ATLANTIS

Abstracting and Indexing

Articles that appear in *Atlantis* are indexed in the following abstracting and indexing services:

American Studies Journal Directory
Bibliography of European Journals for English Studies (BEJES), European Society for the Study of English (ESSE)
CARHUS Plus+
CIRC *Clasificación Integrada de Revistas Científicas*
CSIC
    ISOC-*Sumarios de Ciencias Sociales y Humanidades*
    RESH *Revistas Españolas de Ciencias Sociales y Humanidades*
CWTS *Journal Indicators*
De Gruyter Saur
    International Bibliography of Book Reviews in the Humanities and Social Sciences (IBR Online)
    International Bibliography of Periodical Literature in the Humanities and the Social Sciences (IBZ Online)
DIALNET*Plus*
DICE *Difusión y Calidad Editorial de las Revistas Españolas de Humanidades y Ciencias Sociales y Jurídicas*
DOAJ *Directory of Open Access Journals*
DUOTROPE
ERIH*Plus, European Reference Index for the Humanities*
EBSCO*host*
    Academic Search Complete
    Fuente Academica Premier, Humanities
    Humanities Abstracts
    Humanities International Complete (HIC)
    Humanities International Index
Elsevier BV
    SCIMAGO *Journal and Country Rank*
    SCOPUS
Gale-Cengage
    Academic ASAP
    Expanded Academic Index ASAP
    General Onefile
    Informe académico
    Infotrac Onefile
    Literature Resource Center
Google Scholar Metrics
Índice H de las Revistas Científicas Españolas según *Google Scholar Metrics*
Journal Scholar Metrics
JSTOR *Integrated Digital Platform*
LATINDEX
Linguistics Abstracts Online (Wiley-Blackwell)
MIAR Matriz de Información para el Análisis de Revistas
ProQuest
    Annual Bibliography of English Language and Literature (ABELL)
    CSA Linguistics and Language Behavior Abstracts (LLBA)
    Literature Online (LION)
    MLA *Directory of Periodicals*
    MLA *International Bibliography*, published by the Modern Language Association of America
    Periodical Index Online (PIO) / *Periodicals Contents Index* (PCI)
    Sociological Abstracts

ROAD Directory of Open Access Scholarly Resources
Thomson Reuters
   Arts and Humanities Citation Index
   Current Contents® / Arts & Humanities
   Emerging Source Citation Index
   Social Sciences Citation Index
   Journal Citation Reports / Social Sciences Edition
   Current Contents / Social and Behavioral Sciences
YWES. *The Year's Work in English Studies* (Oxford Journals)
Ulrichsweb (Online)

Atlantis holds the Quality Seal for Excellence in Academic Journals
awarded by the Spanish Foundation for Science and Technology (2014-2017)
(Sello de Calidad de Revistas Científicas Españolas, FECYT)

Table of Contents • Índice

Interview • Entrevista

Reviews • Reseñas

ARTICLES

ARTÍCULOS

"A Relaxing Cup of Lingua Franca Core": Local Attitudes Towards Locally-Accented English

JUAN ANTONIO CUTILLAS ESPINOSA
Universidad de Murcia
jacuti@um.es

Towards the end of the twentieth century, a view emerged suggesting that English had become a lingua franca for communication and, consequently, was no longer the property of its native speakers. Today, the emphasis is on the heterogeneity of the English-speaking world, thus calling into question the legitimacy of the *inner circle* Englishes. In this vein, it is suggested that non-native accents of English should be granted a legitimate status, provided that mutual intelligibility is preserved. In this paper we compare Lingua Franca Core (LFC) features of pronunciation with the speech to the 2015 International Olympic Committee given by the then Mayor of Madrid, Ana Botella. We use auditory analysis and speech analysis software when necessary in order to: (a) systematically describe her use of non-native features which could be labelled as *Spanish English*; (b) assess these in terms of their potential to impair intelligibility as described in Jennifer Jenkins's LFC. The data obtained enable us to provide an analysis that sheds light on how the English as a Lingua Franca debate may be influenced by local attitudes towards correctness in speech. This, in turn, has implications for a sociolinguistically-informed approach to the teaching of pronunciation.

Keywords: English as Lingua Franca (ELF); Lingua Franca Core (LFC); non-native accents of English; linguistic attitudes; political speech

. . .

"Una relajante taza de *Lingua Franca Core*": actitudes locales hacia el inglés con acento local

A finales del siglo XX surgieron voces que sugerían que el inglés se había convertido en una lengua franca para la comunicación y que, en consecuencia, había dejado de ser propiedad exclusiva de sus hablantes nativos. En la actualidad, se enfatiza la heterogeneidad del mundo de habla inglesa, poniendo en cuestión la legitimidad de las variedades del inglés del llamado círculo próximo (*inner circle*). En esta línea, se sugiere que los acentos no nativos

del inglés deberían tener su propio estatus, con la única condición de que se preserve la inteligibilidad mutua. En este trabajo compararemos los rasgos identificados como esenciales para la comprensión—el *Lingua Franca Core*—con el discurso que la alcaldesa de Madrid, Ana Botella, presentó ante el Comité Olímpico Internacional en 2015. Haremos uso de un análisis auditivo y acústico para: (a) describir de manera sistemática su uso de rasgos no nativos, que podrían considerarse como una variedad española del inglés; (b) evaluar estos rasgos en tanto que factores que pueden dificultar la comprensión, basándonos en el *Lingua Franca Core* de Jennifer Jenkins. Nuestros datos nos permiten arrojar luz sobre las implicaciones que las actitudes locales sobre la corrección en el habla pueden tener para el debate sobre el inglés como lengua franca. A su vez, estas actitudes serán esenciales a la hora de formular una aproximación a la enseñanza de la pronunciación que tenga en cuenta factores sociolingüísticos.

Palabras clave: Inglés como Lengua Franca (ILF); *Lingua Franca Core* (LFC); acentos no nativos del inglés; actitudes lingüísticas; discurso político

1. Introduction

Language learning has customarily been conceived of as a process whereby a learner acquires (or at least approaches) the competence of native speakers of the target language. Inherent to this approach is the assumption that the language spoken by native speakers is unarguably the only appropriate model to be presented to learners. However, as English became a *de facto* lingua franca for international communication, there was an increasing trend to question the ownership of the English language. By the end of the twentieth century, linguists were wondering not only whether English as spoken by native speakers was the only possible teaching model but also whether it could indeed be regarded as the most suitable model in an international context. This led to the proposal that models of English for international communication should be based on principles such as simplicity and mutual intelligibility, rather than identity with native speaker practice. According to this view, not only should learners be allowed to keep L1 features that do not impair intelligibility but also that they be considered a valuable expression of identity. In our study, we look at the reception of foreign accented speech in the public arena, specifically focusing on the *ingroup* reactions—in the sense of Allan Bell (1984). In other words, we study how L1-accented speech is assessed by speakers of the same L1.

2. English, Whose English?

Braj Kachru (1985) suggested an influential classification of English using the image of three concentric circles: the *inner circle*, the *outer* or *extended circle* and the *expanding circle*. *Inner circle* countries comprise "the regions where [English] is the primary language" (Kachru 1985, 12) such as the USA, the UK, Canada, Australia and New Zealand. *Outer circle* countries are regions which "have gone through extended periods of colonization, essentially by the users of the inner circle varieties" (Kachru 1985, 12) such as India, Bangladesh, Nigeria, Pakistan, Tanzania and Kenya. Finally, *expanding-circle* Englishes are those that justify the status of English as an international language being "used as an additional language—often as an alternative language—in multilingual and multicultural contexts" (Kachru 1985, 14). Kachru's paper was seminal, starting a trend towards approaches where English was no longer seen as a single model belonging to native-speaker communities. Rather, the term *Englishes*—both native and non-native— was preferred (Clark 2013; Görlach 1991, 1995, 1998, 2002; Hopkins 2013; Kachru, Kachru and Nelson 2006; Kirkpatrick 2010; McArthur 1998; Melchers and Shaw 2003; Seargeant 2012). Under this new approach, *expanding-circle* speakers are granted a role in the use and definition of English, so they are no longer considered mere learners struggling to reach a native speaker target. Their Englishes, which are primarily used for international communication, are considered a variety, not a deviation. On the basis of this, Jennifer Jenkins (2000) and Barbara Seidlhofer (2001) pioneeringly proposed the term *English as a Lingua Franca* (ELF henceforth).

> ELF is part of the GLOBAL ENGLISHES paradigm, according to which most speakers of English are non-native speakers (henceforth NNSEs), and all English varieties, native or non-native, are accepted in their own right rather than evaluated against an NSE [Native Speaker of English] benchmark. [...] [A]n ELF perspective sees non-native Englishes as different rather than deficient. Or, to put it another way, differences from ENL [English as a Native Language] are not assumed to be signs of incompetence, as they are when viewed from an EFL perspective, but are explored as emerging or potential features of ELF. (Jenkins, Cogo and Dewey 2011, 283-284)

The last decade has witnessed the emergence of ELF approaches through dozens of publications, conferences and a dedicated journal, Mouton's *Journal of English as a Lingua Franca* (2011-present). Whereas Jenkins's initial concern was with the phonology of ELF (2000; 2002), Seidlhofer endeavoured to create a corpus of lingua franca English which would enable researchers to carry out lexical and grammatical research: the Vienna-Oxford International Corpus of English (VOICE)—see Seidlfhofer (2010) for a description. Other researchers focused their attention on the pragmatics of ELF communication (Firth 1996; House 2002; Meierkord 2002; see Jenkins, Cogo and Dewey 2011, 293-295 for a comprehensive review).

3. Understanding the Lingua Franca Core

As mentioned earlier, Jenkins (2000) suggests a set of pronunciation features which are deemed to be necessary for *intelligibility* in international communication. According to this view, the target for learners of English as an international language is not attaining a native-like pronunciation; rather, they should aim at achieving a repertoire unlikely to cause misunderstandings or breakdowns in communication. Jenkins's proposal is based on the study of interactions between non-native speakers. Features that do not seem to be the cause of misunderstandings are excluded from the LFC, whereas those that impair intelligibility are included. These core pronunciation features are summarized below, after Jenkins (2000, 159):

- Consonants. Most consonantal contrasts are essential for successful communication and should therefore be preserved. An exception to this is /ð/ and /θ/, which do not seem to cause intelligibility problems and may be replaced by /v/ and /f/, respectively, or even /d/ and /t/. The distinction between the dark, velarized [ɫ] and [l] is also regarded as negligible. The LFC suggests a rhotic pronunciation of English, as well as avoiding "t-tapping"—characteristic of, for example, some varieties of American English where an intervocalic /t/ is realized as a tap /ɾ/. Finally, the aspiration typical of English voiceless stops in the appropriate phonological contexts (consistent with native speaker practice) is considered indispensable for intelligibility.

- Vowels. L1 qualities may be preserved, provided that they remain consistent. The only exception is the central vowel /ɜː/, which seems to require an L2 quality to avoid miscommunication. The emphasis of the LFC approach is on quantity, especially on keeping length distinctions and adapting them to their phonetic environment (pre-fortis clipping, when necessary).
- Clusters. Initial clusters should not be modified, although epenthesis is less likely to cause misunderstandings than deletion. Medial and final clusters may be simplified following L1 conventions.
- Lexical stress. Although unlikely to cause problems *per se*, it certainly has implications for aspiration, vowel length and nuclear stress production. Consequently, some basic rules should be taught in the classroom.
- Intonation. Intonational patterns and their associated attitudinal meanings are neither teachable nor likely to cause communication problems. Only nuclear stress placement and division into tone groups should be taught.

The publication of Jenkins (2000) had considerable impact on phoneticians, language teachers and sociolinguists. Initial expressions of rejection were occasionally harsh—see, for instance, the papers included in Dziubalska-Kolaczyk and Przedlacka (2005)—which led Jenkins to devote a substantial part of her book *English as a Lingua Franca: Attitude and Identity* (2007) to responding to what she regarded as misconceptions based on standard language ideology. Jenkins explains that the LFC is not a model for teaching:

> One frequent misinterpretation of the Lingua Franca Core (LFC) is that it is a model for imitation. This is not at all the case. It is, rather, a core of pronunciation features which occur in successful NNS-NNS communication and whose absence leads to miscommunication [...] The model, then, is not the LFC but the local teacher whose accent incorporates both the core features and the local version of the non-core items. (2007, 25)

Research carried out since 2000 has reinforced Jenkins's findings—for an overview, see Walker (2010, 43-44). With minor adjustments, Jenkins's LFC is a valuable instrument to measure speaker intelligibility from an international perspective. It is precisely this measuring potential that motivates the present study, because it enables us to judge accented speech with regards to intelligibility, not its proximity or deviation from some native standard, RP or American English, for example. There has, though, been research suggesting that certain aspects regarded as non-core by Jenkins do have the potential to impair intelligibility—see Deterding (2012; 2013) and O'Neal (2015). These studies emphasize the role of negotiating meaning rather than isolated pronunciation features in constructing intelligibility.

4. Methodology

4.1. The Data

On September 7, 2013, Madrid presented its bid for the 2020 summer Olympic Games at the 125th International Olympic Committee Session held in Buenos Aires, Argentina. It was Madrid's third consecutive attempt, and became the third consecutive rejection, leaving a trail of disappointment and bitterness across Spain. However, the Buenos Aires gathering attracted public attention in Spain not only because of its disheartening outcome but also on account of the speech given by Ana Botella, mayor of Madrid. Her English was considered appalling by the Spanish press and the general public alike, thus adding some extra embarrassment to the rejection of the Spanish bid. Her speech—two minutes and forty six seconds long—was extracted from the video widely available to the public. It consists of two hundred and eighty three words, which constitute one of the most stigmatized examples of public speaking in Spanish history. This negative reaction was reflected in the press, both immediately after the speech and some time later. Just to mention a few headlines and comments published: "Deplorable speech," which made her deserve the award to the worst campaign to promote tourism in Madrid (*El País*, 27th Dec. 2013); "one of the year's mayors' gaffes" in *Time* magazine (as reported in *El Mundo*, 12th Dec. 2013); "her speech and her English attracted the interest of social networks" (*El Mundo*, 9th September 2014, quoting the major scandals Botella had been involved in); "Spanglish made in Botella" (*El Periódico*, 9th September 2014). These are just a few examples of the widespread feeling of embarrassment among the general public in Spain.

The speech itself had been written by Terrence Burns, a native English speaker and one of the key advisors to the Spanish Olympic bid. He supervised the rehearsals of the speech and stated that the speech was appropriate and her English "excellent, charming and easy to understand" (Lamarca and de Pablo 2013, n.p.).

4.2. Research goals

Our research aims to achieve an objective characterization of the speech by Ana Botella. To this end we shall measure her performance against the intelligibility standards established by Jenkins (2000) and subsequent research in the field. We shall try to check whether her Spanish-accented English contained features that would impair comprehension by an international audience. If this is the case, the explanation for the widespread public embarrassment will be straightforward. If not, we will try to provide some alternative explanation for the uproar against this speech.

4.3. Procedure and variables

The speech was first transcribed using a model British English RP transcription which took into account variability within RP and which was used as the starting point to

measure deviation from native speaker practice. When such a deviation was detected, we then considered whether this was a feature that could be attributed to the other main native variety of English used as a model for teaching, Standard American English. When it wasn't, the deviations were identified as instances of non-native speaker pronunciations, and then classified as belonging to the LFC or not. Subsequently, the data were analysed using the free acoustic analysis software PRAAT (Boersma and Weenink 2016) paying specific attention to the following areas:

- Vowel quality (F1 and F2 measurements) and quantity for the following vowel contrasts /iː/-/ɪ/-/i/, /ʌ/-/æ/-/ɑː/ and /ɒ/-/ɔː/. We also looked at the quality of the long vowel /ɜː/. F1 values are inversely correlated with vowel height, whereas F2 values are correlated with vowel frontness.
- Voice Onset Time (VOT) measurements for voiceless stops, as compared to their voiced stop counterparts in comparable phonetic environments. A relatively long VOT is indicative of aspiration.
- Consonant pronunciations that differ considerably from those of native speaker English, such as /b/-/v/ or /s/-/z/.
- Lexical stress, nuclear stress and the formation of tone groups to indicate phrasing—the boundaries between phrases from an intonational perspective.

The data obtained were used to create a table (Table 1) expressing percentages of native-speaker use, LFC features—those complying with LFC assumptions—and non-LFC features—those violating LFC assumptions and thus likely to impair intelligibility. It also served as the basis for a phonetic transcription of Ana Botella's speech.

4.4. Research questions

The following research questions will provide us with a principled evaluation of the speech by Ana Botella in terms of intelligibility for international communication.

1. Do Ana Botella's vowels correspond to either NS pronunciations or acceptable LFC versions of the same?
2. Is sufficient aspiration present in the /p, t, k/ set in the appropriate phonetic contexts to prevent confusion with /b, d, g/?
3. To what extent do the remaining consonants comply with either NS norms or the LFC?
4. Is lexical stress correctly placed?
5. Is nuclear stress placement and the formation of tone groups performed appropriately enough to prevent misunderstanding?

5. RESULTS

5.1. Vowels: Quality

There is a generalized merger of quality values for all vowel contrasts that do not have an equivalent in Spanish. To put it differently, Ana Botella is using L1 qualities throughout (see Table 1). With minor differences, F1 and F2 formants for /iː/-/ɪ/-/i/ suggest that Ana Botella keeps the same quality for all the different English sounds that roughly correspond to Spanish /i/. The same is true if we limit our comparison to stressed occurrences of contrastive /iː/ and /ɪ/ (see Figure 1). From an LFC perspective, this merger in quality should not impair intelligibility. F1 and F2 values across words are coherent and these could be seen as acceptable L1 qualities.

Table 1. Mean of observed F1 and F2 (Hz) in Ana Botella's vowels,
contrasted to average female British RP values taken from Gimson ([1962] 2001, 99)

	ANA BOTELLA		BRITISH RP VALUES	
Vowels	F1	F2	F1	F2
/iː/	344	2409	303	2654
/i/	351	2411	-	-
/ɪ/	355	2417	384	2174
/æ/	964	1559	1018	1799
/ʌ/	972	1482	914	1459
/ɑː/	1024	1442	910	1316
/ɒ/	725	1165	751	1215
/ɔː/	719	1083	389	888
/ɜː/	756	1130	606	1695

Figure 1. Formant analysis of stressed /iː/ and /ɪ/, as compared to the typical values of a female British RP speaker as per Table 1
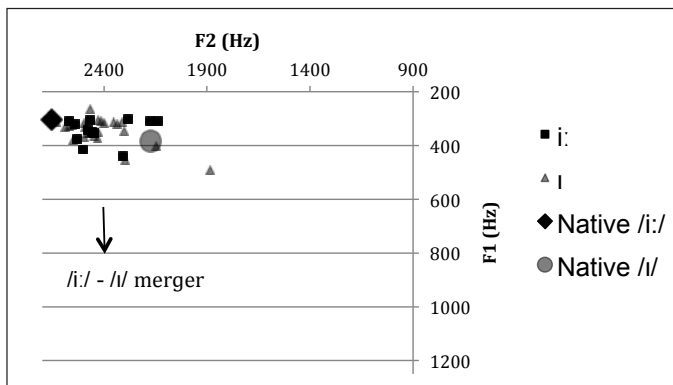
As for the /æ/-/ʌ/-/ɑː/ contrast, the qualities of these three vowels also overlap (see Figure 2). It is worth mentioning, though, that /æ/ values cluster around slightly more fronted realizations as compared to /ʌ/ and /ɑː/. This may indicate that Ana Botella could have been trained (with little success) to keep a distinct quality for /æ/, whereas /ʌ/ and /ɑː/ are left to overlap.

Figure 2. Formant plotting of stressed /æ/, /ɑː/ and /ʌ/, as compared to the typical values of a female British RP speaker as per Table 1
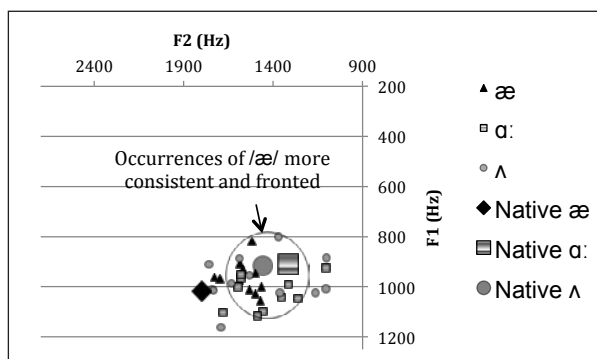
Figure 3 shows a merger of /ɒ ~ ɔː/ vowel qualities, which roughly fall on the area occupied by Spanish /o/. This merger is also typical of many native speakers of American English, rarely impeding intelligibility.

Figure 3. Formant plotting of stressed /ɒ/ and /ɔː/, as compared to the typical values of a female British RP speaker as per Table 1
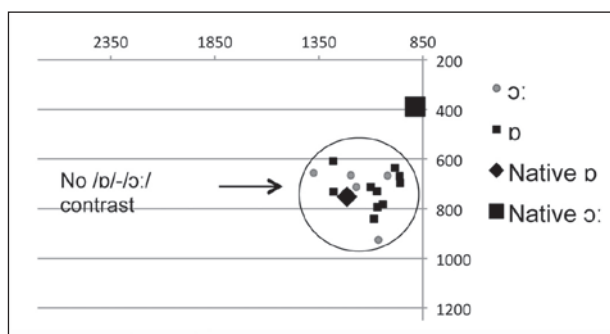
There were only two instances of /ɜː/ in the data. These two words were *world* and *working* and seem to have been pronounced in the area that would roughly correspond to that of a Spanish /o/. This is quite a common pronunciation among Spanish learners of English, arguably induced by spelling.

Apart from these contrasts, a general feature of Ana Botella's speech is the lack of the reduced, unstressed vowel /ə/. Its quality is systematically replaced by that of the corresponding Spanish vowels, with spelling determining which Spanish vowel is used. It is unclear, though, if /ə/ replacement may cause intelligibility problems. Jenkins (2000, 148) states that the categorical use of strong forms does not cause comprehension problems, but she explicitly mentions appropriate /ə/ reduction in non-function words as a factor in maintaining intelligibility.

Generally speaking, Ana Botella seems to be merging contrasts that do not exist in Spanish, using only one quality for different English vowels (see Figures 1 to 3). However, only her pronunciation of /ɜː/ and the lack of an appropriate /ə/ reduction would be considered contradictory to LFC principles. Figures 4 and 5 show the typical female British RP values as compared to Ana Botella's values respectively.

Figure 4. Average of formants of the relevant vowels produced by a model female native speaker of British RP, taken from Gimson ([1962] 2001, 99)
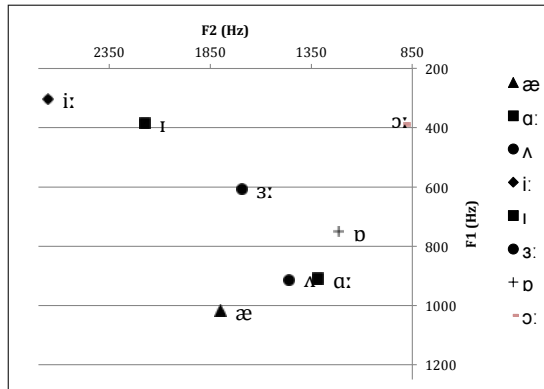
Figure 5. Average of formants in Ana Botella's vowels
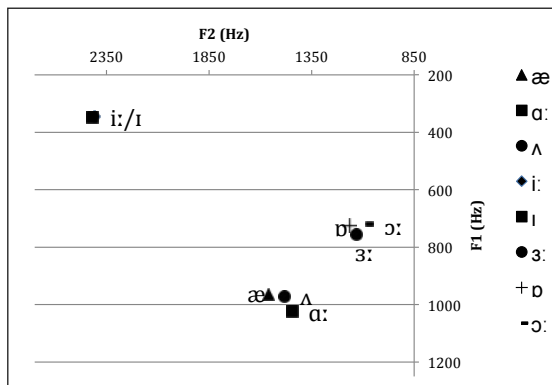
5.2. Vowels: Quantity

Moving on to vowel quantity, the data seem to suggest that some length distinctions may hold (see Table 2). Generally speaking, /iː/ is consistently longer than both [i]—the tense version of /ɪ/ in word-final and morpheme final non-stressed weak position—and /ɪ/, /ɑː/ is longer than both /æ/ and /ʌ/ and finally, /ɔː/ is longer than /ɒ/.

Table 2. Mean of observed vowel duration (ms.) in Ana Botella's speech

Vowel	Duration
/iː/	151
[i]	89
/ɪ/	101
/æ/	129
/ʌ/	151
/ɑː/	174
/ɒ/	105
/ɔː/	139
/ɜː/	173

These raw data have to be interpreted carefully to control two essential variables: stress and phonological context. Fair comparisons about length can only be established if we contrast equally stressed syllables. Attention should also be paid to the shortening or "clipping" effect of voiceless consonants following English vowels. As far as the /iː/-/ɪ/-[i] contrast is concerned, some of the items were excluded from analysis on account of the inherent stress asymmetry between /iː/ on the one hand and /ɪ/-[i] on the other. Whereas /iː/ is always found in the stressed position in our data, [i] only appears in an unstressed position, and /ɪ/ is found both in stressed and unstressed syllables. For this reason, we decided to consider the /iː/-/ɪ/ contrast in the stressed position only, obtaining the following length measurements (Table 3).

Table 3. Mean of observed F1, F2 and duration values for the /iː/-/ɪ/ contrast in stressed position

Vowels	F1	F2	Duration
/iː/	344	2409	151
/ɪ/	347	2416	116

A non-parametric Wilcoxon signed-rank test was performed, which showed that the difference was not statistically significant (p= 0,101). This could be due to the fact

that Ana Botella may not have been consistent in her use of length distinctions. The data under analysis are also limited. However, that the difference is not statistically significant does not necessarily imply that the length contrast is not perceptible for at least some of the vowels. We have tried to show the length of the different occurrences of /iː/ and /ɪ/ in stressed position interacting with phonological context in Figure 6.

Figure 6. Duration (ms.) of instances of /iː/ in open syllables, before voiced consonants and before voiceless consonants. Duration (ms.) of instances of /ɪ/ before voiced consonants and before voiceless consonants

As Figure 6 shows, the two instances of /iː/ in the open syllable position are longer than almost all the occurrences of /ɪ/, with one single exception. Comparing /iː/ and /ɪ/ followed by voiced consonants, the three instances of /iː/ seem to be longer than most instances of /ɪ/, although there is an area of overlap with the five longest occurrences of /ɪ/. The duration of the clipped /iː/ vowel (i.e., checked by a voiceless consonant) is comparable to that of /ɪ/ followed by a voiced consonant, which is consistent with native speaker practice. However, no clipping effect is visible distinguishing /ɪ/ followed by voiced or voiceless consonants. A relevant question would be how much longer a vowel should be to trigger the categorical perception as /iː/ or /ɪ/ among non-native speakers. This would be open to further research in the field of ELF speech perception.

As for the /æ/-/ʌ/-/ɑː/ contrast, /ʌ/ appears to be longer than /æ/, which is contrary to native speaker pronunciation, making both sounds practically indiscernible in Ana Botella's speech. Comparing both sounds to the long /ɑː/ sound, the Wilcoxon signed-rank tests shows a significant difference (p=0.026). Thus we have a situation of /æ/-/ʌ/ merger, with both sounds contrasting to the long/ɑː/.

The /ɒ/-/ɔː/ contrast shows a non-significant effect in the Wilcoxon signed-rank test (p=0.50). As we mentioned in the case of the /iː/-/ɪ/ contrast, this does not necessarily mean that at least some contrasts were not accomplished, as shown in Figure 7. In our

data, there were only occurrences of /ɔ:/ before voiced consonants, not in open syllables or before voiceless consonants. Of these, the majority (six out of nine) are longer than all the occurrences of /ɒ/. This suggests that there has been some attempt to mark this vowel as long, and once again, it would be open to discussion as to how much increase in duration suffices to mark a contrast.

Figure 7. Duration (ms.) of instances of /ɔ:/ before voiced consonants and of /ɒ/ before voiced and voiceless consonants
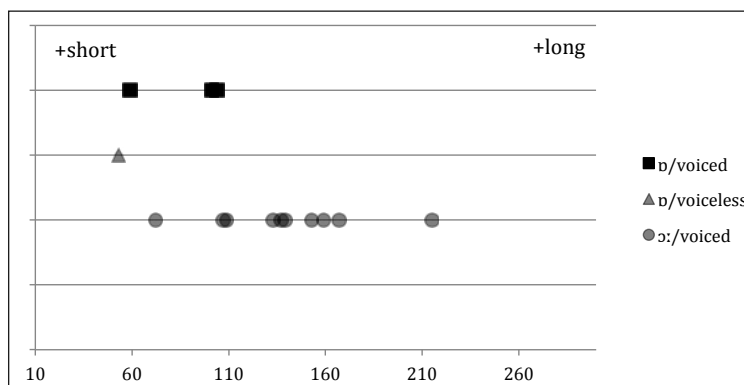
We can now provide an answer to our first research question. As far as quality is concerned, Ana Botella's vowels do not correspond to NS pronunciations but, with the exception of /ɜ:/ and the reduction of the weak vowel /ə/ in non-function words, her pronunciation appears to be acceptable according to the LFC. Regarding quantity, suitable length distinctions exist, even if they are occasionally not consistent. This is to be expected from a person who is in the process of receiving phonetic training.

5.3. Aspiration of /p, t, k/

The acoustic correlate of aspiration is Voice Onset Time (VOT), which can be defined as the time elapsed between the release of a stop and the beginning of vocal fold vibration—i.e., vowel pronunciation. A long VOT will contribute to perceiving a particular stop as aspirated; a shorter one will similarly indicate lack of aspiration. Arthur S. Abramson and Leigh Lisker (1973) report on perceptual tests to establish the minimal voice onset time (VOT) that would guarantee successful categorization of English /p, t, k/. This research was based on native speaker judgement; once a particular VOT duration threshold is reached, listeners shift from categorizing a sound as /b, d, g/ to categorizing it as /p, t, k/. Abramson and Lisker (1973, 4) found that a slightly different threshold existed for each one of the voiceless plosives: 25 milliseconds for /p/, 35 milliseconds for /t/ and 42 milliseconds for /k/. This enables us to classify Ana

Botella's production of /p, t, k/ as correctly aspirated or unlikely to cause confusion with its /b, d, g/ equivalents (Table 4). We have only included those words where the appropriate phonetic context for full aspiration is found: initial position of a stressed syllable, not preceded by tautosyllabic /s/.

Table 4. VOT of /p, t, k/ onsets in contexts favoring aspiration, compared to crossover values as established in Abramson and Lisker (1973, 4)

Word	VOT (ms)	Crossover (ms)	Aspirated
comfortable	73	42	Yes
culture	81	42	Yes
culture	26	42	No
cup	42	42	Yes
importantly	67	25	Yes
parks	72	25	Yes
part	34	25	Yes
people	11	25	No
Petersburgh	27	25	Yes
prepared	57	25	Yes
quaint	95	42	Yes
quite	71	42	Yes
taste	13	35	No
tell	24	35	No

Addressing now research question two, the data suggest that Ana Botella performed 71.4% of the instances with a sufficiently long VOT for /p, t, k/ as opposed to 28.6% of words with little or no aspiration. The words which did not receive appropriate aspiration include *tell, taste, people* and *culture*. We should note, though, that her pronunciation of /p, t, k/ is judged using data from discrimination tasks performed by native speakers. More research would be needed in order to ascertain that these VOT crossover values guarantee intelligibility among non-native speakers.

5.4. Other consonants

As for the rest of the consonants in Ana Botella's speech, we classified her performance under the following headings: (a) typical of NSE, that is included within RP or General American; (b) Lingua Franca Core (LFC) pronunciations, i.e., features which

according to Jenkins's LFC do not cause intelligibility problems; and finally, (c) Non-Lingua Franca Core (NLFC) pronunciations. NLFC forms are those likely to impair intelligibility because they involve the realization of a certain sound not conforming to native speaker practice or LFC prioritization (see Table 5).

Table 5. Instances (#) of consonant production classified as typical of Native Speaker Englishes (NSE), Lingua Franca Core (LFC) or Non-LFC pronunciations (NLFC). Percentages (%) of NSE and LFC pronunciations compared to NLFC pronunciations

Manner of articulation	Cons.	NSE#	LFC#	NLFC#	NSE/LFC% Total	NLFC% Total	NSE/LFC% Total	NLFC% Total
Fricatives	f	17	0	0	100%	-	90.6%	9.4%
	v	13	3	4	80%	20%		
	θ	2	0	0	100%	-		
	ð	1	17	0	100%	-		
	s	47	0	0	100%	-		
	z	10	5	8	65.2%	34.8%		
	ʃ	5	6	1	91.7%	8.3%		
Affricates	tʃ	10	0	0	100%	-	100%	-
	dʒ	3	0	0	100%	-		
Liquids	l	23	24	0	100%	-	100%	-
Nasals	m	37	0	1	97.4%	2.6%	97%	3%
	n	51	0	2	96.2%	3.8%		
	ŋ	4	4	0	100%	-		
Approximants	r	0	66	0	100%	-	98.1%	1.9%
	j	2	9	2	84.6%	15.4%		
	w	16	0	0	100%	-		
	h	2	7	0	100%	-		
Total #		243	141	18	NSE/LFC		NLFC	
Total %		60.4	35.1	4.5	95.5%		4.5%	

Table 5 shows a near-categorical use of either native speaker forms of the relevant consonants or LFC versions. Consonant pronunciation which may result in intelligibility problems is concentrated in the following areas:

- Replacement of syllable initial /v/ with Spanish /b/. Syllable final devoicing is not considered a problem for intelligibility, as /v/ is also partially devoiced in NSE.
- /s/ as a substitute for /z/ in syllable initial position, as well as in word-final position in the auxiliary *is*. Syllable final devoicing is not necessarily critical for intelligibility.
- One instance of /ʃ/ being replaced by /s/.
- Place of articulation assimilation in some nasals, which is directly transferred from Spanish. Word-final /ŋ/ is sometimes pronounced /n/, which is also the case in many NSE varieties particularly in -*ing* verbal endings.

Consonant clusters are almost exclusively resolved in a way that is consistent with native speaker practice, as, for instance, in the case of CCC sequences which are reduced to C(C)C. However, there are instances of NLFC consonant deletion or consonant permutation: *I've* had [aɪ ˈhab], *I'd like* [aɪ ˈlaɪk] *and inviting* [animˈbaɪtin]—which may be confused with the word *uninviting*—and *mixture* [ˈmitʃər]. There are also instances of epenthesis in word initial sC- sequences *speak* [esˈpiːk] (twice), *Spanish* [esˈpaniʃ] (twice), *sport* [esˈpɔːrt]. However, as both Jenkins (2000) and Walker (2010) suggest, epenthesis is much less likely to cause intelligibility problems than deletion. Thus, the answer to research question 3 is that Ana Botella pronounces consonants almost always in ways that are either consistent with native speaker practice or with acceptable LFC versions.

5.5. Lexical stress

Lexical stress is correctly placed in all polysyllabic words, with the exception of the words *perhaps*—pronounced [ˈperhaps]—and *friendship*—pronounced [frenˈʃiːp]. Quantitatively speaking, of the sixty-five polysyllabic words found in the text—Spanish proper names have been excluded, including the repetition of the word *Madrid*), sixty-three were accurately stressed, which represents 96.9% of the total. We can thus answer research question four in the affirmative and state that, generally speaking, lexical stress is correctly placed in Ana Botella's speech.

5.6. Nuclear stress and tone group formation

Nuclear stress and group formation are strongly influenced by a highly emphatic performance. Thus, it proves difficult to tease apart the effect of over-acted performance and that of inadequate word-group formation. In general, nuclear stress is correctly placed, with the exception of a handful of examples of incorrectly formed word groups:

(1) *I must said* [*sic*] [falling intonation, end of phrase] *I like to continue our friendship.*
(2) *you can see, feel and taste* [end of phrase] *the wonder of Spanish…*

(3) *there is nothing quite like a* [falling intonation, pause] *relaxing cup of…*

(4) *I hope* [sharply rising intonation, pause] *you remember* [suspensive].

(5) *In addition* [sharply falling intonation, end of phrase] *to the best prepared plan.*

(6) *We want to share | it | with all | of you.*

Example 1 is particularly likely to cause intelligibility problems because there is a combination of slips of the tongue—*must said* instead of *must say*, *I like* instead of *I'd like*—and the division into two different tone groups of a verb and its complement clause. Falling intonation reinforces the idea that both phrases are syntactically independent. Sentence 2 might also cause some confusion because a sequence of coordinated verbs—*you can see, feel and taste*—is inadequately separated from its direct object. The most notorious sentence in Ana Botella's speech—on account of her reference to a *relaxing cup of café con leche*—is also an example of erroneous tone group formation (3). The separation of the determiner *a* and the noun phrase *relaxing cup* is, however, less likely to cause intelligibility problems because it does not affect the processing of the overall predicate argument structure. In example 4, the combination of erroneous word-group formation and intonation patterns is likely to lead to comprehension difficulties. Examples 5 and 6 are probably the result of an attempt to produce emphatic speech. Example 5 might impair intelligibility, whereas example 6 is just a word-by-word pronunciation, unnatural but unlikely to cause intelligibility problems. We can now answer research question five by stating that nuclear stress and tone group formation are generally performed in a way that is unlikely to pose a serious threat to intelligibility.

6. Discussion

There is little doubt that, from the point of view of NSE, Ana Botella's speech is far from accurate. All vowel contrasts which do not have a parallel in Spanish are merged; many consonants are also altered to match their Spanish counterparts; no weak forms are used in the appropriate contexts, thus yielding an unnatural rhythm; intonation and word group formation are over-emphatic and occasionally confusing.

A drastically different judgement emerges, though, by considering that her speech should not necessarily be assessed on the grounds of NSE. By approaching Ana Botella's speech from the point of view of intelligibility—as operationalized in the form of LFC features—we suggest that her speech was probably understood by most members of her international audience with little difficulty.

Vowels are the weakest part of her performance. The systematic absence of /ə/ and its replacement by Spanish vowel counterparts—induced by spelling—might cause intelligibility problems. However, we have also observed that /ə/ is most often substituted by /e/; a few instances of NSE /ə/ pronunciation occur when the alternative suggested by the spelling would be, for instance, Spanish /a/. We may speculate that the replacement of /ə/ by phonetically close equivalents, like Spanish /e/, may be less

likely to lead to misunderstanding. As far as quantity is concerned, some pronunciation training seems to have been carried out to try to master long/short contrasts in her speech, albeit with only partial success. We cannot ascertain, though, to what extent the existing length distinctions may suffice to help the listener to correctly categorize these vowel sounds. The long, stressed central vowel /ɜː/ also fails to show its characteristic central quality, being pronounced as a lengthened version of the Spanish vowel /o/— here spelling also seems to play an essential role in causing this confusion.

The shortcomings of vowel pronunciation are partially compensated for by an essentially native or LFC pronunciation of consonantal contrasts. About 95% of consonants were accurately pronounced; consonant deletion was scarce and mostly respected NSE constraints. Epenthesis to break sC-sequences is contrary to NSE norms, but this is not regarded as a source of intelligibility problems. In addition, there is a majority of voiceless plosives that receive aspiration in the appropriate phonetic contexts.

Lexical stress placement is also overwhelmingly consistent with NSE practice. As far as nuclear stress placement and tone group formation are concerned, the majority of stresses are correctly placed, although excessive emphasis seems to impair the naturalness of her speech. Apart from some examples where tone group formation interrupts the continuity of syntactic structure, thus rendering it difficult to understand, there is little doubt that suprasegmental factors in her speech were unlikely to impair intelligibility.

Generally speaking, there is little room for doubt that Ana Botella's speech was mostly intelligible for her international audience. As Jenkins (2000) states, intelligibility depends on a variety of factors, with deviations from LFC piling up to reach a critical value that not even accommodation efforts can overcome. In this case, the relative stability of consonantal information, as well as most suprasegmental information, could have made up for the deficiencies in vowel cues. The (otherwise irritating) emphatic, slow speech may have also worked in favor of intelligibility.

Assuming that Ana Botella's speech was communicatively effective, how, then, can we account for the uproar against her performance? Leaving aside questions of political preference, there is substantial evidence suggesting that speakers evaluate public speaking by public figures differently from private exchanges—see, for instance, the contributions in Hernández Campoy and Cutillas Espinosa (2012). Juan Manuel Hernández Campoy and Juan Antonio Cutillas Espinosa (2010a; 2010b) studied the reaction to the local accent of the former President of the Region of Murcia (Spain), as used in public media. They discovered that, rather than attracting ingroup solidarity, she was generally disparaged. The President's use of Spanish was articulate, educated and grammatically standard throughout; crucially, though, non-standardness in pronunciation was seen as inappropriate and unacceptable. In Spain, value judgements about accents are common and rarely disputed. There is a widely accepted idea that there are "right" and "wrong" pronunciations of Spanish, which are closely connected to spelling and the prescriptive role of the Royal Academy of the Spanish

Language. Even Jenkins (2007) commented on Spanish informants being tougher on their appreciation of Spanish-accented English than speakers from other countries.

Reactions to Ana Botella's speech were, therefore, easy to predict. The public embarrassment was not a direct effect of lack of intelligibility, but rather of her perceived use of non-standard L2 forms. Jenkins correctly predicts the crucial role of attitudes in the acceptance of non-native Englishes:

> It seems that whether or not ELF accents will be taken up in years to come by NNS teachers (and thence passed on to their learners) will depend in large parts on how they believe ELF is perceived in the wider English-speaking context, and, within that context, the extent to which they believe such accents will enhance their success rather than discriminate against them. (2007, 231)

Jenkins does not consider the impact that non-native accents may have within a given speaker's community. Obviously, this is not relevant for international communication in private; however, it becomes crucial for international communication in public. Using Allan Bell's (1984) terminology, Ana Botella's speech was not only evaluated by the international audience at the event itself but also by a greater majority of *overhearers.* Crucially, Spanish overhearers are, significantly, a numerous and attentive group and the linguistic attitudes of this group of overhearers were not adequately assessed by Ana Botella's advisors. The general public in Spain is not willing to accept a non-native English standard. In much the same way that heavily non-standardly accented Spanish speech in public is received with contempt, Spanish-accented English too is regarded as embarrassing. It seems that L1 conventions on what is acceptable public speech have been transferred to the lingua franca context. A linguistic culture based on normativity, language purity and the role of prescriptive authorities is less likely to acknowledge the acceptability of non-native Englishes.

7. Conclusion

Our data suggest that Ana Botella's speech to the International Olympic Committee did not drastically deviate from the basic requirements of intelligibility for international communication, as operationalized in Jenkins (2000; 2002) and confirmed in Walker (2010). Vowel production was probably the weakest aspect from an LFC perspective, with only partial length distinctions and the substitution of /ɜː/ quality with Spanish /o/. Other than that, all the other aspects of her speech were consistent either with native speaker practice or with an acceptable LFC version. In spite of this, Ana Botella's speech received severe criticism in Spain, to the extent of being considered the epitome of bad English in the press and on social networks alike.

As mentioned before, the Mayor of Madrid had received linguistic counselling and pronunciation training. Unfortunately, her advisors' understanding of local attitudes

toward accented speech—both in Spanish and in foreign languages—was disastrously inaccurate. A sociolinguistically-informed approach would have probably concluded that she should have limited her use of English to international communication in private spheres rather than public venues—i.e., that she should have delivered her public speech in Spanish, with English interpreting provided—thus acknowledging the crucial role of Spanish overhearers. The implications for LFC research are also valuable. In selecting a non-native standard for international communication, the impact on the ingroup should not be ignored. Spanish English has no chance of succeeding as an effective, intelligible tool for international communication in public unless ingroup language attitudes change. These attitudes have undesired side effects. The pursuit of NS perfection may, in this way, actually discourage learners from using English at all. Until more tolerant approaches to non-native accents become commonplace, a reasonable approach for public figures would be to take into account the attitudes (linguistic or otherwise) of the public they represent. This does not necessarily mean they should refrain from using English in public altogether, but rather that they should do so being fully aware of its socio-stylistic implications. The public figures can then make an informed decision regarding whether to use Spanish-accented English or native, standard-accented Spanish.

Works Cited

Abramson, Arthur S. and Leigh Lisker. 1973. "Voice-Timing Perception in Spanish Word-Initial Stops." *Journal of Phonetics* 1: 1-8.

Bell, Allan. 1984. "Language Style as Audience Design." *Language in Society* 13: 145-204.

Boersma, Paul and David Weenink. 2016. *PRAAT. Doing Phonetics by computer*. Amsterdam: University of Amsterdam. [Accessed online on December 1, 2016].

Clark, Urszula. 2013. *Language and Identity in Englishes*. London: Routledge.

Deterding, David. 2012. "Intelligibility in Spoken ELF." *Journal of English as a Lingua Franca* 1 (1): 185-190.

—. 2013. *Misunderstandings in English as a Lingua Franca. An Analysis of ELF Interactions in South-East Asia.* Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter.

Dziubalska-Kołaczyk, Katarzyna and Joanna Przedlacka, eds. 2005. *English Pronunciation Models. A Changing Scene*. Berlin: Peter Lang.

Firth, Alan. 1996. "The Discursive Accomplishment of Normality. On 'Lingua Franca' English and Conversation Analysis." *Journal of Pragmatics* 26 (2): 237-259.

Gimson, Alfred C. (1962) 2001. *Gimson's Pronunciation of English*. 6th ed., revised by Alan Cruttenden. London: Arnold.

Görlach, Manfred. 1991. *Englishes.* Amsterdam: John Benjamins.

—. 1995. *More Englishes*. Amsterdam: John Benjamins.

—. 1998. *Even More Englishes*. Amsterdam: John Benjamins.

—. 2002. *Still More Englishes.* Amsterdam: John Benjamins.

HERNÁNDEZ CAMPOY, Juan Manuel and Juan Antonio Cutillas Espinosa. 2010a. "Speaker Design Practices in Political Discourse: A Case Study." *Language and Communication* 30: 297-309.

—. 2010b. "Hypervernacularization and Speaker Design: A Case Study." *Folia Linguistica* 44 (1): 31-52.

—, eds. 2012. *Style Shifting in Public. New Perspectives on Stylistic Variation.* Amsterdam: John Benjamins.

HOPKINS, Tometro, ed. 2013. *World Englishes*. London: Bloomsbury.

HOUSE, Juliane. 2002. "Developing Pragmatic Competence in English as a Lingua Franca." In *Lingua Franca Communication*, edited by Karlfried Knapp and Christiane Meierkord, 245-268. Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang.

JENKINS, Jennifer. 2000. *The Phonology of English as an International Language*. Oxford: Oxford UP.

—. 2002. "A Sociolinguistically Based, Empirically Researched Pronunciation Syllabus for English as an International Language." *Applied Linguistics* 23 (1): 83-103.

—. 2007. *English as a Lingua Franca: Attitude and Identity*. Oxford: Oxford UP.

JENKINS, Jennifer, Alessia Cogo and Martin Dewey. 2011. "Review of Developments in Research into English as a Lingua Franca." *Language Teaching* 44 (3): 281-315.

KACHRU, Braj. 1985. "Standards, Codification and Sociolinguistic Realism: The English Language in the Outer Circle." In *English in the World: Teaching and Learning the Language and Literatures*, edited by Randolph Quirk and Henry G. Widdowson, 11-30. Cambridge: Cambridge UP.

KACHRU, Braj, Yamuna Kachru and Cecil L. Nelson, eds. 2006. *The Handbook of World Englishes*. Oxford: Blackwell.

KIRKPATRICK, Andy. 2010. *The Routledge Handbook of World Englishes.* London: Routledge.

LAMARCA, Eva and Patricia de Pablo. 2013. "Entrevistamos a Terrence Burns, el gurú que entrenó a Ana Botella para el discurso olímpico." *Vanity Fair*, September 2013. [Accessed online on February 21, 2017].

MCARTHUR, Tom. 1998. *The English Languages*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP.

MEIERKORD, Christiane. 2002. "'Language Stripped Bare' or 'Linguistic Masala'? Culture in Lingua Franca Conversation." In *Lingua Franca Communication*, edited by Karlfried Knapp and Christiane Meierkord, 109-133. Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang.

MELCHERS, Gunnel and Philip Shaw. 2003. *World Englishes*. London: Arnold.

O'NEAL, George. 2015. "ELF Intelligibility. The Vowel Quality Factor." *Journal of English as a Lingua Franca* 4 (2): 347-358.

SEARGEANT, Philip. 2012. *Exploring World Englishes: Language in a Global Context.* London: Routledge.

SEIDLHOFER, Barbara. 2001. "Closing a Conceptual Gap: The Case for a Description of English as a Lingua Franca." *International Journal of Applied Linguistics* 11 (2): 133-158.

—. 2010. "Giving VOICE to English as a Lingua Franca." In *From International to Local English—and Back Again*, edited by Roberta Facchinetti, David Crystal and Barbara Seidlhofer, 147-163. Bern: Peter Lang.

WALKER, Robin. 2010. *Teaching the Pronunciation of English as a Lingua Franca*. Oxford: Oxford UP.

Juan Antonio Cutillas Espinosa obtained his PhD from the University of Murcia in 2006. He has been Senior Lecturer at the Department of English Philology of the University of Murcia since 2009. His main areas of research include English phonetics and phonology, forensic linguistics and the sociolinguistic study of style shifting.

Address: Departamento de Filología Inglesa. Facultad de Letras. Universidad de Murcia. C/ Santo Cristo, s/n. 30071, Murcia, Spain. Tel.: +34 868883416.

Verbal Agreement with Collective Nominal Constructions: Syntactic and Semantic Determinants

Yolanda Fernández-Pena
Universidade de Vigo
yolanda.fernandez@uvigo.es

This corpus-based study investigates the patterns of verbal agreement of twenty-three singular collective nouns which take *of*-dependents (e.g., *a group of boys*, *a set of points*). The main goal is to explore the influence exerted by the *of*-PP on verb number. To this end, syntactic factors, such as the plural morphology of the oblique noun (i.e., the noun in the *of*-PP) and syntactic distance, as well as semantic issues, such as the animacy or humanness of the oblique noun within the *of*-PP, were analysed. The data show the strongly conditioning effect of plural *of*-dependents on the number of the verb: they favour a significant proportion of plural verbal forms. This preference for plural verbal patterns, however, diminishes considerably with increasing syntactic distance when the *of*-PP contains a non-overtly-marked plural noun such as *people*. The results for the semantic issues explored here indicate that animacy and humanness are also relevant factors as regards the high rate of plural agreement observed in these constructions.

Keywords: agreement; collective; *of*-PP; distance; animacy; corpus

· · ·

Concordancia verbal con construcciones nominales colectivas: sintaxis y semántica como factores determinantes

Este estudio de corpus investiga los patrones de concordancia verbal de veintitrés nombres colectivos singulares que toman complementos seleccionados por la preposición *of*, como en los ejemplos *a group of boys*, *a set of points*. El objetivo principal del estudio consiste en explorar la influencia que este complemento preposicional ejerce sobre el número del verbo. Para ello, he analizado factores sintácticos, como la morfología plural del elemento nominal en la *of*-PP o la distancia sintáctica, y factores semánticos como la animacidad o el carácter humano o no humano del referente de la *of*-PP. Los resultados confirman la importancia de

la frase preposicional introducida por *of* en la selección del número del verbo: la presencia de este complemento preposicional favorece una mayor proporción de formas verbales plurales. No obstante, esta preferencia por patrones verbales en plural disminuye considerablemente a mayor distancia sintáctica, especialmente cuando el complemento preposicional contiene nombres con plural no marcado morfológicamente como *people*. En lo que concierne a la semántica, este estudio demuestra que la animacidad y el carácter humano del elemento nominal en la *of*-PP son también factores relevantes ya que influyen en el elevado porcentaje de formas verbales plurales obtenidas.

Palabras clave: concordancia; colectivo; *of*-PP; distancia; animacidad; corpus

1. Introduction

Collective nouns in English have been the object of numerous investigations aimed at exploring their patterns of agreement (Levin 2001, 2006; Depraetere 2003; Hundt 2006, 2009).[1] These nominal elements can collocate with singular or plural verbal forms depending on the speaker's focus, either on the group or on the individual members, as exemplified by (1) and (2) respectively.

(1) The crowd here *is* really thick despite the weather.
(2) [T]he crowd *are* on their feet, roaring and waving their arms (Depraetere 2003, 86).

This alternation of verbal agreement is further complicated when the collective noun takes a plural *of*-dependent, as in (3), which may interfere in the relationship of agreement between the collective controller and the verbal target.

(3) A random bunch$_{SG}$ *of people*$_{PL}$ are$_{PL}$ waiting (COCA: FIC Mov: Bean).

This study investigates the extent to which the syntactic and semantic characteristics of these *of*-dependents influence and determine the patterns of verbal agreement of twenty-three collective noun-based constructions. To this end, both syntactic and semantic variables have been analysed in data obtained from samples of the British National Corpus (BNC) and the Corpus of Contemporary American English (COCA). Based on the results obtained, it will be argued that the morphology and the animacy of the *of*-dependent are important variables inasmuch as they contribute to the high rate of plural agreement that these structures show. Besides, syntactic distance will also be discussed, as it evinces a direct correlation with the patterns of verbal agreement presented here.

The structure of the paper is as follows. First, a brief theoretical background is presented in section 2. Then in section 3, after describing the methodology used, I focus on the analysis of the different syntactic and semantic determinants of agreement in the constructions in question. Finally, the main conclusions and questions for further research are put forward in section 4.

2. Theoretical Introduction

Agreement, sometimes referred to as concord, is a controversial linguistic phenomenon which, despite the extensive research in the field, still constitutes a challenge for current linguistic investigations. The main complications of agreement concern not only the

cross-linguistic but also the language-internal variation and inconsistencies which it evinces. In this regard, the English language shows significant variation in terms of the patterns of verbal agreement of the object of study here, that is, collective noun-based constructions taking *of*-dependents such as (4):

(4)   *A band of children* were careering about (BNC: AN7 2024).

Agreement can be defined as the "systematic covariance between a semantic or formal property of one element and a formal property of another" (Steele 1978, 610). The two elements involved in any relationship of agreement are the controller, that is, the element determining the agreement relation (usually nominal), and the target, which is the element being conditioned by the feature specifications of the controller (Corbett 2006, 4-5). In collective noun-headed constructions, the collective noun is the controller and the main verb is the target. When these two elements match in form, as in (5) below, they conform to grammatical or syntactic agreement (Corbett 2006, 155):

(5)   The committee$_{SG}$ *has*$_{SG}$ decided.

By contrast, when the form of the target is determined by the semantic characteristics of the controller, we obtain an instance of semantic or notional agreement such as (6) (Corbett 2006, 155):

(6)   The committee$_{SG}$ *have*$_{PL}$ decided.

Semantic agreement is a frequent option in the case of collective nouns. Despite being morphologically singular, these nominal elements are inherently plural and, thus, as in (6), they may also take plural targets. Their patterns of verbal agreement, however, may be complicated even further if potential agreement-carriers such as the *of*-dependents studied here are involved.

(7)   A group$_{SG}$ *of parents*$_{PL}$ were$_{PL}$ standing in the corner (BNC: CHR 861).

Cases such as (7), in which a plural non-head nominal element inflected for number interferes in the subject-verb agreement relation, resemble those instances of the so-called phenomenon of "attraction" or "proximity concord." In the psycholinguistic literature, attraction is associated with errors or ungrammatical instances such as (8) below, in which the interference of a plural nominal element between the head noun subject and the verb results in the erroneous assignment of plural verb number—see Bock and Miller (1991), Bock and Eberhard (1993), Bock et al. (2001), Haskell and MacDonald (2003), Bock et al. (2006), Acuña-Fariña (2009; 2012) and the references cited there.

(8) The readiness$_{SG}$ of our conventional forces$_{PL}$ are$_{PL}$ at an all-time low (Bock and Miller 1991, 46).

In (8) the singular head noun subject (*readiness*) and the verb (*are*) are separated by an *of*-PP which contains a plural nominal element (*forces*). The plurality of this oblique noun is precisely what interferes in the agreement relation and finally "illegally attracts [plural] agreement on the verb" (Acuña-Fariña 2009, 392), with the subsequent subject-verb disagreement and the ungrammatical outcome.

Some of the examples examined here—see (7) above or (9) below—also involve potential agreement conflicts but, given the flexibility of the collective head noun in terms of agreement, we cannot consider them to be errors resulting from attraction. Instead, in collective noun-headed constructions the intervening plural nominal element within the *of*-PP is determinant in verb agreement inasmuch as it reinforces the conceptual plurality inherent to the collective noun and, thus, favours a higher likelihood of plural verb number, although the outcome is in any case grammatical and acceptable.

(9) The majority$_{SG}$ of screenwriters$_{PL}$ were$_{PL}$ dismissed and half the production staff sacked (BNC: A7L 987).

This study shows how the influence of this prepositional dependent on verb agreement is constrained by syntactic and semantic issues. In fact, as will be presented in the following sections, the patterns of verbal agreement of the constructions under scrutiny undergo significant changes depending on factors such as the morphology or the animate and/or human character of the *of*-dependent, corroborating the important role of this prepositional constituent for agreement operations.

3. Case Study: Verbal Agreement with Collective Nominal Constructions
This section introduces the corpora and the data supporting the conclusions of this paper and is rounded off by investigating the syntactic and semantic determinants of the patterns of verbal agreement in collective noun-based constructions.

3.1. Methodology and data retrieval
The data for this corpus-based study were retrieved from the written components of the British National Corpus (BNC) and the Corpus of Contemporary American English (COCA): fiction, magazines, newspapers and academic texts in both corpora as well as non-academic and miscellaneous texts in the British corpus. The former contains 98,363,783 words from British English and covers the period from 1970s to 1993, while the latter contains 464,020,256 words from American English texts published between 1990 and 2012.

The main object of study in this investigation concerns the patterns of verbal agreement of collective noun-headed subjects. These binominal (i.e., containing two noun phrases, *NP of NP*) subjects comprise a singular collective head noun and an oblique noun, that is, the noun within the *of*-PP. As regards the former, twenty-three singular collective nouns that usually take *of*-complementation were included: *band*, *batch*, *bunch*, *class*, *clump*, *couple*, *crowd*, *flock*, *gang*, *group*, *herd*, *host*, *majority*, *minority*, *number*, *pack*, *party*, *rash*, *series*, *set*, *shoal*, *swarm* and *troop*.[2] This list of collectives has been retrieved from the section on "quantifying collectives" in the *Longman Grammar of Spoken and Written English* (Biber et al. 1999, 249) and from "number-transparent nouns" in *The Cambridge Grammar of the English Language* (Huddleston and Pullum et al. 2002, 503).

The search patterns used were the following: N_1 _PRF (+) (+) (+) _N_2 in the BNC data and N_1 of (*) (*) (*) *.[N_2] in COCA. In these formulas N_1 stands for the collective head noun, _*PRF/of* for the preposition *of*, and N_2 for the three different types of oblique noun within the *of*-PP under scrutiny here, namely (i) singular nouns such as *population* in (10) (retrieved by means of the tag NN1), (ii) overtly-marked plural nouns such as *workers* in (11) (the tag in this case was NN2) and (iii) the non-overtly-marked plural noun *people*, as in (12).[3] The elements in parentheses represent the determiners or potential modifiers of the oblique noun (from zero to three).[4]

(10) [T]he majority of the *population*$_{SG}$ adheres happily, or unhappily, to the roles which society expects of them (BNC: EE2 1266).

(11) [E]ach group of *workers*$_{PL}$ builds up a complete car from a box of component parts (BNC: CAN 1233).

(12) A crowd of *people*$_{PL}$ is still standing around in front of Gideon's house (COCA: FICMov:ToSleepWith).

Since the object of study is verbal agreement, only those instances containing verbs inflected for number were included in the database. Due to the size of the corpora, this investigation was limited to a maximum of 6,000 instances per collective noun. Among them, the examples not valid for this study—those that did not show verbal agreement—were manually discarded and, as a result, the total number of hits was set at 5,377.

---

[2] Only the collective/quantificational meanings of these collective nouns have been considered. Instances such as "[Our band of hearing] include all the sounds which are significant for us" (BNC: FEV 929), for example, have been excluded.

[3] In previous preliminary studies, further non-overtly-marked plural nouns were retrieved by means of the tags NN0 in the BNC and NN in COCA. However, given the diversity of this category—which also comprises other nouns being neutral for number (i.e., singular nouns with invariable plurals such as *fish*)—and the high incidence of the non-overtly-marked plural noun *people* in the data—almost 80% of the instances of NN0/NN retrieved from both corpora—only *people* is considered in the data and analysis presented here.

[4] The decision to restrict the number of modifiers to a maximum of three was taken in view of the already low incidence of constructions with three modifiers, below 1.80% of the total instances retrieved in both the BNC and COCA.

3.2. Analysis of the data

This section presents the result of a corpus-based study with a view to measuring the extent to which the syntactic and semantic properties of *of*-dependents affect the patterns of verbal agreement of collective noun-headed constructions. To this end, the role of the *of*-dependent in general (§3.2.1.), and of its syntactic (§3.2.2.) and semantic (§3.2.3.) characteristics in particular, are analysed and discussed in depth in the ensuing sections.

3.2.1. Implications of the *of*-dependent

As commented earlier, I have explored collective noun-based constructions with *of*-PPs containing singular nouns, overtly-marked plural nouns and the non-overtly-marked plural noun *people*. Special attention was paid to those cases in which syntactic agreement is overridden or, in other words, when the number of the verbal target differs from that of the collective nominal controller, as in (13)-(15):

(13) [T]he *majority*$_{SG}$ of the population *are*$_{PL}$ implicitly absolved from responsibility (BNC: CAF 1227).
(14) [A] *group*$_{SG}$ of parents *were*$_{PL}$ standing in the corner (BNC: CHR 861).
(15) A *bunch*$_{SG}$ of really tired people *get*$_{PL}$ together to talk about school (COCA: ACAD IndepSchool).

With respect to these deviations from syntactic agreement, and as already commented in the introduction, I claim that the different syntactic and semantic factors of the *of*-PP are the ultimate determinants of the number of the verbal target. One set of data that supports this working hypothesis is presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Verbal agreement with *of*-PPs and without *of*-PPs

	BNC			COCA		
	SING.VB.	PL.VB.	TOTAL	SING.VB.	PL.VB.	TOTAL
WITH *OF*-PP	776 (36.52%)	1,349 (63.48%)	2,125	1,354 (41.64%)	1,898 (58.36%)	3,252
WITHOUT *OF*-PP[5]	9,431 (72.23%)	3,625 (27.77%)	13,056	42,461 (81.31%)	9,758 (18.69%)	52,219

---

[5] For the data of collectives without *of*-PP the interface of the Brigham Young U. was used and they were retrieved using the pattern N1.[NN1] *.[(VBDZ/VBZ/VHZ/VVZ/VDZ)] for singular verbal forms and N1.[NN1] *.[(VBDR/VBR/VH0/VV0/VD0)] for plural verbs. Given its invariable plural form, series was not categorised as [NN1] and therefore no tag was used in this case.

Despite the fact that only singular collective head nouns are taken into consideration in this study, in general terms, as Table 1 illustrates, both the BNC and COCA show a preference for plural agreement when the *of*-dependent is present (63.48% and 58.36%, respectively). The significance of this constituent is confirmed by the results obtained for the same set of collective nouns when the *of*-dependent is absent, as in (16). In fact, as can be observed in Table 1, both the BNC and COCA show an overall preference for singular agreement (over 70%) when the collective noun-based constructions do not take *of*-PPs: $\chi^2(1)$, p<0.0001 for the contrast between the presence vs. the absence of the *of*-PP in both corpora.

(16)   When a whole *group*$_{SG}$ *is*$_{SG}$ having a go (BNC: ATAW_non_ac_soc_science).

Table 2 below presents in more detail the data according to the number of the noun in the *of*-dependent, singular—NN1—or plural—both NN2 and *people*:

Table 2. Verbal agreement with singular vs. plural *of*-dependents

	BNC			COCA		
	SING.VB.	PL.VB.	TOTAL	SING.VB.	PL.VB.	TOTAL
SING. *of*-PP	162 (72.65%)	61 (27.35%)	223	313 (88.92%)	39 (11.08%)	352
PL. *of*-PP	614 (32.28%)	1,288 (67.72%)	1,902	1,041 (35.90%)	1,859 (64.10%)	2,900

As expected, Table 2 demonstrates that the presence of the plural *of*-PP is strongly associated with plural verbal patterns in this study. Accordingly, the results show a clear preference for plural verbal forms in collective noun-based constructions with plural dependents (67.72% in the BNC and 64.10% in COCA), indicating that the tendency is equally frequent and significant ($\chi^2(1)$, p<0.0001) in both varieties of English.

In addition to the results for plural agreement supporting our hypothesis, Table 2 evinces some other significant data which are also worth mentioning. Even though plural agreement is the predominant tendency with plural *of*-dependents, the rate of singular agreement with plural *of*-PPs is still noteworthy in both varieties (32.28% in the BNC and 35.90% in COCA), a finding which is illustrated in (17) below, and which suggests the need for a more fine-grained analysis in order to explore the determinants of these particular patterns of verbal agreement. Likewise, the still significant rate of plural verbal forms with singular dependents (27.35% in the BNC and 11.08% in COCA), as demonstrated in (18), is an issue which will be also discussed in detail in section 3.2.3.

(17)   This group$_{SG}$ of *people*$_{PL}$ *was*$_{SG}$ recognised by the meeting in Tokyo (BNC: CJP 41).

(18)   The majority$_{SG}$ of the general *public*$_{SG}$ *know*$_{PL}$ little about or understand the implications of results from research (COCA: ACAD Mercury).

3.2.2. Syntactic determinants: Number of the oblique noun and distance

This section tackles the different syntactic variables that have been shown to influence the subject-verb agreement relationship in collective nominal constructions taking *of*-dependents. In particular, I controlled for the number of the oblique noun and the syntactic distance separating the *of*-dependent (and, hence, the collective) from the verbal target.

3.2.2.1. Number of the oblique noun

The first issue that will be analysed pertains to the influence that the plurality of the dependent exerts on verbal agreement. As already mentioned in section 2, the collective constructions examined here are very similar to those involved in processes of attraction, yet, unlike the latter, the former cannot be considered ungrammatical or unacceptable since collective nouns allow for both singular and plural agreement patterns. Nevertheless, despite the flexibility and variation of the collective noun with respect to verb number, this study demonstrates that the influence of the oblique noun, in particular of its morphology, is one of the determining factors of the plural number of the main verb.

Prior literature on the topic has overlooked the relevance of these *of*-PPs and their syntactic characteristics. In fact, to the best of my knowledge, there only exist the studies by Bock and Eberhard (1993) and Haskell and MacDonald (2003), which explored the extent to which the regular and/or irregular morphology of the oblique noun affects verb number with experimental items such as (19) and (20):

(19)   the trap for the *mouse/rat* vs. the trap for the *mice/rats* (Bock and Eberhard 1993, 75).

(20)   the class of *children* vs. the class of *kids* (Haskell and MacDonald 2003, 777).

In particular, Haskell and MacDonald (2003) demonstrated that morphological regularity favours a higher rate of plural agreement when grammatical factors conflict. Likewise, given that the binominal structures analysed here are potential triggers of agreement conflict, in this investigation I explored the role that morphology plays with respect to the patterns of verbal agreement of these collective noun-based constructions.

As already noted, the examples retrieved from both the BNC and COCA show predominantly plural verb number, although only singular collective head nouns are considered. In this respect, I have claimed that the presence of the *of*-dependent is a possible factor determining this high proportion of verbal plurality. As demonstrated

in Figure 1, the data from both corpora show a clear preference for overtly-marked plural oblique nouns (NN2), which is evidenced in more than 70% of cases in both corpora. If we also consider the instances obtained for the non-overtly-marked plural noun *people*, the proportion of plural oblique nouns rises to almost 90% in both English varieties.

Figure 1. Frequency of each oblique noun in the BNC and COCA data

	BNC	COCA
■ people	347	556
◨ NN2	1555	2344
□ NN1	223	352
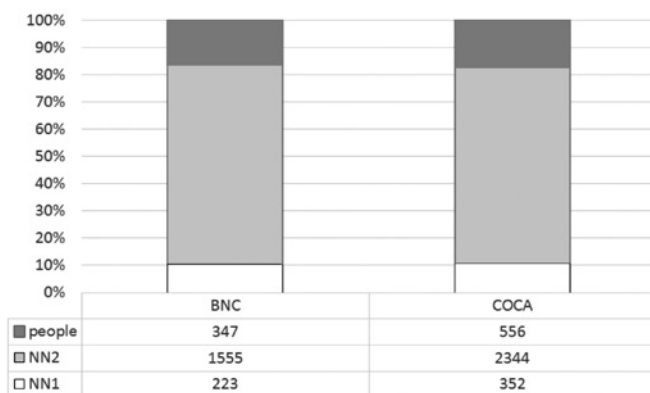
If we contrast the type of oblique noun with verb number, there are significant differences in verbal agreement depending on the type of oblique noun used ($\chi^2(2)$, $p<0.0001$ in each corpora). Specifically, those instances comprising singular oblique nouns in the *of*-PP collocate almost exclusively with singular verbal forms, that is, they conform to syntactic agreement, as Figures 2 and 3 illustrate:

Figure 2. Verbal agreement with each oblique noun in the BNC data

	NN1	NN2	people
■ PL Verb	61	1038	250
□ SG Verb	162	517	97
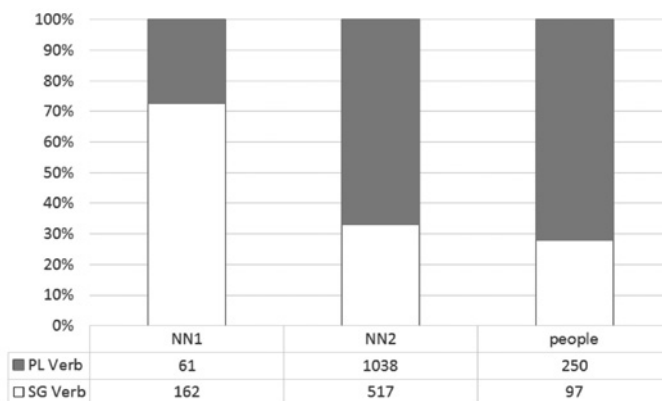
Figure 3. Verbal agreement with each oblique noun in the COCA data

	NN1	NN2	people
■ PL Verb	39	1405	454
□ SG Verb	313	939	102
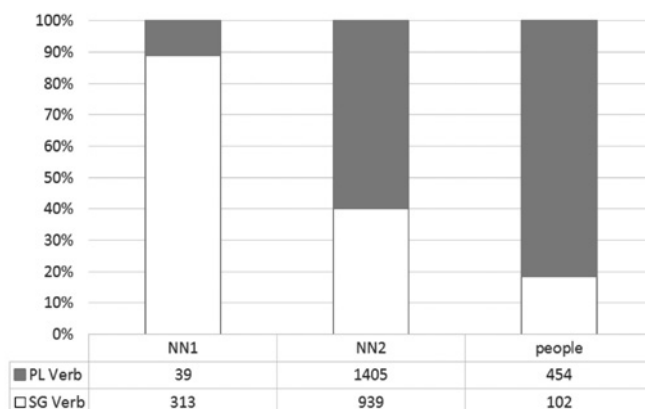
The data presented in Figures 2 and 3 clearly indicate that semantic agreement with the collective nouns explored here is very unlikely if the *of*-dependent contains a morphologically singular nominal element: about 27% in the BNC and 11% in COCA. In contrast, when the oblique noun is plural, these constructions are more permeable to the interference of the plural morphology of the oblique noun on the number that the verb eventually takes. In this same vein, and in light of the data presented thus far, the significant frequency of plural oblique nouns—both overtly-marked plural nouns, i.e., NN2, and *people*—with plural verbal forms observed in the tables comes as no surprise. Hence, the data obtained provide statistical support for the syntactic interference of the oblique noun on verb agreement, as the rate of plural agreement with NN2 and *people* is higher than 60% in both the BNC and the COCA data.

Despite these results, Figures 2 and 3 also evince incipient differences between these two different nominal elements which are worth noting. Contrary to expectations, *people*—the oblique noun which lacks overt plural marking—exerts a higher influence on the number of the verb than overtly-marked plural nouns such as *boys*—66% and 72%, respectively, in the BNC and about 60% and 81% in COCA. This difference, which is statistically significant only in American English ($\chi^2(1)$, p<0.0001), leads us to suggest that in collective-headed constructions taking *of*-dependents overt morphology does not necessarily increase the probability of finding a higher proportion of mismatches in number. Consequently, this study does not support Haskell and MacDonald's (2003) predictions for the direct correlation between regular morphology and plural agreement.

3.2.2.2. Syntactic distance
Authors such as Corbett (1979) and Levin (2001) claim that as the distance between the controller and the verbal target increases, so too does the likelihood of finding

plural (i.e., semantic) agreement. This tendency is especially relevant in the case of collective nouns, since across syntactic boundaries it is easier for us to keep the semantic characteristics of previous linguistic elements activated, which in turn implies that formal features are not pervasive in short-term memory (Levin 2001, 95). Levin found empirical and statistical support for the direct correlation between the incidence of plural verb number and the increase in the number of words separating the collective noun and its verbal target. Following this same argument, in this study one would expect to find similar or even higher proportions of plural agreement since, apart from the semantically plural collective noun, the structures examined here contain a further nominal element which is both semantically and morphologically plural. To test this, syntactic distance in terms of the number of words separating the oblique noun (i.e., the element interfering in the subject-verb agreement relation) and the verb was considered.

Before discussing these data, a brief comment is in order. The data retrieved from both the BNC and COCA comprise instances which, according to the shallow syntactic structure of the *of*-PPs, can be classified into: (i) bare constructions, (e.g., *the majority of (the) girls*); (ii) constructions which are premodified (e.g., *a group of deaf people*), postmodified (e.g., *a band of boys from London*) or both pre- and postmodified (e.g., *the majority of competent people in this field of science*); (iii) coordinated structures (e.g., *a bunch of boys and girls*); and (iv) *of*-PPs which contain a relative clause (e.g., *a host of people who live abroad*). The data presented in this section, however, exclude the last two constructions so as to avoid factors which could potentially bias the data towards plural verbal patterns. To put it simply, the notional (and often morphological) plurality of coordinated structures and the high incidence of plural verbal forms in the relative clauses retrieved in this study may end up influencing the data and favouring a higher rate of plural agreement. Accordingly, in the remainder of this section I will focus exclusively on those constructions that only contain the oblique and/or its postmodifiers to focus exclusively on the interaction between the number of the oblique noun, the number of the verb and the distance (in number of words) separating them.

Tables 3 and 4 below present the rates of plural verbal forms with plural obliques—both NN2 and *people*—in relation to the number of words separating the oblique itself from the verb in the BNC and COCA, respectively.[6] As can be observed, when there are no intervening words in between the plural oblique and the verb, the oblique noun *people*, which lacks an overt plural marker, shows a higher percentage of plural verbal forms in both varieties: 91.67% in the BNC and 89.00% in COCA. By contrast, overtly-marked plural nouns such as *boys* (NN2) display a less significant proportion of plural agreement when they are adjacent to the verb: 64.82% in the BNC and 58.26% in COCA. The contrast between the results obtained for NN2 and *people* is in this case

---

[6] It must be noted that the instances considered for this variable contain not only dependents but also further constituents modifying the verbal phrase or the whole sentence (i.e., adjuncts and/or disjuncts). Thus, a more fine-grained analysis in this respect should be carried out in the future.

statistically significant in both varieties of English ($\chi^2(1)$, p<0.0001), which seems to suggest important processing implications: the conceptual plurality of *people* appears to be stronger than the morphological and semantic plurality of NN2 as a determining factor of verb number.

Table 3. Percentage of agreement in relation to distance in number
of words between the oblique and the verb in the BNC data

| Words between the oblique and the verb | BNC | | | | | |
| | NN2 | | | *people* | | |
	SING.VB.	PL.VB.	TOTAL	SING.VB.	PL.VB.	TOTAL
0	159 (35.18%)	293 (64.82%)	452	10 (8.33%)	110 (91.67%)	120
1-5	110 (39.01%)	172 (60.99%)	282	42 (42.42%)	57 (57.58%)	99
>5	58 (41.43%)	82 (58.57%)	140	20 (44.44%)	25 (55.56%)	45

Table 4. Percentage of agreement in relation to distance in number
of words between the oblique and the verb in the COCA data

| Words between the oblique and the verb | COCA | | | | | |
| | NN2 | | | *people* | | |
	SING.VB.	PL.VB.	TOTAL	SING.VB.	PL.VB.	TOTAL
0	273 (41.74%)	381 (58.26%)	654	22 (11.00%)	178 (89.00%)	200
1-5	148 (38.24%)	239 (61.76%)	387	24 (17.27%)	115 (82.73%)	139
>5	64 (34.22%)	123 (65.78%)	187	17 (38.64%)	27 (61.36%)	44

As the distance between the oblique and the verb increases, differences are observed. As Tables 3 and 4 illustrate, with increasing distance the rate of plural verbal forms with NN2 decreases in the BNC sample, but slightly increases in the COCA data, although differences do not reach statistical significance ($\chi^2(2)$, p>0.1). Hence, the data from this study do not corroborate Levin's or Corbett's claims and predictions. However, the presence of an overt morphological marker for plurality would seem to be a plausible explanation to account for the noteworthy proportions of plural agreement of NN2.

People, by contrast, shows a progressive decline in its collocation with plural verbal forms with increasing syntactic distance. In other words, as different elements intervene between this oblique noun and the verb, the conceptual plurality of *people* and its effects on verb number are notably affected. Accordingly, as the number of words separating the subject from the verb increases, the influence exerted by *people* on verb number in local syntactic domains diminishes significantly in both varieties of English ($\chi^2(2)$, p<0.0001 in both the BNC and COCA).

All in all, this section has shown that morphology and syntactic distance are determining factors of the patterns of verbal agreement of collective noun-based constructions taking *of*-dependents. The data examined have shown that, contrary to expectations, syntactic distance does not increase the likelihood of finding plural agreement, not even when the oblique position is occupied by a plural noun, be it overtly-marked or non-overtly-marked. In fact, what is observed instead is an overall decline in the frequency of plural verbal forms, especially in the British variety and with the non-overtly-marked plural noun *people*. The data thus refute Levin's (2001) arguments and findings with regard to the effects of distance on the agreement patterns of collective nouns, at least as far as the constructions analysed here are concerned. The results also revealed the differences underlying the overt and non-overt morphology of the oblique nouns explored here. In this respect, *people* proved to exert a higher influence on verb number in local syntactic domains, hence failing to support the findings of the few studies carried out on this matter. The lack of an overt plural marker, however, involved a considerable loss of its effects on verb number over distance, thus triggering a decrease in plural verbal forms as the number of words intervening between *people* itself and the verb increases. Overtly-marked plurality, by contrast, turned out to be stronger in postmodified contexts and thus, as a consequence, the influence of this plurality was more pervasive over distance— i.e., the percentages of plural agreement were higher than those of *people*.

