Aspectos de Filoloxía Inglesa e Alemá

Nº 28 - Ano 2019

28

Servizo de Publicacións

Universidade de Vigo


BABEL
A.F.I.A.L

BABEL-AFIAL
Nº 28; Ano 2019

EDITA
Servizo de Publicacións da Universidade de Vigo
Campus Universitario de Vigo
36310 Vigo, España

MAQUETA
Oficode, S.L.

ISSN 1132 - 7332
DEP. LEGAL PO -603 - 02

Indice / Contents / Inhaltsverzeichnis

Artigos / Artículos / Articles / Artikel

Recensións / Reseñas / Reviews / Rezensionen

Romance beyond Obsession: Mourning Lost Love in Alice Munro's "Bardon Bus"

Máximo Aláez Corral (malacor.01@gmail.com)
Universidad de Oviedo

Abstract

In her short-story "Bardon Bus," from her 1982 collection *The Moons of Jupiter*, Canadian writer Alice Munro dissects the memories of a middle-aged woman living in Toronto about a love affair she had had a few months earlier, while on a research trip to Australia, with an anthropologist whom she just names "X." Through a constant time-leap from the Australian past to the Canadian present and back, Munro describes the strategies that the unnamed main character develops in order to deal with the sense of loss after the end of the affair. In this essay the influence and effects of love on female and male individuals, as exemplified in Munro's story, will be analysed under the light of emotion and romantic love, and in relation to the masquerade of femininity, within the framework of Sara Ahmed's theories and other feminist theoretical trends. The connection and/or the clash between the emotionally charged past and the loveless present is revealed to grow and strengthen its influence on the narrator's psyche under the mask of romantic love, a stereotype that takes its roots from conventional and sexist assumptions about love and its absence.

Keywords: Alice Munro, "Bardon Bus," short story, feminism, emotions.

Un idilio más allá de la obsesión: el duelo tras la pérdida del amor en 'Bardon Bus', de Alice Munro

Resumen

En el relato "Bardon Bus," perteneciente a la colección *The Moons of Jupiter* (1982), la escritora

canadiense Alice Munro diseccionа los recuerdos de una mujer de mediana edad que vive en Toronto, en relación con una aventura amorosa que vivió unos meses atrás, en el curso de una estancia de investigación en Australia, con un antropólogo al que se refiere con el término "X." Mediante un constante ir y venir desde el pasado en Australia hasta el presente en Canadá, Munro describe las estrategias que desarrolla la protagonista del relato para gestionar los sentimientos de pérdida tras el final de la aventura. En este artículo se analizarán el influjo y los efectos del amor sobre los personajes femeninos y masculinos, tal como aparecen en el cuento de Munro, bajo el prisma de las emociones y el concepto de amor romántico, así como en conexión con la mascarada de la feminidad, todo ello en el marco de las teorías de Sara Ahmed y otros enfoques feministas. El vínculo y/o la confrontación entre el pasado lleno de emociones y el presente ausente de afecto revela un incremento y un fortalecimiento de su influjo en la psicología de la narradora, bajo la máscara del amor romántico; un estereotipo que se asienta en presupuestos convencionales y sexistas en torno al amor y su ausencia.

Palabras clave*:* Alice Munro, "Bardon Bus," relato, feminismo, emociones.

1. INTRODUCTION

"Bardon Bus" is a story about love and luck and apparently accidental meetings. Alice Munro wrote this story in 1982 for her *Moons of Jupiter* collection. Unlike several other stories that had been previously published in literary journals,[i] this story was written specifically to be published in that volume. As Munro herself has declared, she wanted to deal with a mixture of feelings arising from love, eroticism and sadness:

> In a story called "Bardon Bus" I want to have a kind of feeling of hysterical eroticism. Very edgy and sad.

> This came to me from the feelings I get sometimes in women's dress shops. It's a feeling about the masquerades and attempts to attract love. (qtd. in Howells 78)

This is an idea she had already hinted upon somewhere else:

> I wrote it here last summer when I was down for weekends, and I was getting a very strange feeling from Queen Street. It was of a kind of almost hysterical eroticism. It was something about women's clothes and the very, very whorish makeup that women were wearing. (qtd. in Rasporich *22-23*)

These comments allude to the subtle net of connections Munro establishes between femininity and the construction of masks in relation to love and to social acceptance. All throughout "Bardon Bus," these connections are used to define both the main characters and their contexts. Although they grow tighter and more complex as the story progresses, the main themes are never lost; especially the way love and its socio-cultural ramifications constrains the ego, rather than expand it, and redefines it in unexpected ways when the source of affection disappears.

The protagonist in "Bardon Bus," as in other stories in the collection, is a middle-aged woman who happens to be a writer. Throughout the story this character, who is also the narrative voice, remains unnamed. The plot is apparently simple: a nameless woman (the first-person narrator), living in Toronto after a few months stay in Australia in order to do some research for a commissioned book, reflects upon a love affair she had in the course of her stay there with an anthropologist she just names "X" and whom she had briefly met years before in Canada. As she tells us, they had a short but intense affair in Australia while living there together, disconnected from their previous ordinary lives and obligations (he had recently divorced his third wife). In short, they shared a happiness the narrator now misses and longs for. As the story progresses, we get to know more details and information about the narrator's context: the flat where she is living now in Toronto is owned by Kay, a woman ten years younger,

who has had several lovers and has just broken up with another one. We are also told how the narrator meets Dennis, a friend of X she had already been introduced to in Australia, goes out for dinner with him, and has an interesting conversation with him about love, sex and dependence regarding both men and women. As the story progresses, her narration turns into an unsettling reflection on her present depressing circumstances, and soon we also learn about her struggles to overcome the loss of love. By the end of the story, the narrator seems to get over her emotional crisis, and just then knows that Kay is about to start a relationship with X, whom she has accidentally met during a visit to her ex-lover Roy.

Before delving into the notions of love, emotion, and the management of grief deriving from the absence and/or failure of love feelings, it might be useful to give an overview of the different reactions Munro's short story has provoked amongst researchers and critics. For example, while Coral Ann Howells (78-80) makes a fairly positive assessment of the story, stressing Munro's successful combination of past and present discourse, other critics such as Brad Hooper (71-72) are not so enthusiastic. Hooper precisely dislikes Munro's handling of time in the story and its "disjointed chronology" (72). Ajay Heble adds an interesting reflection on the fact that Munro structured the story in short numbered passages (which is, admittedly, an unusual narrative strategy in the author):

> In "Bardon Bus," Munro's division of the story into thirteen numbered sections suggests that order has given way once again to an interest in fragmentation. The comforts of sequence and connection have been abandoned here in favour of the surprises that come out of secrecy. (138)

Brenda Pfaus focuses on the narrator's personality, "an intuitive, detached (at times cynical) moral critic commenting philosophically on present action and past experience, in terse often clipped sentences as she reflects on her reality" (84). More recently, Munro's story has been analysed under the perspective of feminism and gender discrimination (Staines 60-78), as well as its significance in relation to the stories that precede and follow it in *The Moons of Jupiter*

(116-135). Magdalene Redekop examines "Bardon Bus" under the light of its connection to motherhood and lack, as well as the relevance of sex and repression in the establishment of love relations throughout the text: "Here […] Munro refuses to give sex a hygienic place that is in pure nature, apart from cultural constructions" (159). Similarly, in her essay "Phallicism and Ambivalence in Alice Munro's 'Bardon Bus'," Elizabeth Shih has analysed the story in relation to motherhood, phallicism and psychoanalysis. Finally, Andrea F. Szabó's article "Alice Munro's Australian Mirror Stories" focuses on the Australian context of both "Bardon Bus" and "The Jack Randa Hotel" (1995), also in connection with the gothic concept of romance as used in Charlotte Brönte's *Jane Eyre*.

As can be seen from this brief overview, only Redekop's, Shih's and, to a lesser extent, Szabó's analyses venture to tackle one of the core elements in the story: the management of love and the strategies used in order to deal with an emotional break-up and its aftermath. This article will try to expose the way Munro presents the evolution of grief and mourning of a lost love in the main character, the contingency and provisional nature of love feelings in heterosexual relationships, and the way social expectations force women to develop a masquerade of femininity to achieve the ultimate goal of loving/being loved. It is my contention that the analysis of this text may greatly benefit from a focus on emotions, love, sex and the cultural effects of time and age regarding gender. Being a story about love and the consequences of its absence, emotions play a crucial role in "Bardon Bus," even though on the surface the text may merely look like a random collection of impressions about life and love narrated by a still love-struck middle-aged woman.

The nature of love is exposed not through deep philosophical examination but through the protagonist's ordinary or even trivial musings and observations of the world around her. As has been suggested, on the surface it would seem as if banality ruled the narrator's flow of feelings and she herself had little to do or say in relation to it all (Skagert 62), thus leading her to brood over some sense of light-hearted fatality concerning her life, as when she reflects upon a dream she has recently had, towards the end of the story: "I can't describe it very well, it sounds like a movie-dream of heaven,

all banality and innocence […]. I can't apologize for the banality of my dreams" ("Bardon" 127).[2] As we shall see, both dream and fantasy play a significant role in sustaining notions of romantic love in the narrator's mindset, and also contribute to her descent into mourning and grief, in the sense that they "contaminate" her memories of the time she spent with her lover and distort them by turning them into an idealized and unreal matter, that "rare state of content" the narrator mentions when describing her dream (127).

2. AFFECTION AND THE REPRESENTATION OF LOVE

Idealisation in connection to emotions is one of the basic ingredients of romantic love. But love can also be analysed under a different light. In this respect, the nature of basic affections like love, grief or happiness, which are feelings that play a crucial role in this short story, may acquire a deeper meaning if analysed using Sara Ahmed's theory about emotions in conjunction with the notion of romantic love. Ahmed formulates her theory starting from Freudian psychoanalysis and then progresses towards feminist and queer theory by underlining the cultural qualities shared by emotions, in such a way that any feeling (love first and foremost, but also fear or happiness) can be claimed to be a socio-cultural construct defining different subjectivities, always in relation to larger communities (Bleiker and Hutchinson 124). This approach distinctly contrasts with a strict psychobiological understanding of affect, wherein emotions tend to be theorized not as thoughts (cultural constructs) but as strict bodily sensations (124).

In her seminal work, *The Cultural Politics of Emotion* (2004), Ahmed dissects two traits that characterize love according to Freud: identification and idealisation. While the former can be understood as "the desire to take a place where one is not yet" (126), i.e. the desire to become like the object or other in the future (thus expanding the space of the subject), idealisation is not directed at the object, but rather derives from a need or desire to reaffirm the ego, as Ahmed herself states: "the ideal object, as with the ego ideal, is an effect of the ideal image that the subject has of itself" (127).

In "Bardon Bus," the narrator's apparent inability to overcome her own awareness of romantic failure gives way to an obsession about both the object of love and the past time-space context she spent with him. This obsession, in my opinion, also seems to be at the root of the "randomness" and "unpredictability" Howells mentions in relation to the sequencing of the narrated events (79). More importantly, Howells points at a crucial question: the importance of ageing and the subsequent loss of the "powers of sexual attraction" as a key factor determining love, especially as experienced by women (80), hence the conflict or confrontation mentioned above between the ideal and the real in relation *both* to the subject and the object of love. If we follow Ahmed's reading of emotions we will find that, besides the differences between identification and idealisation, she also uses Freud's differentiation between "anaclitic" loved objects and "narcissistic" ones (*Cultural Politics of Emotion* 125). In the former, an external object is the primary object of love, while in the latter the self is the primary object of love. Interestingly, in narcissistic object-choices the person can love what he/she him/herself is, was or would like to be; or else someone who was once part of him/herself, all of which is reduced to a primal distinction between heterosexual and homosexual love. From this reasoning stems the conventional Freudian identification of anaclitic love with heterosexuality, and of narcissistic love with homosexuality; an identification that seems to be far from fixed or sustainable since "[t]he boy who makes an anaclitic object-choice based on paternal love and protection is as liable to turn out gay as is the boy who makes a narcissistic object-choice and loves himself from his adoring father's perspective" (Dean 124). We might even go as far as confronting Freud's stance that

> complete object-love of the anaclitic type is, properly speaking, characteristic of the man. It displays the marked over-estimation which is doubtless derived from the original narcissism of the child, now transferred to the sexual object. This sexual over-estimation is the origin of the peculiar state of being in love, a state suggestive of a neurotic compulsion, which is thus traceable to the impoverishment of the ego in respect of libido *in favour of the love object*. (qtd. in Samuels 67, emphasis added)

This development of "object-love" on the part of men and of narcissistic inclinations on the part of women leads to men loving women who love themselves, and women loving the love that is directed at them, a difference that, according to Ahmed, reveals a heterosexual logic (*Cultural Politics of Emotion* 125-126). It may also be important to bear in mind, though, that this notion of difference can appear not only in heterosexuality but also in other types of relationships or sexual tendencies. In the case of homosexuality, for example, we might argue whether the subject (be it gay or lesbian) seeks differences in other scopes of his/her lover's individuality, such as character, physical peculiarities, ideology, lifestyle, etc., in order to make for the lack of difference regarding biological sex. Ahmed, following her Freudian analysis of emotions, remarks that "identification involves *making likeness* rather than being alike; the subject becomes 'like' the object or other only in the future" (126).

The concept of romantic love, according to contemporary feminism, certifies a link "between structural determinism and an essentialist conception of emotion," an essentializing conception of love that may even be traced in second-wave feminism (Jónasdóttir 39). In this respect I would like to stress the extent to which such conventional interpretations of emotions steer away from a "liquid" or unstable conception of love and tend to fix attitudes to emotions in terms of sensibility and receptiveness as regards sex and gender. Some significant feminist theorists explored this issue especially in the seventies. Shulamith Firestone's *The Dialectic of Sex*, in particular, is one of the most notorious examples of a thorough description of the mechanisms that rule romantic love. Firestone wrote her book in 1970, a time not too far away from the writing of "Bardon Bus," hence the depiction of love and relationships in the story might easily fit into some of Firestone's assumptions on the same topic. Even though western society has greatly changed through the last decades, and even though both the concept and the experience of love have gone through major shifts in meaning, Firestone makes several interesting remarks. Specifically she states that men seem to be "unable to take love seriously as a cultural matter; but they can't do without it altogether" (127), and that even though a woman may know that romantic "idealization, which she works so hard to produce, is a lie […], her whole identity hangs in the balance of her

love life. She is allowed to love herself only if a man finds her worthy of love" (132).

In relation to Firestone's idea that women tend to rely on their love life in order to attain identity, in "Bardon Bus" we find very different reactions and responses regarding love in either female character (the unnamed narrator and Kay). Here the concept of an emotional masquerade applied to femininity becomes relevant, as we saw in Munro's earlier quotation, insofar as both in the case of the narrator of the story and Kay there seems to be a genuine intention to love the "other," thus equating emotions to femininity, and in both cases their efforts end in failure and loss. However, in the case of the narrator, loss brings about grief and obsession, whereas in the case of Kay it brings about a desperate need to find another "other," not so much as a sexual conquest but as a search for an ideal partner. From a feminist point of view, therefore, love can be seen as an "ideological mask" to justify the exploitation of women. Firestone attacks romantic love as a form of "corrupted" love, even though she claims that love is "good in itself" (138). From my point of view, however, the notion of love we can extract from "Bardon Bus" is that any and every form of love is in itself a social and cultural construct, no matter whether romantic or not, good or evil, and therefore is in any case liable to corruption.

An alternative interpretation of love as a contingent emotional phenomenon, also labelled "confluent love" (Jónasdóttir 40), which usually reinforces sexualisation as its basic drive as opposed to a more spiritual/idealized version of love, does not guarantee the elimination of gender discrimination or inequality either. Indeed, it may only lead to a more sexualized or physical type of romantic love, where gender roles remain fixed and delineated by their conceptual boundaries (40).

3. LOST LOVE AND ROMANCE IN "BARDON BUS"

Together with her use of idealisation as a means to distance herself from a painful reality, the narrator of "Bardon Bus" uses key words as a strategy to sublimate feelings propelled by lack of love; for example, the term "Bardon Bus" makes reference to a bus-line from her former

life in Australia, an itinerary plagued with emotional memories of her lover and herself together, but at the same time the name can be interpreted as a symbol for the transient, volatile and movable quality of love feelings as well as a substitute in the absence of the "real thing" (love). Likewise, the letter X symbolizes and simultaneously substitutes the "real" presence of lover: "[U]sing just the letter, not needing a name, is in line with a system I often employ these days. I say 'Bardon Bus, No. 144,' and I see a whole succession of scenes. I see them in detail; streets and houses" ("Bardon" 112).

Finding or reaffirming identity, so crucial to this story, proves to be a tough task for the narrator, as she constantly returns to writing about her lover. As Georgeann Murphy points out: "if the self can be forged by the act of writing, it can be lost in attraction to the opposite sex" (45). Furthermore, as Katherine J. Mayberry suggests, verbalising the experience and narrating failures and obsessions, especially regarding emotions, may actually bring about or even worsen the very pain that narration intends to prevent or appease (30). The more the narrator writes about her love obsession, the more she loses her own identity. As she reminisces about the love affair, the gap between the character's present actions and her memories from the past is enlarged, thus "alienating" the reader from her narration. In Munro's own words, the more personal stories "are carried away from the real" (qtd. in May 54), an assertion that also emphasizes the tense and difficult coexistence between present and past narration, the "dialectic between present and past, experience and understanding" (Duncan 19).

Love implies an approximation to an ideal that binds both subject and object of love together, even in spite of heteronormative conventional thinking, and probably because of the tendency towards difference in the case of heterosexual relationships. Right from the start, the female first-person narrator in "Bardon Bus" tries to conflate the impression her lover made on her with her own personal context, as when she says: "I think of being an old maid, in another generation. There were plenty of old maids in my family. I come of straitened people, madly secretive, tenacious, economical" ("Bardon" 110), a remark on herself and her family that is coupled, shortly after, with a description of her lover: "I call him X, as if he were a character in an

old-fashioned novel, that pretends to be true. X is a letter in his name, but I chose it also because it seems to suit him. The letter X seems to me expansive and *secretive*" ("Bardon" 112, emphasis added). By using similar expressions to describe both the narrator's personal background and the way she identifies/remembers her lover, Munro remarks the very need to find sameness in difference, a need that traps the subject in love when love dies away or when correspondence is not fulfilled.