3.2.3. Semantic determinants: Animacy, humanness and verb meaning
Apart from syntax, semantics constitutes another essential area implicated in the phenomenon of agreement. This section discusses the influence that the semantics of both the oblique noun and the verb exerts on verb agreement. In particular, in this investigation I have controlled for the animate and/or human character of the nominal elements within the *of*-PPs, and for the extent to which verb meaning constrains verb number selection.

3.2.3.1. Animacy and humanness
The semantics of collective nouns has been explored in studies on agreement such as Depraetere (2003, 95), in which the feature animacy is included in the prototypical definition of collectives, Dekeyser (1975, 43-56) and Levin (2001, 126-129) who both

examined the interaction between animacy and agreement. While Dekeyser (1975) did not find any strongly association in this regard, Levin (2001) described a significant correlation between agreement, on the one hand, and animacy or humanness, on the other. Humanness seems to contribute to an increased frequency of plural number in the verbal target. However, humanness is not a decisive factor. In fact, as Levin (2001, 129) states, even when animate but non-human referents are involved, plural agreement is favoured if the collective is followed by an *of*-phrase (21):

(21)   Here *a family of mice are* beset not only by two vicious cats but by a one-eyed farmer given to laying down poison bait and traps (Levin 2001, 128).

In contrast, the less restrictive concept of animacy intervenes in the agreement operation inasmuch as animate controllers tend to more frequently favour plural agreement (22), an argument that Levin (2001, 128-129) attributes to Barlow (1999), who asserted that, crosslinguistically, inanimate elements are not likely to be morphologically marked as plural.

(22)   The *nation were* to take the Beatles to *their* hearts (Levin 2001, 13).

Taking into account these arguments and findings, in what follows I report the results obtained for the analysis of animacy and humanness in the collective noun-based constructions examined. It must be noted that Dekeyser's (1975) and Levin's (2001) studies focus on the semantic features of the collective noun. In contrast, the discussion presented here will revolve around the semantic characterisation of the oblique nouns, thus leaving the analysis of collective head nouns for future research. Figure 4 below shows the results obtained for the patterns of verbal agreement in relation to the animacy of the oblique noun.

The results demonstrate that, whereas inanimate obliques show similar proportions for both singular and plural number, animate entities clearly favour plural agreement (more than 65% of cases), which is statistically significant in both corpora ($\chi^2(1)$, p<0.0001). As such, the data from the corpora examined here allow us to corroborate Levin's (2001) claims and observations made in this regard.

These observations are mirrored in the data for humanness. Figure 5 below presents the patterns of verbal agreement in relation to the human or non-human status of the oblique noun. As expected, human oblique nouns collocate much more frequently with plural verbal forms—over 70% in both corpora—than non-human nominal elements, which show a preference for singular verb patterns, especially in COCA: over 57% vs. 48% in the BNC. As was the case with animacy, the differences observed in the patterns of verbal agreement of constructions with human referents in contrast to those with non-human referents are highly significant both in the BNC and COCA ($\chi^2(1)$, p<0.0001), which confirms the relevance of this semantic nuance for agreement operations.

Figure 4. Verbal agreement with animate and inanimate obliques in the BNC and COCA data[7]

	Animate	Inanimate	Animate	Inanimate
	BNC		COCA	
■ PL Verb	894	449	1396	495
□ SG Verb	337	437	737	612
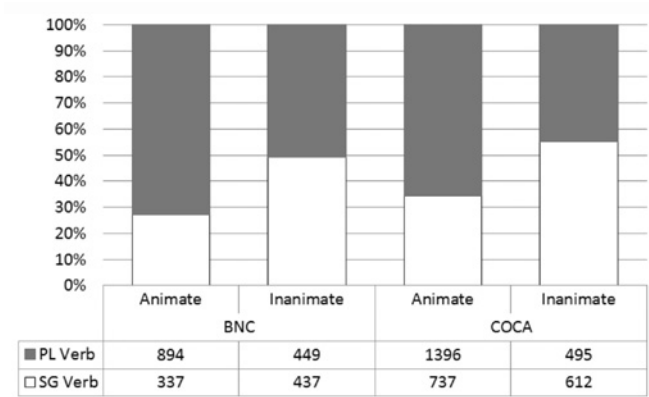
Figure 5. Verbal agreement and humanness in the BNC and COCA data

	Human	Non-Human	Human	Non-Human
	BNC		COCA	
■ PL Verb	847	494	1318	573
□ SG Verb	305	467	562	787
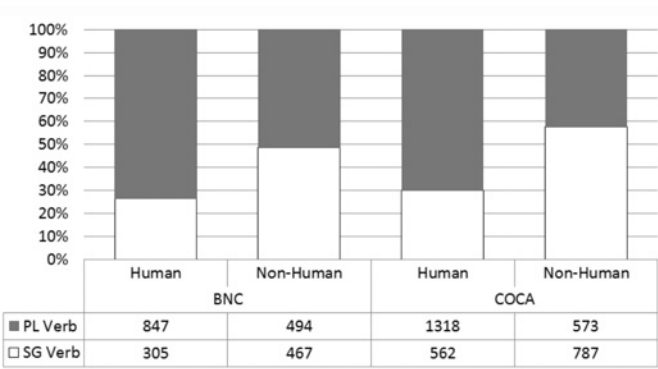
A more detailed analysis of the data indicates that the high incidence of human referents—93.58% of the total number of animate referents in the BNC and 88.14% in the case of COCA—most probably constituted a determining factor of the proportions of plural agreement attested here.

These results provide us with preliminary evidence supporting the idea that, for the collective noun-based constructions studied here, syntax is not sufficient to account for their different agreement patterns. In fact, criteria such as animacy and humanness are necessary to explain some of the tendencies discerned in the previous section and for which no syntactic explanation could be provided: (i) mismatches in syntactic

---

[7] In this and subsequent graphs and tables the discrepancies in the figures result from the need to discard those cases where either it was not possible to assign the oblique to any of the categories or there were two coordinated oblique nouns which belonged to different categories.

agreement such as (23), where we would expect singular verb number, and (ii) instances where the distance and/or the plural oblique noun intervening between the collective noun and the verb does not necessarily trigger plural verb number such as (24) and (25).

(23) If Honecker is convicted, the majority$_{SG}$ of the *population*$_{SG}$ *are*$_{PL}$ implicitly absolved from responsibility (BNC: CAF 1227).

(24) This batch$_{SG}$ of *cars*$_{PL}$ *was*$_{SG}$ transferred onto South Metropolitan tracks in 1906 (BNC: CBK 1744).

(25) The series$_{SG}$ of legal *actions*$_{PL}$ initiated by the Government to suppress publication of the memoirs of a former intelligence agent, Peter Wright, *indicates*$_{SG}$ the lengths to which the Government will go to ensure confidentiality (BNC: EVK 338).

Examples (24) and (25) illustrate that distance cannot be taken as the sole explanation for these particular patterns. In the case of (24), the proximity of the singular collective head noun and the verbal target could justify the conformity to syntactic agreement with the syntactic head of the collective noun-based construction (*batch*). Nevertheless, (25) evinces that, contrary to what authors such as Corbett (1979) and Levin (2001) claim (see section 3.2.2.), syntactic agreement can be maintained even across long syntactic boundaries—seventeen words in this case—and with intervening nominal elements inflected for number (*actions* and *memoirs*). The unlikeliness of finding a plausible syntactic justification for these data has lead me to contemplate semantic criteria as possible alternative explanations. Similarly, semantics will be necessary to account for formal mismatches such as (23) above. Table 5 below presents the figures for agreement, animacy and humanness with singular obliques (NN1) and with overtly-marked plural oblique nouns (NN2).[8]

Apart from showing that both varieties of English present similar figures, Table 5 also corroborates the data presented in the previous graphics as regards the number that the verb takes with animate referents. The higher figures for plural agreement correlate with a high proportion of animate (and human) referents in the oblique position. Inanimate (and non-human) referents, by contrast, favour singular verbal forms, a tendency which is only broken by category NN2 in the American corpus, which shows a higher rate of singular verbal forms with animate obliques (59.57%).

Concerning the patterns presented in examples (23) to (25) above and repeated below as (23')-(25') for the sake of clarification, semantics proves significant in obtaining a preliminary account of those instances where syntactic criteria were infelicitous. In light of the results in Table 5, the collocation of a singular collective head noun, a singular oblique and a plural verb can be explained in terms of the animate—77.05% in the

---

[8] This table does not include the frequencies for *people* since its results for animacy and humanness are obviously negligible for this discussion.

BNC and 63.16% in COCA—and the human—72.13% in the BNC and 52.63% in COCA—status of the referent denoted by the oblique noun, as in (23').

Table 5. Verbal agreement with oblique noun and animacy/humanness in the BNC and COCA data

	Oblique Noun	Verb	Semantics of oblique noun					
			Animate	Inanimate	To-tal	Human	Non-Human	Total
BNC	NN1	Sing.	43 (26.54%)	119 (73.46%)	162	43 (26.54%)	119 (73.46%)	162
		Pl.	47 (77.05%)	14 (22.95%)	61	44 (72.13%)	17 (27.87%)	61
	NN2	Sing.	197 (38.25%)	318 (61.75%)	515	165 (32.16%)	348 (67.84%)	513
		Pl.	597 (57.85%)	435 (42.15%)	1,032	553 (53.69%)	477 (46.31%)	1,030
COCA	NN1	Sing.	79 (25.24%)	234 (74.76%)	313	59 (18.85%)	254 (81.15%)	313
		Pl.	24 (63.16%)	14 (36.84%)	38	20 (52.63%)	18 (47.37%)	38
	NN2	Sing.	557 (59.57%)	378 (40.43%)	935	402 (42.99%)	533 (57.01%)	935
		Pl.	918 (65.62%)	481 (34.38%)	1,399	845 (60.40%)	554 (39.60%)	1,399

(23') If Honecker is convicted, the majority$_{SG}$ of the *population*$_{Anim/Human}$ *are*$_{PL}$ implicitly absolved from responsibility (BNC: CAF 1227).

As for overtly-marked plural obliques, the likelihood of collocation with a singular verb is higher when the plural oblique is neither animate nor human, especially in the BNC—61.75% and 67.84%, respectively—as in (24') and (25'). By contrast, as Table 5 illustrates, in the American corpus the collocation of NN2 with singular verbal forms correlates with a noteworthy proportion of animate oblique referents (59.57%). Interestingly, the criterion of humanness conforms perfectly to the general tendency, showing a higher rate of singular agreement collocating with non-human obliques (57.01%). Such a result indicates that a more detailed analysis of the oblique nouns and the examples from COCA is needed in order to discern the reasons underlying this unexpected result—the data seem to point towards the influence of the animacy of exclusively non-human referents like animals, a semantic type of oblique which amounts to more than 80% of the instances of non-human animate oblique nouns in the data set.

(24') This batch$_{SG}$ of *cars*$_{Inanim/Non-Human}$ *was*$_{SG}$ transferred onto South Metropolitan tracks in 1906 (BNC: CBK 1744).

(25') The series of legal *actions*$_{Inanim/Non-Human}$ initiated by the Government to suppress publication of the memoirs of a former intelligence agent, Peter Wright, *indicates*$_{SG}$ the lengths to which the Government will go to ensure confidentiality (BNC: EVK 338).

In brief, the results have demonstrated that, as far as the collective noun-based constructions examined are concerned, both syntactic and semantic factors have to be taken into account as both have been shown to play a determining role in verb agreement. In particular, the data presented in this section have yielded support for the notion that animacy and humanness contribute to the high proportions of verb agreement attested in this investigation and, thus, they have provided certain patterns of agreement with a semantic explanation which complements the syntactic study reported earlier.

3.2.3.2. Meaning of verbs

Apart from the meaning of the collective or the oblique noun, many authors have noticed the importance of the meaning of the verb and how this may constrain the patterns of verbal agreement of collective nouns. For example, the *Longman Grammar of Spoken and Written English* remarks that in the case of collective noun-based constructions plural agreement is available only if the meaning of the verb can be applicable to the individual members of the group (Biber et al. 1999, 189). Otherwise, singular agreement must be used. As way of illustration, they present example (26), where the meaning of the verbs in bold constrains the flexibility in verb agreement that is characteristic of collective nouns and, thus, only allows for singular verb number:

(26)   *The committee **comprises/consists of /has** (*comprise/consist of/have) eight members*
      (Biber et al. 1999, 189).

In light of these arguments, I have analysed a sample of the database from the BNC—only those verbs displaying a token frequency higher than five, about 58% of the data obtained from BNC—in order to determine to what extent verb meaning conditions the patterns of verbal agreement of the collective noun-based constructions examined. In so doing, Levin's (1993) classification of verbs was taken as a point of reference.

The results obtained did not yield statistically significant data yet. However, some preliminary tendencies can be pointed out.

Table 6. Most frequent semantic types (Levin 1993) of verbal forms
in the BNC data according to their percentage of plural agreement

PLURAL VERB NUMBER	MEANING	MOST FREQUENT SEMANTIC TYPES (LEVIN 1993)
≥60%	prototypical human reference	possession (*get, give*) send/carry existence (*live, gather*) communication (*say, ask*)
<60%	less straightforward connection with human reference	change of state (*increase, rise*) appearance (*come, appear*) motion (*run, follow*)

The results to date seem to support the previous argument on the impact of animacy and humanness. In fact, those verbs showing a higher likelihood of plural agreement take human referents as subjects far more frequently. Following Levin's (1993) classification, the most frequent semantic types in this respect are those involving possession, existence or communication. By contrast, those verbs showing a lower proportion of plurality evince a less straightforward connection with human reference. As illustrated in Table 6, this set of verbal forms is mainly related to actions that do not (necessarily) involve a human subject and encompasses a wider range of verbs denoting meanings such as change of state. However, despite the relevance of these tendencies for the analysis of potential semantic forces, these preliminary results need further research and consideration.

4. CONCLUDING REMARKS

This study has explored the extent to which *of*-dependency influences agreement in collective noun-based constructions. The data showed that, unlike in examples without *of*-PPs, collective noun-based constructions with *of*-dependents favour plural agreement. Different syntactic and semantic determinants of the patterns of verbal agreement were also considered and discussed in connection with the results obtained.

As regards syntax, it was found out that those obliques which do not show overt plural marking such as *people* are more likely to show a stronger influence on agreement and, thus to trigger plural verb number, than those nouns bearing overt plural morphology. Syntactic distance, in terms of the number of words intervening between the oblique noun in the *of*-PP and the verb, showed that overtly-marked plurality seems to be more pervasive over long syntactic boundaries, as the rate of plural verbal forms with overtly-marked plural nouns undergoes no drastic changes with increasing distance. In contrast, the non-overtly marked plural oblique noun *people* turns out to be more sensitive to syntactic distance and thus its influence on verb number and its collocation with plural verbal forms diminish considerably across syntactic boundaries.

Semantics also proved necessary to analyse particular patterns of verbal agreement. Features such as animacy and humanness were found to be significant in that formal mismatches can be explained in relation to the fact that animate (and human) nominal elements tend to favour plural verbal agreement. In addition, in a preliminary data analysis of a subset of the data, the meaning of the verb has shown tendencies that corroborate the research carried out so far in this regard, but the results are still tentative and deserve further consideration.

WORKS CITED

ACUÑA-FARIÑA, J. Carlos. 2009. "The Linguistics and Psycholinguistics of Agreement: A Tutorial Overview." *Lingua* 119 (3): 389-424.

—. 2012. "Agreement, Attraction and Architectural Opportunism." *Journal of Linguistics* 48 (2): 257-95.

BARLOW, Michael. 1999. "Agreement as a Discourse Phenomenon." *Folia Linguistica* 33 (2): 187-210.

BIBER, Douglas, Stig Johansson, Geoffrey Leech, Susan Conrad and Edward Finegan. 1999. *Longman Grammar of Spoken and Written English.* London: Longman.

BOCK, Kathryn, Sally Butterfield, Anne Cutler, J. Cooper Cutting, Kathleen M. Eberhard and Karin R. Humphreys. 2006. "Number Agreement in British and American English: Disagreeing to Agree Collectively." *Language* 82 (1): 64-113.

BOCK, Kathryn and Kathleen M. Eberhard. 1993. "Meaning, Sound and Syntax in English Number Agreement." *Language and Cognitive Processes* 8 (1): 57-99.

BOCK, Kathryn, Kathleen M. Eberhard, J. Cooper Cutting, Antje S. Meyer and Herbert Schriefers. 2001. "Some Attractions of Verb Agreement." *Cognitive Psychology* 43 (2): 83-128.

BOCK, Kathryn and Carol A. Miller. 1991. "Broken Agreement." *Cognitive Psychology* 23 (1): 45-93.

CORBETT, Greville G. 1979. "The Agreement Hierarchy." *Journal of English Linguistics* 15 (2): 203-224.

—. 2006. *Agreement*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP.

DAVIES, Mark. 2004-. *BYU-BNC*. (Based on the British National Corpus from Oxford University Press). 100 million words. 1980s-1993. [Accessed online on June 5, 2013].

—. 2008. *The Corpus of Contemporary American English* (COCA): 520 million words, 1990-present. [Accessed online on October 9, 2013].

DEKEYSER, Xavier. 1975. *Number and Case Relations in 19th c. British English: A Comparative Study of Grammar and Usage*. Amsterdam: De Nederlandsche Boekhandel.

DEPRAETERE, Ilse. 2003. "On Verbal Concord with Collective Nouns in British English." *English Language and Linguistics* 7 (1): 85-127.

FERNÁNDEZ-PENA, Yolanda. 2015. "Verbal Agreement with Collective Noun-based Constructions. Syntactic and Lexical Implications of *Of*-dependents." In *English and American Studies in Spain. New Developments and Trends*, edited by Alberto Lázaro Lafuente and María Dolores Porto Requejo, 206-217. Alcalá de Henares: University of Alcalá.

—. forthcoming. "Patterns of Verbal Agreement with Collective Nouns Taking Plural *Of*-dependents: A Corpus-based Analysis of Syntactic Distance." To appear in *Corpora* 12 (2), 2017.

HASKELL, Todd R. and Maryellen C. MacDonald. 2003. "Conflicting Cues and Competition in Subject-Verb Agreement." *Journal of Memory and Language* 48 (4): 760-778.

HUDDLESTON, Rodney, Geoffrey K. Pullum et al. 2002. *The Cambridge Grammar of the English Language*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP.

HUNDT, Marianne. 2006. "The Committee has/have Decided…: On Concord Patterns with Collective Nouns in Inner- and Outer-Varieties of English." *Journal of English Linguistics* 34 (3): 206-232.

—. 2009. "Concord with Collective Nouns in Australian and New Zealand English." In *Comparative Studies in Australian and New Zealand English: Grammar and Beyond*, edited by Pam Peters, Peter Collins and Adam Smith, 207-224. Amsterdam: John Benjamins.

LEVIN, Beth. 1993. *English Verb Classes and Alternations*. Chicago: The U of Chicago P.

LEVIN, Magnus. 2001. *Agreement with Collective Nouns in English*. Lund: Lund Studies in English.

—. 2006. "Collective Nouns and Language Change." *English Language and Linguistics* 10 (2): 321-343.

STEELE, Susan. 1978. "Word Order Variation: A Typological Study." In *Universals of Human Language.* vol. 4: *Syntax*, edited by Joseph H. Greenberg, Charles A. Ferguson and Edith A. Moravcsik, 585-623. Stanford: Stanford UP.

The British National Corpus, version 3 (BNC XML Edition). 2007. Distributed by Oxford University Computing Services on behalf of the BNC Consortium. 100 million words. 1960s-1993. [Accessed online on May 10, 2013].

Yolanda Fernández-Pena is a PhD (FPU) researcher in the *Language Variation and Textual Categorisation* (LVTC) research group at the University of Vigo (Spain). Her research focuses on the linguistic variation of verbal agreement with collective nouns taking *of*-dependents in Late Modern and Present-Day English. She has presented the preliminary results of her investigation in national and international conferences—organised by the Spanish Association for English and American Studies (AEDEAN), the International Society for the Linguistics of English (ISLE) and the Societas Linguistica Europaea (SLE)—and has published her results in conference proceedings and international, peer-reviewed journals, such as *Corpora* and *Varieng*.

Address: Departamento de Filoloxía Inglesa, Francesa e Alemá. Facultade de Filoloxía e Tradución. Universidade de Vigo. Campus Universitario, Lagoas Marcosende, s/n. 36310, Vigo, Spain. Tel.: +34 986812364.

Mrs. Fielding: The Single Woman as the Incarnation of the Ideal Domestic Women

Aída Díaz Bild
Universidad de La Laguna
adbild@ull.es

Eighteenth-century female writers realized that single women were scorned and viewed with contempt. They tried to modify the negative stereotypes, found mainly in the work of male authors, by offering more attractive portraits of single, independent women. Elizabeth Hamilton dignified the figure of the "old maid" by creating the characters of Martha Goodwin, Maria Fielding and Mrs. Mason. The aim of this article is to analyse the similarities between Hamilton herself and Mrs. Fielding in *Memoirs of Modern Philosophers* (1800), as well as comment on how Hamilton used her fictional counterpart to explore her own ideas on women's education, marriage or spinsterhood. With a character like Mrs. Fielding, Hamilton not only created a positive role for old maids like herself but showed her readers that it was possible for an unmarried woman to have a varied, interesting, useful and fulfilled life.

Keywords: Elizabeth Hamilton; single woman; education; marriage; benevolence

. . .

Mrs. Fielding: la mujer soltera como encarnación del ideal de la mujer en el hogar

Las escritoras del siglo XVIII eran conscientes de que a las mujeres solteras se las ridiculizaba y despreciaba. Por ello intentaron modificar los estereotipos negativos existentes, creados principalmente por los novelistas masculinos, ofreciendo atractivos retratos de mujeres solteras e independientes. Elizabeth Hamilton dignificó la figura de la solterona a través de los personajes de Martha Goodwin, Maria Fielding y Mrs. Mason. El objetivo de este artículo es analizar las similitudes entre Hamilton y Mrs. Fielding en *Memoirs of Modern Philosophers* (1800), así como el modo en que la autora utilizó a este personaje para explorar sus propias ideas sobre la educación de las mujeres, el matrimonio o la soltería. A través de Mrs. Fielding Hamilton no solo creó un papel positivo para "solteronas" como ella misma, sino que enseñó a sus lectores que era posible para una mujer soltera tener una vida variada, interesante, útil y reconfortante.

Palabras clave: Elizabeth Hamilton; mujer soltera; educación; matrimonio; benevolencia

In his analysis of women's fiction written between 1790 and 1820 Edward Copeland emphasizes how fiercely female authors displayed their awareness of the havoc society wreaked on economically limited women. They tell again and again the unhappy story of a bereft, penniless woman who is the victim of an unforgiving economy: "When contemporary authors turn from sentimental convention to economic injustice, to the fecklessness of men, to the vulgarity of the parvenu, and to the courage of the single woman alone and struggling in a hostile economy, their novels grow incandescent" (Copeland [1995] 1998, 13). It is true, as Copeland explains, that economic difficulties caused misery for both married and unmarried women but the case of the spinster was particularly poignant. Jane Austen's protagonist Emma Woodhouse describes the spinster's plight, showing just how much money mattered: "and it is poverty only which makes celibacy contemptible to a generous public! A single woman, with a very narrow income, must be a ridiculous, disagreeable, old maid! the proper sport of boys and girls; but a single woman, of good fortune, is always respectable, and may be as sensible and pleasant as anybody else" (Austen [1816] 1987, 109). Without economic means the single woman faced social degradation, an additional diminishment since she was seen as much less than a wife or widow. This social marginalization of single women made spinsters an excluded category (Hill [1989] 2003). English society considered them a social failure and, in fact, families were not only ashamed of their unmarried daughters but tended to "erase" their very existence. Olwen Hufton summarizes perfectly why there was such social hostility towards single women: "All women lived in societies in which marriage and motherhood were regarded as the norm, spinsterhood and infertility as a blight" (1984, 355).

As Susan Lanser carefully argues, much scathing disparagement of never-married women found in many discourses not only deprecated them as social outcasts but actually served to both produce and augment that very social hostility. An old maid became (and remained) a despised social category (1999, 312-313). Not surprisingly, to avoid such pervasive social contempt women willingly married men they despised or did not love rather than face the sure-fire social opprobrium that remaining single guaranteed. In fact, as the historian Amy Froide indicates in her recent study, *Never Married. Singlewomen in Early Modern England*, never-married women were unhappy not because they lacked a man or a lover but because they were denied the social status and economic security enjoyed by a wife ([2005] 2007, 212).

It was in the eighteenth century when the negative stereotype of single women emerged and the word "spinster" took on a pejorative cast. The never-married woman became a figure of scorn, contempt and abuse. Thus, *A Satyr Upon Old Maids*, published in 1713, does not hesitate to describe single women as "odious" and "impure" "dunghills" and as "nasty, rank, rammy, filthy Sluts," so disgusting and dangerous that they would, as mentioned above, throw themselves into the "vilest" marriages just to avoid being single (quoted in Lanser 1999, 297). Daniel Defoe proposed the establishment of "[a]n Office for Marriages," which "would be particularly useful to a

set of despicable creatures, called Old Maids" ([1719] 1869, 115). This ill-natured and evil maid became a permanent feature of the English novel. Specifically, in eighteenth-century texts written by men, spinsters appeared as frustrated, pushy, nosey, greedy, disagreeable, and either sexually promiscuous or prudish creatures. While, as Lanser has explained, the term "old maid" had lost, by the end of the eighteenth century, much of its venom and the single woman had become an object of polite pity, she still remained a figure of ridicule.

In spite of the antipathy and harassment single women confronted in the eighteenth century, some of them chose to remain unmarried and had useful, interesting and fulfilled lives. Some even celebrated single life, like the poet Katherine Philips, whose poem, "A Married State," compared singlehood and wifehood and advised young women not to get married:

> A virgin state is crowned with much content,
> It's always happy as it's innocent.
> No blustering husbands to create your fears,
> No pangs of childbirth to extort your tears,
> No children's cries for to offend your ears,
> Few worldly crosses to distract your prayers. ([1667] 1994, 255)

Many single women echoed Philips' ideas, underlining the benefits singlehood offered. They emphasized that never-married women enjoyed more freedom since they did not have a husband or children to care for and could follow a vocation or develop close ties with other women. As Elizabeth Brophy has shown, many eighteenth-century women were convinced that upon marrying they lost their happiness and freedom, an idea already present in *A Serious Proposal to the Ladies* (1694), the highly significant publication of Mary Astell at the end of the seventeenth century (1991, 207-208). Astell did not hesitate to argue that women will only find true fulfilment in female bonding, and not in wifehood and motherhood as society wants them to believe ([1694] 1999).[1] In fact, Margaret Hunt actually dismisses the notion put forward by historical demographers that all early modern women wanted to get married but were deterred from doing so due to various factors such as poverty, lack of a dowry, unfavourable sex

---

[1] Lanser has also drawn attention to a 1709 publication by Bernard Mandeville, *The Virgin Unmask'd: or, Female Dialogues Between an Elderly Maiden Lady and Her Niece, on several Diverting Discourses on Love, Marriage, Memoirs and Morals, etc. of the Times*, which has been largely overlooked. Mandeville offers a compelling empirical case against marriage for women by praising the freedom and comfort single women enjoyed and by portraying men as the "destroyers." Mandeville, a medical doctor, highlights just what "the body of the *wife/mother*" endures in real terms (Lanser 1999, 300-301; Mandeville's emphasis). Although Lanser's reference to Mandeville is interesting, she ignores a text already published in 1975, "Bernard Mandeville's *The Virgin Unmask'd*," by Gordon S. Vichert, who asserts the purpose of his paper is "to do a little missionary work for Mandeville by describing his earliest prose work in English, *The Virgin Unmask'd*." Vichert describes the book as a "moral dialogue devoted largely to a defense of feminism" (1975, 1).

ratios, etc. and asserts instead the plain fact that many eighteenth-century women did not want to be married since they were quite aware of the terrible risks of marriage: "'cruel servitude… for life' (as one eighteenth-century woman put it) to a physically or emotionally abusive man, the dangers of pregnancy and childbirth, and the insecurity of living with another's financial ineptitude" (Hunt 1999, 278-279).

However, even though some women criticized marriage and praised singlehood, the fact is that whether the life of a never-married woman was pitiable or interesting depended primarily upon her financial position. A single woman with money had greater opportunities to determine the course of her life, although it is true, as Pamela Sharpe, as well as Brophy, indicate, independence in a single woman was very often ambiguous since it was difficult for her to be completely free of patriarchal family control: "It is an anachronistic idea based on more recent women's lives to think that economic means could free a woman from the bonds of a potentially suffocating web of connections who were both relatives and business associates" (Sharpe 1999, 226; Brophy 1991, 37). Nevertheless, the important point here is not whether single women with economic autonomy had to submit to male discipline or not, but the fact that, as Christine Peters has explained, economic security was a prerequisite for marriage to be a question of choice.[2] Only those women whose families had been supportive of their economic independence felt really free to choose not to marry: "In this process scripturally based ideas of the duty of marriage, the definition of chastity as a rare divine gift and the necessity of female subordination were not insuperable obstacles, but it was socio-economic attitudes which actively encouraged women's ability to decide to 'delight' in the single life" (Peters 1997, 342). Interestingly enough, as both Eva Figes and Olwen Hufton suggest, in higher circles money rather than love determined whether a woman remained single or married (Figes [1982] 1988, 8-9; Hufton 1984, 359). Daughters with a substantial endowment were more likely to get married than those who lacked one. It was also considered more prudent for an upper-class girl to remain single than to marry a man with no property or immediate prospects.

Women with the right skills, training or/and education could also become economically independent and therefore have more freedom of choice. But the truth is that the opportunities for a woman to obtain financial independence through her own efforts were not only scarce but often demeaning. The chief practical alternatives women had to be self-supportive—becoming a governess or a companion, and school teaching—were rarely rewarding. By the end of the eighteenth century writing also became an established employment option for women from the middle and upper classes, but the chance of gaining a viable income from literary activity alone was very

---

[2] We must be careful, as Froide cautions, not to associate choice with happiness, since never-married women with an advanced social and financial position did not always represent singleness positively in their writings: "Single women did not live in a vacuum, they could not help but come into contact with popular ideas about singleness. How much they assimilated these sentiments and became victims of self-contempt varied by individual" ([2005] 2007, 199).

low. In general, female earnings were less than those of males and this explains why economic survival was so difficult for a spinster. Life was especially hard for middle- and upper-class women who had to earn a living because they were restricted in supporting themselves not only by their lack of professional training or the scarcity of employments available to them but by the stigma attached to women undertaking paid work: there was a widespread social opposition to genteel women working and earning a living.[3]

Life was easier and more satisfying for a spinster not only if she did not have to work to support herself but also if she was allowed to head her own household. Unfortunately, only a minority of never-married women were in such a position. In fact, as Richard Wall (1981) has shown, although the number of spinsters increased in the eighteenth century, widows were more likely to create their own households. The main reasons for this prejudice against single women heading households were the social expectation that women should be dependent on their fathers, male relatives or masters, and suspicions about the sexual morality of single women who lived alone. A minority of single women did manage to head their own households, but they generally shared three characteristics: advanced age, parental demise and high social status.[4] However, single women with no female relatives would sometimes opt to create households and mutually supportive relationships with other unmarried women. In fact, Hunt (1999) has pointed out that households headed by widows, single women, deserted or runaway wives, or a combination of these, were more common in the eighteenth century than most historians have tended to acknowledge.

Female writers realized that single women were scorned and viewed with contempt. They tried to modify the negative stereotypes, found mainly in the work of male authors, by explaining unmarried women's economic dependence, their loneliness, their sexual frustration. They also treated the lonely spinster positively and compassionately, thus offering more attractive portraits of single, independent women. Perhaps not surprisingly and as Kern points out ([1986] 1987, 201-202), the writers most sensitive to the plight of never-married women were "old maids" themselves—Fanny Burney, Sarah Fielding, Jane Austen. And amongst these renowned female authors we can and must include Elizabeth Hamilton, whose *Memoirs of Modern Philosophers* (1800) and *The Cottagers of Glenburnie* (1808) also served to dignify the figure of the "old maid."

Hamilton, a talented, intelligent and educated writer, was very much aware of the prevailing negative stereotypes about single women. In her *Translation of the Letters of a Hindoo Rajah* (1796), the Rajah, after reading the "authentic memoirs" of a nobleman, comes to the conclusion that marriage in Europe is constructed "from the most pure and disinterested motives" ([1796] 1999, 191) and that therefore it is only the obstinacy and folly of women that "alone can possibly prevent their advancement

---

[3] As Peter Earle has shown, since paid work was considered degrading for women, marriage was seen as an opportunity for upward mobility, "a change of status often symbolized by their ceasing to work for their livings at marriage" (1994, 153).

[4] Interestingly enough, as Palazzi has shown, in Italy we have exactly the same situation (1990).

to the very summit of felicity!" (192) The Rajah adds that there is a very peculiar and extraordinary punishment reserved for those females who choose to remain single:

> After a few years, spent, as it is generally believed, in vain repentance, and useless regret, they all at once, without any exceptions in favour of virtue, merit, useful or ornamental accomplishments, undergo a certain change, and incomprehensible transformation, and become what is termed OLD MAIDS. From all that I have hitherto been able to learn of these creatures, the Old Maid is a sort of venomous animal, so wicked in its temper, and so mischievous in its disposition, that one is surprised that its very existence should be tolerated in a civilized society. (192)

Fortunately, both Martha Goodwin and Maria Fielding, the two spinsters that appear in *Memoirs of Modern Philosophers*, are not frustrated single women, but the "cheerful, pleased, old maid" (Benger 1818, vol. 2, 95). Hamilton foreshadowed herself to be at the age of fifty-five when she was only twenty-five. Both represent Hamilton's ideal of the domestic woman: they are confident, educated, intelligent, yet feminine and domestic. But there is a very important difference between Mrs. Goodwin and Mrs. Fielding: whereas the former is economically dependent, the latter enjoys all the power and freedom that her privileged social and economic position grants her. It has been argued that Mrs. Fielding is Hamilton's fictional counterpart (Grogan 2000, 22-23) and that Hamilton divides herself and William Godwin among the characters of Martha Goodwin, Maria Fielding and Mr. Sydney (Thaddeus 1995, 412). I absolutely agree with these claims and will comment, in the following pages, not only on the similarities between Hamilton and Mrs. Fielding but also on how Hamilton uses this character to explore her own ideas on women's education, marriage or spinsterhood.

Mrs. Fielding is described from the very beginning as a woman "of superior information and extraordinary talents" (Hamilton [1800] 2000, 183), who employed those abilities to help the needy and, in particular, to uplift women intellectually by calling for and encouraging the reform of education for women: "To raise a little fund for deeds of charity, she had recourse to her pen; and in this retirement she composed several little treatises, chiefly intended for the benefit of her own sex, and calculated to restore that intellectual vigour which the whole course of their present mode of education tends so effectually to destroy" (252). Like her fictional counterpart, Hamilton was deeply concerned with the deficient instruction that women were receiving in England and used both her fictional and non-fictional work to make her contemporaries aware of the necessity of developing women's understanding through a more serious education, since the current options simply contributed to keeping them frivolous and intellectually shallow. She rejected the prevailing idea that women who cultivated their reason would despise the duties of their sex and situation: "toward a strict performance of the several duties of life, Ignorance was neither a necessary, nor an useful auxiliary" (Hamilton [1796] 1999, 72-73). She also challenged the

notion that ignorance contributed to the attainment of female perfection: "But the purity that depends solely on innocent ignorance, is liable to be soiled on the slightest exposure" (Hamilton [1801] 2010, 255). This very same idea is echoed by Dr. Orwell in *Memoirs*: "The light of the mind is necessary for the performance of every duty; and great is the mistake of those who think ignorance the guard of innocence and virtue" (Hamilton [1800] 2000, 103).[5] In fact, *Memoirs* provides us with a very good example of the negative consequences of women not receiving the intellectual training that will allow them to think for themselves. Bridgetina, one of the three heroines in the novel, lacks an enlightened mind and is incapable of fulfilling her domestic duties not because she is an inborn fool but because of her deficient education. And it is precisely Hamilton's Mrs. Fielding who makes this point: "It could not be expected from Miss Botherim, that with her limited opportunities of information she should be able to detect the pernicious tendency of the opinions she so unhappily embraced" ([1800] 2000, 326). Hamilton emphasizes in her writings the important role that mothers should play in their children's education, a role they will not be able to fulfil unless they themselves have cultivated their own intellectual understanding. Hamilton firmly believed that if women reformed themselves they would then be able to reform not only their children but society at large. This faith in women's power to change society was because Hamilton was convinced that intellectually men and women were equal. Thus, and as she argues explicitly, given that Providence has made no "manifest distinction between the sexes, by leaving the female soul destitute of the intellectual powers […] it is incumbent upon us to consider, by what right we take upon us to despise the gift of God" ([1801] 2010, 266). Hence Hamilton supports and promotes the view that as there is no proof that the rational faculties are useless to women, their mental powers should be cultivated so that they can fulfil their duties as mothers, sisters, wives and members of society. In fact, in one piece of personal correspondence, Hamilton acknowledges that one of the things she most valued when she moved from Scotland to England was that "[m]en of learning addressed themselves to me, as to a being who was actually capable of thinking" (Benger 1818, vol. 2, 34-35).

As several critics note, Hamilton's position on women's education and their role in society was not very dissimilar from that of many liberal thinkers such as Mary Wollstonecraft, Catherine Macaulay and Mary Hays (Taylor 2000; Warburton 2001; Perkins 2010). But there are in fact some clear differences which distinguish her from them. First of all, Hamilton's feminism was, as Gary Kelly indicates, more religious and domestic ([1993] 1997, 142-143). Christian principles pervaded her work: she believed that by providing women with the right education society would be true to the

---

5 Mary Wollstonecraft expresses a similar idea in *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* when she affirms that many girls are "ruined before they know the difference between virtue and vice" ([1792] 1993, 150), thus emphasizing that the causes of women's degradation spring from their want of understanding and knowledge. Interestingly enough, in *Letters of a Hindoo Rajah* Hamilton accuses parents of leading their daughters directly to prostitution "by means of an education which conducts them step by step from vanity to vice" ([1796] 1999, 133).

religious principles it had abandoned. Secondly, although Hamilton wanted to expand women's opportunities for self-improvement, she maintained that the domestic sphere was the most appropriate for women.[6] Hamilton's emphasis on domesticity may suggest conservatism; however, I totally agree with Kelly and Taylor when they argue that hers was a strategy to advocate women's rights within social norms, since Hamilton knew her domestic and religious feminism would be more acceptable in the post-revolutionary period when prejudices against the bluestockings or "learned ladies" not only rose but prevailed. Thus, she warns the readers in *Letters on the Elementary Principles of Education*: "Let it not be imagined that I mean to engage my sex in the nice subtleties of logic or metaphysics. It is not for the purpose of exercising their minds in speculation, that I exhort them to the species of inquiry alluded to; but it is to enable them to discharge, with fidelity and honour, the momentous duties to which Providence has been pleased to call them" (Hamilton {1801} 2010, 259). Hamilton knew very well that women should be careful not to display their knowledge in order to avoid accusations of pedantry or "too much learning": "Nothing but experience could have convinced me, that the cultivation of the rational faculties, should, among the Christian women of England, be so rare, that no sooner can one of them emerge from the depths of ignorance, than she is suspected of assuming the airs of self-improvement and conceit" ({1796} 1999, 275). This explains why, from her very first book, Hamilton describes female characters who incarnate the ideal domestic woman as being not only well-read and intelligent but also modest, gentle, humble and tender, though none of them is ostentatious or vain about their knowledge. Of course, Mrs. Fielding is an example of a woman who, although intellectually superior, is not pretentious, but polite, sweet and gentle: "An air of heroick fortitude mingled with the native meekness and gentleness that characterised her manners" ({1800} 2000, 245).[7]

Mrs. Fielding and all the other ideal domestic women created by Hamilton are not only defined by their propriety of sentiment and conduct but also by their benevolence. Hamilton argues again and again that when intellectual powers are cultivated but benevolent affections neglected, "the character will be imperfect, unhappy in itself, and useless to society" ({1801} 2010, 263). Hamilton believed the cultivation of benevolent affections vital for the happiness and well-being of the individual as well as society because they produce in us a desire to promote the happiness and relieve the miseries of our fellow creatures: "It disposes the mind to sociality, generosity, and gratitude, and is the fountain of compassion and mercy" ({1801} 2010, 225). Hamilton warns her female readers in *A Series of Popular Essays* that women too often become trapped in their own

---

[6] Even more liberal women such as Hays and Wollstonecraft, who openly advocated the need to treat women as rational creatures and to teach them to think, considered that motherhood and marriage were women's primary functions.

[7] Although Hamilton's stance here may seem conservative, she was actually revolutionary in lamenting that feminine virtues—such as meekness, gentleness, temperance, chastity, command over passions, willingness to sacrifice every selfish wish to the happiness of others—actually demeaned the dignity of male characters. If these prejudices were questioned and men proved to value themselves on no superiority but that of virtue, "man would become more worthy, and woman more respectable" ({1801} 2010, 252).

emotions, which prevents them from being of use to others in emergencies: "Even though our sympathy in the feelings of others should be productive of the strongest emotions, these emotions, if they do not prompt us to active exertion, though they may be of the benevolent class, do not entitle us to be denominated benevolent" (1813, 292).

One way in which women could show their usefulness to society or, as Hamilton would have it, that their benevolence be active not passive, was by undertaking philanthropic and charitable work. Women such as Hannah More, Sarah Trimmer and Hamilton herself insisted that the privileged of their sex should divert surplus money and time into fruitful and morally uplifting projects,[8] and they themselves participated actively in numerous philanthropic enterprises.[9] Hamilton, for instance, managed a number of charitable institutions, in particular the Edinburgh House of Industry for indigent women.[10] All the ideal domestic women created by Hamilton fulfil their social duties by trying to help those in need, but Mrs. Fielding, her own fictional counterpart, is, without any doubt, the most perfect incarnation of the spirit of benevolence and philanthropy. When under Lady Brierston's roof and therefore still economically dependent, Mrs. Fielding uses her ascendancy over her benefactress "to promote the interests of the humble children of poverty" ([1800] 2000, 251). And even when forced to leave the house and accept shelter in the house of a respectable farmer, "she found means of employing her time to the advantage of the little circle by which she was surrounded. By her instructions she improved the young; by her sympathy she consoled the unfortunate" (252). Later, upon inheritance of Lady Brierston's fortune she decides to use the money to help the indigent and afflicted, who are so grateful to her that they do not hesitate to describe her as "a ministering angel" (278), "a superior being, the dispenser of happiness and joy" (297) or a "worthy benefactress" (298). In the same way as Hamilton helped found the Edinburgh House of Industry, Mrs. Fielding erects the Asylum of the Destitute, "a large house destined for the reception and temporary abode of such of her own sex as, from being destitute of friends in London, were (when by sickness or misfortune thrown out of employment) in danger of being driven, through fear of want, into habits of infamy" (299).[11]

---

[8] Kelly has emphasized that the middle and upper classes in the Revolutionary aftermath used new philanthropic programmes to control the "lower orders" ([1993] 1997, 168). He has also argued that women's sympathetic role beyond the domestic sphere—caring for the poor, the "fallen," the oppressed—was in part a recognition of women's own subordinate social position (8).

[9] As Francis K. Prochaska illustrated in "Women in English Philanthropy, 1790-1830" (1974), contribution to charities increased with evangelical inspiration between 1790 and 1830.

[10] Kelly has argued that both the Edinburgh House of Industry and *The Cottagers of Glenburnie* were "intended to contribute to social control by replacing the lower-class lottery mentality with a middle-class investment mentality" ([1993] 1997, 278). Susan B. Egenwolf expresses herself in similar terms when she asserts that Hamilton believed that charitable education was inextricably tied to industry and that her aim in writing *Cottagers* was to elevate the poor without disturbing the higher classes (2009, 129-155).

[11] Like many other eighteenth-century women, Hamilton was aware of the fact that prostitution was often the unglamorous result of females not being able to earn a living in any other way. Already in *Letters of a Hindoo Rajah* Hamilton criticizes the lack of sympathy British people show for "these Christian women, being yearly suffered to perish in the streets of their great metropolis, under the accumulated misery of want, disease, and infamy!" victims of the licentious passions of unprincipled men who took advantage of their destitution ([1796] 1999, 131-132).

It is in the Asylum of the Destitute, where Julia, the third heroine of the novel, seduced and abandoned by a villain, finds shelter, that Mrs. Fielding's behaviour serves to illustrate Hamilton's own ideas on how to treat and help fallen women. Hamilton believed that a woman who had "renounced all those obligations, which, as a Christian, a wife, a mother, a member of society, she was bound to fulfil" (1813, 311) should be pitied and comforted: "[T]he vicious are certainly the proper objects of our compassion; nor can a truly benevolent mind consider their unhappy state, without feelings of pity and commiseration" (308). She insisted that a pure, active benevolence would relieve the fallen woman from the bondage of sin and guilt, from the passions that had led her to make a terrible mistake and from the false notions and ideas that had made her prey to vice. She warned, as well, of the dangers of sentimental sympathy which removes all those restraints that society has imposed on itself, thus breaking the boundaries between vice and virtue and placing the bad and the good upon the same level. Hamilton referred to this false sentiment as an "excess of charity" and cautioned "that the period is not far distant when the adulteress and chaste matron will be universally received upon equal terms" (314). Thus, Hamilton did not condemn fallen women to eternal fire, but instead felt sorry for them and believed it the duty of all to soothe their pain and relieve them from their terrible circumstances by awakening their consciousnesses to their own errors.

Mrs. Fielding's attitude towards Julia demonstrates an active benevolence, not merely sentimental sympathy. Not only does she show compassion for Julia, but, aware of the prejudices against fallen women, she has a plan to restore her to society:

> It was her opinion, that the support of reputation being found to be a strong additional motive to virtue, it ought not to be put out of the power of the unfortunate female, who, conscious of her error, is desirous to retrieve it by her after conduct. On this account, in the next conversation she held with Julia, she was led again to propose a plan she had suggested for her going first into the country, where she could enjoy all the privacy her circumstances required; and then removing to a situation, where the past incidents of her life might remain for ever buried in oblivion. ([1800] 2000, 371-372)

It is, however, true that in spite of Mrs. Fielding's good intentions Julia dies, this being because, as Janice Thaddeus states, in "Hamilton's didactic world, if not in her moral world, a seduced woman must be punished" (1995, 409), but the encounter between the "sinner" and the virtuous spinster allows Hamilton to give voice to her own principles concerning fallen women, unshared by more conservative thinkers such as Hannah More, who endorsed the removal of fallen women from society and total social ostracization as the only and most proper treatment.

Although Mrs. Fielding's main aim in life is to fulfil her social duties and afford relief to those in distress, it is obvious that she would not have been so efficient in promoting the happiness of others if it had not been for her ample fortune. The fact that Mrs. Fielding is a wealthy woman is vital in the novel since her economic security

grants her power and independence. Although Mrs. Fielding never violates the rules of female decorum, she is presented as a strong woman who speaks with the same authority as certain male characters in the novel. Her privileged social and economic status allows her to be the mistress of her own household and to choose to be surrounded with "a select party of friends" ([1800] 2000, 253), with "people of talents" (259): "Her situation in life gave her an opportunity of selecting her acquaintance, and her discernment and discrimination afforded her the means of employing this inestimable privilege to the best advantage" (286).[12]

Mrs. Fielding's privileged financial position also gives her the freedom to make the most important decision of her life: to reject a marriage proposal. We have to remember that most women in the eighteenth century married in order to achieve economic security and that therefore a single woman who was already economically independent lost one of the main incentives for becoming attached to a man. Mrs. Fielding's decision not to marry is very significant in a novel in which the notion of companionate marriage is celebrated through the union of Mr. Sydney and his wife, Harriet and Henry, and Maria and Churchill. Hamilton had already encouraged a more egalitarian and humane model of marriage in her first book: "In that enlightened country, a wife is the friend of her husband. Motives of esteem influence the choice of both" ([1796] 1999, 88). In the very same text she gives us more than one example of unions based on mutual esteem and affection, in which the husband not only loves his wife but respects her opinions and intellect as well. Even for herself, personally, Hamilton sustained such an ideal for a marriage partner, quite evident in the letter she wrote to her brother Charles refusing his offer to join him in India in order for him to find her a husband:

[S]ome antiquated notions of refinement might stand in my way, such as that there were some other requisites besides fortune essential to happiness, a similarity of disposition, an union of heart and sentiment, and all those little delicacies, which one, whose only ambition is to possess wealth, and whose most ardent wish is the parade of grandeur, may overlook, but which one of a different education, and another manner of thinking, could not dispense with. ([1796] 1999, 336)

However, although the notion of companionate marriage gained adherents during the eighteenth century, and female writers used their novels to encourage this new model of marriage, they also recognized the idea of a union based on mutual esteem leading inevitably to marital bliss to be mere chimera. In fact, Martha Goodwin, the other cheerful spinster of the novel, affirms the gap between an enticing ideal and raw

---

[12] Although Hamilton did not possess Mrs. Fielding's fortune, she was also economically independent, which allowed her to be an active participant in the intellectual society of Edinburgh. She presided over literary gatherings, which, as in the case of Mrs. Fielding, were attended by a select circle of friends: "to spend the winter months in Edinburgh, I shall derive from it the advantage of literary conversation, in a very chosen circle of society" (Benger 1818, vol. 2, 49).

reality with her claim that "the beautiful union of congenial souls is a sight seldom to be beheld on earth!" ([1800] 2000, 188). Hamilton, like other female novelists, knew that in a society where married women had no legal status and the law sanctioned the husband's absolute power and authority within marriage, there was nothing a woman could do to defend herself if the husband turned out to be a tyrannical brute. Neither Hamilton nor her Mrs. Fielding show the slightest willingness to sacrifice the freedom that each enjoyed and that marriage with its concomitant constraints threatened. Both knew that one of the benefits of being single was the liberty to follow a vocation, and if Hamilton was reluctant to give up her literary career for a conventional marriage, Mrs. Fielding's preference was to devote her life to affording relief to the distressed. She too does not want to give up the peace and happiness she enjoys:

> From the day I heard of his [Mr. Sydneys's] marriage, I have devoted myself to a single life. I have endeavoured to create to myself objects of interest that might occupy my attention, and engage my affections. These I have found in the large family of the unfortunate. My plan has been successful in bringing peace to my bosom; and peace is the happiness of age—it is all the happiness of which on this side the grave I shall be solicitous. ([1800] 2000, 388)

Of course, Mrs. Fielding does not overtly acknowledge that the main reason for remaining single is the desire to preserve her freedom and happiness, since by doing so she would go against the social rule that dictates a woman's main aim in life should be to become a wife. Instead, she argues that "[w]ithout solid and mutual esteem, no marriage can be happy […] But cold esteem is not sufficient. Love too must lend its aid; and what can be more ridiculous than a Cupid in wrinkles!" (388). The reader does need to be provided with an explanation for Hamilton's decision that Mrs. Fielding's refuses to marry Mr. Sydney, since it is quite contradictory that in a novel clearly celebrating companionate marriage these former lovers, whose relationship was based on mutual esteem as well as a similarity of tastes, sentiments and dispositions, do not end up together. Maybe Mrs. Fielding's argument for not marrying Mr. Sydney is not totally convincing, but Hamilton with her characteristic irony and sense of humour makes it clear that for an economically independent woman like Mrs. Fielding, who leads a fulfilled and useful life, the choice was obvious: "Such was the decision of Mrs. Fielding, which no intreaty could prevail on her to alter. To our fair readers we shall leave it to pronounce upon its propriety" (388).

If, at the time, one of the benefits of singleness was the freedom to determine the course of one's life, another was the absent burden of children. It is true, that single women in the eighteenth century were encouraged to help other children and families if they did not have one of their own: "Through their assistance to their siblings' children, never-married women discovered one of the most appreciated and condoned positions available to them, that of the surrogate mother" (Froide [2005] 2007, 66). In fact, in order to present Mrs. Fielding as a character who is willing to play the role that society

expects of a single woman, she is described as a figure with maternal instincts. Thus, when Julia seeks refuge in the Asylum of the Destitute, Harriet assures her friend that Mrs. Fielding "will be as a mother to you, till the arrival of your own" (368). Later the narrator tells us that "the sympathetic tenderness of her [Mrs. Fielding's] address was so truly maternal, that it quickly re-assured her confidence, and restored her serenity" (370). Also from the very first time Mrs. Fielding sees Henry, Mr. Sydney's son, she decides to become his benefactress and adoptive mother. She gives him a book and "[o]n opening it, a paper dropped out, addressed to *Master Henry Sydney*; it contained two bank-notes for a hundred pounds each, and these words—*An annual gift from the most affectionate of friends to the child of her adoption*" (250; emphasis in the original). We are told that she "felt for Henry all the affection of a parent" (334) and that she calls both Henry and Harriet her children. But although Mrs. Fielding claims that Henry is like a son to her, and the narrator continually describes her as a maternal figure, the fact is that Mrs. Fielding plays the role of the mother "from a distance"—unlike Martha Goodwin, who has taken the responsibility of educating Harriet after her mother's death, mainly because she is economically dependent and does not want to be a burden on her family.[13] Mrs. Fielding goes on with her life and helps Henry, though we never see her teaching or nursing him, not even when he is accidentally wounded. It is true that while his life is in danger she receives no visitors in her house, but we do not see her by his bedside soothing his pain. Indeed, although she encourages his career as a doctor, her fortune allows her to hire others to do "dirty work" of manipulating a position for him: "The day of the election of the physician for the hospital at length arrived; when the rival candidate having, in consequence of a private visit from Mrs. Fielding's agent, relinquished his pretensions" (290). It is true that Mrs. Fielding confesses to Henry that he is like a son to her, but by then he is already an adult and therefore the only thing he needs from her is financial or professional advice, not the tender care of a mother. In fact, she becomes his patroness not so much because he has awakened her maternal instincts, but because he reminds her of the man she so passionately loved, Mr. Sydney. As he explains to Henry: "You soon caught her attention, and the ardour with which she pressed you to her bosom, while tears stole from her eyes, convinced my wife that she had a more than ordinary interest in him from whom you sprung" (250).

Unlike Charlotte Percy, in *Letters of a Hindoo Rajah*, melancholic and depressed because of "how circumscribed are the limits of those duties to a female, who has no longer any parent to attend on: no family to manage" (Hamilton [1796] 1999, 302), Hamilton, in *Letters on the Elementary Principles of Education*, stresses how the absence of the burden of a husband and children has allowed her to be useful to other women:[14]

---

[13] As Kern explains, making the old maid play the role of the mother was "one way eighteenth-century novelists came to terms with the inevitability of numerous unmarried women" ([1986] 1987, 208).

[14] Although there are obvious similarities between Hamilton and Charlotte—both are orphaned, unmarried women who have cared for a widowed uncle, and in a sense Charlotte could be considered a self-portrait—the fact is that, as most critics have pointed out, Hamilton distances herself significantly from this figure. Unlike

Placed by Providence in a situation undisturbed by the pressure of life's cares […] I should have deemed myself highly culpable, if I had declined the task to which I was called by friendship, and urged by the hope which is dear to every generous mind—the hope of being in some degree useful. […] But to be an humble instrument in routing my sex from the lethargy of quiescent indolence, to the exertion of those faculties which the bounty of a kind Providence has conferred […] ([1801] 2010, 269-70)

With a character like Mrs. Fielding, Hamilton is not only rejecting negative stereotypes about single women but also creating a positive role for spinsters like herself. She showed her readers that it was possible for an unmarried woman to have a varied, interesting, useful and fulfilled life. Dr. Orwell explains this very well in the novel. After asserting that Jesus Christ came to abolish any distinction between the sexes and fix purity and humility in human hearts, he concludes:

And believe me, my children, the heart that is thus prepared, will not be apt to murmur at its lot in life. It will be ready to perceive, that true dignity consists not in the nature of the duty that is required of us, but in its just performance. The single woman whose mind is embued with these virtues, while she employs her leisure in cultivating her own understanding, and instructing that of others, in seeking for objects on which to exert her charity and benevolence, and in offices of kindness and good-will to her fellow-creatures, will never consider her situation as abject or forlorn. ([1800] 2000, 103)

Mrs. Fielding never regrets being single. On the contrary, her life subverts the idea that marriage and motherhood are the only routes to happiness. Both the character, Mrs. Fielding, and her creator, Elizabeth Hamilton teach the female reader that a woman does not need the protection of a male to achieve self-fulfilment, that there are other ways in which a woman can use her superior mind and exercise her benevolent affections for the good of society.

WORKS CITED

ASTELL, Mary. (1694) 1999. *A Serious Proposal to the Ladies*. Edited by Patricia Springborg. Peterborough: Broadview Press.
AUSTEN, Jane. (1816) 1987. *Emma*. Harmondsworth: Penguin.
BENGER, Elizabeth. 1818. *Memoirs of the Late Mrs. Elizabeth Hamilton: With a Selection from Her Unpublished Correspondence and Other Unpublished Writings.* 2 vols. London: Longman.
BROPHY, Elizabeth Bergen. 1991. *Women's Lives and the Eighteenth-Century English Novel*. Tampa: U of South Florida P.

Charlotte who is incapable of overcoming her grief and has sunk into a purposeless existence, Hamilton herself followed the advice that Mr. Denbeigh gives Charlotte by publishing her work "for the instruction, or innocent amusement of others" ([1796] 1999, 303).

COPELAND, Edward. (1995) 1998. *Women Writing about Money. Women's Fiction in England, 1790-1820.* Cambridge: Cambridge UP.

DEFOE, Daniel. (4 April 1719) 1869. "An Office for Marriages." In *Daniel Defoe, His Life and Recently Discovered Writings: Extending from 1716 to 1729*, edited by William Lee, vol. 2, 115-117. London: John Camden Hotten, Picadilly.

EARLE, Peter. 1994. "The Middling Sort in London." In *The Middling Sort of People: Culture, Society and Politics in England 1550-1800*, edited by Jonathan Barry and Christopher Brooks, 141-158. London: Macmillan.

EGENWOLF, Susan B. 2009. *The Art of Political Fiction in Hamilton, Edgeworth and Owenson*. Aldershot: Ashgate.

FIGES, Eva. (1982) 1988. *Sex and Subterfuge. Women Writers to 1850*. New York: Persea Books.

FROIDE, Amy M. (2005) 2007. *Never Married. Singlewomen in Early Modern England*. Oxford: Oxford UP.

GROGAN, Claire. 2000. Introduction to *Memoirs of Modern Philosophers*, by Elizabeth Hamilton, 9-26. Peterborough: Broadview Press.

HAMILTON, Elizabeth. (1796) 1999. *Translation of the Letters of a Hindoo Rajah*. Edited by Pamela Perkins and Shannon Russell. Peterborough: Broadview Press.

—. (1800) 2000. *Memoirs of Modern Philosophers*. Edited by Claire Grogan. Peterborough: Broadview Press.

—. (1801) 2010. *Letters on the Elementary Principles of Education*. In *The Cottagers of Glenburnie and Other Educational Writing*, edited by Pam Perkins, 220-288. Glasgow: The Association for Scottish Literary Studies.

—. 1813. *A Series of Popular Essays, Illustrative of Principles Essentially Connected with the Improvement of the Understanding, the Imagination, and the Heart*, vol. 2. Edinburgh: Longman.

HILL, Bridget. (1989) 2003. *Women, Work and Sexual Politics in Eighteenth-Century England*. London and New York: Routledge.

HUFTON, Olwen. 1984. "Women without Men: Widows and Spinsters in Britain and France in the Eighteenth Century." *Journal of Family History* 9 (4): 355-376.

HUNT, Margaret R. 1999. "The Sapphic Strain. English Lesbians in the Long Eighteenth Century." In *Singlewomen in the European Past, 1250-1800*, edited by Judith M. Bennett and Amy M. Froide, 270-296. Philadelphia: U of Pennsylvania P.

KELLY, Gary. (1993) 1997. *Women, Writing and Revolution 1790-1827*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.

KERN, Jean B. (1986) 1987. "The Old Maid, or 'to grow old, and be poor, and laughed at'." In *Fetter'd or Free? British Novelists, 1670-1815*, edited by Mary Anne Schofield and Cecilia Macheski, 201-214. Athens, Ohio and London: Ohio UP.

LANSER, Susan S. 1999. "Singular Politics. The Rise of the British Nation and the Production of the Old Maid." In *Singlewomen in the European Past, 1250-1800*, edited by Judith M. Bennett and Amy M. Froide, 297-323. Philadelphia: U of Pennsylvania P.

PALAZZI, Maura. 1990. "Female Solitude and Patrilineage: Unmarried Women and Widows during the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries." *Journal of Family History* 15 (4): 443-459.

PERKINS, Pam. 2010. Introduction to *The Cottagers of Glenburnie*, by Elizabeth Hamilton, 1-44. Glasgow: The Association for Scottish Literary Studies.

PETERS, Christine. 1997. "Single Women in Early Modern England: Attitudes and Expectations." *Continuity and Change* 12 (3): 325-345.

PHILIPS, Katherine. (1667) 1994. "A Married State." In *The Cultural Identity of Seventeenth-Century Woman: A Reader*, edited by N.H. Keeble, 255-256. New York: Routledge.

PROCHASKA, Francis K. 1974. "Women in English Philanthropy, 1790-1830." *International Review of Social History* 19: 426-445.

SHARPE, Pamela. 1999. "Dealing with Love: The Ambiguous Independence of the Single Woman in Early Modern England." *Gender & History* 11 (2): 209-232.

TAYLOR, Susan B. 2000. "Feminism and Orientalism in Elizabeth Hamilton's *Translation of the Letters of a Hindoo Rajah*." *Women's Studies* 29: 555-581.

THADDEUS, Janice. 1995. "Elizabeth Hamilton's *Modern Philosophers* and the Uncertainties of Satire." In *Cutting Edges: Postmodern Critical Essays on Eighteenth-Century Satire*, edited by James E. Gill, 395-418. Knoxville: The U of Tennessee P.

VICHERT, Gordon S. 1975. "Bernard Mandeville's *The Virgin Unmask'd*." In *New Explorations in the Art and Thought of Dr. Bernard Mandeville*, edited by Irwin Prime, 1-10. The Hague: Kluwer Academic P.

WALL, Richard. 1981. "Women Alone in English Society." *Annales de Démographie Historique*: 303-317.

WARBURTON, Penny. 2001. "Theorising Public Opinion: Elizabeth Hamilton's Model of Self, Sympathy and Society." In *Women, Writing and the Public Sphere 1700-1830*, edited by Elizabeth Eger, Charlotte Grant, Clíona O'Gallchoir and Penny Warburton, 257-273. Cambridge: Cambridge UP.

WOLLSTONECRAFT, Mary. (1792) 1993. *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman*. In *Political Writings. A Vindication of the Rights of Man, A Vindication of the Rights of Woman, An Historical and Moral View of the French Revolution.* Edited by Janet Todd. Toronto and Buffalo: U of Toronto P.

Aída Díaz Bild is Professor of English Literature at the University of La Laguna. She has carried out research and published on eighteenth-century women's writing (Charlotte Smith, Amelia Opie, Elizabeth Hamilton, Elizabeth Inchbald, Jane Austen) and on contemporary British and Irish novelists (David Lodge, Penelope Lively, Roddy Doyle, Jamie O'Neill, Graham Swift, Seamus Deane). She has also focused on the important role that humour plays in literature.

Address: Departamento de Filología Inglesa y Alemana. Facultad de Filología. Universidad de La Laguna. Campus de Guajara. 38071, La Laguna, Tenerife, Spain. Tel.: +34 922637090.

The Inoperative Community in *The Bell Jar*:
The Sharing of Interrupted Myth

María Luisa Pascual-Garrido
Universidad de Córdoba
ff1pagam@uco.es

In this essay I intend to offer an analysis of Sylvia Plath's novel *The Bell Jar* (1963) that goes beyond the scope of the confessional and feminist readings which have prevailed in Plathian studies. Following the critical interest raised by the notion of community and its problematic relationship with individual subjectivity in recent decades, I draw on Jean-Luc Nancy's understanding of "community" (1985-1986) in order to offer an alternative interpretation of *The Bell Jar*. The theoretical framework which inspires this essay declares the impossibility of an operative community which actually fulfils the natural longing of all human beings for immanence and transcendence. I argue that *The Bell Jar* actually tackles the interruption of two long-standing myths—the possibility of community and the assertion of autonomy of the self. Since the latter has already been addressed by several authors as a central issue in Plath's novel, I here focus on how she deals with the shattered myth of community. Far from being a narcissistic account of private traumas, the novel is paradoxically an attempt to share with others a universal plight—the overwhelming sense of humans as exposed and finite beings facing the absence of a community of immanence. Ironically, it is the sharing of that disturbing truth which allows the emergence of community in Plath's novel.

Key words: Sylvia Plath; *The Bell Jar*; inoperative community; singularity; finitude; exposure

· · ·

La comunidad inoperativa en *The Bell Jar*:
compartiendo el mito interrumpido

En este ensayo se pretende ofrecer un análisis de la novela de Sylvia Plath *The Bell Jar* (1963) que trascienda el enfoque confesional y feminista de la mayoría de interpretaciones que han dominado los estudios sobre su obra. Al hilo del interés crítico generado por el concepto de comunidad y su problemática relación con la subjetividad del individuo en las últimas décadas, este artículo parte la noción de comunidad definida por Jean-Luc Nancy

(1985-1986) para brindar una interpretación alternativa de *The Bell Jar*. El marco teórico en el que se sustenta este trabajo declara la imposibilidad de que exista una comunidad operativa que satisfaga el deseo de trascendencia natural en todo ser humano. Defiendo la idea de que en *The Bell Jar*, en efecto, se aborda la interrupción de dos mitos básicos: la posibilidad de comunidad y la afirmación de la autonomía del ser. Puesto que este último ya ha sido estudiado por varios autores como asunto central de la novela de Plath, aquí se presta atención al desmoronamiento del mito de la comunidad. Lejos de ofrecer el relato narcisista de traumas personales como alegan la mayoría de los críticos, la novela es paradójicamente el intento de compartir con otros un problema universal: la conciencia abrumadora de existir como seres expuestos y finitos enfrentados a la ausencia de una comunidad de inmanencia. Resulta irónico que el compartir esa verdad angustiosa permita el advenimiento o la manifestación de comunidad en la novela de Plath.

Palabras clave: Sylvia Plath; *The Bell Jar*; comunidad inoperativa; singularidad; finitud; exposición

> The thought of a community or the desire for it might well be nothing other than a belated invention that tried to respond to the harsh reality of modern experience: namely, that divinity was withdrawing infinitely from immanence [*deus absconditus*], that the god-brother [*deus communis*] was at bottom *himself* the *deus absconditus* (this was Hölderling's insight) and that the divine essence of community—or community as the existence of divine essence— was the impossible itself. (Nancy [1985-1986] 1991, 10; italics and brackets in the original)

1. Introduction

When Sylvia Plath was completing *The Bell Jar* (1963), she wrote to her mother explaining that she had just "thrown together events from [her] own life, fictionalizing to add color" to show "how isolated a person feels when [she] is suffering a breakdown [...] to picture [her] world and the people in it as seen through the distorting lens of a bell jar" (Ames 1999, 262). It is the belief that the novel is simply a fictionalized autobiography that has sustained the reductionist scope of confessional interpretations and deprived the novel of its deeper significance. Hence, many critics have focused on Plath's psychotic personality to explain the poignant feelings of the protagonist as she undergoes a mental breakdown and attempts suicide. Al Alvarez refers to the "autobiographical heroine of *The Bell Jar*" ([1971] 1974, 36) stressing the idea that the book was written by the author to "free herself from her past" (37). Likewise, the authors of *Sounds from the Bell Jar* state that "Sylvia Plath's journals, and their schizoid contrast with letters written simultaneously, show her to be a psychotic writer, but the poems and prose meant for publication show it equally clearly. All her writing is autobiographical; she can never escape from the subject of her own impressions, her own miseries, terrors and nightmares (Claridge, Pryor and Watkins 1990, 207). From this perspective, the 'distorted picture' offered by the artist could only be interpreted as the inevitable outcome of her psychotic mind, reducing the novel's import to that of psychiatric fiction.

However, most commentators have adopted an openly feminist perspective (Perloff 1972; Macpherson 1991; Wagner-Martin 1992; Brain 2001; Jernigan 2014), exploring the limitations patriarchal culture imposes on aspiring women and the existence of the hypocritical double standards which trouble the young protagonist of *The Bell Jar* as she decides on a coherent self-identity. Feminist critics have also highlighted the inner contradictions of competing models of femininity presented in the novel, suggesting for example, that the novel "examines the problem of the poet who can find no serious female role models, of the young woman writer who finds the shift from silent muse to speaking subject difficult" (Brain 2001, 148). Assessment of the novel from this perspective has tried to clarify the causes for Esther Greenwood's maladjustment and distress, blaming the prevalent male-dominated ideology for her failure to integrate successfully in society. Adam Jernigan's reading, for instance, argues that Plath together with other mid-twentieth-century women writers "resisted the temptation to exploit

the figure of the typist in order to bolster their status as creative writers" (2014, 20), focusing on Esther's refusal to adopt the subordinate and reproductive role associated with "paratextual labours" that most women in *The Bell Jar* do.

More recently, the novel has also been examined from a sociological perspective as a text tailored to meet the requirements of the literary market. Both stylistically as well as thematically *The Bell Jar* would fit into the category of the popular fiction generally published in the 1950s in American magazines like *The New Yorker* (Ferrater 2010, 24). As such, Luke Ferrater identifies in the popular fiction written by women by the end of the fifties a pattern with "a heavy emphasis on love stories, on stories about families and on marriage as the conclusion of the love stories" and with the gradual incorporation of "formerly taboo issues" like "extramarital affairs" and "unwed pregnancies" which were eventually "incorporated within the ideology of marriage" (2010, 37). In this sense, Plath's novel might be considered a mass-market product intended to appeal to a middle-brow female readership interested in women's experience. Featuring characters who are undergoing deep personal crises, such narratives attracted a considerable audience to the pages of *The Ladies' Home Journal* and *Mademoiselle*, where Plath had served as guest editor in the summer of 1953.[1] As Ferrater has pointed out, Plath certainly drew on an incipient tradition in "women's madness narratives" available at the time (2010, 43). This so-called "psychiatric fiction" explored the relationship between mental illness and the effects of cultural constrictions on its protagonists— women most often, although J. D. Salinger's *The Catcher in the Rye* (1951), a clear precursor of *The Bell Jar* (Wagner-Martin 1987, 186-187) has a male protagonist. The influence of Shirley Jackson, a forerunner of this genre, on *The Bell Jar* has also been pointed out both by Wagner-Martin (1987, 164) and Ferrater (2010, 47).[2] Plath herself described *The Bell Jar* as being one of the aforementioned "potboilers" and decided to publish it under a pseudonym (Schober Plath 1975, 490), aware of the fact that she was drawing on stock formulae of a certain kind of popular fiction.[3]

But in this brief overview of the most significant readings of *The Bell Jar*, I would like to highlight the relevance of recent politically-oriented studies which, in my view, entail a radical departure from what were considered until recently the central issues in the novel. Such is the case of Kate Baldwin, who remarks that in most appraisals of *The Bell Jar* certain aspects "have been partially obliterated by the seductiveness

---

[1] Ferrater notes the example of several professional writers—Jean Stafford, Sylvia Townsend Warner and Mavis Gallant—who notably influenced Plath in terms of style and the issues addressed in *The Bell Jar* (2010, 27-36).

[2] While Wagner-Martin mentions Shirley Jackson's 1954 novel *The Bird's Nest* as a major source for *The Bell Jar*, Ferrater considers *Hangsaman* (1951) to be of greater significance (Ferrater 2010, 47).

[3] However, Saul Maloff argues against taking Plath's assertion at its face value in his review of the American edition (1971, 33). The "painstaking quality of the writing," the fact that Plath had already written a draft of the novel by 1957, and the efforts she made to complete it "under the auspices of a Eugene Saxton Fund fellowship in 1962" seem to support Maloff's claim that Plath considered the novel much more than a mere "potboiler," as she suggests in a letter to her mother (Schober Plath 1975, 490).

of Esther's solipsism" (2004, 23). In contrast, Baldwin has called attention to communitarian issues as she demands that the question of selfhood in Plath's novel be studied in the wider historical and political context in which the story is set, bearing in mind the role narratives usually have "in building a sense of national community" (2004, 24). In my view, Baldwin enlarges the scope of her analysis beyond the purely confessional and feminist approaches by focusing on Esther's "nostalgia for substance" and her entrapment in the models of self-identity and citizenship fostered by "nation-building narratives" (32). Rather than helping to create social bonds amongst citizens as other texts might do, *The Bell Jar* questions a grand narrative encouraging specific paradigms of self-achievement in the Cold War era—marriage and motherhood or female professionalism, according to feminist readings. If adopted, such paradigms would provide a sense of personal fulfilment and belonging to community, but the problem in *The Bell Jar* is that the protagonist finds it impossible to assume them. I believe that Esther's confusion derives from her disapproval of the self- and nation-building narratives, just as Baldwin suggests.

Therefore, I would argue that taking into account the coercing power these grand narratives may exert on singular individuals will certainly reveal other concerns of the writer and provide greater insight into this text. However, instead of adopting an exclusively political approach, I will rather pursue a more philosophical and ethically-oriented reading of Plath's novel. My contention is that *The Bell Jar* underscores the difficulties faced by the conscientious individual longing for substance and self-transcendence within the community. Moreover, Esther's counter-narrative questions the very possibility of enacting an operative community. Her cynical and painful account refutes the utopian conception of community and, her isolation inside a bell jar, reveals its absence. Interpreting Plath's novel in this light allows us to read *The Bell Jar* as a work that exposes the predicament of self—of the singular being—in its disturbing relationship with an "inoperative community" (Nancy [1985-1986] 1991).[4]

In order to highlight Plath's political awareness and its weight on Plath's novel, Peel documented Plath's interest in civic and communal issues, noting also the contradictory nature of the ideological discourses she was exposed to (2002; 2007). Assessing the impact of Cold War politics on Plath's work the same author states that:

---

[4] This pessimistic view of community is articulated in Nancy's *The Inoperative Community* ([1985-1986] 1991, 9-16). Nancy's claim is that there has always been in western political thinking a nostalgic desire for the restoration of an archaic community which disappeared with the advent of modern society. Nancy illustrates the longing for the lost community by referring to the natural family, the Roman Republic, the first Christian community or the many brotherhoods established at different historical moments as paradigms. While that community was characterized by the harmonious and intimate links that gave its members a sense of immanent unity and belonging, modern society is alienating and driven by selfish pursuit. Accordingly, the idea that alienation in modern society derives from the disappearance of an original community is what fuels most communitarian thinking. However, Nancy is critical of communitarian philosophy as he sees the danger of communitarian identity as being imposed by violent means, thus restricting self-autonomy and crushing self-identity and singularity.

[T]he narrator of *The Bell Jar* is more politically engaged than the narrator's voice may suggest. An acceptance that there is concealment of this engagement in the person of the immature version of Esther Greenwood allows for the possibility that this is a novel not exclusively about Plath's treatment of her past which has nothing to say about her reading of her present. There is a very definitive link, one that has more to do with stance than subject matter. (2002, 67)

Following Peel's interpretation, I would argue that the narrator's cynical attitude and her eventual derangement signal her resistance both to American core values supporting mythical notions of individual self-attainment and to the sense of belonging to a national community. The latter was prompted by the anti-Communist discourse prevalent in the 1950s, an obvious subtext in *The Bell Jar*. Plath's instruction in politics and history during her years at Smith College (1950-1955) seems essential in the emergence of a budding political conscience, which was developing in England, and can be fully identified in *The Bell Jar*, as the insistent references to the Rosenbergs suggest. As Peel notices, Plath expresses conflicting judgements about the US role in world affairs during her college years, but she is still uncritical as to her identification with the all-American girl before she graduates (2007, 45). However, Plath's experience in England allows her to develop a more detached perspective on the prevailing values nurturing Eisenhower's America: "it is only after 1960 that we see the effective fusion of politics and art in, for example, such imaginative writing as *The Bell* Jar and the poems of 1962 and 1963" (Peel 2007, 48). As a result, Plath's reactions to McCarthyism and Cold War politics are quite pervasive in *The Bell Jar*. Her distrustful attitude to all-American values is also patent in her 1963 essay "America!, America!," where she touches upon the pressure of the American educational system to have everyone "tailored to an Okey Image" so as to create a fake sense of belonging and community, one she cannot endorse (Plath [1977] 2008, 56).

I believe that it is Plath's critical resistance to those fundamental American myths that underlies Esther Greenwood's disturbing narrative, where she has reached the conclusion that, despite her many efforts to genuinely communicate with others, it is impossible for the singular being to enter community. This entails, as thinkers like Maurice Blanchot ([1983] 1988) and Jean-Luc Nancy ([1985-1986] 1991) have argued, the failure of ideals of self-fulfilment and immanence within community and hence the interruption of the myth of community.

2. COUNTERING THE RHETORIC OF DECEPTION AND THE SHARING OF INTERRUPTED MYTH

The Bell Jar certainly evokes the oppressive atmosphere of the 1950s and its destructive effect on the conscientious individual. The story begins in New York where Esther Greenwood has won a guest editorship at a women's magazine. Her short but intense

experience in New York causes her to gradually fall into despair. She seems unable to establish lasting bonds with others and finds no purpose in pursuing what look to other people like satisfying life goals. Signs of her depression are obvious after she returns home. The narrator also details the experience of her mental breakdown and failed suicide attempt, after which she is sent to a mental institution. After a few months of seclusion and electroconvulsive therapy (ECT), Esther seems to have recovered from her mental illness and the novel ends with her discharge from the asylum back into society.

As Steven Axelrod points out (2010, 134), the novel present its young heroine at a crucial moment in her life. Esther Greenwood is enmeshed in the painful and distressing process of transition from youth to adulthood, where she has to pass through confusing rituals of passage that she is unable to cope with because she perceives a fake post-war American society guided by the ethics of success and the hatred of Communists. From the perspective of community theory and Nancy's understanding of community and being, I contend that what is at stake in this novel is not only the problem of being an ambitious woman in the 1950s, or being able to handle the rites of initiation into adulthood for single women, as several authors have claimed. Rather, by offering what seems a "distorted" perception of the world, Plath is acknowledging there is pervasive rhetoric of deception in American culture which fuels the belief in an operative community. The belief in such community implies the assumption that it is possible to achieve perfect communion with other beings and, through it, a sense of individual transcendence. Yet, as events unfold, Esther abandons that longing for community and adopts a distrustful and fault-finding attitude. Having been in the bell jar for a long time, disconnected from others, she ends up mocking both other people's optimism as well as her own hypocritical pretensions to communicate with them.

As I see it, *The Bell Jar* should not be read simply from confessional or feminist approaches, but should rather be interpreted as a narrative that reveals the author's awareness and rejection of false cultural assumptions in a "world of competition, conformity, consumerism and commodification" (Plath [1963] 1966, 135). Esther's narrative is much more than the bewildering account of the self-disintegration of a young and ambitious female being confronted with her passage from youth to adulthood (Perloff 1972, 511). Going beyond an exclusively feminist reading of the text, I would thus contend that through Esther Greenwood's anti-heroic narrative Plath illustrates the impossibility of entering an operative community, one that would theoretically provide the subject with a sense of personal fulfilment and communal transcendence.

It cannot be denied that the process of mental decay and apparent healing are narrated from a female perspective, hence it points to those constraints imposed on females by the patriarchal ideology prevailing in the 1950s. Yet the sense of alienation and despair is also common to other male protagonists of Cold War narratives which

question the prevalent rhetoric of personal attainment and successful integration in community generally associated with the American dream. Despite the suggestion of recovery at the end of the novel, there is no certainty as to whether Esther's feeling of estrangement is completely overcome, or, indeed, that it could ever be. At the same time, in the absence of an ideal community where beings fuse with each other, *The Bell Jar* subtly hints at alternative ways of approaching another sort of community, the "inoperative community" (Nancy [1985-1986] 1991, 1).

But before proceeding further, I should clarify the concept of community I am working with in this essay. Jean-Luc Nancy has rethought the idea of community ([1985-1986] 1991; [1996] 2000) and offers an alternative understanding of community as inoperative. For him, "community" is

> what takes place always through others and for others. It is not the space of the *egos*—subjects and substances that are at the bottom immortal—but of the I's, who are always *others* (or else nothing). If community is revealed in the death of the others it is because death itself is the true community of I's that are not *egos*. It is not a communion that fuses egos into an Ego or a higher We. It is the community of others. The genuine community of mortal beings, or death as community, establishes their impossible communion. Community therefore occupies a singular place: it assumes the impossibility of its own immanence, the impossibility of a communitarian being in the form of a subject. In a certain sense community acknowledges and inscribes—this is its peculiar gesture—the impossibility of community. A community is not a project of fusion, or in some general way a productive or operative project—nor is it a project at all. ([1985-1986] 1991, 15; italics in the original)

It follows then that the only community that can exist is the "inoperative community," and this does not comfort the subject with the idea of belonging or fusion with others, but instead undoes the subject. As soon as the being enters community it does so to lose itself in others, so community does not assert the self, but precisely the opposite.

When Esther arrives in New York as a promising guest editor, her main preoccupation is to fit in, to fulfil the requirements to be an acceptable member of society. However, she is at the same time trying to assert her identity, testing several versions of the self, which she alternatively imitates and discards—Betsy's Pollyanna, Doreen's man-eater, Jay Cee's devoted scholar, Philomena Guinea's successful writer, Dodo Conway's model of motherhood. Her attempts to enter community by "trying out" different alter-egos such as Elly Higginbottom or a fictional heroine named Elaine only increase her own sense of self-alienation (Axelrod 2010, 37).

Therefore, one of the issues Plath obviously questions in this novel is the collapse of the traditional myth of community, understood as a fusion or communion of egos. She brings the absence of community to the fore by having Esther undergo a process

of self-fragmentation which results in a deep depression that alienates her from others, reasserting "the bitter consciousness of the increasing remoteness of such a community" (Nancy [1985-1986] 1991, 13). According to Nancy, "community, far from being what society has crushed or lost, is *what happens to* us—question, waiting, event, imperative—*in the wake of* society" (11; italics in original). Accordingly, there is no such thing as a working community that can fulfil the individual's longing for transcendence, but rather only a society of interests. Society is identified in Nancy's essay with "the dissociation of forces, need and signs" and as such it provokes "much harsher effects (solitude, rejection, admonition, helplessness) than what we expect from a communitarian minimum in the social bond" (11). Assuming this pessimistic view of community, I cannot agree with those who believe that in Esther's story suicide stands for a symbolic rebirth and renewal of the self (Wagner-Martin 1986, 64). Instead, I contend that what the narrator is sharing with us is the terrible insight she gains from her own traumatic experience: the loss or the absence of a working community, one that provides human beings with a sense of solace and transcendence.

As Elisabeth Bonfren explains when considering Plath's prose: "from the start many of her stories set out to analyse the implications of this culturally sanctioned rhetoric of deception, the lies we tell ourselves to make sense of the world and convince ourselves that we fit in, the lies we live to assure ourselves of being loved and acknowledged, but also the tragic cost of such pretence" (1998, 100). It is my contention that Plath is clearly condemning the pervasive 'rhetoric of deception' which governs modern life, and in particular the American ethos of the 1950s, remarking the fallacy of community, one of the most pervasive "inherited myths" in Western culture (Nancy [1985-1986] 1991, 13).

In my view, the experience imparted by the narrator in *The Bell Jar* highlights the fact that we live through shattered myths, as Nancy suggests in *The Inoperative Community* ([1985-1986] 1991). Actually, two essential myths are being explored in *The Bell Jar*, the collapse of which Esther Greenwood experiences as an overwhelming reality. In the first place, there is the myth of communion with others—the idea that the self can in fact communicate effectively and eventually achieve some sort of communion, that is, fuse with other beings, and hence attain a transcendental feeling of immanence within community. Yet, the possibility of entering an operative community which fulfils the longing for permanence and meaningful belonging is clearly challenged by Esther's experience in *The Bell Jar*. It is her *distorted* perspective of social bonds, her critical attitude towards sanctioned behaviour, models and norms which lead her to remain detached and unsympathetic to most people—her mother, the girls she meets in New York, as well as the more mature women she encounters, the insensitive Dr Gordon, her boyfriend Buddy Willard, along with the other male figures she tests out as possible matches. The awareness of living in a bewildering world upholding a number of fake beliefs and twisted principles everybody accepts explains why Esther Greenwood will not be able to genuinely share with other beings her feelings of alienation and

hopelessness. The second myth the novel shatters is the conviction that the self is a unified and coherent being (Perloff 1972, 514; Bonds 1990; Axelrod 2010, 136). The notion of self-autonomy and the unity of being are also challenged by Esther's inability to develop a consistent personality as she struggles to emulate other characters and to identify or communicate with them.

Diane Bonds' (1990) deft analysis of metaphors of the "separative self" in *The Bell Jar* provides considerable evidence to support the fact that Plath saw through this myth of self-containment and independence which American culture transmitted to her. As Bonds points out, Plath clearly identifies the "destructive effects of our cultural commitment to that model" and she illustrates them in Esther's death wish and descent into madness (1990, 50). The abundance of images of dismemberment and disconnection in *The Bell Jar* as metaphors for the broken, fragmented self are quite symptomatic of the burden this dominant model of the self has imposed on contemporary western societies, and American culture in particular. As Bonds (1990) and Axelrod (2010) have offered convincing accounts of how Plath's narrative challenges the myth of the unified and bounded self in *The Bell Jar*, I now intend to focus my attention on how the myth of the operative community is also discarded as a feasible alternative for any conscientious being.

Esther's seemingly perturbed vision of the world questions well-established cultural assumptions—the existence of a working community of shared values and goals, and the autonomy and coherence of a separate or bounded self. Most critics have read Esther's ability to retell her experience as a clear symptom of her reintegration into society, principally assuming that the message underlying her release from the mental institution and her previously rejected compliance with the rituals of marriage and motherhood imply Esther's restoration to her *healthy* being. However, in my view, Plath is in fact revealing that there is a rhetoric of deception that deludes us into believing that mutual recognition and genuine communion with others is possible, allowing the isolated being to attain a sense of fulfilment and belonging.

My analysis is that the character's inability to fit in and her descent into madness are actually due to her awareness of the interruption of both myths, which the harsh reality of modern experience makes all too obvious to her. Esther's bewildering experience is the result of her confrontation with a disquieting truth. The ideal of being able to integrate successfully, to fuse with other beings, without losing some essential part of the self is shattered by the experience of the singular being who realizes this impossibility of immanence and transcendence in community, becoming, thus, estranged both from community and self as a result.

Therefore, Plath presents Esther Greenwood as a highly perceptive being who feels alienated from community, for this is a community which does not correlate to the ideals her culture has transmitted to her. As Perloff affirms, "*The Bell Jar* is the archetypal novel that mirrors, in however distorted a form, [youth's] personal experience, their sense of what Irving Howe calls 'the general human condition'" (1972, 508). The

novel shares with the works of other Cold War writers—Ralph Ellison's *Invisible Man* (1952) and Jack Kerouac's *On the Road* (1957)—the experience of sheer alienation from community. Along with them, Plath partakes of efforts to try to communicate this terrifying experience of utter failure and frustration at achieving communion while becoming a unified and autonomous self.

However, the serious concern with the impossibility of truly communicating or identifying with others allows for the creation of another sort of community, a literary community where the interruption of long-established myths is imparted as a disheartening but unavoidable truth. It is that sharing of an ineluctable sense of alienation from others and exposure as singular, vulnerable beings which makes *The Bell Jar* a worthy piece of literature, despite the repeated ascription of the novel to such popular subgenres as the confessional and the psychiatric novel.

The Bell Jar should, in consequence, be read as a symptom of a diseased culture which has promoted certain ideals about the bounded nature of the self and its relationship with community. *The Bell Jar* voices the distress of incomplete, fragmented but singular beings in the face of an inoperative community—a community that does not work, and hence returns the feeling of utter isolation and disintegration of the self that is so characteristic of the modern and postmodern condition.

3. *The Bell Jar* and the "Inoperative" or "Unavowable Community"

The Bell Jar is a literary text that has, as Blanchot put it in *The Unavowable Community*, "the anonymity of the book which does not address anybody and which, through its relationship with the unknown, initiates what George Bataille (at least once) will call 'the negative community': the community of those who have no community" ([1983] 1988, 24).[5] Esther's attitude "invites in the reader an uneasy mixture of dislike and sympathy, distance and identification" with the narrator (Axelrod 2010, 135) for she is sarcastic and hypercritical with most characters. As a matter of fact, Esther is only able to empathize with marginal beings who, for one reason or another, are rejected by society and usually exiled or confined—like Esther and the other inmates at Belsize— or else sacrificed—as the Rosenbergs' execution proves.

According to Blanchot, the basis of communication "is not necessarily speech, or even the silence that is its foundation and punctuation, but the exposure to death, no longer my own exposure, but someone else's, whose living and closest presence is already the eternal and unbearable absence, an absence that the travail of the deepest mourning does not diminish" ([1983] 1988, 25). In other words, being exposed to our finiteness is what makes us come closer to the idea of our having something in common

---

5 Blanchot ([1983] 1988) and Nancy ([1985-1986] 1991) partake of the same understanding of community. It is a negative community which does not fulfil the individual longing for transcendence. Following their theory of community, I will use the terms "inoperative," "unworking" and "unavowable" as synonyms to refer to a community which is only enacted through an awareness of death or the absence of the other.

with others. Thus, Esther starts to identify with political dissidents like the Rosenbergs as she becomes aware of their exposure, of their impending death. Similarly, she feels a conflicting sense of kinship with Joan, the lesbian girl who has previously attempted suicide, and who finally manages to kill herself, which once again confronts Esther with, the feeling of exposure to death, the loss of other beings and the absence of community.

Imbued with the myths of community and self autonomy which Esther has absorbed throughout her short life, she arrives in New York as a conformist, whose highest goal is to fit in. However, unable to communicate with other people, Esther constructs a landscape of radical estrangement, characterized by images of physical division and dissolution of the self.

By exposing Esther's alienated being, Plath provides what Nancy would call a narrative of "exposure of singular beings" ([1985-1986] 1991, 6). In her first-person account, the narrator becomes aware of the vulnerability of other beings, and by the same token, exposes her own vulnerable self, her own finitude to the reader. Nancy points out that although community cannot exist, the singular being may have a sudden revelation of the commonality of their own mortality and that of other human beings. Having had this realization, Esther's finite being begins to approach "the other," pitying the Rosenbergs or realizing she will miss Joan, and thus she approaches the limit where community emerges by sympathizing with those who die in the novel.

Seen in this light, Esther's account cannot be taken to be a narcissistic narrative, nor her suicide as a strategy for renewal and reintegration in society. Following Nancy, it can be stated that Plath shares the disquieting truth about the myth of an operative community by bringing to the fore Esther's singularity and her inability to fuse with other beings. Esther's sense of futility derives from her having discovered the loss of community in the death of others. As Bonds claims, the pervasive imagery of dismemberment suggests "Esther's alienation and fragmentation as well as a thwarted longing for relatedness with others and for a reconnection of dismembered part to the whole" (1990, 50). *The Bell Jar* clearly echoes the alienated ethos of the above-mentioned narratives of the Cold War era, focusing on the failure of the myth of a working community.

Furthermore, Esther is not at all a mythical heroine; she is in fact quite anti-heroic. Although unresponsive to most people, she is also sensitive, intelligent and honest. Above all, Esther wants to tell the truth about the culture she inhabits, to reveal its self-deceptive rhetoric of success and her uncertainty about the possibility of communion, by bringing to the fore the contradictory logic that demands loyalty to communal values as well as an assertion of an autonomous self.

From the outset, Esther reveals her sense of alienation by focusing on the death of the Rosenbergs: "I knew something was wrong with me that summer, because all I could think of was the Rosenbergs" (Plath [1963] 1966, 2). Esther's identification

with Julius and Ethel Rosenberg, condemned to the electric chair for having passed secrets to the Soviets, attests to her rejection of communal values. Esther sympathizes with those excluded from community and sacrificed by society rather than with any of the all-American women she meets: "Although the elimination of the Rosenbergs [...] is intended to strengthen the bonds among community members who remain, it has the opposite effect on Esther, who identifies herself with the couple's transgression and pain" (Axelrod 2010, 136). It is the suffering and death of those beings that prompts a sense of solidarity, a shared sense of belonging to a community of singular, finite and exposed beings. Although Esther cannot actually communicate with the Rosenbergs, her horror at their impending death is a manifestation of her coming closer to the other, although death hinders the actual possibility of fulfilment of that community of singular beings. The opening scene of the novel anticipates the experience of the ECT Esther is given to help her recover from her mental breakdown: "The idea of being electrocuted makes me sick, and that's all there was to read about in the papers [...] It had nothing to do with me, but I couldn't help wondering what it would be like, being burned alive all along your nerves" (Plath [1963] 1966, 1). Esther's insistence on the fact that she "couldn't get them out of [her] mind" (1) sets the demoralized tone for the rest of the narrative. Esther's odd reaction to their imminent execution—their loss—makes her aware of the fact that something is wrong with her although she "was supposed to be having the time of [her] life" (2). The Rosenbergs' exposure of their inextricable mortality supplies Esther with the overwhelming certainty of her own mortality, of her finitude, as Nancy would put it. And it is precisely on the basis of that responsiveness to the finitude of other beings that community appears. In Nancy's words:

> Sharing comes down to this: what community reveals to me, in presenting to me my birth and my death, is my existence outside myself. Which does not mean my existence reinvested in or by community, as if community were another subject that would sublate me, in a dialectical or communal mode. *Community does not sublate the finitude it exposes. Community itself, in sum, is nothing but this exposition.* It is the community of finite beings, and as such it is itself a *finite* community. In other words, not a limited community as opposed to an infinite or absolute community, but a community of finitude, because finitude 'is' communitarian, and because finitude alone is communitarian. ([1985-1986] 1991, 26-27; italics in the original)

Esther, thus, finds it easy to identify with the Rosenbergs because they are also marginalized beings and have experienced estrangement from community. Moreover, the Rosenbergs' sacrifice reveals the terrible idea that the singular being, the dissident from the common, is punished with death. In fact, Esther considers her own ECT at Dr Gordon's hospital a sort of punishment for not conforming to the 'Okey image': "I wondered what terrible thing it was that I had done" (Plath

[1963] 1966, 38). But above all, she is appalled by Hilda's insensitive attitude to the Rosenbergs' execution. Her merciless remarks make Esther claim that a devil must be speaking through her:

> So I said, 'Isn't it awful about the Rosenbergs?'
> The Rosenbergs were to be electrocuted late that night.
> 'Yes!'Hilda said, and at last I felt I had touched a human string in the cat's cradle of her heart. It was only as the two of us waited for the others in the tomb-like morning gloom of the conference room that Hilda amplified that Yes of hers.
> 'It's awful such people should be alive.'
> She yawned then, and her pale orange mouth opened on a large darkness. Fascinated, I stared at the blind cave behind her face until the two lips met and moved and the dybbuk spoke out of its hiding place, 'I'm so glad they're going to die.' (96)

To Esther's astonishment, Hilda lacks the capacity to pity others, and remains unmoved by the appalling fate of those singular beings, and as such, communication, sharing and mourning are deemed impossible. In fact, the execution of the Rosenbergs frames Esther's increasing process of isolation and estrangement in New York. It is significant that a public event of this nature marks the beginning of Esther's adventure in New York but also the end of that crucial stage in her life, her youth, signalling her descent into insanity. After the stay in New York is over, Esther's gradual sense of disconnection with the living foregrounds her closeness to the most vulnerable and singular beings, those approaching their death.

The second time Esther seems to fleetingly approach community is when Joan, the lesbian inpatient at Belsize, commits suicide. Although Esther has recoiled from Joan's uncalled-for displays of affection, it is when she learns that they have both attempted suicide that she thinks "[f]or the first time it occurred to me Joan and I might have something in common" (192). There is a mutual exposure and common vulnerability in their having being so close to death, which means they shared an awareness of their mortal humanity, of their singularity. Evidence of her approaching the limit of community is found in Esther's recognition of Joan as the "beaming double of [her] old best self, specially designed to follow and torment [her]" (197). Raised in a society where homosexuality is considered deviant, Esther finds Joan's frankness and tenderness quite disturbing. Yet, eventually Esther comes to acknowledge that "[i]n spite of the creepy feeling, and in spite of my old, ingrained dislike, Joan fascinated me. It was like observing a Martian, or a particularly warty toad. Her thoughts were not my thoughts, nor her feelings my feelings *but we were close enough* so that her thoughts and feelings seemed a wry, black image of my own at the same time" (209-210; my emphasis). Although Esther seems unable to escape the prejudice of a rigid heterosexual education, she still perceives that Joan and herself have much more in common than she would like to admit.

Joan is a doubly marginalized figure in the American society of the 1950s, representing both mental derangement and sexual divergence. The knowledge of Joan's death makes Esther recognize her singularity and the fact that they had shared a great deal despite appearances. Eventually, Joan's suicide prompts Esther's awareness of the absence of a singular being, and hence, it pushes Esther to approach the inoperative community once again. The sort of community that emerges here is not mythical, but it is instead a community of loss and death, since once Esther realizes Joan's singularity and mourns her disappearance, there is no possibility of communion.

Having gained this bitter insight, Esther's description of a landscape of fresh "snow [that has] blanketed the asylum grounds" as she is being discharged from Belsize can no longer be read as a symbol of purity, quietness and self regeneration. After her first impression, Esther adds:

> But under the deceptively clean and level slate the topography was the same, and instead of San Francisco or Europe or Mars I would be learning the old landscape, brook and hill and tree […] I remembered everything. I remembered the cadavers and Doreen and the story of the fig-tree and Marco's diamond and the sailor on the Common and Doctor Gordon's wall-eyed nurse and the broken thermometers and the negro with his two kinds of beans and the twenty pounds I gained on insulin and the rock that bulged between sky and sea like a grey skull. Maybe forgetfulness, like a kind of snow, should numb and cover them. But they were part of me. They were my landscape. (226-227)

It is quite clear that the protagonist does not allow herself to be deluded by appearances. Esther knows that the ugliness of reality is only concealed as if by a blanket of unconsciousness, that 'deceptively clean and level slate' of pure white snow. However, the narrator has the courage to confront the disheartening truth about her own sense of isolation and separation from others. She assumes that below the *nice* surface of agreed lies and half truths there lies the certainty of the interruption of the myth of community. It may resurface again, taking hold of the seemingly *healthy* individual that narrates her experience of the absence of community. The character's hesitation as to whether she is definitely recovered is also highlighted when she states: "But I wasn't sure. I wasn't sure at all. How did I know that someday at college, in Europe, somewhere, anywhere the bell jar, with its stifling distortions, wouldn't descend again?" (230).

Although defined as a 'distortion' of reality, what the narrator communicates is a distressing truth—the absence of community. Esther has seen through the deeply-rooted rhetoric of deception and conformity adopted by most characters, the grand narrative about an actual community, giving the impression that they have managed to communicate successfully and fuse with others. In contrast, Esther can only pass on what she has experienced—the impossibility of connecting or genuinely communicating with most other beings. She has come to the limit of an inoperative community, sympathizing with other singular beings exposed to death like herself.

4. Conclusion

Esther fails to communicate with most living creatures. Although she addresses other beings and is addressed by them, her increasing sense of social alienation suggests that it is absolutely impossible for her to establish sincere lasting bonds. This absence of community, the awareness of the loss of a working community, first appears when Esther seems unable to communicate in a genuine way with other characters in New York. Her attempts to find other beings with whom she can identify, other young women like her who might serve as models for her new mature self, prove sterile. No matter how hard the protagonist tries to fit into the different roles offered by society, she remains essentially on the margins, unable to join community. It is this plight of the isolated individual, this predicament of the singular being who mourns the absence of the *other* or the loss of an ideal community that is at the heart of *The Bell Jar*.

Reading the novel in light of this theory of community offers a philosophical dimension and an ethical interpretation of *The Bell Jar*. With its disturbing imagery of disintegration of the self and the poignant message about our shared myths of the self and community, Plath's novel elicits a powerful reflection on the true nature of community and the need to be open to what all beings have in common: exposure, finitude and the singularity of being.

As I see it, Plath's heroine is torn between two mutually exclusive alternatives, leaving her at an impasse—on the one hand, an extreme form of individualism, based on the myth of the bounded unified self; and on the other, a longing for community which would theoretically render her insignificant life and death somehow meaningful. Since other authors (Bonds 1990; Axelrod 2010) have examined in detail the devastating effects of trying to enact the myth of the unified and independent self in *The Bell Jar*, I have devoted this essay to considering what Nancy calls "the interruption of [the] myth [of community]" ([1985-1986] 1991, 47) in order to look at Plath's narrative from a fresh perspective. Yet Nancy has argued that the idea of operative community never took place, except in Rousseau's "state of nature," despite the romantic belief that some kind of transcendence of the subject is made possible by joining community. Therefore, what can be identified in this novel, as in many other literary works of the Cold War period, is the inscription of the singularity of being by sharing or communicating through a worthy piece of literature the interruption of the myth of community. Plath's novel makes it plain that her protagonist is persuaded of the absence of an operative community whose members might fuse with each other to transcend their mortal singularities. Far from the comforting happy ending of much popular fiction, *The Bell Jar* communicates a discouraging fact about our world—that there is no avowable or operative community.

Ironically, the only community Esther glimpses from a certain distance is the community of death, in other words, an unfeasible community which undoes the self. Death is a pervasive element in the novel. As has been noted above, the only indication of kinship emerges when Esther comes across marginal characters like herself, beings

exposed to suffering and extinction, all of whom die at various points in the novel. The Rosenbergs' death is Esther's obsession in the first part of the novel, while Joan's ghost haunts her after she learns of her suicide in the second: "Joan's face floated before me, bodily and smiling, like the face of a Cheshire cat. I even thought I heard her voice, rustling and hushing through the dark" (Plath {1963} 1966, 224).

Following Martin Halliwell's *American Culture in the 1950s* (2007), Ferrater concludes that this was a "decade first characterized as a struggle between conflicting forces" despite the fact that it seems there was a "monolithic and one-dimensional" Cold War culture (quoted in Ferrater 2010, 91). Joanne Meyerowitz in her essay "Beyond the Feminine Mystique: A Reassessment of Postwar Mass Culture, 1946-1958" (1994) also argues that the women's magazines Plath read and for which she wrote "articulate this complexity of ideological forces and discourses" (quoted in Ferrater 2010, 91). So, although what prevailed at the time of the writing of *The Bell Jar* was a conservative attitude which assumed the so-called rhetoric of deception to promote certain models of the self and a belief in the shared values of an operative community, there were also resistant voices contesting the hegemonic discourse of conformity. In my view, Esther's *distorted* vision of American culture is a critique of the social conventions and restrictions imposed on dissenting, alienated individuals. However, as I see it, Plath is not merely condemning society for its double standards towards single women. Although she tells Esther's story from a woman's standpoint, I believe Plath was voicing the predicament of singular beings confronting the interruption of some enduring myths, the exhaustion of the myth of community being the one example that I have examined in close detail in *The Bell Jar* since to date it has not been studied in the light of communitarian theory.

The Bell Jar communicates the collapse of these inherited myths and underscores the abuse of a beguiling rhetoric of self-fulfilment and belongingness in the middle years of the twentieth century. What Esther Greenwood's disturbing experience reveals is that the only way to enter community is by sharing what, according to Nancy and Blanchot, is common to all beings—our death. Yet, it is actual death that undoes the being, and paradoxically destroys community. Therefore, it is the awareness of the death of other beings that brings to the fore the need to communicate, to share with others the pain of their absence and to mourn their loss. It is only by realizing that all human beings are after all nothing but mortal beings that singular lives acquire an intrinsic value and that awareness may trigger the need to reach other beings and engage with them before it is too late.

As a literary work, *The Bell Jar* challenges commonly held assumptions and shatters the myth of community, offering its readers the humble revelation of our common humanity and inescapable finitude. It is this understanding that may eventually provoke an opening up of singularities to community, an ethical turn to share with the *other* a joint feeling of exposure and vulnerability to death, to alert us to the voices of dissidence, because we may actually be sharing more than we believe.

WORKS CITED

ALVAREZ, Al. (1971) 1974. *The Savage God: A Study of Suicide.* Harmondsworth: Penguin.

AMES, Lois. 1999. "Biographical Note to Sylvia Plath." In *The Bell Jar* by Sylvia Plath, 260-276. New York: Harper Collins.

AXELROD, Steven G. 2010. "Alienation and Renewal in *The Bell Jar." The Plath Profiles: An Interdisciplinary Journal for Sylvia Plath Studies* 3: 134-143.

BALDWIN, Kate A. 2004 "The Radical Imaginary of *The Bell Jar." Novel: A Forum on Fiction* 38: 21-40.

BLANCHOT, Maurice. (1983) 1988. *The Unavowable Community.* Translated by Pierrre Joris. New York: Station Hill.

BONDS, Diane S. 1990. "The Separative Self in Sylvia Plath's *The Bell Jar." Women's Studies: An Interdisciplinary Journal* 18: 49-64.

BRAIN, Tracy. 2001. *The Other Sylvia Plath*, Harlow: Pearson.

BRONFEN, Elisabeth. 1998. *Sylvia Plath.* Plymouth: Northcote House.

CLARIDGE, Gordon, Ruth Pryor and Gwen Watkins. 1990. *Sounds from the Bell Jar. Ten Psychotic Authors*. London: Macmillan.

FERRATER, Luke. 2010. *Sylvia Plath's Fiction. A Critical Study.* Edinburgh: Edinburgh UP.

HALLIWELL, Martin. 2007. *American Culture in the 1950s.* Edinburgh: Edinburgh UP.

JERNIGAN, Adam T. 2014. "Paraliterary Labours in Sylvia Plath's *The Bell Jar*: Typist, Teachers, and the Pink-collar Subtext." *Modern Fiction Studies* 60: 1-27.

MACPHERSON, Pat. 1991. *Reflecting on The Bell Jar.* London: Routledge.

MALOFF, Saul. 1971. "Waiting for the Voice to Crack." *New Republic*, May 8, 33-35.

MEYEROWITZ, Joanne. 1994. "Beyond the Feminine Mystique: A Reassessment of Postwar Mass Culture, 1946-1958." In *Not June Cleaver: Women and Gender in Postwar America, 1945-1960*, edited by Joanne Meyerowitz, 229-262. Philadelphia: Temple UP.

NANCY, Jean-Luc. (1985-1986) 1991. *The Inoperative Community*. Translated and edited by Peter Connor. Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P.

—. (1996) 2000. *Being Singular Plural*. Translated by Robert D. Richardson and Anne E. O'Byrne. Stanford, CA: Stanford UP.

PEEL, Robin. 2002. *Writing Back: Sylvia Plath's Cold War Politics.* Madison and Teaneck: Farleigh Dickinson UP / London: Associated U Presses.

—. 2007. "The Political Education of Sylvia Plath." In *Unraveling the Archive: Essays on Sylvia Plath*, edited by Anita Helle, 39-64. Ann Arbor: U of Michigan P.

PERLOFF, Marjorie. 1972. "A Ritual for Being Born twice: Sylvia Plath's *The Bell Jar." Contemporary Literature* 13 (4): 507-522.

PLATH, Sylvia. (1963) 1966. *The Bell Jar*. London: Faber.

—. (1977) 2008. *Johnny Panic and the Bible of Dreams*. New York: Harper Perennial.

SCHOBER PLATH, Aurelia, ed. 1975. *Letters Home by Sylvia Plath: Correspondence 1950-1963.* London: Faber.

WAGNER-MARTIN, Linda. 1986. "Plath's *Bell Jar* as a Female Bildungsroman." *Women's Studies: An Interdisciplinary Journal* 12: 55-68.

—. 1987. *Sylvia Plath: A Biography*. New York: St. Martin's.

—. 1992. *The Bell Jar, A Novel of the Fifties*. New York: Twayne.

María Luisa Pascual-Garrido is a Lecturer at the Department of English and German Studies at the University of Córdoba (Spain). Her research interests are varied, ranging from literary translation to modern English literature (Shakespeare, Johnson), contemporary American literature (Plath, Oates, Hoban) and women's writing. She has published articles and book chapters in those areas and Spanish editions of Samuel Johnson's *Rasselas* (Berenice, 2007), Russell Hoban's *Riddley Walker* (Cátedra, 2011) and, more recently, Mary Astell's proto-feminist essays "A Serious Proposal to the Ladies, Part I" and "Some Reflections on Marriage" collected in *Mary Astell. Escritos Feministas* (Maia, 2013).

Address: Departamento de Filologías Inglesa y Alemana. Facultad de Filosofía y Letras. Universidad de Córdoba. Plaza del Cardenal Salazar, 3. 14071, Córdoba, Spain. Tel.: +34 957 218812.

Woody Guthrie's *Songs Against Franco*

WILL KAUFMAN

University of Central Lancashire
wkaufman@uclan.ac.uk

In 1952 Woody Guthrie wrote a series of songs condemning the Spanish dictator Francisco Franco. These songs were never published or recorded. The present article, based on research at the Woody Guthrie Archives in Tulsa, Oklahoma, is the first study of Guthrie's anti-Franco writings, situating them in the context of Guthrie's abiding anti-fascism amidst the repressive political culture of McCarthyism. Guthrie's *Songs Against Franco* are also placed within the broader history of the songs of the Spanish Civil War as they were adopted and perpetuated in American leftist circles following the defeat of the Second Spanish Republic. Written coterminously with the onset of Guthrie's fatal Huntington's disease, they are the legacy of his final assault on what he perceived to be the transplanting of embryonic fascism into the US, a small but coherent body of work yoking the Spanish past to Guthrie's American present.

Keywords: Woody Guthrie; Spanish Civil War; Franco; folk music; McCarthyism; anti-communism

·   ·   ·

Las canciones antifranquistas de Woody Guthrie

En 1952, Woody Guthrie escribió una serie de canciones que condenaban al dictador español Francisco Franco. Nunca se han publicado ni se han grabado. Este artículo, que tiene su base en una investigación hecha en los Woody Guthrie Archives en Tulsa, Oklahoma, es el primer estudio de las obras antifranquistas de Guthrie, y las sitúa en el contexto de su activismo antifascista, en medio de la cultura política represiva del macarthismo. Además, las canciones de Guthrie en contra de Franco se ven ubicadas dentro de la historia más amplia de las canciones de la Guerra Civil española, a medida que se iban adoptando y perpetuando en los círculos izquierdistas de los EE.UU. tras la derrota de la Segunda República española. Estas canciones, escritas por Guthrie en una época coincidente con la aparición de la enfermedad

de Huntington que causó su muerte, son el legado de su último ataque contra lo que consideraba como el trasplante de un fascismo embrionario a los EE.UU., una obra pequeña pero coherente que unía el pasado español al presente americano de Guthrie.

Woody Guthrie has sometimes been mis-credited with the composition of "Jarama Valley," perhaps the most popular English-language song to have emerged from the Spanish Civil War.[1] It is true that Guthrie recorded a version of the song composed by the Scottish fighter, Alex McDade, who was killed at the Battle of Brunete in July of 1937. McDade's original version was a four-stanza ode to the British Battalion of the Fifteenth International Brigade, first published in *The Book of the XV International Brigade* in 1938 (Ryan [1938] 1975, 97). Guthrie's version is an adaptation celebrating the Abraham Lincoln Battalion, the main American contingent of the International Brigade. Guthrie recorded "Jarama Valley" for his producer, Moses Asch, sometime between 1946 and 1948, but it was not released until 1962 on the Folkways album *Songs of the Spanish Civil War, vol. 2* (Guthrie [1962] 2014).

It is perhaps ironic that the Spanish Civil War song for which Guthrie is best known is one that he did not write. One further Guthrie-penned ode, "Antyfascist Steve," written in honor of Lincoln brigadier Steve Nelson in 1953, has only latterly attracted notice (see Mishler 2004). Thus, until now, only two songs have been known to have marked Guthrie's musical commentary on the Spanish Civil War. However, a significant cache of previously unseen songs has now come to light. In the Woody Guthrie Archives in Tulsa, Oklahoma, there sits a thin makeshift notebook comprising the lyrics to some ten songs, its cover decorated with a bright red watercolor wash bearing the script, "Songs against Franco." Guthrie never published or recorded these songs, but they are important—not simply as reflections of Guthrie's fierce anti-fascism, which is common enough knowledge, but as evidence of a highly conscious and poignant artistic struggle. For even as he wrote these songs, Guthrie was facing his own—fatal—neurological disintegration through the onset of Huntington's disease. Mirroring his own physical breakdown was the seeming disintegration of the American Left, with the Korean War raging abroad, the Cold War reshaping the definitions of political freedom at home, and the repressions of McCarthyism decimating progressive activism in every public arena. Guthrie's *Songs Against Franco* are the legacy of his final assault on what he perceived to be the transplanting of embryonic fascism into the US, a small but coherent body of work yoking Spain's recent past to Guthrie's American present.

In 1952, amidst the early disorienting signs of the disease that would claim his life in 1967, and with his second marriage virtually in ruins, Guthrie fled his New York home to join a community of blacklisted artists, actors and writers in the Topanga Canyon community of Los Angeles. There, the socialist actor Will Geer had established a haven for fellow progressives facing the onslaught of the anti-communist witch hunt spearheaded by Senator Joseph McCarthy. Following the publication of the right-wing

---

directory, *Red Channels* (1950), in which he was named as a communist, Geer had refused to co-operate with the House Un-American Activities Committee (HUAC). As a result, his performing career dried up, and he established the Theatricum Botanicum at Topanga—a venture that continues to produce plays to this day (Cohen 2001, 139).

Guthrie had known Geer since 1938; they often performed together during agricultural strikes and migrant workers' fundraisers in the Salinas and San Joaquin valleys. It was in fact Geer who introduced Guthrie to John Steinbeck, author of the celebrated Dust Bowl epic *The Grapes of Wrath* (1939), with which Guthrie's *Dust Bowl Ballads* have been so frequently associated (Santelli 2012, 40). After Geer and his wife Herta Ware had briefly relocated to New York in 1940, Guthrie had followed them, spending his first week in their plush uptown apartment before settling in the shabby Hanover House hotel, where, the following week, he wrote his signature anthem, "This Land Is Your Land" (Guthrie, N. 2012, 17). Now, in 1952, Guthrie was back with his old friend Geer, wrestling with the implications of his mortal disease as well as the apparent death knell of the American Left in the face of the Red Scare. It was here that Guthrie envisaged his own defiant act— his own version of fighting the good fight against American fascism. He would record an album of anti-Franco songs for Stinson Records because (as he wrote to Pete Seeger), Stinson's communist president, Bob Harris, would be "freer politically about censoring our recordsong [*sic*] ideas" than his usual producer, Asch, would be (quoted in Cray 2004, 358). This was actually an unfair slander against Asch, who had already shown his defiance by commissioning Guthrie to write and record *Ballads for Sacco and Vanzetti* in 1946, when the HUAC was already flexing its muscles (Cohen 2012, 35).

Guthrie's choice of subject matter might seem rather odd for 1952. The Spanish Civil War was long over, the matter settled with the defeat of the Second Republic in 1939. Franco had been ruling, unchallenged, for thirteen years. His relations with the United States were not particularly newsworthy; the Second World War had largely eclipsed any recollection of Franklin Roosevelt's refusal to arm the Republican side, even as Hitler and Mussolini—not to mention Texaco, Franco's "principal oil supplier"—were bankrolling the fascist war machine (Hochschild 2016, 169). Yet, here was Woody Guthrie, in 1952, scrawling in gray ink over a multicolored wash of flowers on a page of his notebook, in the grammatically and syntactically tortured strains of early Huntington's disease:

> All of us flowers
> and blooms and blossoms are
> all out to stop you cold,
>   Franco
> when courtrooms wont stop you we sure

can and our words are oceans and oceans aplenty
to not ever let you forget that we've stopped
while thousands of haters and thuggers and killers just
like you are before you got born. (Guthrie, *Notebooks* 2 [9], 69)[2]

This, then, is the critical question prompted by Guthrie's *Songs Against Franco*. Why invoke, now, and through folk song, the fascist Generalissimo and the lost cause of the Second Spanish Republic? During the Civil War itself, of course, "songs from the olive orchards and the battlefields of Spain" had been left-wing staples, as Serge Denisoff recalled. Amidst the resentment and outrage over the Roosevelt embargo, singing "Los Quatros Generales" or "Viva La Quince Brigada"—especially in their original Spanish—would make any singing American leftist "the life of the party" (Denisoff 1973, 55). Between the years 1937 and 1939, Guthrie had sung at many parties up and down California, either solo or with Geer and other performers. Often these were fundraisers for Spanish refugees, as well as wounded veterans of the Lincoln Battalion (Cohen 2001, 134).

Guthrie himself had already been primed for such musical activism when he arrived in California from Oklahoma, by way of Texas, in 1937. The previous year, according to his brother-in-law and former singing partner, Matt Jennings, the struggle against Franco had been instrumental in putting Guthrie on the path to socialism. Jennings, a Catholic, would show Guthrie the weekly edition of the *Sunday Visitor*, a conservative Catholic magazine whose editorials habitually praised Franco's "fascist rebellion" in defense of the church, and whose anti-communist diatribes by Bishop Fulton J. Sheen were particularly galling to Guthrie (Cray 2004, 86-87). Later, in his autobiographical novel, *Bound for Glory* (1943), Guthrie demonstrated his readiness to establish political connections between Franco's war, fought on behalf of the Spanish landowning class, and the greed of American landowners whose aggressive rapacity and mismanagement of the land had brought about the catastrophe of the Dust Bowl. As Guthrie succinctly put it, through the invented dialogue of a distressed tenant farmer in the Texas panhandle, supposedly speaking in 1936: "This Spanish war's a sign [...]. This is th' final battle! Battle of Armagaddeon [*sic*]! This dust, blowin' so thick ya cain't breathe, cain't see th' sky, that's th' scourge over th' face of th' earth! Men too greedy for land an' for money an' for th' power to make slaves out of his feller men! Man has cursed th' very land itself!" (Guthrie 1943, 247).

Fleeing the Dust Bowl and arriving in Los Angeles in the summer of 1937, Guthrie soon found himself drawing political cartoons and writing a column for the

San Francisco-based *People's World*, the West Coast organ of the Communist Party of the USA (CPUSA). His colleague on the paper, Ed Robbin (who had introduced Guthrie to Geer), recalled: "The civil war was raging in Spain, and it affected us as if it were in our own backyard" (Robbin 1979, 19). But war of a different kind had been "raging" in California since 1934. Robbin had reported first-hand on what Herbert Klein and Carey McWilliams, writing in *The Nation*, had called "farm fascism"—the "organized terrorism" and "fascism from above" on the part of the fruit-crop growers in collusion with their hired thugs and the police (Klein and McWilliams 1934, 97). Robbin recalled "the air of terror and violence in the city of Salinas, [...] the bullet holes in the walls, the broken glass, and some of the children still sick with doses of tear gas," and he reflected: "A city surrounded by police, city officials, growers, and scab herders with their headquarters in the Jeffrey Hotel, violence in the streets and on the picket lines: weren't these the very ingredients of Nazi and fascist rule we had been studying in the European scene?" (Robbin 1979, 22). Indeed, as Kevin Starr has written, equally troubling associations with European fascism could be drawn from the apricot pickers' strike in the nearby Brentwood District of Contra Costa County: "Heads were busted, and the usual suspects rounded up. In this instance, 150 strikers were herded by deputies into a cattle corral-like enclosure in the center of Brentwood. This spectacle of American citizens being herded into a temporary concentration camp had prophetic import" (1996, 164).

Guthrie's and Robbin's editor at *People's World*, Al Richmond, likewise invoked "the agony of Spain" as well as "the shame of Munich," where, in 1938, Britain's prime minister, Neville Chamberlain, had capitulated in appeasement to Hitler. These were "portents of World War II," Richmond believed: "Domestically the New Deal had palliated the most acute distress, but the problems of mass unemployment and poverty were no nearer solution. The presentiment of impending catastrophe, especially in the tide of world affairs, became even more compelling with the defeat of the Spanish Republic, a scant six months after the pact at Munich" (1972, 274-275).

When Robbin brought Guthrie into Richmond's office early in 1939, the editor found that he could add a unique, humorous complement to his more serious writing staff, which included former members of the Industrial Workers of the World as well as veterans of the Lincoln Battalion. The "young hillbilly singer from Oklahoma," Richmond recalled, "might have been called a hippie in later years, except that his Oklahoma speech was authentic and so was his familiarity with the folkways of the open road as it was traveled by uprooted farmers and migratory workers" (Richmond 1972, 280). Among these "folkways of the open road" was the figure of the *vigilante*, as well as the police violence—the "farm fascism"—that Guthrie experienced firsthand in the company of the striking farmworkers. Thus was born Guthrie's "Woody Sez" column, which, using mock hillbilly dialect, was soon making trenchant connections between the "dustbowl refugese" at home and the "Spanish refugies" fleeing Franco (quoted in La Chapelle 2007, 65).

Peter La Chapelle has made a study of Guthrie's newspaper and radio work during his three-year California sojourn, some of which overlapped with the Spanish Civil War. He emphasizes the symbolic power of the Republican struggle for the causes to which Guthrie was increasingly committed:

> Indeed, influenced by ethnic and political refugees from Hitler's Europe and Franco's Spain, Guthrie in his songs and writings began to associate refugee Dust Bowlers with larger, more politically focused struggles with fascism such as the Spanish Civil War and anti-Nazi resistance. By outlining how others shared migrants' status as refugees and informing readers and listeners about these other conflicts, Guthrie worked to mobilize migrants and other audience listeners as supporters of the antifascist Left. His own connections with Spanish republicanism appear to have been reinforced by having met refugee Spanish radicals and returning veterans of the Lincoln Brigade. (2007, 65)

In spite of the general leftist anger over Roosevelt's embargo on arms for the Republican side, and the example of those Americans who were willing to sacrifice their lives on the Spanish battlefields, there is no evidence that Guthrie went so far as to urge US intervention in the war against Franco at this stage of his political awakening. His "Woody Sez" columns are strident in their arguments against US involvement in any European conflict, even though the CPUSA actively supported the Republican cause, with many Lincoln Battalion fighters coming from its ranks (Carroll 1994, 9-14). Beyond working to raise funds for Spanish refugees and Lincoln veterans, Guthrie was content to watch the Spanish struggle from the sidelines. He argued somewhat simplistically in "Woody Sez" (with its exaggerated hillbilly orthography): "I wood have a lots of fights if I had a nother feller to fight 'em for me. But since I got to do my own fightin, I try not to have no trouble" (Guthrie 1975, 64).

As Guthrie's fellow Oklahoman and future singing partner, Agnes "Sis" Cunningham, recalled, the question of US intervention in Spain had become a moot point after three hopeless years of leftist agitation:

> [S]uddenly we realized it was too late to press further for a US lifting of the arms embargo to Loyalist Spain; her final denouement came in February of 1939, when the French sold out the Loyalists and drove evacuees back across the Pyrenees by the thousands after seizing their arms, which they turned over to Franco's forces. Several personal friends and acquaintances of mine were volunteers in Spain—all but one came back. In a manner of speaking, all of us, even if we never left the United States, had to come back from Spain. (Cunningham and Friesen 1999, 177)

But Franco's victory did not quite signal the end of the American Left's efforts on behalf of the Republican side: for some, it was too early to "come back from Spain" as long as there were still refugees and veterans to support. Guthrie's very first New

York appearance, on February 25, 1940, was at a benefit arranged by Geer for the Spanish Refugees Relief Fund at the Mecca Temple on 58th Street and Broadway (Nowlin 2013, 13). The classical baritone Mordecai Bauman, who shared the bill with Guthrie, recalled: "He was a talent we had never heard in New York. In a minute he had the audience in his hand" (quoted in Cray 2004, 167). Guthrie continued to play at Spanish refugee benefits for at least the next seven years, on one later (drunken) occasion infuriating his activist partner, John Henry Faulk, by pretending to steal the proceeds from the event in full view of the gathered crowd:

> [Faulk] saw Woody lurch over to the silver collection plate, piled with contributions from the guests, and pour all the money down his shirt. The party stopped cold, everyone staring. Woody was grinning and patting his shirt. "Somebody shoot at me," he said. "You cain't hit me now!"
>
> Faulk rushed over and grabbed him. "Woody, you little son of a bitch, you're making a shambles of this whole thing. That money doesn't belong to these people, it's for a cause. It's for some poor, half-starved Spanish kids sitting in refugee camps in France. So give it back, for chrissake. Now. (Klein 1999, 338-339)

In the latter half of 1941, Guthrie's ostentatious pacifism evaporated with the end of the Hitler-Stalin Pact, the German invasion of Russia and the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor. When Pete Seeger invited Guthrie to join his group, the Almanac Singers, Guthrie readily agreed, launching into writing a series of gung-ho, pro-war, anti-fascist songs that marked a complete about-face from his earlier non-interventionist stance. From late 1941 to mid-1942—when the press outed them as communists—the Almanacs were the most popular war propagandists on the radio, singing such Guthrie-penned songs as "The Sinking of the Reuben James" and "Round and Round Hitler's Grave." Supporting three children from his first marriage and one from his (soon-to-be) second, Guthrie remained exempt from the draft until late 1943, when "the army was forced to become less choosy about its inductees" (Klein 1999, 274).

Heading off the army induction notices that were certain to come, Guthrie joined the merchant marine, signing on to the first of three Atlantic voyages in June of 1943. On two of the three voyages, his ship was crippled and nearly sunk by acoustic mines. His singing partner, Cisco Houston, who sailed with him, recalled how Guthrie's musical anti-fascism suddenly became a personal issue when his life, and that of his shipmates, was threatened: "Even when the ship got hit, the guys were out on the decks singing [Guthrie's] 'You Fascists Bound to Lose,' and singing was the thing that held them together" (1961, 21). In particular, it was a personal issue against Franco, since Spanish ships had been complicit with the Nazis in inflicting the damage. Guthrie's shipboard comrade, Jim Longhi, described an ominous threat off the coast of Gibraltar: "For the next two nights we were threatened by brightly lit ships steaming straight toward our blacked-out convoy. They were Spanish ships. Spain was supposed to be a

neutral country, yet they were lighting the way for the U-boats, guiding them straight to us" (1997, 83-84). This was an outrage that Guthrie never forgot: his late wartime notebooks bristle with his hatred for Franco and the violation of Spain's declared neutrality. In January of 1945 he exploded onto the page:

> I saw the wrecked hulls of twenty six of our ships and their crews of men all knocked to hell in the harbor of Gibraltar.
>
> So I say break all dealings with that fascist, that real Nazi, Franco.
>
> Yes. Break off all foolish friendship with him because you know that if Mexico was to sink ten of our cargo ships you would declare war on them before daylight in the morning.
>
> I saw how the men swim out from the shores of Franco Spain with "sticker bombs" on their backs and stick them onto the sides of our ships. And the men from the other wrecked ships told us, "Oughtta declare war on that Franco right this very minute!"
>
> I do agree with these shipwrecked "sticker bombed" seamen. And I say: "Declare War on Fascist Spain now. This minute."
>
> My guitar has got a label on it that says "This Machine Kills Fascists"—and that is the only thing that makes my guitar play. (Guthrie, *Notebooks* 1 [26], 95)

This is, of course, a striking declaration from a songwriter whom popular culture persists in depicting as an implacable pacifist—the icon who is remembered for proclaiming, "Nope, I aint a gonna kill nobody. Plenty of rich folks wants to fight. Give them the guns" (Guthrie 1975, 71). But an annotation of Guthrie's, jotted onto a record cover in that same January of 1945, illuminates his fixation on Franco as the locus for all the fascistic tendencies towards which his own country appeared to be drifting, even as the war against European fascism still raged. Blasting the radio executives at New York's WNEW station, where he briefly hosted a ballad program, Guthrie wrote: "Of course what sucks my brain dry is this goddamned tight censorship this station has got. They won't even let me sing a song against Franco. That shows you where they stand. They don't want no song to say nothing about anything on one side or the other. I guess they are afraid Franco will take them down to the court of law and sue them. Well, let him sue me. I don't care" (1945, n.p.).

Guthrie's immediate postwar writings confirm the sense of malaise infecting much of the American Left in the wake of Harry Truman's assumption of the presidency. What Robbie Lieberman describes in terms of the American liberal wing would certainly hold true for the communist wing, of which Guthrie was a part: "They were unhappy with the Truman administration's policy in Europe, which often encouraged the remnants of fascism. While the United States government did little to help displaced Jews find a home, it worked with people and groups once close to the Nazis in Germany, tolerated the Franco government in Spain, and supported the right wing in the Greek Civil War" (1995, 105). Writing explicitly of the Greek Civil War—which had prompted the so-called "Truman Doctrine," the first articulation of the US mission to fight a global war

against communism (Bostdorff 2008)—Guthrie declared ruefully, in the persona of "a Greek working man, and a fighter, too":

> Fascists
> Fought to get rid of them.
> They didn't even change their uniforms.
> Still walking my sidewalk. (Guthrie 1947, n.p.)

Yet, it was not only Greece that had Guthrie worried. With the HUAC reaching deeper and deeper into American freedoms of expression and political association, he applied similar terminology to the domestic setting:

> If we chase all you fascists
> Out from Washington
> They'd be a world of vacant houses
> For Americans. (Guthrie 1948, n.p.)

It is a measure of Guthrie's political disillusionment that, by 1949, he was ready to conclude: "The war is so far from won that you can nearly say that we've lost outright to the fascists" (quoted in Cray 2004, 305). Guthrie could even point to evidence to support his assertions, as he did on the 9th of August that year: imprisoned Jews in "the British Long Gun Holy Land"; the murdered and disappeared at the hands of "Chiang Kai Check [*sic*]"; and "Franco's hungry and dead prisoners" (Guthrie, *Notebooks* 1 [57], 17).

It is in this context of postwar disillusionment that we should consider the resurgence in popularity of Spanish Civil War songs among the beleaguered American Left—a manifestation of the *Radical Nostalgia* of which Peter Glazer has so eloquently written (2005). In the aftermath of the Republican defeat in 1939, progressive American singers had taken up with renewed verve "Viva La Quince Brigada," "Si Me Quieres Escribir" and other odes to the (lost) cause. It was as late as 1943 that Glazer's father, Tom, along with Pete Seeger, "Butch" Hawes and Bess Lomax Hawes, recorded *Songs of the Lincoln Battalion* for the Asch-Stinson label (Asch and Stinson having merged for three short years); the songs included "Viva La Quince Brigada," "Jarama Valley," "Spanish Marching Song" and "Quinto Regimento" among other numbers (Glazer et al. 1943). Now, in the infancy of the Cold War, folksingers were reviving those same Spanish odes. In 1948, the *People's Song Book* reprinted versions of "Los Quatros Generales" as well as Harry Berlow's "The Rat," both of which had appeared two years earlier in *People's Songs*, the major bulletin for the dissemination of progressive topical songs (Hille [1948] 2006). In September of 1951, when folk singers who had supported the Republican cause were being ingeniously and maliciously designated "premature anti-fascists" by the HUAC, *Sing Out!* magazine reprinted "Jarama Valley" among its monthly offerings (McDade [1938] 1951, 11). This same issue included a defiant letter from Guthrie, throwing down the gauntlet to the

anti-communist Taft-Hartley Act of 1947 and Sen. Pat McCarran's Internal Security Act of 1950: "[W]hichever side MacCarran [*sic*] ain't on, I am; whichever side Taft-Hartley's not on, I'm on double watch" (Guthrie 1951, 14).

Guthrie had already seen his close friend and protégé, Pete Seeger, pilloried in the anti-communist "smear sheet," *Counterattack*—like *Red Channels*, in which he was also named, a major resource for the HUAC. In June of 1950, *Counterattack* accused Seeger's group, the Weavers, of singing "fighting songs of the Lincoln Brigade (which fought for Stalin in the Spanish Civil War) and other Communist song favorites" (quoted in Cohen and Samuelson 1996, 45). *Counterattack*'s unabashed ignorance as to the political complexities within the Republican ranks still takes the breath away. Its editors had obviously not read Maxwell Anderson's *Key Largo*, in which Nimmo, a Lincoln Battalion volunteer, explains: "They're Anarchists, Communists, Leftists, Rightists, Leftist-rightists, Rightist-leftists, Socialists, Leftist-Socialists, Rightist-Socialists, Anti-clericals, Clerical-Communists, Loyalist soldiers, police, crazy people, and once in a while just a plain farmer, all fighting Franco!" (Anderson 1939, 9). No matter: for the right-wing gutter press, singers of Republican songs were plainly and simply "Stalin's songbirds," as Seeger was called for the rest of his life (Epstein 2010, 123).

For the HUAC, particular songs were as suspect as the singers themselves. As Seeger recalled, "[i]n 1949, only 'Commies' used words like 'peace' and 'freedom'" (quoted in Dunaway 2008, 188). Among the Weavers' songs singled out by name in the HUAC hearings were "If I Had a Hammer," which honored both the workers' movement and the peace movement, and "Wasn't That a Time," which implicitly condemned the McCarthyite witch-hunters even as it equated the Spanish Republican struggle with the battles of Valley Forge and Gettysburg:

> And now again
> the madmen come
> and shall our victory fail?
> There is no victory
> in a land
> where free men go to jail.
>> Isn't this a time!
>> Isn't this a time!
>> A time to try the soul of man!
>> Isn't this a terrible time!
>> Our faith cries out
>> THEY SHALL NOT PASS!
>> We cry NO PASARAN!
>> We pledge our lives,
>> our honor, all
>> to free this prisoned land. (Hays and Lowenfels [1948] 1961, 75)

By 1952, the Weavers were thoroughly blacklisted, unable to secure bookings anywhere in the broadcast media or in clubs. As Gene Marine recalled: "In Ohio, a woman was subpoenaed [by the HUAC] because she had held a hootenanny in her house in order to introduce Pete Seeger to other local people. In his own upstate New York, sponsors of a concert were physically threatened" ([1972] 2014, 24). At the exact same time, Guthrie's early patron, the folk song collector Alan Lomax, was suffering as a result of the collusion between the US government and the Franco regime in keeping musical figures in check. Having fled the witch hunts in America, Lomax was in Spain in 1952, attempting to collect folk songs, under the intimidation of the Guardia Civil, who, he said, "would appear like so many black buzzards carrying with them the stink of fear" (quoted in Swezd 2010, 272). Lomax's biographer explains: "The police were interested in Lomax because, unbeknownst to him, the FBI had notified the Spanish authorities that he was a potential threat [...] The police in Madrid went through the mail that was being held for [him] and shared what they found with the US Embassy" (Swezd 2010, 272-273).

It is in the knowledge of this poisonous atmosphere—with the US and Franco's Spain sharing a splendid mutual conviviality—that we finally turn to Guthrie's *Songs Against Franco* as reflections of his engagement with the then-current political culture. In October of 1952, as he scrawled on the pages of his notebook, it seemed to him that "any good word" was "anty franco [*sic*]" (*Notebooks* 2 [9], 65). Guthrie's composition strategies are varied, and it is sometimes unclear whether his setting is the actual war of 1936-1939, the undeclared war against Franco for which Guthrie had hopelessly called back in 1945, or some later imagined war.

One of the most intriguing narratives in *Songs Against Franco*, "Spanish Rebel," injects some historical confusion into the song by virtue of its title as well as the protagonist's self-designation as a rebel—"Half a saint and half a devil"—fighting against Franco in what clearly is the 1936-1939 war. However, during the Civil War, it was Franco and his soldiers who were the rebels, having taken up arms against the elected Republican government. But Guthrie has no time for such distinctions, for here—as in so many of his other songs—rebellion against a prevailing tyranny is the most noble act. Thus, the rebel in "Spanish Rebel" is an American fighter hailing from New York's Coney Island, where Guthrie was then living with his wife and children. His rebellion is clearly against his own hypocritical government, which has imposed an embargo on Republican aid:

> Good Bye to job and salary;
> Good Bye to wife and family;
> Hello to my rabble army
> Stopping Franco while we can.

My United States, dammit!
Wont give me a single bullet;
Hitler fires ten billion at me
Tryin' ta stop me while he can.

Warshin'ton Dee Cee wont send me
Not a single shooting bullet;
Mussoleeny shoots fifty jilliun
Tryin' ta stop me while he can. (Guthrie, *Notebooks* 2 [9], 66)

Franklin Roosevelt had eventually called America's failure to intervene against Franco "a grave mistake" (quoted in Hochschild 2016, 369). But for Guthrie, this grievous error had not only ensured the triumph of fascism in Spain, but it had also paved the way for it to intrude into the corridors of American power. Hence the desperation of the song's final line:

My world won't soon forget, dear,
My hand grenade I tossed here;
When you dont see me come back, dear,
Stop these fascists while you can. (Guthrie, *Notebooks* 2 [9], 66)

Similarly, in a song titled "Stop Franco," the narrator superimposes the Spanish Civil War upon what is both the "damned tangled up" political culture of the American 1950s and Guthrie's disintegrating personal life:

My life got so damned tangled up
I signed up for to go
Up over the hump of the Pyrraneses [*sic*]
To try to stop Franco; (yes),
To try to stop Franco. (Guthrie, *Notebooks* 2 [9], 68)

As is the case in "Spanish Rebel," the first-person setting of "Stop Franco" is highly significant in that Guthrie chooses a narrative position whose intimacy and immediacy confounds the impression of mere soap-box preaching. The fight against Franco is, again, a highly personal one, as it is in Guthrie's merchant marine writings. Although "Stop Franco" in particular dwells at length on the brutality of the Franco regime, it also carries resounding overtones of the increasingly thuggish personages on the HUAC, in the anti-communist press and in the country at large. Guthrie had already seen bigoted citizens stirred up into inflicting actual violence upon suspected *commies*. He had fresh memories of the mob attacks that he had personally faced along with Paul Robeson, Seeger and others during the violently anti-communist Peekskill Riots in

New York State in 1949 (Fast 2011). Now, a scant four years later, McCarthyism in the legislative halls compounded the mob violence on the streets, all hearkening back to Franco's ascension to power:

> Franco he's a bigshot racketman;
> Coldhearted gambler, too;
> To keep his bullywhip boys in bizness
> There's nothin' he wont do;
> There's nothin' he wont do.
>
> Franco kills his wisest ones
> That speak out against his few;
> And, to keep my lips from speaking truth
> There's nothin' he wont do; no;
> There's nothin' he wont do. (Guthrie, *Notebooks* 2 [9], 68)

Carnivalesque ridicule is clearly one of Guthrie's major rhetorical strategies in *Songs Against Franco*. "Curses for Franco," for instance, invokes in all its crudeness the spirit of François Rabelais—perhaps the bawdiest of Renaissance writers—as well as the time-honored folk tradition of "the dirty dozens," the African American ritual of insult. Guthrie's fondness for Rabelais is a matter of record; his biographer describes him encountering *Gargantua and Pantagruel* for the first time and going "wild over it, pacing back and forth across the floor, giggling madly and reading aloud" (Klein 1999, 259). As for the "dozens," there is no question that Guthrie was intimately familiar with the rhetorical form described by Elijah Wald as reflecting "aggression as well as humor and ugliness as well as artistry" (2012, 171). Guthrie's intent is clear, to "degrade by the grotesque method"—as Mikhail Bakhtin described the process—to drag Franco's name "down to the absolute lower bodily stratum, to the zone of the genital organs, the bodily grave, in order to be destroyed" ([1964] 1984, 28):

> Franco he's a rumdum bum! Franco he's a turd!
> Franco he's a shitty slinger th' worst I ever heard;
> Franco he's a fart in the wind of dirty & low degree;
> Franco he's a whammmy whamm whammer!
> The rest I cannot say.
>
> Franco he's a bullywhip man! Franco he's a goon!
> Franco he's a foney baloney! Franco is a loon!
> Franco he's a frankenstein of dirty and low degree!
> Franco he's a jinnga jinng jinger!
> The rest I cannot say!

Franco he's a snattleyrake! Franco he's a louse!
Franco he's a penny me snatcher! Franco he's a farce!
Franco he's a blood spiller thug of dirty & low degree!
Franco he's a wheengy dingy dinger!
The rest I cannot say! (Guthrie, *Notebooks* 2 [9], 70)

Similarly, in "Talking Love Lost Blues," Guthrie turns to mocking the sexual impotence of a close associate of Franco who had appealed to the Generalissimo for aid. In an annotation below the lyrics, Guthrie claims to have read of this embarrassment in a "factual newspaper story." Help had apparently been secured from Franco's good friends, the Americans:

Franco, Franco, run quick and see;
Run quick an' see what's happenin' ta me;
My staff wont stand up hard any more,
And I cant satisfy any of my whores.
Got me worried. What can I do about it?

I'll just send a telegram right away
To that great sex doctor in the U.S.A.;
He can ship his office machenery [*sic*] over here today;
I'll borrow enuff money off of Uncle Sam ta pay.
Couple a hundred thousand ta get 'im on his way.

When this talk with Uncle Sam was through,
That money flew and the doctor, too;
Five shiploads of 'chenery with full train'd crew
Tryin' ta git Franco's buddy back his longlost youth.
Caint guarantee anything.
Just makin' a stab at it. (Guthrie, *Notebooks* 2 [9], 72)

Songs such as these latter two reveal Guthrie's exasperation—and perhaps his own political impotence—in the face of both the Spanish dictatorship and America's hypocrisy in supporting it, the only weapon he can muster being carnivalesque degradation. But it is characteristic of Guthrie, never fully devoid of optimism, to seek a glimmer of light amidst the darkest of landscapes. Of all the songs against Franco, it is the talking blues "Enda Franco's Line" that best reflects his hopes for the defeat of fascism at the hands of determined, organized progressives. Guthrie's use of the talking blues—a black musical discourse originally aimed at presumptions of white supremacy—is highly significant for two reasons. First, it resurrects the voice of one of his most celebrated *Dust Bowl Ballads*, "Talking Dust Bowl Blues,"

in which the narrator strikes a resilient, defiantly laconic note in the face of both natural and economic calamity (Guthrie [1940] 1988). Secondly, the sub-genre of the talking blues is itself "ideologically charged" in its "satiric potential," as Guthrie scholar Martin Butler notes (2007, 88). "Enda Franco's Line" has thirteen stanzas, each beginning with a given year, which lead us through the Spanish Civil War and the Second World War to the waves of worker unrest that had been spreading since 1947 throughout the Basque Country and Catalonia, challenging Franco's autocracy and culminating in the Barcelona general strike of 1951 (Foweraker 2003, 114). Again, as in his other anti-Franco songs, Guthrie implicates the United States as the guardian of Spanish fascism, even as Franco's own citizens stir in gathering rebellion:

> Longa 'bout Nineteen Forty Nine,
> Franco lived on Wall Street's chicken and wine;
> Longa 'bout Nineteen Fifty O'—
> Every worker in Barc[e]lona on a strike did go.

> Longa 'bout Nineteen Fifty One,
> His cops and his whips and his camps did hum;
> Ladies march'd through the streets with empty oil jugs,
> Got stopp'd and whipp'd and jailed by thugs.

> Longa 'bout Nineteen Fifty Two,
> We're sending Frankie money every day or two;
> Longa 'bout Nineteen Fifty Three,
> I'm hoping anda praying Franco will cease t' be.

Guthrie's final stanza envisages what history itself declined to provide: the overthrow of the Franco regime within the next three years:

> Longa 'bout Nineteen Fifty & Four,
> I hope his ganga killers wont be anymore;
> Longa 'bout Nineteen Fifty Five,
> The Spanish working folks'll bring my good old Spain alive! (Guthrie, *Notebooks* 2 [9], 74)

It was, of course, a hopeless cause. Franco would rule until 1975, outliving Woody Guthrie by eight years. Upon finishing his *Songs Against Franco*, Guthrie turned to other hopeless causes—at least, causes that would have seemed very hopeless in 1952: the presidential campaign of the Progressive Party candidate, Vincent Hallinan, the comprehensive repudiation of the Korean War, total nuclear disarmament—and he wrote songs about all of them (Kaufman, forthcoming). Meanwhile, he saw former

singing comrades like Burl Ives naming names—including Seeger's—for the HUAC. He watched helplessly as Seeger was hauled before the Committee in 1955, convicted of contempt of Congress for his defiance, and given a ten-year jail sentence—the sentence was later overturned on a mere technicality.) Guthrie himself was spared a subpoena solely because of his illness; but he saw the entire folksinging community branded en masse as likely communist sympathizers (Cohen 2002). In 1956, he was committed to the Greystone Park Psychiatric Hospital in New Jersey, and he remained hospitalized until his death eleven years later (Buehler 2013).

But the noble aura of the Spanish Civil War and its songs had managed to survive the blacklist of the folk music community, the beginning of the end of which had been signaled by the triumphant return of the Weavers to Carnegie Hall in 1955, the very year of Seeger's HUAC appearance. The concert recording—*The Weavers at Carnegie Hall* (1957)—includes the rousing anti-Franco anthem "Venga Jaleo" (Weavers 1957). As late as 1962, Guthrie's young associate, the Canadian-born balladeer Oscar Brand, could declare: "On campus after campus I have heard the lamentation that there have been no 'great causes' since the Spanish Civil War" (1962, 58)—a lament that lends credence to the sentiments of Tom Lehrer's fondly satirical number, "The Folk Song Army":

> Remember the war against Franco?
> That's the kind where each of us belongs.
> Though he may have won all the battles,
> We had all the good songs. (1965)

At about the time Lehrer recorded this song, Guthrie received a letter from a young English fan:

> Dear Woody,
> I am writing to you to tell you that I have sung your songs in Franco's Spain. I have your picture inside my guitar case.
> Yours sincerely with huge admiration, Ralph May.

By now, Guthrie was laying in the Brooklyn State Hospital, practically mute and virtually paralyzed. So his ex-wife wrote on his behalf:

> Dear Ralph,
> Thank you for writing. Keep singing, signed Marjorie Guthrie. (McTell 2008, 540)

Ralph May later adopted the performing name Ralph McTell, and went on to become a giant of British folk music, penning the classic song, "Streets of London" (McTell, 1975). He must have been quite fortunate to have evaded Franco's police if he

had been singing Guthrie's songs in Spain; for as late as 1971, Pete Seeger was having no such luck. Arriving in Barcelona for a pre-arranged concert at the university, Seeger found that his show had been canceled by the police, who had been "fearing a left-wing riot," as Seeger's biographer writes: "'I am sorry that the concert could not have been held,' the dean told Seeger an hour later. 'It is out of my hands. The governor of Barcelona says that he personally ordered the police to stop it, and he did so on orders from Madrid.' Seeger left, vowing to sing in Barcelona another time" (Dunaway 2008, 372). True to his word, he returned in 1978, singing for a new generation the *Songs of the Lincoln Battalion* that he and his comrades had recorded in 1943. As he explained on a 2003 recording of "Jarama Valley" made with Guthrie's son, Arlo, Seeger had asked his audience how they could possibly have known the English words well enough to have sung along with him: "I said, 'How come you sing these songs in the same versions that I sing?' And they said, 'Oh, we learned them off your record. We made tapes of them and brought them across the border and played them for each other. Of course, if we'd played them very loud we might have gotten arrested.' So, that little record kept alive *in Spain* some of these songs" (Seeger and Guthrie 2003; Seeger's emphasis). In 1993, now seventy-four years old, Seeger returned to Barcelona once more, where he sang "Viva La Quince Brigada" to a packed concert hall (Seeger 1993). There can be no doubt that—as ever—he had the angel of his long-dead mentor, Woody Guthrie, sitting on his shoulder, perhaps singing in counterpoint one of his own *Songs Against Franco*.

Works Cited

Anderson, Maxwell. 1939. *Key Largo*. Washington, DC: Anderson House.

Bakhtin, Mikhail. (1964) 1984. *Rabelais and His World*. Translated by Hélène Iswolsky. Bloomington: Indiana UP.

Bostdorff, Denise M. 2008. *Proclaiming the Truman Doctrine: The Cold War Call to Arms*. College Station, TX: Texas A&M UP.

Brand, Oscar. 1962. *The Ballad Mongers: Rise of the Modern Folk Song*. New York: Minerva Press.

Buehler, Phillip. 2013. *Woody Guthrie's Wardy Forty: Greystone Park State Hospital Revisited*. Mt. Kisco, NY: Woody Guthrie Publications.

Butler, Martin. 2007. *Voices of the Down and Out: The Dust Bowl Migration and the Great Depression in the Songs of Woody Guthrie*. Heidelberg: Universitätsverlag Winter.

Carroll, Peter N. 1994. *The Odyssey of the Abraham Lincoln Brigade: Americans in the Spanish Civil War*. Palo Alto, CA: Stanford UP.

Cohen, Ronald D. 2001. "Will Geer and Woody Guthrie: A Folk Music Friendship." In *The Life, Music, and Thought of Woody Guthrie: A Critical Appraisal*, edited by John S. Partington, 131-142. Farnham, Surrey: Ashgate.

—. 2002. *Rainbow Quest: The Folk Music Revival and American Society, 1940-1970*. Amherst: U of Massachusetts P.

—. 2012. *Woody Guthrie: Writing America's Songs*. New York: Routledge.

COHEN, Ronald D. and Dave Samuelson. 1996. *Songs for Political Action: Folk Music, Topical Songs, and the American Left, 1926-1953*. Hambergen: Bear Family (companion text to CD set).

CRAY, Ed. 2004. *Ramblin' Man: The Life and Times of Woody Guthrie*. New York: Norton.

CUNNINGHAM, Agnes "Sis" and Gordon Friesen. 1999. *Red Dust and Broadsides: A Joint Autobiography*, edited by Ronald D. Cohen. Amherst: U of Massachusetts P.

DENISOFF, R. Serge. 1973. *Great Day Coming: Folk Music and the American Left*. Baltimore, MD: Penguin.

DUNAWAY, David King. 2008. *How Can I Keep from Singing? The Ballad of Pete Seeger*. New York: Villard.

EPSTEIN, Lawrence J. 2010. *Political Folk Music in America from Its Origins to Bob Dylan*. Jefferson, NC: McFarland.

FAST, Howard. 2011. *Peekskill USA: Inside the Infamous 1949 Riots*. New York: Open Road Media.

FOWERAKER, Joe. 2003. *Making Democracy in Spain: Grass-Roots Struggle in the South, 1955-1975*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP.

GLAZER, Peter. 2005. *Radical Nostalgia: Spanish Civil War Commemoration in America*. Rochester: U of Rochester P.

GLAZER, Tom, Baldwin "Butch" Hawes, Bess Lomax Hawes and Pete Seeger. 1943. *Songs of the Lincoln Battalion*. Asch-Stinson.

GUTHRIE, Nora and the Woody Guthrie Archives. 2012. *My Name Is New York: Ramblin' Around Woody Guthrie's Town*. Brooklyn, NY: powerHouse Books.

GUTHRIE, Woody. (1940) 1988. "Talking Dust Bowl Blues." On Guthrie, *Dust Bowl Ballads*. Rounder Records, Track 3.

—. 1943. *Bound for Glory*. New York: E. P. Dutton.

—. 1945. Annotation to *American Folksay: Ballads and Dances*, January 16. Woody Guthrie Archives, Tulsa, Oklahoma. Media: Record Albums, Box 3, A no. 2008-100.

—. 1947. "Talking News Blues." In *New Found Land*, typed manuscript by Woody Guthrie, Alan Lomax Collection, American Folklife Center, Library of Congress, Washington, DC. AFC 2004/04, Woody Guthrie Manuscripts, Box 33.02, Folder 20.

—. 1948. "I'll Write My Name Down in Blood Red Blood." Woody Guthrie Archives, Tulsa, Oklahoma: Songs 1, Box 2, Folder 12.

—. 1951. "A Letter from Woody Guthrie." *Sing Out!* vol. 2, no. 3 (September): 2, 14.

—. (1962). 2014. "Jarama Valley." On Various Artists, *Songs of the Spanish Civil War, Vols. 1 and 2*. Smithsonian Folkways Records, Track 13.

—. 1975. *Woody Sez. Sayings, Stories & Drawings by America's Greatest Ballad-maker*, compiled and edited by Marjorie Guthrie. New York: Grosset and Dunlap.

—. n.d. *Notebooks*. Tulsa, Oklahoma: Woody Guthrie Archives.

HAYS, Lee and Walter Lowenfels. (1948) 1961. "Wasn't That a Time." In *Reprints from the People's Songs Bulletin*, edited by Irwin Silber, 74-75. New York: Oak Publications.

HILLE, Waldemar, ed. (1948) 2006. *The People's Song Book*. New York: Oak Publications.

HOCHSCHILD, Adam. 2016. *Spain in Our Hearts: Americans in the Spanish Civil War, 1936-1939*. New York: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt.

HOUSTON, Cisco. 1961. [Untitled recollection]. In *Reprints from the People's Songs Bulletin, 1946-1949*, edited by Irwin Silber, 21. New York: Oak Publications.

KAUFMAN, Will. Forthcoming. *Woody Guthrie's Modern World Blues*. Norman, OK: U of Oklahoma P.

KLEIN, Herbert and Carey McWilliams. 1934. "Cold Terror in California." *The Nation*, July 24, 97.

KLEIN, Joe. 1999. *Woody Guthrie: A Life*. New York: Delta.

LA CHAPELLE, Peter. 2007. *Proud to Be an Okie: Cultural Politics, Country Music, and Migration to Southern California*. Berkeley: U of California P.

LEHRER, Tom. 1965. "The Folk Song Army." On Tom Lehrer, *That Was the Year That Was*. Warner Bros./Reprise, Side 1, Track 4.

LIEBERMAN, Robbie. 1995. *My Song Is My Weapon: People's Songs, American Communism, and the Politics of Culture, 1930-1950*. Urbana: U of Illinois P.

LONGHI, Jim. 1997. *Woody, Cisco, and Me: With Woody Guthrie in the Merchant Marine*. New York: I books.

MARINE, Gene. (1972) 2014. "Guerrilla Minstrel." In *The Pete Seeger Reader*, edited by Ronald D. Cohen and James Capaldi, 3-42. New York: Oxford UP.

McDADE, Alex. (1938) 1951. "Jarama Valley." *Sing Out!*, 2 (3): 11.

McTELL, Ralph. 1975. "Streets of London." On Ralph McTell, *Streets of London*. Transatlantic Records, Track 1.

—. 2008. *As Far as I Can Tell: A Post-War Childhood in South London*. London: Loyola.

MISHLER, Paul C. 2004. "Woody Guthrie's Lost Song to Lincoln Vet Steve Nelson." *Science and Society* 68 (3): 350-355.

NOWLIN, Bill. 2013. *Woody Guthrie: American Radical Patriot*. Cambridge, MA: Rounder (companion text to CD set).

RED CHANNELS. 1950. *Red Channels: The Report of Communist Influence in Radio and Television*. New York: Counterattack.

RICHMOND, Al. 1972. *A Long View from the Left: Memoirs of an American Revolutionary*. New York: Delta.

ROBBIN, Edward. 1979. *Woody Guthrie and Me: An Intimate Reminiscence*. Berkeley, CA: Lancaster-Miller.

RYAN, Frank, ed. (1938). 1975. *The Book of the XV International Brigade*. Madrid: Commissariat of War. Reprint, Newcastle upon Tyne: Frank Graham.

SANTELLI, Robert. 2012. *This Land Is Your Land: Woody Guthrie and the Journey of an American Folk Song*. Philadelphia, PA: Running.

SEEGER, Pete. 1993. "Viva La Quince Brigada." Live performance at Palau Sant Jordi, Barcelona, on 23 April. [Accessed online on June 2, 2016].

SEEGER, Pete and Arlo Guthrie. 2003. "Jarama Valley." On Various Artists, *Spain in My Heart: Songs of the Spanish Civil War*. Appleseed, Track 1.

STARR, Kevin. 1996. *Endangered Dreams: The Great Depression in California*. New York: Oxford UP.

SWEZD, John. 2010. *Alan Lomax: The Man Who Recorded the World*. New York: Penguin.

WALD, Elijah. 2012. *Talking 'Bout Your Mama: The Dozens, Snaps, and the Deep Roots of Rap*. New York: Oxford UP.

WEAVERS, The. 1957. "Venga Jaleo." On *The Weavers at Carnegie Hall.* Vanguard, Side 1, Track 8.

Will Kaufman is Professor of American Literature and Culture at the University of Central Lancashire in Preston, England. He is the author of the first political biography of Woody Guthrie, *Woody Guthrie, American Radical* (Illinois, 2011). His other books include *The Civil War in American Culture* (Edinburgh, 2006) and *American Culture in the 1970s* (Edinburgh, 2009). His next book, *Woody Guthrie's Modern World Blues*, is currently in press (Oklahoma, 2017).

Address: School of Humanities and Social Science. University of Central Lancashire. Livesey House 311. PR1 2HE, Preston, United Kingdom. Tel.: +44 (0)1772 893035.

Toward an Affective Problematics:
A Deleuze-Guattarian Reading of Morality and Friendship in Toni Morrison's *Sula*

NAEEM NEDAEE AND ALI SALAMI
University of Tehran
naeemnedaee@ut.ac.ir, salami.a@ut.ac.ir

It might sound rather convincing to assume that we owe the pleasure of reading the novel form to our elemental repository of physical perception, to our feelings. This would be true only if mere feelings could add up to something more than just emotions, to some deep understanding of the human. After all, a moment of epiphany, where we begin to realize things that dramatically disturb our normal state of mind, is not just emotional, nor indeed a simple moment. Despite its root in the corporeal, a mo(ve)ment of affective realization reaches beyond the realm of the human and opens up the plane of virtual potentials. In this work, we intend to map out the points and relations of affective singularity that pervade the narrative of Toni Morrison's *Sula* (1973). Also, we will discuss how these mo(ve)ments of sensation give form to Sula's and Nel's experiences and contribute to an affective transformation in morality and friendship.

Keywords: Gilles Deleuze; Felix Guattari; Toni Morrison; *Sula*; affect; emotion

. . .