This need also reveals the suitability of the narrative text as a place for meeting: the meeting of narrator/character and reader, in such a way that both a "meeting by observing" and a "meeting by identifying" can be sustained between the two of them, in Keith Oatley's terms (444-446),[3] the more so because Munro does not create an overtly relatable main character. In this way, the reader may identify with the narrator while at the same time watching her from a distance.

Even from a first reading of "Bardon Bus" it seems clear that the narrator establishes emotional links with objects and displays a troublesome relation with herself in terms of identity. Masquerading—in direct relation to femininity but also tangentially with homosexuality—plays in this sense a crucial role, as we see in several scenes and situations along the story, for example when the narrator describes how her friend Kay once disguised herself as an old woman, "with a gray wig and a tattered fur coat" ("Bardon" 116). This tendency towards the masquerade of femininity reappears later on, when the narrator goes out to buy some earrings and enters a shop where a boy is being dressed up as a lady: "[A] beautiful young lady, who is not a lady at all but a pretty young boy dressed up as a lady, emerges from the shelter of the mirror. […] [H]e is the prettiest and most ladylike person I have seen all day" (125-126). This vision prompts in the narrator memories of herself when she was a child and performed her own masquerades of femininity:

> I remember how when I was ten or eleven years old I used to dress up as a bride in old curtains, or as a lady in rouge and a feathered hat. After all the effort and contriving and my own enchantment with the finished

> product there was a considerable letdown. […] There is a great fear and daring and disappointment in this kind of display. ("Bardon" 126)

Munro exposes here the need not only to "be" what the mother is, in mock imitation and at the same time through repetition of performative routines, but also to desire femininity as the full realisation of a "complete" woman, this realisation proving to be a disappointing artifice, a "product", from the child's innocent perspective, and an unsatisfied or unfulfilled desire from the mature narrator's perspective, thus longing for the boy's youth as a *sine qua non* condition to embody desirability. The narrator's childlike persona stages her masquerade as a "longing for plenitude with the mother," an unconscious imitation of the mother (Shih 76). By contrast, the narrator's middle-aged impersonation despises the permanence of the masquerade into old age, a time when it seemingly starts being ineffective. Curiously enough, her obsession about ageing and decay is directly and exclusively connected to femininity, as there is no mention of any such process affecting men:

> I'm half convinced that a more artful getup would have made a more powerful impression, more dramatic clothes might have made me *less discardable* […]: the fat woman with pink hair; the eighty-year-old with painted-on eyebrows; they may all be thinking that they haven't gone too far yet, not quite yet. ("Bardon" 124-125, emphasis added)

The narrator's obsession with ageing is probably as important as her obsession with loss of love in "Bardon Bus," in the sense that ageing implies loss of desirability. This view on bodily decay derives from a heteronormative male perspective on women, a point of view that, while apparently being shared by the female narrator at the beginning of the story, may reveal a "panicked masculinity" in the characters of X and Dennis (Shih 81): a panic that seems to be fought back whenever the male must strive to be completely and unambiguously male, as in the case of X, or whenever femininity is denied by means of apparent misogyny, as in the case of Dennis (Shih 81-82). The need to be as heterosexually masculine as possible betrays

both in X and Dennis the fact that masculine identity, as Judith Butler asserts, is constituted by means of sexual difference, inasmuch as it is attained by a prior prohibition of homosexuality (150). The two female characters, on the contrary, display a concept of womanliness deeply rooted in instability and masquerading, either by means of performative gestures, poses or attitudes conventionally understood as "feminine" or, as mentioned before, by dressing or making up in a stereotypical feminine way in order to clear off any doubts about their heterosexuality.

Nevertheless, the contemptuous vision on women that apparently characterizes Dennis's train of thought, and which might justify Firestone's statement that "men can't love" (135), may not be as clearly misogynistic as might seem at first sight. The bluntness of his assertions when he talks with the narrator could even be claimed to betray an honesty missing in X's softer, gentler, and seemingly more insincere approach to women. Dennis remarks that "women are the lucky ones […] [b]ecause they are forced to live in the world of loss and death" ("Bardon" 122), and he is probably expressing his true belief, harsh though it may seem. The kind of "luck" Dennis talks about, however, is disconnected from female experience and reality; hence the narrator craves for "new definitions of luck" towards the end of the story (128), in order to overcome grief from the absence of the lover. Ahmed states, regarding loss and grief:

> [T]he loss of the object is compensated for by 'taking on' the quality of the object. Mourning and grief become an expression of love; love announces itself most passionately when faced with the loss of the object […]. Love has an intimate relation to grief not only through how the subject responds to the lost object, but also by what losses get admitted as losses in the first place. If I can imagine that the person who has lost 'could-have-been-me,' then the other's grief can also become my grief. (*Cultural Politics of Emotion* 130)

Specifically in connection with the main topic in the story—grief for and obsession about a lost love—mourning and love seem to be tightly linked together as far as the lover's desire to "be like" the

object of love is concerned. This is exactly what Kay, the other female character in the story, refers to when she says: "It's always the desire to see yourself reflected. […] Love always comes back to self-love. […] Obsession and self-delusion" ("Bardon" 117). By using the word "self-love" Munro explicitly names the need of finding oneself in the other and validating (or completing) one's own identity through this "other" whose presence fills in this desire in the subject, and whose absence awakens or arouses the same need.

Interestingly, whereas Dennis's attitude seems to be defined by his sharp and merciless description of male-female love relationships, both the narrator's and Kay's attitude towards love denote masochism, "the only way in which the narrator can sense the boundaries of her fragile ego and so be assured that she still exists; so too is with Kay" (Shih 84). In a similar way, both women tend to resort to nostalgia "as a coping mechanism" in the absence of love or in the aftermath of a break-up (89).

The narrator tries to use different strategies to fight grief, with varying results: at the beginning of the story she seeks identification with the love object by means of fantasies, nostalgia and dreams, but when this tactic fails she resorts to letting eroticism and sexuality flood over her psyche, with the result of increasing anxiety derived from longing and desire. Eventually, she tries to find pleasure in the ordinary and simple nature of reality, as when she goes to Rooneem's Bakery and just watches the street, producing apparently random unconnected reflections about the world around her, snippets of a larger net of interconnections, i.e. accepting reality as a way to overcome pain and frustration (Martin 144). This strategy proves to be much more successful and probably lets her find the stamina to accept the revelation awaiting her at the end of the story (144). This final acceptance of reality, and her subsequent resignation to "let go" and accept loss for what it is, may also be seen as a way out of the above-mentioned masochistic impulses and obsessions (Heble 138). This could also be seen as a turn in the notion of ageing, no longer a negative aspect but a positive one. As Beverly Jean Rasporich states: "transformation and change is the condition of the female life and it is also adventure for Munro's heroines who take their leads from the mother-philosopher figure" (70).

In spite of the narrator's progress out of her emotional crisis, dependence on desirability still implies a strong link between happiness and romantic love, in the sense that there is a process of idealisation affecting both the love object and love itself. Idealisation has such a strong presence in "Bardon Bus" that the inner conflict between love and the need to be desired remains unsolved until the end of the story. If we accept, in line with Ahmed's suggestion, that happiness implies "a specific kind of intentionality" ("Happy Objects" 33), then we may claim as well that the narrator in "Bardon Bus" is intentionally seeking a change from the state of mourning and grief in which loss of love has left her, a change into some kind of emotional improvement, while at the same time heavily relying on chance and the above-mentioned "new definitions of luck," which may lead to a displacement in the focus of the subject-lover, as can be seen by the end of the story.

In "Bardon Bus," events and the characters' reactions to them go hand in hand without any explicit judgement on the part of the narrator as to their "good" or "evil" value: Munro leaves the task of establishing moral judgement to the reader. This detachment from moral judgement is paired with a sense of both futility and fleetingness regarding the experience of love, as we see in the narrator's reminiscence of the affair: "We were not afraid to use the word love. We lived without responsibility, without a future, in freedom, with generosity, in constant but not wearying celebration. We had no doubt that our happiness would last out the little time required" ("Bardon" 113).

The story itself flows in and out of the present or the past tenses, through a succession or sequencing of events that become thematically interconnected in spite of their seemingly arbitrary or casual appearance. For instance, the fact that the narrator has had an affair with X and is trying to recover from her lost love in a flat that happens to be owned by Kay, who happens to have just broken up with Roy, an anthropologist who happens to be a friend of X, another anthropologist who happens to meet Kay, who happens to fall in love with him, etc. The apparent denial of conventional narrative structure in the story (as regards a clear introduction, development, and climax/conclusion) runs parallel to the accidental, unstructured or

"liquid" quality of the love processes depicted. In Munro's story, events are presented as a kind of tidal flow constantly adding new layers of meaning with each new interconnection. The effects deriving from all those interconnections, nevertheless, create a kind of build-up in the narrator's psyche, as she eventually reaches a stage where she can no longer put up with the unstructured and random state caused by pain and grief: "There is a limit to the amount of misery and disarray you will put up with, for love, just as there is a limit to the amount of mess you can stand around a house. You can't know the limit beforehand, but you will know when you've reached it" ("Bardon" 127).

This is the point where the narrator goes beyond acknowledging the trappings of romantic love and its pernicious effects on her and actually starts taking effective measures in order to fight them. Her recollection of an encounter she had with a previous lover who used to follow her after they had broken up is very illustrative of this (painful) progression towards independence from romance. After the ex-lover makes a scene where he declares, in a dramatic and overacted manner, that she is "free" of him, she reflects: "He was in desperate need, as I am now, and I didn't pity him, and I'm not sorry I didn't" ("Bardon" 126-127). The man "used to follow" the narrator after the break-up, but she unabashedly declares she would be willing to do the same about X: "Thank God I don't know where he is. I can't telephone him, write letters to him, waylay him on the street" (126).

Here we can see a striking parallelism with Firestone's above-mentioned remark about men's inability to take love as a cultural matter. On the one hand, the scene with the narrator's ex-lover illustrates his idealization of women, as well as his reliance on "falling in love" rather than on actually loving. On the other hand, the two male characters, Dennis and X, stand for very conventional male positions as regards sex and love: Dennis appears to be a cynic who relishes on misogynist comments about women and the burdens that their emotional side bring upon them, whereas X is characterized not so much by what he says but by his actions and his behaviour, and impersonates the role of a womanizer who goes through different love affairs, as well as marriages, without much emotional commitment.

He does not say much throughout the story, indeed. It is significant that one of the few remarks that seem to come from him is actually produced by a fictional version of him, within the context of a fantasized sex scene the narrator imagines in a moment of sexual need: "We almost finished each other off" ("Bardon" 124).[4]

In either case, Munro characterizes the male attitude to love as ruled by pragmatism and a will to conquer rather than to share. In theory, this would mean that both Dennis and X reject the conventional logic of romantic love—the idealization of one and only one lover as a soulmate—either through sarcasm and cynicism (in the case of Dennis) or through lack of genuine commitment (in the case of X). The fact that X approaches love as a collector of affairs or sexual conquests seems to suggest a connection with the idea of "sexual inequality" between both genders, a concept whose presence is essential, in Firestone's opinion, for love to exert its destructive effects on women (130). Dennis also portrays this ideology of inequality and discrimination in several of his remarks, especially in the course of his conversation with the narrator when he asks her for dinner in Toronto in the present timeline. He says: "Think of the way your life would be, if you were a man. […] Men fall in love with younger women. Men want younger women. Men can get younger women" ("Bardon" 121). A little bit further, in the same conversation, he makes another generalization, this time about women: "A woman your age can't compete […]. You can't compete with younger women. […] So the men have this way of renewing themselves, they get this refill of vitality, while the women are you might say removed from life" (121-122). Women, following this patriarchal reasoning, are tied up by their biology: the fact that their bodies age plays a far more relevant role in their "chances" regarding love and relationships than in the case of men, who seem to be "naturally" attracted to younger women and apparently need not worry about their own physical decay.

The fact that, especially in western societies, success for women seems to depend on "their desirability to males" (Person 258), reinforces the social and economic marginalisation of those women who choose to be or live alone; thus, rather than an expression of choice or chance, being alone is considered some kind of emotional or social failure for women. The narrator in "Bardon Bus" is also tied

by this social constraint. In this respect she seems to be imprisoned not just by sexual/emotional dependency but, most importantly, by the demands imposed on her by conventional assumptions around love and the roles of men and women in heteronormative love relationships: after the end of the affair she is currently living alone (marginalisation); she is no longer young (ageing); and she is no longer beautiful (desirability). Having lost the attributes that traditionally allow for romance, she resorts, at first, to memories, dreams and fantasies, and finally to a reliance on chance and a change of luck as providers for happiness.

Together with this slight optimistic change of perspective, nevertheless, by the end of the story we also see a growing yearning on the part of the narrator to disappear from her own narration, most likely allowing a displacement in favour of Kay, the younger and more beautiful woman and, overall, probably a more suitable embodiment of the masquerade of femininity: "Kay is back from the country. She too has a new outfit, a dark-green schoolgirl's tunic worn without a blouse or brassiere. She has dark-green knee socks and saddle oxfords" ("Bardon" 128). At the same time, the narrator's voice grows less urgent and more resigned, as if slowly drifting into silence (Redekop 14). It is interesting to note that in the last numbered paragraph, which contains a conversation between Kay and the narrator, the latter barely speaks, and it is indeed Kay's voice that occupies most of those final sentences. Through Kay's voice we reach the final revelation in the story, as if in a subtle epiphany of sorts.[v] Never fully or explicitly stated but scribbled between the lines for the reader to imagine, this revelation establishes new links between the old and the new love-object—the former just a symbol, a letter; the latter a full name with (probably) new meanings and a brand new love story to offer—even though the story so far already offers a hint of where this new love may lead to, on account of what the narrator has told us about Kay and her ramblings in love. Munro confronts us with the starting point of a new sentimental relationship, another reiteration in a string of "innumerable variations" of love affairs that point towards a rather contingent, provisional and gendered conceptualization of emotions.

4. CONCLUSIONS

As we have seen, Munro dissects, with a deceitfully simple and casual approach, the effects of love on women, as well as the way in which chance is combined with social pressure on the female individual in the configuration of her emotions and in the handling of loss when emotional links are traumatically suppressed. To achieve this goal the author weaves, by means of seemingly disconnected vignettes, a progression from the narrator's reliance on dreams and fantasies, her usage of certain significant key words and expressions, her eroticized/sexualised remembrance of the relationship, to her final acceptance on the casual and accidental nature of reality. Munro is wise enough, nonetheless, to hint at the provisional and unstable quality of each strategy the narrator uses to overcome pain and grief. In this, Munro seems to follow Firestone's ideas about the different conception of love in men and women, as well as the inescapable inequality that applies to women when handling love feelings.

Through my analysis of Munro's story against the concept of romantic love and the impact of emotions on female identity I have tried to clarify the author's conscientious examination of the cultural dimension of love both in males and females. Even though Munro refuses to use the main character/narrator to give a speech on inequality in heterosexual relationships, she does provide sufficient evidence about men having the upper hand in deciding when to stop or start affairs, to the detriment of women, who invariably turn into sufferers/mourners in unequally balanced relationships. Both the narrator's and Kay's attitudes and reactions reveal how women are driven to a masquerade of femininity in order to love and be loved. Through her minute description of the main character's life (past and present), Munro succeeds in exposing the constructed nature of femininity, and the void behind any identity based on such masquerade.

The apparently unstructured sequencing of impressions, memories, fantasies, dreams and observations that make up the story conforms a universe that both accounts for and reinforces grief and pain deriving from lost love. In this respect, Sarah Ahmed's theories on emotions and affect (love and happiness, in particular) throw some

light on the way feelings are handled by the individual. Likewise, a revision of the mechanisms of romantic love (both in men and women) proves to be useful in order to understand the extent to which the love-subject is trapped in the cultural prison of gendered feelings. A complex pattern of heteronormative assumptions seem to constrain and limit women especially, by means of performative masquerades in order to increase their expectations of loving/being loved.

Munro does not provide explicit moral solutions for any of these love-related issues, but she does provide an accurate, sharp and at times ironic description of the evolution the main character goes through in the story. We witness the way the narrator deals with her post-break-up situation by constantly bringing the past into the present, and how she tries to allow the present to get rid of the past. However, it is the past (embodied in X) that seems to come back to haunt the narrator through the possibility of the new affair with Kay. In sum, the story's conclusion only reinforces the idea that love, as a social construct, is a source of both happiness and grief for the female individual who enjoys it or suffers from its absence: beyond the suffering or happiness that such individual might get from those feelings, love has a gendered and provisional quality that no woman seems to be able to avoid. Once she has completed the process of mourning her lost love, the main character remains silent and fades away, as if her role in the story had exhausted her. It is then time for a new female character to start the process of a new love affair, a reiteration of emotion that will most likely consume her as well.

NOTES

[1] This was the case of "Dulse" (1980), "Accident" (1977), "Prue" (1981) or "The Moons of Jupiter" (1978), among others.

[2] All quotations from Munro's short story will be henceforth labelled "Bardon" followed by the corresponding page number.

[3] This is a distinction Oatley uses precisely to highlight the dialogic nature of the narrative text.

[4] Incidentally, this stress in an (unfulfilled) desire for complete commitment in sex/passion echoes an earlier comment by the narrator, precisely in connection with another fantasy: "There I come back again

and again to the centre of my fantasy, to the moment when you give yourself up, give yourself over, to the assault which is guaranteed to finish off everything you've been before" ("Bardon" 111).

[5] The epiphany is that Kay has accidentally met X (whose full name, Alex Walther, is finally mentioned) and will most likely start an affair with him.

WORKS CITED

Ahmed, Sara. *The Cultural Politics of Emotion*, Routledge, 2004.

Ahmed, Sara. "Happy Objects." *The Affect Theory Reader*, edited by Melissa Gregg and Gregory J. Seigworth, Duke UP, 2010, pp. 29-51.