Una lectura de la amistad y la moralidad en *Sula* de Toni Morrison bajo el prisma de Deleuze y Guattari. La afectividad a debate

Podría resultar convincente asumir que el placer de leer formas novelísticas está relacionado con nuestro repositorio de percepciones físicas, con nuestros sentimientos. Este aserto sólo podría ser cierto si tales sentimientos nos llevasen más allá de las emociones hacia una comprensión más profunda de lo humano. En realidad, el momento epifánico en que se nos revelan las situaciones que perturban de forma radical nuestros estados mentales normales no es un solo momento, ni es tampoco puramente emocional. Pese a estar enraizado en lo corpóreo, cualquier mo(vi)m(i)ento de comprensión de la afectividad va más allá del ámbito

de lo humano para abrirse a un ámbito mayor de posibilidades. En este trabajo queremos explorar aquellos aspectos de la singularidad afectiva que impregnan la novela *Sula* (1973) de Toni Morrison. Además, se estudiará el modo cómo los distintos mo(vi)m(i)entos de emoción en la novela dan forma a las experiencias de sus protagonistas, Sula y Nel, y contribuyen a su transformación afectiva en términos morales y de amistad.

Palabras clave: Gilles Deleuze; Felix Guattari; Toni Morrison; *Sula*; afectividad/afectos; emociones

1. Introduction

Novels are a great form, if not the greatest, to deal with human characters, explore human life, provide solutions to human problems, even problematize human solutions. What else could the novel relate to if not to the human? We wish here to enumerate three of the various dimensions that account for the humanness of any human character in a novel, namely, experience, belief and emotion. Although it would be too inflated a claim to posit that these elements are exclusive to human beings, we are positive that the experience-belief-emotion triad forms an infinite range of possibilities that no other beings can rival in complexity. Take Madame Bovary, Mrs. Dalloway, Jude, Gatsby, Lady Chatterley. When we remember the great characters of the novel, it is for their encounters, judgments and feelings—however eccentric, flawed, involuted, vain or abject the character might be. A character's belief, judgment, attitude, supposition or mindset can be said to take shape in the encounter between experience and emotion, just as a character's emotion is the result of an encounter between experience and judgment, attitude, belief. Experience, however, is directly connected with the outside, with happenings and incidents.

Gilles Deleuze utilizes the term experience/impression not in the laboratory sense—that is, as a valid source of objective knowledge that establishes itself through the scientific method—but as the process through which an individual's cognition/perception engages in an involuntary encounter with the world outside. The experiencing individual, as a result, senses the urge/necessity to interpret/decipher the sign(s) emitted by "a substance, an object, a being" (Deleuze [1964] 2000, 4). Deleuze considers that the act of interpretation/reading moves beyond the limits of "strictly intellectual truths [insofar as] they lack 'necessity.' But in art or in literature, when intelligence supervenes, it is always *after*, not before: 'The impression is for the writer what experimentation is for the scientist, with this difference, that in the scientist the work of the intelligence proceeds and in the writer comes after'" (23; emphasis in the original). According to Alan Bourassa, "[t]he human character in the novel is the result of a certain set of experiences, both expected and unexpected. [In fact,] a character is the sum total of its experiences" (2009, 11-13). Thus, it is not until something happens that a character can gain experience, understanding, awareness. In this sense, experience is accumulative; it is what gives depth to the character by making change and transformation inevitable.

Now that we are entangled in the experience-belief-emotion triad, let us pose some questions as a way out. What advantage is there in the novel that distinguishes it from the myriad of other sources, other forms of knowledge that similarly stake a claim to a definition of the human? A quick but shallow answer would be that readers can grasp such insight, such awareness through sympathy, by responding emotionally. But what is the point of reading—or writing for that matter—more and more novels if we can have that understanding from our encounter with our first novel(s)? And, what, then, is the point of reading critically or practicing literary criticism? After all, not

all novels have that charge of insight to give a reader the ultimate sensation, the sharp feeling that perhaps one has made a once-in-a-lifetime discovery. We will argue that the novel provides for us the much appreciated opportunity to draw lines of flight, to move beyond the human and open ourselves up to the realm of virtual potentials, to the nonhuman. To this end, we will draw on Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari's theory of affect as a virtual, nonhuman reality that actualizes into, is constitutive of and is differentiated from human emotions ([1991] 1994). In addition, we will develop two instances of problematic, two networks of singular mo(ve)ments for Toni Morrison's *Sula* ([1973] 2004): one, based on the synthesis of emotions—we will see how this problematic fails to take us beyond the human—and another, based on the synthesis of affects—the problematic that will draw a line of flight and open up the realm of the virtual. However, before discussing the novel in terms of a problematic, we will offer a brief narrative and contextual sketch of *Sula*.

2. Text and Context

In *Sula*, Toni Morrison follows the life—and death—of her title character from 1919 to 1965 with a ten-year interval in the middle that divides the novel into two parts. The first part of the novel outlines Sula's childhood friendship with her one great companion and only true friend Nel. They live in a fictional place called the Bottom, a hilly part of the town of Medallion, which was given as a token of freedom by a white farmer to his slave. Although the land is not fertile, the slave is tricked into believing that the Bottom is so called because it is the first place that God sees when he looks down from heaven (Morrison [1973] 2004, 5). The appellation suggests that the African American inhabitants of the Bottom are still subject to racial oppression even after regaining their—nominal—freedom. Following Nel's marriage to Jude Greene, Sula feels dejected and leaves town. The second part of the novel begins when Sula returns to Medallion only to find out that she is seen as evil incarnate by the townspeople because of her disregard for conventional moral codes. Sula sleeps with Nel's husband, which causes a rift between Jude and Nel and between the two friends. It is only after Sula's death that Nel, who is haunted by a lingering sense of grief up until the novel's end, reconstructs her spiritual connection with her childhood friend.

Male characters are often absent in the Bottom community. The Bottom's men, faced with a crisis of masculinity, struggle with their economic position and gender role in society. Sula loses her father when young and her grandmother Eva is left with three children by her husband. Nel is raised by her mother Helene since her father works as a chef for a shipping company and spends most of his time away from home. Morrison's narrative reflects the fact that "African American men have historically been blocked from enacting both the traditional African and traditional American mainstream gender roles of provider and protector" (Lawrence-Webb, Littlefield and Okundaye 2004, 628). Receiving little or no protection from their men, black women were forced

to exercise self-reliance and take care of their children by themselves. As bell hooks suggests in *Ain't I a Woman*, African American women were doubly oppressed in the patriarchal society of the United States: "Sexism and racism intensified and magnified the sufferings and oppressions of black women" (1982, 22). Motherhood was left as the only possible institution that could bring power to women, operating as "a symbol of power" and "an empowering experience" (Collins 2000, 192-198). However, Morrison invents a female character who not only rejects the standard roles of mother and wife but also moves beyond the limits of womanhood through an insistence on shaping herself differently. And she does so by "posing the radical possibility that women friends could and should share male lovers, even in the context of wedlock, [as] an alternative to heteronormative romantic love based in [*sic*] jealous possession" (Fulton 2006, 74). Morrison's narrative is revolutionary in that it portrays a sort of unconventional, open morality and considers the possibility of feminine friendship alongside marriage, which was radical at the time. In a conversation, Morrison tells Gloria Naylor of how some men were "genuinely terrified" of the notion of friendship between women when she went to certain places to talk about *Sula* ([1985] 1994, 200).

Although it can be received as a novel that authentically represents the cultural and historical conditions of the period, *Sula* is not exclusively context-bound or culturally specific. According to Joseph McLaren,

> *Sula* […] is not primarily concerned with the social conflict between the white and the African American communities of Medallion. The novel mostly concerns the way African American communities both include and exclude those members who have violated community mores or who have become dislocated in ways that cause them to live on the moral or social margins. The novel presents characters who each signify an adaptation to this community, a community divided by class. (2010, 5567)

Similarly, as Hortense J. Spillers suggests,

> Morrison […] imagines a character whose failings are directly traceable to the absence of a discursive/imaginative project—some *thing* to do, some object-subject relationship which establishes the identity in time and space. We do not see Sula in relationship to an "oppressor," a "whitey," a male, a dominant and dominating being outside the self. No Manichean analysis demanding a polarity of interest—black/white, male/female, good/bad—will work here. Instead, Sula emerges as an embodiment of a metaphysical chaos in pursuit of an activity both proper and sufficient to herself. (1999, 54; emphasis in the original)

Relying on Alan Bourassa's critical method in his analysis of Ralph Ellison's *Invisible Man* (Bourassa 2009), we approach *Sula* not as a specifically African American text but as the expression of a universal human situation/possibility.

3. From the Problematic of the Personal

It would not be too implausible to suggest that literature is the scope of problems. After all, pure happiness is not so much maintained as wished for in our everyday lives, and in our fiction. Even when achieved, happiness proves so elusive, so transitory that one begins to doubt if it had existed in the first place. It is not difficult to name a plethora of problems faced by the key character of *Sula* and by Nel, the other key character of the novel: from the disillusionment/estrangement that Sula and Nel undergo in their relationships with their mothers to the mutual loss of a profound feminine bond. In a sense, Morrison portrays in this novel how Sula and Nel struggle from crisis to crisis. But this treatment of a problem does not, to us, appeal as a satisfactory approach since it misses the complex dynamics of the problematics that we always encounter in the act of reading. The character's problems are always defined in terms of personality, experience, identity, emotion—being too confined to the personal. Inasmuch as this is true of any novelistic character, we can be certain that it is also true of Sula and Nel, whose struggles, encounters and decisions form the entire set of crises that comprise the novel. Nevertheless, it is still possible to speak of another type of problem, another type of problematic that is encountered by the reader in the reading process. And it can only be described as having a curious tactile sensation under the skin, a weightless feeling of heaviness, an unnameble set of twists and turns, of knots and loops and of thresholds that cannot be directly expressed in the content of the story. It is only when these singular points reverberate together that a certain problematic begins to reveal itself.

Here is a key question for us: What is the problematic of *Sula*, the string of singular points that resonate in the story and yet resist easy articulation? One might describe it in terms of complexity, ambiguity, oddity or eccentricity. We can equally well use a myriad of other words that point to an intensive, unnamable, indefinable quality and that contain an element of confusion, undecidability, uncertainty. The problem is thus constituted by certain moments of *Sula* where one feels an overtone of complexity, a sense of ambiguity or oddity in comparison to which other moments—however serious or vague—seem plain and simple, perhaps the plainness and simplicity by which so much personal experience seems to be typified. The problematic moments experienced by Sula are numerous: her grandmother Eva's immolation of her son Plum out of mercy, Sula's slicing off of her own fingertip to ward off harassing white boys, a neighborhood boy's slipping into the river and his subsequent drowning, Sula's mother Hannah's accidental and fatal burning, Sula's departure from her hometown and her subsequent return, the encounter and exchange of words between Sula and Nel after ten years of separation and Sula's momentary theft of Nel's husband—among others. There are also other key questions for us to ponder: What characterizes these scenes with their complexity or ambiguity? Why do these moments form a kind of enclosure, a kind of frame for the novel? It is as if, reading *Sula*, one is in the presence of two novels: one, the surface novel or plotline recognizably about characters with a psychology, with

emotions, with relationships, with identity; and another novel, at a deeper level, that constitutes the texture, the perceptions and affections of *Sula*. For us to express the real, complex workings of this problem, we must ask still another question: What basically is a problem? In *The Logic of Sense*, Gilles Deleuze provides us with an answer by setting up the problematic against the *event*: "The mode of the event is the problematic. One must not say that there are problematic events, but that events bear exclusively upon problems and define their conditions. [...] A problem is determined only by the singular points which express its conditions. We do not say that the problem is thereby resolved; on the contrary, it is determined as a problem" ([1969] 2002, 54).

One might wonder what practical implications there are in Deleuze's definition, with its intensifying complexity, what he assumes a reader can actually do with a problem and its conditions. Fortunately, he goes on to clarify the point for us: "[T]he question is not that of quantifying or measuring human properties, but rather, on the one hand, that of problematizing human events, and, on the other, that of developing as various human events the conditions of a problem" (55). For Deleuze, the problematic is best conceived of as a network of relations between different points of singularity. The act of reading then is constituted not just by one instant, one event of complexity, one singularity, but rather by a patchwork of singular points that are strung out along the line of the reading. It follows that the problematic can only be articulated when we are able to discover not just the points and events, the moments and movements, but the relations of singularity that run between them. We have already pointed out in passing several moments of complexity that seem to run through Morrison's narrative. Before we proceed to map out the problematic of *Sula* along a line or spectrum of singular points, we must first recognize what the endpoints of this line, the extremities of this spectrum are. Between what two points do the points of complexity unfold? It would not be off the mark to name them as morality and friendship, the two great forces whose perpetual clash and overlap pervade the narrative of *Sula*. Friendship, when broken, propels Sula from man to man for fulfillment in love, which she nonetheless fails to reach. It is also the very same force that nourishes attachment and fuels contention between Sula and Nel.

A keen reader can realize how one terminus of the problematic, the question of morality, is closely connected with a certain sense of ambiguity in the course of the novel and in the character of Sula. Morrison unsettles the seemingly primordial dualism of good and evil in *Sula* by animating the relativity of meaning. According to Rachel Lee, "*Sula* broaches the subject not only of semantic integrity (how we can convey what we mean) but also of epistemological integrity (how [we can] know anything since there is no objective perspective and no objective essence or truth to know)" (1994, 571). The idea, then, can be evolved to apply to the figure of Sula herself: "How can we understand or know Sula, who is not only egoless or without a self (and hence undeterminable) but who also is unable to know anything herself?" (571). It is because of her doubting, her questioning nature that Sula does not hesitate to give vent to

an epistemological antagonism toward Manichean ethics. Once, she challenges Eva's adherence to Christian morality in her judgments of right and wrong, of good and evil:

> [Eva] "Bible say honor thy father and thy mother that thy days may be long upon the land thy God giveth thee."
> [Sula] "Mamma must have skipped that part. Her days wasn't too long."
> [Eva] "Pus mouth! God's going to strike you!"
> [Sula] "Which God? The one watched you burn Plum?" (Morrison [1973] 2004, 93)

Sula's question 'Which God?' not only undermines Eva's conception of good and evil but also the substantiality of evil in general. We would not be far wrong to claim that ambiguity in *Sula* finds its ultimate expression in the question of (a)morality. In this line, Spillers recognizes how Sula's negation of shallow moral codes allows her to escape categorical and simplistic definitions of personality:

> Despite our misgivings at Sula's insistence and at the very degree of alienation Morrison accords her, we are prepared to accept her negative, naysaying freedom as a necessary declaration of independence […] that leads us as well as the author away from the limited repertoire of powerless virtue and sentimental pathos. Sula is neither tragic nor pathetic; she does not amuse or accommodate. For black audiences, she is not consciousness of the black race personified, nor "tragic mulatto," nor, for white ones, is she "mammie," "Negress," "coon," or "maid." She is herself. (1999, 54-55)

In a word, the rejection of absolutes and the absence of a moral reference have made a very complex, ambiguous, eccentric character out of Sula. The *Sula* reader can also see how the other terminus of the problematic, the question of friendship, resounds in the novel with a sense of oddity. Despite the two friends' childhood closeness and companionship, Sula and Nel reach a point of failed understanding in their relationship. These two forces—that is, morality and friendship—remain the ultimate great incompatibles of *Sula*. However, it is not possible to claim that they are incompatibles unless we add a third term, some assumption, concept or idea that acts as a connective, as the glue between the two. It follows that the third term may fail to function as a synthesizer, to yield a proper solution. So we begin to conceive of a type of false problem, a type of trap we can all too easily fall into. It is precisely by breaking into this trap—exploring the central crises of the novel—and by breaking out of it— working out of the crises—that we as readers can finally manage to articulate the other problematic, the complex problematic of singularity.

Sula opposes the community's brand of morality with a deeply felt personal experience. Throughout the course of the narrative, we frequently encounter a form of emotional self-revelation as we follow the shift from fury to terror, to thrill, to curiosity, to frustration. Sula's individualism, her rejection of an exterior ethical

principle is reanimated by her introspective contemplation of emotions: "[W]ith a twist that was all her own imagination, she lived out her days exploring her own thoughts and emotions, giving them full reign, feeling no obligation to please anybody unless their pleasure pleased her" (Morrison [1973] 2004, 118). Despite the fact that Sula undermines any notion of pure morality, she seeks a pure word to describe the feeling, the loneliness she pursues in sexual love. It is the type of loneliness that is conceivable or desired without any necessary prior negation of relation to another—a form of absence that antedates presence, "a loneliness so profound the word itself had no meaning. For loneliness assumed the absence of other people, and the solitude she found in that desperate terrain had never admitted the possibility of other people" (123). It is no wonder that this ambitious longing for a word that escapes words proves nothing but a failure. Sula's idea of loneliness in a vacuum, then, is not only aborted but also replaced by a deeply felt, untraceable nostalgia and supplemented by a list of lost items: "She wept then. Tears for the deaths of the littlest things: the castaway shoes of children; broken stems of marsh grass battered and drowned by the sea; prom photographs of dead women she never knew; wedding rings in pawnshop windows; the tidy bodies of Cornish hens in a nest of rice" (123). It is in terms of the self/the person that Sula makes her decision to leave Medallion in the wake of Nel's marriage to Jude. She takes the path to urban life, travels from town to town, goes to college and allegedly sleeps with white men too—as a gesture of antipathy against Nel's submission to the moral, the matrimonial.

In contrast to Sula, who chooses to revel in her spirit of self-reliance, Nel is morally conscious of the codes and conventions of social decorum. In "Sula and the Primacy of Woman-to-Woman Bonds," Stephanie A. Demetrakopoulos traces Nel's conformism back to her mother's rigidly protective behavior, and to her family history: "Nel's matrilineal line suffers from an Eve/Mary bedrock of feminine duality, the whore/Madonna polarity. Nel's mother, Helene, has been carefully taught to hate her own mother, Rochelle, an Eve figure, a 'Creole whore'" ([1987] 1999, 79). Also in contrast to Sula's self-sought loneliness and freewheeling denial of roots, Nel is more of a nest-making, domestic figure. She marries, bears children and keeps the home fires burning. Realizing that "a lover was not a comrade and could never be—for a woman" (Morrison [1973] 2004, 121), Sula returns to Medallion after ten years and meets Nel once again. The encounter bears testimony to both a metaphorical and a literal distance, an odd lack of mutual understanding. It is in terms of the personal that their exchange is terminated by Nel's distracting act of proffering tea:

"You been gone too long, Sula."
"Not too long, but maybe too far."
"What's that supposed to mean?" […]
"Oh, I don't know."
"Want some cool tea?" (96)

It is in the conflict, the encounter between friendship and morality, the morality of the black community that Sula dismisses through her liberated way of life, that the emotion, the individuality, the personhood of Sula takes form. Ironically, it is with the same kind of awareness—the consciousness of her desires and her friendship—that Sula sleeps with her best friend's husband. Sula's dismissal and breaching of normative morality comes into conflict with Nel's conception of feminine friendship. Jude leaves home and Nel refuses to see Sula for some time. Nel's emotional response, her deeply felt agony and devastation in the face of her husband's betrayal derives from the fact that her womanhood, individuality and vulnerability have been all too available, too exposed to Jude:

> But Jude […] you *knew* me. All those days and years, Jude, you *knew* me. My ways and my hands and how my stomach folded and how we tried to get Mickey to nurse and how about the time when the landlord said… but you said… and I cried, Jude. You knew me and had listened to the things I said at night, and heard me in the bathroom and laughed at my raggedy girdle and I laughed too because I knew you too, Jude. So how could you leave me when you knew me? (104-105; emphasis in the original)

The question remains unanswered. Apparently, Sula has been acutely conscious of her emotions all along. And this certain consciousness reaches its climax when Nel finally goes to pay a visit to Sula, who is burning with fever, lying on her deathbed. In response to Nel's implicit denunciation of her wayward lifestyle—"Lonely, ain't it?" (143)—Sula, once again, affirms her desire for absolute loneliness—a state constituted by a sense of missing or longing, but without an object: "Yes. But my lonely is *mine*. Now your lonely is somebody else's. Made by somebody else and handed to you. Ain't that something? A secondhand lonely" (143; emphasis in the original).

4. Toward the Problematic of Affects

Every problem deserves an appropriate answer. But the problem whose three points are morality, emotion and friendship receives no answer whatsoever since it constitutes a false one. In this false problematic, morality is represented by the most sordid, mechanistic criteria of good and evil, and blinds itself to the complexities of the human mind, the nuances of love and friendship and the subtle movements of social life. It sets itself up as ethical, but its morality is nothing but a kind of backward stubbornness and unquestioning faith in a simplified set of laws, the kind of morality that allows the women of Bottom to not worry, to even take it as a compliment that Sula's mother Hannah has casual sex with their husbands as long as she does not possess them, while at the same time fretting over Sula's relationships with white men—"the thing for which there was no understanding, no excuse, no compassion. The route from which there was no way back, the dirt that could not ever be washed away" (Morrison [1973] 2004, 112).

Sula's attempt to compensate for the loss of Nel's affection and counter the blinkered morality of the black community is purely in terms of character or the person, that is, based on her personal feelings and experiences. It is a false problem because emotion/character does not resist the morality to which Sula stands opposed. To anchor oneself to the personal is never to counter or escape the instrumentalist morality of a self-righteous community but only to become its plaything. It is for the very same reason that with her decision to return, Sula becomes a pawn to the moral whims of a self-infatuated community. When a plague of robins accompanies Sula home, the people of the town are encouraged to interpret it as a bad omen, as evidence that she is a source of evil (89). And Sula confirms the allegation by committing her old grandmother Eva to a nursing home, and "the people in the Bottom shook their heads and said Sula was a roach" (112). It is only when she is present that the community can attribute random occurrences of misfortune to her—such as a child's falling off of Sula's porch and a man's accidental choking to death as Sula passes by (113-114). By the same token, it is only in Sula's presence that Nel can identify herself as a "good woman" (138). Marked by promiscuity in the eye of a moralist community, Sula serves only as a foil for reinforcing the community's sense of properness. We realize that the personal, the deeply felt emotion does not undercut mechanistic morality since it is itself morality's proudest accomplishment. To the false problem of morality-emotion-friendship, then, we must provide an alternative, a more effectual problem whose solution is not hampered by the conditions of the problem itself. We specify this alternate problem as morality-*affect*-friendship and assume that it exceeds the limits of the individual, the inward, the emotional. But how do we reach this desired alternative?

In *What Is Philosophy?*, Deleuze and Guattari identify the three creative dimensions of thought that compose the human subject, namely, philosophy, science and art. Whereas "philosophy extracts *concepts* [...], science extracts *prospects* [...] and art extracts *percepts* and *affects*" ([1991] 1994, 24; emphasis in the original). These distinct means forming human existence make possible the production of new modes of conceiving, observing and feeling/perceiving. As Claire Colebrook stresses in her book *Gilles Deleuze*, "[c]oncepts are not labels or names that we attach to things; they produce an orientation or a direction for thinking" (2002, 15-16). A concept, then, is never meant to simply add one more word to a language or increase life quantitatively. Likewise, the material of art—and of literature for that matter—is to be treated not as a function of representation but as a means of intensive, differential production. If the task of philosophy is to produce new concepts that move us and our language away from the fixity of prefabricated clichés and commonsensical opinions, art is meant to produce new affects and percepts that furnish us with the possibility of moving beyond personal feelings and simplistic generalizations. In a sense, affects both comprise and are essential to art. In the words of John Hughes, "the work of art preserves a being of sensation as 'a compound of percepts and affects' independent [...] of the lived perceptions and affections of the artist or his or her viewer or reader. Once again, not the perception—

what one sees—but the percept as the virtual event of a becoming by which newly constituted relations of things and self are given to be seen" (1997, 71). In the same vein, Brian Massumi contrasts affect as intensity with feeling as personal emotion:

> AFFECT/AFFECTION. Neither word denotes a personal feeling (sentiment in Deleuze and Guattari). *L'affect* (Spinoza's *affectus*) is an ability to affect and be affected. It is a prepersonal intensity corresponding to the passage from one experiential state of the body to another and implying an augmentation or diminution in that body's capacity to act. *L'affection* (Spinoza's *affection*) is each such state considered as an encounter between the affected body and a second, affecting, body (with body taken in its broadest possible sense to include "mental" or ideal bodies). (1987, xvii; emphasis in the original)

Massumi's notion of affect is a dynamic force, with the potential or capacity to 'affect' and 'be affected,' to expand and retract, and to constitute change, transition, transmutation in the event of an encounter. In a conversation with Mary Zournazi, Massumi addresses emotion as simply one narrow fragment, one actual state of a wider range of virtual possibilities and potentialities: "[A]n emotion is a very partial expression of affect. It only draws on a limited selection of memories and only activates certain reflexes or tendencies" (Zournazi 2002, 213). Also, in "Literature, Character, and the Human," Bourassa separates affect from emotion, from the simply human:

> [A]lthough affect is often used interchangeably with emotion, we can see that affect goes beyond the realm of emotion. It is more accurate to say that emotion is a branch of affect. Emotion is one way of marking an impingement of one force upon another—the potentiality of human judgment brought together with a particular experience, leading to a particular feeling. But an action is also an affect, a perception is an affect, a composite of perception, feeling, movement can be an affect. (2009, 26)

We thus see that affects are not merely the preserve of personal experiences and felt emotions, but put us in touch with the far greater source of all potentials, the relations of force. In fact, affects are prepersonal intensities that form human beings, but are not limited to the human. As Deleuze and Guattari remind us, there is something nonhuman, virtual, intense to every affect: "Sensations, percepts, and affects are *beings* whose validity lies in themselves and exceeds any lived. They could be said to exist in the absence of man because man [...] is himself a compound of percepts and affects" ([1991] 1994, 164; emphasis in the original).

If the problem of Morrison's *Sula* is the conjuncture of morality-affect-friendship, our main task is to directly address the complexity, the specificity of affect. What affective movements inform *Sula*? How do they constitute prepersonal intensities/ haecceities? And how do these affects relate to the endpoints of morality and friendship? After all, we cannot reconcile ourselves with a friendship that is only

personal and a morality that is only mechanistic. In this line, we will focus on two affective mo(ve)ments in *Sula*: what we will call the affective mo(ve)ment of sensation and the epiphanic reconfiguration of morality and friendship. Sula and Nel experience moments of sensation that, despite bearing an emotional charge, cannot be reduced to any single emotional component. The three most important mo(ve)ments of affective sensation occur (1) when Sula overhears her mother's statement about not liking her just as Nel is similarly disappointed with her mother for not reacting to racial humiliation (fury/disappointment), (2) when Sula swings a neighborhood boy around and accidentally throws him into the river, leading to his drowning (fear/terror), and (3) when Sula watches her mother Hannah burn to death and does nothing to save her (thrill). These three mo(ve)ments constitute intense instances of crossing well-defined thresholds of the personal, the individual. In all three mo(ve)ments, the characters are pushed into a sensation at the very moment that they are least expecting it.

   The summer of her twelfth year, Sula has one of her first experiences of fury/disappointment as she overhears Hannah's conversing with friends. While the others do not admit that the difficulties associated with raising children have negatively affected their maternal love, Hannah does so unapologetically. She tells one of her friends, "You love [your child], like I love Sula. I just don't like her. That's the difference" (Morrison [1973] 2004, 57). Shocked by the reality of her mother's detachment from her, Sula rushes up the stairs—where she stays for some time "in bewilderment," painfully "aware of a sting in her eye" (57). After this critical event in Sula's childhood, there seems to be little hope that her relationship with Hannah will ever fully recover. According to Elizabeth Ann Beaulieu, Sula's emotional disconnection from her mother leaves her emptied, without a center: "When women deny their mothers in Morrison's novels, as they often do, the result is a loss of self or center" (2003, 116). Despite its initially devastating impact, the realization—that her mother does not like her—plays a crucial role in Sula's future character development. In much the same manner, Nel experiences estrangement as she accompanies her mother Helene on a trip to New Orleans to see her ailing grandmother. Helene walks through the white only compartment of a passenger car and is harshly reprimanded by the conductor. In response to the humiliation, she does nothing but "[smile] dazzlingly and coquettishly" (Morrison [1973] 2004, 21). Nel is disillusioned with the image of her mother as a strong and right-minded woman and decides to never follow in her quietism, and instead to "always be on her guard" against it: "If this tall, proud woman, this woman who was very particular about her friends, who slipped into church with unequaled elegance, who could quell a roustabout with a look, if she were really custard, then there was a chance that Nel was too" (22). Following their separate experiences of disappointment with their mothers, Sula and Nel try to compensate for this lost sense of belonging in one another's company where they can "afford to abandon the ways of other people and concentrate on their own perceptions of things" (55).

Sula and Nel are to experience still another surge of sensation while playing together on the river bank, uprooting grass and digging holes. Later when Chicken Little, a small boy from the neighborhood, joins the two of them, Sula tries to give him a swing: "Sula picked him up by his hands and swung him outward then around and around. His knickers ballooned and his shrieks of frightened joy startled the birds and the fat grasshoppers. When he slipped from her hands and sailed away out over the water they could still hear his bubbly laughter" (60-61). Overcome by terror and still expecting him to "come back up, laughing," the two girls "[stare] at the water" in a state of disbelief and helplessness (61). As the expectation of his resurfacing gradually diminishes, Nel realizes that Shadrack, the town's shell-shocked veteran of World War I, has witnessed the scene. Sula runs to his cottage in mixed terror and embarrassment to ensure that he will not tell. Even before she finds the courage to ask the question, Shadrack nods his head and mysteriously answers, "Always" (62). Interpreting this as a promise, Sula rushes "back to Nel and the dark closed place in the water," where she bursts into tears and is consoled by Nel (62). Secrecy consigns Sula and Nel to their interiority and develops into isolation, "a space, a separateness, between them" (64).

Sula's perception of terror in response to Chicken Little's death is in contrast to a completely different sensation in the dramatic scene that occurs shortly afterward. Hannah accidentally sets herself on fire while lighting a fire in the yard. Realizing that her daughter is burning, Eva throws herself out of the top floor window in an attempt to smother the flames, but miscalculates and comes "crashing down some twelve feet from Hannah's smoke" (76). Hannah runs out into the street where the neighbors throw water on her and put out the flames, but she is severely injured and dies during the transfer to the hospital. Eva is also taken to the hospital where she muses over the events of that day and remembers that as she was on the ground, reaching for Hannah, Sula was standing on the back porch, watching her mother burn without doing anything to help her. When Eva mentions this to a few friends, they insist that it was probably because Sula was too shocked to react. However, Eva remains "convinced that Sula had watched Hannah burn not because she was paralyzed, but because she was interested" (78). In retrospect, Sula reflects on her uncanny passivity and detachment, her voyeuristic fascination and thrill in watching the horrific spectacle of her mother on fire: "I didn't mean anything. I never meant anything. I stood there watching her burn and was thrilled. I wanted her to keep on jerking like that, to keep on dancing" (147).

The novel provides us with two potential explanations for Sula's anti-passionate coolness. In the first, the narrator diagnoses Sula with a basic lack of egoism: "She was completely free of ambition, with no affection for money, property or things, no greed, no desire to command attention or compliments—no ego. For that reason she felt no compulsion to verify herself—be consistent with herself" (119). In the other, the narrator reveals that Sula's eccentricity, curiosity and frustration are all the result of a creative imagination that has no medium, no object:

> In a way her strangeness, her naiveté, her craving for the other half of her equation was the consequence of an idle imagination. Had she paints, or clay, or knew the discipline of the dance or strings; had she anything to engage her tremendous curiosity and her gift for metaphor, she might have exchanged the restlessness and preoccupation with whim for an activity that provided her with all she yearned for. And like any artist with no art form she became dangerous. (121)

A still more credible analysis would be to posit that Sula, in going her own way, in making her own decisions, captures and hypostatizes her affects. In the words of Spillers, "[w]hatever Sula has become, whatever she is, is a matter of her own choices, [however] ill-formed and ill-informed" (1999, 54). And it is this uninhibited openness to possibilities that produces an aura of distinction around the character of Sula. Her adoption/affirmation of these affects is so successful, in fact, that she lives in the realm of the actual and the real. Sula's ethical/aesthetic philosophy captures for her the dangers of the affective, the intense. Whereas Sula is a woman of her own making, Nel—at least initially—cannot actualize the affects that comprise her. Morrison characterizes Nel as a psychologically inhibited and unimaginative figure in that her obsessive/repressive mother has driven "her daughter's imagination underground" (18). Nel's unarticulated belief that she cannot simultaneously experience heterosexual love and feminine friendship deprives her of both Sula's company and Jude's love. She hesitates to create a morality of her own, and instead remains complaisant and plays the good daughter of the community. Morrison complicates the problem further by suggesting in a conversation with Robert B. Stepto that Sula and Nel can be taken as "two sides of the same person, or two sides of one extraordinary character" (1979, 216). While the novel begins with and for the most part centers on Sula, it is ultimately Nel's.

It is not until her second reunion with Sula that Nel begins to form an affective friendship that will run counter to her personal sense of love and the abstract morality of the black community. We can see the first hints of Nel's transformation, her gradual self-recognition, in her decision to go and visit her dying friend despite all that has gone between them. In this reunion, Sula undermines—even reverses—Nel's delusion that her own actions are driven by virtue, that she is morally superior to Sula:

> "How you know?" Sula asked.
> "Know what?" Nel still wouldn't look at her.
> "About who was good. How you know it was you?"
> "What you mean?"
> "I mean maybe it wasn't you. Maybe it was me." (Morrison [1973] 2004, 146)

Nel leaves in silence, closing the door behind her. It is still not clear that the challenge to Nel's conception of virtue has taken effect. And it is still not possible to determine that her perceptions are transmuting into affective awareness, the consciousness of

sensations, of energies, of flows. The undermining of Nel's mental framework is only a negative byproduct of the new kind of perception, the truly materialistic awareness that is about to be formed. What is more, friendship, attachment, closeness and love are not a matter of emotion. One does not just have an emotional sense of friendship; one does not simply feel forgotten, unloved, overlooked, betrayed. According to Bourassa,

> [t]he feelings themselves are only offshoots of a larger affective condition, and because the condition is affective rather than emotional, it preexists the evaluations we or the character might place upon it, and so mutates as it undergoes its own history. It is not bound to any emotional or moral evaluation, so love, as affect, can migrate from ethical situation to ethical situation. (2009, 69-70)

Sometime later, Nel goes to pay a call on Eva who is left by Sula at Sunnydale, a home for the aged. In the middle of a disjointed conversation, Eva surprises Nel by inquiring how she killed Chicken Little. As Nel tries to disambiguate that it was Sula who threw the little boy in the river, Eva challenges her innocence: "You. Sula. What's the difference? You was there. You watched, didn't you?" (Morrison [1973] 2004, 168). Eva's vision that Sula and Nel are one and the same—"just alike" (169)—begins to haunt Nel. She remembers the good feeling, the feeling of enjoyment and contentment, when Chicken's hands slipped from Sula's, and when water finally closed over the place where he sank. Nel ultimately recognizes her own guilt, her moral failure, but her friendship is not separate from the moral valuation she places upon it. Nel's appropriation/appreciation of her friendship as a potential, a force, an affect becomes possible as soon as her prejudices, her misrecognitions fall away. When she can take Sula's love upon herself, it becomes a question, not of feeling, but of movement, of relation, and it is in this movement that she finds not only a world she has never before seen, not only the meaning of love, but the ethics that has escaped her all along, even in her greatest commitment to the catholic morality of the black community. Nel gradually walks into this unsettling world of possibility, and although it is impossible to go back and fix things with Sula, just as she is still within the stark confines of the black community's morality, she is about to experience a pure affective movement, one that enables her to perceive the difference between a true friendship and a self-centered, self-righteous, self-indulgent relationship. It is but a short step before she falls into her new awareness. The moment of this change is to come shortly after Nel visits the colored part of the cemetery at Beechnut Park where Sula is buried alongside other members of the Peace family. After Nel accidentally encounters Shadrack as she is leaving—"and it is in the accident that we see the greatest workings of affect, in the chance encounter, the fall one takes into one's future [or past]" (Bourassa 2009, 70)—she begins to see what she has missed. Nel realizes that her deepest attachment to another human being was to Sula, not to Jude, nor to any man whatsoever.

All that time, all that time, I thought I was missing Jude." And the loss pressed down on her chest and came up into her throat. "We was girls together," she said as though explaining something. "O Lord, Sula," she cried, "girl, girl, girlgirlgirl." It was a fine cry—loud and long—but it had no bottom and it had no top, just circles and circles of sorrow. (Morrison [1973] 2004, 174)

It is so often the case that emotions follow events immediately whereas affects, being complex, accumulative and singular, form over time. As Barbara Johnson puts it:

> The dissociation of affect and event is one of Morrison's most striking literary techniques in this novel, both in her narrative voice (in which things like infanticide are not exclaimed over) and in the emotional lives of her characters. The most important example of affective discontinuity is Nel's reaction to the discovery of Jude, her husband, naked on the floor with Sula, her best friend. She tries to howl in pain but cannot do so until seventy pages later when she realizes that she mourns the loss of Sula rather than Jude. ([1993] 2008, 168)

We seem to have finally captured the movement by which Nel achieves the realization to articulate the problem of morality-affect-friendship more thoroughly. In the false problem of morality-emotion-friendship, we have observed that a third term— here, emotion—intervenes between the two endpoints of morality and friendship only to hamper the possibility of reaching true awareness. Emotion, as a medium between friendship and morality, reduces morality to nothing more than a set of mechanical laws, and friendship to nothing more than personal feeling, a synthesis that fails to challenge catholic morality and is in fact itself appropriated by it. We can always restructure this problem to attain a more workable synthesis by replacing emotion with affect. A change in one dimension of the problem changes the problematic altogether because, as posited by Bourassa, "the problem is a continuous multiplicity that depends upon the relationship, the differential relationship, of all of its terms" (2009, 71). The new problematic that we come to, then, is the problematic of morality-affect-friendship, the two endpoints of which relate to one another with more clarity, more vigor. Morality is no longer the scope of blind mechanisms but of virtual potentialities, of forces, intensities and haecceities that open up endless possibilities for transmutation. Sula's morality, which ultimately becomes Nel's realization/epiphany, is a morality without boundaries, one that neither fixates nor is fixated. Friendship, in its turn, operates as a catalyst of perception, of sensation, so that when it comes in touch with morality, it does not collapse into some passive personal interiority, but rather alters morality into an intensive flow that is constantly in the process of formation, deformation and reformation. It is essential for us to note that affect is precisely what keeps friendship from the danger of fixation. Friendship is not a thing, not a concrete object that demands to be felt, but is rather a question of prepersonal intensities, relations and movements. By the end of the novel, Nel has moved from a closed world of binary

morality and of possessive love into a world of affective recognition. When she emerges from her inwardness, she will know where the fault lines/lines of flight are and what transformations are just beneath the threshold of existence.

WORKS CITED

BEAULIEU, Elizabeth Ann, ed. 2003. *The Toni Morrison Encyclopedia*. Westport, CT: Greenwood Press.

BOURASSA, Alan. 2009. *Deleuze and American Literature: Affect and Virtuality in Faulkner, Wharton, Ellison, and McCarthy*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

COLEBROOK, Claire. 2002. *Gilles Deleuze*. London: Routledge.

COLLINS, Patricia Hill. 2000. *Black Feminist Thought: Knowledge, Consciousness, and the Politics of Empowerment*. New York: Routledge.

DELEUZE, Gilles. (1964) 2000. *Proust and Signs: The Complete Text*. Minneapolis, MN: U of Minnesota P.

—. (1969) 2002. *The Logic of Sense*. London: Athlone Press.

DELEUZE, Gilles and Felix Guattari. (1980) 1987. *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*. Translation and Foreword by Brian Massumi. Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P.

—. (1991) 1994. *What Is Philosophy?* New York: Columbia UP.

DEMETRAKOPOULOS, Stephanie A. (1987) 1999. "*Sula* and the Primacy of Woman-to-Woman Bonds." In *Toni Morrison's Sula*, edited by Harold Bloom, 77-92. Philadelphia: Chelsea House.

FULTON, Lorie Watkins. 2006. "'A Direction of One's Own': Alienation in *Mrs. Dalloway* and *Sula*." *African American Review* 40 (1): 67-77.

HOOKS, bell. 1982. *Ain't I a Woman: Black Women and Feminism*. Boston, MA: South End.

HUGHES, John. 1997. *Lines of Flight: Reading Deleuze with Hardy, Gissing, Conrad, Woolf*. Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press.

JOHNSON, Barbara. (1993) 2008. "'Aesthetic' and 'Rapport' in Toni Morrison's *Sula*." *Textual Practice* 7 (2): 165-172.

LAWRENCE-WEBB, Claudia, Melissa Littlefield and Joshua N. Okundaye. 2004. "African American Intergender Relationships: A Theoretical Exploration of Roles, Patriarchy, and Love." *Journal of Black Studies* 34 (5): 623-639.

LEE, Rachel. 1994. "Missing Peace in Toni Morrison's *Sula* and *Beloved*." *African American Review* 28 (4): 571-583.

MASSUMI, Brian. (1980) 1987. "Notes on the Translation and Acknowledgments." In Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari (1980) 1987, xvii-xx.

MCLAREN, Joseph. 2010. "*Sula*." In *Masterplots. Fourth Edition*, edited by Laurence W. Mazzeno, 5567. Amenia, NY: Salem Press. [Accessed online on July 1, 2016].

MORRISON, Toni. (1973) 2004. *Sula*. New York: Vintage International.

Naylor, Gloria. (1985) 1994. "A Conversation: Gloria Naylor and Toni Morrison." In *Conversations with Toni Morrison*, edited by Danille Taylor-Guthrie, 188-217. Jackson: U P of Mississippi.

Spillers, Hortense J. 1999. "A Hateful Passion, a Lost Love." In *Toni Morrison's Sula*, edited by Harold Bloolm, 51-76. Philadelphia: Chelsea House.

Stepto, Robert B. 1979. "'Intimate Things in Place': A Conversation with Toni Morrison." In *Chant of Saints: A Gathering of Afro-American Literature, Art and Scholarship*, edited by Michael S. Harper and Robert B. Stepto, 213-229. Urbana: U of Illinois P.

Zournazi, Mary. 2002. *Hope: New Philosophies for Change*. Annandale, NSW: Pluto.

Naeem Nedaee is a literary scholar with a Master of Arts focused in English literature from the University of Tehran. Nedaee is interested in poststructuralist theories and cultural studies across a variety of western literatures and cinemas.

Ali Salami is a literary scholar and professor of English literature at the University of Tehran. An internationally published author, Salami has written extensively on gender and discourse, Shakespeare and postcolonial literature.

Address: Faculty of Foreign Languages and Literatures. University of Tehran. North Kargar St. Tehran, Iran. Tel.: +98 935 878 0017 (Naeem Nedaee). Tel.: +98 912 500 7383 (Ali Salami).

Under the Radar: Jess Walter's *The Zero* and the State of Irony and Satire after 9/11

DOLORES RESANO
Universitat de Barcelona
dolores.resano@ub.edu

This article explores a typically overlooked novel within the corpus of post-9/11 fiction, Jess Walter's *The Zero* (2006), and puts forward some hypotheses for this under-examination. The article suggests that the various debates that arose in the aftermath of 9/11—the status of fiction after tragedy, the theses on the demise of irony and satire, the high expectations put on canonical authors to give meaning to the event, and standardized explorations of the figure of the terrorist Other—all served to construct readings for *The Zero* that fell within prescriptive approaches to post-9/11 fiction and thus missed its highly subversive potential. While recent academic output is starting to explore *The Zero* in innovative ways, early reception failed to examine it conceptually and formally, favoring as it did a trauma studies approach that resulted in a bland analysis of the novel's focus on terrorist figures. This article offers a reading of *The Zero* through Mikhail Bakhtin's theorization of satirical carnivalization, a practice that is especially suited to construct a dialogic, polyphonic and inquisitive narrative to not only question but dialogue with the post-9/11 United States.

Keywords: post-9/11 fiction; irony; satire; counter-discourse; carnivalization; perpetrator fiction

. . .

Por debajo del radar: *The Zero* de Jess Walter y el estatus de la ironía y la sátira tras el 11 de septiembre

Este artículo explora una de las novelas menos estudiadas del corpus de ficción post-11-S, la novela de Jess Walter *The Zero* (2006), y propone algunas hipótesis que puedan explicar esta falta de atención. El artículo sugiere que los debates que surgieron en los Estados Unidos tras el 11-S—respecto al estatus de la ficción frente a la tragedia, las tesis sobre el declive de la ironía y la sátira, las grandes expectativas depositadas en los autores canónicos para que dieran sentido al hecho, y las ficcionalizaciones normativas de la figura del terrorista como

Otro—contribuyeron a determinar ciertas lecturas de *The Zero* dentro de los parámetros establecidos por la primera ola de ficción post-11-S, pasando por alto su potencial subversivo. La recepción temprana de la novela ha tendido a desatender el análisis formal y conceptual de *The Zero* al favorecer una aproximación desde los estudios del trauma que resulta en un análisis insustancial de las acciones terroristas que son objeto de la novela. El artículo ofrece una lectura desde la noción del carnaval satírico desarrollada por Mikhail Bakhtin y muestra como la sátira es especialmente idónea para construir un relato dialógico, polifónico e inquisidor que no solo cuestione sino que dialogue con la nación estadounidense tras el 11-S.

Palabras clave: ficción 11-S; ironía; sátira; contra-discurso; carnivalización; ficción sobre la figura del perpetrador

1. INTRODUCTION

Over a decade and a half after the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, the corpus of post-9/11 fiction has diversified into previously unexplored areas and so criticism has also followed these new tendencies.[1] A "second wave of post-9/11 fiction"—as Petrovic labels the production after 2008—is characterized by "a newfound imaginative space founded on deconstructing the national exceptionalist fantasy" (2015, ii) that dominated the discursive landscape after 9/11, and which signified the attacks as a traumatic moment of rupture that meant a loss, yet again, of innocence for the United States. The first wave of post-9/11 fiction tended to be dominated by certain readerly and critical expectations that, in the face of a speechless and shocked collectivity, demanded fiction writers to *give meaning*—in the complex and intricate ways that fiction permits—to what felt like a national, collective trauma. As novelist Jay McInerney acknowledged, there was a shared desire "to have a novelist such as McEwan or DeLillo or Roth process the experience for us" (2005, n.p.), and while writers would oblige in due course, DeLillo's harrowing essay "In the Ruins of the Future" of December 2001 warned that response became a question of "response-ability," and that these first attempts at "understanding" 9/11 would be tentative at best. The challenge for writers was, as DeLillo wrote, "to set into our frame of practiced response" the "massive spectacle that continues to seem unmanageable, too powerful" (2001, 35), and to give it meaning while at the same time resisting "the demand to speak with moral clarity and [to] declare what the event means" (Abel 2003, 1236).

It is upon this horizon of expectations that the first wave of post-9/11 fiction would have to inscribe itself: a landscape dominated by trauma narratives that demanded a naturalistic portrayal of the attack's effects without falling into voyeurism, aesthetic escapism, domesticity or the attendant danger of depoliticization, when, at the same time, there was a recognition of the inexpressible nature of traumatic events.[2] As Baelo-Allué points out, first wave post-9/11 fiction was often "trapped in narrowing conceptions of trauma and the impossibility of its articulation" (2016, 169) and criticism often demanded, as well as decried, such limitations. In fact, criticism became somewhat prescriptive (Worthington 2015, 3) of what a "good 9/11 novel" should be and repeatedly voiced the inadequacy of early texts to grapple with the event. In 2005, the media were clearly voicing these alleged failings, declaring that "Truth Is Stronger than Fiction" and that "no novels ha[d] yet engaged with the post-September

[2] These were some of the contentions against early novels such as Frédéric Beigbeder's *Windows on the World* (2004), Jonathan Safran Foer's *Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close* (2005) and Don DeLillo's *Falling Man* (2007). See McInerney (2005), Kakutani (2007), Litt (2007), O'Hagan (2007), O'Keeffe (2007), Gray (2011), Randall (2011) and Baelo-Allué (2012).

11 era in any meaningful way" (Donadio 2005, n.p.), a verdict that was confirmed in 2011 in Laura Miller's piece for *Salon*, "Why We Haven't Seen a Great 9/11 Novel."

It was while still waiting for "the great 9/11 novel" to come out of the more or less expected and canonical sources—in more or less the prescribed ways—that Jess Walter's fourth novel *The Zero* was published (2006). While the novel received excellent reviews—"brilliant," a "noir page-turner," "scathing," "the *Catch 22* of 9/11," a "Kafkaesque parable" (quoted in Walter [2006] 2007)—and was a finalist for the National Book Award, it remained largely under the radar of critics and scholars alike, even as it shed some light on what 9/11 *had meant* and what 9/11 *has done to us*—the usual demands of critics of post-9/11 fiction. This is somewhat perplexing, as by 2006 roughly sixty-nine post-9/11 novels had been published and, of those, less than half were by American novelists. Thus Walter's novel was among the first attempts by American writers to respond to the cultural demand to give meaning to the traumatic experience through fiction. It might be argued that at the time Walter was relatively unknown to the general reading public, but I want to suggest that it was *The Zero*'s non-conformity to canonical expectations that meant it passed under the radar. In a trauma-centered prescriptive scenario that called for the demise of ironic humor in the face of tragedy, Walter's novel dissected through satire the management of 9/11 by the Bush administration, and American society's acquiescence to the official discourse of collective grief, trauma and heroism, to the demand to move on and "go shop" (Bush 2001b, n.p.), and to the effective inauguration of a state of exception at home and abroad. As John Duvall argues, the publication of Walter's text in 2006 was indeed a risky move (2013, 280), when the cultural climate was prone to self-censorship and to political correctness, and when dissenters were quickly accused of being un-American. No other American novel had so straightforwardly engaged with the consequences of 9/11 at the cultural and political levels as *The Zero* did, or sought so fervently to open up a space for an alternative public discussion of what 9/11 had meant. But as Baelo-Allué argues, the trauma discourse was so pervasive that it permeated not only post-9/11 fiction but also political discourse as the perfect means to accommodate the discourses of patriotism, innocence and exceptionalism, as well as to justify the ideology of pre-emptive action (2016, 167). This, together with academics in the field of trauma studies seizing upon the opportunity "to put into practice their own theories" (167), may explain the popularity of the trauma studies approach in critiquing early post-9/11 fiction, and it is in this light that Walter's choice to write a satirical novel stands out as a frontrunner in the exploration of the concerns that Petrovic attributes to the second wave; namely, the exploration of the wider and geopolitical implications of the US exceptionalist response (2015).

The analysis by Duvall is the first among a small number of recent scholarly articles that have begun to turn their attention to *The Zero*, albeit that some generic studies on post-9/11 fiction briefly mentioned the novel—sometimes just as a footnote—from 2009 onwards (Melnick 2009; Crownshaw 2011; Däwes 2011; Gibbs 2014). After

Duvall's article in 2013, Derosa (2013), Dodge (2014), Flinn (2014), K. Miller (2014) and Worthington (2015) have all followed up with important studies on the novel.[3] While it is true that some of these analyses fall within the interpretive paradigms of early 9/11 studies by approaching post-9/11 fictions as explorations/representations of the traumatic experience, of how to engage ethically with the figure of the terrorist or fundamentalist Other, and of how to deal with a loss that is characterized as exceptional, some have also begun to investigate *The Zero*'s resort to satirical humor (Duvall 2013; Dodge 2014; Flinn 2014). Following in the same vein, this article reflects on the significance of Walter's satire as a counter-discourse that negates both the prescriptions of early post-9/11 fiction and the announcements of the satire's demise as a valid outlook for the post-9/11 world. In contrast to early media reception that seemed to miss the novel's high potential for ethical engagement, the brief examination carried out in this work of some of the textual and semiotic strategies employed seeks to demonstrate the vitality of an allegedly defunct and politically incorrect form of satire in the post-9/11 world.

2. THE RECURRENT DEATHS OF IRONY AND SATIRE[4]

Under the much-repeated mantra that "everything changed" on 9/11, trauma became the overarching and inescapable paradigm of interpretation, and the melancholic atmosphere of the nation became its context. As both Butler ([2004] 2006) and Sturken (2007) have argued, this melancholic state constrained the critical examination of the causes of the attack and hampered the task of seeking alternatives to the government's aggressive policies. In this context, then, the trope of the end of irony and satire soon gained traction as their attendant "lack of seriousness" was deemed an inadequate means through which to address the aftermath. Pundits and cultural prognosticators, like the editor of *Vanity Fair* Graydon Carter, declared that "the end of the age of irony" had arrived (Hirschorn 2011, n.p.) and reflected that this was probably the "[o]ne good thing [that] could come from this horror" (Rosenblatt 2001, n.p.). As Webber argues, the most relevant effect of this type of reaction was to demonstrate "a kind of political and cultural truism" that tends to associate American culture with perennial youth, whereby young people are simply "playing around" until events force them to get serious (2013, 3). The perceived loss of innocence on 9/11 thus demanded the United States to, finally, "grow up." The general mood seemed to subscribe to the thesis that foreshadowed the demise of black comedy, cynicism and satire in a post-

---

[3] Earlier studies include a conference presentation by Derosa (2011) and an MA thesis by Santin (2011). However, I take 2013 as the start date, which is when peer-reviewed journal articles or book chapters that focus specifically on *The Zero* begin to be published.

[4] Irony and satire are distinct terms but they are intrinsically related, as irony can be thought of as "one of the ways by which satire signifies" (Bowles 2015, 9). Many of the media texts I refer to here use them interchangeably. For a brief overview of the debates over the end of irony in the media, see Hirschorn (2011) and Duvall (2013).

9/11 climate "where a new form of PC (Patriotic Correctness) shaped most discussions of the US response to terrorism domestically and globally" (Duvall 2013, 280).

The end-of-irony thesis was, however, soon contested in both the televised and written media—Kakutani (2001), Williams (2003), Newman (2008)—as well as in the academic sphere, and scholars working in various fields "have produced intellectually robust defenses of irony […] that demonstrate how irony continues to be a salient feature of manifold cultural discourses and articulate myriad reasons why democratic societies don't just seem to like irony but *need* irony" (Stratton 2013, 1-2; emphasis in the original). The trope of the end of irony has even been turned on its head in post-9/11 cultural studies; as Ted Gournelos and Viveca S. Greene argue in *A Decade of Dark Humor: How Comedy, Irony, and Satire Shaped Post-9/11 America*, "humor, irony, and satire were not only shaped *by* 9/11 and its aftermath, but were also pivotal in shaping responses to the events" (2011, xii; emphasis in the original). However, this should not obscure the fact that humor in the form of irony and satire continues in some quarters to be viewed as inadequate and sometimes inappropriate to address the aftermath of 9/11; as Duvall contends, the end-of-irony thesis still "has a certain resiliency in academic criticism" (2013, 279) and some continue to argue that "irony never really did make a comeback after 9/11" (Hirschorn 2011, n.p.).

Indeed, and as Duvall argues, "to claim that irony died on 9/11 is to selectively read fiction published since 2002" (2013, 280), highlighting that there are many early examples of 9/11 literary production where fiction writers make evident their willingness to engage with irony and satire in the post-9/11 world, such as Art Spiegelman's *In the Shadow of No Towers* (2004), Ken Kalfus's *A Disorder Peculiar to the Country* (2006), and later examples such as Christopher Grimes's *The Pornographers* (2012). So what explains the resilience of the belief that satire is not appropriate to deal with 9/11?

Much has to do, in my estimation, with the currency of outdated modes of reading and understanding satire derived from an influential—yet now stagnant—corpus of satire criticism that bloomed, especially in the United States, between 1960 and 1980.[5] Unlike the notions of irony and parody, which were revisited by and became pivotal to postmodernism—see, for instance, Hutcheon (1985; 1994) or Jameson (1984)—satire has not had the benefit of such critical reevaluation until very recently. And this is despite the fact that Mikhail Bakhtin's groundbreaking work on the subject (1963; 1965) was readily available in the West in the 1970s, and that many theorists have been working on a renewal of the notion of the satiric since the 1990s: Griffin (1994), Weisenburger (1995), Bogel (2001), Mookerjee (2013) and Bowles (2015), among others. But as Bowles himself contends, satire tends to elicit an intuitive response in the reader whereby an exclusively referential or mimetic meaning is attributed to the

---

[5] The trope of the death of satire is a recurrent debate in aesthetic theory, especially from the nineteenth century onwards. In the United States, the debate bloomed between academics at Yale and Chicago universities during the period 1950-1980. See, for instance, Worcester (1940), Elliot (1960), Highet (1962), Feinberg (1963), Kernan (1965), Paulson (1967) and Hodgart (1969).

characters or situations described, and the text is usually perceived as aggressive, with a very clear, targeted intentionality that relies on an unambiguous moral positioning. For instance, and in order to understand what the consensual, mainstream perceptions are, *Merriam-Webster Dictionary* still defines SATIRE as "a way of using humor to show that someone or something is foolish, weak, bad, etc." or "humor that shows the weaknesses or bad qualities of a person, government, society, etc." ([2003] 2014, s.v.). In this conventional—and still current—view, satire is, then, a corrective tale that rests on the alignment of the reader and the author against the satirized object (Bogel 2001), an alignment which is perceived as unacceptable in certain historical circumstances— as one would satirically condemn certain situations at one's own peril. For instance, Roger Rosenblatt's argument that certain events "like 9/11, and perhaps Obama […] are so big that they almost imply an obligation not to diminish [them] by clever comparisons" reveals how in this view ironic humor is "a diminishing act" where we smile "at the distance" (quoted in Newman 2008, n.p.). Yet newer trends in satiric theory question this perception of the distance between satirist/reader and the object, as they understand satire as, if anything, an act that problematizes the creation of difference precisely because the object of satire is "*not alien enough*" to the satirist and reader (Bogel 2001, 41; emphasis in the original).

The persistence of outdated understandings of satire is especially perplexing in a culture like the United States, which has such a long tradition of satirical writing and has produced such pivotal figures as Nathanael West, Joseph Heller, Thomas Pynchon and Kurt Vonnegut, to name but a few, to speak nothing of the pervasiveness of satire in every other artistic medium.[6] It is into this lineage that Walter's *The Zero* inscribes itself, and it is through dialogue and intertextual play with this tradition—as well as with the works of Céline, Kafka and Camus—that the novel finds its fullest ethical expression. As Walter fiercely states, "THIS BOOK IS NOT ABOUT THEM [the government]. It's about us" (Flinn 2014, 229; capitals in the original), about the way that Americans have deluded themselves into a post-9/11 collective insanity. Thus, the author himself states that the satire of *The Zero* goes beyond mere allegory and seeks to engage readers in an open-ended, non-finite and dialogic way that is crucially different from what traditional satire criticism would understand it to be. *The Zero* does not merely "point the finger at" the government's management of the aftermath of 9/11, but attempts to lead readers into self-examination and a recognition of their own complicity, and it achieves this by building empathic bridges with the reader through what Bowles terms the satiric effect (Bowles 2015, 7).

As Daniel Bowles seeks to demonstrate in *The Ends of Satire* (2015), looking at satirical writing from a semiotic point of view—that is to say, at *how* satire signifies—not only makes evident the pervasiveness of satiric practices such as inversion, dialogism,

---

[6] For a comprehensive analysis of American satirical writing in the twentieth century, see Weisenburger (1995).

intertextuality, parody, citation and mythification in everyday theoretical and fictional writing, but can also help to better understand how the satiric effect works. Bakhtin's notions of carnivalization and dialogism are, in my view, among the most fruitful ways to re-examine satiric theory, along with Kristeva's reworking of Bakhtin's dialogism and ambivalence towards the notion of intertextuality. While it is beyond the scope of this article to explore the influence and full ramifications of Bakhtin's and Kristeva's work for structuralism, post-structuralism and beyond, Bakhtin's exploration of the tradition of folk humor, carnival laughter (Bakhtin [1965] 1968) and the "carnival sense of the world" (Bakhtin [1963] 1999, 107) as the basis for the literary practice of carnivalization helps to understand the satiric as a literary gesture permitting the temporary suspension of monologic, authoritative discourses, thus opening up a small breach where other discourses may be considered.

Both in *Problems of Dostevsky's Poetics* (1963) and in *Rabelais and His World* (1965), Bakhtin traces the ancient festivities of carnival in Roman and medieval times as feasts that "celebrated temporary liberation from the prevailing truth and from the established order," marking "the suspension of all hierarchical rank, privileges, norms, and prohibitions. [...] [T]he true feast of time, the feast of becoming, change and renewal [...] hostile to all that was immortalized and completed" (Bakhtin [1965] 1968, 10). From this idea of licensed transgression Bakhtin derives the notion of carnivalization (or epistemological inversion) as a literary practice that can be traced back to Antiquity, from the serio-comical genres of Classical times—especially the Menippean satire and the early Socratic dialogues—into the Middle Ages, where he identifies Rabelais's grotesque realism as one of the main examples of carnivalesque energies in fiction (Bakhtin [1965] 1968). These energies in turn encroach upon the emerging genre of the European novel in the eighteenth century (Bakhtin [1981] 2011) and can still be found in Dostoevsky's "polyphonic novel" of the following century, and in the "carnivalized genres" of today (Bakhtin [1963] 1999, 107-113). What Bakhtin's notion of carnivalesque writing underscores is a type of discourse that, in contrast to epic, distanced, closed off monologic discourses, opens up the text for an "atmosphere of joyful relativity" that reverts to "a weakening of its one-sided rhetorical seriousness, its rationality, its singular meaning, its dogmatism" (107). The carnivalized text is especially dialogic as it becomes "writing [that] reads another writing, reads itself and constructs itself through a process of destructive genesis" (Kristeva [1969] 1986, 47). This destructive force is not, as traditional criticism of satire is apt to contend, aggressive and sometimes gratuitous; rather, as Bakhtin maintains, the temporary and "festive" laughter of carnival is a rejuvenating and restorative force (Bakhtin [1963] 1999; [1965] 1968), and this is precisely the type of writing that can inquire into monologic discourses—such as the official narratives of 9/11 and all those "regulatory fictions through which the state exercises governmental rule" (Pease 2003, 205). As Bakhtin writes in *The Dialogic Imagination*, the power of laughter resides in its potential for inquiry:

Laughter has the remarkable power of making an object come up close, of drawing it into a zone of crude contact where one can finger it familiarly on all sides, turn it upside down, inside out, peer at it from above and below, break open its external shell, look into its center, doubt it, take it apart, dismember it, lay it bare and expose it, examine it freely and experiment with it. Laughter demolishes fear and piety before an object, before a world, making of it an object of familiar contact and thus clearing the ground for an absolutely free investigation of it. Laughter is a vital factor in laying down that prerequisite for fearlessness without which it would be impossible to approach the world realistically. (Bakhtin [1981] 2011, 23)

In this light, the satiric is revealed not just as a mode of writing but also as a mode of reading, a way of engaging with a text that is ambivalent, open-ended, polyphonic, that speaks in more than one voice, that is dialogized, "opposed to all that [is] ready-made and completed, to all pretense of immutability, […] ever changing, playful, undefined" (Bakhtin [1965] 1968, 11). From this perspective, the mimetic act in *The Zero* can be explored as signifying "something beyond the mere practice of imitation" and denunciation (Bowles 2015, 12), and as probing the limits of contemporary authoritative discourses through their temporary suspension. The carnival laughter of *The Zero* is, as Bakhtin would suggest, inquisitive, regenerative, ambivalent and inclusive, as opposed to the type of negative mockery where Walter the satirist would be at a safe distance from the world that he mocks. In the narrative universe of *The Zero* the post-9/11 world is turned inside out through carnivalesque inversion: cowards become heroes, heroes become crooks, victims turn victimizers and terrorists are revealed as innocent. More importantly, the state, the alleged source of "law and order," becomes the main cause of terror. The bodily materiality that is so present in the satirical grotesque as a way of bringing all that is abstract and ideal down to earth and making it flesh and material (Bakhtin [1965] 1968, 18-19) is evident in *The Zero*'s constant percolation of "jigsawed bits of people" (Walter [2006] 2007, 44): a chin, a scalp and a head are found in the debris; a body explodes like a water balloon on the sidewalk; rescue workers at "The Place That Stunk" (17) play a game of "*name that piece*" (48; italics in the original), while politicians and bosses give inspirational speeches to the masses, and reporters go "grief fishing" (12). The text abounds with elements germane to carnivalesque subversion, with parodying doubles, unusual psychic states, inappropriate speeches and performances and a general sense of unacknowledged absurdity. Also, and as Kristeva demonstrates, the figures of language used "including repetition, 'inconsequent' statements (which are nonetheless 'connected' within an infinite context) and non-exclusive opposition, which function as empty sets or disjunctive additions, produce a more flagrant dialogism than any other discourse" ([1969] 1986, 49). Temporality is shattered as the narrative jumps from one scene to the next in *media res* and, in a final loop that takes the reader back to the beginning, *The Zero* most effectively embodies the temporary breach, the small gap of opportunity and transgression where the world has been turned on its head.

3. Jess Walter's *The Zero*: Satirizing the Aftermath

Walter's satirical novel is narrated through the impaired perspective of a police officer, Brian Remy, an allegedly traumatized and apparently schizophrenic individual whose paranoid experience serves to dissect post-9/11 culture and politics, the lethal logic of violence and forgetting and the manufacture of consent through aggressive state and media propaganda, "the most insidious, greatest propaganda ever devised" (Walter [2006] 2007, 222), according to one of the novel's characters. The novel constructs a devastating portrayal of a society's reaction to a terrorist attack and its acquiescence to the machinations of official discourse, since the felt need for "the comfort of conceptual closure" (Flinn 2014, 232) leads the society portrayed in *The Zero* to fall victim to discourses of heroism, of vengeance, of victimhood, of nostalgia, of security, of consumerism, and so on. As Walter reflects in his "Journals,"[7] he wanted to write an allegorical satire about the aftermath of 9/11 because such a reaction from people was not inauthentic and "in some ways the fact that they believed this shit was even more chilling" (Walter interviewed in Flinn 2014, 232). Thus, the novel's epigraph—which is the first of many references to the anti-hero Ferdinand from Louis-Ferdinand Céline's first autobiographical novel *Journey to the End of the Night* (1932)—brings to mind the self-destructive nature of the US military response and the oftentimes absurd logic that official discourses have employed to justify state violence—e.g., "they hate our freedoms" (Bush 2001a, n.p.). Like Céline's Ferdinand Bardamu in the epigraph to Walter's novel, the main character of *The Zero* has the feeling of being surrounded by collective insanity:

> Could I, I thought, be the last coward on earth?
> How terrifying!… All alone
> with two million stark raving heroic madmen
> armed to the eyeballs …
>   CELINE,
> *Journey to the End of the Night*   (Walter [2006] 2007, n.p.)

Even before the analogy with the post-9/11 United States is established, a concise "Author's Note" at the beginning warns that "This happened," (Walter [2006] 2007, n.p.), an assertive statement that becomes ironic in light of the utter unreliability of the narrative voice, since it will remain unclear what happened and what did not happen in the narrative universe of the novel.[8] Perhaps all that can be known for certain is that

---

[7] The 2007 edition of the novel includes a selection of entries from the journals that Walter kept while writing *The Zero*, hereafter referred to as the "Journals" (Walter [2006] 2007, 8-21).

[8] The text unequivocally sets the action in post-9/11 New York, and although the city is never named, many of its landmarks are. The analogy is further suggested by the invocation of rumors that were widespread in the post-9/11 days. See Walter ([2006] 2007, 8-9).

"This" (i.e., the writing of *The Zero*) "happened" (i.e., took place) for the Author.[9] The note acquires a deeper layer of meaning if read in dialogue with Vonnegut's opening lines to *Slaughterhouse Five*—"All this happened, more or less" ([1969] 2000, 1)— thus foreshadowing *The Zero*'s intertextual and polysemic intention. By establishing a connection to Vonnegut's text—a novel that also confronts the experience of severe trauma, death and loss during the US-British firebombing of Dresden in the Second World War, but crucially published at the height of the American War in Vietnam (1969)—Walter places signification in a dialogic relationship with prior texts and prior contexts—contexts of war, violence, madness and absurdity—which opens up the text for multiple and new significations. In a hospital scene at the beginning of the novel the victims of Vietnam are spectrally brought in through a phantasmatic Vietnamese girl with a burned hand who snaps her big eyes open and stares at Remy "as if she were waiting for the answer to some question" (Walter [2006] 2007, 8). But while Remy is distressed about the girl, the hospital employee ignores him and continues to read from Kafka's *The Castle*: "*nothing more hopeless, than this freedom, this waiting, this inviolability*" (Walter [2006] 2007, 8; italics in the original). Intertextuality, then, is one of the main strategies by which *The Zero* signifies, as the text will establish and build upon, become filtered and mediated by its dialogue with other texts, not only fiction but political discourse too, in particular, the many public statements by the Bush administration and then mayor of New York, Rudy Giuliani.

After the attacks, which have left chaos, destruction, thousands of victims and an enormous disaster scene called "The Zero," Remy is retired from the police force due to a spine injury, although his main concern is his deteriorating vision. His retirement enables his recruitment as an undercover agent in a government counterterrorism unit, the Documents Department of the Office of Liberty and Recovery, where he is assigned the mission of finding a woman, March Selios, who they believe was tipped off to flee the towers. The unit has come to this conclusion after a piece of paper with a recipe for pecan-encrusted fish, which hung on March Selios's office cubicle, has appeared on a bus in Canada. The agency's utter reliance on this small piece of paper for launching a full-scale counterterrorist operation sets the tone for the covert-ops satire that will unfold. Documentation and whatever is on paper will take precedence over any other objectively (or potentially) verifiable fact (Flinn 2014). The terrible consequences that derive from this allegiance to documents and knowledge put down on paper is yet another way in which *The Zero* subverts the reliability of fossilized monologic discourses and official narratives.

The allegedly benign mission of the Documents Department is to recover and interpret the infinite number of scraps of paper that blanket the city after the attacks, in order to reclaim "[the United State's] place in the world, our heritage, [...] gathering

---

[9] I am deeply grateful to Cristina Alsina at the Universitat de Barcelona for this idea, which needs to be further explored.

everything that was lost, recapturing the record of our people, and our commerce" (Walter [2006] 2007, 54). That is, to reconstruct a pre-lapsarian narrative, the mythical and foundational narrative that was in place before *everything changed*. Paper—and especially falling paper, whether real or in the shape of the flecks in Remy's failing vision—becomes the dominant image of the novel, and this is significant given that the image of falling paper is one of the most visited tropes in early post-9/11 fiction. Not only did the image become iconic but in post-9/11 fiction it is usually interpreted as a way of *not* talking about falling bodies. *The Zero*—just as DeLillo's *Falling Man* (2007)—opens with the image of a flock of birds that in fact turns out to be "frantic" sheets of paper (Walter [2006] 2007, 3) but, contrary to expectation, abounds with falling bodies, body parts and an obsessive effort to recover every single body fragment and meaningless scrap of paper. Thus, the opening image of falling paper that suggests a trauma narrative is, as Duvall aptly points out, simply "a red herring" (2013, 283).

The misleading nature of this scene is indeed suggested by the second paragraph of the novel, which zooms in on a crime scene inside an apartment: a victim, Remy, is lying on the ground with a gunshot wound to his head. While readers may interpret that Remy has attempted suicide as a consequence of the trauma of the attacks—there is a suicide note on the table that reads "Etc." (Walter [2006] 2007, 5)—this pivotal scene begins to debunk the trauma narrative and announces instead the onset of some sort of parody. On the one hand, and given that the victim seems to be coming to after the impact of the gunshot, the question arises whether the image of falling paper that the novel opened with might not be an image of traumatic repetition but, rather, the consequence of a heavy concussion, what is often described as seeing stars. On the other, the way the crime scene is described parodies and subverts the generic conventions of the crime/detective novel and, especially, of the TV cop show *par excellence*, *Law and Order*.[10] These shows typically open with the crime scene, where the victim lies inert, and then the police arrive to inspect the scene. In *The Zero*, as Remy lies getting his bearings, his neighbor insists through the locked door that if Remy does not open the door, or at least tell her that he is OK, she will call the police. To which Remy replies, "I am the police" (Walter [2006] 2007, 4). This is the first epistemological inversion—in which the victim becomes the police, and vice versa—that anticipates the doubling of the main character that will follow.

The parody of the cop show genre continues as Remy (first victim, now police officer) inspects the crime scene (his own home) to try to figure out what has happened. He arrives at no conclusions (especially because the suicide note—paper—provides no clues), and the scene ends elliptically with Remy losing consciousness once again. These breaks in consciousness (gaps in the narration as well as in Remy's memory) are instrumental to the parody of the detective story, not only because throughout the novel Remy is forced to become the detective in the mystery of his own life (trying to

---

[10] I am deeply grateful to Matthew Armstrong for this observation, which he brought up at the "Reading Terror: Representations and Resistance" conference held at The Graduate Center (CUNY) in New York in November 2015.

figure out—in a Pynchonesque sort of paranoid quest—what he does as an undercover agent) but also because his genuine requests for clarification on this point are taken by everyone else as proof of his laconic sense of irony, thus reinforcing the parody of the classic "hardboiled detective" in American crime fiction (Duvall 2013, 284).

The doubling of Remy as "good" Remy (the victim, the cop, the caring but incompetent father) and "evil" Remy (the victimizer, the ruthless undercover agent) paves the way for a world of inversions in which, as noted, law enforcers become terrorists and presumed terrorists are shown as innocent victims framed by a government plot. These inversions can also be analyzed, as Flinn suggests, as resulting in grotesque figures, "grotesque" understood here as the result of the joining of dissimilar fragments, the fusing of categories that usually preclude each other, which then coexist as a unit, with the end result being an evident misfit (Flinn 2014, 222).[11] Furthermore, Remy's efforts to reassemble a coherent narrative that is able to reveal the "meaning" of his actions epitomizes all the other characters' desire to defragment both themselves and the pre-lapsarian narrative of wholeness that has been shattered by the attack (Flinn 2014, 224). As a result, and as Finn contends, the characters in *The Zero* end up creating "counterfeit synecdoches"—parts that stand for a whole—that aim to compensate for their loss and to recreate "what is knowable, acceptable, containable," a course of action which, ultimately, shields them from any responsibility or sense of truth (224). Examples of "counterfeit synecdoche" are Remy's colleague Guterak capitalizing on the tragedy through his participation in commercials and movies as a "hero-cop," Remy's son Edgar pretending that his father is dead and performing his grief in a one-man show at school, and Remy's girlfriend April staging her grief for a TV show, all of which actions reveal the inability of the character involved to truly acknowledge loss (Butler [2004] 2006, 19-49).[12] Fragmentation pervades the novel at the metaphorical, the figurative and the narrative levels, and allows Walter to construct a particular form of satire, a "new grotesque" (Flinn 2014, 221), a literary style that depends for its effect on the coexistence of the ordinary with something terrible or uncanny in order to create a feeling of estrangement in the reader. As Kayser ([1957] 1963) notes, the feeling of estrangement implies feeling alien *within* the world but not so far removed from it that the narrative can be taken as either fantasy or tragedy. Hence the world represented by the grotesque has to be our world, clearly identifiable yet strangely ominous so that the reader can be moved and affected "because it is our world that ceases to be reliable, and we feel that we would be unable to

---

[11] The term "grotesque," which has a very solid theoretical base due to centuries of use in aesthetic theory, was originally coined in the Renaissance to designate a Roman type of ornamental painting that combined elements of different orders in a playful way, with no heed to symmetry or proportion, which also suggested something ominous and sinister (Kayser [1957] 1963, 21). In literature the term refers to a particular form of satire. Both Wolfgang Kayser's *The Grotesque in Art and Literature* ([1957] 1963) and Mikhail Bakhtin's *Rabelais and His World* ([1965] 1968) emphasize the notion of play, of "a game with the absurd" (McElroy 1989, 2; see also Harpham 1982. For an analysis of *The Zero* as a new grotesque, see Flinn 2014).

[12] For an analysis of Edgar's grieving for his un-dead father as an appropriation and contestation of public grief, see Dodge (2014).

live in this changed world" (Kayser [1957] 1963, 185). Thus, in the narrative universe of *The Zero*, Remy is a mis-assemblage of odd parts who is also "estranged" by witnessing a world that remains oddly familiar, yet unknown.

The framing of Remy as a grotesque figure, his being both a victim/hero and a perpetrator/anti-hero, is an innovative approach to one of the main concerns of early post-9/11 fiction—the exploration of the figure of the terrorist Other. As Richard Crownshaw (2011) and Alan Gibbs (2014) contend, the trend in cultural memory studies—which have traditionally relied on the figure of the victim for identification—to turn to the figure of the perpetrator is verified in post-9/11 fiction in an attempt "to understand the terrorists, via their fictional renditions" (Crownshaw 2011, 76).[13] While these approximations have usually been vehiculated through Muslim or Middle Eastern characters, *The Zero* is perhaps the first post-9/11 novel to approach the terrorist Other through a white, non-Muslim American character, effectively bridging the gap that had otherwise existed in the exploration of post-9/11 perpetrators (76).[14] While the Middle Eastern characters in the novel do turn out to commit terrorist acts (although they are mostly framed), their actions pale in comparison to those carried out by the government agents who, rather than combating terror, seem to be "cloning terror" (Mitchell 2011) and producing more terrorists than existed in the first place. This suggestively leads to other real-life subversions, such as the dehumanizing treatment of detainees at the hands of the US military in Guantanamo and Abu Ghraib, and invites a reflection on the role of American perpetrators in the context of the post-9/11 world. However, most early reviews bypassed the implications of Remy's paralegal use of violence, as well as the novel's narrative choice to obscure these acts through its repeated leaps in chronology and ellipses: Remy's most violent acts are never directly narrated or fully shown, they are simply inferred. For Gibbs, this narrative strategy can be read as a wider political claim "regarding the invisibility of American 'counter-terrorism' operations post-9/11, and the way in which the American mainstream failed to discuss the ethics of such measures" (2014, 97). Thus, as Duvall contends (2013), the effect of Remy not knowing the full implications of his violence points at a vast majority of American citizens turning a blind eye to their government's establishment of a virtual state of exception both at home and abroad, verifying Dick Cheney's claim that "[a] lot of what needs to be done here will have to be done quietly, without any discussion" (Cheney 2001, n.p.). Cheney's words confirm the vitality of a type of political narrative that "in the name of national security, justifies [citizens'] exclusion from information and decision making" (Rogin 1990, 116), which relies on citizens' "intentional ignorance" (Chomsky 2003, 42) to make it possible.

---

[13] For a detailed analysis of the representation of terrorists in American post-9/11 fiction, see Bermúdez de Castro (2012).

[14] John Updike's would-be-terrorist Ahmad in his 2006 novel *Terrorist* is also American, but Updike's insistence on his mixed origins—Egyptian father, Irish mother—draws attention away from his American citizenship and seems to locate his alienation in his multicultural upbringing and surroundings. The presumed ex-terrorist Martin in DeLillo's *Falling Man* (2007) is German.

Although in his early "Journals" about 9/11 Walter did acknowledge that he was looking for "a narrative shape for an allegorical satire about the aftermath of 9/11" (Walter [2006] 2007, 8), the trauma studies approach taken by most early reviews reads the main character as a metaphor for the United States' prostrated self and its inability to make sense of the 9/11 events, thus missing much of the subversive potential of the novel. These readings tended to see Remy as a traumatized "Everyman"—especially because of his troubled psychological state—a universal figure standing not simply for the United States, but for American citizens as a whole, the shell-shocked collectivity post 9/11. This is, paradoxically, at odds with the story *The Zero* sets out to tell: Remy is in fact dumbfounded precisely by the collective narrative of heroism and loss that is superimposed on him, by how the insistent retelling of the collective experience of pain fuses and obliterates private trauma and individual suffering and turns it into commercial gain, which seems a direct allusion to the ease with which the diagnosis of "collective trauma" (Jameson 2003, 55-58) and the label of "hero" were applied to the general population as a whole after 9/11, and of how these ritualized and standardized formulations continue to feed the massive industry of public commemoration (Sturken 2007). Against this generalizing discourse, *The Zero* suggests that individual experience might actually leave room for unheroic acts, for unassuaged grief, for desperate and even cowardly acts, for ethical dilemmas and for psychological collapse. Therefore, I contend that the allegory refers not to Remy as a signifier of American society's experience of trauma, but to Remy as the embodiment of the need to go beyond traumatic paralysis and motivated forgetting and to delve into society's complicity with the discourses of power.

Furthermore, by applying a trauma studies approach, most early reviews found a plausible explanation for most of the novel's narrative strategies—such as the ellipses, the leaps in chronology, the doubling of the main character, and so on, i.e., as evidence of Remy's Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). Contrary to these readings, the novel raises doubts about the significance of any of the symptoms by featuring a set of *literary* doctors with extremely suspicious names, Rieux, Huld and Destouches, who are each adamant about their own (conflicting) medical diagnoses—because they are written on paper and official reports.[15] While the psychiatrist Rieux is certain that Remy's condition "is textbook PTSD" (Walter [2006] 2007, 194) and that Remy is "not working for some top-secret department, investigating whether or not [his] girlfriend's sister faked her death" (194-195), the unnamed general practitioner insists on reporting a "chronic back pain" that Remy denies having; Remy's real medical concerns are his faltering eyes and his memory gaps, which are repeatedly dismissed. We do not know if Remy's impaired vision is real, imagined or metaphorical—as the eye surgeon, Destouches, tells him, he has "never seen such thin, tattered tissue on a human being that wasn't a cadaver"

---

[15] Rieux is the heroic doctor in Albert Camus's *The Plague* (1947), Huld is K.'s lawyer in Franz Kafka's *The Trial* (1925) and Destouches is Céline's real surname: Louis-Ferdinand Destouches.

(266)—but the problems can be interpreted, ultimately, as a metaphor for "the blind eye we turned to torture" (Walter interviewed in Flinn 2014, 229) and the paralegal measures put into effect by the *Patriot Act* (October 2001). The reader may be tempted to confirm—having witnessed the questionable procedures of the covert-ops—that these conflicting medical diagnoses are just another ruse, "a cover story" (Walter [2006] 2007, 196), but the fact that Remy's doctors are depicted as utterly unreliable—are they even real?—and the text's intertextual cues divert the attention away from PTSD and suggest, rather, a general state of delusion. What these diagnoses point at is the desire to find logical explanations, and hence closure for the 9/11 events, explanatory discourses that fill in the blanks of what cannot be known or comprehended.

In short, early reviews of *The Zero* tended to overemphasize the allegory of a traumatized collective identity, of the dislocation experienced by the nation as a whole due to 9/11, and they have been more reluctant to explore the wider implications of the main character's unknowingness, his framing as a hero and his use of violence, issues that resonate deeply with America's investment in the notions of innocence, amnesia and the newfound "enduring" vulnerability, in then-president Bush's phrasing. Contrary to these readings, *The Zero*'s satirical framing of Remy's dual nature as victim and perpetrator problematizes the limitations and the faultlines in the victim-oriented rendition of the aftermath and its coexistence with an aggressive and hero-oriented response. And this, to a large extent, is what 9/11 *has done to us* and what 9/11 *meant*, and Remy comes to realize that he cannot be defined in black-and-white terms and that it is in this guise that he must learn to live. By means of its elliptical and gapped narrative structure "Walter's novel actually stages the reader's complicity with the US state of exception" (Duvall 2013, 297) as the reader identifies with the clueless and "unknowing" Remy, who is ignorant of his role or purpose, but whose innocence is seriously compromised. Walter wants the reader to feel that "odd helplessness of being complicit in this delusional policy and world view" and the seeming inability to act against it (Walter [2006] 2007, 20), and this is further achieved by the satirical framing of the novel. The tragicomic laughter of satire builds empathic bridges between text and reader where laughter is revealed, as Kristeva contends, as "not simply parodic; [...] no more comic than it is tragic; it is both at once, one might say that it is *serious*" ([1969] 1986, 50; emphasis in the original). In stark contrast to traditional understandings that may conceive of ironic and satirical humor as exercises in frivolity or acts of diminishing and distanced aggression that presuppose an insulated subject position, a reading of *The Zero*'s satire as carnivalization brings to the foreground its potential for serious inquiry. It is in this vein that Walter conceived his novel, as an entry from 2005 in his "Journals" reveals: "What if the great 9/11 book comes not from there, but from here, one of those fuzzy places that doesn't exist to them" (Walter [2006] 2007, 16), alluding to a place of indeterminacy that is doubtful of the government's self-assured rhetoric. It is in this vein that the "Zero" can be, as one of the novel's characters reflects, "[t]he point of departure in a reckoning" (Walter [2006] 2007, 309).

WORKS CITED

ABEL, Marco. 2003. "Don DeLillo's 'In the Ruins of the Future': Literature, Images, and the Rhetoric of *Seeing* 9/11." *PMLA* 118 (5): 1236-1250.

BAELO-ALLUÉ, Sonia. 2012. "9/11 and the Psychic Trauma Novel: Don DeLillo's *Falling Man*." *Atlantis. Revista de la Asociación Española de Estudios Anglo-Norteamericanos* 34 (1): 63-79.

—. 2016. "From the Traumatic to the Political: Cultural Trauma, 9/11 and Amy Waldman's *The Submission*." *Atlantis. Revista de la Asociación Española de Estudios Anglo-Norteamericanos* 38 (1): 165-183.

BAKHTIN, Mikhail. (1963) 1999. *Problems of Dostevsky's Poetics*. Edited and translated by Caryl Emerson. Minneapolis and London: U of Minnesotta P.

—. (1965) 1968. *Rabelais and His World*. Translated by Helene Iswolsky. Bloomington: Indiana UP.

—. (1981) 2011. *The Dialogic Imagination. Four Essays*. Translated by Caryl Emerson and Michael Holmquist. Austin: U of Texas P.

BEIGBEDER, Frédéric. (2004) 2005. *Windows on the World*. London: Harper Perennial.

BERMÚDEZ DE CASTRO, Juanjo. 2012. *Rewriting Terror: The 9/11 Terrorists in American Fiction.* Alcalá de Henares: Instituto Franklin-UAH.

BOGEL, Fredric V. 2001 *The Difference Satire Makes. Rhetoric and Reading from Jonson to Byron*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell UP.

BOWLES, Daniel. 2015. *The Ends of Satire. Legacies of Satire in Postwar German Writing*. Berlin: De Gruyter.

BUSH, George W. 2001a. "Address to a Joint Session of Congress and the American People," *Whitehouse.gov*, September 20. [Accessed online on March 9, 2017].

—. 2001b. "Remarks by the President to Airline Employees," *Whitehouse.gov*, September 27. [Accessed online on March 9, 2017].

BUTLER, Judith. (2004) 2006. *Precarious Life. The Powers of Mourning and Violence*. London and New York: Verso.

CHENEY, Dick. 2001. "NBC News' *Meet the Press*: Dick Cheney," *NBC*, September 16. [Accessed online on June 25, 2016].

CHOMSKY, Noam. 2003. *Hegemony or Survival: America's Quest for Global Dominance*. New York: Henry Holt.

CROWNSHAW, Richard. 2011. "Perpetrator Fictions and Transcultural Memory." *Parallax* 17 (4): 75-89.

DÄWES, Birgit. 2011. *Ground Zero Fiction. History, Memory, and Representation in the American 9/11 Novel*. Heidelberg: Universitätsverlag Winter.

DELILLO, Don. 2001. "In the Ruins of the Future: Reflections on Terror and Loss in the Shadow of September." *Harper's Magazine*, December: 33-40.

—. (2007) 2008. *Falling Man*. London: Picador.

DEROSA, Aaron. 2011. "Nationalism and Alterity in Laila Halaby and Jess Walter." Paper given at the Revisioning Terrorism: An Interdisciplinary and International Conference, Lafayette, September 2011.

—. 2013. "Alterity and the Radical Other in Post-9/11 Fiction: DeLillo's *Falling Man* and Jess Walter's *The Zero*." *Arizona Quarterly* 69 (3): 157-183.

DODGE, Jason J. 2014. "September 11 and Public Grief: Grieving Otherwise in Jess Walter's *The Zero.*" *Critique: Studies in Contemporary Fiction* 55 (2): 152-165.

DONADIO, Rachel. 2005. "Truth Is Stronger than Fiction." *The New York Times*, August 7. [Accessed online on June 25, 2016].

DUVALL, John. 2013. "Homeland Security and the State of (American) Exception(alism): Jess Walter's *The Zero* and the Ethical Possibilities of Postmodern Irony." *Studies in the Novel* 45 (2): 279-297.

ELLIOT, Robert C. 1960. *The Power of Satire: Magic, Ritual, Art*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton UP.

FEINBERG, Leonard. 1963. *The Satirist: His Temperament, Motivation, and Influence*. Ames: Iowa State UP.

FLINN, Anthony. 2014. "The New Grotesque in Jess Walter's *The Zero*. A Commentary and Interview." In *Transatlantic Literature and Culture After 9/11*, edited by Kristine A. Miller, 221-237. Houndmills, Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.

FOER, Jonathan Safran. (2005) 2006. *Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close*. Boston and New York: Mariner.

GIBBS, Alan. 2014. *Contemporary American Trauma Narratives*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh UP.

GOURNELOS, Ted and Viveca S. Greene, eds. 2011. *A Decade of Dark Humor. How Comedy, Irony, and Satire Shaped Post-9/11 America*. Jackson: UP of Mississippi.

GRAY, Richard. 2011. "Imagining Disaster." In *After the Fall: American Literature Since 9/11*, 21-50. Malden and Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell.

GRIFFIN, Dustin. 1994. *Satire: A Critical Reintroduction*. Lexington: UP of Kentucky.

GRIMES, Christopher. 2012. *The Pornographers*. Seattle, WA: Jaded Ibis.

HARPHAM, Geoffrey Galt. 1982. *On the Grotesque: Strategies of Contradiction in Art and Literature*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton UP.

HIGHET, Gilbert. 1962. *The Anatomy of Satire*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton UP.

HIRSCHORN, Michael. 2011. "Irony, The End of. Why Graydon Carter Wasn't Entirely Wrong." *NYMag*, August 27. [Accessed online on June 25, 2016].

HODGART, Matthew. 1969. *Satire*. London: Weidenfield & Nicolson.

HUTCHEON, Linda. 1985. *A Theory of Parody: The Teachings of Twentieth-Century Art Forms*. New York: Methuen.

—. 1994. *Irony's Edge: The Theory and Politics of Irony*. London: Routledge.

JAMESON, Fredric. 1984. "Postmodernism, or The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism." *New Left Review* I, 146: 53-92.

—. 2003. "The Dialectics of Disaster." In *Dissent from the Homeland: Essays after September 11*, edited by Stanley Hauerwas and Frank Lentricchia, 55-62. Durham and London: Duke UP.

KAKUTANI, Michiko. 2001. "Critic's Notebook: The Age of Irony Isn't Over After All; Assertions of Cynicism's Demise Belie History." *The New York Times*, October 9. [Accessed online on June 28, 2016].

—. 2007. "A Man, a Woman, and a Day of Terror." *The New York Times*, May 9. [Accessed online on June 28, 2016].

KALFUS, Ken. 2006. *A Disorder Peculiar to the Country*. New York: Harper Collins.

KAYSER, Wolfgang (1957) 1963. *The Grotesque in Art and Literature*. Translated by Ulrich Weisstein. New York: Columbia UP.

KERNAN, Alvin. 1965. *The Plot of Satire*. New Haven and London: Yale UP.

KRISTEVA, Julia. (1969) 1986. "Word, Dialogue and Novel." In *The Kristeva Reader*, edited by Toril Moi. New York: Columbia UP.

LITT, Toby. 2007. "The Trembling Air." *The Guardian*, May 26. [Accessed online on September 7, 2015].

MCELROY, Bernard. 1989. *Fiction of the Modern Grotesque*. London: Macmillan.

MCINERNEY, Jay. 2005. "The Uses of Invention." *The Guardian*, September 17. [Accessed online on June 25, 2016].

MELNICK, Jeffrey. 2009. *9/11 Culture: America under Construction*. Malden and Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell.

MERRIAM-WEBSTER DICTIONARY. (2003) 2014. Online edition, based on *Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary, Eleventh edition*. Springfield, MA: Merriam-Webster. [Accessed online on June 25, 2016].

MILLER, Kristine A. 2014. "Reading and Writing the Post-9/11 Cop: Trauma, Personal Testimony, and Jess Walter's *The Zero*." *Arizona Quarterly* 70 (1): 29-52.

MILLER, Laura. 2011. "Why We Haven't Seen a Great 9/11 Novel." *Salon*, September 10. [Accessed online on June 25, 2016].

MITCHELL, W. J. T. 2011. *Cloning Terror: The War of Images, 9/11 to the Present*. Chicago and London: U of Chicago P.

MOOKERJEE, Robin. 2013. *Transgressive Fiction. The New Satiric Tradition*. London and New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

NEWMAN, Andy. 2008. "Irony Is Dead. Again. Yeah, Right." *The New York Times*, November 21. [Accessed online on June 25, 2016].

O'HAGAN, Andrew. 2007. "Racing Against Reality." *The New York Review of Books*, June 28. [Accessed online on June 25, 2016].

O'KEEFFE, Jeff. 2007. "Fumbling Men." *Open Letters Monthly: An Arts and Literature Review*, June 1. [Accessed online on June 25, 2016].

PAULSON, Ronald. 1967. *The Fictions of Satire*. Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins UP.

PEASE, Donald. 2003. "From Virgin Land to Ground Zero." In *Dissent from the Homeland: Essays after September 11*, edited by Stanley Hauerwas and Frank Lentricchia, 205-213. Durham and London: Duke UP.

PETROVIC, Paul. 2015. "Introduction: Emergent Trends in Post-9/11 Literature and Criticism." In *Representing 9/11: Trauma, Ideology, and Nationalism in Literature, Film, and Television*, edited by Paul Petrovic, i-xii. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield.

RANDALL, Martin. 2011. *9/11 and the Literature of Terror*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh UP.

ROGIN, Michael. 1990. "'Make My Day!': Spectacle as Amnesia in Imperial Politics." *Representations* 29: 99-123.

ROSENBLATT, Roger. 2001. "The Age of Irony Comes to an End." *Time*, September 24. [Accessed online on June 25, 2016].

SANTIN, Bryan M. 2011. "Representing the Trauma of 9/11 in US Fiction: Jonathan Safran Foer, Don DeLillo and Jess Walter." Master's thesis, Miami University.

SPIEGELMAN, Art. 2004. *In the Shadow of No Towers.* New York: Pantheon.

STRATTON, Matthew. 2013. *Politics of Irony in American Modernism*. Bronx, NY: Fordham UP.

STURKEN, Marita. 2007. *Tourists of History: Memory, Kitsch, and Consumerism from Oklahoma City to Ground Zero*. Durham and London: Duke UP.

UPDIKE, John. (2006) 2007. *Terrorist*. London: Penguin.

VONNEGUT, Kurt. (1969) 2000. *Slaughterhouse Five or The Children's Crusade*. London: Vintage.

WALTER, Jess. (2006) 2007. *The Zero*. New York: Harper Perennial.

WEBBER, Julie. 2013. *The Cultural Set Up of Comedy. Affective Politics in the United States Post 9/11*. Bristol and Wilmington: Intellect.

WEISENBURGER, Steven. 1995. *Fables of Subversion. Satire and the American Novel, 1930-1980*. Athens and London: U of Georgia P.

WILLIAMS, Zoe. 2003. "The Final Irony." *The Guardian*, June 28. [Accessed online on June 25, 2016].

WORCESTER, David. 1940. *The Art of Satire*. New York: Russell & Russell.

WORTHINGTON, Marjorie. 2015. "Jess Walter's *The Zero*: Satirizing the 'Desert of the Real.'" In *Representing 9/11: Trauma, Ideology, and Nationalism in Literature, Film, and Television*, edited by Paul Petrovic, 2-15. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield.

Dolores Resano is a research fellow (FPU) at ADHUC—Teoria, Gènere, Sexualitats—Universitat de Barcelona, where she is currently completing her dissertation on 9/11 fiction and satire. Her research examines political and media rhetoric on 9/11 and their satirical contestation in literature. She obtained an MA in Cultural Identities at the Universitat de Barcelona (2011), writing on DeLillo's *Falling Man*, and in 2015 she was granted a three-month research stay at Princeton University. She is online editor for *Alluvium* and also coordinates the site for online reviews *Lletra de Dona*.

Address: Centre Dona i Literatura. Facultat de Filologia. Universitat de Barcelona. Gran Via de les Corts Catalanes, 585. 08007, Barcelona, Spain. Tel.: +34 934035655.

Unexpected Alliances: Friendship and Agency in US Breast Cancer Theater

MARTA FERNÁNDEZ-MORALES
Universidad de Oviedo
fernandezmmarta@uniovi.es

As theorists from different fields have proved, the hegemonic discourse has excluded women from the grammar of friendship, pitching them as rivals as a requisite for the survival of patriarchy. However, real life and cultural products provide evidence that women *are* capable of friendship, even in isolating contexts like life-threatening disease. With an interdisciplinary approach that bridges female illness and feminist friendship via drama, this paper analyzes three plays in which bonding in the context of breast cancer is placed center stage. Friendship is presented as a form of agency that allows for the construction of a network within which the cancer patient finds tools to resist the androcentric medical discourse and to recover her capacity to decide and act. This process echoes the philosophy of the Women's Health and Breast Cancer movements in a productive feedback loop between social movements and their related cultural repertoires.

Keywords: theater; breast cancer; friendship; agency; empowerment; medical discourse

. . .

Alianzas inesperadas: amistad y agencia en el teatro estadounidense sobre el cáncer de mama

Como teóricos/as de diferentes campos han demostrado, el discurso hegemónico ha excluido a las mujeres de la gramática de la amistad, colocándolas como rivales como prerrequisito para la supervivencia del patriarcado. Sin embargo, la vida real y los productos culturales dan prueba de que las mujeres *sí* están capacitadas para la amistad, incluso en contextos que tienden a aislar, como es el de enfermedades potencialmente letales. Con un enfoque interdisciplinar que enlaza la enfermedad femenina y la amistad feminista a través del teatro, este artículo analiza tres obras en las que los lazos en el contexto del cáncer de mama se sitúan en primer plano. La amistad se presenta como una forma de agencia que permite la

construcción de una red en la que la paciente de cáncer encuentra herramientas para resistirse al discurso médico androcéntrico y recuperar la capacidad para decidir y actuar. Este proceso se hace eco de la filosofía del Movimiento por la Salud de las Mujeres y Contra el Cáncer de Mama, en un productivo proceso de retroalimentación entre los movimientos sociales y sus repertorios culturales.

Palabras clave: teatro; cáncer de mama; amistad; agencia; empoderamiento; discurso médico

1. Introduction: Friendship With/out Women

In her essay on women and complicity, Carmen Alborch stated that mainstream narratives have contributed to the perpetuation of a discourse that systematically reminds women of what is expected from them, to the point that many assume the conventional roles as personal decisions, not being able to perceive the conditioning mechanisms behind the discourse (2002, 59). These roles include the incapability of building networks with other women. Our asymmetrical gender system, concluded Alborch, pitches female citizens against one another for the sake of patriarchy (2002, 23). This form of organization "has traditionally promoted a very negative perspective of any type of solidarity between women" (Narbona 2012, 61).

The strategy of hindering a female pact that would match the structure of brotherhood into which men are typically socialized has its roots in hegemonic Western philosophy, where friendship has been conceived of as a male prerogative, as Nietzsche exemplified in *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* (1883): "women are not yet capable of friendship: women are still cats and birds. Or, at best, cows" (in Jones-Ryan 2011, loc. 296).[1] Derrida elaborated on this in his revision of the brotherhood-centered and androcentric politics—his terms—that incorporate the figure of the (male) friend ([1994] 1998, 12), stating that in Western culture the grammar of friendship excludes women (74). The idea of a female friend cannot be a docile manifestation of brotherhood; that is why it must be domesticated as part of our political education (13). Analyzing canonical philosophy after Derrida, Maureen Jones-Ryan explained that for Plato or Socrates women were also "outside the realm of true friendship" and that this way of thinking lingers on today (2011, loc. 2469).

By imagining the possibility of relationships based on companionship, feminism challenges traditional definitions of friendship. Structures like the consciousness-raising groups of the Second Wave promoted bonding, and some branches which are still active, like the Women's Health Movement (WHM) and the Breast Cancer Movement (BCM), consider peer support a key principle. Several feminist texts have delved into the positive forces and difficulties of friendship, such as Robin Morgan's *Sisterhood* trilogy (1970, 1984, 2003). In the introduction to the latest volume, she concluded that the pattern of "tend and befriend" is appropriate for a gender-conscious study of female-to-female relations (Morgan 2003, xxv). Other important titles in this respect are *Communities of Women: An Idea in Fiction* (1978) and *Women without Men: Female Bonding and The American Novel of the 1980s* (1993), where Nina Auerbach and Donald J. Greiner, respectively, analyze the creation of intra- and extra-diegetic communities of women in novels; bell hooks' *Sisters of the Yam* (1993), where she describes the group of peers as a "healing place" (152); *Feminist Nightmares: Women at Odds. Feminism and the Problem of Sisterhood* (1994), edited by Susan Ostrov Weisser and Jennifer Fleischner, which discusses women with and against other women; Maureen Jones-Ryan's *Thicker than Blood. Friendships among Womyn*

---

[1] The Kindle version does not provide page numbers, but "locations."

(2011), quoted above, which focuses on the relevance of "gender-like friendships" to the development of healthy women (2011, loc. 312); *Sisterhoods: Across the Literature/Media Divide*, edited by Deborah Cartmell, I.Q. Hunter, Heidi Kaye and Imelda Whelehan (1998) and *Girlfriends and Postfeminist Sisterhood*, written by Alison Winch (2013). Both these latter works problematize sisterhood, pointing at the rarity of images of female friendship in literature, cinema and television (Cartmell and Whelehan 1998, 2) and identify how women are co-opted by patriarchy and exert mutually oppressive gazes (Winch 2013, 27), falling into a competitive pattern that Nora Rodríguez Vega had discussed in *¿Qué tiene ella que no tenga yo?* (2004).

Revising Western cultural productions, Jones-Ryan asserts that while "[f]riendships between men have been romanticized, glamorized and recorded," relationships between women have been "patronized, misunderstood, demeaned, diminished, or ignored" (2011, loc. 326). The conception of female friendships that exist beyond the frame of competition highlighted by the mainstream has proved radical, and it has been incorporated into certain theatrical products. Examples of this in the Anglo-American context are Susan Glaspell's *Trifles* (1916), where solidarity saves Minnie Wright from the death penalty, Caryl Churchill's *Top Girls* (1982), an antecedent to Lisa Loomer's *The Waiting Room* (1998)—see below—*Real Women Have Curves*, a 1996 play by Josefina López adapted to film in 2002 and *Ruined* (2009) by Lynn Nottage, where mutual help is a survival tool in the Congo.[2]

Taking an interdisciplinary approach that bridges the experiences of illness and friendship via drama, I develop a content analysis of three texts created by women in the US from the 1980s to the 2000s in which bonding in the context of disease takes center stage.[3] Through an examination of breast cancer as an alienating circumstance with gendered consequences, I argue that, in the corpus, friendship is a form of feminist agency, allowing for the construction of a caring network where the patient finds instruments to resist patriarchal medical discourse and to recover her capacity to decide and act. Finally, I aim to prove that this process echoes the philosophy of the Women's Health and Breast Cancer movements, in a productive feedback loop between social movements and their related cultural repertoires. I align myself with Tasha Dubriwny when she declares that the current discourse about women's health is strongly gendered. She discusses memoirs of prophylactic mastectomies and post-partum depression alongside advertisements for medication against the human papillomavirus, and draws a picture of dominant health narratives as neoliberal and postfeminist. However, she adds, "they are not the *only* narratives available […] Work by feminist activists on the edge of mainstream discourse is important, as it always holds the potential to disrupt the dominant postfeminist hegemony" (2013, 154; emphasis in the original).

---

[2] Narbona (2012) tackles theater and sisterhood, and she also raises the question of agency.

[3] In other texts mentioned here, friendship is secondary (e.g., *My Left Breast*). That the plays include explicit interactions between women friends that condition the development of the story is a key criterion for my selection of cases.

Being, as they are, on the edge of the mainstream given they are theatrical proposals developed by politically committed women, the titles chosen here are part of a continuum of breast cancer theater that has been expanding since 1985, when Lee Hunkins' *The Best of Strangers* (1995)—see below—opened at the American Folk Theatre. The 1990s were particularly productive, autoperformance being one of the preferred techniques to stage sickness. One-woman shows like Linda Park-Fuller's *A Clean Breast of It* (1993) and Susan Miller's *My Left Breast* (1994) coexisted with multi-character plays like Lisa Loomer's *The Waiting Room* (1998)—world premiere 1994 at the Mark Taper Forum—and the visibility and influence of the Breast Cancer Movement (BCM) during that decade echoed in their content.[4] As if trying to answer Lizbeth Goodman's question at the end of the 90s, "[W]hy an AIDS theatre movement but not a breast cancer theatre movement?" (1996, 206), the new millennium welcomed enactments of breast cancer like Rebecca Ritchie's comedy *Buying a Brassiere* (2000), Amy Fox's *Summer Cyclone* (2001), where two generations of women fight cancer, Wendy Wassertein's *Third* (2004), in which the protagonist's best friend undergoes chemotherapy and Sarah Ruhl's *The Clean House* (2006), first staged in 2004 by the Yale Repertory Theatre—see below.

For a discussion of breast cancer and friendship, both of which cut across the personal into the political, the medium of theater seems ideal. Firstly, because it is a form of communication that has been present in human societies from an early stage, as part of a chain of actions generally termed *performance*, "ranging from ritual, play, sports, popular entertainments, the performing arts [...] and everyday life performances, to the enactment of social, professional, gender, race and class roles, and on to healing [...] the media and the internet" (Schechner 2006, 2). Theater is a familiar constituent of our civilization and effective as a platform from which to explore issues. Secondly, it is an inherently political art, engaging with the people and with the power structures in which they live. In Augusto Boal's words, "all theater is necessarily political, because all the activities of man are political and theater is one of them" (1985, ix). Finally, theater invites us to explore tensions between the individual and the collective in ways not necessarily available to other cultural manifestations. As concisely put by playwright Eve Ensler, theater "allows—encourages—us as a community of strangers to face *together* realities that may be too difficult to confront alone" (2003, 433; emphasis in the original).

With this in mind, my paper contributes in two ways to the scholarship on friendship, breast cancer and theater. Firstly, through a political application of the concept of friendship, one which has not undergone "much theoretical examination [...] in the history of thought, feminist or otherwise" (Lugones 1995, 141). Case studies will be presented as a counter-discourse against the androcentric definition of friendship and the prevailing conceptualization of postfeminist girlfriendship as individualistic and complicit with patriarchal networks of symbolic violence (Winch 2013). Secondly,

---

[4] I analyzed autoperformance as a genre that allied with the 1990s BCM in my chapter in *Performing Gender Violence* (Fernández-Morales 2012).

by bringing the dynamics of female bonding to the surface in a series of plays that, on the part of feminist theater scholars, have either been neglected—most clearly *The Best of Strangers*—or discussed mainly with regard to the body politics of breast cancer (Deshazer 2003; 2005; 2013). My study is based on Lee Hunkins' *The Best of Strangers* (1995), Lisa Loomer's *The Waiting Room* (1998) and Sarah Ruhl's *The Clean House* (2006). I follow up on timid hints about the importance of this topic, such as Pamela Renner's suggestion that in Lisa Loomer's text the protagonists begin to reclaim their own lives as they develop a friendship (1999, 34), arguing that the characters recover control over their existence precisely *because* they develop those bonds.

2. Politicizing Illness and Friendship on Stage

Illness is a potentially isolating context, particularly in the case of life-threatening diseases with strong cultural meanings, like breast cancer. In such circumstances, feminist friendship provides a platform for agency and helps patients acquire tools of resistance against disciplining practices associated with the androcentric medical discourse. Through actions like linguistic rebellion, humor, information-seeking and confrontation, the characters in *The Best of Strangers* (Hunkins 1995), *The Waiting Room* (Loomer 1998) and *The Clean House* (Ruhl 2006) keep hold of the reins of their lives, reconstruct their identities following diagnosis and build meanings for their sickness. In so doing, they place center stage the awareness systematized by feminist thinkers— such as Jones-Ryan (2011), quoted above, on friendship and health—and peer support theorists: "[s]ocial support has long been recognised as an important contributor to health and well-being. It is multidimensional and has been defined as the provision of information, practical assistance and emotional empathy and comfort" (Campbell, Phaneuf and Deane 2004, 3).

Analyzing death and dying, Chris Shilling reactivates a term coined by John Berger in 1967 that proves useful here. Berger wrote about "marginal situations" as moments that push us to the edges of our existence, forcing us to acknowledge that life is unstable and that the meanings that we attribute to our world are based on human activity alone (Shilling 2003, 155). The protagonists of the selected pieces find themselves with their lives on the line and have to deal with such paradoxical circumstances as Wanda's in *The Waiting Room*: after years of molding her body for the dominant taste, she must have her implants removed, her breasts amputated and prostheses inserted to make her look "normal" (Loomer 1998, 55). Without delving too deeply into the issue, the play suggests that the implants may actually be behind the cancerous process, subtly denouncing damaging cosmetic practices when Wanda ironizes about her problems: "the usual. The foam broke down. The casing hardened" (17). This is a turning point in her self-perception and, with the support of a female network, she initiates a process of re-appropriating agency that culminates in her gaining full control over her treatment.

Like Wanda, the rest of the sick women in the corpus move towards an agency (re) gained in the company of peers. Echoing the lessons of the Women's Health Movement (WHM), they create their own support groups outside the medical establishment, benefitting from the advantages of this dynamic while questioning the *status quo*. As explained by Jane Ussher, Laura Kirsten, Phyllis Butow and Mirjana Sandoval, peer support groups for people with cancer provide a sense of community, acceptance and information about the illness and its treatment (2006, 2565). Hunkins', Loomer's and Ruhl's micro-communities promote all this, building a network based on a shared gender identity. In their plays, agency is multifaceted and includes the following aspects discussed by Lois McNay in *Gender and Agency*: firstly, the capacity to actively manage the often "discontinuous, overlapping or conflicting relations of power" (2000, 16). Secondly, as a realization of McNay's "creative dimension to action," agency can be read as the ability to act in an unexpected fashion or to institute new forms of behavior (22). Finally, agency extends into the capacity to engender change within the socio-cultural order (46). All these manifestations are geared toward one objective: dismantling the roles associated with the patient by breaking down the expectations of the hegemonic medical discourse and providing alternatives that reinstate the women to the position of subjects. The authors activate the feminist praxis of self-narrative as a form of resistance against a masculinist view of the world (82), allowing the characters to co-elaborate their version(s) of cancer. At the same time, they situate themselves as part of a culture of action developed within the BCM.

In *The Biopolitics of Breast Cancer*, Maren Klawiter discusses the transition between the *regime of medicalization* of the first three quarters of the twentieth century, in which breast cancer discourse was dominated by (mostly male) surgeons and by a common resort to radical mastectomy, and a *regime of biomedicalization*, born in the 1970s, that brought "changes in the practices of cancer education, early detection, diagnosis, disclosure, treatment and rehabilitation" (2008, xxvii). Within the former, patients were expected to comply with the *sick role*, associated with seclusion, absolution from work and familial burdens, exemption from responsibility and an obligation to get better and return to their lives.[5] This role hindered the establishment of bonds because the emphasis was placed on individual recovery and on looking as normal as possible. In the times of biomedicalization a new role has appeared: "the temporary sick role for symptomatic women was replaced by a permanent 'risk role' for all women" (Klawiter 2008, 38). This role, problematic as it is, has made it possible for collective identities and a network of cancer-based solidarity to thrive. The BCM is rooted in this form of biosociality which responds to discriminating practices through lobbying, action and a range of cultural manifestations, including theater.

---

[5] My description of the sick role draws on two sources based on Talcott Parsons' original coinage in *The Social System* ([1951] 1991), Arthur W. Frank's "Reclaiming an Orphan Genre: The First-Person Narrative of Illness" (1994) and Bryan S. Turner's *Medical Power and Social Knowledge* (1995).

These responses are part of what sociologists call *cultures of action* (COAs): forms of mobilization that "enact, embody, emote and articulate […] particular visions of what is and what ought to be" (Klawiter 2008, 44). In her study, Klawiter discusses three COAs: (1) early detection and screening activism, (2) patient empowerment and feminist treatment activism and (3) cancer prevention and environmental risk activism. *The Best of Strangers*, *The Waiting Room* and *The Clean House* are in line with the second COA, problematizing the position of the patient within a regime that still echoes the era of medicalization—mastectomy remaining a frequent option—but incorporates biomedical elements like screening and some treatment choice. Hunkins, Loomer and Ruhl participate in the public conversation about the disease, putting their personal and political preoccupations on stage. It is pertinent to point out that Hunkins was an employee of the Department of Health, Education and Welfare until 1982 and continues at this time to volunteer for the Healing Arts Initiative in New York. Loomer saw the ravages of breast cancer on her mother's body and took action: "I began the play […] with the idea of writing about women and health. It seemed that every woman I knew, knew someone with breast cancer."[6] In Ruhl's case, staging illness also touched on the personal: her father died of bone cancer and both her grandmothers succumbed to breast tumors.[7]

The three case studies, as textual productions within the COA explained above, share the premise of contesting the dominant medical discourse and empowering the sick characters in the caring company of women. Some protagonists spend most of their time in medical settings: Sybil in *The Best of Strangers*, who after a mastectomy shares a room with Tisho, due for a hysterectomy, and Wanda in *The Waiting Room*, who goes to her doctor's office and meets Forgiveness from Heaven and Victoria, the former suffering from trouble in her "lotus feet" (bound for male pleasure), the latter threatened with an oophorotomy (ovary removal surgery) because of inappropriate behavior. Extracted from their private environments, Sybil and Wanda are initially situated within the classical sick role, taking on characteristics of the more technological risk role when their diagnoses turn out to be complicated and they are submitted to a battery of tests. Within their limited field of action, however, both exert creative agency through linguistic rebellion, humor and resistance. In *The Clean House* Ana spends little time in hospital: four scenes out of twenty-eight. She escapes both the sick and the risk roles through confrontation and builds her own fate in a domestic setting.

In these plays audiences face a set of unexpected alliances cutting across time, class and race.[8] Bonds are based on a gender-focused *we* used as a pillar for friendships

---

[6] Quoted from the 1994 playbill of *The Waiting Room* by the Trinity Repertory Company.

[7] Ruhl expanded on her motivations in an interview for *American Theatre* in 2004.

[8] Deborah Geis used the term "unexpected alliances" in her paper "Love after Death: Sarah Ruhl's Drama and the Postmodern Romance," delivered at the Fourth International Conference on American Drama and Theater (2012). An expanded version appeared in *The Methuen Drama Guide to Contemporary American Playwrights* (Geis 2014).

that question the politics of breast cancer in relation to information disclosure, treatment, bodily effects or the role of caretakers. As forms of oppositional discourse, the relationships established by the women are, as Derrida theorized, knowledgeable acts exercised by choice and with a committed consciousness ([1994] 1998, 25). The various relationship axes in the works—Sybil-Tisho, Forgiveness-Victoria-Wanda and Ana-Matilde-Lane-Virginia, discussed below—are not happenstance results of the women's circumstances: they are gradual processes, built through personal will, and although there are points of conflict, these have empowering results, particularly for the cancer patients, who recover their decision-making capacity and self-esteem. The texts invite a reading in relation to the politics of the WHM and BCM, where mutual support between women is key in the framework of what Patricia Kaufert dubbed "networks of resistance" (1998, 294).

The political implications of the plays are further highlighted by their dramaturgical strategies. With different degrees of complexity, the three playwrights contribute to feminist Brechtian theater, most importantly through their application of the alienation effect: "The cornerstone of Brecht's theory, […] the technique of defamiliarizing a word, an idea, a gesture so as to enable the spectator to see or hear it afresh" (Diamond 1997, 45). Hunkins does it through the fragmentation of *The Best of Strangers*, to be staged as a series of vignettes: six scenes making up a one-act play; in Brecht's terms, "each scene for itself" (Willett 1992, 37), displaying not only the final result of a plot but also the course of a narrative. Loomer exploits anachronism as a source of humor and for distancing purposes. In the vein of Caryl Churchill, she situates in one chronotope an eighteenth-, a nineteenth- and a twentieth-century woman, all with issues in common. And Ruhl's magic realism, most evident in her uses of the setting—actors breaking the fourth wall, snow in an apparently realistic living room, as I have explained elsewhere (Fernández-Morales 2013-2014)—which multiplies the potential of the A-effect so that audiences "may come to question both the realist and magical elements" (Al-Shamma 2011, 60).

2.1. 1980s: The Language Wars

The Best of Strangers shows the relationship between Sybil, a "[w]hite female in her early fifties" and Tisho, a "[b]lack female in her early forties" (Hunkins 1995, 17). Both are hospitalized with typically female problems and conditioned by, firstly, the sick role—away from everyday activities, supposed to return to normal, expected to let doctors decide—and then the risk role—screened and x-rayed.

In the context of the conservative backlash promoted by the Reagan administration, African-American playwright Lee Hunkins evokes the increasing diversity of the WHM and BCM. In 1982 the National Women's Health Network created the National Black Women's Health project; the first National Conference on Black Women's Health happened in 1983; Luz Álvarez, Alicia Bejarano, Paulita Ortiz and

Elizabeth Gastelumendi founded the National Latina Health Organization in 1986; and the Native American Women's Health Education Resource Center opened in 1988. That said, the expansion of the WHM and BCM was not immune to the wave of conservatism of the time: "doctors' preconceived notions about gender led them to ridicule what these women were proposing […] [T]he persistence of radical mastectomy had less to do with medical indications than with male physicians asserting power" (Lerner 2001, 165). Hunkins' work reflects this through Sybil, who is subjected to a single mastectomy and threatened with a second: after one month under the care of a nurturing female nurse—Amy—and the surveillance of an off-stage male surgeon assisted by a detached female doctor—Dr. Cavendish—who serves as a spokesperson for the dominant discourse, she is ready to talk back.

The first battle that Sybil wages is against medical jargon, activating the creative dimension of agency theorized by McNay (2000). In her conversations with Tisho, she voids breast cancer of fear through re-naming:

> SYBIL: Look at the medical terms they use… radical mastectomy… sounds like something a mad scientist is working on.
> TISHO: [W]hat would you call it?
> SYBIL: A rainbow special! (Hunkins 1995, 27)[9]

Displaying their growing complicity, Tisho makes a toast "to rainbow specials" and joins the network of resistance by applying her own term to hysterectomy: "hot fudge sundae" (31). When Sybil's biopsy reveals that there is no second tumor and she can keep her breast, she appropriates sports lingo to share the diagnosis: "The score is one out… one still on base" (48).

The hospital setting is a context of social death that excludes subjectivity and bases decisions on a continuous evaluation of supposedly objective biological factors (Comelles 2000, 318). In the semiotic process developed in Hunkins' play, the 1980s ideas about medical power and patient passivity within that context are communicated through a series of theatrical props that work as signs: a chart, a wheelchair, a bedpan, etc. In this scenario, attended by a doctor who states that she cannot afford "the luxury of sympathizing" (44), the protagonists become close. Their first step is the consequence of shared everyday gestures, like helping each other in and out of bed. Later, they contest cancer through humor and through the gradual dissolution of boundaries. In scene three, Sybil concedes to Tisho, who is doubtful about disclosing her diagnosis: "You don't have to tell me if it's too personal" (31). By scene four, Sybil is ready to allow Tisho to stay in the room while she talks to her doctor (44). When Dr. Cavendish throws information at Sybil, Tisho stands up for her through confrontation against a structure that, in this

---

[9] Deshazer observes a similar strategy of word/phrase coinage in humorous online narratives like CancerBitchblogspot.com (2013, 110).

case, perversely pitches woman-patient against woman-doctor, in a conflicting twist of the traditional medical encounter.[10] In the same vein as Linda Park-Fuller's piece *A Clean Breast of It* (2003), which incorporates anger as part of the cancer experience, Tisho stops being an accepting patient and becomes an outspoken (im)patient:

> Don't you feel anything for that woman? […] Sybil's a human being. She needs to know you people are there for her! […] Being an eternal optimist, I can only hope that one day you end up in a hospital bed, and a cold-blooded bitch who's gone through six years of medical school and a four-year residency, pulls out your IV [intra venous] and says, 'Dr Cavendish I think you're dying, and who gives a shit?' (45)

The ultimate I-to-we leap comes after a watershed that is crucial in breast cancer narratives due to the symbolic weight of the breast, as Zillah Eisenstein argues: "The breast is never an isolated starting point because it is always already culturally and psychically filled with meanings" (2001, x). In scene four, Tisho accompanies Sybil to confront her new image in the mirror. The stage directions describe her silent support while Sybil observes her chest and moans, and the final kinetic instruction states that Tisho holds Sybil's hand tightly, their bodies united (47). The gradual physical approach becomes a sign of their friendship, which is finally verbalized by Sybil as she leaves the hospital: "ARTHUR: I thought you became such good friends. // SYBIL: We certainly did" (51).

2.2. 1990s: Friends beyond Time
In 1982, British dramatist Caryl Churchill surprised audiences with *Top Girls* ([1982] 1991) which unites women from different origins to celebrate the promotion of the protagonist, a contemporary "superwoman." The *rendez-vous* includes ninth-century Pope Joan, thirteenth-century Lady Nijo, Griselda in Chaucer's "Clerk's Tale," the protagonist of a Brueghel painting and Victorian traveller Isabella Bird. The anachronism, the juxtaposition of real and fictional characters, their cultural clashes and their alienating effect have made their dinner one of the most celebrated moments in feminist theater.

After Churchill's Brechtian model in *Top Girls*, in *The Waiting Room* (1998) Lisa Loomer introduces an eighteenth-century Chinese woman with bound feet, a nineteenth-century corseted English lady and a "modern gal" from Jersey with breast cancer who share the same doctor. Their interactions put the focus on the medical establishment and the possibilities that patients have of (re/de)constructing narratives. The play denounces control over female bodies, but also satirizes women's complicity in a multi-billion dollar industry (Deshazer 2003, 13). The protagonists evolve through a

---

[10]See McNay (2000) about agency in conflicting power contexts.

framework of symbolic violence—where "complicity" is key, as Bourdieu explained in *Masculine Domination* ([1998] 2001)—and convert their role of accomplices into one of resisting agents. They renegotiate their position within the doctor-patient dynamic by turning the waiting room, traditionally a non-place in the style of airports or hospital lobbies (Lagrée [2002] 2005, 73), into a *locus* of friendship.

Loomer's two-act play was first produced in 1994, early into the Clinton administration. It was a period of great visibility for the WHM and BCM and a productive era for theory, with feminist scholars expanding the canon of scientific thought and questioning knowledge and its forms of construction. As Nancy Tuana wrote, "the women's health movement was an epistemological resistance movement" (2006, 1).[11] Within this framework and featuring disorders conditioned by beauty canons that differ between cultures, but always impinge on female bodies, Loomer presents three women progressing from victimhood to agency; a journey that is a common result of the peer support group structure (Adamsen 2002; Ussher, Kirsten, Butow and Sandoval 2006). They start off somewhat disabled: Forgiveness' toes are falling off, Victoria can hardly breathe in her corset and Wanda may have to have her breasts amputated. Through their increasingly intimate relationship and a process of mutual education reminiscent of the WHM and the BCM, they move from acceptance of, to resistance against traditional roles. Like Sybil and Tisho, they count on the complicity of a nurse who emerges as the spokeswoman for gender fairness in research (Deshazer 2005, 20). Managing diverse power relationships in the line of McNay's agents, the women challenge the medical institutions to look for alternative treatments (Renner 1999, 35).

Behaving unexpectedly, as the creative woman she is, Wanda jokes about her condition. When the threatening quality of her implants is revealed, she snaps: "I can keep a couch six years, I can't keep a pair of tits six months" (Loomer 1998, 17). After her doctor orders immediate tests to determine malignancy, she responds: "I was going to get a haircut on my lunch hour, but I guess a biopsy would be good too" (28). Humor also serves as a bonding element, being useful to manage the fear wrought by health issues with profound consequences in the context of the heteronormative system. The Chinese woman disregards her condition ironically: "Little problem with little toe. […] Fell off this morning" (11). The Victorian lady responds when asked whether her corset hurts: "Only when I breathe" (12). Eventually, Wanda takes charge of her treatment, in a climax that echoes the Second Wave of feminism and the related WHM and BCM:

> this cancer… it's in *my* body […] this cancer is… mine. For better or for worse, till death
> do us apart, it's about the one thing I got left that's all—mine. And if I want to take it to
> Tijuana or Guadafuckinglajara […] If I want to die. If I want to call up my doctor and say,
> "No thank you very much," or "Please, God help me"—for once in my lousy screwed up life,
> it's MY BODY! MY BODY! MINE! (Loomer 1998, 70; emphasis in the original)

---

[11] See Fernández-Morales (2012) for more on 1990s feminist scholarship about female health and illness.

Like Hunkins' characters', their process is accompanied by a kinetic shift from distance to contact: nurse Brenda hugs Wanda, Victoria kisses Forgiveness, Wanda and Victoria hold hands. Their bodies are thus staged counter-discursively, not as abject containers of sickness or shameful carriers of disease, but as caring dispensers of affection and tools for mutual empowerment.[12] Reinforced by the support of her peers, Wanda appropriates the discourse to subvert the traditional narrative in the closing scene. Becoming an authoritative narrator,[13] she tells Forgiveness a deconstructed fairy tale in which women smash all the mirrors in the kingdom and invite their girlfriends to look into each other's eyes for renewed perceptions of beauty and health. Although it is hard, "eventually the women [start] to buy it," the doctors/magicians controlling their bodies run out of business and everybody lives happily ever after (75).

2.3. 2000s: The (Other) End

The canonical concept of the happy ending is also subverted in Sarah Ruhl's *The Clean House* (2006), described by Isherwood as "a play concerned primarily with the complex intimacies among women" (2006, n.p.). In it, (im)patient Ana evades the sick and risk roles after an unsuccessful mastectomy and decides to be euthanized by Matilde, a maid who hates cleaning and is devoted to finding the perfect joke. When it becomes obvious that her disease is incurable, Ana tells Matilde: "I would like you to kill me with a joke" (Ruhl 2006, 101). By doing this, Matilde rewrites her mother's involuntary femicide (her father told her a joke and she laughed to death) "as an act of mercy rather than an accident" (Al-Shamma 2011, 39). Ana's setup of her own scenario for demise—laughing and standing, not suffering and lying down like most patients—constitutes her ultimate act of control, and her end is described as a "transformation," not a defeat (8). Ruhl dismisses the custom of placing the dying in "such specialized hiding places as intensive care units, oncology research facilities, and emergency rooms" (Nuland 1993, xvi): she situates her protagonists in a private space where, after a complex journey of trust-building, Ana and Matilde, accompanied by Lane (Matilde's employer) and her sister Virginia, perform a series of rituals that complete the sick woman's progression towards agency. *The Clean House*, in the line of the two previous texts, "draws together a nurturing community of women around the ailing Ana" (Al-Shamma 2009, 11). Furthermore, by staging Ana's death, it also challenges the mainstream narratives of success that dominate breast cancer representation, which Emily Waples labeled "the master plot of survival" (2014, 159).

With her innovative proposal, which I have discussed elsewhere as representative of postmillennial Brechtian feminism (Fernández-Morales 2013-2014), Ruhl brings the vindications of the WHM and BCM into this century, when the cause of equity in health is still "an incomplete revolution" (Ehrenreich and English 2005, 362). Alive

---

[12] About the presence of sick bodies on stage and their reception see Fischer-Lichte (2008).
[13] Mead, Hilton and Curtis (2001) elaborated on the usefulness of storytelling for processes of self-reconstruction in the context of peer support groups.

despite institutionalization, the BCM continues to conceive actions, including textual production: "the culture of feminist treatment activism continued its development during the twenty-first century by creating new images and representations of women with breast cancer" (Klawiter 2008, 249). Such is the case of Ana, whose position counters the tendency of constructing narratives of breast cancer around young women, disregarding evidence that "the vast majority (approximately seventy-seven percent) of women diagnosed with breast cancer are over the age of fifty" (Klawiter 2008, 2).

Furthering the diversity of Hunkins' and Lommer's plays, Ana is a 67-year-old Argentinean immigrant who builds a relationship with Brazilian Matilde, a domestic worker in her twenties, American Lane—a doctor in her fifties, married to Ana's surgeon/lover Charles and Matilde's employer—and Virginia, a housewife looking for a mission in life and Lane's elder sister. Ruhl dramatizes the current intersectional feminist ideologies, offering a model of political friendship under the feminist ethos of women bonding across differences, as described by Maria Lugones and Pat Alaka Rosezelle (1995, 141).[14] Due to personal plight, class and age, these women's ties are, like those in *The Best of Strangers* and *The Waiting Room*, unexpected alliances. They start in conflict: Matilde with Lane because she does not clean; Virginia and Lane because of family issues; Ana and Lane because the former has fallen in love with the latter's husband. However, they move toward friendship after Charles goes on a journey to try and find a tree bark that he thinks would save Ana's life.

If in traditional patriarchal discourse men tend to act as mediators to determine women's value, Ruhl's proposal eliminates the male from the equation and leaves women center stage, offering them the possibility of working on a direct bond instead of the indirect way of interacting promoted by androcentrism (Alborch 2002, 35). Without Charles, the protagonists connect and end up performing meaningful ceremonies of affection. Before Ana passes away, they share eating ice cream from the same container, which in Ruhl's dramaturgical universe can be read as a Brechtian *gestus*: "a gesture, a word, an action, a tableau, by which […] the social attitudes encoded in the playtext become visible" (Diamond 1997, 52).[15] When Ana is ready to go, similar to Hunkins' and Loomer's plays, there is physical contact in the form of an embrace with Lane. Once she dies, Lane washes Ana's body and Virginia says a prayer. By the end, they have all gained something: Ana has finished her life as she wanted, Matilde has closed her mourning by aiding Ana, Lane has processed her husband's betrayal by getting to know Ana and Virginia has found a task in looking after Ana and her sister, who finally lifts her emotional shield.

Ana's empowerment is the most visible: upon diagnosis, she echoes the WHM/ BCM's idea that knowledge is power, demanding from Charles: "Tell me everything"

---

[14] About intersectionality in twenty-first-century feminisms, see Crenshaw (2003).

[15] A similar *gestus* features in the plays *The Good Body* (2001), where a group of Afghan women risk their lives to treat the author/protagonist Eve Ensler to ice cream; or *Sistahs* (2005), a text about uterine cancer by Maxine Bailey and Sharon Mareeka where food nurtures bonding.

(Ruhl 2006, 54). After her mastectomy, she confesses: "I have avoided doctors my whole life" (52). Nevertheless, she falls in love with Charles-the-man, but does not accept his command as Charles-the-doctor. She responds differently according to his shifting roles, managing "the often discontinuous, overlapping or conflicting relations of power" (McNay 2000, 16). She also dismisses medication and insists "No hospitals!" (Ruhl 2006, 79). She rebels against the roles that the system offers, which are, in the case of the terminally ill, radically limited: "While the patient is nearly naked, immobilized, frequently in pain […] and basically unable to control his own condition, the doctor is clothed, mobile, healthy, educated in the meanings of illness, and at least superficially in control of the situation" (Gilbert 2006, 189). In her response against a discourse that she does not assume, like Sybil in *The Best of Strangers*, Ana rejects the language of cancer which "becomes blood count, biopsy, chemotherapy, radiation, bone marrow, blah blahblahblahblah" (Ruhl 2006, 96). Aware of her double-tongued identity, she sentences: "As long as I live I want to retain my own language. Mientras tengo vida, quiero procurar mantener mi proprio [*sic*] idioma" (96).

Progressively walking into the shoes of a creative subject with the help of her network of resistance, Ana achieves agency, understood here "as the ability to act in an unexpected fashion or to institute new and unanticipated models of behaviour" (McNay 2000, 22). When the time comes, she places her life in the hands of a female housekeeper rather than a male doctor and resorts to humor as a strategy for release.[16] While, as David Wendell explains, physicians generally set the stage for dying in the (bio)medical context (1996, 29), lay women do it here with the acquiescence of Lane, a doctor undergoing a profound change. Whereas "[t]echnology is the primary weapon that physicians use to fight death" in the generalized "save-life-at-all-costs orientation" (Wendell 1996, 30), *The Clean House* de-technologizes the phenomenon and incorporates laughter into a peaceful acceptance of the end of life.

3. Generating New Cultures of Breast Cancer and Friendship

With different staging styles, all drawing on Brecht and with a common ideology of resistance against androcentric medical praxis, *The Best of Strangers*, *The Waiting Room* and *The Clean House* contribute to the COA of patient empowerment and feminist treatment conceived by the BCM. Moreover, they are representative of alternative narratives about friendship that align with feminism and respond to misogynist philosophy. Articulating woman-to-woman bonding within the alienating situation of life-threatening disease, they present audiences with various versions of what Gloria Steinem has called *psychic families*, affinity groups that "are a recognition that the biological family isn't the only important unit in society" (1993, 178).

---

[16] Patients have acknowledged humor and the role of jokes as part of the relief strategies within cancer peer support groups (Ussher, Kirsten, Butow and Sandoval 2006, 2569).

The protagonists overcome differences to construct ties that transform them. Their friendships, à la Derrida, are conscious, knowledgeable acts that invite a political reading because, as Lugones and Alaka Rosezelle have suggested, "[f]riendship across positions of inequality has to be worked for. [...] This entails a profound transformation of one's self" (1995, 143). In this sense, their relationships promote the third manifestation of agency contemplated by McNay: "the capacity of individuals to engender change within the socio-cultural order" (2000, 46).

This paper is based on the premise that, in line with what Tasha Dubriwny states (2013), the creation of alternative discourses about breast cancer is a possibility and a necessity if we are to achieve equity. In fact, the BCM

> was, from the beginning, bound up in the construction and diffusion of new visual images, collective identities, emotional vocabularies, and forms of embodiment. [...] These new meanings were encoded in new policies and legislation, enacted through new kinds of lay-expert collaborations, and inscribed on the bodies of breast cancer survivors and women living with cancer. They were also encoded in films, photographs, drawings, paintings, performances, poetry, and other forms of writing and artistic expression. (Klawiter 2008, loc. 3660)

The articulation of models of friendship grown out of feminist practices of resistance and peer support is a must if younger generations are to be raised in equality. Texts that circulate new modes of behavior in breast cancer contexts are part of an expanding collage of health-centered narratives that have "the potential to change how we live our lives" (Dubriwny 2013, 181). As constituents in a corpus of consciousness-raising literature aimed at engendering change (Knopf-Newman 2004, 91), Hunkins', Loomer's and Ruhl's works invite us to contemplate the personal as political. In interaction with other cultural products, they have the potential to encourage audiences to internalize—and maybe put into practice—the idea that there are other ways of being sick and strategies to build friendships between women beyond the traditional forms that may immediately come to mind.

WORKS CITED

ADAMSEN, Lis. 2002. "From Victim to Agent: The Clinical and Social Significance of Self-help Group Participation for People with Life-threatening Diseases." *Scandinavian Journal of Caring Sciences* 16 (3): 224-231.

AL-SHAMMA, James. 2009. *Ruhl in an Hour.* Hanover: Smith and Kraus.

—. 2011. *Sarah Ruhl. A Critical Study of her Plays.* Jefferson, MO: McFarland.

ALBORCH, Carmen. 2002. *Malas.* Madrid: Santillana.

AUERBACH, Nina. 1978. *Communities of Women: An Idea in Fiction.* Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP.

BOAL, Augusto. 1985. *Theatre of the Oppressed.* New York: Theatre Communications Group.

BOURDIEU, Pierre. (1998) 2001. *Masculine Domination.* Translated by Richard Nice. Stanford: Stanford UP.

CAMPBELL, Sharon, Marie Rose Phaneuf and Karen Deane. 2004. "Cancer Peer Support Programs—Do They Work?" *Patient Education and Counseling* 55: 3-15.

CARTMELL, Deborah and Imelda Whelehan. 1998. "Introduction." In Deborah Cartmell, I.Q Hunter, Heidi Kaye and Imelda Whelehan, eds., 1998, 1-15. London: Pluto.

CARTMELL, Deborah, I.Q. Hunter, Heidi Kaye and Imelda Whelehan, eds. 1998. *Sisterhoods: Across the Literature/Media Divide*. London: Pluto.

CHURCHILL, Caryl. (1982) 1991. *Top Girls*. London: Methuen.

COMELLES, Josep Maria. 2000. "Tecnología, cultura y sociabilidad. Los límites culturales del hospital contemporáneo." In *Medicina y cultura. Estudios entre la antropología y la medicina*, edited by Enrique Perdiguero and Josep Maria Comelles, 305-351. Barcelona: Bellaterra.

CRENSHAW, Kimberlé. 2003. "Traffic at the Crossroads: Multiple Oppresions." In *Sisterhood is Forever. The Women's Anthology for a New Millennium*, edited by Robin Morgan, 43-57. New York. Washington Square Press.

DERRIDA, Jacques. (1994) 1998. *Políticas de la amistad.* Translated by Patricio Peñalver and Francisco Vidarte. Madrid: Trotta.

DESHAZER, Mary. 2003. "Fractured Borders: Women's Cancer and Feminist Theatre." *NWA Journal* 15 (2): 1-26.

—. 2005. *Fractured Borders. Reading Women's Cancer Literature.* Ann Arbor: U of Michigan P.

—. 2013. *Mammographies. The Cultural Discourses of Breast Cancer Narratives.* Ann Arbor: U of Michigan P.

DIAMOND, Elin. 1997. *Unmaking Mimesis.* London and New York: Routledge.

DUBRIWNY, Tasha. 2013. *The Vulnerable Empowered Woman. Feminism, Postfeminism and Women's Health.* New Brunswick: Rutgers UP.

EHRENREICH, Barbara and Deirdre English. 2005. *For Their Own Good. Two Centuries of Experts' Advice to Women.* New York: Anchor.

EISENSTEIN, Zillah. 2001. *Manmade Breast Cancers*. Ithaca: Cornell UP.

ENSLER, Eve. 2003. "Theater: A Sacred Home for Women." In *Sisterhood Is Forever. The Women's Anthology for a New Millennium*, edited by Robin Morgan, 430-436. New York: Washington Square.

FERNÁNDEZ-MORALES, Marta. 2012. "The New Breast Cancer (Im)patient: Female Revolt against Biomedical Violence in US Drama." In *Performing Gender Violence. Plays by Contemporary American Women Dramatists*, edited by Barbara Ozieblo and Noelia Hernando-Real, 97-112. Houndmills, Basingstoke: Palgrave MacMillan.

—. 2013-2014. "'Is Anybody Paying Attention?': Breast Cancer on Stage in the Twenty-First Century." *Tulsa Studies in Women's Literature* 32 (2) / 33 (1): 129-146.

FISCHER-LICHTE, Erika. 2008. *The Transformative Power of Performance. A New Aesthetics.* London and New York: Routledge.

FRANK, Arthur W. 1994. "Reclaiming an Orphan Genre: The First-Person Narrative of Illness." *Literature and Medicine* 13 (1): 1-21.

GEIS, Deborah. 2014. "Sarah Ruhl." In *The Methuen Drama Guide to Contemporary American Playwrights*, edited by Martin Middeke, Peter Paul Schnierer, Christopher Innes and Matthew C. Roudané, 261-278. London: Bloomsbury.

GILBERT, Sandra. 2006. *Death's Door. Modern Dying and the Ways We Grieve.* New York: W. W. Norton.

GOODMAN, Lizbeth. 1996. "AIDS and Live Art." In *Analysing Performance: A Critical Reader*, edited by Patrick Campbell, 203-218. Manchester: Manchester UP.

GREINER, Donald J. 1993. *Women without Men. Female Bonding and the American Novel of the 1980s.* Columbia, SC: U of South Carolina P.

HOOKS, bell. 1993. *Sisters of the Yam. Black Women and Self-Recovery.* Boston: South End.

HUNKINS, Lee. 1995. *The Best of Strangers.* In *Facing Forward. One-act Plays and Monologues by Contemporary American Women at the Crest of the 21st Century*, edited by Leah Frank, 15-51. New York: Broadway.

ISHERWOOD, Charles. 2006. "Always Ready with a Joke, if Not a Feather Duster." *New York Times*, October 31. [Accessed online on April 6, 2017]

JONES-RYAN, Maureen. 2011. *Thicker than Blood. Friendships among Womyn.* Chicago: Fractal Edge. [Kindle edition]

KAUFERT, Patricia. 1998. "Women, Resistance and the Breast Cancer Movement." In *Pragmatic Women and Body Politics*, edited by Margaret Log and Patricia Kaufert, 287-309. Cambridge: Cambridge UP.

KLAWITER, Maren. 2008. *The Biopolitics of Breast Cancer. Changing Cultures of Disease and Activism.* Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P.

KNOPF-NEWMAN, Marcy. 2004. *Beyond Slash, Burn and Poison. Transforming Breast Cancer Stories into Action.* New Brunswick: Rutgers UP.

LAGRÉE, Jacqueline. (2002) 2005. *El médico, el enfermo y el filósofo.* Translated by Pablo Lópiz Cantó. Madrid: La Esfera de los Libros.

LERNER, Barron. 2001. *The Breast Cancer Wars. Hope, Fear and the Pursuit of a Cure in Twentieth-Century America.* Oxford: Oxford UP.

LOOMER, Lisa. 1998. *The Waiting Room.* New York: Dramatists Play Service.

LUGONES, María and Pat Alaka Rosezelle. 1995. "Sisterhood and Friendship as Feminist Models." In *Feminism and Community*, edited by Penny A. Weiss and Marilyn Friedman, 135-145. Philadelphia: Temple UP.

MCNAY, Lois. 2000. *Gender and Agency. Reconfiguring the Subject in Feminist and Social Theory.* Cambridge: Polity.

MEAD, Shery, David Hilton and Laurie Curtis. 2001. "Peer Support: A Theoretical Perspective." *Psychosocial Rehabilitation Journal* 25 (2): 134-141.

MORGAN, Robin, ed. 1970. *Sisterhood is Powerful. An Anthology of Writings from the Women's Liberation Movement*. New York: Random House.

—, ed. 1984. *Sisterhood is Global. The International Women's Movement Anthology*. New York: Anchor Press / Doubleday.

—. 2003. "Introduction: New World Women." In Robin Morgan, ed. 2003: xv-lx.

—, ed. 2003. *Sisterhood is Forever. The Women's Anthology for a New Millennium*. New York. Washington Square Press.

NARBONA, María Dolores. 2012. "The Role of Female Bonding on the Stage of Violence." In *Performing Gender Violence. Plays by Contemporary American Women Dramatists*, edited by Barbara Ozieblo and Noelia Hernando-Real, 61-78. Houndmills, Basinstoke: Palgrave MacMillan.

NULAND, Sherwin. 1993. *How We Die. Reflections on Life's Final Chapter.* New York: Vintage.

OSTROV WEISSER, Susan and Jennifer Fleischner, eds. 2011. *Feminist Nightmares. Women at Odds: Feminism and the Problem of Sisterhood*. New York and London: New York UP.

PARSON, Talcott. (1951) 1991. *The Social System*. London: Routledge.

RENNER, Pamela. 1999. "Science and Sensibility." *American Theatre* 16 (4): 34-37.

RODRÍGUEZ VEGA, Nora. 2004. *¿Qué tiene ella que no tenga yo? Por qué competimos las mujeres.* Barcelona: Belacqva

RUHL, Sarah. 2006. "The Clean House." In *The Clean House and Other Plays*, by Sara Ruhl, 3-116. New York: Theatre Communications Group.

SCHECHNER, Richard. 2006. *Performance Studies. An Introduction.* 2nd ed. New York and London: Routledge.

SHILLING, Chris. 2003. *The Body and Social Theory.* London: Sage.

STEINEM, Gloria. 1993. *Revolution from Within. A Book on Self-Esteem.* New York: Little, Brown.

TUANA, Nancy. 2006. "The Speculum of Ignorance. The Women's Health Movement and Epistemologies of Ignorance." *Hypatia* 21 (3): 1-19.

TURNER, Bryan S. 1995. *Medical Power and Social Knowledge*. London: Sage.

USSHER, Jane, Laura Kirsten, Phyllis Butow and Mirjana Sandoval. 2006. "What Do Cancer Support Groups Provide which Other Supportive Relationships Do Not? The Experience of Peer Support Groups for People with Cancer." *Social Science & Medicine* 62: 2565-2576.

WAPLES, Emily. 2014. "Avatars, Illness and Authority: Embodied Experience in Breast Cancer Autopathographics." *Configurations* 22 (2): 153-181.

WENDELL, David. 1996. *Confronting Death. Values, Institutions and Human Mortality.* Oxford: Oxford UP.

WILLETT, John, ed. 1992. *Brecht on Theatre. The Development of an Aesthetic.* New York: Hill and Wang.

WINCH, Alison. 2013. *Girlfriends and Postfeminist Sisterhood.* Houndmills, Basingstoke: Palgrave MacMillan.

Marta Fernández-Morales, PhD, is a fully tenured Associate Professor at the University of Oviedo. Her interest focuses on gender issues in US culture. Author of four books and (co)editor of eight, her work has featured in journals like *TSWL* and *Women's Studies.* She belongs to the "Representation Ideology and Reception in Audiovisual Culture" research unit of the University of the Balearic Islands, where she used to teach and where part of the research for this paper was conducted.

Address: Dpto. de Filología Inglesa, Francesa y Alemana. Edificio Departamental. Campus de Humanidades "El Milán." 33011, Oviedo, Spain. Tel.: +34 985104562.

Exorcising Personal Traumas / Silencing History: Jennifer Johnston's *The Invisible Worm*

CONSTANZA DEL RÍO
Universidad de Zaragoza
crio@unizar.es

Jennifer Johnston's novel *The Invisible Worm* (1991) is an exemplary trauma narrative, both stylistically and thematically. It centres on the consciousness of its protagonist—Laura—and narrates her painful and protracted psychological process of coming to terms with a past marked by repeated sexual abuse by her father, which culminates in rape, and her mother's consequent suicide. Yet *The Invisible Worm* is also a contemporary example of the Irish Big House novel, a genre that articulates the identitarian, historical and social plights of the Anglo-Irish. My intention in this article is to consider how the narrative's evident interest in the personal dimension of Laura's traumas works to obviate the socio-historical and political elements that have also contributed to the protagonist's predicament. I will also analyse the different treatment afforded to the individual and the collective past: while the novel is explicit and optimistic in the case of Laura's personal story, it remains reluctant to speak out about historical evils, with the result that, at the end of the novel, although freed from her personal traumas, Laura remains the prisoner of her historical legacy.

Keywords: Trauma Studies; Irish history; the Irish Big House novel; Jennifer Johnston; *The Invisible Worm*

·   ·   ·

Los traumas personales se exorcizan / La historia se silencia: *The Invisible Worm*, de Jennifer Johnston

La novela de Jennifer Johnston titulada *The Invisible Worm* (1991) es un ejemplo perfecto de la "novela de trauma," tanto estilística como temáticamente. El centro de interés recae en el mundo interior de Laura, la protagonista, y la novela narra el proceso psicológico, doloroso y prolongado, que Laura debe experimentar para recordar y asumir su pasado: un pasado marcado por los reiterados abusos sexuales de su padre, que culminan en violación, y el suicidio de su madre a consecuencia de estos hechos. Pero *The Invisible Worm* es también

una novela que pertenece al género de la novela Big House irlandesa, y este es un género que tradicionalmente ha articulado los conflictos de identidad, históricos y sociales de los Anglo-irlandeses. En este artículo se considerará cómo el interés narrativo en la dimensión personal de los traumas de Laura—violación a manos de su padre y suicidio de su madre—simultáneamente sirve para obviar los elementos socio-históricos y políticos que también forman parte del conflicto de la protagonista. Intentaré así mismo llamar la atención sobre el tratamiento tan diferente que se otorga en la novela a la historia personal de Laura, en contraste con el pasado colectivo de la nación irlandesa: mientras la novela es mucho más explícita y optimista en cuanto a la historia personal de Laura, los hechos históricos se silencian, y al final de la novela, aunque Laura parece haber exorcizado sus traumas personales, su legado histórico todavía la mantiene prisionera.

Jennifer Johnston's novel *The Invisible Worm*, first published in 1991, is an exemplary trauma narrative, both stylistically and thematically.[1] It centres around the consciousness of its protagonist—Laura—and narrates her painful and protracted psychological process of coming to terms with a past marked by repeated sexual abuse by her father, which culminates in rape, and her mother's consequent suicide.[2] The novel presents an alienated, numb, dissociated and depressed personality trapped in an emotional turmoil of hatred, guilt and shame, initially unable and unwilling to integrate the traumatic events of her life into a coherent narrative. Formally, *The Invisible Worm* is divided into multiple brief sections that shift abruptly from present to past, from external to internal narration, from reported discourse to free indirect discourse to internal monologue, thus offering a discontinuous and fragmented surface that mirrors the temporal dislocation, instability and sense of disintegration of the traumatic self. As an incest survivor, the protagonist finally manages to work through her trauma when she finds an appropriate and empathic listener for her story. Yet *The Invisible Worm* is also a contemporary example of the Irish Big House novel, a genre that articulates the identitarian, historical and social plights of the Anglo-Irish.[3]

From the end of the nineteenth century onwards, the Irish Big House novel came to record the declining power of the Anglo-Irish Ascendancy and its gradual demise as a dominant and vital force in Irish politics, history and culture. The Act of Union, successive land acts oriented towards the redistribution of land ownership, the growth of the Home Rule movement, the rise of Sinn Fein, the War of Independence, the partition of Ireland and the marginalisation of Protestants in the Irish Free State were all determining factors in the final downfall of this formerly ruling class. The decay and failing fortunes of the Anglo-Irish were symbolised in the Big House novel through their dilapidated and ruined mansions (Marsh 2006, 52-53).

The onset of the Troubles in Northern Ireland at the end of the 1960s and the beginning of the 1970s triggered the revival of the genre of the Big House by some writers—among them Eugene McCabe, William Trevor and Jennifer Johnston—as a way of exploring contemporary sectarian violence through a fictional examination of the carnage during the turbulent years from the Easter Rising (1916) to the end of the Civil War (1923). Yet, in my view, these writers' intentions can also be seen as a way of casting a backward look—at times nostalgic, at times critical—at the

---

[2] The incest story in Johnston's novel led Christine St. Peter to relate it to a growing body of incest narratives by contemporary female Irish writers that started to give verbal form to the hitherto unspoken and unspeakable within Irish society (2000a, 49; 2000b, 127).

[3] For previous scholarly work that argues the pertinence of Trauma Studies for the analysis of twentieth- and twenty-first-century Irish fiction, see del Río (2010) and Garratt (2011).

Ascendancy's historical role in, and responsibility for, past viciousness, as well as at the future possibilities for this class's integration into and relevant participation in public life in the Republic.[4]

As mentioned above, one of the Irish writers to revive the Big House novel, particularly at the beginning of her career, is Jennifer Johnston. Her own social background is that of the upper-middle class and urban cultured elite. Although not a member of the landed gentry, the fact that she is Protestant and born into a privileged minority group may explain her continuing interest in the plight of the Anglo-Irish Ascendancy. As Mark Mortimer remarks, "she is closely linked to this world through family connections, friends and personal tastes" (1991, 209).[5]

My reasons for choosing *The Invisible Worm* as an object of analysis over other Big House novels by Johnston are fourfold: (1) this is her last Big House novel to date and differs from previous examples of the genre in that it is not set during the revolutionary years but later on, in an unspecified time, probably in the late nineteen-eighties; (2) within her Big House novels, this is the one that most subscribes to the experimental features that Ronald Granofsky (1995), Laurie Vickroy (2002) and Anne Whitehead (2004) have identified as constituting the "trauma novel" and the one whose protagonist most evidently shows post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) symptoms as defined by the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders*, published by the American Psychiatric Association (2013); (3) the protagonist's suffering is not apparently the result of sectarian brutality but stems from her personal circumstances: paternal sexual abuse leading to incest and (her mother's) suicide; and finally, (4) as several critics have perceived, and—misguidedly in my view—attributed to the more intimate nature of the female protagonist's victimisation, this novel marks a shift in Johnston's thematic interests, albeit a shift that was becoming increasingly evident in her fiction (Kreilkamp 1998, 214; Mahony 1998, 221).[6] In this sense, certain critics maintain that while Johnston's earlier narratives deal with the politics of class and sectarian division in Ireland, from the 1990s onwards she centres mostly on the politics of gender. Caitriona Moloney, for example, has affirmed that "[a]lthough Johnston's early work reveals some nostalgia for the lost culture of the Ascendancy, the development of her women characters takes her fiction away from Ireland's troubled history and into a more emancipatory world where art equates with freedom and 'a room of one's own'" (2003, 66).

---

[4] The notion that Jennifer Johnston's Big House novels were not exclusively a way of displacing contemporary violence onto a former historical period is supported by the fact that early in her career she wrote fiction where ongoing Troubles-related violence featured explicitly, for example in *Shadows on our Skin* (1977) and *The Railway Station Man* (1984). The same applies to writers Eugene McCabe and William Trevor.

[5] However, when interviewed, Johnston herself has resented being labelled a "Big House novelist" by academic critics and has stated that for her, the Big House is just "a means to an end" and that she uses the setting without "trying to make statements of any sort about 'the Big House'" (González 1998, 10).

[6] In a later novel, *Grace and Truth* (2005), Johnston returns to the theme of incest but this novel does not belong to the Big House genre.

In fact, two of Johnston's early novels dealing with the world of the Ascendancy—*The Captains and the Kings* (1972) and *How Many Miles to Babylon* (1974)—feature male protagonists and revolve around male heroic acts—mainly the First World War. In *The Gates* (1973), *The Old Jest* (1979) and *Fool's Sanctuary* (1987) she however opts for female protagonists.[7] In these latter three works she also draws on the conventions of the *Bildungsroman* and thus her novels start to blend historical, political and social factors with the psychological. In general, this tendency can be perceived in all her Big House novels of the 1970s and 1980s in her persistent attempt to fuse the private and the public so as to explore the ambiguity of Irish identity and "the national, cultural, political and religious divisions separating Ireland's two nations" (Kamm 1990, 137). The isolated and alienated female protagonists of these early novels, and their transgressive social and religious alliances—as customary in most twentieth-century Big House novels—serve to articulate Johnston's scepticism towards integrating the conflicting interests and worldviews of Ireland's competing factions in terms of class, history, politics, culture, religion and gender.

As mentioned above, *The Invisible Worm* appears to signal a shift in Johnston's work. While still within the confines of the Big House novel, this narrative seems to be more interested in the personal dimension of its female protagonist's story than in exploring broader contextual issues.[8] The story's detachment from turbulent historical periods—the revolutionary decade or the Troubles—as well as the personal plight of the central female character, probably contribute to this impression. In the same vein, Christina Hunt Mahony points out that the political context is not highlighted (1998, 221), Rosa González stresses the novel's concentration on the analysis of subjectivity "by presenting a story of personal and gender-marked drama in which Ireland's history is not a primary focus, but a mere setting" (1994, 119), and Rachael Sealy Lynch asserts that *The Invisible Worm*, "while by no means devoid of political resonances, is more concerned with Laura Quinlan's emotional and psychological growth" (2000, 252-253). Similarly, Heather Ingman has read the novel within Kristeva's theory of maternal abjection and has highlighted the protagonist's troubled relationship with her mother (2007, 87-91).

Considering that Robert F. Garratt has also read Johnston's novels, among them *The Invisible Worm*, from the perspective of Trauma Studies, his ideas deserve more attention here. In his study *Trauma and History in the Irish Novel: The Return of the Dead* (2011), Garratt establishes a distinction between "trauma novels" and "novels about trauma."

---

[7] Although *The Old Jest* (1979) is not fully a Big House novel, it shares many of the conventions of the genre, such as the temporal setting, the unholy alliances between the upper-class Protestant girl and the Protestant and Catholic revolutionaries, and the constant presence of the girl's grandfather, a crumbling reminder of Britain's imperial past.

[8] Undoubtedly, sexual violence is closely linked to questions of power and patriarchal institutions, and consequently always entails a social and cultural dimension. Additionally, in trauma there are no clear demarcations between the political and the psychological (Horvitz 2000, 4). I am here rather referring to the novel's silencing of the influence of Ireland's historical past on Laura's traumatisation.

Following critics such as Anne Whitehead (2004) and Laurie Vickroy (2002), for Garratt "trauma novels" use narrative strategies (temporal and spatial discontinuities, repetitions, abrupt shifts in focalisation and voice, fragmented identities, etc.) that mirror the process whereby the traumatised subject attempts "to discover, confront, and give voice to a vague yet threatening catastrophic past" (Garratt 2011, 5). On the other hand, "novels about trauma" deal with the character's traumatic experience in an external, objective way, as a plot element in a story which is narrated through classical conventions (5). In the chapter devoted to Jennifer Johnston's fiction (69-83), Garratt discusses *How Many Miles to Babylon*, *Fool's Sanctuary* and *The Invisible Worm* as "trauma novels," while he considers *The Railway Station Man* (1984) rather a "novel about trauma." In some way, Garratt's consideration of the first three novels just mentioned as "trauma novels" for their more experimental features, and his classification of *The Railway Station Man* as a more conventional or classical "novel about trauma," indirectly shows that the cataloguing of narratives according to their more or less experimental features is questionable and always relative. If one reads the first pages of *How Many Miles to Babylon* and of *The Invisible Worm*, both of them "trauma novels" according to Garratt, certainly *The Invisible Worm* seems much more discontinuous, disrupted and fragmented in all respects. In this sense, if *The Invisible Worm* is compared to *How Many Miles to Babylon*, the latter would appear to be a "novel about trauma" and not a "trauma novel." Garratt also argues that Jennifer Johnston's "trauma novels" are grounded on the condition of "historical vacuity" (2011, 71). By this he means that "her characters return to the past precisely because they lack an awareness of it as history, as an event that is finished and therefore behind them, and that can be reconstructed in some form of discourse, usually as a story" (71).