Bleiker, Roland and Emma Hutchinson. "Fear No More: Emotions and World Politics." *Cultures and Politics of Global Communication*, edited by Costas M. Constantinou, et al. Cambridge UP, 2008, pp. 115-136.

Butler, Judith. *The Psychic Life of Power: Theories in Subjection*, Stanford UP, 1997.

Dean, Tim, and Christopher Lane, eds. *Homosexuality and Psychoanalysis*, Chicago UP, 2001.

Duncan, Isla. *Alice Munro's Narrative Art*, Palgrave MacMillan, 2011.

Firestone, Shulamith. *The Dialectic of Sex*, Bantam Books, 1970.

Heble, Ajay. *The Tumble of Reason. Alice Munro's Discourse of Absence*, Toronto UP, 1994.

Hooper, Brad. *The Fiction of Alice Munro: An Appreciation*, Praeger, 2008.

Howells, Coral Ann. *Alice Munro*, Manchester UP, 1998.

Jónasdóttir, Anna, and Ann Ferguson, eds. *Love: A Question for Feminism in the Twentieth-First Century*, Routledge, 2014.

Martin, Walter R. *Alice Munro: Paradox and Parallel*, U of Alberta P, 1987.

May, Charles E., ed. *Alice Munro*, Salem, 2013.

Mayberry, Katherine J. "'Every Last Thing…Everlasting': Alice Munro and the Limits of Narrative." *Alice Munro*, edited by Harold Bloom, Bloom's Literary Criticism, 2009, pp. 29-40.

Munro, Alice. "Bardon Bus." *The Moons of Jupiter*, Vintage International, (1982) 1991.

Murphy, Georgeann. "The Art of Alice Munro: Memory, Identity, and the Aesthetics of Connection." *Alice Munro*, edited by Harold Bloom, Bloom's Literary Criticism, 2009, pp. 41-56.

Oatley, Keith. "Meetings of Minds: Dialogue, Sympathy and Identification in Reading Fiction." *Poetics*, vol. 26, 1999, pp. 439-454.

Person, Ethel. *Dreams of Love and Faithful Encounters. The Power of Romantic Passion*, American Psychiatric, 2007.

Pfaus, Brenda. *Alice Munro*, The Golden Dog, 1984.

Rasporich, Beverly J. *Dance of the Sexes: Art and Gender in the Fiction of Alice Munro*, U of Alberta P, 1990.

Redekop, Magdalene. *Mothers and Other Clowns: The Stories of Alice Munro*, Routledge, 1992.

Samuels, Robert. *Between Philosophy and Psychoanalysis: Lacan's Reconstruction of Freud*, Routledge, 1993.

Shih, Elizabeth A. "Phallicism and Ambivalence in Alice Munro's 'Bardon Bus'." *Contemporary Literature*, vol. 44, no. 1, September 2004, pp. 73-105.

Skagert, Ulrica. *Possibility-space and its imaginative variations in Alice Munro's short stories*, Department of English, Stockholm U, 2008.

Staines, David, ed. *The Cambridge Companion to Alice Munro*, Cambridge UP, 2016.

Szabó, Andrea F. "Alice Munro's Australian Mirror Stories." *Brno Studies in English*, vol. 41, no. 2, 2015, pp. 109-119.

Recibido / Received: 14-3-2019 *Aceptado /Accepted: 10-4-2019*

Out of a "Rupert" Frost Poem: Myths, Anti-Myths and Icons in Annie Proulx's New England Short Stories

Maja Daniel (daniel.maja@ehu.eus) [1]
Universidad del País Vasco/Euskal Herriko Unibertsitatea

Abstract

The idea of New England as a pastoral, authentic, and morally solid place emerged early in the nineteenth century, and was a consequence of rapidly changing social conditions. This kind of image, though cherished by the elite of the region and sought after by tourists, is obviously false and highly exclusive. *Heart Songs*, Annie Proulx's debut collection of short stories, is one of the first texts to shatter the idealized picture of New England. This article will offer examples of settings and characters radically different from those conventionally associated with the region's identity. A special focus will be placed on the imagined archetypal Yankee figure and the way Proulx's New Englanders deal with such an unreal image in their very real lives. Likewise, the group of newcomers and their perception of the region will be commented on. The general methodological framework applied here relates to cultural studies and, more precisely, to studies of space, with an emphasis on a regionalist approach.

Keywords: Annie Proulx, short stories, regionalism, myth, New England

De un poema de "Rupert" Frost: Mitos, antimitos e iconos en los relatos cortos sobre Nueva Inglaterra de Annie Proulx

Resumen

La idea de Nueva Inglaterra como un lugar bucólico, auténtico y moralmente fuerte surgió a principios del siglo diecinueve y fue consecuencia de los rápidos

cambios sociales. Esta imagen, aunque mantenida por la élite de la región y perseguida por los turistas, es obviamente falsa y excluyente. *Heart Songs*, la colección de relatos cortos con la que Annie Proulx debutó como escritora, es uno de los primeros textos que echan por tierra este idealizado retrato de la región. Este artículo analiza algunas de estas icónicas imágenes y ofrece ejemplos de escenarios y personajes opuestos a lo que convencionalmente se asocia con la identidad de Nueva Inglaterra. Pone, además, especial énfasis en la figura del arquetípico yanqui y la manera en la que los habitantes nativos afrontan esta representación irreal en sus vidas reales. De igual modo, analiza la percepción de un grupo de residentes urbanos recién instalados en los pueblos de estas zonas rurales. El marco metodológico general aplicado en el artículo es el de los Estudios Culturales que destacan la importancia del espacio, especialmente ligados a un enfoque regionalista.

Palabras clave: Annie Proulx, relatos cortos, regionalismo, mito, Nueva Inglaterra

> Don't presume to tell New Englanders – or people in any region, for that matter, who they are …; they know very well who they are through the patterns and textures of the lives they have carved out in the landscapes of their immediate places.
> Kent C. Ryden

When reviewing Annie Proulx's *Heart Songs and Other Stories* in 1989, Loree Rackstraw began quoting R. V. Cassill's definition of the short story genre, who defined it as "a refuge for those who want to explore the human condition as sentient men and women" (qtd in Rackstraw 66). The reviewer also observes that, in her stories, Proulx not only reveals the touching and bizarre struggles of country folk, but she also makes vivid the painful irresolution of human need, which is somehow softened by irony.

Indeed, Rackstraw accurately summarized one of the crucial aspects of Proulx's work. In this study, the influence of settings and the physical and cultural burden of the milieu, will be emphasized above all other facets. Likewise, the archetypal Yankee figure and its confrontation with those inhabiting such a culturally complex area as New England are to be examined. As such, the aim of this article is to highlight Annie Proulx's iconoclastic treatment of one of the most recurrently imagined American regions, as the writer shatters its mythic foundations in order to uncover the burden its residents are forced to deal with in their mundane, prosaic lives. In like manner, the newcomers, their arrogance and aloofness towards the "locals," and their being ridiculed at the end, often as a consequence of the milieu's particular features, will form a part of this analysis.[2]

The first edition of Proulx's collection, published in 1988 under the title *Heart Songs and Other Stories*, contained nine stories. Two further stories were added to the 1995 edition, under the simplified title *Heart Songs*. The earliest texts from the collection had appeared in *Gray's Sporting Journal*, the favorite publication of "an ardent fisherperson and bird hunter," as Proulx described herself in those times and of "everybody who was even faintly literate and involved in outdoor stuff" (Cox). In an interview with Christopher Cox, the writer shared an anecdote relating to the payment for one of her texts according to which she "swapped a story for a canoe at one point" (Cox). Proulx then clarifies: "It was a three-way deal where *Gray's* ran an ad for Mad River Canoes, I got a canoe, and they erased the cost of the story. It worked out pretty well – I think the canoe was eleven hundred dollars. I named it Stone City after one of the stories *Gray's* published" (Cox).

Heart Songs takes place in northern New England, mainly in Vermont, "in Chopping County, a North America of shadowy ravines, monumental trees and cliffs too sheer even for the average mountain goat" (Cumming 148). The stories are set during the second half of the twentieth century, some in the 1950s, others in the 1980s. These were hard times for New Englanders from the rural areas, as small dairy farms were not profitable anymore. Progress has not yet reached the remote villages and no prospect awaits of a decent income for what survives of local businesses. Many native inhabitants had to abandon the hopeless

search for a decent job and move to urban areas, whereas those who lingered behind accepted welfare and occasional low-paid jobs. Families who had known each other for generations and lived in tight-knit, supportive communities started to disappear. The new residents who come to occupy their homes, are a rich neorural bourgeoisie, who gladly purchase the shabby farms from the desperate farmers, to convert them into bucolic, summer dream-houses. In this regard, Proulx's short stories can be bound with those texts dealing with class difference.

Nevertheless, in her works Proulx does not classify characters into evil, heartless outsiders and virtuous, genuine locals. In fact, the newcomers are rather, the target for mockery. As Karen Rood points out, the summer part-timers in *Heart Songs* are often "sources of humor as they misinterpret and misjudge the actions and motives of rural individuals who are more attuned to the cycle of the seasons and steeped in a way of life alien to city dwellers" (17). The local residents, on the other hand, "are not merely victims of a national market economy that has made their ways of earning a living obsolete" (Rood 17). Proulx's rural characters are far from being idealized. The author portrays candidly "the effects of years of poverty, backbreaking work, domestic violence, incest, rape, and anger that sometimes smolders for decades before it erupts in acts of revenge" (Rood 17-18).

Annie Proulx's New England short stories are excellent examples of a critique of regional identity. This critique is not explicit, but, as Kent Ryden insists, "simply by virtue of setting her fiction in Vermont, a state with a long history of being imagined as a romanticized locus of escape, she forces a consideration of the differences between the place that New England has taken in the national imagination and the place that frustrates and kills its inhabitants" ("The Corpse" 74).

Indeed, the power of such an idealized image, both of the landscape and of its residents, must not be underestimated. Although in the twentieth century the West was the most culturally reimagined region of America, this was not so in earlier periods. As a matter of fact, even now, the West and New England can compete in the number and quality of their imaginary features. Ryden asserts that the phrase "the idea of 'New England'," invokes, for most Americans,

a spontaneous picturing of a set of conventional images they have internalized throughout their lifetimes:

> In the popular mind, New England looks a certain way, marked by such things as quaint country stores, white village centers, steepled Congregational churches, venerable stone walls, and blazing fall foliage. It is populated by a certain group of people, largely the descendants of the region's Puritan founders and of the stalwart Yankee farmers of earlier centuries. And it has witnessed and been shaped by certain fundamental threads of historical experience, notably the arrival of English colonists and the nation-founding events of the American Revolution. ("Region" 110)

According to Joseph Conforti, New Englanders' early historical consciousness and high rate of literacy and cultural production were the main reasons for such a mythic image (6). This scholar observes that the region has been a storied place from the very inception of American cultural identity. New Englanders dominated American historical writing from providential Puritans, to Whiggish antebellum Yankees, to nostalgic colonial revivalists, to partisan academics. Their identity, the scholar insists, has been encoded in narratives about the region's past and *imagined past* (emphasis in original), consisting of stories continually revised in response to new interpretative needs, to negotiate, traditionalize, and resist change (Conforti 6). It is important to underline that, as Conforti indicates, to call "imagined past" these changing narratives reinforcing New England's culture and regional identity, is not to imply they are pure myth with no empirical foundation, "Rather, it is to argue that these narratives are *partial truths*, selective interpretations of New England experience that are held up as the *whole* truth" (Conforti 6).

If we were to analyze, in general terms, the creation process and dissemination of New England's regional identity, such a review starts with the Puritans and, as Conforti formulates it, their "efforts to colonize and exercise imaginative dominion over New England" (8). First-generation Puritan migrants saw themselves as Englishmen in exile rather than colonists, and all they wished and attempted to do

was to "purify their church and society while also pursuing and extending the cultural patterns of their old homes – that is, to literally create a new and better *England*" (Ryden, "New England" 197). Yet, when considering the second generation of New England Puritans, significant changes in colonial life and shifts in their attitude towards the English homeland are observed. According to Ryden, given the fact that Puritans had enough time assumed their distance from England and embraced their colonies as home rather than as a site of exile, they began to interpret their migration in terms of separation, emphasizing the "New," rather than the continuity signified in "England" ("New England" 197). Thus, for the first time, lineaments of some sort of regional identity were appreciated.

Given Puritanism's distinctive culture, pre and post Revolution New Englanders stood out as the collective with the most defined regional identity and strongest awareness of their historical and cultural specificity. Being religious was not the only feature of this identity since with the growing secularization of this community, political integrity began to gain importance. This was the era when popular culture created the figure of the Yankee. According to Conforti, as early as the eighteenth century, influential geographers Jedidiah Morse and Timothy Dwight observed the distinctiveness of New Englanders, even in their appearance. They were appreciably taller, more athletic, and frequently had darker skin and eyes. But Dwight and Morse primarily focused on the character of these people, "a hearty republican character forged from ancestry, history, piety, and even climate" (Conforti 115), that of "a simple but shrewd farmer" (Ryden, "New England" 198).

As for the region itself, the whole nineteenth century, but especially the years after the Civil War, was a time of crucial changes in the lives of New Englanders. The most important alteration of country existence, up until then supposedly peaceful, pastoral, and changeless, came hand-in-hand with the industrial boom. New England as a whole became "the single most urban part of the nation – the most industrial, the most Catholic, the most heavily immigrant, and the most rapidly changing area in the United States" (Nissenbaum 39-40). The colonial revival was a response to these changing conditions. This is when, as Ryden indicates, the white-

painted Georgian-style houses gained popularity and recognition, and village centers were restored to resemble a colonial ideal ("New England" 198). Moreover, that was when the Pilgrim story awakened in the Northern imagination, and therefore the image created during the colonial revival (later cherished afresh as a consequence of a devastating moral influence generated by the Great Depression and the Second World War) was highly exclusive and its protagonists were constrained to idealized, hard-working English settlers and Anglo-Saxon farmers.

The first significant example of the literary re-imagining of the New England past is Lucy Larcom's memoir *A New England Girlhood* (1889). This text praises the Yankee mill girls' disposition, the high morals and religious paternalism of their overseers, and the beauties of the landscape viewed from the factory window, while silencing the dangers and hardships of the mill's machinery. Prior to this came Harriet Beecher Stowe's works ("A New England Sketch," 1834; *Oldtown Folks*, 1869), romanticizing New England village landscapes and populated by strong Yankee republican figures, which she promoted to powerful symbols of the region. But although these texts by Stowe appear, as Josephine Donovan puts it, "nearly Utopian" (67), they also "depict authentic regional detail, including authentic dialect, authentic local characters, in real or realistic geographical settings" (Donovan 50), features mastered later in Annie Proulx's narrative.

There were some other writers whose intention was to portray a certain idealized image of New England identity. Nevertheless, in their fiction they aimed at the past, conscious of the fact that the present did not correspond with the altered picture they sometimes presented. Many of these authors have been condescendingly referred to as "local color" writers, as they focused on "small-scale, closely drawn scenes of village life, frequently paying attention to regional folk ways and patterns of dialect" (Ryden, "New England" 199). Such New England local colorists as Sarah Orne Jewett, Mary E. Wilkins Freeman or Rose Terry Cook are Proulx's predecessors. However, this heritage does not lie in the choice of characters for their works. While these nineteenth-century writers are described today as foremothers of "women's literary realism," which "grew out of the bourgeois

critique of the romance, but … expressed awareness and concern about female characters and female roles" (Donovan 11), Proulx favors male protagonists in her narrative. The linking point is the manner in which the settings are depicted, and their influence on New Englanders' lives. Cooke, and later Freeman, displayed in her stories what Donovan calls a "kind of grimly authentic realism," defined as a "vision [that] anticipates that of the naturalists: a bleak, uncompromising view of humanity … as dull brutes" (68). In "The West Shetucket Railroad" and other stories published in the 1880s in *Harper's*, it seems that Cooke acknowledges the evil in rural worlds without attributing it to foreign influence. As Donovan points out, Cooke "fully realized that evil could be homegrown; indeed, she perceived that it may be fostered by the bareness and hardness of New England's physical environment" (68). This theme of rural brutality deriving from the milieu will be recurrent in Proulx's fiction.

While the idealized image of the New England village is shattered completely in Cooke and Freeman's texts, Orne Jewett's *The Country of the Pointed Firs* is still an ambiguous case of the region's portrayal. On the one hand, the novel is set within the geographical limits of New England, inhabited by good-hearted Yankees living in an idyllic domestic contentment. On the other hand, however, this writer presents a realistic portrayal of a world where the unfortunate consequences of the historical decline of the region's villages and rural areas are not ignored: a place which is moribund, unsustainable, and largely abandoned, especially by the young.

Such an image will prevail in twentieth-century writings. A similar depiction of New England's declining rural population in prose is found in the novels by Edith Wharton, a part-time resident of Massachusetts and, I believe, Annie Proulx's naturalistic narrative's forerunner. Her works *Summer* (1917) and *Ethan Frome* (1911) develop in morally corrupt, marginal, somnolent, and desolate towns. Her characters' fates, such as that of Ethan Frome, illustrate the author's judgment of the hopelessness of New England existence: "trapped in his home town, unhappily married, unfulfilled in every way possible – indeed, suggesting the impossibility of fulfillment in such a place" (Ryden, "New England" 206).

This brief revision of New England writers / mythmakers cannot be complete without the renowned New England twentieth-century poet, Robert Frost, himself a symbol of Yankee identity. Although sometimes described as a much more complex and sophisticated person, Frost embraced the image of himself as "a New Hampshire countryman and farmer who happened to also be a fine and talented poet" (Ryden, "New England" 207), a "Yankee-farmer-poet," and "a celebrant of and spokesman for the region" (Ryden, "New England" 206). It is interesting to underline the change Frost's writing underwent from his first book *North of Boston* (1914), which contains a serious critique of the socially untenable situation in waning rural areas of the region, to the reinforcement of the conventional views of New England in his 1923 collection *New Hampshire*. The poet reached the point of lamenting that in New Hampshire and Vermont, which he describes as the best states in the Union, "it's hard to create literature from New England life, because there is so little tragedy to be found there" (qtd in Ryden, "New England" 207).