In *The Mental State of Hysterics: A Study of Mental Stigmata and Mental Accidents* (1901), Pierre Janet distinguished between narrative ad traumatic memory, a distinction that Ruth Leys has read as follows: traumatic memory "merely and unconsciously *repeats* the past," while narrative memory "*narrates the past as past*" (Leys 2000, 105; emphasis in the original). This contrast also forms the basis of LaCapra's differentiation between "acting out" and "working through" (2001, 21-23).

In my view, Garratt's references to "history" denote the personal history of the character, whose recovery, undoubtedly, also has a public or collective value, but is not to be confused with the history of the nation. That is probably why, in line with previous critics, he asserts: "While the events of Irish history are not as crucial here [*The Invisible Worm*] as they are in *Fool's Sanctuary*, they nonetheless play a role in Laura's story, if only to stand as background to lend significance to Laura's circumstances" (2011, 78-79). As I see it, and as I will try to argue in this essay, Irish history is not just a background for the protagonist's predicament, for it also plays a crucial role in this novel. The question is not so much that the personal has been privileged over the political, social and historical, but rather that the systematic formulation of Laura's traumatic story as deriving principally from her

family situation means that the historical and collective roots of her affliction are symptomatically covered up. Alternatively, reading *The Invisible Worm* as a narrative that articulates both individual and historical traumas yet handling them in different ways, and where personal trauma is ultimately rooted, though covertly—and probably unintentionally—in historical and political collective responsibility, will also illuminate the ending of this novel—an ending that, as will be seen, has been interpreted in contradictory terms.

"I stand by the window and watch the woman running. Is it Laura? I wonder that, as I watch her flickering like blown leaves through the trees. I am Laura. Sometimes I run so fast that my legs buckle under me; ungainly, painful" (Johnston 1991, 1). Thus starts *The Invisible Worm*, with its protagonist, thirty-seven-year-old Laura, staring through the window at a running woman, dressed "in the colours of weariness," (1) who, she thinks, may be herself. But certainty lies beyond Laura's reach. Her discontinuous thoughts, memories and words are saturated with doubts, tentative maybes, ellipses and gaps. As she herself says, she has become "ill with half-believing" (163). That is why for many years she has opted for silence and isolation while attempting to excise the memories of an all too painful past. For Laura, silence "was like the splint that held a broken limb tight, […] prevented pain, prevented truth, prevented dislocation, falling apart. Long live silence!" (101). This has been her way of keeping up a fragile façade of sanity and safety. In the privacy of her Big House, looking out of the window, she feels as protected as a snail in its shell and she can pretend that order still prevails. Yet silence is a treacherous strategy to cope with traumatic events, since, as Dori Laub has stated, "[t]he 'not telling' of the [traumatic] story serves as a perpetuation of its tyranny. The events become more and more distorted in their silent retention and pervasively invade and contaminate the survivor's daily life. The longer the story remains untold, the more distorted it becomes in the survivor's conception of it, so much so that the survivor doubts the reality of the actual events" (1995, 64). Consequently, as much as Laura has tried to hold back her memories and to dissociate herself from her past self, that Blakeian invisible worm keeps gnawing at her body and consciousness: a worm that figures as the corruption of her innocence, the shattering of her sense of self, her father's violation of her body, and her mother's ensuing suicide, for which Laura feels responsible.[9]

The novel starts on the day of Laura's father's funeral and it becomes evident in the first pages that Laura is haunted by frequent "unclaimed memories," to use Cathy Caruth's phrase,[10] of both her mother and her father: memories triggered

---

[9] The reference here is to William Blake's famous poem "Sick Rose," a symbolic rose that hosts a symbolic invisible worm which is destroying the rose's life from within (*Songs of Experience*, 1794).

[10] In her famous book *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative, and History* (1996), Caruth refers to the traumatic memories that assail the individual as "unclaimed experiences."

through associations based on present perceptions and sensations.[11] In the following quotation, we read Laura's thoughts and realise how, for her, a present and apparently innocuous sensation is immediately connected to a destructive past experience. The passage, although less evidently, also links Laura's Catholic husband with her likewise Catholic father.

> The feel of his [her husband's] fingers pressing through my coat and my black woollie will stay with me for ever… not of course in the front region of my mind, but I will be able to recall, when I need to, the feel of those fingers, the faint smell of Eau Sauvage, the sound of his steps, confident on the polished parquet as we cross the hall.
>
> Such scenes reverberate and conjure up other scenes in the past: my father's soft, white fingers imprinting their marks on my arms, as he shook me and my feet clattered on the floor and a dog barked at nothing, outside in the sunshine. The sound of my own voice screaming tears suddenly at the soft corners of my brain. (4-5)

In these early pages of the novel, the reader learns of Laura's visceral hatred towards her father and of her refusal to forgive him on his deathbed. What the reader also learns is that Laura is the daughter of a mixed marriage between a pragmatic and successful Catholic statesman and a beautiful Anglo-Irish heiress: the owner of the Big House the family inhabits. Senator O'Meara is Laura's father and the perpetrator of incest. Yet, as several critics have observed, he is also representative of the misogynist and oppressive features of post-independence Ireland, and of the new postcolonial political elite that has replaced and marginalised the old colonial order embodied in his wife's Protestant values and Anglo-Irish lifestyle (Kreilkamp 1998, 215; Backus 1999, 227; Lynch 2000, 264). The constant clashes and tension between Laura's Protestant mother and Catholic father connote the unsuccessful integration and reconciliation among Ireland's competing factions, and they impinge upon the child Laura, who suffers from divided loyalties even at an age when she is still unable to grasp the socio-historical significance of such confrontations. Although Laura's rape by her father represents the culmination of repeated sexual abuse, and in this sense calls attention to the permanent vulnerability of children within the institution of the patriarchal family, in Laura's case the feeling of self-division and fragmentation common to abuse victims had already started before any sexual assault. Such a feeling could have originated as the result of her registering the violence and unresolved conflicts of Ireland's history, encapsulated in her parents' incessant skirmishes, without her yet understanding their historical provenance and meaning. In this respect, Kai Erikson has argued that "in order to serve as a generally useful concept, 'trauma' has to be understood as resulting

---

[11] Situational triggers that lead the subject to recall the original traumatic event can be seen as instances of acting out, or repetition as re-traumatisation, but they can also become a mechanism for working through, or repetition as cure. They can be used to release emotion and "offer the chance to explore the sensations and feelings associated with abusive events in order to construct change" (Cvetkovich 2003, 113-114).

from a *constellation of life experiences* as well as from a discrete happening, from a *persisting condition* as well as from an acute event" (1995, 185; emphasis in the original).

Initially, the child Laura sees her mother as distant and cool, and she feels safer under the warm protection of her father, a powerful man full of charm and energy. Laura resents her mother's constant taunts and mockery of her father, always at odds with the idealised image Laura has of him. In time though, her alliances will shift and she will come to see her father as a domineering and abusive figure, as the destroyer of her hopes and future. She will, at the same time, come to admire her mother's resistance to his attempts at control, her refusal to become Catholic and her decision to bring Laura up as a Protestant, thus defiantly disobeying the dictates of the Catholic *ne temere* decree, according to which children of mixed marriages should be brought up in the Catholic faith.[12] Laura's fidelity to her dead mother is nowhere more evident than in her decision to become the guardian of the Big House—her house—that has been handed down for three generations through the female line. Likewise, Laura's initial refusal to work through her traumatic past can also be linked to her loyalty to her mother. Dominick LaCapra has explained such resistance as a "[m]elancholic sentiment that in working through the past in a manner that enables survival or a reengagement in life, one is betraying those who were overwhelmed and consumed by that traumatic past" (2001, 22). In Laura's case, nevertheless, the emotional attachment to her dead mother combines with feelings of guilt for her death and for having been unable to mourn her properly, since her body was never found. Burdened by the maternal—Anglo-Irish—inheritance, Laura's only way of commemorating her mother is by remaining trapped within her own traumatic memories.

From her mother, Laura will also inherit an arrogant and aloof stance and a loathing for pragmatic and materialistic contemporary Ireland; an abhorrence that is but an extension of her hatred towards her father (Kreilkamp 1998, 219). In spite of this hatred, Laura has married a Catholic man she does not love and who very much resembles her own father. She confesses that she married Maurice in retaliation for her father's behaviour (Johnston 1991, 121, 169). Yet she does not seem to be aware that, in doing so, she has repeated the damaging dynamics that first wounded her. Her decision to replicate the social configuration of her parents' marriage signals the extent to which her subjectivity has been built through a cumulative traumatic experience of division and confrontation whose roots lie in Irish history. Maurice is a gentler version of Laura's father, not so much the abuser as the womaniser, though equally vain, ambitious and insensitive to Laura's needs. To Maurice, Laura is his treasure, his darling, a beautiful ornament, just the vehicle to purchase the glamour, and sense of history and tradition

---

[12]Laura's critical perception and memories of her mother point to Johnston's ambivalent treatment of the Anglo-Irish Ascendancy. Johnston's Big House novels evoke this fading world nostalgically and lovingly while also registering its failings. In Vera Kreilkamp's words: "Throughout Johnston's fiction, her acknowledgement of the snobbery, injustice, and self-destructive improvidence […] of gentry life is balanced by her idealization of ascendancy taste, an idealization that is strikingly absent from earlier (pre-Yeatsian) fiction about Anglo-Ireland" (1998, 208).

that, in the terms established by the novel, Catholics lack (Kreilkamp 1998, 217). He only demands that Laura look and act like the lady she is, while he indulges in his extramarital affairs. Laura accepts his lies and infidelities because Maurice leaves her alone, allows her to preserve her silence and privacy (Lynch 2000, 265). It becomes clear that Maurice will be of no help in Laura's potential process of recovery. He is not the good listener she perhaps needs, since, as Laura herself says, he "never listens when you tell him things. He just shuts his ears to what he doesn't want to hear" (Johnston 1991, 23). And Maurice, who thought highly of Laura's father, considering him a patriot and a great man, will not want to learn of his vicious behaviour.

Judith Lewis Herman has explained that traumatic events call into question basic human relationships and breach the attachments of family, friendship, love and community (1992, 51). Fundamental for recovery is the establishment of safety, the reconstruction of the traumatic story and the restoration of the connection between survivors and their community. In her own words: "Recovery can take place only within the context of relationships; it cannot occur in isolation" (133). Here Laura faces a problem which again points to the novel's shrouding of the historical by the personal, for, while the discrete traumatic events in Laura's life may have deepened her sense of isolation and abandonment, the truth is that her alienation derives too from her social and historical position in the contemporary south of Ireland: as said above, she is the offspring of a mixed marriage, though identified as Protestant and representative of the Anglo-Irish Ascendancy. That is, should Laura wish to re-establish her bonds with her social community she would find that the community is virtually extinct. In her own conclusive words, Laura thinks that Protestants in the Republic of Ireland constitute "an endangered species" (Johnston 1991, 120). Laura's consciousness repeatedly records her estrangement, and her ostracism as an Anglo-Irish Protestant reverberates in the novel: the derelict and crumbling Anglican Church that she occasionally attends, her exclusion from the visiting circuit and her paranoid conviction that people consider her standoffish, snobby, cold, different, indifferent (19-20) or an arrogant "Protestant bitch above in her Big House" (59). Together with her personal traumas, Laura may also be said to suffer from a trauma deriving from historical forces, the type of collective trauma defined by Kai Erikson as "a blow to the basic tissues of social life that damages the bonds attaching people together and impairs the prevailing sense of communality" (1995, 187). As Erikson further argues, "the community […] serves as the repository for binding traditions. And when the community is profoundly affected, one can speak of a damaged social organism in almost the same way that one would speak of a damaged body" (188).

The empathy and generosity that Laura needs in order to regain trust, open herself up again to the world and bear witness to her traumatic story, will come from Dominic: another outcast, another victim of contemporary Catholic Ireland. He resisted his father's vicarious ambition of a successful career in the priesthood and abandoned the seminary to become a Classics teacher. This decision led his father to disinherit him

and his sisters to blame him for their father's untimely death. Dominic is a sensitive and cultured Catholic young man whose masculinity is completely different to that of Laura's father or her husband's Maurice. He is unthreatening, untroubled by women and walks behind Laura "with docility" (Johnston 1991, 41), "sedately" (81), always listening attentively to Laura's words and respecting her wishes. Laura establishes a relationship with him based on their shared estrangement, a transgressive coalition that crosses boundaries of religion and social group. The pair formed by Laura and Dominic could apparently be seen as an illustration of Jenny Edkins's ideal community: "a form of community that does not entail a circuit of power between oppressors and victims, a community that does not produce forms of subjection" (2001, 7). And I say *apparently*, because although their bond has been read as offering a utopian solution for Ireland's historical conflicts and as an "emblem for inter-sectarian political and affective alliances" (Backus 1999, 234), it also recalls outdated forms of courtship precisely based on subjection: in this case the subjection of the male to the female. From the moment he meets Laura, Dominic is mesmerised by her beauty and sees her as an Italian painting, as one of Giovanni Bellini's *Madonnas*. He is perhaps a little too docile, too servile, and their relationship is too asexual, rather a Platonic affair of the soul than of the flesh.[13] Laura may confess her love for him but refuses his proposal to build a future together somewhere else, away from "the bogies of the past" (Johnston 1991, 113). She finally sends him away and, although Dominic initially feels angry at her dismissal, he ultimately complies with her wishes.

Together with her conversations with Dominic, there is an act that features centrally in Laura's healing process: her decision to recover the summerhouse built a hundred years before by her maternal ancestors, now choked and drowned under piles of rubbish and shrubbery, echoing Laura's mother's drowning at sea. The summerhouse is overdetermined as an emotional symbol: both of her mother's freedom and suicide, and of her rape by her father. Laura's determination to excavate the debris around it and bring it to light again with Dominic's help plunges her into a frenzied activity that partially neutralises her traumatic symptoms, and thus empowers her. As Ann Cvetkovich has argued, vehicles for physical activity "counteract the sense of physical and emotional helplessness that contributes to traumatic loss of memory" (2003, 97).[14] In addition, Laura's resolution also signifies her willingness to disinter the traumatic past, to confront it, hence leading to her final narrative retelling of the traumatic events. Once the summerhouse is restored to its former graceful shape, Laura chooses to burn it in a gesture that symbolically exorcises the evil past and purges her of both guilt and hatred.

At the very end of the novel, and after excluding Dominic from her life, Laura is again looking out of the window, alone in her Big House, only now she can think of the future

---

[13] Richard York has referred to this relationship as "a new love, a love deliberately restrained, a thing of the imagination, but one that takes [Laura] beyond the confines of her own community and family" (2006, 272).

[14] In this sense, Laura's fondness for rituals, such as the making and drinking of tea or the writing of lists, can also be seen as failed attempts on her part to achieve empowerment.

for the first time, "an empty page on which [she] will begin to write [her] life" and "try to embellish the emptiness of living" (Johnston 1991, 180), and now she knows that the running woman, whoever she may be, will no longer run away (181). Some critics have interpreted this ending as intimating individual renewal and regeneration: Laura "learns to accept solitude" and her dismissal of Dominic is a gesture of withdrawal into the privacy of her mind whereby "memory perpetuates love, and replaces it" (York 2006, 272). Similarly, Margot Gayle Backus has seen the whole process Laura goes through as an inward quest toward "self-possession, toward an active, conscious inhabitation of her own body, her own present, her own familial house, her own marriage, and her own country" (1999, 235). From the perspective of Kristeva's concept of abjection and her theories on the maternal, Heather Ingman concludes that "[*The Invisible Worm*] ends on a note of hope [...] [S]o far from fleeing the mother, this daughter takes what inspiration she can find in her mother's life and uses it in her quest to become the subject of her own life" (2007, 91). Finally, Robert Garratt draws on the restorative power of narration and writing—the empty page on which Laura will now be able to write her future—as well as on Backus's reading of the novel's ending to state that in its closing lines "Johnston implies that the future may indeed be an open page upon which to write, free from the violent pain of the past" (2011, 82).

On the other hand, Laura's resumed loneliness and her entrapment in a loveless marriage she will not forego and a house she will not forsake may signify her desire to avoid confrontation. According to Rachael Lynch, "Laura clearly believes that her safety and even her survival depend upon rendering herself as invulnerable as possible, through the rigorous maintenance of a continued degree of isolation, alienation and emotional frigidity [...] [We] do not leave her with a future that looks in any way inviting" (2000, 265-266). Lynch's conclusion blatantly contradicts the readings previously referenced, therefore pointing to the novel's ambiguous ending. I would claim that such inconsistencies derive from the novel's obscure treatment of the historical dimensions of Laura's trauma, from a certain reluctance to connect the private and the public, and, in my view, the text's silences as regards Ireland's history, and Anglo-Irish responsibility in that history, result in a final paradox: while at an individual level Laura has managed to liberate herself from the ghosts of her father and mother, she still remains trapped by her mother's Anglo-Irish legacy. Dominick LaCapra has stated that "specific phantoms that possess the self or the community can be laid to rest through mourning only when they are specified and named as historically lost others" (2001, 65). The novel's uncertain ending points, in my opinion, to the fact that certain communal, historical phantoms have not been sufficiently specified and named. If *The Invisible Worm* is approached from a "hermeneutics of suspicion" framework, the text's historical vagueness seems devious.[15]

---

[15] The phrase "hermeneutics of suspicion" refers to certain reading and interpreting practices, such as the one developed by the neo-Marxist critic Pierre Macherey in *A Theory of Literary Production* ([1966] 2006), by some strands of psychoanalytic criticism, and by deconstruction, which focus on the text's silences, aporias, interstices and marginal elements.

There has been a long tradition in Irish politics and culture of equating the family with the nation, the most famous proclamation in this respect probably being Éamon De Valera's speech delivered on St Patrick's Day 1943. Even though the family envisioned by de Valera as emblematic of Ireland was implicitly Catholic, *The Invisible Worm* introduces the unsettling novelties of making the family a mixed one and of embodying the suffering Dark Rosaleen or Mother Ireland in a Protestant woman. Yet it is these long-established analogies that propitiate a symbolic and/or allegorical reading of the novel. In this sense, Laura's Catholic father can be seen as representative of the "newly ascendant class" that covets and mimics "the symbols and attitudes" of the old colonial order represented by his Protestant wife and daughter (Kreilkamp 1998, 214-215). In Kreilkamp's view, a view that focuses on post-independence Ireland, Senator O'Meara is a violent aggressor whose violation of his daughter "is part of a larger social violation, an assault on the land, on culture, and on old pieties by a new nation" (1998, 220). On the other hand, for Backus, whose interpretation of O'Meara's infamous actions looks backwards towards Ireland's colonial past, Laura's rape signifies her father's attempt "to come to grips with the historic problem of dispossession through an abuse of patriarchal and parental power" (1999, 231). Following Kreilkamp's arguments, it is true that in the novel Laura is aware of the fact that her father came to enjoy the mythological edge, glamour and air of history of Anglo-Ireland through her, not through her mother (Johnston 1991, 121). What Laura is not aware of is that her father's rape, symbolic of colonisation and domination, may not only represent his perverse vengeance for his symbolic emasculation at the hands of his wife, always an independent woman who managed to escape his control (Lynch 2000, 264). As Backus has it (1999, 231), it may also signify Senator O'Meara's retaliation for historical Catholic dispossession through the agency of the Anglo-Irish. The colonial violation of Ireland is nevertheless silenced in the novel. In this sense, Laura vehemently disclaims her mother's family's involvement in empire building or soldiering, and she cherishes her memories of her great-grandfather, a mere traveller of the world, who only collected jade and other exotic objects now displayed in the house, but who was, though, always accompanied by his Catholic servant (Johnston 1991, 22-23). So, in terms of relationships between Protestants and Catholics, this, to Laura, appears to be the natural order: master and servant, or, when it comes to herself and Dominic, beloved lady and courtly lover.

It is also significant that the Big House itself, symbol of former Ascendancy wealth and influence but also of conquest, colonialism, and historical conflicts between Anglo-Irish landlords, Catholic tenants and landless labourers is not described in this novel, while the summerhouse, figuring rather the personal dimension of Laura's trauma, is depicted at different stages of its recovery. This absence of representation of the material building is all the more telling since, in the genre of the Irish Big House novel, the house is accurately evoked and becomes a central symbol of the history, condition and fate of its inhabitants.

When describing different ways of dealing with trauma in the contemporary novel, Ronald Granofsky has argued for the usefulness of symbolism in cases where "new

information resists easy assimilation into memory" (1995, 6). In his words: "The literary symbol in the trauma novel facilitates a removal from unpleasant actuality by use of distance and selection" (1995, 6). Literary symbolism, thus, by imposing spatial distance between the mind and the thing symbolised, and by letting only certain aspects of the traumatic experience emerge, "allows for a 'safe' confrontation with a traumatic experience" (7). Similarly, Laurie Vickroy, following object relations theorists Melanie Klein and D. W. Winnicott, has argued for the role of symbols "as crucial to the formation of an individual's relation to the world and to the interchange between external reality and personal psychic reality—symbolism, fantasy and imagining are all important to self-construction" (2002, 30). She further associates "[d]isturbed symbolization processes" with "poor early object relations, trauma, or other psychic upheavals, where the individual never develops or loses the ability to distinguish between inner and outer reality" (31), thus effecting "a defensive fusion between self and object or object and symbol" (Segal 1957, quoted in Vickroy 2002, 31). True symbolisation, indicating the overcoming of an accepted loss, occurs in *The Invisible Worm* as regards Laura's personal traumas (her incestuous father and her mother's suicide), which, as previously explained, are manifestly embodied in the summerhouse.

The other side of her predicament is nevertheless downplayed: her unwitting introjection of her parents' cultural and social clashes, her marginal status in contemporary Ireland, the lack of a sustaining community and, most importantly, her oblivion or lack of concern for the Ascendancy's forceful intervention in Irish affairs and this class's historical contribution to strengthening Britain's dominion over Ireland and other colonies. That is, the historical implications of her Anglo-Irish inheritance are left disembodied, with Laura self-protectively merging her identity with the symbol that her Big House should have represented, therefore overlooking the mansion's historical significance by transforming it into an extension of her subjectivity. In other words, she is unable to separate herself from the symbol and she has become the house itself, trapped in its empty rooms and corridors. That is, perhaps, why she cannot abandon it. While therapeutic healing takes place at a personal level, the wounds of Irish history are left open. In order to effect a successful process of symbolisation, *The Invisible Worm* should embark on a further process of excavation, this time of the original colonial violation of Ireland, a time when the Anglo-Irish were not as a rule, or not exclusively, the traumatised victims of Catholic violence, and the Catholics were not the only perpetrators of abusive and violent actions.

WORKS CITED

AMERICAN PSYCHIATRIC ASSOCIATION. 2013. *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders. DSM-5*. 5th edition. Arlington, VA: American Psychiatric Publishing.

BACKUS, Margot G. 1999. *The Gothic Family Romance: Heterosexuality, Child Sacrifice, and the Anglo-Irish Colonial Order*. Durham and London: Duke UP.

CARUTH, Cathy. 1996. *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative, and History*. Baltimore, MD: The Johns Hopkins UP.

CVETKOVICH, Ann. 2003. *An Archive of Feelings: Trauma, Sexuality and Lesbian Public Cultures*. Durham and London: Duke UP.

DEL RÍO, Constanza. 2010. "Trauma Studies and the Contemporary Irish Novel." In *In the Wake of the Tiger: Irish Studies in the Twenty-First Century*, edited by David Clark and Rubén Jarazo Álvarez, 3-15. A Coruña: Netbiblo.

EDKINS, Jenny. 2001. "Trauma, Memory and Sovereign Power." Unpublished paper presented at the 42nd Annual Convention of the International Studies Association, Chicago, Illinois, 20-24 February.

ERIKSON, Kai. 1995. "Notes on Trauma and Community." In *Trauma: Explorations in Memory*, edited by Cathy Caruth, 183-199. Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins UP.

GARRATT, Robert F. 2011. *Trauma and History in the Irish Novel: The Return of the Dead*. Houndmills, Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.

GONZÁLEZ, Rosa. 1994. "The Burden of the Past in Jennifer Johnston's Novels. Thematic and Stylistic Variations." In *Estudios de Literatura Inglesa del Siglo XX* (2), edited by Pilar Abad, José M. Barrio and José M. Ruiz, 117-122. Valladolid: Instituto de Ciencias de la Educación, Universidad de Valladolid.

—. 1998. "Interview with Jennifer Johnston." In *Ireland in Writing: Interviews with Writers and Academics*, edited by Jacqueline Hurtley, Rosa González, Inés Praga and Esther Aliaga, 7-19. Amsterdam-Atlanta, GA: Rodopi.

GRANOFSKY, Ronald. 1995. *The Trauma Novel: Contemporary Symbolic Depictions of Collective Disaster*. Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang.

HERMAN, Judith Lewis. 1992. *Trauma and Recovery: From Domestic Abuse to Political Terror*. London: Pandora.

HORVITZ, Deborah M. 2000. *Literary Trauma: Sadism, Memory, and Sexual Violence in American Women's Fiction*. Albany: State U of New York P.

INGMAN, Heather. 2007. *Twentieth-Century Fiction by Irish Women: Nation and Gender*. Aldershot, Hampshire and Burlington, VT: Ashgate.

JANET, Pierre. 1901. *The Mental State of Hystericals: A Study of Mental Stigmata and Mental Accidents.* Translated by Caroline Rollin Corson. New York and London: G.P. Putnam's Sons.

JOHNSTON, Jennifer. 1991. *The Invisible Worm*. London: Review.

KAMM, Jürgen. 1990. "Jennifer Johnston." In *Contemporary Irish Novelists*, edited by Rüdiger Imhof, 125-141. Tübingen: Gunter Narr Verlag Tübingen.

KREILKAMP, Vera. 1998. *The Anglo-Irish Novel and the Big House*. Syracuse: Syracuse UP.

LaCAPRA, Dominick. 2001. *Writing History, Writing Trauma*. Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins UP.

LAUB, Dori. 1995. "Truth and Testimony: The Process and the Struggle." In *Trauma: Explorations in Memory*, edited by Cathy Caruth, 61-75. Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins UP.

LEYS, Ruth. 2000. *Trauma: A Genealogy*. Chicago and London: The U of Chicago P.

LYNCH, Rachael S. 2000. "Public Spaces, Private Lives: Irish Identity and Female Selfhood in the Novels of Jennifer Johnston." In *Border Crossings: Irish Women Writers and National Identities,* edited by Kathryn Kirpatrick, 250-268. Dublin: Wolfhound.

MACHEREY, Pierre. (1966) 2006. *A Theory of Literary Production*. Translated by Geoffrey Wall. Reprint. London and New York: Routledge.

MAHONY, Christine Hunt. 1998. *Contemporary Irish Literature: Transforming Tradition*. London: Macmillan.

MARSH, Robin. 2006. "Ivy over Imperial Ireland: The Irish Big House Novel since 1960." In *Irish Fiction since the 1960s. A Collection of Critical Essays*, edited by Elmer Kennedy Andrews, 51-70. Gerrards Cross, Buckinghamshire: Colin Smythe.

MOLONEY, Caitriona. 2003. "Jennifer Johnston." In *Irish Women Writers Speak Out*, edited by Caitriona Moloney and Helen Thompson, 65-74. Syracuse: Syracuse UP.

MORTIMER, Mark. 1991. "Jennifer Johnston and the Big House." In *The Big House in Ireland: Reality and Representation*, edited by Jacqueline Genet, 209-214. Dingle, Co. Kerry and Savage, MD: Barnes and Noble.

SEGAL, Hanna. 1957. "Notes on Symbol Formation." *International Journal of Psychoanalysis* 38: 391-397.

ST. PETER, Christine. 2000a. *Changing Ireland: Strategies in Contemporary Women's Fiction*. Basingstoke and London: Macmillan.

—. 2000b. "Petrifying Time: Incest Narratives from Contemporary Ireland." In *Contemporary Irish Fiction: Themes, Tropes, Theories*, edited by Liam Harte and Michael Parker, 125-144. Houndmills, Basingstoke: Macmillan.

VICKROY, Laurie. 2002. *Trauma and Survival in Contemporary Fiction*. Charlottesville and London: The U of Virginia P.

WHITEHEAD, Anne. 2004. *Trauma Fiction*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh UP.

YORK, Richard. 2006. "Jennifer Johnston: Tremors of Memory." In *Irish Fiction since the 1960s*, edited by Elmer Kennedy Andrews, 263-276. Gerrards Cross, Buckinghamshire: Colin Smythe.

Constanza del Río is Senior Lecturer at the Department of English and German Philology of the University of Zaragoza, Spain. Her research centres on narrative theory, narrative genres and contemporary Irish fiction. She has published numerous articles on these subjects and on writers such as Flann O'Brien, Seamus Deane, Eoin McNamee, Eilís Ní Dhuibhne, Kate O'Riordan, Sebastian Barry, Patrick McCabe, William Trevor and Jennifer Johnston. She is co-editor of the volume *Memory, Imagination and Desire in Contemporary Anglo-American Literature and Film* (Heidelberg, 2004) and of *Traumatic Memory and the Ethical, Political and Transhistorical Functions of Literature* (London, 2017).

Address: Departamento de Filología Inglesa y Alemana. Universidad de Zaragoza. Campus Universitario, s/n. 50009, Zaragoza, Spain. Tel.: +34 976761527.

"A Dangerous Love":
Ben Okri's Persisting Commitment to Literary Experimentation

MAURICE FRANK O'CONNOR
Universidad de Cádiz
maurice.oconnor@uca.es

A once high-profile post-colonial writer, it is noticeable that the London-Nigerian novelist and essayist Ben Okri has all but dropped out of view as far as the literary establishment is concerned. While his earlier works still receive much academic attention and are deemed highly influential, critical engagements with his later fiction are almost non-existent. With this in mind, our aim is to map out the many transformations the author's work has gone through and offer explanations as to the reasons behind certain negative receptions of the author's work. To understand the new directions the author's current writings have taken, one must analyse the totality of his novelistic writings as a single collective body striving towards a sustained renovation of the literary form. Our premise is that this experimentation might, contrary to its aim, be hampering the author's success, and our study shall, therefore, examine in detail the experimental nature of these later works and offer a series of perceptions as to their possible shortcomings.

Keywords: Ben Okri; post-colonial writing; literary experimentation; spiritual resource-bases; hybridism; New Ageism

. . .

"Un amor peligroso": el empeño tenaz de Ben Okri hacia la experimentación literaria

En los últimos años parece que los círculos literarios han dado de lado al que fuera considerado escritor post-colonial de renombre, Ben Okri, novelista nigeriano afincado en Londres. Mientras que sus primeras obras aún son objeto de estudio y son consideradas muy influyentes, apenas se han hecho análisis críticos de sus trabajos más recientes. Partiendo de esta idea, nuestro objetivo es definir las numerosas transformaciones por las que ha pasado la obra del autor para explicar las razones que hay detrás de ciertas recepciones negativas de la misma. Para comprender la nueva dirección que la obra actual de Okri ha tomado, se debe

analizar la totalidad de su producción novelística como si se tratase de un todo que pugna por lograr una renovación continua de la forma literaria. Partimos de la premisa de que la experimentación podría, al contrario de lo que perseguía, estar impidiendo el éxito del autor, y el presente trabajo, por tanto, examinará en profundidad la naturaleza experimental de sus últimas obras para ofrecer una serie de percepciones sobre sus posibles limitaciones.

Palabras clave: Ben Okri; literatura post-colonial; experimentación literaria; bases de recursos espirituales; hibridismo; discursos nueva era

> We can't ask new literature to be like the old, to give us the same pleasures as those that have gone before. […] That would be mere repetition.
>
> Ben Okri, *A Time For New Dreams* (2011)

1. INTRODUCTION

Ben Okri likens the literary form to a recipient which holds the text together and allows its literariness to stand the test of time. From an early stage in his career, one can witness the author's commitment to this literary form, something he once defined as an entity "moving towards infinity" (Wilkinson 1992, 83).[1] A salient aspect of Okri's works is his singular vision of what constitutes reality, and this ontology informs his creative process profoundly, at both an imaginative and a formal level. It is for this reason that we feel it fruitful to provide a brief analysis of Okri's earlier works analysed from these perspectives, so as to provide the reader with a deeper understanding of the directions which the author has taken in his more recent narratives. What we propose is that Okri's search for a new form is an attempt to recreate the ineffable quality of mysteries that can only be expressed in quasi-mystical terms, while deeper truths about what an augmented reality encapsulates become juxtaposed against the real world in its outer form.

There is a certain irony to the fact that *Dangerous Love* (1996), which Okri himself does not rate highly due to its more conventional form, was the author's last novel to have garnered acclaim. Similar postcolonial authors, such as Abdulrazak Gurnah for example, have made life-long careers out of producing works of a similar nature and quality. In this light, our position is that Ben Okri's unbending commitment to experimentation with form could well be jeopardising his career as a writer.

2. THE ROAD TO TEXTUAL HYBRIDITY

Fifteen years after the publication of *The Landscapes Within* (1981), Okri re-wrote this same novel under the new title of *Dangerous Love* (1996). José Santiago Fernández Vázquez had detected the classical *Künstlerroman* motif operating within *The Landscapes Within*, and the author sought to re-address the individualistic prerogative that operates behind this motif (2002, 32). Ayo Mamadu (1991), for example, had correctly identified the protagonist's lack of a meaningful engagement with his community in favour of a withdrawal into the inner self. To understand how Okri re-wrote this individualistic ethos in favour of a more West-African collective consciousness one must turn to a very significant moment in both novels where Omovo, the novel's

budding artist and main protagonist, encounters a group of Egungun masqueraders within the forest. In *The Landscapes Within*, the perceived violence of these masquerades was transmitted through a Modernist stream of consciousness, and the narration of this episode was, furthermore, performed at a confused distance, as if the narrator were incapable of deciphering the deeper significance behind the unfolding events.[2] The ritual importance of the Egugun masqueraders is that, having taken on the identities of important ancestors, they then beat their audience with *atori* whips, although this violence is always performed within a highly ritualized framework. Similarly, in *The Famished Road* trilogy ([1991] 1993), the terrific masquerade figure became a symbolic representation of the ruling class's violation of inherited ethics within postcolonial Nigeria and, as Williams Rea assures us, "masks are themselves part of a wider structure of control over power or knowledge [...] [and] this control is often regarded as being linked into general ideas about ancestral knowledge and legitimating" (1998, 100). Nonetheless, while *The Landscapes Within*'s form was not able to adequately deal with the epistemological significance of the Egungun rite, a revisiting of this same scene in *Dangerous Love* brought forth its deeper significance. Omovo's spiritual awakening, the shift from an individualistic to a communal prerogative (the rejection of the *Künstlerroman* motif) is, furthermore, activated by his contact with these masqueraders. Therefore, by strategically appropriating this Yoruba tradition and displaying its transformative power, Okri was reactivating a cultural memory that had previously, in *The Landscapes Within*, been silenced. In *Dangerous Love*, the scene is described as follows:

> Masked figures, bearing whips, burst out of the forest. [...] The lesser figures, whose masks didn't have the size or the fearsomeness of the chief masquerade, began whipping one another. [...] They whipped one another's feet. [...] There was no malice in their actions. [...] They whipped the year's evil from one another, dancing round Omovo. They didn't touch him. (Okri 1996, 270)

Turning to the formal construction of this passage, we can detect the use of parataxis, defined in linguistic terms as the ordering of propositions or clauses without indicating the relation of co-ordination or subordination between the said propositions or clauses. Daria Tunca gives a detailed account of how Okri used these paratactic structures in *Dangerous Love* (2014), and if one examines *The Famished Road* trilogy at this synchronic level one can find a similar use of parataxis. This particular device

---

[2] In Yoruba culture, the tradition of the masquerade, known as Odun Egungun, is celebrated during festivals. The purpose of these annual ceremonies is to honour the dead and thus assure the ancestors a place among the living. The ancestors compel the living to uphold the ethical standards of the past generations of their clan, town or family. In *The Famished Road* trilogy, there is a violation of this tradition and the subsequent breaking down of the natural order established by tradition as, rather than being framed with the controlled ritual of the Egungun, the masquerade is now portrayed as being anarchic and out of control.

is employed to suggest the rhythms of West African oral discourses, although our interest here is to link the use of parataxis that Tunca establishes at the cohesive level, and an interpretative parataxis that operates at a diachronic level. Certainly, one of the difficulties in reading Okri has to do with the way discrete episodes are narrated; the reader is asked to hold suspended a series of seemingly disconnected events, and it is only towards the close of the narrative that a fruitful interpretation appears to emerge. In contrast to parataxis, the hypotactic prose we find in much canonical literature tends to establish continual relations between propositions and clauses through connectives that are structured around an additive process pointing either backward or forward. Okri's prose displays a marked lack of logical connections and, we suggest, it is precisely this lack of subordination found at the discursive level of the text which is also reflected at the level of plot structure. We therefore propose that a distinct inner logic as regards the narrative events is created in the sense that there is a lack of a more conventional form of narrative cohesion that connects the discrete episodes. Therefore, while a hypotactic prose directs the reader toward a specific narrative arch, the use of parataxis creates a distinct mode of interpretation. For example, the foreshadowing of future narrative events are noticeably absent; the events are not syllogistically connected but, rather, function as a series of, seemingly, isolated incidents.

A good example of this can be found in *Infinite Riches* (Okri 1998), specifically within the repeated episodes where Azaro, the *abiku* spirit child, and his father experience situations that involve fire. These episodes are not linked to any larger plot structure in the conventional sense but, rather, must be construed as narrative events that happen against what we might define as a flat background. We use this term *flat* in juxtaposition to the pyramid structure of dramatic plot development, which includes: exposition, rising action, climax, falling climax, denouement, etc. In contrast to this, many narrative events in *Infinite Riches* function independently of each other and, at an interpretative level, the reader has to construe how the motif of fire is intimately related to the book's main theme of karmic transformation. So, while the discrete events marked by the repeated motif of fire operate against this narrative flat surface, overall meaning is only gained through symbolically linking each of these fire episodes together. Okri's narrative strategy, therefore, consists in creating fissures within the temporal and the spatial, a feat performed through a concatenation of seemingly unrelated adventures. Opinions, it must be said, are divided as regards Okri's continued use of disconnected narrative episodes; events that do not lead to recognizable denouement. Critics like Douglas McCabe (2005; 2013) find these narrative non-sequiturs tiresome and frivolous, while others such as Maggi Phillips (1997) and John Hawley (1995) see Okri's incantatory style as creating a unique perspective within postcolonial literature.

The aforementioned episodes in *Infinite Riches* and their common theme of fire are paradigmatic of the spiritual nature that impregnates Okri's narrative, something that has gained prevalence in his later works. As the author himself affirms, form embodies a spiritual quality, that is "a meditation on the mystery of life, […] the

visible manifestation of spirit," and a defining feature of Okri's fiction is how he strives to deconstruct the real from its opposite, the unreal, so as to create a diffusion of the existing boundaries between man and nature (Okri 2011, 127). In *Infinite Riches*, we find a merging of form with Okri's appropriation of Yoruba myth and, in this respect, serves to initiate this imaginative process that seeks to reconstruct a multi-dimensional reality. The author first explored transmitting this otherworldly sensation through the short story format, and the formal strategies he employed in these yielded an ontological shift within his next narratives, *Incidents at the Shrine* (1986) and *Stars of the New Curfew* (1988). As Ato Quayson points out, these short stories were the constituent stages of this experimentation and he assures us that "there has been an effort to problematize protocols of representation by routing several aspects of narrative discourse through the prism of indigenous beliefs about spirits and their relationship with the real world" (1995, 148-149).

A collapsing of the boundaries between the real and the supernatural was a recurring feature in *The Famished Road* ([1991] 1993). The author employed a formal element to create this effect. Similar to a musical score where two scenes are played off each other in a contrapuntal composition, the real and the supernatural in the novel are often narrated at the same time. Therefore, while in the majority of West African fiction the boundaries between the real and the supernatural were clearly marked, this contrapuntal device merges these two worlds into a simultaneous narration and thus heightens the reader's sense of the supernatural being embedded within pedestrian reality. This technique is repeated throughout the novel; for example, in many of the scenes that take place in Madame Koto's bar we find grotesque ghouls from the otherworld mingling with the parishioners. What we can therefore conclude is that the contrapuntal form establishes a simultaneous protocol which creates a cacophony of experience, as if too many instruments were being played at the same time. This form is important in shaping the reader's perceptions of Azaro's world. When we encounter this contrapuntal form it tells us that Azaro finds himself in a liminal space where he is not capable of dividing these two worlds and its boundary thus becomes porous with the supernatural impinging upon the real to create a cosmic chaos.

Mid-way through the writing of *The Famished Road* trilogy, Okri produced *Astonishing The Gods* (1995), a short novel which was, already, signalling a creative shift away from both *The Famished Road*'s Yoruban resource-base. Where *Astonishing The Gods* does converge with *The Famished Road* trilogy is in its atemporal quality as regards the time of the narrative events and its marked reticence to specify where the events take place outside of what the reader can discern as being generic African or European settings. The invisibleness of the protagonist remains an enigma throughout, and his wanderings through the unnamed location can be construed as a search for meaning, primarily for "the secret of visibility," while the transformations of the physical landscape, impregnated with "myth," reflect the

series of inner transformations he undergoes (Okri 1995, 159). In this respect, Okri uses a technique of defamiliarization which questions our perceptions of both time and space. This strategy thus produces a slowing down of the reading process and solicits a heightened attention to how temporal events interact within the narrative arch. Bereft of the temporal indicators of the more pedestrian novel, the reader finds her/himself moving through an ambiguous and disconcerting space that is akin to the oneiric. Within the novel, these non-defined temporal-spatial vectors serve to harness the potential of the dream narrative. They create a multidimensional cosmos that questions perceptions of reality and, by extension, realism as *the* organizing narrative principle; a rubric also applicable to *The Famished Road* trilogy.

This experimentation, however, we feel is weakened by a separate narrative voice telling the reader about the metaphysical nature of the protagonist's search, rather than the reader perceiving this in an organic fashion through the text. Furthermore, the unnamed setting fails to create what we define as a protocol of suggestion— the paralinguistic elements that the reader can access through a series of carefully selected descriptions and suggestions. On the contrary, while Okri's short story "In the Shadow of War" (1983) employs a similar reticence as regards the time and place of the action, the reader is offered a series of carefully honed motifs and symbols that bring forth the ghosts of Biafra. The same can be said of all of Okri's fiction with a West African setting, yet we propose that effective protocols of suggestion are missing from *Astonishing The Gods* and much of his later fiction.

3. The Search for Form
Okri assures us that a child's perception contains a certain quality of genius "that lingers in the depths of the mind, like an imperishable melody" (2011, 33), and, while place of origin must never become a creative straight jacket, it is the author's reconfiguring of his Nigerian late childhood into a literary form that we feel has produced his greatest works to date. The author left Nigeria at the age of nineteen to never return, yet, while many critics consider him to be an African writer, our view is that his identity affiliation is more cosmopolitan than national. As such, many of his later works serve as creative outlets for this cosmopolitan identity, yet we are of the opinion that West Africa, as a narrative setting, generates a richer protocol of suggestion when compared to those novels where the settings are, in some manner, vaguely European, although a specific location is never offered. *Starbook* (2007) did represent Okri's brief return to a West African theme, although the novel was temporally situated within the epoch of the Black Atlantic Slave Trade, while the setting is predominately an unnamed forest. The geographic location of the West African forest is something that had previously provided the author with a powerful creative source and was, in part, the reason for *The Famished Road*'s originality. Here, Okri had appropriated the Yoruban folktales of Daniel

O. Fagunwa where the forest transforms the mundane into a freakish experience that brings supernatural events to the fore. As in *The Famished Road*, Okri employs a contrapuntal technique in *Starbook* as a means to narrate the supernatural; the present time of the forest is played off a future time where the reader is offered glimpses of the prince's enslavement and his subsequent humiliation in the new world as a result of the Middle Passage. However, while in *The Famished Road* a West African resource-base was employed through the specific figure of the *abiku* child as a means to collapse ontological boundaries, the motif of the dreamtime is the device which *Starbook* employs to merge distinct narrative times into a single continuum. By the dreamtime we mean the shamanic practice of journeying into parallel realities through the consuming of hallucinatory drugs or practices of deep meditation, and it is through the latter that the prince embarks upon astral voyages that take him towards his own tragic future. Instrumental in his initiation into the dreamtime is the figure of the heron which the prince encounters in the forest, and, in this respect, Michael Harner speaks of entities that guide shamans on their quest for power and knowledge (1980, 56-59). This belief is common to all shamanistic-orientated cultures; in Mexico they go under the name of *nagual*; in Siberia they are called tutelary spirits, while in Australian aboriginal societies they are known as assistant totem. To acquire these guardian spirits, the shaman must initiate a spirit quest, in a remote pace in the wilderness, and it is for this reason that, in *Starbook*, the prince instinctively travels from his village and deep into the forest. As Harner assures, "[t]he guardian spirit is often a *power animal*, a spiritual being that not only protects and serves the shaman, but becomes another identity or alter ego for him," and the heron, in this respect, becomes the prince's power animal (1980, 54; italics in the original). This shamanic motif gives symbolic cohesion to the, many, isolated episodes regarding the heron, and through these isolated episodes we also come to understand the significance of the Middle Passage: how its futurity has already impinged upon the present narrative time of the forest.

To collapse these distinct narrative times, Okri also uses the device of gaps which are encountered as gateways, invisible to the uninitiated (O'Connor 2008, 20). Both the prince and the maiden move through these time conduits, which become the nodal points from which the characters embark on their travelling through passages and "into a dream, or as if from a dream fading in daylight" (Okri 2007, 288). This is also an appropriation of a shamanic resource-base; Harner tells us that the shaman moves through different cosmological planes, through special holes which are entrances that exist "in ordinary reality as well as in nonordinary reality" (1980: 31). In *Starbook*, these gaps occur as both physical spaces located within the forest space and as conduits inside one's own consciousness. The prince commences a process of initiation into the mysteries of human consciousness and it is during this process, which occurs at the master's workshop, that he enters a trance-like state and travels into the dreamtime through a gap. This takes him to the New World where he finds

himself "half naked in a marketplace, being sold for the price of a dog" (Okri 2007, 299). Through this collapsing of a teleological perspective in favour of a layering of narrative times the reader is thus primed for the future horrors of the Middle Passage.

Starbook can thus be considered to have drawn less from West African resource-base and more from shamanism, and *Astonishing the Gods* (1995), in this respect, also signalled a search for a form that relied less upon the Yoruba myths and folktales. What remains a constant within Okri's work, nonetheless, is his pronounced gravitation towards otherworldly themes, and *Tales of Freedom* (2009) continues along these lines where reality becomes fused with dream narratives. "The Comic Destiny," the longest piece in this collection, is structured around a series of absurd dialogues that function through a call and response technique; the characters engage with each other at cross-purposes, a device employed to create a comic effect. However, behind these absurdities lie traces of madness which are provoked by the unnamed predicament the characters find themselves embroiled in. These characters relate past brutalities in a nonchalant manner, which transmits a message to the reader that says, all is normal; however, this banality augments a pervading sense of absurdity and creates a contrastive effect which lends to the surreal quality of the freakish events. *The Famished Road* (1991) employed an analogous open tone for similar reasons; harrowing situations were given a neutral treatment as, perceived from Azaro's consciousness, death was an inspirational place, free from the constrictors of ordinary life. "The Comic Destiny" displays a similar attitude as regards life and death, and this theme is conveyed through the aforementioned open tone, the downplaying of tragic elements through linguistically neutral codes. Devoid of any psychological dimension beyond that which the *mise-en-scène* provides, the protagonists move through a liminal space delimited by the mundane and the supernatural. There is a dream-like quality to their existences, something that is heightened by the predominating *lieu vague*, a recurring feature in all of the other shorter stories in this collection.

In "The Comic Destiny," save a white house with a blue door and a table out front, the setting is empty and no attempt is made at creating a verisimilitude of place. As far as mimesis is concerned, this sensation of the bare stage seems to point towards a form that wishes to convey the surreal. This particular device points towards a more generalized tendency within Okri's recent writing where descriptions are kept to a bare minimum. The question of descriptive narratives and their aesthetic value *per se* is a debate that has run for some time, and how descriptive devices are managed within literature is still deemed paramount within contemporary writing. Vladimir Nabokov, for example, posits Nicolai Gogol as being revolutionary in his deployment of descriptive techniques for formal ends; Russian literature prior to Gogol, Nabokov tells us, was purblind inasmuch as it traded in "hackneyed combinations of blind noun and dog-like adjectives" (Nabokov [1981] 2002, 54). Where Gogol injected new life into the descriptive passage through a defamiliarization of what Nabokov determined as a series of automatized descriptors that "Europe had inherited from the ancients"

(55), Okri has taken this question one step further in his eschewing of *all* description. This, however, we suggest, is risky and, contrary to the intention, might be creating an unnecessary flattening of the narrative. This strategic lack of description is coupled with an absence of character psychology, something that is a recurring feature in most of Okri's recent writings. It would seem that the author is suggesting that, through this radical minimalism, the reader is given more space to activate an unconscious response to the text and therefore participate in a more profound interpretative process. Coupled with this radical minimalism is the formal arrangement of apparently non-related situations which only gain coherence at the end of the piece. The absurd journey being made by the characters in "The Comic Destiny" emerges as a traversing of a purgatorial state, and this reading, once again, evidences the paratactic nature of Okri's form. In the first section of "The Comic Destiny," Pinprop is leading Old Man/Old Woman through the forest towards an unknown destiny. The pervading sense of hopelessness that permeates throughout the whole piece is offset by the idea of redemption, which is seen as the only reprieve from the existential void in which the characters find themselves. This redemption to counterbalance the postlapsarian wasteland which the characters move through comes in the final pages of the text when New Man/New Woman emerge naked from the white house into which is set the blue door and proclaim:

> 'Let's dream again,' said New Man. […]
> 'Of Eden when it was new.'
> 'And after we have restored it.' (Okri 2009, 105)

The remaining narratives within *Tales of Freedom* are comprised of much shorter pieces, what the author defines as *stokus* or an amalgam between the short story and the Japanese haiku. While in a haiku a *kiru* or cutting word marks the contrasting image and enhances the way in which the elements relate to each other, these *stokus* deliver the contrasting element through short, declarative sentences. Similarities can be found between "The Comic Destiny" and these *stokus* in both their oneiric quality and the open tone employed to relate darker aspects of human existence. "The War Healer," for example, tells the story of a newly-wed groom who must return to a fighting zone so as to continue his work as a healer and "burier of the dead" (Okri 2009, 187). His bride, subsequently, joins him and soon her bridal dress has become "all bloody and darkened with gore, mud, blasted out brains and intestines spewed up from all the shelling" (189). The nuptial white, stained with the colour of death, functions as a visual metaphor of love and hate occupying a common space, and it is this single contrasting element upon which the dramatic effect of the piece hinges.

It is "The Mysterious Anxiety of Them and Us," nonetheless, that best delivers the contrastive power of haiku that Okri was searching for through his compacted short story form. A group of people is gathered at the grounds of a magnificent estate where

an outdoor feast is laid out before them. The host, however, does not invite them to take their places at the table and a palpable anxiety arises as to how to proceed. The narrator now finds himself amongst those who have taken it upon themselves to start eating. He tells us, "[t]hose who were at table, ate. That's it. That's all," yet, behind these diners a body of people forms who have not come to the table but rather who wait passively for their situation to change (Okri 2009, 120). Through the single image of these people sitting at the plentiful table and the murmuring of those they have turned their backs upon, the narrator develops a contrasting theme, and in an attempt to mitigate the guilt that this unequal situation produces, a moral argument is generated to shore up this predicament: "So to turn around and offer them food would automatically be to see them as inferior. When in fact they behaved in a manner that made things turn out that way" (Okri 2009, 20). The contrasting aspect of the haiku thus serves to establish in the reader's mind the complex relationship we harbour as regards injustices or human suffering, and it is through form that this theme becomes effectively activated.

As we have already seen, Okri's past experimentation through the short story format yielded its dividends although it must be said that *The Age of Magic* (2014), Okri's most recent literary fiction, has not brought to fruition the experimentation with form that *Tales of Freedom* seemed to have been heralding. This novel functions as a sequel to *In Arcadia* (2002), and both this and *The Age of Magic* narrate a train journey across Europe which is divided into two parts. The basic premise of both novels concerns a film crew that has been commissioned by a mysterious patron to undertake the search for Virgil's pastoral idyll, and a closer reading of both texts reveals a certain affinity with Borges' "The Aleph" (1945), where the common themes include the excessive need for public recognition, the instability underlying the illusion of permanence and the ineffability of psychic experience. At a structural level, *In Arcadia* is conducted in two movements, the first being the (uncompleted) outward journey towards the Peloponnese and, the second, an inner search for a personal Arcadia. *The Age of Magic* furthers the train journey initiated in *In Arcadia* where the train tracks represent a metaphorical travelling through life, with death as a *memento mori* flanking the moving train on one side and the utopian ideal of transformation on the other. The text refers to the two sides as Hades and Arcadia respectively, and Alistair Fox (2005) establishes a link with similar themes found in Milton's *Paradise Lost* and Dante's *La divina comedia* respectively. The underlying tensions created by these images of paradise and hell are contextualized within the dream sequence that opens *The Age of Magic*: Lao has fallen asleep and now finds himself in conversation with a Quylph, a mythical creature, who suggests that his fear of Malasso defines his actions.

Okri re-introduces Malasso from *In Arcadia*, a dark character that controls many of the narrative events from an unnamed location. In this respect, he can be seen as an invisible *metteur en scène*, imposing his arcane will upon the film crew, and it is through Malasso that the narrative attempts to create an overarching ambiguity. As a

presence, Malasso remains phantasmagorical throughout, and his relation to each of the protagonists becomes a device that merges their outer reality with their inner, psychic space. Furthermore, his presence is intimately linked to the dreamtime of each of the characters and, as in *The Famished Road*, there is an attempt to establish an interplay between a series of pasts, futures and presents within the narratives and which "extends to the mental lives of the characters [...] so that their dream lives constantly inform their daily doings and vice versa" (Fraser 2002, 69).

On a similar note, Christian Gutleben situates *The Famished Road* within the African Gothic genre, and sees the presence of ghostly figures in the novel as "historical beings" that serve to reactivate the ancestral culture of West Africa (2013, 53). While Okri has distanced himself from this resource-base, his interest in the spirit world continues to solidly inform his fiction, and Malasso, in this respect, can be seen as a gothic spectre. For example, when Lao awakes from his brief dream a figure appears from beyond the train window attired like a dark magician and hence the uncanny return of Malasso is linked to the oneiric subplot that runs parallel to the principal narrative; the merging of the outer journey with the inner. These attempts at creating parallels between the real and the oneiric/ghostly presences can also be found in the novel's denouement; Lao glimpses the Quylph and this induces in him a transcendental experience, a dream-like encounter with this benign spirit, which serves to finally liberate him from his self-doubt. The narrative mediates this epiphany through the motif of sight, "that whole world, that vast reality, came into being when he was not looking, when he was not trying to see" (Okri 2014, 269).

In an earlier work Okri asserted that "[t]o see something one must first be something. One must become oneself" (2011, 23) and much of his fiction employs this idea of vision; a recurring leitmotif that suggests a link to the discourses of New Ageism. Lao's subsequent transformation—his unconscious need for recognition and the solipsism that this drive produces—offers an alternative model to the Faustian motif explored earlier on in the text and, seen from a broader perspective, the journey towards the physical Arcadia takes on a metaphorical significance. Here, Lao chooses to see his personal Arcadia and it is in this moment of epiphany that he rejects his former perceptions of his own self importance. This personal denouement is linked to the book's larger theme of humanity's need to discover the magical facets to human existence; a quasi-mystic revelation present in most of Okri's fictional and non-fictional works. Alistair Fox (2005), in this light, defines *In Arcadia* as an exercise in postmodern utopian fiction, framed within such classical utopian texts as Thomas Moore's *Utopia* and Francis Bacon's *New Atlantis*, and this reading is also applicable both to *The Age of Magic* and "The Comic Destiny" where we can find many digressions on the perniciousness nature of a secular modernity that has stifled the magic present in heightened realities. Both texts champion the energizing role of art and the possibilities of a new way of being, understood as an active dreamtime that runs parallel to our pedestrian realities; an ideal that occupies centre stage in Okri's work.

4. CONCLUSION

The meshing together of the otherworldly with the mundane at a formal level has been at the heart of Okri's literary success and *The Famished Road* (1991), in this respect, was paradigmatic of the fine balance the author struck between these two vectors. There is, however, a sense that Okri's work has become progressively more spiritually orientated with time and has lost touch with the human struggles that *The Famished Road* poignantly portrayed. Kwame Anthony Appiah (1992), however, had already detected what he defined as New Ageism in *The Famished Road*, while Douglas McCabe viewed the text as verging "on being a New Age allegory" (2005, 18-20) and thus problematized those interpretations that framed the text within a postcolonial/postmodern discourse. Regarding the otherworldly nature of *The Famished Road*, Ato Quayson's (1997) study was highly influential in defining the novel's spirituality as resting within a Yoruba resource-base, although Oliva Renato (1999) gave testimony to other spiritual discourses such as shamanism operating in parallel with this West African resource-base. In this light, *Starbook* (2007) initiated a third stage in Okri's writing where these pan-spiritual discourses now eclipsed what Quayson had correctly defined as a marked affiliation with West African spirituality. The astral voyage, telepathy, the collapsing of space-time, and so forth now became a central part of the form, and the West African resource-base was no longer employed. While we, in part, disagree with McCabe's (2005; 2013) reading of *The Famished Road* as purely New Age spiritualism (the novel is far more layered, polyphonic, and has too many political sub-plots to confirm this simplified reading), the author's later works do tend more towards the spiritual allegory that McCabe had detected at the margins of *The Famished Road*.

There are, however, two principal issues that we feel subtract from, rather than add to, the ineffability that Okri seeks to create through form. The first relates to the manner in which he pares the narrative down to a skeleton text. As a formal device, this economy attempts to produce a sense of the unfamiliar, yet part of the reason we feel that this economy does not work is that the bare *mise en scène* and a *lieu vague* presented in these texts fail to provide the protocol of suggestion we mentioned earlier on in this essay. While Okri produces a polished, minimalist style that suppresses all qualifiers and eschews verbal pyrotechnics that attempt to convey a sense of the unreal, considered an overarching aesthetic effect, this device falls short of its mark. While the elusive nature and predominant lack of closure did create a continuum within the reader in his earlier fiction, the lack of closure and elusiveness in his later works now, we feel, produces indifference.

The second error Okri has incurred is in his increasingly messianic vocation. This has eclipsed other, and more essential, elements of the storytelling form, which have become subordinated to these philosophical speculations of a marked spiritual nature. For example, in *The Age of Magic* (2014) there is a dubious connection between Lao's ideas and those of the disembodied third person narrator; they express the same

thoughts and this weakens the impact of these ideas as we see Lao as a mouthpiece for the narrative point of view. This particular defect in the structure is related to the author's habitual use of digressions in much of his work, digressions which mostly have to do with the author's utopian and spiritual leanings. This is also true of *Astonishing the Gods* (1995) and *In Arcadia* (2002), and while one can abandon the story to develop a particular theme, we feel this device is not appropriate for the kind of form Okri wishes to develop. We, therefore, suggest that there is a profound conflict of interests operating within Okri's fiction: a conflict between the writer of stories and the essayist, the latter a genre he dominates with much finesse. It is our opinion that the author would do better to limit these spiritual digressions to the essay form, and in his storytelling develop a more suitable form that better transmits his, respectable, belief in the nature of spirituality and human existence. In *The Age of Magic*, for example, while its strength lies in how Malasso as a multiple psychic projection versus an invisible *metteur en scène* has the potential to create a series of uncanny events that can destabilize the reader's perception of reality, this psychic transferral of the characters' dream material onto the action is, once again, arrested by digression—both gnomic asides and superfluous scenes. We therefore conclude that what the author may see as a conscious and purposeful expression of the form might well be the subjective illusion of the poet. Or perhaps it is that his work, like that of William Blake, whose poetic imagination has exercised a considerable influence upon Okri, may not be accessible to the spirit of the literary moment.

Works Cited

Appiah, Kwame Anthony. 1992. "Spiritual Realism." *The Nation*, August 3-10, 146-148.

Cooper, Brenda. 1998. *Magic Realism in Western and African Fiction: Seeing with a Third Eye*. London and New York: Routledge.

Fernández Vázquez, José Santiago. 2002. *La novela de formación: una aproximación a la ideología colonial europea desde la óptica del Bildungsroman clásico*. Alcalá de Henares: Servicio de Publicaciones de la Universidad de Alcalá.

Fox, Alistair. 2005. "In Search of the Postmodern Utopia: Ben Okri's *In Arcadia*." *Portal Journal of Multidisciplinary International Studies* 2 (2): 1-16.

Fraser, Robert. 2002. *Ben Okri. Writers and Their Work*. Devon: Northcote House.

Gutleben, Christian. 2013. "African Ghotic: Ben Okri's Aesthetics of the Uncanny in *The Famished Road*." In *The Famished Road*: *Ben Okri's Imagined Homelands*, edited by Vanessa Guignery, 47-58. Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars.

Harner, Michael. 1980. *The Way of the Shaman: A Guide To Power and Healing*. New York: Bantam Books.

Hawley, John C. 1995. "Ben Okri's Spirit-Child: Abiku Migration and Postmodernity." *Research in African Literatures* 26 (1): 30-39.

MAMADU, Ayo. 1991. "Portrait of a Young Artist in Ben Okri's *The Landscapes Within*." *Commonwealth Essays and Studies* 13 (2): 85-91.

McCABE, Douglas. 2005. "'Higher Realities': New Spirituality in Ben Okri's *The Famished Road*." *Research in African Literatures* 36 (4): 1-21.

—. 2013. "New Age Spirituality, Abiku and Hunger in *The Famished Road*." *Commonwealth* 35 (2): 21-31.

NABOKOV, Vladimir. (1981) 2002. *Lectures on Russian Literature*. Boston: Mariner Books.

O'CONNOR, Maurice. 2008. "A Journey Towards Stillness: Modes of Renewal in Ben Okri's *Starbook*." *Wasafiri* 23 (2):17-22.

OKRI, Ben. 1979. *Flowers and Shadows*. London: Longman Drumbeat.

—. 1981. *The Landscapes Within*. London: Longman.

—. 1986. *Incidents at the Shrine*. London: Vintage.

—. 1988. *Stars of the New Curfew*. London: Vintage.

—. (1991) 1993. *The Famished Road*. London: Vintage.

—. (1993) 1994. *Songs of Enchantment*. London: Vintage.

—. 1995. *Astonishing the Gods*. London: Phoenix.

—. 1996. *Dangerous Love*. London: Phoenix.

—. 1998. *Infinite Riches*. London: Phoenix.

—. 2002. *In Arcadia*. London: Phoenix.

—. 2007. *Starbook: A Magical Tale of Love and Regeneration*. London: Rider.

—. 2009. *Tales of Freedom*. London: Rider.

—. 2011. *A Time For New Dreams*. London: Rider.

—. 2014. *The Age of Magic*. London: Head of Zeus.

PHILLIPS, Maggi. 1997. "Ben Okri's River Narratives: *The Famished Road* and *Songs of Enchantment*." In *Contemporary African Fiction*, edited by Derek Wright, 167-179. Bayreuth: Breitinger.

QUAYSON, Ato. 1995. "Esoteric Webwork as Nervous System: Reading the Fantastic in Ben Okri's Writing." In *Essays on African Writing*, edited by Abdulrazak Gurnah, 144-158. Oxford: Heinemann.

—. 1997. *Strategic Transformations in Nigerian Literature: Orality and History in the Work of Rev. Samuel Johnson, Amos Tutuola, Wole Soyinka, and Ben Okri*. Oxford: James Currey.

REA, Williams. 1998. "Rationalising Culture: Youth, Elites and Masquerade Politics." *Africa* 68 (1): 98-116.

RENATO, Oliva. 1999. "Re-Dreaming the World: Ben Okri's Shamanic Realism." In *Coterminous Worlds: Magic Realism and Contemporary Post Colonial Literature in English*, edited by Elsa Linguanti, 171-196. Amsterdam: Rodopi.

TUNCA, Daria. 2014. *Stylistic Approaches to Nigerian Fiction*. Houndmills, Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.

WILKINSON, Jane. 1992. *Talking with African Writers*. London: James Currey.

Maurice O'Connor is a full-time lecturer at the University of Cádiz where he read his PhD on Ben Okri. His research interests are centred on African and Indian diasporic writing. His book entitled *The Writings of Ben Okri: Transcending the Local and the National* (2008) was published by Prestige Books, New Delhi and his latest article entitled "The Narcotic Memes of Bombay: Jeet Thayil's *Narcopolis*" was published in the 2015 autumn edition of the journal *Wasafiri*. He is currently treasurer of the Spanish Association for Interdisciplinary Studies on India.

Address: Departamento de Filología Francesa e Inglesa. Facultad de Filosofía y Letras. Universidad de Cádiz. Avenida Gómez Ulla, s/n. 11003, Cádiz, Spain. Tel.: +34 956015851.

INTERVIEW

ENTREVISTA

"I Have Always Been a Writer":
An Interview with Evelyn Conlon

MELANIA TERRAZAS GALLEGO
Universidad de La Rioja
Melania.terrazas@unirioja.es

Irish novelist and short story writer Evelyn Conlon was born in Co. Monaghan and lives in Dublin[1]. She is an elected member of Aosdána, the Irish artists' association. Conlon has been writer in residence at University College Dublin and in colleges around the world and has a deep interest in Australia, where she lived in the early 1970s. There she held a variety of jobs and became besotted by the landscapes of rural Australia.

Conlon has published three collections of short stories, *My Head is Opening* (1987), *Taking Scarlet as a Real Colour* (1993) and *Telling: New and Selected Short Stories* (2000), and four novels. The short stories are widely anthologized and translated. Conlon's novels deal with social and political dilemmas. *Stars in the Daytime* (1989) and *A Glassful of Letters* (1998) related the lives, loves and hates of women and girls of the Irish diaspora. *Skin of Dreams* (2003), shortlisted for Irish novel of the year, dealt with the story of Harry Gleeson, who was sentenced to death row for the murder of a woman, a crime he did not commit. Gleeson recently received a posthumous pardon. Conlon is currently working on a new collection of short stories, but her most recent publication was a novel, *Not the Same Sky* (2013), which focuses on Irish Famine orphans of the 1840s and earned her the title of Australia's newest Irish novelist. The diary-like *Not the Same Sky* draws on her Australian experience and narrates the moving story of over 4,000 Irish girls aged between fourteen and twenty, victims of the famine, who were shipped to Sydney to work as domestic servants. Conlon's work, whether short story or novel, is suffused with originality and humour and she is brilliant at deploying many of the rhetorical strategies of the satirical apparatus, namely, irony and wit.

The following interview took place on October 13, 2014, at her home in Dublin, during my visit as a Scholar at the National University of Ireland, Galway (NUI Galway), where I was researching Irish Literature and Culture.

Melania Terrazas: *Evelyn, thank you very much for meeting me. I'd like to start with some general questions before I focus on your literary production. I have read that you moved from job to job and place to place between 1972 and 1975 before dedicating yourself to writing full-time.[2] When and how did your writing adventure start? And how have your experiences affected your writing?*

Evelyn Conlon: I went to Australia in 1972 by ship and over a period of three years did a lot of travelling around the country. I did all sorts of jobs, learned some things about life. But before I left I had already had a short story published in *New Irish Writing*, one of the main Irish newspapers. Funny I cannot remember sending it in. Then I had another one published there. It is an interesting question. I have always been a writer. I think that when I was about nine, I decided that that was what I wanted to be. But, of course, I didn't know what it meant. It was a gradual thing from then, a difficult thing, because I certainly didn't come from a background in which there were people who were writers. But then, who does? I do think that there are extra difficulties for writers who are women. After returning from Australia, I took part in a National Writers Workshop in the early eighties with Eavan Boland. She said an interesting thing; that the young man will say, "I want to be a writer, I am going to be a writer," but it often takes the young woman much longer for her to say "that is what I am." And so it was with me. I *was* a writer before I would say that I wanted to be one. Even when I was doing all sorts of odd jobs, I was really just working to live and longing to get back to writing about what I felt was going on around me, about what I was seeing. After I had those short stories published, before I was twenty, I really wanted to tackle things about women in Ireland. And I felt that I couldn't do it, I didn't have the nerve. So what I did was I wrote poetry or, what I should say is, attempted poetry. And this was absolutely not good enough because what was happening was that I was using poetry to pretend that I was not saying something that I was in fact saying. So it was not truthful. When I came back to Ireland I had my first child, at twenty-three. I wanted to go back to university, having been out of my depth, making a mess of it, the first time and leaving to go to Australia. I went back to Maynooth College, which was also the place where priests were trained. It had recently been opened to lay people. It seemed an impossible task but I got a crèche going there. And that is what led to that introduction: "This is the only woman you will ever meet who has started a crèche in a Seminary." I had my second child in the second year and separated from my ex-husband in the third year. Pretty hectic arts degree. Separation was quite unusual in Ireland at the time and

---

2 See, for instance, Devlin-Glass (2013, 1-2).

my life became extremely difficult, not just financially but because attitudes were distressing. There was no divorce. But it was not just that there was no divorce. It was that antagonisms could be quite strong. However, when I look back on it now, I can see that, obviously, such enormous turmoil in my personal life affected what I wrote about. But then, in a way, I don't regret all that, because it gave me an opportunity to see a world that I would never have seen otherwise, to understand what hypocrisy means. If everything had gone nice and smoothly, there are a lot of things that I would not know about life. And, you know, I had the energy to survive it at the time.

MT: *You were involved in the radical end of the* Irish Women's Liberation Movement—Irish Women United. *Now, looking at that stage in your life, what do you think you have achieved?*

EC: You mean, what *we* have achieved, all of us who were there. I've just been to the opening of an exhibition of posters and photographs from that era. One of the organizers came to go through my collection and it was astonishing to look at some of the things they were looking for. Listen, we have achieved amazing things, amazing things. Contraception was not legal in Ireland then; divorce was not legal. The one thing we have not achieved is abortion rights. By that, I mean, we have not achieved a situation in which the dignity of women who are pregnant can be dealt with in the way that it needs to be, which essentially to me is that it is between the woman, the medical person involved in her life and the man involved in her life, if there is a man involved in her life.[3] And it should not be up to any of the rest of us. I do, however, believe that we will see that sorted —sooner, in fact, than we think. That's the optimist in me. Now for a bit of work on it.

MT: *Would you agree with the interpretation of many of your short stories as non-moral works that embody a transgressive act of imagination of a kind that necessarily precedes the formulation of specific political demands whose purpose is to give insights into moral problems, not providing solutions to them, and which are enacted in the public sphere?*

EC: The answer to that is that you are right and it is interesting that you would see it, because I certainly would not be aware of it as I work. Quite often stories begin with an idea of something that wasn't there yesterday, but must have been in a subconscious way and I think: "Gosh, I really want to write that." Now, that is day one. Day two, I want to write it this way. Day three, it's different again. Day fifteen it does not work. So, back to the beginning. But, quite often, what happens is that what is left is the original idea that moved me towards writing the thing in the first place. With new clothes on. And I can't examine it like a reader does, but I'm delighted that you have seen what you have.

---

[3] For further reference on this idea, see Pelan (2000).

MT: *How do you decide which form is more suitable for your writing aims and which literary form do you prefer?*

EC: I think that whatever form I'm working in at a given moment is the best one. My fourth novel has just come out and I am working on my fourth collection of short stories. So, at the moment, I am thinking, "Oh, there is nothing like the short story," and "I'll never do a novel again." But I do feel that the short story is great in many ways, because you have to pare it down all the time. It's a more exact art form. It's a bit like dancing. You can't go all over the place with it. There are other dancers to be taken into consideration. But also, the story is not good if you don't discipline it, just like the dance suffers if you throw yourself all over the place.

MT: *Do you still write by hand?*

EC: Yes, I do, although I have noticed recently that I'm beginning to write a bit on the machine if I am doing radio essays. These are short pieces—they should last the length of time that somebody is making a cup of tea on a Sunday morning. The program goes out at 9.10 am and is known among some as "The atheist's Mass." I have always worked by hand even though I am a fast typist. The process of what is going on in my head needs pen and paper. And also a kind of silence, it is a better silence. When I am at a machine, that is a different thing. It feels like a thing of distance… functional. Although the mechanics are available on the computer, it feels like there is more capacity for the work to change with pen and paper.

MT: *Could you say something about your next collection? What makes it different from the previous ones?*

EC: Gosh! I must have a look at what stories are in it. Well, they are set in different places: New York, one in Australia, of course, Paris, Jakarta and one in Hiroshima. But you know, despite the specific locations, I don't know if they are that different, except that, naturally, the things that interest you change, as you move on. Although the funny thing is that one of them is actually a story that began in my head when I was in my twenties. Years later, I discovered a story about somebody who pretended that they were going to Australia—because they were going to South Africa and we weren't supposed to go to South Africa at that time, we were supposed to be boycotting it. The Anti-Apartheid Movement was very strong here. Another thing: when apartheid as a law was ended, I heard people talk about having worked in South Africa and I would be looking at them and thinking: "You went to South Africa when apartheid was there." Never felt the same about those people again. So the story is about telling lies. It is called "The Lie of the Land" and it was recently translated into Chinese. It begins with two people telling a lie. The couple lie about going to South Africa and in an ironic twist they dislike the place intensely. However, as a result of the lie they become destined to travel endlessly. And then, finally, one of

them says one night, "But lots of us have told lies here." So we discover that there are lots of people around a table who are running away. Like the person who was involved with the forged Hitler diaries. And others. Yes, the stories are different and yet some of them go back to things that happened about thirty years ago.

MT: *Many critics describe your style as clear-sighted and witty. You also make frequent use of irony. Do you consider yourself a satirical author?*

EC: See, I don't think about it like that. Then, sometimes, when I read out loud at an event, I suddenly see what they mean, but I wouldn't have set out to do that. That would not have been how I began. But the voice might run away with it.

MT: *What do you think about the social value of literature?*

EC: As I would have said this morning in the National Gallery, here we are in the cave and the minute we have enough to eat and to drink, somebody over in the corner starts to make a painting or somebody decides to make a play.[4] I think that is an essential part of our lives, how we understand things—an essential part of our social life as well—but I do recognize that some writers go writing for themselves and it would appear that that poem or story has nothing to do with the outside world. The individual reader must take exactly what they want from it, even if it seems very private. The woman in *Skin of Dreams* keeps secret the story of her relative who has been executed. But it is all within her head, the discussions are going on within herself, yet they do have a relationship to what is happening in the outside world. So, I suppose I don't write deliberately in this manner but if a story eventually relates to history and the political view of our lives then that is what it does, regardless of the intention of the original idea.

MT: *Do you think you are a political writer?*

EC: What is political? Everything is political. Love is political. So, in a way, I am political because it means being bigger than the self, even though the self is at the centre of us. I am a citizen as well as a writer. We stood at the top of Grafton Street selling condoms, not because we had nothing better to do on a Saturday morning, but because we felt we had to. I know some people didn't feel that, but they were glad we were out doing it.

---

4 Conlon was interviewed by Brendan Rooney at the National Gallery of Ireland in Dublin on 12 October 2014 and I attended it. The interview took place because Conlon's short story "What Happens at Night" is included in *Lines of Vision: Irish Writers on Art* (McLean 2014), a beautifully illustrated anthology of new poems, essays and short stories by a wide range of Irish writers—fifty-six in total, including John Banville, Roddy Doyle, Seamus Heaney and Jennifer Johnston—inspired by pieces in the National Gallery of Ireland, Dublin, to mark its 150th anniversary. *Lines of Vision: Irish Writers on Art* was edited by Janet McLean, Curator of European Art 1850-1950 at the National Gallery of Ireland, who also set up the accompanying exhibition, which was formally opened by President Michael D. Higgins, himself a poet, on 7 October 2014.

MT: *What made you go to Australia in the 1970s?*

EC: Okay, I probably won't answer properly because I am trying to figure it out myself for a nonfiction book that I may be beginning. And how much of my childhood do I actually ever divulge? But there is no doubt that going to Australia was me running away. At some stage, I may examine what I was running away from and maybe I won't. In many ways I had a strange childhood and part of that strangeness meant that I lived a lot imaginatively. One of the places that had always been in my head was Australia. A completely ludicrous notion of what Australia was and I just wanted to go there. I was going out with a man at the time and he decided to come with me, then changed his mind. But when I asked him to be a referee for me going myself he changed his mind again. We got married in order to emigrate, which was a very silly thing to do. You don't realize that marriage actually follows you. But he convinced me that it didn't make a hoot of a difference, he didn't believe in it anyway, so that was fine. And I was nineteen so could not see the danger. So, Australia was there in my head. I suppose it was there in a romantic sort of way but its main attraction was it was the furthest place I could think of. It certainly was then. And when I came back to Ireland, I have to tell you, I never intended to stay. But I had two children and when I separated from this man I realized what marriage meant. I was not free to leave Ireland with my children. I of course wanted to make it as easy as possible to facilitate my ex's relationship with the children but forcing me to stay in Ireland was the worst thing that could have been done to me. I certainly wanted to be anywhere other than Ireland. Then, several years into this experience, I thought, maybe, gosh this may have been an unintended favour to me, because Ireland is a good place in which to bring up children. A good place, but it was a fighting place for me, which I could have done without. Somewhere else would have given me a different life, but my work would not have been as it is if I had not remained in Ireland.

MT: *Did you feel like an outsider in your own country?*

EC: Yes. Still do sometimes, but not so much now. But I really did, as a separated woman in 1979 with two children, both under three years old. Did I feel like an outsider? You bet! And that experience never leaves. But, you know, becoming an outsider taught me a lot.

MT: *How would you describe Australians' attitude to newcomers?*

EC: When I went there in the 1970s, they were very welcoming to a young Irish woman, but that is not necessarily the attitude that they would have had towards everybody. The problem of refugees today is an entirely different matter. I know Australians who are in despair about how this issue is being handled. But about me going there, I have dealt with this in a long story or novella, which may be published with the collection of short stories. In it I've written about how the emigrant into any country has to keep finding things they have in common, because they can't keep saying that such and such is different. The native will eventually become annoyed by this continuous comparison.

MT: *I would like to focus now on your latest novel,* Not the Same Sky. *What motivated you to write a historical novel?*

EC: And is it a historical novel? There is a moment, when tossing around an idea when you suddenly say, "Oh my God, this is a novel." It is not a short story and you think, "Oh, no!" and that happened with this one. I certainly remember the moment when that happened with the previous one, *Skin of Dreams*, and look where that brought me. I had a memory from visiting Gundagai [in New South Wales] in the 1970s, a strange sort of feeling. It stayed with me. And when I first heard about these girls it seemed to explain it. But the book was originally written with a link in the 1970s. Eventually, with the disappearance of that link, it became more about them.

MT: *Millions of Irish emigrated to America and Britain and many writers have dealt with this Irish diaspora. Not many have written about the perhaps 5% who migrated to Australia and I do believe that it is important that you have done so in* Not the Same Sky.

EC: There was a huge level of emigration in my family, to England, Canada and the US. And I have dealt with that in the novel *A Glassful of Letters*, but this time I was interested in the Australian story, because I had been there and I found the notion of these young women going from Ireland to that place so far away completely astounding. I was also interested in how few people knew anything about them. In the novel, one person says to a barman: "You'd think that they would have noticed? All these weddings suddenly going on." There is this small place, Yass, where some of these girls were brought, less than one hundred out of the 4,400. So there has been one wedding in five years and the next thing there are ten in a week. Nobody says, "Gosh, how did that happen?" It is only now that historians are beginning to look at these times. So they fascinated me for two reasons: one, the thought of them and their journey, and two, that so few people had examined it. And I began to think to myself, "Did they not examine it because they were girls?" But I now think it's more than that. I think that when the girls got to a certain point, where they could organize their lives in some way, they had to leave their pasts absolutely behind, because there was no possibility of them ever being able to recollect at ease. How they got to where they were was way too crazy for gentle reminiscing. That is why I got into the whole thing about memory because I feel that they dug a hole and put their memories in it.

MT: *Why did you choose that title?*

EC: The novel began its life as *Getting to Gundagai*, then it was *Records on Globe Street*, which I still rather like. The notion of people's records, the notion of the world, Globe Street, but also—and this is a ridiculous coincidence, which I found out after I had begun to use the title—the Records Office in Sydney was until recently situated on Globe Street. Anyway, that had to go because too many people felt that it did not read like the title of a novel. I had about twenty titles and had great fun with them, but in the end, the notion that the sky changes is about as shocking as it can get. You look up and you do not recognize the stars. That is far away.

MT: *In the novel, Julia says that they had "some choice" in their decision about going to Australia. What is your position about this issue?*

EC: She said "some choice" as in sarcastic. Charles Strutt says "you choose to come here" or "I think you had a choice in it" and she says "SOME choice" as in "do you call that a choice?" You can stay and die or you can go to Australia. She is the one person in a way, I think, who was being political, because she is saying: this was forced upon us, you are the person who is English. We are Irish. This issue of course came up when the book came out in Australia, and when I was doing readings there were some arguments about it. Apparently, they did have a choice about going. In other words, they could have said "I am not going," but my feeling is with Julia's "SOME choice." Also I believe that if you have a sixteen-year-old girl in a workhouse in Ireland after famine, she probably does not know where Australia is. The concept of Australia. How would she know? So, again, I don't believe that was choice. Now, some of the people are trying to say: "Oh, no, but they chose to come freely." What they are saying is that they were not prisoners. They are differentiating between them and convicts, so they say they came with free choice. But I do not consider that a free choice. Nevertheless, I do talk about them opting to gamble on life. In one chapter of the book I throw all those difficult problems into the mix and there is no answer really, because in one way, they did have a choice, and in another way absolutely not, because how could they have chosen when they would not have known what they were choosing? *You* know what I mean. So you have to be really careful about how you say it, and then of course there is the extra wonder of setting Australia up as a colony by penal labour. Can you imagine? I mean, it is an extraordinary thing. We will make this colony and we will set it up by taking prisoners, who will build the place. And then we might need to get female labour later.

MT: *As the story evolves, the reader discovers that these girls were better looked after than most other immigrants, yet when settled in Australia, marriage or prostitution were perhaps the only options. Could you expand on this issue?*

EC: I don't think it was as harsh as that. Because they were brought out on a very specific scheme, they were looked after insofar as they were employed. They were settled. Yes, they would have continued working, unless they got married. All the research that I have looked at suggests that the majority of them married and had children. Lots of them.

MT: *Do you think these girls had less choice and fewer rights in Australia than in Ireland?*

EC: That is a very hard question, isn't it? Firstly, there is the issue of whether they would have lived if they had remained in Ireland. Once in Australia the tenor of their lives would have been decided by how good their employer was. You can imagine the difference between a benign human being who fed them well and an abusive slave driver. I tried to deal with that when I talked about the young woman who isn't hired. She goes back upstairs and wonders if she has been lucky. It is her employer who will decide what her fate looks like.

MT: *Did your own memory of landing in Australia by boat affect your narrative description of these orphan girls' arrival?*

EC: I took that memory and tried to hold it up to what it would have been like, at that time, for those young women. I think that one real fear would have been about losing the others who had been on the ship with them for months. And also Charles Strutt, their Surgeon-Superintendent, whom they had learned to trust.

MT: *Are the girls inspired by actual women?*

EC: No. The character Charles Strutt is based on a real man; I've read his log in the library in Melbourne, and imagined him out of the functional but informative entries. But the girls, the young women, are completely fictional characters. I tried to imagine what, as human beings, any of us would be in those circumstances. I think we would be bits of all those four characters, including Bridget, who pines for death really. They represent what I believe human beings in that situation would be.

MT: *Who is your favourite female character in* Not the Same Sky *and why?*

EC: I couldn't choose. No, it is the four of them. I like the four of them. But, Julia, yes, of course. But then, in a way, Honora is the one who intellectualizes what memory is, in the end. So, I have to like her too. She saddens me more, though. She saddens me much more, whereas Julia has that great instinct for survival, and would be fun to be with. Maybe.

MT: *These orphan girls manage to adapt themselves to a new land, to forget their harsh past and, as a result, to survive.[5] However, the last sentence of the novel reads:* "We should all know where they came from." *Is your account of their lives a tribute to memory, to their lives and experience in Ireland and Australia?[6]*

EC: I hope it is all of that.

MT: *In the last paragraph of* Not the Same Sky *there is an outpouring of thoughts about people migrating in the same way as birds. What is the significance of this extended metaphor?*

EC: That is how the world is. The importance of it has to be decided by the reader. Some people might read it quickly, whereas I think it is deeply important, because of the silence of those girls. It is essential to see them in the context of the entire movement of peoples around the world. There are birds right through the book, you know. Using them as metaphor prevents the novel descending into sentimentality.

MT: *The contemporary fascination with sites of memory raises the important question of the politics of place. In the prologue of* Not the Same Sky, *Irish sculptor Joy Kennedy receives a letter from Australia asking for help in creating a memorial to the 4,414 famine orphan girls in Sydney, situating them in history. She questions the significance of a memorial to the*

---

[5] Klaassen also views these girls as survivors (2013, 2).
[6] Pelan dwells upon the issue of memory and journeys in her work (2013, 193).

girls. Do you think that the building of a memorial in Australia potentially raises its own political problem of an evasion of history, especially in connection with Ireland?

EC: I wanted to approach the building of the memorial to show a modern person hearing about the story and what they might do with it. The request comes to Joy because she is a woman and a stonemason. The big problem is that she has never heard of the girls before so she wonders how they should be remembered. And are they now Australians? Is there any point? Which is an odd thing for her because this is what she actually does for a living, she writes down on stone how to remember people. Then she has the question, "Should they be remembered only in Australia?" On returning from there to Ireland, she thinks that the only thing that matters is their names. That is the only part of them that is still in Ireland, their names, because the people left behind would have named children for them. The novel asks why we memorialize some things and not others. But there is always a problem about that, isn't there?

MT: *Your novel is important in Ireland and Australia, it gives us the story of these lives that have until recently been silenced. Would you consider yourself a spokesperson of these silent realities?*

EC: In a way, but you know it is important to acknowledge the nonfictional work that I read or listened to, and I have done so in the novel. I also don't think they were silenced, although one could say that by being removed to Australia their voices were taken from them. But I think they were silent themselves. Partly because their pasts were so traumatic. And then the question of choice rears its head again. I can see the difficulties. It depends on how you want to view the past. And you can see why: there you are, sitting in your house overlooking the beach, the grand expanse of sunburnt bush, or wherever. You are having a lovely life in Australia and you don't actually want to believe that, four or five generations ago, your ancestors came in such and such circumstances. There's a lot of forgetting done in Australia, partly because of the penal past. Part of the whole process of becoming a non-convict was to forget your history. And even those who were not convicts got into the swing of it.

MT: *Evelyn, your rhetoric of inquiry in* Not the Same Sky *unmasks, anatomizes and exposes the unpalatable truth about these orphans' journey. That is, it uncovers the social and political implications of their migration. Did the rhetorical nature of* Not the Same Sky *emerge organically from the difficulty of tackling trauma or did you want to write a novel that was innovative in terms of form?*

EC: I think when I began the book, it was not going to be at all like it is now. I had the modern-day sculptor, I had the girls and I had a 1970s person in between, but that person is now gone and is perhaps becoming a novella. My big concern was that it not be a sentimental novel. I did not want it to be *those poor girls*, although I did want us to look at what a terrible thing befell them. But I also wanted to show their survival. I had a discussion with a London editor who was very interested but who quite cynically said:

"You know, it should be really bad, really tough, getting better and then amazing." And I said: "You must be joking!" I had no interest whatsoever in that way of looking at them. I wanted the novel to leave us with no answers, because how could we round off the notion of these lives? They are much too complicated for that. You can't round off the famine, you cannot round off the fact that somebody thought that this would be a good idea. And yet you cannot decide if it was or not because, as I said, they lived. But also you could have fed them in their own country and they could have lived there. But no matter what you bring up, this is what happened. So, therefore, you have to just throw all those things into the mix and leave it without resolution.

MT: *Evelyn, you use many letters in your novel. Do they serve a specific purpose?*

EC: I love letters. And here I think of them as a way of giving the women a voice. And yet the really important long letter is never sent, nor addressed. It is found when Honora is dead. So, it is an anti-letter.

MT: *Could you expand on your interest in having the girls confront the settings of Ireland and Australia?*

EC: Yes, well, I had to do that. Because we have no words from the girls themselves. I tried to imagine what it would have been like to be a girl living in Ireland in the 1840s. We see Honora with all her family, we see them all in that lovely bed. You know, they are poor and the boys are in one bed and the girls are in another, all in the one room, but nevertheless they are content. Their house was a happy house. And then, that is gone. And I deliberately say: the mother died, the father died and then, there you go. I do not want to go into the details. The shocking thing is that you could do it in one sentence, you can say: the mother died, the father died, so and so died. So there they are and then they end up in Australia. In a way, you know, it is a good thing that it took a hundred days for them to get there. That they could see so many changes over the days, that they could see the changes in the sky, that the sea was absolutely terrible. The hundred days are the distance between the lives they had had and the lives they are now going to have. The slow journey allows thought and a recognition of what the difference is.[7]

MT: *Despite the fact that it was men who put these girls in this situation, the notable male characters are positively portrayed?*

EC: Well, the first male character that we meet is Matt Dwyer. I don't think he is benign. I think he just has no nerve and what can he do? He is merely a civil servant. Possibly you want me to talk about this Charles Strutt. Of course, again, this could cause problems, because some people would say that not every Surgeon-Superintendent was like him. But I believe that, from what I have read, he was a moral man. And I also wanted the

---

[7]   For further reference on this idea of the girls' inner and outer journey, see Kildea (2013, 1).

novel to be about the girls and their thoughts. It's not that I deliberately made the men okay. In many ways, it is just that they are not there. That includes the ones who controlled this venture. The novel is about the women, how they managed with their lives afterwards.

MT: *You focus on women's lives, but not exclusively. Has your focus on gender changed?*

EC: Gosh! I don't think about those things at all. I'm not aiming for a particular statement. I don't get into that at all, because if I did, I would stop myself. It would be like putting the brakes on. So, it is interesting if that is coming through because, now that I think about it, *Skin of Dreams* is about an innocent man found guilty of murdering a woman. That book is about him and about other men on death row. But it is also about how women see this. Reviewers have talked about me writing about women, but that is also because I give different kinds of women a bit of the page. Maybe I don't examine men's lives as closely. It is difficult, I think, as a woman writer today, to take seriously some of the issues which have been dealt with in fiction before, the notions about what women think. So that is why many of my women have tended to be a bit sceptical. Women are as diverse as men. But you wouldn't know it always from what is written about them. You define her as a mother, or a non-mother, and then she is a certain way. You define her as single and then she is immediately many other things, whereas we wouldn't do that for a man. We would say, he is x… and he is also whatever. We would give him a personality. In fact, now that you ask me about it, I think there are three stories in the next collection of short stories in which the narrator could be either male or female. I do not specify, it is up to the reader to decide.

MT: *Now, post-Celtic Tiger, how would you describe the situation of women in Ireland?*

EC: I think that the big battle at the moment for everybody in Europe is holding on to their level of income. It is about the global economy, it is about money being taken from ordinary human beings in order to pay gamblers and banks. And the issues are the same for all of us, whether we are women or men. Now, there are the extra issues, specifically female, abortion being the principle one. That battle is being fought again and we will have a campaign to get rid of the Eighth Amendment which was stupidly put into the Constitution. And, unfortunately, I will be involved in it because I will not be able to say that I can't. It is the most awful fight. And there will be this underlying notion that somehow or another you cannot trust women with their own bodies. It is about control. No woman makes a decision lightly to have an abortion. No, that's not true, of course, the odd woman does. The human race is rather funny, but in general, I would like to trust women a hell of a lot more than the so-called pro-life people. And in the meantime, Irish women go to England to have abortions. Why should the English have to do this for us? We need to grow up, face this thing here. It is a question for women, their partners sometimes, and their doctors.

MT: *Thank you so much, Evelyn.*

Works Cited

Conlon, Evelyn. 1987. *My Head is Opening.* Dublin: Attic Press.

—. 1989. *Stars in the Daytime.* Dublin: Attic Press.

—. 1993. *Taking Scarlet as a Real Colour*. Belfast: Blackstaff Press.

—. 1998. *A Glassful of Letters.* Belfast: Blackstaff Press.

—. 2000. *Telling: New and Selected Stories*. Belfast: Blackstaff Press.

—. 2003. *Skin of Dreams.* Brandon Mount Eagle.

—. 2013. *Not the Same Sky. A Novel.* Adelaide: Wakefield Press.

Devlin-Glass, Frances. 2013. "Interview with Evelyn Conlon: Australia's Newest Irish Novelist." *Tinteán Online Magazine*, September, 12. [Accessed online on January 6, 2016].

Kildea, Jeff. 2013. *Not the Same Sky*, Sydney launch address at Parliament Buildings delivered on 24 August. *Evelyn Conlon Webpage* [Accessed online on January 6, 2016].

Klaassen, Nic. 2013. "Review of *Not the Same Sky:* A Story of Irish Famine Girls Brought to Australia." *South Australian History Website* [Accessed online on January 6, 2016].

McLean, Janet, ed. 2014. *Lines of Vision. Irish Writers on Art*. London: Thames and Hudson.

Pelan, Rebecca. 2000. "Interview with Evelyn Conlon." *Hecate* 26 (1): 66-67.

—. "Review of Evelyn Conlon's *Not the Same Sky.*" *The Australasian Journal of Irish Studies* 13: 193.

Melania Terrazas is Senior Lecturer in English Studies and International Mobility Coordinator in the Department of Modern Languages, University of La Rioja (Spain). She is the author of *Relational Structures in Wyndham Lewis's Fiction: Complexity and Value* (Lincom Europa, 2005) and helped set up the Wyndham Lewis Project website. She has published on Applied Linguistics (vocabulary knowledge and motivation) and extensively on a number of British, American and Irish authors. She was previously Editor of the *Journal of English Studies* and is on the Executive Board of AEDEI (The Spanish Association for Irish Studies). She is currently co-editing a collection of essays on satire.

Address: Departamento de Filologías Modernas. Universidad de La Rioja. C/ San José de Calasanz, 33. 26005, Logroño (La Rioja), Spain. Tel.: +34 941 299 420.

REVIEWS

RESEÑAS

Paula Martín Salván, Gerardo Rodríguez Salas and Julián Jiménez Heffernan, eds. 2013. *Community in Twentieth-Century Fiction*. Houndmills, Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan. xiv + 278 pp. ISBN: 978-1-137-28283-5.

ANTONIO J. JIMÉNEZ MUÑOZ
Universidad de Oviedo
jimenezantonio@uniovi.es

Benedict Anderson's *Imagined Communities* (1983) triggered critical attention towards community as a cultural, critical or ideological concept. Jean-Luc Nancy's *The Inoperative Community* denounced George Bataille's focus on the individual in order to thwart "a thinking of community" ([1986] 1991, 23). Nancy conceived community as a transcendent alterity that "is not a communion that fuses the egos into an Ego or a higher We [but a] community of others" (15). Subsequent critical responses—Rorty (1989), Agamben (1993), Blanchot ([1983] 1998), Esposito (1998)—stressed elements within Nancy's proposal—respectively, the roles of contingency, exposure, secrecy and obligation—in the weaving of a given community. *Community in Twentieth-Century Fiction* (henceforth *Community*) discusses the usefulness of these texts as a framework to apply to the systematic analysis of fiction. Fully assuming Nancy's denunciation of the "dissolution, the dislocation, or the conflagration of the community" ([1986] 1991, 1) in modern thinking, the contributors to *Community* aim to "explore the strategies of working and unworking, construction and deconstruction of communities" (vii) in the short-stories and novels of twelve established authors. They value some attempts at analysing the construction of fictional communities (Miller 2005; 2011) but lament the fact that most literature has failed to adapt the conceptual articulations of community "in a systematic manner" (vii).

Community avoids centring upon a particular communality. Each contributor writes two chapters on the idea of community in two separate authors, who are "loosely grouped" following "a criterion of affiliation to a distinct narrative tradition" (3). Without being detrimental to the volume, these implicit associations—as far as chapters are nevertheless self-contained—reveal as fruitful as problematic. Although aspects of interpretation can justify linking James Joyce to Edna O'Brien, or Alex LaGuma to J. M. Coetzee, some other connections seem elusive, particularly as the chapters on individual authors who are paired—such as Evelyn Waugh and V. S. Naipaul—are in fact some chapters apart. Such intended systematicity is more palpable in the

introduction (1-47). Julián Jiménez Heffernan sets out a critical framework which is an invaluable tool when applied to further discourses, authors or periods. Criticising the "double limitation" in academic literature of being "over-specific in the choice of its narrative corpus" or "over-ambiguous in its conceptual grasp of the notion of community" (3), he explains how "categories like imagined communities (Anderson) or knowable communities (Raymond Williams) have become normal [critical] currency" (31). However, he denounces the entrenchment of "most applications of the notion of community to current literary studies" as being caught in "an explanatory frame" neglecting their critical tenets, and thus "fully compromised" (18) by them. Jiménez Heffernan clinically exposes how texts on fictional communities (Auerbach 1978; Page 1999; Kella 2000; Wegner 2002; Hurst 2011) have been largely restricted to a particular community and generally have failed to problematise community as a critical construct. This is also true for a number of other works (Sabin 1987; Michael 2006; Britton 2008; Lübecker 2009; McNally 2013; Boswell 2014).

That said, the introduction is robust and non-compromising; it offers clear textual approaches, which the ensuing essays exemplify. It situates modern thought about community within a "metaphysical tradition" (7) of transcendent models of community requiring an implicit alienation. With the contention that "current debate on community is shaped by Hegel's original dialectical questioning" (9) of the separation between political and civil aspects of communal life, the author finds in Karl Marx and Ferdinand Tönnies an axiology which necessitates the individual as an indivisible and untrascendable "figure of immanence" (3). Consequently, the author clarifies that community has not yet been thought of "in a non-immanent way" (22). Using Nancy's *unworked* or *inoperative community*, Jiménez Heffernan notes how Western fiction has "proved an invaluable platform where community-models have been relentlessly tested, discarded or confirmed" as writers have "sought to formulate a kind of community that had not as yet existed" (2). Using the concept of "original position" (Rawls 1971, 22) as a hypothetical time-spatial situation, Jiménez uses critical responses by Maurice Blanchot, Roberto Esposito, Giorgio Agamben, Stanley Fish, Richard Rorty, Ernesto Laclau, Chantal Mouffe and Jean-François Lyotard (27-31) to outline the preconditions to a community—such as transcendence, partition, singularity, finitude, exposure and communication. He establishes how most of the characters in the novels analysed "are born into Gesellschaft, even if their immediate environment is one of suffocating Gemeinschaft" (36), to which they can respond in various ways (37). Characters in James Joyce's "The Dead" (1914) discover their finitude within the borders of the community but only in communication with larger society; protagonists in novels by Don DeLillo, J. M. Coetzee and V.S. Naipaul achieve self-awareness precisely because of the lack of community ties; those in Katherine Mansfield and Evelyn Waugh only do so after an awakened realisation of finitude, which triggers their eagerness for community.

The subsequent chapters attest the fertility of these ideas. Pilar Villar-Argáiz reads the influence of Catholicism and finitude in "The Dead" and Joyce's saturated

communities as being "composed by singularities rather than by homogeneous individualities" (59). Centring on protagonist Gabriel as an outsider, she reveals how Joyce eschews community as an identitarian precondition. On Edna O'Brien, Villar-Argaiz highlights her deliberate intent to transcend "repressive communal impositions" by devising "alternative communitarian forms" (178) in which marginalised characters can be accommodated. O'Brien's rural and urban communities are made up of recurrent singularities rather than individualities, despite her characters being "socially alienated from their communities" (179) and "experience[ing] an intense urge to escape" (180), just like Joyce's Gabriel. Villar-Argáiz also sees a "radical openness" (192) in O'Brien's use of spaces and the permeability of certain motifs indicative of entertaining "the prospect of an alternative community in a future that is still to come" (192).

Gerardo Rodríguez Salas reads Katheirne Mansfield's short stories, along with Maurice Blanchot's "community of lovers," as an "antisocietal society or association" (38), and Nancy's idea of the couple as being torn, between public and private spheres. He interprets the "epiphanic moment between lovers" as a "castrating silence" far from Nancy's reliance on corporeity to replace language. Rodríguez explicates Mansfield's fictional pessimism as being due to the fact that her lovers are "too young, immature and artificial" (73) or "romantic and idealistic" (74). He interprets Mansfield's "The Black Cap" (1917) to show both marriage and adultery as imperfect communities, since individuals fail to compromise in light of the unworking of the organic community. On Janet Frame, the author explores the ironic dramatisation of community in *The Carpathians* (1988). Following two seminal ironies in the critical apparatus— the fact that a "being-in-common that is not a common being" (Nancy [1986] 1991, 62), and its dissolution into unity "ruins immanence as well as the usual forms of transcendence" (Blanchot [1983] 1998, 8)—Rodríguez stresses how Frame denounces the artificiality of self-proclaimed national, racial or spiritual communities through characters who try to come to (their own) terms with nationhood, race or beliefs.

Jiménez Heffernan exemplifies how some characters—Charles Ryder, the Flyte family—in Evelyn Waugh's *Brideshead Revisited* (1945) can unwork the organic community into an exceptional, inoperative community through a "craving for distinction" (86). Against received criticism, *Brideshead Revisited* is interpreted not as a pilgrimage towards conversion but "from convention to exception" (87). The transitional aspect of the novel allows it to be read as an "operation on death […] involving two institutions, England as a historical nation and the Catholic church" (95). However, the author reads *Brideshead*'s melancholic end as redolent of the toils required in order to contemplate an inoperative community: Waugh's vanishing world has little to be hopeful about. On V.S. Naipaul, Jiménez Heffernan challenges the alleged disengagement and simplicity of his political fiction—*The Mimic Men* (1967), *In a Free State* (1971), *Guerrillas* (1975), *A Bend in the River* (1979)—since these revolve upon the "political impossibility" of "the beginning of a free state" (196). A result of Naipaul's "distrust of the immanence of communities, whether small-scale or national" (199), his protagonists show a remarkable rejection of organic

communities: they are a "cultural ensemble affording […] social protection" and yet "little more than a convenient fiction, often the outcome of cultural adulteration" (197). In Naipaul, the lack of structure of postcolonial society is seen as "a flaw, not an enabling condition" (205); revolution becomes an empty signifier, "a parodic performance" or "a word you say rather than a thing you do" (208). Jiménez Heffernan highlights Naipaul's refusal to simmer politics down to fiction, his novels ultimately being the product of contingency.

Paula Martín Salván interprets sacrifice in Graham Greene's *The Quiet American* (1955) as being prompted by "communitarian interests" (105). Intersecting the love triangle between Thomas Fowler, Phuong and Alden Pyle with the competing ideologies in 1950s Indochina, Martín challenges more conventional allegorical interpretations, since characters reject larger structural societies. Martín highlights that Fowler is critical of "communities that demand the death of their members" (111) and he is ostracised by "all the other characters who have a political community" (115). Phuong's symbolism is similarly denied, and she is perceptively interpreted as a character whose "illegibility" entails a "subversive potential" (117). Dispelling more political interpretations, Martín shows the intimation of finitude to fuel commitment: Fowler's fears enable the inoperative community of lovers in "the presentation to its members of their mortal truth" (Nancy [1986] 1991, 15). Analysing Don DeLillo, Martín reads the isolation of his characters as a sign of the times. She explores some of his textual articulations; the neighbourhood in *Underworld* (1997) and *Cosmopolis* (2003) acts as a community in which language, beliefs and social rites enable transcendence. His "communities of conspirators and terrorists" (224) emerge against institutionalised power and underwrite the difficulty of significant political action, and the crowd offers an unworked community which entails an opportunity for transcendence. Martín acknowledges how none of these communities offer a viable or permanent solution for DeLillo's characters, stressing how the longing for community "goes unfulfilled" and yet it "shapes the borders of the postmodern experience" (233).

María J. López explores Alex La Guma's Marxism as an effective means to fight totalitarianism in both political and literary terms. Examining his use of ghosts as devices which signal an existential frontier between communities, López aligns them with Nancy's idea of the inoperative community as "one of otherness and death" (130). Thus, she shows how La Guma uses spectral figures in *In the Fog of the Seasons' End* (1972) and *Time of the Butcherbird* (1979) to mirror the haunting of communities under Apartheid, but interpreting their symbolism as "the promise of justice" where "human bonds of family and community may be renewed" (136). In contrast, she perceives J. M. Coetzee's focus on the isolated individual as resistance to the loss of individuality on entering the tribe or community, "understood as immanence, fusion, political project or nationalism" (242). López nevertheless finds a communal dimension in Coetzee's epistolary fiction in *Elizabeth Costello* (2003) and *Age of Iron* (1990), following the idea that "each writer, each work inaugurates a community" (Nancy 1986, 68) in both fiction and life.

Mercedes Díaz Dueñas explores the operative communities in Robertson Davies's *The Cornish Trilogy—The Rebel Angels* (1981), *What's Bred in the Bone* (1985), *The Lyre of Orpheus* (1988)—to underline the importance of shared "mythical predestination and common secrets" (157) for various communities (art, academia, family, religion). In Margaret Atwood's futuristic dystopias—*The Handmaid's Tale* (1985), *Oryx and Crake* (2003), *The Year of the Flood* (2009)—Díaz sees the "human compulsion to erase finitude and the obsession for immunity" in Atwood's enactment of the "will to bring about operative communities" (255) to provide transcendence under totalitarianism. Traversing through Atwood's "well-defined operative communities" (268), Díaz highlights how language and its suppression act as means of oppression. In her dystopias, survival entails precisely moving away from the immunity these communities offer.

Community in Twentieth-Century Fiction is not without formal problems. It does not include a case for fiction to exemplify more powerful reflections on community than other more inter-personal genres, such as drama; the corpus and implicitly comparative approach used could be deemed subjective; contributors redefine concepts from the introduction which were better explained there; some of the texts discussed, such as Atwood and DeLillo's recent output, can hardly be considered twentieth-century fiction; and the volume lacks a conclusion to encapsulate and connect ideas throughout the various essays. The rewards of the collection as a whole, however, greatly outweigh these shortcomings. The wide-ranging selection of texts aptly covers the century and is illustrative of its political geography, with inspired and informed close-readings which unearth the pervasive presence of aspects of community in fiction through abundant textual evidence. The volume thus becomes more than a mere addition to the sustained attention to community in literary studies in this century (Berman 2001; Durrant 2004; Michael 2006; Lee 2009; Hurst 2011; Miller 2011) and it paves the way for further research within a potentially prolific field of study.

WORKS CITED

AGAMBEN, Giorgio. 1993. *The Coming Community*. Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P.

ANDERSON, Benedict. 1983. *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*. London: Verso.

AUERBACH, Nina. 1978. *Communities of Women: An Idea in Fiction*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP.

BERMAN, Jessica. 2001. *Modernist Fiction, Cosmopolitanism, and the Politics of Community*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP.

BLANCHOT, Maurice. (1983) 1998. *The Unavowable Community*. Translated by Pierre Joris. Barrytown, NY: Station Hill.

BOSWELL, Martha, ed. 2014. *David Foster Wallace and "The Long Thing": New Essays on the Novels*. New York: Bloomsbury.

BRITTON, Celia. 2008. *The Sense of Community in French Caribbean Fiction*. Liverpool: Liverpool UP.

DURRANT, Sam. 2004. *Postcolonial Narrative and the Work of Mourning: J. M. Coetzee, Wilson Harris, and Toni Morrison*. New York: State U of New York P.

ESPOSITO, Roberto. 1998. *Communitas: The Origin and Destiny of Community*. Stanford, CA: Stanford UP.

HURST, Mary Jane. 2011. *Language, Gender and Community in Twentieth-Century Fiction: American Voices and American Identities*. Houndmills, Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.

KELLA, Elisabeth. 2000. *Beloved Communities: Solidarity and Difference in Fiction by Michael Ondaatje, Toni Morrison and Joy Konawa*. Uppsala: U of Uppsala P.

LEE, Sue-Im. 2009. *A Body of Individuals: the Paradox of Community in Contemporary Fiction*. Columbus: Ohio State UP.

LÜBECKER, Nikolaj. 2009. *Community, Myth and Recognition in Twentieth-Century French Literature and Thought*. London: Continuum.

MCNALLY, Lisa. 2013. *Reading Theories in Contemporary Fiction*. London: Bloomsbury.

MICHAEL, Magali Cornier. 2006. *New Visions of Community in Contemporary American Fiction: Tan, Kingsolver, Castillo, Morrison*. Iowa City: U of Iowa P

MILLER, Joseph Hillis. 2005. *Literature as Conduct: Speech Acts in Henry James*. New York: Fordham UP.

—. 2011. *The Conflagration of Community: Fiction Before and After Auschwitz*. Chicago: U of Chicago P.

NANCY, Jean Luc. (1986) 1991. *The Inoperative Community*. Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P.

PAGE, Philip. 1999. *Reclaiming Community in Contemporary African American Fiction*. Jackson: U of Mississippi P.

RAWLS, John. 1971. *A Theory of Justice*. Cambridge, MA: Belknap.

RORTY, Richard 1989. *Contingency, Irony and Solidarity*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP.

SABIN, Margery. 1987. *The Dialect of the Tribe: Speech and Community in Modern Fiction*. Oxford: Oxford UP.

WEGNER, Phillip E. 2002. *Imaginary Communities: Utopia, the Nation, and the Spatial Histories of Modernity*. Oakland, CA: U of California P.

Antonio J. Jiménez Muñoz is Associate Professor of English at the University of Oviedo. His research interests include critical theory and the influence of Romantic legacies in contemporary art-forms. He has contributed to edited collections published by Oxford University Press, Routledge, De Gruyter, Gale and others. A monograph on the pervasiveness of Romanticism in twenty-first century poetry is forthcoming (Palgrave, 2018).

Address: Departamento de Filología Inglesa, Alemana y Francesa. Campus de Humanidades. Universidad de Oviedo. 33011, Oviedo, Spain. Tel.: +34 985104613.

Cynthia Sugars and Eleanor Ty, eds. 2014. *Canadian Literature and Cultural Memory*. Don Mills, Ontario: Oxford UP. xv + 512 pp. ISBN: 978-0-19900-759-2.

MIASOL EGUÍBAR HOLGADO
Universidad de Oviedo
eguibarmiasol@uniovi.es

As an emerging discipline, cultural memory studies has become a focus of critical attention over the past three decades, pointing to the importance of memory in the assessment of cultural movements and trajectories (Elrr 2008, 1). *Canadian Literature and Cultural Memory*, edited by Cynthia Sugars and Eleanor Ty, is a collection of essays oriented to the exploration of cultural memory and its representation in several forms of Canadian literature and other cultural productions. Canada emerges as a complex site of cultural and historical contestation from these critical approaches, which seems especially relevant since geography has been privileged over history in the Canadian context as signifier for cultural identifications. As Robert Fulford has put it, "[h]istory strives earnestly to teach us its enduring lessons, but in Canada geography is our real teacher, the one to which we must listen with the greatest care" (1995, 51). More recently, however, the uses and representations of historical pasts and memory have attracted the attention of Canadianist scholars. Erin Peters' contribution to Russell J. A. Kilbourn and Eleanor Ty's *The Memory Effect: The Remediation of Memory in Literature and Film* (2013) focuses on the tensions that emerge when Canadian collective memory (or lack thereof) is deployed to mediate constructions of Canadian nationalism. Also, works such as Cecilia Morgan's *Commemorating Canada: History, Heritage, and Memory, 1850s-1990s* (2016) reflect on Canada's contested relationship with its history and the diversity of approaches to the memorialisation of the past. These texts show a shift in ontological focus essential to the study of Canada as a coherent cultural unit, whereby notions of the past, history and memory need to be carefully reassessed. Several works concentrate on memory and place, for example *Placing Memory and Remembering Place in Canada* (Opp and Walsh, 2010), and both these aspects feature prominently in Sugars and Ty's volume. However, in *Canadian Literature and Cultural Memory* both are approached from a literary stance, providing a novel and essential contribution to the ongoing academic dialogue between memory, history and identity in the Canadian context.

The essays in this collection are grouped into five parts, according to the theoretical axes of various critical concepts and routes within the field of cultural memory studies. The first part, entitled "Sites of Memory: Cultural Amnesia and the Demands of Place," brings together papers focusing on the role of place in processes of memory reconstruction and forgetting, and in readings and counterhegemonic writings of history. Each engages with different notions of place. In chapter one, Tony Tremblay questions the marginalised position of certain rural areas within what he deems the amnesia of global de-territorialisation. Next, Kimberly Mair explores how spatiality produces meaning to the point that historical reproductions may be manipulated to privilege the coloniser's gaze, even through the place factor in an art gallery devoted to Aboriginal culture. This is followed by Renée Hulan, who redresses Pierre Nora's (1989) concept of *lieux de mémoire*—sites that serve as commemoration points in order to prevent the loss of historical memory—and transforms it into what he calls *lieux d'oublie*, to refer to the neglect of the Canadian north, inhabited as it is by Aboriginal peoples. In the fourth chapter, Candida Rifkind approaches the specific space of the Canadian company town, ephemeral, manufactured communities whose current disappearance is triggering the recovery, in different forms of art, of their physical and cultural traces. The final chapter of the section, by Brooke Pratt, describes, in a rather straightforward and uncomplicated way, the significance of making Canadian poet Al Purdy's house part of a National Historic Site, and conserving it as a locus of cultural heritage and landmark for historical tourism.

Part II, "Memory Transference: Postmemory, Re-memory, and Forgetting," has chapters dealing with different mechanisms of remembering, forgetting, and the inter- and trans-generational circulation of memories, often of memories which are burdensome or hard to handle. Robert Zacharias's essay introduces food as a fundamental element in the way migrants and their descendants remember their homeland and cultural heritage. More specifically, he discusses how food is one of the last vestiges of their culture that Mennonites retain in urban settings, where almost all other markers of a Mennonite identity are gone. Chapter seven, by Marlene Goldman, turns to the rather complex concept of "transference." Taken from psychoanalysis and connected to Marianne Hirsh's ideas on postmemory—which refers to the experiences of subjects who have inherited, though not directly lived themselves, traumatic memories (2008)—it describes the processes of projection and displacement of traumatic memories within different generations. Likewise, in the following paper, Linda Warley analyses personal and familial transmission of memories and knowledge; and how these individual acts of remembering may influence the way socio-cultural paradigms of class divisions and capitalism are constructed. The ninth chapter, by J. A. Weingarten, also employs a theoretical framework of postmemory to shrewdly speak about a literary shift during the 1970s which involved moving from the construction of national narratives during the confederation centenary (1967), to the tendency of addressing microhistories

as repository of cultural memory. These microhistories were seen as an alternative reading of history to nationalist overarching discourses which failed to acknowledge particularity and difference. Tanis MacDonald's essay introduces another useful concept, that of rememory, first used by Toni Morrison (1990) to describe how the past, and especially violent or troublesome pasts, remains alive in people's memories. MacDonald explores the risks of appropriation and the intricacy of issues of authenticity, both of which are pervasive and contested elements in the writing and re-writing, forgetting and remembering of indigenous voices. Finally, Cynthia Sugars addresses questions of remembering, nostalgia and the transmission—or, at times, frustrated transmission—of transgenerational memories through the investment of memories, stories and history in tangible objects: memorabilia, heirlooms, etc.

Part III, entitled "Re-Membering History: Memory Work as Recovery," comprises seven chapters framed around the retrieving of lost narratives or sections of history which have been neglected or erased from official or canonical versions. Mark Fortin's paper raises some issues that could enter in conversation with the ideas in Mair's chapter, regarding the Aboriginal figure as archived in the past tense. Also, like Tanis MacDonald, Fortin tackles questions of appropriation and the dichotomy of authentic/inauthentic knowledge; as well as the distinction between written and oral epistemologies and how the ever increasing loss of the latter affects the recognition of Aboriginal memory and history in legal contexts. In chapter thirteen, Peter Hodgins analyses Archibald Lampman's poetry (1861-1899), and connects his premature mourning for the loss of natural environments to later postcolonial involvement with the disappearance of First Nations peoples and their cultures. Next, Jesse Rae Archibald-Barber offers a twofold analysis of Pauline Johnson's poetry (1861-1913): she explores personal memory in Johnson's lyric poetry, on the one hand, and questions of cultural memory in her memorial odes on the other, thereby revealing how connections between these two aspects of poetry and memory have impacted Aboriginal peoples' representation in and exclusion from history. The next chapter, by Sophie McCall addresses the exceptional condition of the indigenous diaspora through reviewing the itinerant life of indigenous writer Anahareo (1906-1986). McCall aptly reconsiders a personal family story which was affected by Anahareo's diasporic status, her urban connections and in short, her non-conformity with expected patterns of indigeneity. Shelley Hulan's essay constitutes an unconventional approach to certain texts by Alice Munro, one that seeks to explore allusions, interpretations and inscriptions of Aboriginal peoples in her work. The last two chapters deal with the same contested subject: the Great War is considered in anglophone contexts as a historical event which marks the transition of Canada from colony to nation, and, consequently, commemorations of the war usually imply a celebratory mindset and the exultation of Canada's heroic participation, instilled with a sense of pride and patriotism. This contrasts with the 1918 Quebec Riots, which were forgotten as part of this process of nationalist encumbering. The oppression

suffered by Quebecers due to their dissent in relation to participating in the war was forgotten; and worse, the fact that the Great War drove a socio-cultural and political chasm between French and English Canada is completely subsumed under the dominant, celebratory version. Dennis Duffy's treatment of this historical distortion is through an interesting comparison of the representation of Quebec in two best-sellers. Marissa McHugh's chapter connects these same riots with the October Crisis of Quebec in 1970, addressing in this way the issue of privileged versions of history, and the impact that remembering the riots has had for present-day Quebecers and their collective mourning of past, forgotten events.

The four chapters in part IV, "The Compulsion to Remember: Trauma and Witnessing," foreground the necessary juxtaposition and integration of remembering and the diametrically opposed act of forgetting. Robyn Morris' chapter is a balanced, well informed paper on a novel which narrates the experiences of a Cambodian genocide survivor now living in Canada. Morris explains that acts of individual forgetting and remembering in cases of trauma and repression affect not only the personal, but also the collective, i.e., the community who suffered the genocide, as well as, she alludes, beyond the lived experience in terms of the empathy and awareness that may arise in those who access these traumas through literature. The following chapter, written by Farah Moosa, analyses David Chariandy's novel *Soucouyant* (2007), and posits forgetting as a necessary and even desirable act in an attempt to overcome traumatic pasts. However, this becomes more complicated in the context of second-generation diasporans who are compelled to negotiate and balance processes of remembering and forgetting as part of the construction of their cultural identity. The last two chapters in this part are both concerned with the institution of the residential school system, designed for the education of Aboriginal children and effective from the last part of the nineteenth until the end of the twentieth century. Doris Wolf's paper focuses on a graphic novel which narrates the intergenerational trauma provoked by colonisation, the practice of abuse and assimilation in the residential school system and its legacies in the descendants of those who underwent these struggles. Robyn Green's chapter concludes, through the analysis of Richard Van Camp's novella *The Lesser Blessed* (2004) that reconciliation should not be taken for granted, even though it has been recently acknowledged that policies of assimilation have been highly destructive for Aboriginal peoples. She proposes that effective action to redesign pedagogical curricula should be considered one of the first priorities in order to amend and redirect the course of Aboriginal culture policies.

Finally, part V, "Cultural Memory in a Globalized Age," comprises five chapters oriented to how discourses of diaspora and transnationalism (past and contemporary) become central in the configuration of personal and cultural memories. Alexis Motuz's paper examines Dionne Brand's collection of poems *Inventory* (2006) as a sort of elegy for global deaths caused by humankind. As Motuz describes, Brand's mourning process is expressed in transgressive ways, that is, the elegy does not follow the standard pattern

of mourning and consolation. Rather, it seeks to draw attention to the importance of empathy and denounces the way the media dehumanises catastrophes and death on a global scale. Joel Baetz's chapter focuses on Brand's novel *What We All Long For* (2008). Whereas urban space in this novel has been read as a liberating milieu for the main characters to leave their pasts behind and thrive in the multicultural, diverse possibilities of the city and its anonymity, Baetz suggests that the memory (or rather, the postmemory) of diasporic experiences that they carry with them cannot be completely and effectively left behind. In the third chapter of this section, Eva Darias-Beautell points out how current Canadian literary criticism has been oriented towards the theoretical arena of hauntology. This is understood as the writing back of a hidden, suppressed, or absented history that haunts accepted and canonical versions. The exploration of these mechanisms in a globalised context becomes a valuable addition to the debate, and an important point of departure for future conversations on inclusive histories and national narratives. Jennifer Andrews approaches the question of Canada's complex postcolonial condition, which, coupled with politics of cultural memory, the erasure of histories and the processes of recovery, constitutes a very promising and challenging notion to explore in relation to literature. The last chapter in this part, written by Pilar Cuder-Domínguez deals with transnational memory as reflected in the novel *The Second Life of Samuel Tyne* (2004), by Esi Edugyan, where tensions and cultural/identity conflicts between different Black Canadian diasporas are underlined by the haunting of memories and cultural legacies, whose presence affects these communities in diverse ways.

It becomes clear from these essays that memory, remembering and forgetting are not simply personal/individual acts of story and history transmission and preservation. This body of critical work emphasises, repeatedly and in different contexts, that processes of recovery, amnesia and historical representation are highly politicised: personal memories and their inclusions in history are not always accessible to certain sectors of society and systemic intervention plays a central role in the construction of a cultural memory which is often exclusionary. These essays show the importance of redressing the past, of reclaiming lost agency within this complex interplay of remembering and forgetting in order to achieve a nuanced and heterogeneous perspective on Canada's cultural memories. As such, the book constitutes a balanced, well informed collection of essays, where perhaps the most notable absences are a chapter on Joy Kogawa's seminal *Obasan* (1981), one of the works of literature which has been most influential in revising Canadian history and national narratives, or a paper addressing the lost and later commemorated site of Africville. Aside from this, and the fact that some authors struggle at times to connect individual memories with broader, regional or national repercussions—I believe this is especially the case in Peter Hodgins' and Shelley Hulan's chapters, whose narrow focus fail to address wider concerns—this volume is a necessary and thought-provoking compilation for both the fields of cultural memory and Canadian literature.

WORKS CITED

ERLL, Astrid. 2008. "Cultural Memory Studies: An Introduction." In *Cultural Memory Studies: An International and Interdisciplinary Handbook*, edited by Astrid Erll and Ansgar Nünning, 1-18. New York and Berlin: Walter de Gruyter.

FULFORD, Robert. 1995. "The Lesson of Canadian Geography." In *Far and Wide: Essays from Canada*, edited by Sean Armstrong, 51-64. Toronto: Nelson Canada.

HIRSCH, Marianne. 2008. "The Generation of Postmemory." *Poetics Today* 29 (1): 103-128.

MORGAN, Cecilia. 2016. *Commemorating Canada: History, Heritage, and Memory, 1850s-1990s*. Toronto: U of Toronto P.

MORRISON, Tony. 1990. "The Site of Memory." In *Out There: Marginalization and Contemporary Cultures*, edited by Russell Ferguson, Martha Gever, Trinh T. Minhha and Cornel West, 299-305. New York: The New Museum of Contemporary Art.

NORA, Pierre. 1989. "Between Memory and History: *Les Lieux de Mémoire*." *Representations* (Special issue: Memory and Counter Memory) 26: 7-24.

OPP, James and John C. Walsh. 2010. *Placing Memory and Remembering Place in Canada*. Vancouver: U of British Columbia P.

PETERS, Erin. 2013. "The *Heritage Minutes*: Nostalgia, Nationalism and Canadian Collective Memory." In *The Memory Effect: The Remediation of Memory in Literature and Film*, edited by Russell J. A. Kilbourn and Eleanor Ty, 249-266. Ontario: Wilfrid Laurier UP.

Miasol Eguíbar Holgado holds a degree in English Philology from the University of Oviedo, Spain. In 2011, she followed a Master in Philosophy on American Literatures in Trinity College, Dublin. She was awarded a scholarship to carry out her PhD, which she completed in 2015 at the University of Oviedo. Her research focuses on the study of diasporas in contemporary Canadian literature, particularly on the Scottish and African settled diasporas of Nova Scotia.

Address: Departamento de Filología Inglesa, Francesa y Alemana. Universidad de Oviedo. Campus de El Milán. C/ Teniente Alfonso Martínez s/n. 33011, Oviedo, Spain. Tel.: +34 985104545.

Silvia Pellicer-Ortín. 2015. *Eva Figes' Writings: A Journey through Trauma*. Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing. vii + 281 pp. ISBN: 978-1-4438-8026-6.

LAURA DE LA PARRA FERNÁNDEZ
Universidad Complutense de Madrid
lauraparrafernandez@ucm.es

Since the 1990s, Trauma Studies have become an important tool of analysis for texts and other media produced after the atrocities of the Second World War. Starting with Adorno, who said that it was barbaric to have written poetry after Auschwitz ([1997] 2003), the question of representing the horror of the Shoah has been dealt with by many scholars and artists, such as Claude Lanzmann, Maurice Blanchot, Elie Wiesel and Arthur Cohen, among others (35). Most of these critics have arrived at the contentions that, first, the trauma caused by the Holocaust is irrepresentable in realist modes, and, second, that ethics and aesthetics must go together when representing such a traumatic event. The truth is, however, that many sufferers, including second- and third-generation children of people affected by the Holocaust—what Marianne Hirsch coined "the generation of postmemory" (Hirsch 1992)—are still trying to come to terms with the horrors that they or their relatives suffered, and with how this has affected their present-day identities.

Trauma Studies was fostered by Holocaust Studies scholars when trying to identify and analyse how trauma is conveyed (or not) through narrative. Among the most prominent pioneers are Shoshana Felman, Dori Laub and Cathy Caruth, inheritors of the Yale School of Poststructuralism, who theorised an approach to the representation of the trauma of the Holocaust following Freud's, Pierre Janet's and Joseph Breuer's theories on trauma memory and its healing. According to Caruth, trauma is "a response, sometimes delayed, to an overwhelming event or events, which takes the form of repeated, intrusive hallucinations, dreams, thoughts or behaviors stemming from the event, along with numbing that may have begun during or after the experience, and possibly also increased arousal to (or avoidance of) stimuli recalling the event" (2008, 4). Judith Lewis Herman in her book *Trauma and Recovery* (1992) lists, among other symptoms, hyperarousal, intrusion and constriction, and these responses will be returned to throughout Pellicer-Ortín's in-depth analysis of Eva Figes' work (20). The main stages that Pellicer-Ortín uses to put her analysis in motion are drawn from Dominick LaCapra's *Writing History, Writing Trauma* (2001),

namely, "acting out" and "working through." "Acting out" is "the compulsive repetition of the traumatic event" (quoted on page 25); whereas "working through" marks the beginning of the healing process which is "based on the understanding and structuring of the traumatic event in an ordered and logical way" (25). Following Pierre Janet, the final stage of healing would consist of transforming the traumatic memories, which the subject is constantly avoiding, into narrative memories.

But there needs to be a listener for these memories, or a witness, as Shoshana Felman and Dori Laub contend (1992), since, as Herman argues, "[t]rauma cannot be healed in isolation" (1992, quoted by Pellicer-Ortín on page 47). The traumatised subject needs a community to share his/her experiences with. As Kirby Farrell argues in *Post-Traumatic Culture* (1998), "trauma is an injury not just to the central nervous system or to the psyche, but also to the culture which sustains body and soul" (quoted on page 22), that is, it deeply wounds the community of the traumatised subject because it questions how and why that suffering has been allowed to happen. Although trauma is never individual, but rather collective, since it tears apart the support system of the subject who suffers it, this idea takes on a special significance in an event with the dimensions of the Holocaust as the way it is incorporated in history has to take into account and respect the suffering of hundreds of thousands of people. We must therefore take responsibility by being, as Felman terms it, "*subjects of history*," that is, those "who were [...] neither its perpetrators nor its most immediate and most devastated victims, but its historic *onlookers*: its *witnesses*" (1992, 96; emphasis in the original). And one way of being a witness is by being a critical reader and scholar, a task that Silvia Pellicer-Ortín superbly tackles in this volume.

Pellicer-Ortín's main task is twofold: on the one hand, she attempts to bring to the fore and contextualise the importance of the *œuvre* of Eva Figes (1932-2012), a writer mostly forgotten by mainstream literary criticism because she did not adjust to the literary conventions of her time—she was rather a late modernist as well as sharing some of the tenets of post-modernism. On the other, Pellicer-Ortín contends that Eva Figes' writings evolve following the different stages of trauma until reaching a kind of healing obtained through the practice of "scriptotherapy" (98-101). The term was coined by Suzette Henke in *Shattered Subjects: Trauma and Testimony in Women's Life-Writing* (2000), and follows Freud's theory of the "talking cure." According to Henke, by articulating unspeakable experiences, "[s]ubjective reconstruction can take the form of aesthetic vocation, personal liberation from a cloying domestic or social environment, or successful integration into a larger discursive community" (Henke, 2000, xv).

After establishing a solid theoretical foundation, Pellicer-Ortín introduces the life and works of Eva Figes. Born in Berlin in 1932, Figes was a Jewish-German writer who exiled in Great Britain with her parents when she was seven years old, after the Second World War broke out. She continued to live in Britain until her death in 2012. Following her divorce in 1962 she supported herself and her two children

through her writing, producing a variety of texts including fiction, non-fiction—she was a prominent feminist activist during the early stages of her career—newspaper articles and radio plays. Her fiction explores the themes of identity, the effects of war and the Holocaust, women's issues, and memory and the past (89). Pellicer-Ortín divides Figes' fictional production into three subgroups, namely: novels of a great modernist imprint dealing with feminist issues; psychological novels, closer to postmodernist concerns; and trauma novels, which deal directly with the after-effects of trauma (89-101). It is the works of this last group that are analysed in detail by Pellicer-Ortín, who follows the chronological order of publication, and emphasises the fact that the content of the works, considered in this way, also coincides with the three stages of trauma over time.

The study thus divides Figes' work into three chapters, the first corresponding to Figes' early and more experimental period, highly influenced by modernism and specifically by Virginia Woolf's stream of consciousness techniques and preoccupation with the perception of time, as well as by the French *nouveau roman*. In this chapter, Pellicer-Ortín analyses Figes' *Winter Journey* (1967) and *Konek Landing* (1969) as fictional examples of the phase of "acting out" trauma. The male protagonist of each work experiences the symptoms of relieving a past traumatic experience that was left unresolved. Pellicer-Ortín parallels the protagonists' acting out of trauma with Figes' own acting out, since the two books fit into the category of fiction and are not autobiographical (99).

The second part of the analysis comprises the autobiographical *Little Eden: A Child at War* (1978) and *Tales of Innocence and Experience* (2003) as representations of the phase of "working through" the traumatic experience. These works present "a radical break with previous ones, both in terms of form, and content" (99). Figes tries to both place and narrate the "unspeakability" of trauma in the past, in order to assimilate and cope with the events that she and her family went through, such as "migration, death and loss, during and after the Holocaust" (98). The articulation of trauma becomes a key step in the stages of healing, the first of which is laying the foundations for "safety," explained, following Herman, as "the feeling experienced once the problem has been recognised and named, and the subject recognises that s/he needs to gain control over his or her life" (47). The second stage is termed "remembrance and mourning" and is where "the subject explores his or her own traumatic memories in order to turn them into an integrated and coherent narrative" (47). This, according to Herman, is the moment when the survivor is able to place the trauma in the past, their next step is creating a future by coming to terms with their identity, their community, and even making sense of their own life by becoming an activist or a writer who gives voice to injustice (47).

The last chapter analyses *Journey to Nowhere: One Woman Looks for the Promised Land* (2008), where the final stage in the healing of trauma is reached. *Journey to Nowhere* is the case of a "limit-autobiography," a term coined by Leigh Gilmore in

The Limits of Autobiography: Trauma and Testimony (2001). Gilmore explains that this kind of autobiography features experimental techniques in order to render traumatic memories into words, so as to "help to explain how the past remains present" (quoted on page 230). The main task of these autobiographies is to transmit these stories to future generations as well as to the community. In other words, their main task is to *testify*, which for Felman means "to *address* another, to impress upon a listener, to *appeal* to a community" (Felman and Laub 1992, 204; emphasis in the original). That is, to go beyond the traumatic experience and to have an impact on the community in order to establish a sense of identity in relation to it which assimilates the trauma.

Pellicer-Ortín's book is a rich, highly inspirational piece of research on the work of a writer who had been unjustly forgotten by critics. There is virtually no previous scholarship dedicated to Figes, besides some minor critical reviews of her work in studies of contemporary Jewish-British authors and a special issue of the journal *Critical Engagements* in 2012, guest edited by Silvia Pellicer-Ortín and Sonya Andermahr (Tew and Phillips, 2012). This work is indeed the first thorough study of Figes' work seen through the lens of Trauma Studies. Its claims appear firmly grounded by the theoretical background of Trauma Studies with an emphasis on Holocaust and Diaspora Studies, through which the works are analysed. It will be of interest to scholars belonging to the field of Trauma Studies and British and/or Jewish contemporary women writers, since it presents a different way of categorising an author's work by linking psychological phenomena with their literary representation. Although the question of otherness, namely being a German Jew in Britain, and Figes' outspoken and polemic anti-Zionist position, is dealt with in depth, from my position as a scholar of Gender Studies and *mimetic* Trauma Studies, I would have appreciated a more complex approach to memory whereby categories of vulnerability were taken into account when assessing the diverse impact of trauma. Regardless of the nature of the event itself—and without disregarding such a sensitive event as the Holocaust—I concur with Susannah Radstone that "it is not an event, which is by its nature 'toxic' to the mind, but what the mind later does to memory." (Radstone 2007, 17). I would have liked greater clarity in how Eva Figes' identity as an Other—a Jew, a (divorced) woman writer and a German growing up in Britain—shaped the way that trauma was interiorised in her autobiographical writings, rather than it being the other way round—she reflecting upon her Otherness as a consequence of her traumatic experience, coming to terms with her identity once she is able to verbalise trauma. Overall, I think this book satisfies its main aim: that of fostering discussion on the work of Eva Figes and around the representation of trauma, how trauma affects the individual and the collective, and, most importantly, how it can be healed, if at all. However, the ever-present question keeps being asked: can art heal? The answer remains elusive, prompting thought-provoking responses in art and criticism, so, whether art heals or not, it makes room for verbalising, witnessing and sharing pain and memories in order to build a better history.

Works Cited

Adorno, Theodor W. (1997) 2003. *Can One Live After Auschwitz? A Philosophical Reader*. Translated by Rodney Livingstone and edited by Rold Tiedemann. Stanford: California UP.

Caruth, Cathy. 2008. *Trauma: Explorations in Memory*. Baltimore and London: John Hopkins UP.

Farrell, Kirby. 1998. *Post-Traumatic Culture. Injury and Interpretation in the Nineteens*. Baltimore and London: John Hopkins UP.

Felman, Shoshana and Dori Laub. 1992. *Testimony: Crisis of Witnessing in Literature, Psychoanalysis, and History*. New York and London: Routledge.

Gilmore, Leigh. 2001. *The Limits of Autobiography: Trauma and Testimony*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell UP.

Henke, Suzette. 2000. *Shattered Subjects: Trauma and Testimony in Women's Life-Writing*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

Herman, Judith Lewis. 1992. *Trauma and Recovery. The Aftermath of Violence—from Domestic Abuse to Political Terror*. New York: Basic Books.

Hirsch, Marianne. 2008. "The Generation of Postmemory." *Poetics Today* 29 (1): 105-128.

La Capra, Dominick. 2001. *Writing History, Writing Trauma*. Baltimore and London: Johns Hopkins UP.

Radstone, Susannah. 2007. "Trauma Theory: Contexts, Politics, Ethics." *Paragraph* 30 (1): 9-29.

Tew, Philip and Lawrence Phillips, eds. 2012. *Critical Engagements: A Journal of Criticism and Theory*. (Special issue on Eva Figes, guest edited by Silvia Pellicer-Ortín and Sonya Andermahr), 5 (1) / 5 (2).

Laura de la Parra Fernández is a third-year PhD candidate and Research Fellow (four-year grant awarded by the Spanish Ministry of Education) in the Department of English Literature at Complutense University of Madrid. Her research focuses on women's madness narratives in English from World War II to the Cold War and is supervised by Dr Isabel Durán Giménez-Rico and Dr Carmen Méndez García.

Address: Departamento de Filología Inglesa II. Facultad de Filología. Universidad Complutense de Madrid. 28040, Madrid, Spain.Tel.: +34 913945638.

Brenda M. Boyle, ed. 2015. *The Vietnam War. Topics in Contemporary North American Literature*. London and New York: Bloomsbury. xvi + 205 pp. ISBN: 978-1-4725-1204-8.

CRISTINA ALSINA RÍSQUEZ
Universitat de Barcelona
alsina@ub.edu

The 2003 invasion of Iraq fueled yet another surge of interest in the US war in Viet Nam. The ambition of Brenda M. Boyle's collection is, luckily, to be more than yet another volume that capitalizes on this favorable wind for publication. Rather, it pays attention to the cultural and political significance of the omissions in the representation of the Viet Nam war thus far. Broadening the literary canon by not privileging the voices of the US veterans over those of the non-combatants, this work is transnational in nature as it includes Vietnamese voices—Southerners, Northerners and Viet Cong— as well as advocating a theoretical approach to the texts which corrects the distorting tendency towards referentiality in the field. In this collection novels are analyzed not as sources of documentary information, but as fictional artifacts best addressed from other forms of textuality. This approach is to be celebrated.

The Vietnam War. Topics in Contemporary North American Literature belongs to the series Bloomsbury Topics in Contemporary North American Literature, conceived as a collection of useful teaching tools. Boyle's contribution most certainly meets this objective, as evidenced by the inclusion of a very useful "Further reading" section and a revealing chronology. Writing a chronology of the American War in Viet Nam is a tricky job. Forty years ago, in *Dispatches*, Michael Herr declared it impossible to "date the doom" (1979, 46). For some, it started in 1954, with Viet Nam's declaration of independence from France. Others track it all the way back to World War II, with the Japanese invasion of Vichy France's Indochina. For yet others, it took hold in 1961 with Kennedy's expansion of military aid to President Ngo Dinh Diem. Officially, the war began in 1965, after the Gulf of Tonkin Resolution. But culturally, Herr argues: "[we] might us well lay it on the proto-Gringos who found the New England woods too raw and empty for their peace and filled them up with their own imported devils" (46). Boyle frames the chronology using the following three dates: 1897, when "France makes itself the government of the Indochina Union" (viii); 1917, when President Wilson talks about the right of self-determination of all nations; and 1919, when Ho Chi Minh petitions for Vietnamese independence. Her text, therefore, rests on a

postcolonial scaffold befitting a collection that contributes to increasing the presence of Vietnamese voices in the literary canon of the American War in Viet Nam. The volume also includes a clarifying introduction that maps both the nature and history of the field. In her preview of the essays themselves, Boyle also provides the reader with a first approach to the most pervasive tropes in the fiction stemming from the experience of the war, and to the most cogent debates in the academic response to the said fiction.

The volume gathers together seven essays that ably tackle some of these debates. Central to the collection are articles continuing the important work of making visible Vietnamese contributions to the representation of the war, work started by collections of fiction such as *Once Upon a Dream… The Vietnamese-American Experience* (De Tran, Lam and Hai Dai Nguyen 1995), *The Other Side of Heaven: Post-War Fiction by Vietnamese & American Writers* (Karlin, Le Minh Khue and Truong Vu 1995) and *Watermark: Vietnamese American Poetry & Prose* (Tran, Truong and Luu Truong Khoi 1998) and which reverberates in Christian Appy's extraordinary oral history *Patriots. The Vietnam War Remembered from all Sides* (2003). Michele Janette's piece on three novels by two North Vietnamese "insiders-turned-dissidents" (49)—Duong Thu Huong's *Paradise of the Blind* (1988) and *Novel Without a Name* (1995) and Bao Ninh's *The Sorrow of War* (1990)—is a much needed attempt to supersede the tendency to include Vietnamese voices only as a politically correct exercise in compromise. Instead, Janette analyzes these voices for their capacity to problematize the rather simplistic representations of Viet Nam's history, socio-political complexities and peoples which are found in most US fiction about the war. According to Janette, the texts do not complement but rather challenge the American literary canon, while at the same time offering a sharp criticism of contemporary North Viet Nam through their reassessment of its national history. Janette is cautious enough to point out that the dissent voiced by Duong and Bao is not comparable to that of South Viet Nam or to the anti-war dissent in the United States. As North Vietnamese dissidents, their accounts of the war are partial in their own ways and, significantly, they are valued by a Western readership more willing to listen to traitors to the communist regime of North Viet Nam than to representatives of the victorious North. Janette's effort to view the conflict from a transnational perspective on the processes of decolonization and within the larger framework of the Cold War is also one of the most praiseworthy aspects of the whole volume. The approach aligns with attempts to redefine American Studies so as to transform it into the transnational, comparativist and trans-disciplinary field imagined by the New Americanists, including Shelley Fisher Fishkin (2005), Donald E. Pease (2011) and John Carlos Rowe (2012).

In the same vein, Isabelle Thuy Pelaud's text on le thi diem thuy combines the volume's transnational perspective with another of the theoretical tools favored by the collection: Gender Studies (95-114). Thuy Pelaud analyzes how le thi diem thuy's texts explore the role censorship played in the creation of a recognizable identity for herself as a Vietnamese American writer. Thuy Pelaud also explores how le, as a Vietnamese woman refugee, has to fight against three intersecting and overbearing forces: the need

to honor family and respect tradition, the male gaze that exoticizes and orientalizes her, and the demand by mainstream readership that she should fictionalize her experience as a refugee in ways that are accommodating to the US's guilty conscience. The collection closes with another text that takes a Gender Studies perspective in which Boyle considers three twenty-first-century novels (159-184): Denis Johnson's *Tree of Smoke* (2007), Karl Marlantes's *Matterhorn* (2010), and Tatjana Solis's *The Lotus Eaters* (2010). Boyle's analysis concentrates on how the novels "confront practices of masculinities in contemporary American war culture" (165), leading her to the conclusion that, in the post 9/11 US of the Patriot Act, the Viet Nam War is being cynically re-written to highlight the uplifting outcome of the war for Americans—particularly male—who, despite being broken by the experience, managed to heal and become stronger as individuals and as citizens.

One of the guiding principles of this volume, what we might call the vietnamization of Viet Nam War Studies, also brings with it an interrogation of the notion of victimhood, which has traditionally been associated with anguished, suffering American soldiers. This reconsideration of victimhood and guilt is fruitfully and innovatively engaged from the theoretical framework of Trauma Studies. However, this is also one of the few aspects of the collection that could be deemed inconsistent: most of the essays on trauma concentrate on US literature, emphasizing yet again the narcissistic discourse of American victimization. That said, unquestionably, the way Mason, O'Brien or Herr are read from Trauma Studies is a groundbreaking contribution. Hopefully, now that the foundations have been laid, other work will follow which will analyze the traumatic experiences of the Vietnamese combatants—in both armies—as well as those of the refugees. That, in turn, will ward off the discourses of American exceptionalism that permeate US representations of the war and will help challenge the naturalization of the US presence in Viet Nam.

Mark Heberle's piece on *Dispatches* (1977) concentrates on how Herr's post-traumatic visitations (29) shape the narration and distance it from any allegedly objective, officially sanctioned representation of the events (27-46). According to Heberle, the text's conjunction of New Journalism and traumatic memory blurs the distinction between reporting and fiction and fosters the idea that to map the Viet Nam War authentically, one must revert to subjectivity and fiction. Herr's account of the war is tinged with the reporter's ethical unease about his being able to leave the war behind at any minute and with his need to make visible the overpowering presence of death, which was so often minimized or left out in official reporting. Joanna Price, in turn, reads Bobbie Ann Mason's *In Country* (1985) as a novel that explores ethical response to collective grief (71-94). The two main characters, Emmett and Sam, have to face the burden of PTSD and post-memory respectively and thus embody the national difficulties in coping with the Viet Nam War. According to Price, these two characters learn that their emotional survival comes from being "'implicated' in the lives of others" (93), meaning that Mason's novel needs to be read as an invitation to understand history relationally and responsibly.

Susan Farrell's chapter on Tim O'Brien adds to a much-needed revision of his work that avoids ascribing meaning and worth to it only inasmuch as it conveys some sort of factual truth (115-136). Instead, Farrell addresses it from the expressly theoretical standpoint of political philosophy and ethics and justifies her choice by pointing out that O'Brien himself asserts that literature "must entail the practice of 'moral philosophy'" understood as a *process of rigorous and careful thought about values* (quoted on page 117; emphasis in the original). Besides, O'Brien's fiction addresses the philosophical conundrum of how to behave ethically in a war one considers unjust. Farrell engages in a very interesting description of the complex images of the domestic in O'Brien's work: while the thought of home allows soldiers to cling to a world not haunted by the ugliness and moral depravation of the war, we are also reminded, in an ethical Gordian knot, that the ideological and social nature of the very domestic bliss they idealize is the origin and the justifier of the war from which they are trying to escape.

Stacey Pebbles contributes a chapter on Larry Heinemann's *Paco's Story* (1987), an unjustifiably neglected novel despite having bested Toni Morrison's *Beloved* to win the Pulitzer Prize in 1987. Pebbles remarks on the numerous points of comparison between these two novels (137-158): they both deal with traumatic experiences perpetrated by a US institution, emphasize oral storytelling as testimony, stress the legacy of not only psychological but also bodily pain, and include main characters who are both perpetrators and victims. In both texts, the tension of this contradiction generates a ghost-like presence that somehow stands for these hurt and hurting bodies. Heinemann's novel, however, takes a much bleaker stand than Morrison's. In it, community—the so often romanticized male community of brothers-in-arms and the nation they represent—is singled out as the originator of the horror it endures (148) and it offers no consolation; it only contributes to the fragmentation of a subject for whom there is no possible healing.

All in all, the volume is a very useful collection for graduate students, for those researchers who have recently developed an interest in the ever-growing body of work on the representations of the Viet Nam War, and for those having specialized in the field, who will find new perspectives which prove that we are far from having exhausted it.

WORKS CITED

APPY, Christian. 2003. *Patriots. The Vietnam War Remembered from all Sides*. New York: Viking.

FISHKIN, Shelley Fisher. 2005. "Crossroads of Cultures: The Transnational Turn in American Studies." *American Quarterly* 57 (1): 17-57.

HERR, Michael. 1979. *Dispatches.* London: Picador.

KARLIN, Wayne, Le Minh Khue and Truong Vu, eds. 1995. *The Other Side of Heaven. Post-War Fiction by Vietnamese & American Writers*. Willimantic, CT: Curbstone Press.

PEASE, Donald E. 2011. "Introduction: Re-mapping the Transnational Turn." In *Re-Framing the Transnational Turn in American Studies*, edited by Winfried Fluck, Donald E. Pease and John Carlos Rowe, 1-46. Hanover, NH: Dartmouth College P.

ROWE, John Carlos. 2012. "Next Times. The Futures of American Studies Today." *American Literary History* 25 (1): 257-270.

TRAN, Barbara, Monique T. D. Truong and Luu Truong Khoi, eds. 1998. *Watermark. Vietnamese American Poetry & Prose*. New York: Asian American Writers' Workshop.

TRAN, DE, Andrew Lam and Hai Dai Nguyen, eds. 1995. *Once Upon a Dream… The Vietnamese-American Experience*. Kansas City: Andrews and McMeel.

Cristina Alsina Rísquez teaches twentieth century US literature at the University of Barcelona where she is a Serra Hunter Fellow. She is a member of the research Center in Theory, Gender and Sexuality (ADHUC) at the same University. She co-directs the Journal *Lectora: revista de dones i textualitat*. Recent publications include articles on Willa Cather and the coedited volume *Innocence and Loss: Representations of War and National Identity in the Unites States* (2014).

Address: Departament de Filologia Anglesa i Alemanya. Facultat de Filologia. Universitat de Barcelona. Gran Via de les Corts Catalanes, 585. 08007, Barcelona, Spain. Tel.: +34 934035688.

John Knox. (1588) 2016. *El primer toque de la trompeta contra el monstruoso gobierno de las mujeres. Tratado contra María Tudor y otras reinas de la edad moderna*. Estudio preliminar, traducción y notas de José Luis Martínez-Dueñas y Rocío G. Sumillera. Valencia: Tirant Humanidades. 184 pp. ISBN: 978-84-16349-73-9.

Begoña Lasa Álvarez
Universidade da Coruña
b.lasa@udc.es

Queens regnant have typically been ill-defined figures, anomalous entities in a patriarchal society (Dugan 1997, xx). For centuries, both their role as rulers and their nature as women have widely been considered irreconcilable. However, it is precisely their ambiguity and paradoxical position, both as public and private agents, which have made them such attractive subjects for writers (Mitchell 2000, 142). John Knox's anonymously published pamphlet *The First Blast of the Trumpet against the Monstruous Regiment of Women* (1558) must be seen in this context, as the initial lines of the text clearly illustrate: "Promover a una mujer a que ejerza gobierno, superioridad, dominio o mando sobre cualquier reino, nación o ciudad es repugnante a la naturaleza, contumelia a Dios, una cosa bien contraria a su voluntad revelada y a su mandato aprobado, y finalmente es la subversión del buen orden, de toda equidad y justicia" (126). Knox, a Scottish author, writes against women's rule in general, but his indictment is specifically addressed to two Catholic queens in the British Isles at that time: Mary of Guise (1515-1560), Regent of Scotland after the death of her husband, James V, and Mary Tudor or Mary I of England (1516-1558). Moreover, associating the figure of the woman ruler with Catholic idolatry, this text is also a relevant exponent of anti-Catholicism in Tudor Britain (Álvarez-Recio 2010, 54).

The publication of this Spanish translation of Knox's text forms part of a growing body of scholarship on queens and queenship in recent years, and particularly of the royal women of early modern Europe—Campbell Orr (2004), Benassar ([2006] 2007), Craveri ([2005] 2007), Jansen (2008), Cruz and Suzuki (2009), Wellman (2013), among others. During this period, owing to what has been termed dynastic accidents, different queens had to exert ruling power in various European countries (Cruz and Suzuki 2009, 1): Spain, England, Scotland, France, Navarre and the Netherlands were all governed by queens in the mid-sixteenth century. From a scholarly point of view, this high number of women in regnant roles constitutes a rich field of investigation

that permits a variety of approaches to the study of queens and queenship. Yet at that time these atypical circumstances caused social anxiety about women's competence as rulers, with divergent opinions emerging in a public debate known as *querelle des femmes*. On one level, Humanism and the Renaissance sanctioned and valued women's education to a certain extent, with various cultivated and learned women to be found in European courts and noble households, and several important texts on the issue were published, such as Luis Vives's *De Institutione Feminae Christianae* (1524) and Thomas Salter's *The Mirror of Modesty* (1578). Yet on another level, significant misogynistic assertions against women's capacities continued, associated with their alleged weakness, both physical and moral, which would serve to prevent them from participating in any kind of public role. A prominent example of the latter trend is Knox's text.

The text prepared by José Luis Martínez-Dueñas and Rocío G. Sumillera includes the translation of Knox's text into Spanish, along with an extensive preliminary study, divided into eleven sections, which, following Knox's biography, explores issues as diverse as the Scottish writer's political and religious assumptions, and the circumstances of Protestant exiles in Europe and their connections to other religious communities, such as that founded by Calvin in Geneva. The actual examination of *The First Blast of the Trumpet* is relatively brief. The introduction opens with some pages devoted to an explanation of the general idea behind the creation of this text by Knox, that is, the fact of two queens on the throne in two different kingdoms in Britain, when, according to the Holy Scriptures, as Knox pointed out, this was intolerable: "las hijas de Eva, presas de una maldición y un castigo bíblico, están condenadas a quedar apartadas del poder y sometidas al hombre" (17). Alongside this basic premise, Knox's vehement anti-Catholicism is also significant, since, faced with a ruler's idolatry, he was in favour not only of appealing to religious duties, but also of taking political actions to combat such illegitimate government. The resounding title of the pamphlet is also expounded in a footnote on the initial page, with a reference to another work by Knox, *A Godly Letter of Warning, or Admonition to the Faithful in London, Newcastle and Berwick* (1554), in which he compares his voice to a trumpet played by God to warn and prepare every man in England for the battle ahead (11).

In this introductory study the reader can follow Knox's life from his birth in a village near Edinburgh in 1514. He began his religious career as a Catholic priest, but soon converted to Protestantism and became an influential preacher among various Scottish and English congregations, and even in the royal court (23). However, when Mary Tudor acceded to the English throne and restored Catholicism, Knox decided to flee from England to the Continent. In his first stay in the French city of Dieppe, he published three letters addressed to his former congregations in Britain, alerting them to the terrible consequences of the reestablishment of Catholicism by Queen Mary I in England. Finally, Knox travelled to Frankfurt, one of the European destinations for English Protestants in exile at the time.

The following part of the preliminary study concentrates on Knox's stay in Geneva (1556-1557), where he spent the happiest days of his life (27). He had recently married, and his two sons were born there. Two dear female friends of his also joined them in the city. This raises a remarkable issue in regard to Knox's relationship with women, the contradiction between his great private bonds with them, and his severe attacks against women in public as the source of all the evils on Earth (28-29). In this section the independent city of Geneva is also described, Knox's stay there coinciding with it being ruled by Calvin. The inhabitants of the city considered themselves God's chosen people and followed the strictest Protestant discipline (30). The fourth section discusses four political writings published by Knox during a further stay in Dieppe (1557). Three of these address a crucial message in Knox's political agenda: the duty of Scotland, and particularly the Scottish nobility, towards God, and their responsibility to redress the errors committed by Mary of Guise's rule during her regency, before the accession to the Scottish throne of her daughter, Mary Queen of Scots. While these works dealt with a subversive assumption, it was the fourth, *The First Blast of the Trumpet*, turning its invective on Mary I of England, which caused the greatest impact (33).

Before addressing the text itself, the editors include a section about the literature written in favour and against the nature and capacities of women, that is, the *querelle des femmes*, a necessary step in contextualising Knox's pamphlet. Moving on to *The First Blast of the Trumpet*, Martínez-Dueñas and Sumillera describe the most important ideas contained in the text. Knox, considering himself a prophet of God on earth, vindicated Protestantism as the true expression of religion, against Catholicism and the Pope's idolatry, which had been reintroduced in England by Mary Tudor. However, his attack is not just against Catholicism, but against women's rule in general. His line of reasoning follows three steps: women's rule is contrary, first, to men's law and, secondly, to God's perfect command; consequently, women's government subverts order, equity and justice (44-45). Queen Mary's marriage to Philip of Spain (1554) made the situation in England worse still, as it was feared that the country might thus find itself under the yoke of a foreign power (48).

One of the most notable actions proposed by Knox to combat this dangerous possibility is the rebellion against illegitimate and idolatrous monarchs, as opposed to the traditional doctrine by which all the subjects of a kingdom had to obey their sovereign, since his or her power derived directly from God. These conflicting theories are discussed in great detail in section seven. In the following one, the propaganda at the time relating to Mary Tudor is analysed, which, as might be expected, included writings both in favour and against her, according to the religious beliefs of the author. The next part of the introduction is devoted to Knox's difficult relationships with Calvin and Queen Elizabeth I, owing to the publication of the *The First Blast of the Trumpet* itself. As noted above, this was published in 1558, just a few months before Mary I's death and the accession of her half-sister to the English throne as Elizabeth I. In spite of publishing the text anonymously, Knox admitted his authorship in other works, together with the ideas that he was going to discuss in his next two "blasts of

[the] trumpet" (75-76). Because Elizabeth at the outset of her rule needed to ensure the general acceptance of her right to the English throne, Knox's text was "una puñalada en la espalda" for her (77). However, the Scottish writer, while admitting Elizabeth's rule as godly design, continued to argue that her government was, as with the reign of any woman, contrary to the laws of God and men.

The reception and consequences of the publication of *The First Blast of the Trumpet* are examined in the final two sections. The reaction to the text was predominantly negative, among both Protestants and Catholics, which included Elizabeth I, and the new Queen of Scotland, Mary Stuart. Knox had four interviews with Mary Queen of Scots and in the first of these she accused him of publishing a tract against women's rule, and particularly against her mother, Mary of Guise. However, given the universal nature of Knox's allegations about women, Mary Stuart considered that he had also attacked her (98). Nevertheless, Knox remained faithful to his fundamental ideas regarding women until his death.

The introduction is accompanied by scholarly footnotes, as might be expected, though in some cases these are perhaps rather lengthy (98-99), since they include the original text in English of those quotations translated into Spanish in the main text. This seems quite unnecessary and incongruous when the actual text under study in the book, *The First Blast of the Trumpet*, can be read just in Spanish in the second part of the book. In addition to the presence of many bibliographical references in the footnotes, the volume also offers a broad section of works cited, which includes primary and secondary sources, as well as a recommended bibliography on women in early modern Britain. As for the translation of Knox's text, Martínez-Dueñas and Sumillera have used the original text published in 1558 (105) and have exploited most footnotes for the marginalia present in it, instead of utilising them to complete the nine-page analysis devoted to *The First Blast of the Trumpet* in the preliminary section of the book. This treatise has been rendered into present-day Spanish, while preserving the exhortative nature of Knox's discourse, particularly observable in long sentences with various subordinates and parenthetical remarks and the profusion of rhetorical questions and exclamations. A certain early-modern English flavour is also noticeable, thanks to the translators' syntactic and lexical choices. The volume includes two further sections: a very short appendix (177-178) in which, quoting Poutrin and Schaub (2007), all the European queens regnant between 1500 and 1600 are set out on a grid and, finally, an index.