In the last two decades of the twentieth century, once the colonial revival resulting from the post-war moral decay was over, a much more inclusive regional fiction eventually began to be created. These writers, "partisans of place," as Ryden calls them, not only dared to challenge the conventional image of the region. Above all, they tried to write a fairer and democratic regional literature, addressing the imbalance in the idea of New England. To do so, they insisted on portraying so far neglected communities such as the rural poor or people of French-Canadian descent in the regional literary imagination. Ernest Hebert and Carolyn Chute are clearly the most representative authors writing this kind of fiction. Their works describe depressed, beaten-down New England locations and focus on sharply realized, unglamorous scenes. In *Heart Songs*, Annie Proulx draws inspiration from Hebert and Chute's texts. For instance, her rich "neo-rural" bourgeoisie reflects characters like Zoe Cutter in Hebert's *The Dogs of March* (1979), a transplanted Midwesterner obsessed with an idyllic old magazine image who struggles to reconcile the material, physical, New England to the one she envisions.

The image of the region that emerges from Proulx's texts is clearly unlike the one propagated throughout the colonial revival period — no

white-painted Georgian-style houses and no restored town centers to be found. In fact, Proulx reverses the myth of a flawless New England village[3] and does not hesitate to present the region's mid-twentieth-century countryside with all its ugly details, its grim and severe living conditions, and its economic struggles.

References concerning the grimy appearance of New Englanders' or, more precisely, rural Vermonters' properties, sleazy and cluttered with junk, are frequently used by the author in her descriptions of place. These depictions sometimes signal the loss of such a property by its native owner as imminent. But in general, it seems that the shabby houses and trashy surroundings result from some kind of a mixture of poverty, carelessness, and lack of aesthetic sensitivity. In the story "Heart Songs," Snipe, a newcomer, on his way to the Twilight farm, passes "trailers and shacks on the back roads, the yards littered with country junk – rusty oil drums, collapsed stacks of rotten boards, plastic toys smeared with mud, worn tires cut into petal shapes and filled with weeds" (73). As the narrator indicates, all of this trash is nothing but "proofs of poor lives" (73), and one can only guess Proulx is not only referring to material poverty. Once there, Snipe's impression is that the Twilights' mountaintop farm made a "Godawful place to live" (74), his senses registering all the annoying details: "He could smell cow manure and hot green growth. Pale dust sprayed up at every step. He felt it in his teeth, and when his fingers picked at his face, fine motes whirled in the thick orange light of the setting sun" (74-75). The house itself, "old and broken, the splintery gray clapboards hanging loosely on the post-and-beam frame, a wavery glass in the windows mended with tape and cardboard" (75) completes this picture of decay and grime. Inside, in the "stifling" kitchen, "the stamped tin ceiling was stained dark with smoke" (75), above a table hung a "fly-specked" calendar, and a chair Snipe was pointed to had "a ripped plastic seat off to the side" (75), a description that points to the ubiquitous dirt and slovenliness of this space. There is a sharp contrast between the Twilights' property and the one Snipe rented and lived in with his girlfriend, "a modernistic glass horror stinking of money and crowded by forty mammoth blue Arlas cedars set out at the turn of the century" (80). Nevertheless, it is important to underline that the juxtaposition of the two places is not perceived as an image exemplifying the obvious difference between bad and

good, ugly and beautiful. Proulx makes this inequality much more complex, for the reader realizes that the new-fashioned "Cedar Cliffs" is not only aesthetically discordant with the landscape due to its artificiality, but also highly impractical, insomuch as Snipe's commitment as a tenant was to "tend shaggy branches and clean up the litter of twigs and cones that fell from them in a constant rain" (80). The Twilights' farm, on the other hand, in spite of its shabbiness or maybe precisely because of it, seemed to blend in with the area.

A similar case of two contrasting properties is presented in "The Unclouded Day" and, again, it is not an easy task to judge the beauty of each. Santee, the best of the local bird trappers, owns a place that looks poor and untidy. The first thing to meet the eye here was "the warp screen door", "the scabby paint on the clapboards" and "the run-down yard" (90). A property belonging to a newcomer and Santee's hunting apprentice Earl, is described as a very different place, a huge spotless new house, with a large porch for his baby to crawl around and a flawless yard. Notwithstanding, its description suggests that the New England countryside is not a proper place for such a construction, which gives the impression of being, again, artificial and ridiculous: "an enormous Swiss chalet with windows like tan bubbles in the roof and molded polystyrene pillars holding up a portico roof" (93).

Interestingly enough, not only are physical properties set in opposition to each other in *Heart Songs*. One of the most recurrent themes in Annie Proulx's narrative, is that of presenting dissimilar points of view and ways of life, as well as contrasting behaviors, of local residents and newcomers to a particular place. This is also the case of her New England fiction, where there are numerous examples of outsiders whose image is opposite to that of the locals'. Yet, it is worth highlighting that Proulx does not paint a portrait of stereotyped characters drawn from the history of the New England literature. In *Heart Songs*, the reader finds a broad spectrum of New Englanders, some of whom may resemble the imagined archetypical Yankee, and some its antithesis, while other characters self-consciously embody this mythic image of the Yankee in their own financial interest. As for the newcomers, a certain pattern in their representation can be distinguished. Their naive belief that reality reflects the image of the

New England they grew up with frequently makes them appear ridiculous. Indeed, it seems that for foreigners, the value of Vermont is "the way it receives romantic projections from the observer's mind" (Ryden, "The Corpse" 79). Nevertheless, much more complex examples of summer part-timers and locals, the "rural insiders who, explicitly or quietly, through thoughts or words or actions, contradict and critique the roles to which they've been assigned" (Ryden, "The Corpse" 79) are also part of the analyzed texts.

In the amusing story "On the Antler" the proganists are two contrasting local residents of Chopping County who hate each other since childhood. Hawkheels,[4] who focalizes the narrative, used to sell parts of the family property "until he was down to the trailer, ten spongy acres of river bottom and his social security checks" (3). Unlike the archetype of a hard-working Yankee, living on welfare does not cause him any distress; rather, he believes "this was the best part of his life" (3). What truly mattered was that he could still reside in the place he belonged, among Vermont forests and mountains. It is worth noting the parallels between nature and religion which Proulx applies when describing Hawkheels' eagerness for hunting, a hint of irony included: "He has his secret places hidden all through Chopping County and he visited them like stations of the cross; in order, in reverence and in expectation of results" (4). The way Hawkheel perceives the passing of time, a circular perception characteristic of those living close to nature, is also significant, though its romanticism generates an intriguing discordance:

> The deer hunt was the end and summit of his year: the irrevocable shot, the thin, ringing silence that followed, the buck down and still, the sky like clouded marble from which sifted snow finer than dust, and the sense of a completed cycle as the cooling blood ran into the dead leaves. (4)

While Hawkheel's passion for hunting is, in truth, the only feature of a supposedly "classic" Yankee figure, from an outsider's perspective Bill Stong fulfils all the necessary features. As a child, for example, he merrily "hunted with his father and brothers and shot his first buck when he was eleven" (4). Everything changed when

the boy was fifteen and all the members of the Stong family but Bill died, poisoned by strychnine-contaminated pork roast, "an event that exposed his mother's slovenly housekeeping ways" (5). This is a morbid story, indeed, one of many demonstrating the sensationalist character of Proulx's naturalistic fiction. The reader meets Bill Stong in his sixties, at a time when he has a surprisingly developed business acumen: "It was a time when people were coming into the country, buying up the old farmhouses and fields and making the sugarhouses into guest cottages" (7) and Stong knew how to take financial advantage of this. He resolved to line his own pockets "selling" the New England myth and arranged everything so as to meet strangers' expectations. To start with, he adjusts his physical aspect, as to a "fine platinum white" hair and "good bones" (7) he adds overalls and a red bandana around his neck. Mockingly, when a neighbor first notices Stong's new appearance, "he looked to see if there was a straw hat on a nail" (9). In his feed store now Stong offered everything an outsider could wish for and expect in such a "typical" New England country establishment. And so he carried from his house almost all the goods and "he arranged generations of his family's possessions on the shelves beside the work gloves and udder balm" (8). The best customers, those who provided Stong most of his income, were the autumn hunters, and he fools them unashamedly: "The hunters bought Stong's knives and ammunition and went away with rusted traps, worn horseshoes and bent pokers pulled from the bins labeled 'Collector's Items'" (10) . In spite of all these adjustments, Stong did not bother to conceal his anti-Yankee greed. By boldly informing his customers "Take what I can get" (10), in his neighbors' disapproving eyes, Stong was "making a country virtue out of avarice" (10).

The new residents in "On the Antler" are presented in a clearly unfavorable light, their actions often the target of mockery. For example, old New England houses bought to, as they claimed, provide a taste of the country life, were immediately transformed into plush and incongruous dwellings and their gardens converted into tennis courts. The urbanites' desire was to purchase a part of this imagined region and touch the mythic New England. Most of them held dear the image of Stong as an archetypical Yankee, for in the end this was one of the main reasons for drawing them into the country. They expected to meet

the kind of "rednecks" they knew from "Rupert" Frost, the poet's name misquoted by a city woman: "Bill, you look like a character out of a Rupert Frost poem" (7). This is why they gladly paid for Stong's trash, and this is why they eagerly listened to his interminable and fictitious stories, reading morals out of these "rambling lies" (7).

Similarly foolish in their seeming ingenuity are the newcomers in the story "Electric Arrows," the Moon-Azures. Very much interested in everything related to rural New England, they are especially fond of the Clew family, whose old homestead they had purchased and inhabited during the summer. Nevertheless, it is significant that "all of their fascination is with the ancestor Clews; living Clews exist … to be used. Dead Clews belong to the property and the property belongs to the Moon-Azures" (144). They seem to wish to become a part of what they probably perceive to be the original Yankee national archetype. The Moon-Azures research partly involved searching for maps of the farm, tracing the Clews' genealogy or even studying the ear notch design the Clews used more than a century before to mark their sheep. They take for granted that both the dead and the living Clews were farmers, as all "real" Yankees ought to be. Reality was not what they were curious about, especially if it could not be adjusted to the idealized image of the place they now possessed. I agree with Ryden when he argues that this kind of superior attitude, this imposition of a specific image onto Vermonters, "amounts to a kind of colonialism or cannibalism; rural residents are consumed and put to work according to the needs of outsiders, pressed into roles that do not suit them and that they do not want to play" ("The Corps" 79).

The lack of real knowledge about the area and its native residents, and a naive faith regarding its mythic past encoded in their minds, leads the Moon-Azures to a particularly ridiculous "discovery." For there is no other explanation why they mistake one of the Clews' self-portraits carved in rock for a native tribal petroglyph of a "Thunder God". The "god," whose discovery is proudly announced in the newspapers, clutches three bolts of electricity in one hand, and around his waist hung a lineman's belt, the same one worn by all electrical company workers, including the old Clew and the carver of the "god" himself.

Another irritating feature of the Moon-Azures pointed out by the narrator is their arrogance. From the very beginning, they do not hesitate to publicise to the locals, especially the Clews, "things they do to better the place" (142). They make it seem that without them this part of the New England countryside would probably be lost forever, doctor Moon-Azure openly stating: "I'll never get used to the way you people let these fine places run down" (143). They are aware that, in spite of occupying the supposedly weaker position of outsiders, their money would grant them the real power, entitling them to make critical allusions, snide hints and comments. Perhaps for the same reason, or maybe just because of the famed Yankee helpfulness, they never ceased in expecting neighbors to do them favors, such as "getting their car going, clearing out the clogged spring, finding their red-haired dog" (144).

Native residents of the area judge the Moon-Azures severely, considering them opportunists. They mock their "fancy" habits, such as walking for pleasure, admiring the landscape and the New England flora: "You drive somewhere and here come the Moon-Azures, stumbling through the fireweed, their hands full of wilted branches" (143).

As to the way of life of these rural insiders, they have clearly lost a great part of their identity over the previous years. It seems that together with the destruction of the local community, save a handful of "leftover" neighbors who still lived in a few "worn-out houses" (138), they also lost their strength. The catastrophic perspective of "Venezuelan millionaires" and "cocaine dealers" occupying their lands made them feel disheartened and vulnerable. Some, in order to survive, felt forced to "eat quick, afraid of losing time that could be put into work" (140). The Clews, after giving up their property, at least try not to give away their family photographs, the only legacy they managed to maintain. This a real success, indeed, taking into account the Moon-Azures' "insistence on denying the Clews' very identity, their distinctiveness, their history, their humanity" (Ryden, "The Corpse" 80). It is important to comprehend the magnitude of the consequences such unequal social encounters can eventually generate. The coming together of the wealthy Moon-Azures, bearing culturally mistaken misconceptions, with the humble rural Vermonters is aptly described by Ryden in these terms:

> the juggernaut of Vermont and New England identity, when applied to particular places, can warp the structure of current human lives and eradicate any awareness of, let alone respect for, lives in the past. As with other colonial relationship, while it may be remunerative for the colonizers, it can be culturally and materially destructive for the invaded. ("The Corpse" 80)

Mockery of newcomers is a recurrent theme in Proulx's New England short stories, as it is in her *Wyoming Stories*. The author highlights the newcomers' ignorance as to the place they move to, underlining their incongruity with this new environment. These city people, generally very wealthy, are not only ridiculed because of the "glass" houses they build with their money, these "heliodor mansions" that at sunset "flashed like an armada signaling for the attack" ("Negatives" 171) nor even because of the ostentatious décor of these mansions. In the natives' eyes, the newcomers are foolish and laughable because of their inability to adapt to their country surroundings and the rules of nature. In "Negatives," Walter Welter explains ironically to a poor local drunk the reason for his partner's injury, crashing his bycicle into an unmoving deer: "The deer stood there and he thought it would run off so he kept on going but it didn't and he hit it. Then the deer run off and Buck had a broken ankle and a wrecked bike" (176).

In "The Unclouded Day" the ineptitude of Earl, another newcomer, seems even greater. According to Karen Rood, the story "is in some ways typical of the sort of fiction that has been published for years in magazines for hunters and fishers, humorous stories that often feature a wily outdoorsman who gets the better of an arrogant city slicker" (26). In my view, however, Santee is an example of an honorable New Englander, whereas, undoubtedly, Earl excels in his folly, as shows his belief in having killed three birds with just one shot and ignoring the lightning that struck the very moment he fired his gun. By contrast, local residents in this story are presented in a positive light. Except for the touch of slyness shown by Santee in the end, he and his family are presented as upright and decent people, especially taking into account that during the second year of Earl's training there is no money involved. It is also significant that the locals

in Proulx's stories are not always obstinate and narrow-minded. Rather, they can sometimes be observant and impressionable, as is the case of Santees' wife. Verna's contacts with Earl made her appreciate the aesthetic aspects of her surroundings, spurring her into cleaning and decorating her own property. Furthermore, in "The Unclouded Day," and in "A Run of Bad Luck," the New England families are presented as quite the traditional model. They are united and close, and the children raised in a country manner. The mothers are housewives, responsible for feeding their families, a partial exception being "A Run of Back Luck," where Mae becomes "a workin' girl" (61) for some time.

As far as the region's mythical image is concerned, there are several stories where its direct influence on characters is observed, though manifested differently in each instance, as in "Heart Songs," for example. Here, the protagonist's unsuitability for the New England countryside is obvious. Snipe and his girlfriend Catherine move to the country enthusiastically imagining how simple and wonderful their life will be "selling bundles of white birch logs tied with red ribbon to fireplace owners in New York City, or growing ginseng roots they would sell through a friend whose brother knew a pharmacist in Singapore" (78). Obviously, all these plans fail miserably, but Snipe keeps dreaming. He develops a taste for the "authentic" life of the rural musician, imagining he would

> play his guitar in rural night spots, cinder-block buildings on the outskirts of town filled with Saturday night beer drunks and bad music. He wanted to hook his heel on the chrome rung of a barstool, hear the rough talk, and leave with the stragglers in the morning's small hours. He recognized in himself a secret wish to step off into some abyss of bad taste and moral sloth, and Chopping County seemed as good a place as any to find it. (74)

Snipe is truly delighted the moment he meets the Twilights, this family he perceives as "real backwoods rednecks" and "down and dirty" (77). Not only does he harbor a primitive instinct to delve deeply into their humility and simplicity — a natural response to his

own complicated personal situation — but he also feels there is a chance of earning some money. Snipe wants to convince them to record their songs, and let him organize tours and promotions. He even mentally designs the cover of their album: "a photo of them standing out front of their ratty house, sepia-toned and slightly out of focus, rural and plain" (80). It seems a dream come true, his imagined country life finally fulfilled: "Simple times in an old farmhouse, Shaker chairs by the fire, dew-wet herbs from a little garden, and an isolation and privacy so profound he could get drunk and fall down in the road and no one would see" (80).

The moment Snipe's plans fail miserably, he resolves to try somewhere else. As Rood observes, indifferent to any emotional damage, "like the sniper his name suggests, Snipe strikes his victims and moves on" (26). The eternal dreamer and his emotionally unstable girlfriend turn to the only myth still left, the everlasting promise of infinite and marvelous possibilities: to go west. In New Mexico or Arizona they would "undoubtedly" lead a simple and easy life, for "Snipe knew somebody would pay him good money to collect the wild seed of jimsonweed" (86).

Is it particularly interesting to point out the universality of the myth of the West, equally powerful for sophisticated myth-seekers, such as Snipe and Catherine, as for crude country folk. Two characters in the story "In the Pit" illustrate this: a simple New England farmer and a cynical self-made young man, a city dweller named Blue. The reader meets the Vermonter, Mr. Fitzroy, through the eyes of Blue, who, as a child, spent several summers in his parents' cabin in the New England woodland. The first image of Mr. Fitzroy is disagreeable: he seems to have turned into one of "those old boys," "pumping along on a kid's bike with its fat tires and faded handlebar streamers, face blazing with drink and the abrasive wind thrown off by passing cars" (105). After a few moments' hesitation, Blue realizes this is a man whose barn he knew well, for every evening his father drove to the Fitzroys' place "for sweet milk dipped from the tank, the shuddering liquid releasing a smell of torn grass and rain" (107). Indeed, the way he remembers those people and their farmhouse is not only illustrative of New England mythology, but an image linked to his own idealized memories. With his parents constantly arguing,

yelling at each other in hatred, this Yankee couple's life appeared calm and steady, enviable even for Blue's father:

> After the milking was done he [Mr. Fitzroy] sat beside his wife on the porch and played "Lady of Spain" on the accordion. Mrs. Fitzroy cut and whittled. There were her wooden animals on the windowsills … At last the light quivered behind them and they seemed to shrink from the assaults of moths on the glass. Blue and his father listened, sitting in the car with the windows down and slapping mosquitoes with a sound like sparse applause. (107)

But now Fitzroy is the living image of a failure, his own and that of the imaginary Yankee. Living in the milking room after the death of his wife, now the old man's only company are ex-convicts. This depressing, anti-mythical picture is what Blue perceives with dismay. Furthermore, it seems as though values such as work and helpfulness were never the New Englander's true principles. Fitzroy has no intention of running any dairy business anymore, and he is tired of "these new people from down below always goin' off the road and want[ing] you to pull them out for nothin' with the tractor" (109), a recurrent comical detail in several Proulx stories. Finally, this old Yankee's dreams are particularly meaningful and ironic. Unaware of his own role in the American imagery, he wishes to go west and succeed there, naively believing a newspaper ad: "No down payment, no interest, your own spread on Wild Buffalo Mesa. Get away from it all. Come to the big sky country where wild horses roam free among the sagebrush and breathe the unspoiled air" (110).

As to Blue, his unhappy childhood has made him a skeptical and contemptuous person. For a moment, when repairing and cleaning the cabin, and when some of the good memories return, he thinks with enthusiasm of using the summer house for his own family vacations. But this does not last for long because the image of a mythic woodland village has been destroyed along with his childhood: the locals are nothing but drunks and thieves. His judgments are fast and decisive, and turn out to be mistaken, for Mr. Fitzroy's companion, a reformed thief, has not stolen what Blue

instantaneously accuses him of. Less "tolerant," to use Rood's words, than the hospitable old farmer, just like the protagonist of "Heart Songs," Blue "causes emotional pain through his misreading of others' intentions" (Rood 27). The final conclusion as to the moral stance of both characters is left to the readers, yet I agree with Rood when she claims that his mistake "embarrassed Blue and probably dampened his plans to vacation at the cabin, but is has contributed little to his understanding of his own character" (28).

There are no easy and clear-cut judgments in Proulx's works. The New England region is ironically portrayed in her stories. This irony makes her texts stand out from earlier texts construing New England, and it is turned into a weapon against prejudices, naivety and folly. It should also be noted that, in spite of Proulx's realistic style, allegory is one of the narrative techniques she sometimes applies. Oddly enough, although the writer's heritage derives from the local colorists and their down-to-earth themes and anti-sentimental visions, similarly to Sarah Orne Jewett, Proulx's texts are sometimes considered to dwell on the limits between realist doctrine and symbolism, leaving to the reader multiple interpretations.

Not only does Proulx play with the dominant tropes of regional identity, but she inverts them. The writer penetrates "the rural surface to get to the underlying mechanisms that produce that surface and the human costs of that production," and this is how she discovers New England, a place that is "deeply troubled, extremely complicated, and continually whipsawed by contingency and bad luck" (Ryden, "The Corpse" 76). Thus, Proulx's representation of rural New England is sometimes surprising, sometimes disheartening.

Most of the outsider characters are unable to understand the discordance between the false image of their nation's cradle that reached them down through the years and the real nature of the region. Perhaps the only exception is found in the story "Stone City," where, wanting to escape an earlier stormy life, the protagonist assumes Vermont would be the peaceful shelter he had been seeking: "I had retreated from other people in other places like a man backing fearfully out of a quicksand bog he has stumbled into unknowingly. This place in Chopping County was my retreat from high, muddy

water." (23). The New England he has imagined was just that, a safe refuge enhanced by the beauty of its landscape. What distinguishes him from the other characters carrying such a mistaken image is that he manages to correct his misconception in time. Once the village's violent past and its inhabitants' present dramas are discovered, he does not hesitate to sell his house and move out. The buyers are a New Jersey couple and it seems that, similar to the previous purchaser, they want to acquire something more than the physical property, for, as the narrator ironically observes: "They were innocently enthusiastic about the country" (40).

Annie Proulx's *Heart Songs* are filled with examples of landscapes and characters that are nothing like those conventionally associated with the region's identity, and even less with its mythical image. In Ryden's words, they are, instead, written "against the weight of New England regional identity" and point at

> the absurdity of the assumptions that characters have brought to Vermont, populating pastoral scenes with often desperate lives, suggesting the cultural costs exacted on rural residents by the imposition of regional identity that would just as soon sweep them away if they don't behave properly. ("The Corpse" 83)

Most of the inhabitants of this rural, generally shabby, Vermont, are presented as hopeless and morally questionable. While those belonging to the group of newcomers are ridiculed for their naivety and ignorance, their money bailing them out trouble, the locals are usually predetermined to fail in their life prospects. Some of the native residents try not to surrender and desperately cling to their impoverished properties and community values. Others give up and, after losing everything, surrender to fate while observing, perplexed and weary, the new set of rules imposed by the modern world. At the heart of everything, though, there are also characters, just as "native" as the supposedly "authentic" ones, who have always belonged to this area, although they have never been included in the collective imaginary, and who come to light in Annie Proulx's narratives. The idea of New England as a pastoral and morally sturdy place is shattered in most of the writer's short stories. It is, indeed,

thoroughly demolished not only by iconoclastic images of grimness and the moral sloth of the poverty-stricken residents, but by the disclosure that filthiness and misconduct have been part of this most idealized of American region from its very beginnings.

NOTES

[1] This essay has been completed under the auspices of the research group REWEST, funded by the Basque Government (IT-1026-16) and the University of the Basque Country, UPV/EHU. Likewise, I am indebted to the Spanish Ministry of Education, Culture, and Sports (PGC2018- 094659-B- C21), FEDER, for funding the research carried out for this essay.

[2] Some parts of this article come from the author's doctoral dissertation entitled "Dangerous and Indifferent Ground: Naturalism and Regionalism in Annie Proulx's Fictional Realm" (2017).

[3] As Stephen Nissenbaum observes in "New England as Region and Nation," according to several historical geographers, Joseph Wood and Martyn Bowden among them, "the idea of a centrally arranged, or *nucleated*, New England village, with its collection of neat white houses facing a central 'common,' or 'green,'" (43-44) was inaccurate. Not only were the houses painted bright red, green, or blue instead of white, but most importantly, not until the 1820-30 could anyone talk about compact villages. The rural New England before the American Revolution was composed of dispersed and isolated farmsteads. Also, ironically, it has to be underlined that "New England town centers developed not in simple opposition to capitalism but rather as an early strategy of adapting to it" (45), for it was vital for shopkeepers and professionals to establish their businesses and homes in the village centers. As for the bucolic "greens" or commons in town centers, they were bare and muddy rather than actually green. The commons, as Nissenbaum indicates, began to be beautified by businessmen and organizations of newcomers after the Civil War. Such valuable historical insights are an interesting introduction to any study of the New England imaginary landscape and should be noted when discussing the outsiders' efforts to change and improve the region.

[4] Hawkheel's name suggests "he is the last of the lone woodsmen, like James Fenimore Cooper's noble outdoorsman Natty Bumppo" (Rood 18)

WORKS CITED

Conforti, Joseph A. *Imagining New England: Explorations of Regional Identity from the Pilgrims to the Mid-twentieth Century*. The University of North Carolina Press, 2001.

Cox, Christopher. "Annie Proulx: The Art of Fiction No. 199" *The Paris Review*, no. 188, spring 2009, www.theparisreview.org/interviews/5901/annie-proulx-the-art-of-fiction-no-199-annie-proulx. Accessed 2 Nov. 2015.

Cumming, Laura. "Chopping and Unchanging." *TLS, The Times Literary Supplement*, no. 4532, 1990, p. 148.

Donovan, Josephine. *New England Local Color Literature. A Women's Tradition*. Continuum, 1988.

Nissenbaum, Stephen. "New England as Region and Nation." *All Over the Map: Rethinking American Regions*, edited by Edward Ayers and Peter Onuf, Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996.

Proulx, Annie. *Heart Songs*. Fourth Estate, 1995.

Rackstraw, Loree. "Painful Resolution." Review of *Heart Songs and Other Stories* by Annie Proulx. *The North American Review*, vol. 274, no. 3, 1 Sep. 1989, p. 66.

Rood, Karen L. *Understanding Annie Proulx*. University of South Carolina Press, 2001.

Ryden, C. Kent. "The Corpse in the Stone Wall: Annie Proulx's Ironic New England." *The Geographical Imagination of Annie Proulx. Rethinking Regionalism*, edited by Alex Hunt, Lexington Books, 2009, pp. 73-86.

—-. "New England Literature and Regional Identity." *A Companion to the Regional Literatures of America*, edited by Charles L. Crow, Blackwell Publishing, 2003, pp. 195-212.

—-. "Region, Place, and Resistance in Northern New England Writing." *Colby Quarterly*, vol.39, no.1, March 2003, pp. 109-120.

Recibido / Received: 15-3-2019 *Acceptado / Accepted: 13-6-2019*

The Performative Function of Literature: the Discursive Game with the Reader in Ian McEwan's *Atonement*

Malgorzata Godlewska (malgorzata.godlewska@ug.edu.pl)
University of Gdansk

Abstract

This paper attempts to offer a new insight into Ian McEwan's novel, *Atonement*, in relation to the phenomenon of a performative function of trauma narrative. The novel might be perceived as a discursive game between the reader, text and the implied author conducted within the novel's complex structure, narrational design, the two-fold construction of the protagonist's traumatised identity as well as the novel's intertextual and metatextual mosaic. The use of the motif of fiction highlights the performative function of literature together with the trauma narrative present within the novel's fictional realms and its generic composition. The article's methodology relies on Trauma Theory and J. L. Austin's Speech Act Theory.

Keywords: literary discourse, performative function of literature, trauma narrative, Ian McEwan

La función performativa de la literatura: el juego discursivo con el lector en *Atonement* de Ian McEwan

Resumen

Este artículo intenta ofrecer una nueva visión de la novela *Atonement*, de Ian McEwan, en relación al fenómeno de la función performativa de la narrativa del trauma. La novela puede entenderse como un juego discursivo entre el lector, el texto y el autor implícito que se lleva a cabo dentro de la compleja estructura de la novela, el diseño narrativo, la doble construcción de la identidad traumatizada de la protagonista y el mosaico intertextual y metatextual de la novela. El tema de la

ficción resalta la función performativa de la literatura junto con la narrativa del trauma presente en los mundos ficticios de la novela y su composición genérica. La metodología utilizada se basa en la teoría del trauma y en la teoría de los actos de habla de J.L. Austin.

Palabras clave: discurso literario, función performativa de la literatura, narrativa del trauma, Ian McEwan

1. INTRODUCTION

If "two voices" denote "the minimum of life, of existence," as Bakhtin puts it (355), then Ian McEwan's *Atonement* vibrates with textual energy emanating from the protagonist's polyphonic record of her pre- and post-war memories. The novel invites the reader to participate in a discursive game whereby senses are deciphered through a mesh of inter- and meta-textual references. The motif of a game reverberates through the novel's ongoing debate with the concept of truth. This adheres to fiction and story-telling, as well as to the condition of the human mind –the Lacanian "psychic reality" (Dobrogoszcz 14). What should be accentuated about the writer's literary search is his interest in the possibilities of fiction and his continued quest for "the contemporary," "that slippery term comprising the distinctive elements that make up the elusive Zeitgeist, the spirit of our time" (Groes 2).

Ian McEwan's novel will be analysed with respect to two key functions of literature, namely the aesthetic and the performative, the latter function being linked to that of the atoning role seen in the testimony of the trauma victim. Notable too, due to its intricate mesh of textual and extra-textual relations, is the discourse of the novel submerged in the ongoing dialogue between the reader, the narrator, the text, and the cultural and social context. The novel, it might be argued, evolves into a multilayered literary discourse where interdisciplinary "practice" or "productivity" (Hall 35) is seen in a sophisticated cultural game with the reader. If literature should be perceived in terms of space, where multiple voices can be

encountered (Bennet and Royle 74), then Ian McEwan's novel serves as its perfect exemplification.

2. THE PERFORMATIVITY OF A LITERARY TEXT

The performative function of Ian McEwan's novel is discussed through the prism of Austin's Speech Act Theory and its extension of the concept of performativity suggested by Ute Berns whose definition of performativity hinges on the concept of imitation or illusion of a performance discussed in relation to narratology (2). This form of performativity highlights both the narrator's activity, "the act of presentation" alongside the pragmatic context of this act (Berns 9). The author connects the performative theory with Austin's speech act terminology emphasizing the potency of an utterance to perform a statement. Berns follows MacLean and Pfister by stating that in the act of narration, the narrator and the audience, namely the readers, recreate a performance, and by doing so they remain in the active and interactive relation to one another (Berns 10). This relation is foregrounded in the literary text by a variety of self-reflexive and meta-textual references which direct the process of reading towards the literary text itself.

The performative function of a literary text corresponds with one of the main concepts of trauma, namely scriptotherapy, which denotes "a discursive space within which all the psychological wounds one suffers are re-enacted with the purpose of making them heal" (Henke 216). Narrative methods which allow to recognize an example of scriptotherapy include "fragmentation of thought," "dissociative outlook," "decontextualized visualization," and "focalization" (Laurie 32). The analytical part of this paper will try to shed light on those aspects of *Atonement* which reveal its performativity in the process of trauma narration: its metatextuality, intertextuality, and references to the cultural context.

3. THE FRAGMENTARY DESIGN OF THE NOVEL

The construction of the novel is markedly fragmentary and, as such, signals the novel's first metatextual quality encouraging the

readers to participate in its literary discourse while also, more importantly, reflecting the main characteristic of scriptotherapy.

The novel is divided into four main parts with Part One being devoted to the presentation of a day in the protagonist's childhood before the War when Briony's groundless accusations of rape of her cousin Lola destroy the lives of Robbie and Cecilia. The subsequent two parts of the novel contain descriptions of their wartime memories presented from three different perspectives, each belonging to a central protagonist affected by Briony's accusation. Part Two consists of Robbie's war accounts from Dunkirk. Part Three constitutes an insight into the three main characters' perspectives and presents their experiences during the war. The last part of the novel, "London 1999," confirms Briony's authorship of the entire text of the novel. It reveals the truth behind the implied author's –namely Briony's– decision to falsify facts about the fate of Robbie and Cecilia in her memoir. Instead of reporting the truth about their tragic deaths during the war, Briony ends her testimony with their reunion. Hence, the protagonist's confession in the last part of the novel reveals that Robbie's war accounts in Part Two belong to the sphere of her literary fiction. They are inspired by official post-war archives and letters rather than by the protagonist's memories. The official history, Robbie's experience at Dunkirk, is, for the sake of her literary invention, falsified by Briony in order to grant her atonement for her past misdeed. By exposing Briony's manipulation of the facts, her autobiography's truthfulness and reliability is undermined. It should be highlighted that the narrator's unreliability and unethical attitude exemplify another feature of trauma discourse, according to Laurie (34).

4. THE PROTAGONIST'S TESTIMONY

The novel constitutes an example of the protagonist's dialogue with her "shattered self" in the years following her disastrous lie. The decision to confess the truth behind her unjustly denouncing Robbie and accusing him of raping Lola, is related to her growing awareness of aging compounded by encroaching memory loss. More importantly, the will to uncover the truth about the past is connected with Briony's wish to face her childhood trauma. What matters in the protagonist's

testimony is her dual role as perpetrator and victim, author and reader, speaker and listener.

Revealing the autobiographical dimension of the text only in the last section is the most significant example of the discursiveness of the novel which foregrounds the text's performative function. Dominic Head observes the existence of the motif of dualism in the literary works of writers such as Ian McEwan:

> the ethical content is often embedded in disturbing fictions, in which a narrator may take up a position that is dubious or depraved. The sense of complicity with the corrupt late twentieth century is part of the writing strategy in the work of these writers, since both seek to convey the seductive appeal of contemporary addictions and appetites, in order to make them fully understood. (*Cambridge Introduction* 258)

Head emphasizes the significance of the recurring trope of innocence found in the works of such writers as Ian McEwan, where, quoting Kiernan Ryan, "complicity is 'not innate but acquired,' thus supplying one way out of the circle of unity and discrimination" (in Head, *Cambridge Introduction* 258). The protagonist's decision to substitute the truth about the two lovers' deaths with another lie in order to immortalize them, indicates Briony's attempt to assuage her guilt and make amends for her wrongs against the couple. However, the novel does not enter the character's consciousness in order to justify her motivation but to report her vision or version of the past. Nevertheless, the protagonist is presented in a process of self-redefinition, in other words, undertaking a working-through of her trauma process by means of her novel's fictitious ending.

The trauma narrative constitutes a form of the character's internal dialogue that extends the novel's interpretative frames and adds another mask to be uncovered in the ongoing discourse between the reader, the text and the implied author. The protagonist's experiences exemplify the behavioural pattern of a childhood trauma victim. Briony witnesses an act of love making between her sister and Robbie which, due to her young age and fecund imagination, she interprets as

an act of violence. This event, shocking for a young child unable to rationalise what she sees, influences her future misjudgment of the situation and triggers her false accusations against Robbie. The image of the two lovers is repressed and returns later in Briony's haunting memories exemplifying belatedness of experience, another feature of the trauma experience indicated by Caruth.