All in all, and despite some inconsistencies regarding the relative brevity of the analysis of Knox's text in the introductory section and the unusual handling of footnotes throughout the text, this Spanish study and translation of *The First Blast of the Trumpet* is a well-documented work, which provides a new and suggestive perspective on queens and queenship studies, and particularly on Mary I of England, a relatively unknown royal figure in Spain (Pérez Martín 2012). It also enriches the Spanish view on crucial European historical episodes, such as religious persecutions and wars, particularly attractive for those scholars, students and readers interested in Renaissance and early-modern studies.

WORKS CITED

ÁLVAREZ-RECIO, Leticia. 2010. *Fighting the Antichrist: A Cultural History of Anti-Catholicism in Tudor England*. Brighton: Sussex Academic Press.

BENASSAR, Bartolomé. (2006) 2007. *Reinas y princesas del Renacimiento a la Ilustración. El lecho, el poder y la muerte*. Translated by Núria Petit. Barcelona: Paidós.

CRAVERI, Benedetta. (2005) 2007. *Amantes y reinas. El poder de las mujeres*. Translated by María Condor. 2nd ed. Madrid: Siruela.

CRUZ, Anne J. and Mihoko Suzuki, eds. 2009. *The Rule of Women in Early Modern Europe*. Urbana and Chicago: U of Illinois P.

DUGAN, Anne J., ed. 1997. *Queens and Queenship in Medieval Europe*. Woodbridge: The Boydell Press.

JANSEN, Sharon L. 2008. *Debating Women, Politics, and Power in Early Modern Europe*. Houndmills, Basingstoke and New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

KNOX, John. 1554. *A Godly Letter of Warming or Admonition to the Faithful in London, Newcastle and Berwick*. EEBO TCP.

MITCHELL, Rosemary. 2000. *Picturing the Past: English History in Text and Image 1830-1870*. Oxford: Clarendon.

ORR, Clarissa Campbell, ed. 2004. *Queenship in Europe, 1660-1815. The Role of the Consort*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP.

PÉREZ MARTÍN, Mª Jesús. 2012. *María Tudor: la gran reina desconocida*. Madrid: Rialp.

POUTRIN, Isabelle and Marie-Karine Schaub. 2007. *Femmes et pouvoir politique. Les princesses de l'Europe, XVe-XVIIIe siècle*. Paris: Bréal.

WELLMAN, Kathleen. 2013. *Queens and Mistresses of Renaissance France*. New Haven and London: Yale UP.

Begoña Lasa Álvarez teaches at the Faculty of Education (Universidade da Coruña). She holds two BAs, one in English and one in Spanish Studies, and a PhD on the Spanish reception of eighteenth-century English novels by women. Her academic interests focus on eighteenth-century women writers, literary and cultural interchanges between English-speaking countries and Spain, and English language and literature teaching, which are also her main areas of publication.

Address: Departamento de Didácticas Específicas, Métodos de Investigación e Diagnóstico en Educación. Facultade de Ciencias da Educación. Universidade da Coruña. Campus da Zapateira, s/n. 15071, A Coruña, Spain. Tel.: +34 881014744.

María Jesús Lorenzo-Modia, ed. 2016. *Ex-Sistere: Women's Mobility in Contemporary Irish, Welsh and Galician Literatures*. Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars. x + 223 pp. ISBN: 978-1-4438-8700-7.

NOEMÍ PEREIRA-ARES
Universidade de Santiago de Compostela
noemi.pereira@usc.es

Ex-Sistere: Women's Mobility in Contemporary Irish, Welsh and Galician Literatures constitutes a thought-provoking collection of essays and is a valiant critical undertaking on the part of its editor and contributors, engaging as it does with geographies, literatures and subject positions traditionally deemed peripheral and subaltern. Drawing on feminist, postcolonial and poststructuralist approaches, the volume offers startling insights into the intersections between gender and mobility in the work of contemporary women writers in Ireland, Wales and Galicia. As such, it focuses on women's literary production in three Atlantic regions existing, as the editor notes, "on the margins of their respective colonial metropolises […] of their dependent economies" (2) and, one could even add, of their hegemonic literary traditions. Irish, Welsh and Galician literatures are nowadays each a thriving field in their own right, but much critical work is still necessary to rectify the conspicuous absence of female writers from their respective literary canons. The controversies surrounding *The Field Day Anthology of Irish Writing* (Deane et al. 1991) are emblematic in this respect, and scholars working on Galician and Welsh literature have also denounced the difficulties faced by women writers to edge their way into literary canons that continue to be overwhelmingly male (González Fernández 2005; Dix 2016). The volume under review here contributes to redressing this imbalance, adding to previous publications on Irish, Welsh and Galician literature of female authorship (Entwistle 2013; Gramich 2007; Nogueira Pereira, Lojo Rodríguez and Palacios González 2010; Palacios González and González Fernández 2008; Palacios González and Lojo Rodríguez 2009). *Ex-Sistere* nonetheless incorporates new layers of criticism, hence its originality and scholarly value. It is specifically concerned with exploring the discourse of female mobility, thus counteracting the gender myopia that permeates much scholarship on migration. The need to critically address female mobility is indeed highlighted in the "Foreword" to the collection, written by the renowned Irish scholar Declan Kiberd, who invites, *inter alia*, the thought of women being "the main agents (as well as subjects) of a new phase in the culture of travel

and resettlement" (x). The "Foreword" is followed by an introduction by María Jesús Lorenzo-Modia, the editor of the collection. The introduction pertinently unpacks the significance of the concepts featuring in the title and, whilst acknowledging the volume's indebtedness to other scholars and disciplines, Lorenzo-Modia succeeds in laying bare the book's novel interventions in the field.

The collection is divided into three main sections—"Galician Literature," "Irish Literature" and "Welsh Literature"—with a total of ten contributions that combine critical essays with autobiographical pieces of creative writing. María López Sandez's "Women's Mobility in Contemporary Galician Literature: From 'Widows of the Living' to 'I Too Wish to Navigate'" inaugurates the section on Galician literature. In it, López Sandez traces shifts in the relationship between gender and mobility along a broad spectrum of texts, from Rosalía de Castro's *oeuvre* to works by contemporary Galician women writers such as Xohana Torres, Begoña Caamaño, Lupe Gómez and Luísa Villalta, amongst others. The essay examines travelling as a "metaphor for the construction of identity" (10) and argues that, in the work of contemporary Galician women writers, eroticism, sexuality, eco-feminist perspectives and refashioned myths such as that of Penelope are all elements that work in tandem to deconstruct stereotypical notions of femininity and their projection onto the Galician geographical imaginary. Albeit from a different perspective, the emergence of novel imaginaries is also explored in María Xesús Nogueira Pereira's "Naming the Foreign: External Toponymy in Galician Poetry Written by Women (2000-2009)." The essay aptly relates the analysis of foreign toponyms with the volume's main concerns—gender and mobility—providing ample evidence from works by María do Cebreiro, Chus Pato, Yolanda Castaño, Eli Ríos, Dores Tembrás, María Reimóndez and Luz Pozo Garza. Particularly revealing is Nogueira's comment on the political dimension underlying much foreign toponomy in Galician poetry, which shines a light on the political agenda underpinning the work of contemporary Galician women poets.

The remaining two contributions in the volume's first section focus on Galician emigration to the UK during the Franco regime. In "The Chronotope of Galician Migration in Eva Moreda's *A Veiga é como un tempo distinto*," Olivia Rodríguez-González proposes an analysis of Moreda's latest novel in the light of Mikhail Bakhtin's concept of the "chronotope." Her essay sagely reveals the non-linear structure of the novel and interprets its narrative disposition as a formal attempt to create and recreate "the chronotope of emigration" (72), that is, the disruption between past and present, between home and abroad, that impinges on the diasporic condition. Rodríguez-González's theorisations on the "chronotope of emigration" could productively be applied to the interpretation of Xesús Fraga's "Virtudes and Isabel: Two Galician Women in London," an autobiographical text where, intriguingly, Galicia and London each become the abandoned place for different characters. The author reconstructs here his mother's and grandmother's life-stories as emigrants in London, while dramatising his own experience of dislocation as an individual transplanted

from London to Galicia at a tender age. The text evokes multiple tropes characteristic of diasporic fictions, but many readers might be surprised by the uncomfortable truths that Fraga reveals. As a case in point, the writer narrates how, on passing the UK border controls, his mother had to keep her pregnancy secret, for pregnant women were not accepted as foreign workers.

"Ireland, Spain and Galicia in the Work of Honor Tracy," written by José Francisco Fernández, brings together Ireland and Galicia through a close exploration of Tracy's writings on Éire and Spain. Ireland and Galicia, as Fernández amply demonstrates, are often depicted in a negative light in Tracy's work, whereas England "appears as the model to follow" (100) and Spain is frequently romanticised. Reading against the grain, Fernández thus unveils the imperial perspective that Tracy casts upon Ireland and Galicia, offering insights into Tracy's political ideology and her views on nationality and identity. Identity, coupled with issues of migration, is also a central concern in "The Discourse of Identity and Emigration in Christina Reid's *Tea in a China Cup*" by Mª Dolores Gómez Penas and Mª Amelia Fraga Fuentes. The only contribution in the collection to be centred on drama, this essay examines how Reid problematises the impact that migration might have on identity and vice versa. The principal character Theresa's Catholic identity, the article argues, becomes "less significant" (128) in London—her diasporic locus—than in 1960s Belfast—her original homeland. However, in London, Theresa's cultural identity jeopardises her position as an "insider," potentially turning her into a "cultural 'outsider'" (128)—which gives credence to Lorenzo-Modia's words when she notes, in the "Introduction" to the volume, that "even white women may be considered as belonging to a different ethnic group when they are migrants" (2).

The act of staying might entail a political declaration as powerful as that of leaving, and this is precisely what María Jesús Lorenzo-Modia argues in "On Not Leaving Belfast in Trouble: Medbh McGuckian as a Symbol of Irish Resistance." Looking back to Northern Ireland during the Troubles, Lorenzo-Modia reads McGuckian's decision to remain in Belfast as a "symbol of resistance," a significant and "valiant rejection of escapism" (137). In a convincing exercise of hypertextual deciphering, Lorenzo-Modia also tracks the links that McGuckian's poems establish with a wide range of fictional and academic works. Especially thought-provoking is the critic's interpretation of McGuckian's use of hypertextual and "ex(tra)territorial" references (150) as a mechanism of figurative mobility—an argument that recalls Nogueira Pereira's comments on the role of foreign toponyms in contemporary Galician poetry by women. A different form of intertextuality is analysed by Manuela Palacios in "Stand Still: Photographs of Irish Migrating Women." In it, Palacios gathers together, and critically examines, a series of descriptions by Irish women writers of photographs depicting migrating women—and this includes pieces of writing by Evelyn Conlon, Celia de Fréine, Rita Kelly, Catherine Phil MacCarthy, Máighréad Medbh, Paula Meehan, Lia Mills, Mary O'Donnell and Lorna Shaughnessy. Their texts emerge as

historical archives that retrieve multiple stories of female mobility and "give voice to a formerly silenced experience" (155). Palacios's subsequent analysis does not simply examine these texts and their contexts. It also offers a compelling exploration of the "intersection of visual representation and creative writing" (154) and, by extension, of the very process of writing. One should congratulate Manuela Palacios on bringing out this hybrid contribution which, besides many other strengths, certainly fulfils its aim of "rescuing women's experience from the limited circle of oral accounts […] and plac[ing] them in the wider public sphere" (155).

The last section of the collection, focused on Welsh literature, is shorter in comparison, which arguably constitutes the main weakness of the book. In "Indian Defences: Mobile Identities in Nikita Lalwani's *Gifted*," Kevin Mills deals with a novel written by an Indian-Welsh author which revolves around an Indian family transplanted to Cardiff in the 1980s. Mills's article offers a refreshing change in focus, as it engages with a different diasporic community and with a text where Wales features not as a nation of emigration, but rather of immigration. Approaching Lalwani's novel as a *Bildungsroman*, Mills provides a systematic analysis of the conflicts that distance the heroine, Rumi, from her parents, and reads *Gifted* (2007) not only as a text on transnational migration, but also on Rumi's "inner travel towards self-realization" (196). Mills's essay gives way to Chris Kinsey's "Mobility, Migration and Settling in Mid-Wales." Combining prose and poetry, the contribution deals with the author's own experience of mobility within and without Wales and, in this way, as throughout the volume, the section closes with a sample of creative writing. In Kinsey's highly evocative text, the experience of migration is intertwined with other more figurative forms of mobility, including "pilgrimages of self-discovery" (207) along the course of various rivers. Kinsey's narrative, with its multiple references to nature, lends itself to being read under an ecocritical perspective, and it even recalls the communion with nature that features in some of the works analysed by López Sandez in the first article of the volume. This provides further evidence of the concomitances that can be established between the different texts analysed throughout the collection, while simultaneously adding to the cohesion of the volume and potentially hinting at future lines of research.

Combining critical essays with pieces of creative writing, *Ex-Sistere* offers a kaleidoscopic and multi-angled approach to the collection's main subject-matter. The editor is to be congratulated on the overall high standards of the publication, on selecting and structuring a range of original and insightful contributions, and ultimately on having brought out a volume that fulfils its promises. The collection is of interest to researchers and academics in various disciplines. It could appeal to scholars working on gender and mobility from perspectives as varied as feminism, postcolonialism, poststructuralism and literary and cultural studies, and it constitutes a valuable intervention in the field of Irish, Welsh and Galician literary criticism. Its close exploration of female mobility in the featured texts is extremely pertinent to those

critics concerned with mining this specific vein, and yet the literary concerns, patterns and tendencies adumbrated throughout the collection might also prove engaging to many other scholars working on Irish, Welsh and Galician literatures.

WORKS CITED

DEANE, Seamus et al., eds. 1991. *The Field Day Anthology of Irish Writing*. 3 vols. Derry: Field Day.

DIX, Hywel. 2015. "Writing the Nations: Welsh, Northern Irish, and Scottish Literature." In *The History of British Women's Writing. Volume 10: 1970-Present*, edited by Mary Eagleton and Emma Parker, 195-213. Houndmills, Basinstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.

ENTWISTLE, Alice. 2013. *Poetry, Geography, Gender: Women Rewriting Contemporary Wales*. Cardiff: U of Wales P.

GONZÁLEZ FERNÁNDEZ, Helena. 2005. *Elas e o paraugas totalizador. Escritoras, xénero e nación*. Vigo: Xerais.

GRAMICH, KATIE. 2007. *Twentieth-Century Women's Writing in Wales: Land, Gender, Belonging*. Cardiff: U of Wales P.

NOGUEIRA PEREIRA, María Xesús, Laura Lojo Rodríguez and Manuela Palacios González, eds. 2010. *Creation, Publishing, and Criticism: The Advance of Women's Writing*. New York: Peter Lang.

PALACIOS GONZÁLEZ, Manuela and Helena González Fernández, eds. 2008. *Palabras extremas: escritoras gallegas e irlandesas de hoy*. A Coruña: Netbiblo.

PALACIOS GONZÁLEZ, Manuela and Laura Lojo Rodríguez, eds. 2009. *Writing Bonds: Irish and Galician Contemporary Women Poets*. Bern: Peter Lang.

Noemí Pereira-Ares is a member of the Department of English and German Studies at the University of Santiago de Compostela. She holds a PhD from the University of Santiago de Compostela, and her main research interests include South Asian diaspora fiction, migrant literature(s) in English, fashion and cultural studies.

Address: Departamento de Filología Inglesa y Alemana. Facultad de Filología. Universidad de Santiago de Compostela. Avda. Castelao, s/n. 15782, Santiago de Compostela, Spain. Tel.: +34 881 811 976.

Barry Forshaw, ed. 2016. *Crime Uncovered: Detective*. Bristol and Chicago: Intellect. 220 pp. ISBN: 978-17-832052-1-9.
Fiona Peters and Rebecca Stewart, eds. 2016. *Crime Uncovered: Antihero*. Bristol and Chicago: Intellect. 218 pp. ISBN: 978-17-832051-9-6.

BILL PHILLIPS
Universitat de Barcelona
billphillips@ub.edu

These two books from Intellect's Crime Uncovered series are appropriately *noir* in appearance, both on the outside, with a dark grey cover, and inside where an even darker hue indicates a change of chapter.[1] The editors, too, are steeped in the turbid tint of crime fiction. Barry Forshaw, editor of *Detective*, is a journalist and broadcaster and the author of various books and articles on crime fiction. He is also editor of the website *Crime Time* (www.crimetime.co.uk), a useful resource for obtaining up to date information on publications and events in the crime fiction world. Fiona Peters and Rebecca Stewart, the editors of *Antihero*, are both lecturers at Bath Spa University where they ran the well-known (in crime fiction circles, at least) conferences *Captivating Criminality* between 2012 and 2015. Both volumes follow the same format. A brief introduction is followed by a series of short "case studies," which make up the bulk of the volume, followed by interviews with authors, and ending with a small number of more general "reports," or articles. Each of these chapters is written by a different contributor, for whom brief bionotes are provided in the final pages of the volume. Particularly useful are the references given after each of the chapters in which the critical sources, novels, stories, television series and websites related to the detective or antihero in question are listed. Unfortunately, though, neither of the books contains an index. Nevertheless, given the popularity of crime fiction and the extraordinary longevity of the genre both in printed form and on the screen, any new reference or critical work, particularly when it deals with the latest offerings, as is the case here, is extremely welcome.

DETECTIVE

In *Detective*, as in *Antihero*, I found the introduction too short as issues of terminology and classification needed some clarification and this was not forthcoming. *Detective* begins well, with Barry Forshaw correctly identifying "social criticism" (8) as an essential element of the best detective novels, but the fact that the volume is dedicated solely to "the police detective" (7) to the exclusion of the private investigator needs some explanation. Detective fiction is notorious for the fact that its sleuths bear little relation to reality. It is true many writers enjoy a comfortable relationship with the police, even to the extent of accompanying them on patrol, but this provides material used to add colour to their narratives and rarely reveals the way the police actually detect. In real life, cases are solved either because it is obvious who did it, or because the police receive information that leads them to the culprit. Moreover, the police work as a team and there is no room for maverick geniuses like Colin Dexter's Inspector Morse, at war not only with multiple murderers, but also a hidebound bureaucracy. Among the least fanciful police procedurals, in that it relies on a strong cast of characters rather than a single protagonist, is Ed McBain's 87th Precinct series, published between 1956 and 2005, but it is a rarity. The most likely explanation for this distance from reality is to do with the novel itself, and the detective genre in particular, which customarily feature a single hero or heroine. Interestingly, television seems to be a medium much more suited to multiple casts, and police series like *Hill Street Blues* (1981-1987) and *The Wire* (2002-2008) enjoyed considerable success. The point is, the fictional police detective is effectively indistinguishable from the fictional private detective, as one of the book's contributors, Darren Brooks, affirms in a later chapter: "the Noir Cop is, essentially, a private eye inside the police force" (61). The decision, then, to exclude private detective fiction from the volume appears to be somewhat arbitrary.

The thirteen individual case studies, although short are, on the whole, interesting and informative, but I would particularly recommend Darren Brooks's study of Michael Connelly's Harry Bosch and Erin MacDonald's chapter on Ian Rankin's Inspector Rebus. Brooks's chapter, in fact, would have made a better introduction to the volume than Forshaw's since it not only discusses at some length the similarities between fictional police detectives and private eyes, but also examines "the term 'noir'" (58) before offering a meditation on the differences between American and British crime fiction in which he makes the incisive claim that the former, in contrast to the latter, is "contingent upon the perpetuation of disorder" (58). McDonald's chapter, like Brooks's, displays a comprehensive knowledge of the genre and its critical history, and an understanding of the social, moral and literary complexities inherent to it. As a specialist in Ian Rankin's work, her article on the Inspector Rebus series is very complete and includes, among others, sections on Tartan Noir, class and the Scottish character, Rebus's spiritual quest and the duality of human nature.

Five of the thirteen case studies are devoted to Scandinavian detective series. This is, presumably, because Barry Forshaw, the editor, has published a book on Scandinavian

crime fiction—*Death in a Cold Climate: Scandinavian Crime Fiction* (2012)—and Nordic Noir is his area. It does mean, however, that the detective series chosen are rather unrepresentative of the genre as a whole. In fact, only one non-European detective is studied—Michael Connelly's Los Angeles-based Harry Bosch—and so some of the very best crime writing from around the world is ignored. The United States, of course, has a massive tradition of crime writing, but there has also been an outpouring in recent years from around the world, including writers such as Australia's Peter Temple and Garry Disher, South Africa's Deon Meyer and Margie Orford, and India's Vikram Chandra, to restrict ourselves to authors of police detective fiction. Consequently, then, a little less Scandinavian fiction—which in my opinion is largely overrated—would have made room for a geographically wider selection of authors.

The one writer of Nordic Noir who cannot be ignored is Henning Mankell (1948-2015). Mankell himself claims that the reason for Nordic Noir's success is that "Scandinavian writers are as concerned with a provocative discussion of the problems of society as they are with the details of a crime investigation" (163). This is confirmed by Barry Forshaw in his chapter on Mankell: "[t]he issues addressed in the various books— from the corrupt influence of Big Pharma and the ruthless prerogatives of multinationals, to people trafficking, to his country's barely disguised racism—are clearly powered by the author's own social engagement (he is known for his theatre work in the country in which he spent so much time, Africa, attempting to ameliorate the lot of ordinary Africans)" (70). The reference to Africa as a country is the kind of embarrassing slip we all make and Forshaw meant to write Mozambique. A more serious omission, however, is that this chapter, like a number of other contributions to the collection, includes little or no reference to critics of the genre, of whom there have been many in recent years and whose work has been of a very high standard indeed: Lee Horsley, Stephen Knight, Martin Priestman, among many others. In the case of Mankell, and given that Forshaw brings up the author's commitment to Africa, it might have been pertinent to refer to Slavoj Žižek's review of Mankell's *The Return of the Dancing Master* in *The London Review of Books* (2003) where he, provocative as ever, argues that "[a]n exclusive focus on First World issues of late-capitalist alienation and commodification, of ecological crisis, of racism, intolerance and so on, cannot avoid seeming cynical in the face of Third World poverty, hunger and violence" (Žižek 2003, 24). This is a relevant point. Why, given the problems facing the world, should we concern ourselves with the relatively minor problems of a handful of affluent Scandinavians? Žižek, of course, answers this question quite masterfully, in the next few lines of the review. This particular chapter in *Detectives*, though, offers no such insight, providing instead a brief overview of Mankell's work before moving on to describe the highly successful television adaptations of the author's Kurt Wallander police series.

Before leaving the frozen North a serious issue related to Scandinavian crime fiction needs discussing: violence against women. Murray Pratt, in his chapter on Norwegian writer Jo Nesbø, acknowledges this author's "much criticized use of graphic violence, misogyny and caricatured plots" (97). Nesbø is among the worst culprits when it comes

to his male characters inflicting appalling violence on women, but it seems to be a staple of Scandinavian crime fiction, from the undisguised sexual titillation of Stieg Larsson's *Millennium* trilogy (2005-2007) rape scene, to the horrific severed body of a woman in the Danish/Swedish television series *The Bridge* (first released in 2011). Pratt's justification for this is that "extreme violence, together with misogyny and other forms of discrimination and hatred, while featured within detective stories, do so, in exaggerated forms, as part of the plot's bid to represent the social disorder that must be eliminated" (98). It might be worth mentioning at this point that in a genre not exactly lacking in women writers, of the thirteen case studies, only three are by women: P.D. James, Fred Vargas and Maj Sjöwall (with Per Wahlöo), while the question of gender, which is absolutely central to an understanding of detective fiction, is virtually absent except in the thought-provoking case study of Soren Sveistrup and Hans Rosenfeldt's *Broen/Bron/The Bridge* by Jacky Collins.

The final chapters of the book are all worth reading largely for the same reasons I have outlined above with regard to the contributions by Darren Brooks and Erin MacDonald. Stephen Peacock's "The Modern Maverick Detective" traces the evolution of the hard-boiled detective genre from its origins in nineteenth century American frontier narratives, to the vigilante films of the 1970s, and then on to the reluctant heroes of more recent series such as Mankell's Kurt Wallander and Ian Rankin's John Rebus. Alison Joseph, in "Reason and Redemption: The Detective in the Secular Age" reminds us that detective fiction is, in fact, a "story told backwards" (192), though it is worth mentioning here that, as is so often the case when discussing crime fiction, few critics can match Lee Horsley who, in his magisterial work *Twentieth-Century Crime Fiction* discusses this phenomenon at length as a particularly clear-cut manifestation of the Russian formalist narratological distinction between *fabula* and *sjuzet* (2005, 23-36).

ANTIHERO

Rebecca Stewart's introduction to this volume begins with a too brief but useful description of the characteristics of the antihero. Little is said, however, of the history of antiheroes—other than passing references to Dostoevsky's *Notes from Underground* (1864), Achilles, Oedipus and Antigone. Instead, Patricia Highsmith's Tom Ripley who, justifiably, generates much discussion, seems to be taken as the archetype of the figure. Only once, in a chapter by Katherine Robbins on the American television series *Breaking Bad* (2008-2013) and *Dexter* (2006-2013), is an earlier precedent cited: Macbeth. W.M. Thackeray's Becky Sharp in *Vanity Fair* (1848), one of the great antiheroes in English literature, receives no mention, while in the crime fiction genre the great archetype is surely E.W. Hornung's Raffles, about whom no mention is made at all. Published in mostly short story format between 1898 and 1909, Raffles was conceived as a homage to the author's brother-in-law, Arthur Conan Doyle, the creator of Sherlock Holmes. The great man was not convinced, declaring that "[y]ou must not make the criminal a hero" (Doyle [1924] 2004, 225), but Doyle's discomfort at the coupling of criminal and hero

is, in fact, precisely the point: we are bemused by antiheroes, both charmed and repelled. George Orwell, in his essay "Raffles and Miss Blandish" writes that:

> The Raffles stories, written from the angle of the criminal, are much less anti-social than many modern stories written from the angle of the detective. The main impression that they leave behind is of boyishness. They belong to a time when people had standards, though they happened to be foolish standards. Their key-phrase is 'not done'. The line that they draw between good and evil is as senseless as a Polynesian taboo, but at least, like the taboo, it has the advantage that everyone accepts it. (Orwell [1944] 1968, 216)

Orwell is able to enjoy the stories by interpreting them as an attack on a class and a code that he finds absurd. According to Rebecca Stewart, the antihero critiques "the notions of heroism by disturbing and disrupting our expectations, and furthermore by enticing us to be complicit in this. […] The role of the antihero, then, it seems, is to challenge the ways in which we see, or wish to see, ourselves" (7). Hornung's Raffles disrupts the certainties of his readers' assumptions, just as Thackeray's Becky Sharp requires the reader to question the limitations forced upon an intelligent, ambitious woman in mid-nineteenth century Britain. It is a pity, then, that the opportunity to discuss the literary and cultural history of antiheroes was not taken in *Antihero* given that such a contextualisation would have strengthened the volume's opening assertion that the antihero "can be found throughout literature, film and television" (7).

Of the eleven case studies in *Antihero*, six are television series, one is a comic superhero, and the remaining four are novels. Crime fiction has clearly moved away from its traditional media of the written word and the feature film. There is, furthermore, a clear tendency among the most highly acclaimed contemporary televised crime series to explore the complexities and moral ambiguities of their protagonists in a way that was rarely seen on the small screen until quite recently. Few of the crime series shown on television during the sixties, seventies or eighties were troubling for viewers. Despite their cosmetic idiosyncrasies, Colombo, Ironside, Kojak and co. were all unequivocally guided by conventional and unimpeachable moral codes. Not that such pasturage has totally disappeared, as the kindergarten ethics and desperate dullness of the long-running series *Law and Order* (1990-2010) and *CSI* (2000-2015) demonstrate. Moral fuzziness, however, is not new to the genre itself, particularly in its printed form. Early pulp fiction, which is not necessarily detective fiction, relates, in usually quite neutral tones, the actions of petty criminals and desperate citizens in the Prohibition era. One of the finest examples, Dashiell Hammett's magnificent novel, *Red Harvest* (1929), portrays the doomed town of Personville—an allegory for the United States—which, by the end of the story, is left reeling from the violence unleashed by its purported saviour, the novel's unnamed protagonist, referred to only as "the Continental Op"— short for Continental Operative, an employee of the Continental Detective Agency. Hammett knew perfectly well what he was doing, but even in the less thoughtful

works of Raymond Chandler and the egregious Mickey Spillane, the self-destruction, misogyny, racism and self-righteousness of their respective heroes, Philip Marlowe and Mike Hammer, are sufficiently obvious to leave many readers ill at ease.

Such a response is certainly the case with Marvel comics' antihero the Punisher. Since his first appearance in 1974 he is "officially responsible for the deaths of 48,502 people" (35). The Punisher is a vigilante on a one-man mission to wipe out criminals in revenge for the random murder of his wife and children by gangsters. Kent Worcester's case study devoted to the Punisher places the character within the context of 1970s revenge narratives, arguing that they "no doubt reflected the bitter impact of the Vietnam War on service personnel, their families and their local communities, as well as the larger cultural shock-waves unleashed by the political scandals, inflationary surges and rising crime rates of the 1970s" (36). This brief contextualisation is one of the very few occasions in either *Detective* or *Antihero* that an attempt is made to explain the popularity of the characters and genres under discussion. Given that both books fall within the ambit of cultural studies, it is not unreasonable to expect that some analysis of those factors which gave rise to their production and subsequent popular reception would be provided. Ironically, in a later chapter, Joseph Walderzak laments the fact that most studies of antiheroes do not investigate the genre's "ideological ramifications" (125) and instead merely recount "its recent historical development" (125). This is one of my major criticisms of both books: neither takes into account their genres' histories nor do they relate the texts studied to wider social, historical or ideological issues. In the case of the Punisher, the comics are still being produced and film adaptations were made in 1989, 2004 and 2008, and vigilante fiction is as popular as ever on television, as series such as *Dexter* and *Arrow* (2012-) demonstrate. If the Vietnam War was a possible reason for the rise of vigilante fiction in the 1970s, some exploration of the reasons for its ongoing popularity would be welcome.

The television series *True Detective* (2014-2015) merits two chapters in *Antihero*. Isabel Große analyses one of the series' two protagonists, Rust Cohle, a philosophising lone wolf whose daughter was killed in a hit and run accident, and who slowly descends into alcoholism and madness, while Mark Hill takes a close look at the question of masculinity. Gender and its representation in the figure of the antihero is one of the book's most interesting and rewarding themes. In the case of Rust Cohle and his partner Martin Hart, Hill concludes that the series is by no means a conventional tale of two police detectives successfully bringing a serial killer to justice (which they do), but rather a cautionary tale of futile masculinity:

> Marty and Rust lie to themselves about a sense of victory, they lie to themselves about the good they have done for the living women in their lives. We should not champion them; we should pity them. Since they cannot accept an empowered, sexually free and self-initiating femininity, they can only dream of the dead women, who, by being voiceless, can fit the narrative of feminine dependence that these antiheroes require to feel justified in their masculinity. (201)

Hill rightly dismisses complaints that the series is "a blind celebration of misogynistic masculinity" (201). Indeed, observant viewers of the series will have spotted the visual joke in the final two episodes where Hart, abandoned by his wife and no longer a policeman, sets himself up as a private detective in a cheap, prefabricated office under the name of "Hart Investigative Solutions." The initial letters are enlarged to spell the word "HIS." The untidy, unsuccessful business is all that is left to the protagonists—their vaunted masculinity reduced to mere signage.

In an earlier chapter, Gareth Hadyk-DeLodder makes similar comments about the television series *Ray Donovan* (2013-2016) which "engages a 'troubled' masculinity" (88). According to Hadyk-DeLodder, "multiple characters exchange questions, accusations and aspersions that all concern, on a fundamental level, the public legitimacy and performance of their (or others') manhood, both symbolically and literally" (90). Indeed, throughout the book, critics turn to gender studies, and the question of masculinity in particular, as a tool for understanding their various antiheroes' behaviour. Of Tony Soprano, Abby Bentham says that his "1950s gangster masculinity does not correspond with the sensitive, emotionally literate and demonstrative version of masculinity required within the late-twentieth century home" (73) while the crime writer James Ellroy, quoted in an article by Rodney Taveira, observes that traditional hardboiled crime fiction is all about the depiction of "the masculine figure in American society" (207).

Of particular interest are also the articles devoted to women. In his case study of Sarah Linden, protagonist of *The Killing* (2011-2013), Joseph Walderzak provides a useful summary of the twentieth century's so-called crisis of masculinity, before moving on to argue that the male and female antiheroes reveal "a uniquely shared gender crisis" (127). The representation of women in crime fiction has long been fraught. Should female detectives and criminals be portrayed differently from their male counterparts? If so, how? Numerous women—American crime writer Sara Paretsky is probably the best-known example—have explored the consequences of creating a hard-boiled woman detective. Veena Sud, creator of *The Killing* (2011-2014), tackles the task with subtlety. Sarah Lind, her antihero, abandons her family in pursuit of her cases. This is clearly seen as inappropriate behaviour for a woman. However, by making use of a female detective who behaves in a masculine fashion, Sud highlights the failure of contemporary masculinity, where the neglect of family by male detectives is taken for granted and is only made visible when the shortcomings of masculinity are manifested by a woman.

In Sabrina Gilchrist's study of Alice Morgan, the antihero of the television series *Luther* (2010-2015), the question of women and gender is also central. Surprisingly, Gilchrist is the only contributor to *Antihero* to make reference to the *femme fatale*, an ambiguous figure about which relatively little has been written in general, but one which clearly fits beneath the antihero umbrella. In common with Sarah Linden, the *femme fatale* Alice Morgan "adopts a conventionally masculine habitus" (120), she "exerts agency, has control, manipulates others and the storyline—but through it all, she remains distinctly feminine. Her blunt sexuality allows her access to the male gaze, not to escape it, but to

code it differently (once again making her distinctly feminine—the object of the male gaze—and masculine in her manipulation of it)" (120). Both Walderzak's and Gilchrist's chapters provide important insights into antiheroes, masculinity and femininity and reveal just how far, and how inseparably, gender is embedded within the genre. The reports that conclude the volume, include not only Mark Hill's excellent analysis of gender in *True Detective*, but also Jacqui Miller's absolutely fascinating journey into the world of internet fanfiction and specifically into reworkings of Highsmith's Tom Ripley.

In conclusion, these two volumes are mixed bags. I found *Antihero* the more interesting of the two, perhaps because the subject matter has received less critical attention than detective fiction, but also because it was far more critically informed. In both books there were contributions which simply concentrated on specific crime narratives within a vacuum, with little or no reference to comparable series, the history of crime fiction, social or historical context, or critical theory. They were, in effect, merely summaries of plot and character. Fortunately this was not always the case, indeed, overall, the majority of the contributions were informative and a pleasure to read.

WORKS CITED

DOYLE, Arthur Conan. (1924) 2004. *Sir Arthur Conan Doyle: Memories and Adventures: an Autobiography*. Ware: Wordsworth Editions.

HORSLEY, Lee. 2005. *Twentieth-Century Crime Fiction*. Oxford: Oxford UP.

ORWELL, George. (1944) 1968. "Raffles and Miss Blandish." In *As I Please, 1943-1945. Volume 3. The Collected Essays, Journalism and Letters of George Orwell*, edited by Sonia Orwell and Ian Angus, 212-224. London: Seker & Warburg.

ŽIŽEK, Slavoj 2003. "Parallax." *London Review of Books*. 25 (22), November 20. [Accessed online on February 3, 2016].

Bill Phillips is a senior lecturer in the Modern Languages and Literatures Departament at the University of Barcelona. He has published widely on poetry in English, ecocriticism, ecofeminism, gender studies, science fiction and crime fiction. Together with other members of the Australian Studies Centre, based at the University of Barcelona, he is currently researching and publishing on postcolonial crime fiction.

Address: Departament de Llengües I Literatures Modernes i d'Estudis Anglesos. Universitat de Barcelona. Gran Via de les Corts Catalanes, 585. 08007, Barcelona, Spain. Tel.: +34934035688.

Elena Oliete-Aldea, Beatriz Oria and Juan A. Tarancón, eds. 2016. *Global Genres, Local Films: The Transnational Dimension of Spanish Cinema*. London: Bloomsbury. 270 pp. ISBN: 978-15-013029-8-5.

PAUL MITCHELL
Universidad Católica de Valencia San Vicente Mártir
paul.mitchell@ucv.es

The edited volume *Global Genres, Local Films* offers a welcome addition to the growing literature on Spanish transnational cinema written in English, providing a range of thoughtful analyses that augment the insights already made in such recent works as Benet (2015), Dapena, D'Lugo and Elena (2013) and Dennison (2013), as well as in the articles published in the journal *Transnational Cinemas* by Berger (2016), Cerdán and Fernández Labayen (2015), Falicov (2013) or Craig (2010), to name but a few. Many existing studies of transnationalism in Spain approach the topic from a predominantly economic perspective—such as Ibáñez (2013)—and *Global Genres, Local Films* continues this tradition by offering several contributions which comment on the financial benefits of coproductions for Spanish filmmakers. Yet the collection also attempts to provide a more innovative, postmodern reading of Spanish cinema through exploring the manner in which many historical and contemporary films add nuance to the very concept of transnationalism itself.

The opening chapters of the volume efficiently establish the context of the debate. In the "Foreword," Barry Jordan expresses his concern that the transnational might (already have) become a "passing panacea [that is] overly prescriptive and superficial" (xviii). Instead, the editors' "Introduction" informs us that *Global Genres, Local Films* will provide a "counter-history" of Spanish filmmaking (8). In doing so, the book analyses the points of contact between "cross-cultural aesthetics and narrative models on the one hand, and indigenous tradition on the other" (8-9). The most successful essays in *Global Genres, Local Films* do precisely this, providing thoughtful and provocative insights into films whose richness is enhanced through the consideration of their complex transnational dimensions.

Although the editors emphasise that the book has been organised into three distinct time periods, in an attempt no doubt to emphasise the historical continuity of transnational concerns in Spanish cinema, such a structuration can, at times, seem a little forced, with part 2 in particular including several films outside of

the supposed remit of cinema from "the 1970s to the 1990s" (11). Part one of the book, "Rethinking Spanishness: The Soft Edges of Early Cinema," focuses on films from the silent era until the early 1950s. In it, the various authors provide a series of illuminating readings to challenge the accepted notion that Spain's political situation led its early cinema to be culturally isolationist and self-referential. Indeed, Valeria Camporesi's analysis of Spanish musicals from the 1930s emphasises that, despite their particularly local, folkloric flavour, films such as *La verbena de la Paloma* [Festival of the Virgin of the Dove] (Benito Perojo, 1935) and *Morena Clara* [Dark and Bright] (Florian Rey, 1936) display an attempt to construct a vision of *españolada* [Spanishness] which had transnational appeal. As such, Camporesi concludes that what we now understand as globalisation should be recognised as an important element of Spain's cinema from its earliest beginnings. Leading on from this, Vicente J. Benet's essay on historical film dramas debunks a reading of Franco-era cinema as simplistically propagandist, arguing that such a political interpretation limits the overall effect and complexity of the films. Although indebted to work already done by Jo Labanyi (2002), Benet suggests that women spectators had a crucial effect on Spanish drama productions such as *Locura de amor* [The Mad Queen] (Juan de Orduña, 1948) and *Lola la piconera* [Lola, the Coalgirl] (Luis Lucía, 1952) and, as a result, that these films share an important communality with other foreign cinemas at the time. The latter film is also the subject of Federico Bonaddio's extensive and insightful analysis of how transnational hybridity—in this case, the blending of the historical epic (a staple of Franco-era filmmaking) and the musical—serves to illuminate the social and cinematic dynamics at the time of *Lola la piconera*'s creation. The author convincingly suggests that changing spectator demands for the escapist narratives offered by Hollywood caused the production company (CIFESA) to change its approach, downplaying the politics of patriotism in favour of a more commercially viable, transnational product. Hybridity is also a concern in Daniel Mourenza's essay on the work of celebrated Spanish director, Juan Antonio Bardem. However, rather than examining his merging of neorealism and melodrama, a topic that has already been insightfully discussed by Diana Roxana Jorza (2011), Mourenza focuses exclusively on Bardem's use of melodrama as a transnational element in his filmmaking. In this way, he proposes that, rather than understanding the director in auteurist terms, films throughout his career—such as *Muerte de un ciclista* [Death of a Cyclist] (1955), *Calle Mayor* [Main Street] (1956) and *Nunca pasa nada* [Nothing Ever Happens] (1963)—reflect how genre cinema allowed Bardem to comment on the social and ideological conflicts of Spain through the prism of more personal and individual relationships.

Although perhaps a little unfocused in its detailed discussion of US films, Juan A. Tarancón's chapter on Spanish crime cinema still offers an interesting account of the genre's emergence during the Franco years. Despite its transnational origins, Tarrancón argues effectively that crime cinema was an appropriate form through

which filmmakers such as Julio Salvador—*Apartado de correos 1001* [P.O. Box 1001] (1950)—Ignacio F. Iquino—*Brigada criminal* [Crime Squad] (1950)—and Francisco Rovira Beleta—*Los ojos dejan huellas* [The Eyes Leave a Trace] (1952)—could explore the complexities and ambiguities of contemporary Spanish society.

The overarching concern of part two of the book, "Broadening Perspectives: Crossing Borders, Crossing Genres," is with the exploration of transnationalism in Spanish films during the country's transition to democracy—that is between the end of Franco's regime and the 1990s. However, as not all of the contributing authors focus exclusively on films that fall within this period, the demarcation of such a specific historical period can seem at times somewhat redundant. Arnaud Duprat de Montero recovers Carlos Saura's critically undervalued road movie, *Stress-es tres-tres* [Stress is Three, Three] (1968) from obscurity, arguing that it embodies a rich, intertextual dialogue with the *Nuevo Cine Español* [New Spanish Cinema] and the work of auteurs such as Jean-Luc Godard and Luis Buñuel. The film can thus be understood, he argues, as a particularly European/transnational take on the US road movie but one which allows Saura to address specifically Spanish social concerns, such as his subversive representation of the new technocratic bourgeoisie. The transnational road movie is also the subject of Carmen Indurain Eraso's essay which examines how Spanish filmmakers have re-codified the genre in order to explore specific "glocal" (154)—or a conflation of global and local—concerns. In particular, she identifies *Airbag* (Juanma Bajo Ulloa, 1997) and *Fugitivas* [Fugitives] (Miguel Hermoso, 2000) as films that exemplify the postmodern and realistic trends within late twentieth century Spanish cinema.

Both Andy Willis and Anne Davies offer interesting analyses of other genre films, the former's "Violence, Style and Politics: The Influence of the *Giallo* in Spanish Cinema of the 1970s" exploring how the thematic and stylistic conventions of *Una libélula para cada muerto* [A Dragonfly for Each Corpse] (León Klimovsky, 1974) become "entwined with the ideological morality of the Spanish dictatorship" (112). An inventive, alternative reading of the canonical *El espíritu de la colmena* [Spirit of the Beehive] (Victor Erice, 1974) is offered by Anne Davies who explores this and two other films—*La residencia* [The House That Screamed] (Narcisco Ibáñez, 1969) and *Tras el cristal* [In a Glass Cage] (Agustí Villaronga, 1987) in terms of their gothic elements. Rather than limiting herself to an analysis of how the films can be read for their political engagement, Davies instead suggests that they contribute to a broader gothic mode within transnational cinema.

Noelia V. Saenz's chapter positions 1992, the Quincentenary anniversary of the discovery of the Americas, as a defining year within Spanish transnational film production. Although flawed initially by a somewhat clumsy understanding of the link between historical epics and heritage films, this shortcoming does not, however, detract from Saenz's highly productive comparison between *Christopher Columbus: The Discovery* (John Glen, 1992), which maintains a Eurocentric view of

history, and *También la lluvia* [Even the Rain] (Iciar Bollaín, 2010) which represents "a discursive critique of the role of film and film industries as both a vehicle for continued exploitation and potential resistance" (132-133). Chantal Cornut-Gentille D'Arcy's essay ends part two with a close reading of another Iciar Bollaín film, *Flores de otro mundo* [Flowers from Another World] (1999). After establishing historical emigration as a basis for transnationalism in Spain, the author suggests that Bollaín's film evidences the emergence of a new genre in Spanish cinema, one in which immigration, displacement and globalisation are key elements.

Part three of *Global Genres, Local Films* deals with Spanish productions in the twenty-first century which are much more self-consciously transnational. Re-examining several of the genres already discussed in the previous sections, the contributions in the final part explore the multiplicity of cultural identities in the new millennium. Beginning with Beatriz Oria's excellent study, "Isn't it Bromantic? New Directions in Contemporary Spanish Comedy," the author examines the globalising effect of Hollywood through a detailed analysis of *No controles* [Lovestorming] (Borja Cobeaga, 2010), a film which appropriates many of the elements of mainstream America cinema whilst maintaining "a model of Spanishness [that] is firmly rooted in the past" (183). Luis M. Garcia-Mainar's essay on the crime genre includes a rewarding exploration of the television miniseries, *Crematorio* [Crematorium] (Jorge Sánchez-Cabezudo, 2011), in terms of how the Spanish cinematic industry has tried to emulate its US and European counterparts. In doing so, a noticeable shift in emphasis from action onto the characters' personal and emotional experiences can be observed and it is this, the author argues, that allows for recent productions to scrutinise specific Spanish social and historical concerns. A similar argument is proposed in Hilaria Loyo's study of the transnational elements in Isabel Coixet's films. The Catalan filmmaker's predilection for the transnational genre of melodrama is interpreted by Loyo as a strategy through which she can explore universal human suffering in a more specific, localised context. Loyo's observation that Coixet's characters are "uprooted" (202) participants in the process of global mobility finds an echo in Alberto Elena and Ana Martín Morán's chapter on recent Spanish immigration films. They suggest that, by making modifications to existing transnational genres such as the romantic comedy and the French *cinéma de banlieue* [suburb cinema], filmmakers such as Irene Cardona—*Un novio para Yasmina* [A Fiancé for Yasmina] (2008)—and Santiago Zannou—*El truco del manco* [The One-Handed Trick] (2008)—have been able to convey the often unrepresented reality of migrants' experience in contemporary Spain.

Migration is also a key concern in Iván Villarmea Álvarez's productive close reading of recent Galician documentaries. The author considers the notions of marginality and estrangement to be central to the *Novo Cinema Galego* [New Galician Cinema] and these ideas are explored in both *Bs. As.* (Alberte Págan, 2006) and *Vikingland* (Xurxo Chirro, 2011) such that "the filmed subjects express and defend their national

identity as a consequence of their transnational experience" (242). The final chapter in the book is perhaps the most conventional in its emphasis on coproduction as a key element of transnational cinema. Yet, Vicente Rodríguez Ortega undertakes an interesting comparison between "visible" and "invisible" coproductions so as to explore how "filmmaking has turned into a transnational practice in which the national is strategically mobilized for a variety of purposes" (256).

Global Genres, Local Films is a diverse, rewarding and thought provoking collection of essays which adds significant value to the scholarly analysis of transnational cinema. Although focusing specifically on Spanish films, the cogently written articles will be of interest to both specialists and to casual readers who enjoy world cinema. With a pleasing range of contributors from Spain, the UK, France and the US, the volume provides a comprehensive overview of some of the key dynamics at work in the Spanish film industry from the 1930s until the present day.

WORKS CITED

BENET, Vicente J. 2015. "Spanish Archetypes in Transnational Cinema: A Comparative Study of Iconography." *Journal of Spanish Cultural Studies* 16 (1): 9-27.

BERGER, Verena. 2016. "Going Home: Mobility and Return Journeys in French and Spanish Road Movies." *Transnational Cinemas* 7 (2): 168-182.

CERDÁN, Josetxo and Miguel Fernández Labayen. 2015. "Mediating Migration in Ceuta, Melilla and Barcelona: Border Thinking and Transnationalism from Below in Independent Documentary." *Transnational Cinemas* 6 (2): 137-155.

CRAIG, Linda. 2010. "From National to Transnational in Pedro Almodóvar's *All About My Mother.*" *Transnational Cinemas* 1 (2): 161-174.

DAPENA, Gerard, Marvin D'Lugo and Alberto Elena. 2013. "Transnational Frameworks." In *A Companion to Spanish Cinema*, edited by Jo Labanyi and Tatjana Pavlovi , 30-40. Oxford: Wiley Blackwell.

DENNISON, Stephanie, ed. 2013. *Contemporary Hispanic Cinema: Interrogating the Transnational in Spanish and Latin American Film.* Woodbridge: Tamesis.

FALICOV, Tamara L. 2013. "Cine en Construcción/Films in Progress: How Spanish and Latin American Filmmakers Negotiate the Construction of a Globalized Arthouse Aesthetic." *Transnational Cinemas* 4 (2): 252-271.

IBÁÑEZ, Juan Carlos. 2013. "Another Vision: Memories of the Civil War in Coproductions of Recent (Spanish?) Cinema." In *Transnational Cinema in Europe,* edited by Manuel Palacio and Jörg Türschmann, 93-104. Zurich: Lit Verlag.

JORZA, Diana Roxana. 2011. "A Neorealist Melodrama's Problematic Contention with Hollywood: *Calle Mayor* (1956)." *Studies in Hispanic Cinemas* 7 (2): 117-132.

LABANYI, Jo. 2002. "Historia y mujer en el cine del primer franquismo." *Secuencias* 15: 42-59.

Paul Mitchell teaches at the Universidad Católica de Valencia San Vicente Mártir. He is the author of *The Poetry of Negativity* (Valencia, 2011) and other articles about the American writer, Sylvia Plath. More recently, he has published on Spanish cinema, particularly in relation to the dynamics of rural space and cultural heritage.

Address: Facultad de Ciencias de la Educación. Universidad Católica de Valencia. Campus de Edetania. C/ Menéndez y Pelayo. 46100, Burjassot-Santísima Trinidad, Valencia, Spain. Tel.:+34 963 637412.

Goretti García Morales, María Isabel González Cruz, Carmen Isabel Luján García and María Jesús Rodríguez Medina. 2016. *La presencia del inglés en la publicidad televisiva española (2013-2015).* Madrid: Síntesis. 143 pp. ISBN: 978-84-9077-264-5.

RAMIRO DURÁN MARTÍNEZ
Universidad de Salamanca
rduran@usal.es

This volume has been jointly crafted by four authors, all of whom are based at the University of Las Palmas de Gran Canaria, and share an interest in the study of the Anglo-American impact on Spanish advertisements through the use of English. The book presents the results of a research project, financed by their own university and coordinated by Luján García. It aims to analyse from various angles the influence of English on Spanish television advertisements broadcast between 2013 and 2015.

Luján García has published extensively on the topic of the increasingly pervasive presence of English in Spanish daily life from a sociolinguistic perspective. Her analyses have paid particular attention to aspects such as the study of shop windows (2010a; 2010b) and toy leaflets (2011). She has also examined the most common techniques for translating and adapting the titles of Anglo-American films in Spain (2010c) as well as the attitude of Spaniards towards English and Anglo-American culture. She explored the consequences of globalisation on Spanish language and society in *The English Language and Anglo-American Culture: Its Impact on Spanish Language and Society* (2013). A second contributor, Rodríguez Medina, has used the lens of linguistics for her research work on anglicisms in Spain, focusing on lexical, morphosyntactic and pragmatic aspects (2000; 2002; González Cruz and Rodríguez Médina 2011). And while García Morales has examined the challenge of anglicisms within the fields of both translation (Socorro Trujillo and García Morales, 2009) and film studies (2016), González Cruz has published widely on the topic of Anglo-Canarian socio-cultural and linguistic contact (2002; 2012; 2013; González Cruz, Rodríguez Medina and Déniz Santana 2009).

Anglicisms have been extensively studied in Spain. Some classic references on the topic include Lorenzo Criado (1987; 1996), Gómez Capuz (1997; 1998), Rodríguez González and Lillo Bualles (1997) and Pratt (1980). The novelty of the book under scrutiny in this review lies in the fact that it deals with the analysis of anglicisms on Spanish television rather than in press advertisements, the recurring area of inquiry

until now (Durán, 2002; Van Hooft 2006; Rodríguez-Díaz, 2011). Even though both in press and TV adverts the two main elements, text and image, are usually analysed, TV adverts offer greater complexity from a linguistic perspective. Indeed, besides the script, their moving images and soundscapes play a key role in their communicative strategy. Thus, the fact that this is, as far as we know, the first extensive research done in Spain on anglicisms in television advertisements adds new value to this already intrinsically important contribution to the body of existing studies.

The book is structured in four chapters. The first ("Introduction") justifies the relevance of the study and seeks to analyse the frequency and the ways in which copywriters use anglicisms or English to communicate with audiences who either do not use English as their ordinary communication code or simply do not understand it. The pertinence of any aspect concerning the influence of English on Spanish should currently be considered in view of the growing debate between copywriters and linguists, who hold conflicting views on the consequences and on the quantification of this phenomenon. Therefore, even though this study does not investigate its repercussions, it does shed light on many dimensions of this complex issue. The next section provides a concise overview of some of the studies on the use of anglicisms in the discourse of advertising carried out in Spain and in countries such as South Korea, Thailand, Russia, Italy, France, Mexico and Ecuador, making evident that this is not just a local phenomenon. Finally, six different reasons are provided which could explain the noticeable presence of anglicisms in Spanish TV adverts. These are: (a) the current consideration of English as a language of prestige, (b) the multinational scope of advertising campaigns, (c) the intention of associating the product with an English-speaking country, (d) the permeability of the discourse of advertising to new terms, (e) the very nature of the English language whose short words lend themselves to easy and playful transformations, and finally (f) pure snobbery and the notably superfluous use of adopted, or adapted, English, which is the main concern for most Spanish language scholars. The book also addresses some other reasons for the use of anglicisms, such as the *need-filling motive* (Anttila 1989, 155), which refers to the need to name new inventions, particularly in the products associated with new technologies.

Chapter two—"Marco teórico: definición y tipología del anglicismo"—establishes a sound theoretical framework revolving around some of the key notions required to outline the research. The concept of *lexie* (Pottier [1969] 1971) and its different categories, namely simple, compound, complex and textual, is used to account for all the multiplicity of words and lexical structures where the influence of English is found. Different definitions of the blurry notion of loan are revised following the research of Gómez Capuz (1998). After introducing the readers to divergent sensibilities regarding the understanding of what anglicisms are, a wide notion of the term is advocated to cover any linguistic element used in Spanish and coming from English. Finally, a brief examination of different proposals for the taxonomy of anglicisms is followed

by the authors' formulation of their own classification, based on Lorenzo (1987). They establish five categories: pure anglicisms, assimilated anglicisms, acronyms, pseudo-anglicisms and cultural anglicisms.

The third chapter is mainly devoted to describing the methodology of the project and analysing its results. Data were collected from June 2013 to January 2015 from four private channels on Spanish TV—Telecinco, Antena 3, La Sexta and Disney Channel—during the late afternoon and at prime time. More than four hundred advertisements were studied and classified into six broad thematic fields, which comprised: (a) mobile phones, the internet and ICT; (b) leisure time and culture; (c) personal hygiene and care, cosmetics and fashion; (d) food, drinks and restaurants; (e) home and family; and (f) products aimed at children. Both the number of advertisements and the wide range of products covered make this corpus a rich source for the analysis of Spanish television advertising discourse practices.

Although there are differences in some of the established thematic fields, most analyses follow a similar pattern. First, in each field—e.g., leisure time and culture—advertisements are quantified, distinguishing both the kind of product—shopping centres, concerts, games, TV programmes, or amusement parks—and the number of different anglicisms used in the promotion of each product. These data allow the authors to check which products are richer in English loans and how varied these are. Then, a descriptive analysis of the presence of anglicisms in each product, illustrated by a vast number of examples, is carried out. After highlighting the distinctive features of each group of adverts in the use of anglicisms, a rationale for their use is provided. Finally, each chapter concludes with a sample of the compiled anglicisms, classified according to the five categories mentioned in the second chapter.

In the final chapter, the authors start by presenting some general conclusions about the presence of anglicisms in Spanish TV advertisements. These are followed by specific comments on the thematic fields analysed. The study confirms the powerful presence of anglicisms in most of the products advertised. Most are pure anglicisms—such as *breeze, entertainment, beauty, cheeseburger* and *media stars*—but they also include acronyms—*ADSL, RAM, HD, DKNY* and *USB*—assimilated anglicisms—*líder, dónut, golf* and *test*—and even pseudo-anglicisms—*odor-stop, pro-expert, Revitalift, aquasource, proglide, Rastreator*. The presence of sentences and phrases in English, such as *I'm lovin' it; Open your World* and *Be natural*, is also highlighted, together with cultural and iconic anglicisms—actors imitating Elvis or songs sung in English. The authors conclude that this cultural influence is particularly noticeable in products aimed at children and teenagers, where the pervasiveness of names, messages and songs in English is overwhelming.

This book has a very clear structure and, while it follows the quality standards of academic discourse, it makes an engaging and appealing read. It offers a fair balance of information drawn from the field of research and from the world of advertising companies and copywriters. Its up-to-date references and practicality makes it especially apt for any reader interested in the influence of English on the Spanish language.

WORKS CITED

ANTTILLA, Raimo. 1989. *An Introduction to Historical and Comparative Linguistics*. Amsterdam and Philadelphia: John Benjamins.

DURÁN MARTÍNEZ, Ramiro. 2002. *La lengua inglesa en la publicidad española. Una aproximación pragmática*. Salamanca: Ediciones Universidad de Salamanca.

GARCÍA MORALES, María Goretti. 2016. "A Study of Loanwords from English in Spanish Film Reviews." In *Input a Word, Analyze the World. Selected Approaches to Corpus Linguistics*, edited by Francisco Alonso Almeida, Ivalla Ortega Barrera, Elena Quintana Toledo and Margarita E. Sánchez Cuervo, 359-378. Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars.

GÓMEZ CAPUZ, Juan. 1997. "Towards a Typological Classification of Linguistic Borrowing." *Revista Alicantina de Estudios Ingleses* 10: 81-94.

GÓMEZ CAPUZ, Juan. 1998. *El préstamo lingüístico: conceptos, problemas y métodos*. Valencia: Universitat de València.

GONZÁLEZ CRUZ, María Isabel. 2002. *Notas para una bibliografía inglesa sobre Canarias: Primer repertorio bibliográfico y análisis de su estructura y contenido*. Santa Cruz de Tenerife: Instituto de Estudios Canarios de la Universidad de La Laguna.

—. 2012. "English in the Canaries: Past and Present." *English Today. The International Review of the English Language* 109: 20-28.

—. 2013. "Hispanismos y canarismos en un corpus de textos ingleses sobre Canarias." *LEXIS. Revista de Lingüística y Literatura* 37 (2): 229-267.

GONZÁLEZ CRUZ, María Isabel and María Jesús Rodríguez Medina. 2011. "On the Pragmatic Function of Anglicisms in Spanish: A Case Study." *Revista Alicantina de Estudios Ingleses* 24: 257-273.

—, María Jesús Rodríguez Medina and María Jesús Déniz Santana. 2009. *Anglicismos en el habla juvenil de Las Palmas de Gran Canaria*. Madrid: La Factoría de Ediciones.

LORENZO CRIADO, Emilio. 1987. "Anglicismos en la prensa." In *Primera reunión de Academias de la Lengua española sobre el lenguaje y los medios de comunicación*, 71-79. Madrid: Real Academia Española.

LORENZO CRIADO, Emilio. 1996. *Anglicismos hispánicos*. Madrid: Gredos.

LUJÁN-GARCÍA, Carmen. 2010a. "La presencia de la lengua inglesa en carteles publicitarios en las calles de Las Palmas de Gran Canaria." *Miscelánea: A Journal of English and American Studies* 41: 13-36.

—. 2010b. "Globalisation: English Christmas Signs in Spanish Shop Windows." In *Los caminos de la lengua: estudios en homenaje a Enrique Alcáraz Varó*, edited by J. L. Cifuentes, A. Gómez, A. Lillo, J. Mateo and F. Yus, 1133-1150. Alicante: Universidad de Alicante, Servicio de Publicaciones.

—. 2010c. "Traducción de los títulos de las películas en los cines de España: ¿inglés y/o español?" *Odisea: Revista de estudios ingleses* 11: 301-314.

—. 2011. "English 'Invasion' in Spain: An Analysis of Toys Leaflets Addressed to Young Children." *English Today. The International Review of the English Language* 27: 3-9.

—. 2013. *The English Language and Anglo-American Culture: Its Impact on Spanish Language and Society*. Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars.

POTTIER, Bernard. (1969) 1971. *Gramática del español*. Translated by Antonio Quilis. Madrid: Alcalá.

PRATT, Chris. 1980. *El anglicismo en el español peninsular contemporáneo*. Madrid: Gredos.

RODRÍGUEZ-DÍAZ, José Antonio. 2011. *Anglicismos y germanismos en el lenguaje de la publicidad del español peninsular contemporáneo 1998-2007*. Santiago de Compostela: U de Santiago de Compostela.

RODRÍGUEZ GONZÁLEZ, Félix and Antonio Lillo Buades. 1997. *Nuevo diccionario de anglicismos.* Madrid: Gredos.

RODRÍGUEZ MEDINA, María Jesús. 2000. "El anglicismo en el español: revisión crítica del estado de la cuestión." *Philologica Hispalensis* 14: 99-112.

—. 2002. "Los anglicismos de frecuencia sintácticos en español: estudio empírico." *Revista española de lingüística aplicada* 15: 73-80.

SOCORRO TRUJILLO, Karina and Goretti García Morales. 2009. "Dificultades del traductor: anglicismos." In *Más allá del espejo: estudios culturales sobre traducción y literatura infantil en el nuevo milenio*, edited by Isabel Pascua Febles, 121-142. Las Palmas: Universidad de Las Palmas de Gran Canaria, Servicio de Publicaciones.

VAN HOOFT COMAJUNCOSAS, Andreu. 2006. "El valor añadido de los anglicismos en la publicidad española. El impacto y la valoración social de las voces inglesas en la publicidad de la revista *Elle*." In *Nuevas tendencias en el discurso de especialidad*, edited by Maria Vittoria Calvy and Luisa Chierichetti, 225-248. Bern: Peter Lang.

Ramiro Durán Martínez is a lecturer in the English Studies Department at the University of Salamanca. He started his career as a *Escuela Oficial de Idiomas* teacher and since 1997 he dedicated his time to instructing ESOL primary and secondary school teacher trainees. His research interests include English Language Teaching, Bilingual Programmes, Discourse Analysis and the Language of Advertising.

Address: Departamento de Filología Inglesa. Universidad de Salamanca. Calle Placentinos, 18. 37008, Salamanca, Spain. Tel.: +34 923294400.

Editorial policy, instructions to contributors and abridged guidelines

What we publish

Atlantis publishes articles, reviews and interviews in the field of English studies. Contributions submitted to *Atlantis* should meet the following criteria:

- Suitability for the aim and scope of the journal
- Originality and interest in relation to subject matter, method, data or findings
- Relevance to current research in the field
- Revision of previously published work on the topic
- Logical rigour in argumentation and in the analysis of data
- Adequate use of concepts and research methodology
- Discussion of theoretical implications and/or practical applications
- Command of recent bibliography
- Linguistic appropriateness, textual organisation and satisfactory presentation
- Readability and conciseness of expression

Submissions

Articles should be 6,000-8,000 words and book reviews 1,000-1,250 (including abstract, keywords, footnotes and references).

Contributions should be uploaded to the journal's webpage (www.atlantisjournal.org), in a double-spaced, point 12 electronic Microsoft Word document (or equivalent electronic version). Please follow the indications on the journal's webpage, especially with regard to the metadata accompanying your submission: www.atlantisjournal.org/index.php/atlantis/about/submissions#onlineSubmissions

- Title of the manuscript
- Author's name
- Institutional affiliation and full postal address
- Telephone numbers (both home and office)
- Institutional e-mail address
- Word processor and version used to format the document
- Total number of words, including works cited and notes
- A 60-word bionote
- The *Atlantis* checklist

Copyright notice and concurrence

Authors are expected to know and heed basic ground rules that preclude simultaneous submission and/or duplicate publication. Prospective contributors to *Atlantis* commit themselves to the following when they submit a manuscript:

- That no concurrent consideration of the same, or almost identical, work by any other journal and/or publisher is taking place.
- That the potential contribution has not appeared previously nor is about to appear within two years, in any form whatsoever, in another journal, electronic format, or as a chapter/section of a book.

If, after two years, a contribution first published in *Atlantis* is to be reprinted elsewhere, permission is not required but the author should credit *Atlantis* for the contribution's first appearance. If in doubt about any of the above, the author should consult the Editor.

Seeking permission for the use of copyright material is the responsibility of the author.

Anonymity policy

All details of personal identification must be absent from the manuscript, as well as from the file properties. The author's name should be replaced by "author" throughout the paper. If the submission contains any element of identification of the author, it will not be sent to referees.

Formal guidelines

Before submitting an article, please make sure that your text observes the following guidelines. Articles that do not comply with the *Atlantis* style sheet will be returned for resubmission before being sent out to referees.

§ 1. External presentation

1.1.   Abstract

The first page of each article must include a title plus a 100-200 word summary. The abstract should be written in an 11-point Times New Roman font, indented (0.5 cm) and positioned immediately before the body of the text. It should consist of one paragraph and contain no bibliographical reference in parenthetical form.

1.2. Keywords

Just after the abstract, append a list of up to six keywords, separated with semi-colons, so that your contribution can be accurately classified by international reference indexes. Do not use period at the end of the list of keywords.

1.3. Language

Manuscripts are to be submitted in English. Authors must consistently follow either British or American spelling conventions. A version or translation of the title, abstract and keywords in Spanish must be provided. For those contributors who do not handle Spanish the Editors will provide the translation.

1.4. Length

For articles: 6,000-8,000 words (including abstract, keywords and references); for book reviews: 1,000-1,500 words.

1.5. Submission

Authors must submit their contribution (Microsoft Word document) accompanied by the following documents in separate files:

- Checklist
- Personal data and a bionote of approx. 60 words
- An institutional address and phone number following the example below

Address: Departamento de Filología Moderna. Facultad de Educación. Universidad de Castilla-La Mancha. Plaza de la Universidad, 3. 02071, Albacete, Spain. Tel.: +34 000000000; ext. 0000. Fax: +34 000000000.

§ 2. GENERAL STYLISTIC, STRUCTURAL AND FORMATTING GUIDELINES

All manuscripts should follow the guidelines of the latest edition (now 16th edition) of the *Chicago Manual of Style* unless otherwise specified.

2.1. Format

The text should be submitted single-spaced. Use a 12-point Times New Roman font for the main text and an 11-point Times New Roman font for the abstract, footnotes and indented quotations.

The first line of each paragraph should be intended 0.5 cm (please use the indentation tool included in Word, not the tab key), with the exception of the first line in the first paragraph of each section. The first line of all footnotes should also be indented 0.5 cm.

2.2. Titles of contributions

Place them at the top and centre of the page on which the text begins. Capitalize only the first letter of the first word and all other significant words (nouns, adjectives, verbs and adverbs) as well as proper nouns. Always capitalize the last word. Do not use period after titles.

2.3. Textual divisions and headings

Section headings should be used with discretion. They must begin from the left margin, with no period at the end. Headings may be numbered. The use of Arabic numerals is

recommended. If absolutely necessary, further division within a section should follow the same format used for section headings. They must be preceded by Arabic numerals separated by period (e.g., 1.1). Do not capitalize headings in full (only contents words should be in capital letters) and use small caps.

2.4. Tables, drawings and graphic items

Please avoid their proliferation, since it may result in an excessive number of pages. This could affect the eligibility of your work for publication. All tables and figures should be numbered consecutively and referred to by their numbers within the text (e.g., as we see in example/table/figure 1). Take into account that graphs must be clearly understood when printed in black and white.

2.5. Punctuation

All punctuation marks, except colon and semicolon, should precede closing quotation marks (e.g.,"the bookshelf," she replied).

Question marks (?) and exclamation marks (!) should not normally be used in scholarly writing unless they are part of a quotation.

Do not use commas (,) before "and" and "or" in a series of three or more. Never use a comma and a dash together.

Square brackets ([ ]) are used for an unavoidable parenthesis within a parenthesis, to enclose interpolations or comments in a quotation or incomplete data and to enclose phonetic transcription. Slash marks (/ /) are used to enclose phonemic transcription.

2.6. Numbers

Spell out whole numbers from zero to one hundred and numbers followed by *hundred*, *thousand*, *hundred thousand*, *million* or *billion*. Spell out all numbers beginning a sentence.

2.7. Dates

Centuries are spelled out and lowercased (the twenty-first century). Use standard dating (April 13, 1990). No comma is used between month and year when no day is given (May 1990).

2.8. Italics

Use italics for emphasis or ironic sense (only when necessary), foreign words, technical terms and linguistic forms (words, phrases, letters) cited as examples or as subjects of discussion. Italicize titles of books, plays, periodicals, films, television and radio programmes, paintings, drawings, photographs, statues or other works of art.

2.9. Capitalization

Capitalize the first letter of the first word and all of the principal words—including nouns, adjectives, adverbs and verbs in hyphenated compounds, but not articles,

prepositions and conjunctions—in titles of publications, lectures or papers. In mentioning magazines, journals or newspapers (e.g., the *Gentleman's Magazine*), do not treat an initial definite article as a part of the title.

Do not capitalize references to standard parts of a specific work, such as preface, acknowledgements, appendix, chapter, etc. (e.g., as discussed in chapter four).

2.10. Quotation marks

Double quotation marks (" ") are used to enclose quoted speech or writing when they are run Into the text. They are also used for titles or articles, book chapters and poems. Do not use straight double quotation marks (" ").

For quotations within run-in quotations use single quotation marks (' ')

2.11. Quotations

All quotations should correspond exactly with the originals in wording, spelling, capitalization and internal punctuation, indicating any change included—e.g., "this is for HER [my capitals] and you know it." The italicizing of words for emphasis (use with discretion) or the modernizing of spelling should also be explicitly indicated. If the source contains a spelling error, insert the italicized word *sic* in square brackets ([*sic*]). Clarifications, as well as translations, must be enclosed in brackets—e.g., "He [Stephen Spender] is one of the finest poets Britain has ever produced."

When using the author-date system, the reference of the quotation should always be placed at the end of the clause, before the punctuation mark—e.g., a "nice suggestion" (Russell 2016, 36).

2.12. Run-on and indented quotations

Unless special emphasis is required, prose quotations up to about 75 words should be run in the surrounding text. Longer quotations should be set off, indented (0.5 cm) and never enclosed in quotation marks. An 11-point font should be used.

Verse quotations of up to two lines should be run in, with the lines separated with a slash, leaving one space on either side (/). Longer verse quotations must be set off.

2.13. Ellipsis within quotations

Use three periods enclosed in brackets […] to indicate that part of a quotation has been deleted. Avoid using this device to open or close quotations that are obviously complete syntactic fragments.

2.14. Em dash (—)

The use of em dash instead of parentheses is advised. Do not leave any space before or after them—e.g., haunting ghosts of the past—slavery and its legacy—to rest before a better future can be built.

2.15. Footnotes

These should be limited to authorial commentary that cannot be easily accommodated in the body of the text and their use is discouraged. They must not be used to give bibliographical references that can appear in parenthetical form within the text. They should be numbered, superscripted and placed after the closest punctuation mark. The first line of the footnote should be indented 0.5 cm.

2.16. Exemplification

If the author provides a list of examples including sentences they should be listed, indented (0.5 cm) and written in an 11-point font following the example:

> (1) Hello my name is Charlie. My town is xxx. (S5b4P)
> (2) Hello! Mr. and Mrs Edwards. I'm Julia and I live in xxx. (S210g5P)
> (3) Hello family! My name is Berta and my surname is Santos. (S1g6P)

§ 3. Documenting sources

Do not forget to add to your list of works cited all the references you mention throughout the text. Bear in mind that specific page numbers must be provided for all quotations included.

Leave page numbers in full, not abbreviated. Do so for in-text citations—e.g., (Suedfell 1997, 849-861)—as well as for pages in the works cited list—e.g., *Political Psychology* 18 (4): 384-395.

Never use Latin reference tags (*op. cit.*, *ibidem*, etc.).

If you want to indicate that some information is missing you can use the following devices: n.p. for "no publisher"—where the publisher's name would appear in your entry—also for "no place of publication" and "no page"—e.g., online material without pagination. The use of n.d. is advised for "no date." If the author or editor is unknown, the entry should begin with the title of the publication.

Publishing company names are abbreviated in the list of works cited. Remove articles, business abbreviations (Co., Inc.) and descriptive words (Publishers and so on). Any university press will be abbreviated according to one of these two patterns: U of Miami P or Toronto UP.

Avoid giving initials for authors in your works cited. Full names should be provided when possible.

Two different types of documentation will be used: parenthetical in-text citations and a works cited list following the examples provided below. Other cases not included here must also follow the *Chicago Manual of Style* (latest edition).

Books and book chapters

Books with single author:

BARNES, Julian. 1984. *Flaubert's Parrot*. London: Jonathan Cape.
(Barnes 1984, 38)

Several books by the same author (and same year of publication):

SAMADDAR, Ranabir. 1999a. *The Marginal Nation. Transborder Migration from Bangladesh to West Bengal*. Delhi: Sage.
—. 1999b. *Reflections on Partition in the East*. Kolkata: Vikas.
(Samaddar 1999a, 124)
(Samaddar 1999b, 241)

Books with two or more authors:

ALLAN, Keith and Kate Burridge. 1991. *Euphemism and Dysphemism. Language Used as Shield and Weapon*. Oxford and New York: Oxford UP.
(Allan and Burridge 1991, 24)

BURFORD, Barbara, Gabriela Pearse, Grace Nichols and Jackie Kay. 1988. *A Dangerous Knowing. Four Black Women Poets*. London: Sheba.
(Burford et al. 1988, 45)

Book by a corporate author:

American Cancer Society. 1987. *The Dangers of Ultra-Violet Rays*. Washington: ACS.
(American Cancer Society 1987)

Edited books:

BROADBENT, John, ed. 1974. *Poets of the Seventeenth Century*. 2 vols. New York: New American Library.

If the same author appears as editor, list your references following the model:

O'HALLORAN, Kay. 2004. *Multimodal Discourse Analysis*. London: Continuum.
—, ed. 2005. *Mathematical Discourse: Language, Symbolism and Visual Images.* London: Continuum.

Translations/editions:

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

Second and successive editions:

WIENER, Martin J. 2004. *English Culture and the Decline of the Industrial Spirit, 1850-1980*. 2nd ed. Cambridge: Cambridge UP.

REPRINTS:

TREHARNE, Elaine, ed. (2000) 2010. *Old and Middle English c. 890-c. 1450. An Anthology*. Reprint, Malden, MA and Oxford: Blackwell.

(Treharne [2000] 2010, 98)

MULTIVOLUME WORK:

WILES, Rassele, ed. *The Complete Prose of Claus Rassele*. 9 vols. Chicago: U of Chicago P.

RASSELE, Claus. 1959-1972. *The Eternal Fire. The Complete Prose of Claus Rassele*, edited by Randal Wiles, vol. 3. Chicago: U of Chicago P.

BOOK CHAPTERS OR PARTS OF A BOOK:

OLSEN, Tillie. 1977. "Tell Me a Riddle." In *Jewish-American Stories*, edited by Irving Howe, 82-117. New York: Mentor-NAL.

BERGER, Samuel. 1983. Introduction to *International Terrorism*, by Morris Provis, xiv-xxii. Champaign: U of Illinois P.

ARTICLES

JOURNAL ARTICLES:

POPE, Marcel Cornis. 1990. "Poststructuralist Narratology and Critical Writing: A 'Figure in the Carpet' Textshop." *Journal of Narrative Technique* 20 (2): 245-265.

(Pope 1990, 247)

JOURNALS CONSULTED ONLINE:

Please DO NOT include any URL. Add, however, the date of access at the end. For example: [Accessed online on June 12, 2013].

ANDERSON, Jane. 2013. "Intertextual Strategies in Emma Tennant's *The Beautiful Child*." *Journal of Intertextual Studies* 76: 11-33. [Accessed online on November 25, 2015].

(Anderson 2013, 30)

SUEDFELD, Peter. 1997. "Reactions to Societal Trauma: Distress and/or Eustress." *Political Psychology* 18 (4): 849-861.

(Suedfeld 1997, 860)

NEWSPAPER ARTICLES/REVIEWS:

Please DO NOT include any URL. Add, however, the access date [Accessed online on Month day, year] at the end followed by a period. If the web is no longer available, use [No longer available].

BANKS, Sandra. 1986. "The Devil's on Our Radio." *People*, May 7, 72.

SMITH, Ali. 2012. "Once upon a Life." *Observer*, May 29. [Accessed online on August 2, 2015].

(Smith 2012, n.p.)

CHURCHWELL, Sara. 2012. Review of *Home*, by Toni Morrison. *Guardian*, April 27. [Accessed online on July 13, 2015].

Sorby, Angela. 2008. "A Woman in Saudi Arabia Chafes at Gender Restrictions." Review of *Songs of Ourselves: The Uses of Poetry in America*, by Joan Shelley Rubin. *American Historical Review* 113 (April 2008): 449-451.

Unpublished dissertations, theses and manuscripts:

Sandrei, Maria. 1990. "Life and Death in Eighteenth-Century Love Letters." PhD diss., University of Oviedo.

Vedrashko, Ilya. 2011. "Advertising in Computer Games." Master's thesis, University of Arizona.

Klein, Katherine. "Postmodern Literary Theory Revisited." Unpublished manuscript, last modified October 2, 2013, Microsoft Word file.

Lectures / papers presented at conferences:

Dunker, Patricia. "Salvage: On Writing Neo-Victorian Fiction." Lecture given at the AEDEAN Annual Conference, Málaga, November 2012.

Multimedia

Films, CDs, DVDs, VHSs:

Mehra, Rakeysh Omaprakash, dir. 2006. *Rang de Basanti*. ROMP and UTV Motion Pictures.

Cleese, John, Terry Gilliam, Eric Idle, Terry Jones and Michael Palin. 2001. *Monty Python and the Holy Grail*, special ed. DVD. Directed by Terry Gilliam and Terry Jones. Culver City, CA: Columbia Tristar Home Entertainment.

Handel, George Frideric. 1988. *Messiah*. Atlanta Symphony Orchestra and Chamber Chorus, Robert Shaw. Performed December 19, 1987. Ansonia Station, NY: Video Artists International. Videocassette (VHS), 141 min.

Online multimedia:

Please DO NOT include any URL Add, however, the access date [Accessed online on Month day, year] at the end followed by a period. If the web is no longer available, use [No longer available].

Pollan, Michael. 2007. "Michael Pollan Gives a Plant's-Eye View." Filmed March 2007. TED video, 17:31. [Accessed online on July 13, 2013].

Harwood, John. 2008. "The Pros and Cons of Biden." New York Times video, 2:00. August 23, 2008. [Accessed online on February 22, 2015].

Blogs:

Please DO NOT include any URL. Add, however, the access date [Accessed online on Month day, year] at the end followed by a period. If the web is no longer available, use [No longer available].

Flinders, Matthew. 2014. "Politics to Reconnect Communities." *OUPblog* (blog), April 2, 2014. [Accessed online on May 23, 2015].