Judith Herman uses the term "dialectics of trauma" to define the conflict between "the desire to tell and the will to deny" (49). The protagonist's period of unawareness after the critical moment is marked by dissociation (Bloom) or, "temporal displacement" from repressed memories (Kilby). Cathy Caruth explains that, "it is only in and through its inherent forgetting that it [trauma] is first experienced at all" (81). She adds that, "since the traumatic event is not experienced as it occurs, it is fully evident only in connection with another place, and in another time" (81). The protagonist, a child at the time of her crisis, is neither aware of her guilt, partly because of her inability to judge herself at that very moment, nor is able to differentiate between seeing and knowing, inherent in trauma theory (Letissier 216). Briony openly admits, "Less like seeing, more like knowing", when asked about the crime she witnesses (McEwan 170). Cathy Caruth claims that, "one of the signs of the presence of trauma is the absence of all signs of it" (Elsaesser 199). The moment the girl commits her crime, she might be claimed to remain under the influence of her family upbringing and her own tendency to fall prey to her imaginative inclinations.

The issue of trauma should be discussed together with Text World Theory, which stresses the importance of the context of both the reading and writing processes, as evinced in the textual and extra-textual realms of Ian McEwan's novel. Alison Gibbons observes that in Text World Theory the "discourse-world level encompasses writer and reader contexts including knowledge and emotions specific to the participants of the literary experience" (130). She further concludes, quoting Werth, that, "situations do not occur in a conceptual vacuum" (84). Karam Nayebpour goes even further by stating that McEwan might be considered a cognitive writer since his narratives can "anchor themselves firmly to the readers' real world knowledge, experience and mental models, or to their so-called frames and scripts" (9).

This analysis of the novel's thematic concerns relies on the theories mentioned above due to their common feature that converges with this article's main argument, namely the assumed atoning function of literature, which might be equated with the discursive process of communication between the reader, the text and the implied author. Irene Kacandes offers an interesting scheme of trauma's intricate paradigms which she calls "circuits of narrative witnessing" (95). The author observes the existence of six circuits which can be divided into two groups: the first one, including two characters' interaction with the experience of trauma, either as direct or indirect participants in a traumatizing experience; the second one, includes the co-witnessing of trauma through the act of the trauma narrative experience. The scheme of these circuits draws attention to the discursive character of the concept of trauma narrative.

Atonement might be interpreted with regard to a few levels of Kacandes' circuits of narrative witnessing. First, "intrapsychic witnessing" (Kacandes 97) confronts the reader at the beginning of Part One and continues throughout the novel to its conclusion, as the main character returns to the origin of her trauma through her narrative. Secondly, "textual witnessing," which is the fourth type of circuit according to Kacandes' theory (97), is demonstrated in the presence of the narrator (Briony) and the narratee (reader) both of whom co-witness the trauma experience in Part One of the novel, since Briony embodies both the narrator and the implied author of the text. More notably, for the foregrounding of the novel's performativity, it is the fifth type which should be considered as key, namely, "literary-historical witnessing" (97), which is where the text of the novel and the contemporary reader become co-witnesses to the trauma embedded in the text.

Part Three of the novel combines the circuits of narrative witnessing. It portrays Briony as a "ghost" (Caruth 5), a person possessed by trauma and, as a result, this part of the novel equates to the intrapsychic witnessing that overlaps textual and literary-historical witnessing levels. As such the reader observes a process of transformation whereby the protagonist/trauma victim rejects her former secure life protected, as she was, by her upper class status, and

as the reader learns from Cecilia's letter to Robbie, embarks on a nursing career, "as a sort of penance" (McEwan 212). The decision to join a profession known for the extreme demands on a practitioner becomes the girl's way of distancing herself from her former egocentric self. Through hard work and isolation from family, she manages to dissociate herself from her experience, though, as she sadly admits, "she would never undo the damage. She was unforgivable" (285). The protagonist consciously transforms from a perpetrator into a victim by means of the self-imposed punishment of her new expiatory occupation. Her nursing profession permits the transference of her past experience: she is able to repeat the past but in a new role - that of a healer of the wounded. The conversation with a dying young soldier in hospital serves as the best example of Briony's attempt to obtain atonement through the repetition of this reversed pattern of behaviour. She agrees to respond to the name, not her own, given by a dying soldier in order for this deceit to console the fatally wounded man. La Capra's terms, "the process of acting-out" and "working-through" trauma (2), find their realization in the protagonist's exploration of past moments in her emotional disintegration through her writing, and in the refuge she chooses to take in her subsequent, subservient role in the healing profession.

The second phase of trauma, according to La Capra, appears after the repetitive compulsion period and indicates the victim's attempt to face one's own memories. For the victim of trauma, the absence of the fractured experience must be completed with a testimony. Briony experiences two epiphanic moments that allow her to face her trauma. The first is her decision to meet her sister and Robbie and ask for their forgiveness. The event is portrayed by Briony as being during the war and ends with the two lovers kissing in front of her. Both the confession of truth, with its attendant agreement to confirm her deed in writing in order to repair the mistake, coupled with the kiss unifying the couple belong to the fictional reality of Briony's novel. It becomes clear in the final part of the novel that the events mentioned occur only in the sphere of Briony's imagination, and provide more evidence of her manipulation of the truth relating to the couple's deaths during the war, as confirmed by official archives.

Secondly, the protagonist's preferred approach is to work through

her trauma through her decision to write a novel to reveal the truth about this disastrous incident in her childhood and to prevent the past being obliterated as her memory vanishes. The novel constitutes an artistic testimony of a trauma victim, so highlighting the atoning role of the novel. Stating that story-telling is the only method to heal her wound might be considered one of the most obvious interpretations for the novel's use of the prism cast by the theory of trauma. Thus, the protagonist embarks on a journey from her imposed physical and emotional isolation towards her inner self, *the other* so as to be heard. With this regard, the novel pertains to Bakhtin's philosophy of a dialogic world and Kristeva's other. Firstly, the protagonist conducts a dialogue within herself while struggling against her inability to distinguish between truth and a lie. In this dialogue, the lie often wins. Secondly, the internal dialogue offered in her novel betrays her passage from the acting-out phase to the working-through trauma stage. The dialogue refers to the clash of her present consciousness with her past wounds within emotional and mental spheres. The action of the novel within the novel constitutes the protagonist's expression of internal dialogue, embodying her constant struggle between opposites, such as her personal desires, and social expectations, as well as a tendency towards escapism or even "wounded narcissism" (Root 244); a form of literary creativity opposed to the ethical obligation to provide truthful and credible accounts of the past. From the distance of the third-person narration, Briony admits, "She was under no obligation to the truth, she has promised no one a chronicle" (McEwan 280). What needs to be emphasized with regard to Briony's writing cure is the capability of trauma fiction to engage readers in its process. According to Laurie, readers become interlocutors and interpreters of a series of multiple viewpoints which trauma narrative may offer (3). Moreover, the relationship between a trauma narrative and its readers may be compared to the relation between a therapy and a therapist since readers can "join a meditative process for understanding human responses to shock" (Henke 28). Thus, a performative function of a traumatic script is also embedded in a fictional trauma narrative. The repercussions of the effect of a trauma testimony on its listeners/readers might also be claimed to be transferred on the relationship trauma fiction - readers. As fiction can give rise to sympathy for victims and lead to the effect of "failed empathy," or "a delusion that casual readers can understand the

suffering of others" (Keen in Laurie 30), Briony, in McEwan's fictional reality, might be suspected of manipulating readers' feelings evoking sympathy towards herself through engaging the readers in a "therapeutic reenactment" (Henke 28) of her performative testimony. Quoting Letissier, "testimony has become the discursive mode par excellence" (212).

5. THE PERFORMATIVITY OF THE NOVEL AND ITS METATEXTUAL DIMENSIONS

Metafictional concerns in McEwan's fiction can be regarded as one of the key continuities in the author's work to date next to "feminist issues, an interplay of moral relativism and moral judgement, and an enduring love of psychological fiction" (Malcolm, 2002: 19). In his analysis of contemporary writers, which encompasses McEwan's fiction, Malcolm indicates three ways of foregrounding the text in their literary work: by means of various devices which produce a sense of narrational detachment; through shifts in point of view; through the particular configuration of the narrative" (75). *Atonement* draws attention to its own textuality on all of the levels mentioned. What is more, the novel's self-referentiality is also thematically signalled by means of the leitmotif of literature, heralded by the first word of the novel: "play" and refers directly to the protagonist's first literary attempt. The novel's self-referentiality demands that the reader be an active reader participant in the reading process by engaging him/her in the game of searching for hidden senses conveyed by literary and cultural intertexts.

The novel reveals its intertextual potency by means of its paratexts. Genette defines a paratext as any information concerning the literary work in question that stands as if on "the threshold" of the text and of its external reality (xviii). *Atonement* includes a number of paratexts in Genette's sense, and these encompass the title, title page, and intertitles, "which all appear to be marginal but assume an important role in the presentation of the narrative structure, narrative theme and narrative technique" (Huang 636). The novel's title serves as the most significant paratext, as it indicates immediately the novel's main thematic concern, which is the protagonist's urge to be forgiven and

the text's intertextual reference to the theory of trauma. It must be stressed that the word "atonement" is a key expression applied in trauma studies as are wound and the healing process, which encompass the phase of atonement and the witnessing procedure, employing either the written or oral confession of a witness.

The presence of a quotation on the front page constitutes another significant paratext observable in the construction of *Atonement*. The lines opening Part One of the novel are embedded in quotes and end with the source information, namely Jane Austen's *Northanger Abbey*. The quotation at the beginning of the novel is an obligatory intertextual reference to the novel's fictional realms and to its protagonist. It might be added here that the paratext of the first page functions as the "threshold" to the novel's reality and informs the reader of the novel's thematic and perhaps ideological concerns which might be encountered in the reading process. Huang argues about the quotes guaranteeing the "favourable interconnection between the paratext and the reader and that between the paratext and the text" (638). When confronted with the quotation in the paratext, the reader immediately creates a link between the novels' protagonists, their personalities and inclinations. What might be assumed with regard to the two novels, and two main characters' equation, is Briony's tendency to dwell in the world of fiction, and in her own imagination which lead to her misjudgment of reality so triggering the disastrous consequences. Even after the protagonist's lie, her sister addresses her as "a fantasist, as we know to our cost," and, later, "Remember what a dreamer she is" (McEwan 212).

The motif of literature is present in the fictional realms of the novel in form of direct references to English writers, with especial reference to Virginia Woolf, Samuel Richardson, Jane Austen, William Shakespeare amongst many others mentioned by the protagonists, Robbie and Cecilia. More importantly, literature is presented as an important constituent in the characters' lives revealing its various functions. To begin with, the three central characters, Briony, Cecilia and Robbie, share an insatiable appetite for books: all are highly interested and engaged in the world of fiction in a variety of ways. Robbie obtains a university degree in literary studies. Cecilia studies literature, spending her free time reading and discussing books with

Robbie. Briony, after her childhood experience in writing a theatrical play, becomes a professional writer, a chronicler of the past and the author of her own memoir. It might be argued that the motif of literature gains symbolic status within the novel's fictional realms, partly due to its frequent occurrence in the text, as well as on its thresholds, in the form of paratexts, thus inviting the reader into a polemic with the motif's cultural and literary connotations confronted in Ian McEwan's novel. Moreover, Briony, in the fictional realms of *Atonement*, firstly embodies the role of a writer, secondly, the trauma victim. Literature has been her passion since childhood, her chosen way of living but it also represents the main theme within her narrative. The leitmotif of fiction in Briony's memoir might be claimed to represent "decontextualised visualizations" (Henke 32) of her past traumatic experience, the shock of witnessing the erotic scene in the library. The past haunts her present by frequent references to literary texts side by side with images of physicality.

The intersection of the two symbolic levels might be illustrated with a number of events and motifs discovered in the novel's fictional realms. Primarily, the phenomenon is visualized in the passionate act between the two lovers in the home library, yet it is also present in the form of the infamous letter written by Robbie to Cecilia. The library becomes the setting for the couple's passionate love making creating a tangible link between: books and passion, literature and body, the intellectual and physical. With regard to the other motif, the love letter sent by Robbie to Cecilia by mistake expresses his sexual attraction to the woman and is written alongside another romantic letter that, however, reveals the man's true feelings. Interestingly enough, the two letters are written next to the protagonist's copy of *Gray's Anatomy*, on which the innocent and romantic version of the letter is left by mistake.

It might be further claimed that the sexual act in the library between the upper class woman and the lower class man embodies their break with social conventions and, what follows, might be perceived as their rejection of the class divisions that stand in the way of their fulfillment. The erotic letter becomes Robbie's expression of passion for the girl, and, at the same time, his rejection of the conventional and passionless perception of a relationship between a

woman and a man found in the classical works of literature which both of them read during their studies.

Furthermore, the events mentioned above draw attention to the active role of literature in the sphere of communication. The performative function of literature, following J. L. Austin's definition (6) is conveyed within the fictional realms of *Atonement* with regard to its capability to transform reality through utterances. The trope of literature in Ian McEwan's novel might be claimed to disclose the ability of generating changes in the lives of all the protagonists, as well as of provoking their internal transformation. The novel's generic construction might serve as the immediate example for this statement as it incorporates the genre variant of *Bildungsroman* with reference to a maturing young girl, as well as the developing creative potential in the writer's consciousness, thus adhering to the transforming capacity of the text. The performative role of literature is communicated through a variety of events within the fictional realms of the novel. Literature is embodied in the form of Robbie's love letter and, as such, it might be claimed to "do" things rather than "tell" about them. The letter should be perceived as the justification behind the accusations of sexual assault thrown at Robbie and the direct cause of his imprisonment: Robbie's direct reference to a woman's intimate body part clearly written out, in his own hand, is officially acknowledged as a symptom of his disease.

Subsequently, literature functions as a form of a secret code between the two characters during Robbie's imprisonment. Since any form of intimacy is forbidden Robbie while serving his sentence, the protagonists use literary characters and events as symbols of their emotional states. Thus, literature operates as the lovers' source of coded messaging, while the intertextual references offer a channel for exchanging secret messages encoded in literary intertexts and transformed by their clash with new social and cultural contexts. Moreover, the letters the characters exchange during the war replace the physical intimacy they had experienced in the Tallis library. It might be stated that the performative function of literature is visualized in the protagonists' method of communication with each other. In their secret code, the literary language betrays the ability to change reality: the protagonists can experience a form of emotional intimacy as lovers

contrary to others' expectations and, at the same time, exclude intruders from their communicative acts. Their encrypted language becomes their method of transforming their unbearable reality.

Next, the performative function of literature is partly hinted in Briony's recollections of her war experiences during her nursing career. It is Briony's story telling which attenuates the pain of a dying soldier. Briony agrees to participate in the dying soldier's game of appearances: she is asked to pretend to be his beloved and to accept the girl's first name in their conversations. This invented method of communication between the two protagonists has a significant impact on the soldier's condition: it alleviates his emotional distress and brings him consolation before his death.

Briony's literary career serves as another event that might be said to hint at the dual function of literature suggested in the novel. Her memoir's initial function is to fill the memory gaps due to her deteriorating condition, progressing dementia and expected complete memory oblivion. Nevertheless, it must be stressed that the central function of Briony's memoir is to obtain atonement. Her novel is supposed to heal her own wounds as a means of granting her the forgiveness she craves for. Thus, the performative function of literature seems to be of prior concern in the novel, bridging the gap between these various textual and extra-textual levels. The novel's main theme, which is writing a confession to gain atonement, may be understood as a performative utterance that is aimed at transforming the protagonist's reality. The act of testimony in trauma theory requires the presence of a trauma victim as a storyteller, and of a listener or reader, in order to work through trauma towards its acceptance. This fulfillment highlights the main concept of trauma theory, gaining atonement through the act of empathic listening to the trauma narrative. In this manner, trauma becomes transformed, rather than forgotten, just as the speaker's perception of the traumatized past and his/her position towards the rejected traumatic experience. In the speech act, one participant utters a statement which changes reality by means of words, and as a result, the utterance works through the experience, positive or not, and leads to the transformation of this reality. Consequently, the performative role of literature might be hinted at in the novel's fictional reality. By referencing the theory, the novel might be claimed to suggest at least a partial correspondence between trauma theory and

the performative role of fiction. Nevertheless, it is questionable whether the presentation of literature in the above mentioned manner is prescriptive or rather ironic, an idea discussed later in this text.

The novel's literariness is further emphasized using various literary forms mentioned, or even embedded within the text. Briony becomes the implied author of her own memoir, and of the other characters' reminiscences within her war memories. Robbie and Cecilia become the authors of their love letters, and thus, partly, co-authors of Briony's memoir, as their perspectives build the novel's complex narrative design. Another aspect of the novel's literary form is Briony's reliance on historical archives rather than on her own memories. This fact might indicate the novel's generic affinity, namely to the historical archive or *lieux de memoire* (Nora 12). Thus, the motif of literature should be perceived in the novel with a view to its dichotomy, its main aesthetic and escapist functions as well as its ability to reveal the performative function at the same time. The dual function of literature, as presented here, might be suggested through the novel's dialogue with the symbolic values of the motif of literature encoded in the universal culture.

6. THE PERFORMATIVITY OF THE NOVEL AND CULTURAL INTERTEXTS

The novel encourages the reader to participate in a discursive game by means of foregrounding a number of suggestive motifs which function in the universal culture as symbols. If it is possible to conceive of the whole narrative as a speech act, then one can emphasize "the narrative's performativity in a larger pragmatic and cultural context possibly taking account of the empirical author or of a paratextual matter" (Berns 5). Thus, the narrative act can be viewed as "a mode of cultural agency that engages with cultural conventions and shapes collective identities" (Berns 5). In Ian McEwan's novel, it is the contradiction between the incorporated symbolic values in literary motifs, and their cultural counterparts, that shapes human identities. The motif of literature serves as the most powerful example of this narrational technique, but not an exhaustive one. The leitmotif of shoes prevails among the novel's intertextual references to cultural conventions and exemplifies the interactive practice between

literary and extra-literary modes. Moreover, the foregrounding of single cultural signs in the narrative might be regarded as a reflection of recurrent images that haunt the protagonist later as a consequence of the traumatic events that accumulate in the girl's consciousness. Single images emerge from her shattered mind so as to be remembered and finally converted to memory.

The shoe motif is present and foregrounded in Part One and Two of the novel suggesting its ambiguity. It might be claimed that it conveys a number of semantic values in the universal cultural context. Among the most prominent ones for this discussion are protection, love, fertility, pleasure, disgrace, subjugation, possessing, dignity, masculinity (Kopalinski 258), all phenomena present in the fictional realms surrounding the main characters of *Atonement*. The motif appears in the novel with high frequency. What is more, it is weaved into the text so as to function as an expressive and powerful symbolic image. Primarily, the motif should be analysed on two levels: its function in the presentation of the relationship between Robbie and Cecilia as well as, and more importantly, between Robbie and upper-class society.

In Part One, the motif of shoes is linked to Robbie's visits to the Tallis family home and presented from two shifting perspectives, Robbie's and Cecilia's, both belonging to Briony's "qualia," namely "the first-person feelings of phenomenal experience" and their "integration within a (third-person) materialist, neuroscientific account of the mind" (Gaedtke 185). Robbie is presented in the act of removing his shoes before entering their house. On the first occasion, the protagonist kneels before removing his boots and socks prompted into the act by their poor condition, as he himself observes. The scene is later commented on by the protagonist who becomes aware of his awkwardness and feeling like "an idiot … padding behind her [Cecilia] across the hall and entering the library barefoot" (McEwan 84). The incident is subsequently analysed in the first version of his letter to Cecilia where the man admits to his feeling "light-headed" and "foolish" in her presence (84). The incident might be treated as a symptom of the protagonist's growing fascination with the girl, his sense of insecurity and apprehension in her presence. Nevertheless, the scene in which a central protagonist, Robbie, kneels before the act

of removing his shoes in front of the mansion belonging to his mother's employers, contradictory to the other guests' behaviour, is a suggestive image reconstructing the social relations in the Tallis's surroundings. The act of shoe removal represents the protagonist's sense of respect towards the Tallis family but it also suggests his low self-esteem related to his inferior social position in the Tallis home. Thus, the motif might be claimed to allude to the second symbolic level within the motif's internal construction, namely servitude and humility. As the event belongs to Briony's memoir, it must be highlighted that the recurrence of the motif reflects her haunting memories emerging from the subconscious.

The letter expressing the man's behaviour in the Tallis house further connects the connotations of the shoe symbol with his state of mind and with his emotions. Various literary motifs responding in the literary practice of the novel including literature and shoes might be claimed to pertain to two distinct spheres, to the properties of physicality and spirituality, namely, the body and the soul, both lying at the root of Briony's shattered self.

The descriptions of war provide additional examples of extending the symbolic values of the leitmotifs found this time in Part Two of the novel, recreated by Briony's focalization out of historical archives and letters. By adding the motif of dead bodies, i.e. a human leg on a tree within Robbie's war accounts in his letters to Cecilia, the motif of literature becomes connected with the concept of the body and mind opposition and foregrounds the issue of physicality. It should be remembered that Robbie's war letters include his observations of his surroundings and the omnipresence of shoes or mutilated legs. The image of a leg in a tree is depicted in detail so as to draw attention to its symbolic value in the war accounts. The narrator observes:

> It was a leg in the tree. A mature plane tree, only just in leaf. The leg was twenty feet up (…) bare, severed cleanly above the knee. (…) It was a perfect leg, pale, smooth, small enough to be a child's. The way it was angled in the fork, it seemed to be on display, for their benefit or enlightenment: this is a leg. (McEwan 192)

The choice of this human body part as an object for this detailed description together with all its accompanying observations, create the effect of irony hidden behind the image where the defining words such as "perfect," "smooth," and "a child's" should give rise to positive connotations with beauty and youth. Moreover, irony concomitant with the image of a tree with a human limb as one of its branches, seems to mock human inability to recreate a new body part in stark contrast to nature's cyclical revival. Nevertheless, the contrast inscribed in the symbol reverberates with Briony's suppressed memories from her childhood experience of becoming a witness of the physical and emotional union of the two lovers in the library.

The shoe motif permeates the war account offered by Robbie within Briony's memoir. It exists in the text either in the form of a prominent image, such as the one mentioned before, or as a seemingly insignificant detail in the setting. In one of his letters to Cecilia, the protagonist remembers the story about a recruit who goes to a parade with one shoe missing (McEwan 208). In another part of his war reminiscences, the protagonist draws another link between the shoe motif and literature. His depiction of his journey and the regular movement of his feet is equated to poetic hexameter and marked graphically by a forward slash symbol within the narration of the novel:

> other men were pursuing him, but he had comfort in a pretence, and a rhythm at least for his feet. He walked / across / the land / until / he came / to the sea. A hexameter. Five iambs and an anapaest was the beat he tramped to now. (McEwan 219)

The lines connect the motif of literature with the motif of feet and shoes by equating their feature of regular rhythm and, as such, indicating the physicality of the two acts, walking and reading. This intertwining of motifs might be also perceived as a symptom of Briony's acting out the trauma memories that occur in her mind involuntarily.

In the other passages of the war memoire, Robbie comments on the sight of soldiers walking barefoot (McEwan 240), and notices a heap of wellington boots on the way (243). The ending of Part Two of

the novel provides another significant image related to the shoe motif, shedding light on the application of the motif with its contradictory symbolic values. His war companion, Corporal Nettle, takes off his shoes and discards them with anger refusing to wear them despite seriously damaged feet. The shoe lands on a rotting human corpse (245). The scene gains significance through Robbie's commentary on the Corporal's agitated behaviour: "It's a long way to England in your socks" (245). The seemingly light-hearted statement discloses the possible interpretation of the leitmotif that evokes the issue of respect for one's nation and its culture. In contrast, the act of removing one's shoes might be read as a sign of respect, humility and servitude. By discarding his boots with anger and refusing to wear them, the soldier rejects his servitude towards the state and the country. The symbolic value of the motif is thus repeated and transformed at the same time. The value of servitude preserved in the act of shoe removal should be read as a sign of rebellion against subjugation, inequality and dominion of one social class over the other. This association is created by Robby's memory of his arrest in the Tallis' mansion and the feel of the gravel underneath his thin-soled shoes as well as "the icy touch of the handcuffs on his wrists," all belonging to the central consciousness of the implied author of the memoir, Briony (264).

The other motifs employed in the practice of the social discourse of the novel include the vase and the temple. The motifs might be claimed to share a common function: the symbolic embodiment of social relations exemplified by the Tallis family and their fragility of their status. The vase and the temple constitute reminders of the Tallis family's prominent history, their high social status and past prosperity. Nevertheless, their present damaged states, the vase's lost ear and the temple's dilapidation, represent the family's crisis, both within the Tallis family circle, and in the upper-class society they represent. It should be stressed that it is Robby who is placed at the centre of the objects' destruction while still within Briony's focalized narrative. He is the one who, though by accident, breaks the ear of the ancient vase in a struggle with Cecilia. He is also the one who is connected with the infamous attempted rape by the temple, a romantic but derelict part of the Tallis' property, and by association, family history. The motifs infer the Tallis's superiority towards Robbie, who despite his intelligence and acquired education, represents a working class man with high

aspirations. It might be further assumed that the false accusations against Robbie are partly attributable to the family's prejudice towards the lower-class in general and to the young daughter's upbringing in the spirit of upper-class superiority and the romantic legends which accompany them in literature.

7. CONCLUSIONS

All of the motifs foregrounded in the text of the novel together with the paratexts and intertexts contribute to the overall understanding of the novel as a discussion about literature as a discursive practice. The literary text seems to reveal its performative function by participating in the protagonist's testimony, the purpose of which is to gain forgiveness, work through trauma to obliterate the traumatic past, and, at the same time, to forestall memory loss. In this vein, the novel relies on the traumatic opposition between remembering and forgetting, and on "transcending the limitations of the self" (Groes 1).

Nevertheless, the events revealing the performative function of various forms of literature present in *Atonement* indicate its illusoriness. The protagonist's concern with receiving forgiveness for her past lie through literature proves futile as it is also based on a lie: the events which Briony presents constitute another version of the past which she admits to have altered. Thus, the reliability of any form of story-telling, including the trauma narrative, is undermined. As a consequence, the validity of the trauma narrative as an example of the performative text as a means of asking for forgiveness is questioned and its fictionality disclosed. The novel's title, foregrounding one of the key concepts of trauma theory, might hint of skepticism towards the performativity evinced in trauma narrative. Judith Seaboyer acknowledges the issue of the performative function in *Atonement*; however, she highlights the problematic dualism embedded in the protagonist's desire to atone and "her desire to arouse in us a desire for her narrative" (32). Thus, the novel's double narrative allows us "to experience the ethics of writing and reading reality" (32). *Atonement* should be read as "the constructive equivalent or counterpart of narrative ethics" (Head, *Contemporary British*

Novelists 24), and an attempt to break the boundaries of fiction creating a literary work which is a performative practice between the reader, the text, the author, and the cultural and social context.

WORKS CITED

Acheson, James, and Sara C. E. Ross. *Contemporary British Novel*, Edinburgh UP, 2005.

Austin, John L. *How to Do Things with Words*, Harvard UP, 1975.

Bakhtin, Mikhail. "Problemy Poetyki Dostojewskiego." Translated by N. Modzelewska, *Bachtin. Dialog. Język. Literatura*, edited by Edward Czaplejewski and Edward Kasperski, Panstwowe Wydawnictwo Naukowe, 1970, pp. 355-370.

Bennett, Andrew, and Nickolas Royle. *An Introduction to Literature, Criticism and Theory*, Pearson Longman, 2004.

Berns, Ute, "Performativity," *The Living Handbook of Narratology*, edited by Peter Huhn, et al., Hamburg UP, 2014. URL=hup.sub.uni-hamburg.de/Ihn/index.php?title=Performativity&oldid=2039. Accessed 05 June 2019.

Bloom, L. Sandra, "Trauma Theory Abbreviated." 1999. www.cyf.vic.gov.au/trauma_theory_abbreviated_sandra_bloom.pdf. Accessed 10 January 2018.

Caruth, Cathy. *Trauma: Explorations in Memory*, Johns Hopkins UP, 1995.

Dobrogoszcz, Tomasz. *Fiction and Relationships in Ian McEwan's Fiction*, Lexington Books, 2018.

Elias, Amy J. "Meta-mimesis? The Problem of British Postmodern Realism." *British Postmodern Fiction*, edited by Theo D'haen and Hans Bertens, Brill-Rodopi, 1994, pp. 9-31.

Elsaesser, Thomas. "Postmodernism. Mourning Work." *Screen*, vol. 42, no. 2, Summer 2001, pp. 199-200.

Gaedtke, Andrew. "Cognitive Investigations: The Problems of Qualia and Style in the Contemporary Neuronovel." *Novel: A Forum on Fiction*, vol. 45, no. 2, *The Contemporary Novel: Imagining the Twenty-First Century*, Summer 2012, pp. 184-201. www.jstore.org/stable/23259543 Accessed on 18 May 2019.

Genette, Gerard. *Paratexts. Thresholds of Interpretation*, Cambridge UP, 1997.

Gibbons, Alison, *Multimodality, Cognition, and Experimental Literature*, Routledge, 2012.

Groes, Sebastian, ed. *Ian McEwan: Contemporary Critical Perspectives*, Bloomsbury, 2013.

Hall, Geoff. *Literature in Language Education*, Palgrave Macmillan, 2005.

Head, Dominic. *The Cambridge Introduction to Modern British Fiction, 1950-2000*, Cambridge UP, 2002.

Head, Dominic. *Contemporary British Novelists: Ian McEwan*, Palgrave Macmillan, 2007.

Henke, Suzette. *Shattered Subjects: Trauma and Testimony in Women's Life-Writing*, St. Martin's Press, 1998.

Herman, Judith. *Trauma and Recovery: The aftermath of violence – from domestic abuse to political terror*, Basic Books, 1997.

Huang, Weilong. "A Study of Paratexts in Ian McEwan's *Atonement*." *Advances in Social Science, Education and Humanities Research*, vol. 87, Atlantis Press. 2007. https://Doi.org/10.2991/icemeet-16.2017.134. Accessed 23 January 2017.

Kacandes, Irene. *Talk Fiction: Literature and the Talk Explosion*, University of Nebraska Press, 2001.

Keen, Suzanne. *Empathy and the Novel*, Oxford UP, 2007.

Kilby, Jane. "The Writings of Trauma: Trauma Theory and the Liberty of Reading." *Formations: A Journal of Culture/Theory/Politics*, Issue 47, 2002, pp. 217-230.

Kopalinski, Wladyslaw. *Słownik symboli [The Dictionary of Symbols]*, Oficyna Wydawnicza Rytm, 2006.

LaCapra, Dominic. *History and Memory after Auschwitz*, Cornell UP, 1998.

Laurie, Vickroy. *Reading Trauma Narratives: The Contemporary Novel and the Psychology of Oppression*, University of Virginia Press, 2015.

Letissier, Georges. "'The Eternal Loop of Self-Torture': Ethics and Trauma in Ian McEwan's *Atonement*." *Ethics and Trauma in Contemporary British Fiction*, edited by Susana Onega and Jean-Michel Ganteau, Rodopi, 2011, pp. 209-226. Ebscohost. Accessed 27 May 2019.

Malcolm, David. *Understanding Ian McEwan*, University of South Carolina Press, 2002.

McEwan, Ian. *Atonement*, Vintage Books, 2007.

Mengham, Rod, ed. *An Introduction to Contemporary Fiction*. Polity Press. 1999.

Nayebpour, Karam. *Mind Presentation in Ian McEwan's Fiction: Consciousness and the Presentation of Character in Amsterdam, Atonement, and On Chesil Beach*, Columbia UP, 2017.

Nora, Pierre. "Between Memory and History: Les Lieux de Memoire." *Representations*, no. 26, Spring 1989, pp. 7-24. www.jstor.org/stable/2928520. Accessed 19 April 2018.

Ridley, Matt. Foreword. *Ian McEwan: Contemporary Critical Perspectives*, edited by Sebastian Groes, Bloomsbury, 2013, pp. ix-xii.

Root, P.P. Maria. "Reconstructing the impact of trauma on personality." *Personality and Psychopathology: Feminist Reappraisals*, edited by Laura S. Brown and Mary Ballou, Guilford Press, 1992, pp. 229-265.

Ryan, Kiernan. "Sex, Violence and Complicity: Martin Amis and Ian McEwan." *An Introduction to Contemporary Fiction*, edited by Rod Mengham, Polity Press, 1999, pp. 203-18.

Seaboyer, Judith. "Ian McEwan: Contemporary Realism and the Novel of Ideas." *Contemporary British Novel*, edited by James Acheson, Sarah C. E. Ross. Edinburgh UP, 2005, pp.13-32.

Werth, Paul. *Text Worlds: Representing Conceptual Space in Discourse*, Longman, 1999.

Recibido / Received: 11-3-2019 *Aceptado / Accepted: 13-5-2019*

Una ambigua utopía victoriana. Muerte y desarraigo en *A Crystal Age* (1887) de W.H. Hudson

Eva Lencina (evalencina@live.com.ar)
UNT-CONICET (Argentina)

Resumen

En este artículo estudiamos *A Crystal Age* (1887), la segunda novela del escritor anglo-argentino William Henry Hudson, en relación a su filiación genérica con la literatura utópica victoriana. Analizamos cómo el concepto de utopía en Hudson introduce a su vez una representación indirecta del espacio americano así como una cristalización ficcional de su compleja identidad escindida, planteo teórico que nos permitió discutir con los conceptos de biculturalismo, zona de contacto, liminalidad, *in-between* y sujeto fronterizo en relación a su aplicabilidad a la figura del naturalista. Mediante una comparación de estructuras actanciales con *The Purple Land* (1885), la primera novela del autor, reafirmamos la importancia del concepto de utopía como centro del pensamiento hudsoniano, en estrecha relación con sus nociones de infancia y naturaleza. Ahondamos en la manera en que la identidad escindida, en tanto efecto biográfico de la figura de Hudson, se abre paso hasta su ficción, donde cristaliza en forma de mecanismos narrativos a través de estrategias figuradas de representación.

Palabras clave: *A Crystal Age*, W.H. Hudson, novela utópica victoriana, identidad escindida.

An Ambiguous Victorian Utopia. Death and Estrangement in W.H. Hudson's *A Crystal Age* (1887)

Abstract

In this paper, we study *A Crystal Age* (1887), Anglo-Argentine writer William Henry Hudson's second

novel, in relation to its generic affiliation with Victorian utopian literature. We analyze how the concept of utopia in Hudson also introduces an indirect representation of the American colonial space, as a fictional crystallization of his complex split identity, theoretical proposal that allows us to discuss with the concepts of biculturalism, contact zone, liminality, in-between and border subject in relation to their applicability to the naturalist's figure. Through a comparison of narrative structures with *The Purple Land* (1885), the author's first novel, we reassert the importance of the concept of utopia as center of the Hudsonian thoughts, in close relation to his notions of childhood and nature. We delve into the way in which split identity, as a biographical effect of Hudson's figure, makes its way into his fiction, where it crystallizes as narrative mechanisms through figurative strategies of representation.

Keywords: *A Crystal Age*, W.H. Hudson, Victorian utopian novel, split identity.

1. INTRODUCCIÓN

William Henry Hudson (1841-1922) fue un escritor y naturalista anglo-argentino que vivió marcado por una ambigua pertenencia nacional: si bien nació en Argentina, de padres norteamericanos, en 1874 eligió radicarse en Inglaterra, país de sus ancestros que admiraba y consideraba su patria cultural, pero donde nunca dejó de sentirse parcialmente un extranjero (ver nota 4). Escribió su obra literaria y ensayística en inglés y, sin embargo, gran parte de ésta se encuentra atravesada por los paisajes pampeanos que poblaron su niñez.

Se puede considerar a Hudson, como se desprenderá de este trabajo, como un sujeto bicultural (*cfr.* Eks Oksaar), con la competencia para actuar en dos contextos culturales según las reglas de cada uno. Sin embargo, podríamos decir que el biculturalismo tiene un lado oscuro: mientras el sujeto posee la potencialidad de pertenecer a dos culturas, sufre a su vez de la incapacidad de formar

parte plenamente sólo de una. Por otro lado, el planteamiento de Oksaar es principalmente lingüístico y se concentra en la adquisición de lenguas, lo cual comporta importancia por el espesor que reviste el lenguaje en Hudson, un misterio para sus canonizadores hasta la década del cincuenta. Pese al beneficio de un enriquecimiento cultural y un mayor cosmopolitismo, la condición bicultural implica también una ambigüedad de pertenencia que, en determinados contextos, puede producir dificultades de integración social (pensemos entonces en la mentalidad victoriana en relación con el mestizaje o con los descendientes de europeos nacidos en las colonias o semi-colonias).[1] Esta ambigüedad es lo que produjo una identidad del desarraigo en Hudson, identidad que se abre paso hasta la textualidad de sus obras, constituyendo un espejo donde la intelectualidad argentina buscaría luego reflejarse, para construir también su identidad escindida como hijos de Europa nacidos en otra tierra, a la que también pertenecen.

Hudson se crio en una comunidad de inmigrantes anglosajones y, a pesar de trabajar en el campo y servir en el ejército, las actividades profesionales que empezó a desarrollar en su adultez consistieron en una labor de naturalista en constante contacto con las academias de Estados Unidos e Inglaterra. Pese a vivir en Argentina, Hudson se movía en una miniatura del mundo anglosajón.[2] En ese sentido, Hudson se configura como sujeto fronterizo (pensando el término "frontera" como un dispositivo pedagógico del disenso que ayuda a visibilizar identidades en conflicto, *cfr*. Mónica Szurmuk y Irwin McKee 106-111): no hablamos ya de una capacidad para moverse en ambas culturas, pues eventualmente Hudson elegiría desarrollar sólo la competencia inglesa, pero sí de un habitante de la frontera con Inglaterra, una "zona de contacto" (en términos de Mary Louise Pratt 31-32) probablemente poco cartografiada por la propia sociedad inglesa.[3] Por su bagaje cultural de colono anglosajón nacido y criado en la América hispana y de inmigrante en Londres, Hudson tampoco pertenece plenamente al mundo inglés en el que elige desenvolverse.[4] El concepto de *in-between* de Homi Bhabha es otra manera de expresar la medianería identitaria hudsoniana. Si bien Bhabha remite a textos donde lo colonial implica identidades colectivas, la ambigua situación hudsoniana, escindida entre el retorno a las raíces y una extranjería de matices coloniales, expresa en sus

textos, por medio de la representación problemática de lo americano, un espacio incierto, entre-medio, que opone los "espacios salvajes de la tierra" (136) a la mirada simplificadora propia de la *inglesidad*. Pese a que sus ficciones no expresarán un sentimiento anti-inglés, lo americano no deja de cristalizar como problema. Incluso la idea de liminalidad (entendida como "posición intersticial entre identidades fijas," Thomassen 16-18) para referirse a la identidad hudsoniana es fácilmente relacionable con el enfoque de Felipe Arocena, que habla de "fronteras culturales" en la vida de Hudson: zonas de su experiencia vital en la que la ambigüedad mantenía al sujeto en suspenso (Argentina-Inglaterra, blanco-indio, campo-ciudad, naturaleza-cultura, ciencia-literatura, *cfr.* Arocena 23-24).

Como hemos visto, muchos y variados conceptos provenientes de los Estudios Culturales, la Sociología de la Cultura e incluso la Antropología pueden converger a la hora de abordar la biografía y la identidad hudsoniana. Conceptos como biculturalismo, *in-between*, sujeto fronterizo o liminalidad pueden confluir en la expresión "identidad escindida," con la que nos referimos al constructo identitario hudsoniano en toda su singular complejidad.

En 1887 Hudson publicó anónimamente *A Crystal Age*, su segunda novela, que podría enmarcarse en cierta corriente de la literatura utópica victoriana. La obra tiene como protagonista a Smith, un estereotipado *Englishman* que despierta misteriosamente en un futuro lejano, en el que la civilización ha olvidado su pasado histórico y se organiza ahora en pacíficas comunidades matriarcales aisladas entre sí, similares a colmenas de abejas, y devotas de la naturaleza. Smith deberá adaptarse forzosamente a esta nueva realidad, enamorado como se encuentra desde un principio de Yoletta, una de las hijas de la Casa. El recurso novelesco de la obra estriba en la aparente imposibilidad de este amor, dada la ideología de la comunidad, que basa la manutención de la paz en la contención de las pasiones que antaño llevaran a la humanidad a la guerra y restringe las relaciones íntimas con fines reproductivos a la Madre y el Padre de cada Casa.

A Crystal Age es una de las obras de Hudson menos difundidas y conocidas, tanto en Inglaterra como en Argentina. En Inglaterra, se debe principalmente a la pobre acogida crítica que tuvo en su época.

La falta de mérito literario de esta novela es casi un consenso crítico y el mismo autor se negaría a reeditarla. En el campo literario argentino, dado que esta novela utópica de Hudson no tematiza directamente el escenario nacional (a diferencia de *Far Away and Long Ago*, su autobiografía de 1918, o *Idle Days in Patagonia*) o el territorio americano (como *The Purple Land*, su primera novela de 1885, o *Green Mansions*), obtuvo una casi nula respuesta crítica durante su ulterior etapa de canonización en el país. Sin embargo, y a pesar de su valor literario discutible y su puesto menor dentro de la literatura de la época (e incluso dentro de la propia obra de Hudson), consideramos que su rescate crítico puede iluminar perfiles de sus ficciones que ponen en escena elementos de su propia identidad cultural fronteriza. Si en textos declaradamente autobiográficos o autoficcionales tales representaciones identitarias funcionan como un elemento cardinal, estimamos que en *A Crystal Age* reviste valor crítico la búsqueda de los modos en que se establece, por medio de transformaciones y simbolizaciones, ese mismo sistema de representaciones.

Abordaremos aquí *A Crystal Age* para estudiar su papel en el marco de la literatura utópica victoriana, así como su especial carácter de "utopía pastoral." También mencionaremos en la novela una representación indirecta de lo americano-colonial, en relación con el discurso utópico y exotista de la Inglaterra de aquella época. Por otro lado, estableceremos un sistema de relaciones connotativas entre la obra y ciertos aspectos canónicos de la biografía del autor, en especial todo aquello que remite a su condición de sujeto fronterizo. Y es que este rasgo de la identidad escindida, que hiciera atractivo a Hudson para la crítica argentina, está también presente de manera programática en *A Crystal Age*.

De hecho, el proyecto utópico del autor tiene como base implícita su propia experiencia en la pampa.[5] En este sentido, *A Crystal Age* constituye una forma particular del género utópico, donde se funden la dimensión prospectiva con la retrospectiva, especialmente si consideramos que el autor plantea como sistema ideal de valores su propio mundo de recuerdos infantiles para localizarlos de manera simbólica en un futuro remoto (de forma invertida, en su autobiografía, Hudson hace de su infancia pampeana un paraíso perdido, enterrado irremediablemente en el pasado). En términos ideológicos, la utopía

retrospectiva de Hudson connota el conservadurismo que se opone a los estragos del progreso de la industrialización que estaban sufriendo Inglaterra y Occidente en general.

2. *A CRYSTAL AGE* EN LA LITERATURA UTÓPICA VICTORIANA

Dentro del sistema literario en que fue concebida, *A Crystal Age* se enmarca en la tradición de la literatura utópica cultivada en Inglaterra desde el siglo XVI, cuando Thomas More escribe la obra fundadora del género, su famosa *Utopia* (1516), donde ya se encuentra presente el elemento irónico que caracterizará al género en su proyección futura.[6] Hacia fines del siglo XIX, el género utópico experimenta ciertos cambios radicales. El progreso como noción central en la historia de la humanidad, los desarrollos teóricos en torno a la evolución y los acelerados avances tecnológicos de la Segunda Revolución Industrial introdujeron un elemento crucial en la ficción utópica: el tiempo como eje narrativo suplanta los desplazamientos espaciales que situaban las sociedades utópicas en regiones remotas y aisladas pero contemporáneas (*cfr*. Novák 66).

De esta manera, el tópico del viaje en el tiempo a través de un sueño sobrenatural aparece en obras utópicas anteriores a la de Hudson: es el recurso que moviliza la trama en *The Great Romance* (1881), obra anónima neozelandesa, *The Diothas; or, A Far Look Ahead* (1883) del norteamericano John Macnie y la célebre *Looking Backward* (1888) de Edward Bellamy. Sin embargo, podemos incluso rastrear este tópico fuera del género hasta el clásico relato norteamericano "Rip Van Winkle" (1819) de Washington Irving, donde el escapismo y la irresponsabilidad del protagonista lo condenan a una siesta de la que despierta muchos años después.

Como precursora cercana de la obra de Hudson, debemos mencionar *Erewhon* (1872) de Samuel Butler (1835-1902), una utopía ambigua que satiriza la sociedad victoriana y que tuvo una amplia recepción en la época.[7] Sin embargo, la obra utópica con la que más estrechamente se ha comparado *A Crystal Age* es su sucesora de 1890, *News from Nowhere (or An Epoch of Rest)* del socialista William Morris.[8]

Se considera que las similitudes entre ambas obras se deben a una influencia directa de Hudson sobre el célebre Morris, a pesar de que esto no ha podido ser comprobado a través de cartas o testimonios de la época.[9] Como la de Hudson con su "edad de cristal", la obra de Morris hace referencia en su título a "una época de descanso", situando ambas obras la utopía no en un lugar exótico, sino en un tiempo futuro. Otra semejanza central entre ambas es que Morris también hace uso de un sueño que lleva al protagonista a un futuro lejano en que la sociedad ha experimentado cambios radicales, cuyo examen es materia de la obra.

En comparación con sus contemporáneas más notables, la novela de Hudson carece de referencias políticas directas (pese a no estar privada de una denuncia general del orden social de la época) y, como se desprende de su título, no está centrada en la descripción de un lugar utópico e indeterminado (aunque actual), sino en el análisis de una época futura, en la cual el estilo de vida es globalmente utópico. Por otro lado, no lidia con las supuestas consecuencias de la industrialización que se preveían en el siglo XIX (positivas o negativas), sino que se permite en ese sentido un hiato temporal y el lector infiere que el estado actual de las cosas es el resultado de un quiebre socio-político originado en el presente de la enunciación pero el cual la sociedad ha superado mediante un retorno a un modo de vida natural (es decir, nos encontramos frente a un relato, en tal sentido, post-apocalíptico). Mediante esta disyunción temporal, Hudson plantea un viaje al futuro para volver al pasado. Como veremos, el principal interés del autor no es el planteo de "otra" forma de vivir, sino de una conocida por él desde su infancia y que considera abandonada por la sociedad de su época. En este sentido, *A Crystal Age* constituye una utopía conservadora que idealiza formas tradicionales de organización social, en oposición a obras utópicas progresistas como la de Bellamy, que ponen el acento en las ventajas de la industrialización para reducir la carga laboral del hombre.

A Crystal Age se opone también a otras obras utópicas de su generación por poner el acento en el ambiente pastoral (mientras que las demás acentuaban las posibles consecuencias del fenómeno de la industrialización), y se alinea con un conjunto de obras denominadas "utopías pastorales," como *News from Nowhere* de Morris y la trilogía

altruriana de William Dean Howells (que comienza en 1894 con *A Traveller from Altruria*) y que quizá tenga su culminación en la épica ecológica de Tolkien. En tanto utopía pastoral, la sociedad imaginada por Hudson carece casi por completo de tecnología moderna y practica la agricultura de manera tradicional, trabajo al que Smith dedica cada mañana. El género pastoral no le fue desconocido a nuestro autor, en especial a través de sus ensayos al aire libre y obras como *A Hind in Richmond Park* (1922) y *A Shepherd's Life* (1910), y podría decirse que está íntimamente imbricado con su noción de utopía (*cfr.* Franco xxxi).

En un Prefacio a *A Crystal Age*, añadido a la segunda edición de 1906, donde finalmente admite su autoría, Hudson concluye paradójicamente: "[…] the ending of passion and strife is the beginning of decay. It is indeed a hard saying, and the hardest lesson we can learn of her without losing love and bidding good-by forever to hope" (vii-viii). Esta posterior exégesis sobre la supuesta utopía que delineara veinte años antes hace surgir interrogantes acerca de las múltiples interpretaciones que podría albergar la obra. Si bien Hudson proyecta una clara dimensión utópica en la descripción del mundo en la "edad de cristal," especialmente relacionada con su infancia y con su concepción de la naturaleza, el experimento culmina en una tragedia amorosa con tintes distópicos (de hecho, Axel Gasquet incluso lee toda la novela en clave distópica).

Durante la obra, asistimos a la favorable evolución de Smith en su adaptación a la comunidad en que se ve arrojado, mientras crece su ansiedad por relacionarse con Yoletta, una joven de la que se ha enamorado el primer día. Esto resulta aparentemente imposible, al comprender Smith que las reglas de la Casa no contemplan ningún tipo de relación amorosa a no ser entre el Padre y la Madre, los únicos autorizados para la procreación. Sin embargo, la Madre, ya moribunda, ha decidido que Smith y Yoletta sean sus sucesores, resolviendo así el conflicto amoroso. Pero la impaciencia de Smith es demasiada y cae en la desesperación antes de que Yoletta le comunique la buena noticia. Ingiere un brebaje que anuncia el cese de todo sufrimiento y, antes de que termine de adivinar la trágica verdad, muere.

Otra de las alteraciones que sufre el género utópico a fines del siglo XIX es la incorporación de la dimensión femenina a la acción

novelesca, principalmente debido al creciente papel social que experimentaban los movimientos de liberación de la mujer (*cfr*. Novák 66). En este sentido, la mujer en el género utópico suele cumplir la doble función de interés amoroso y guía del protagonista a través del territorio inexplorado. Por otro lado, el papel de la mujer en las obras de Hudson es en muchos casos relegado a un interés amoroso idealizado, pero sin demasiada incidencia en la trama. En una carta a su amigo David Garnett, Hudson admite, muchos años después de la publicación de la obra, que "la pasión sexual es el pensamiento central en *A Crystal Age*: la idea de que no habrá millenium, descanso ni paz perpetua, hasta que se haya extinguido esa furia, y yo di un tiempo ilimitado para que se produjese ese cambio" (Jurado 97).

Desde este punto de vista, podríamos considerar que Smith, a pesar de haberse adaptado positivamente a la "edad de cristal," es finalmente castigado por cualidades que evocan su relación con el pasado: su impaciencia desencadena su propio final trágico, mientras que su desmedido deseo por Yoletta es lo que lo lleva a la desesperación. *A Crystal Age* constituye sin duda alguna una utopía, pero lleva implícita una reflexión catastrófica (y por lo tanto distópica) sobre los efectos de la industrialización en la mente de la sociedad moderna. La muerte de Smith no destruye los planteos utópicos de la comunidad, pero cabría preguntarse si no constituye una venganza final del colono (el propio Hudson) sobre la sociedad inglesa (mediante el castigo a la impaciencia de Smith), la cual demuestra no ser digna de una comunidad utópica. Volveremos a esto en el último apartado, cuando revisemos la postura de Jason Wilson quien, lejos de caer en la falacia intencional, propone una lectura de la identidad autoral inscripta en el texto a modo de marca discursiva.

Sin embargo, persiste la incertidumbre a causa del Prefacio escrito por Hudson. ¿Apoya éste la evolución de su protagonista o lo considera con sorna? ¿Opina Hudson que el cese de las pasiones en el hombre conduce a la paz y prosperidad, o que esto es imposible y resulta una hipocresía por parte de la literatura utópica el plantear semejante desarrollo social? Cabe señalar que el Prefacio está fechado en 1906, casi veinte años después de publicada la obra y cuando Hudson había alcanzado ya mayor éxito literario y reconocimiento social. Su intento de producir una obra dentro del género utópico, tan de moda en la

época, bien puede haber constituido una estrategia de legitimación dentro del campo literario en que el autor buscaba posicionarse por entonces y dentro del cual su primera obra, dos años antes, no había recibido muchas ni buenas críticas. De esta manera, lo planteado por Hudson en *A Crystal Age* puede ser considerado un constructo artificial de sus propias creencias (banalizadas a extremos maniqueos debido a las exigencias del género), donde tal vez éstas encuentran sus límites al colisionar en el trágico desenlace.

La principal paradoja que se plantea en toda obra de utopía social perfectiva es la sutil barrera que divide el territorio de la contención del de la represión. De esta manera, algunas obras plantean la sana contención de las pasiones y excesos del hombre como una vía hacia la pacífica convivencia, mientras que otras ven en esto una mera impostura, donde la contención es en realidad una represión, destinada al fracaso y al rebrote de las mismas pasiones de manera patológica. ¿Un camino social perfectivo por la contención puede alejarnos del vicio de los malos impulsos o al reprimirlos, anularía nuestra vitalidad humana?

Así, la duda permanece:

> Hudson´s message […] is not quite clear. Does he want to suggest that humans have to pay too high a price for the peace and stability of a true utopia? Or does he want to suggest that Smith tragically fails to win the prize for happiness because he acts rashly and foolishly? (Seeber 55)

Asimismo, si aceptáramos la segunda opción planteada por Seeber, cabe preguntarse acerca de la identificación que construye Hudson en la novela con respecto al accionar de su protagonista, es decir, si la resolución compositiva de la obra está pensada como una ironía trágica o como una sátira. En el primer caso, podría decirse que la contención planteada por la comunidad fue trágicamente interpretada como una represión por parte de Smith (al menos en un nivel inconsciente), debido a su paradigma social atrasado, conduciendo inevitablemente a la muerte, la cual la obra pretendería representar de manera respetuosa (como un acontecimiento tan trágico como ineludible).

Mientras que, si la resolución constituye una sátira, entonces se disuelve toda posible identificación discursiva entre autor y protagonista, siendo la muerte de Smith un recurso humorístico debido a que, en un giro sentimental, no logró comprender la esencia de la comunidad *natural* debido a sus lazos con la *civilización*.

3. LA IDENTIDAD ESCINDIDA DE W.H. HUDSON

Jason Wilson, en su artículo "W.H. Hudson: the Colonial's Revenge," considera que Smith no debe ser identificado con una dimensión alteregoica del autor, sino al contrario: en una interpretación de corte biográfico y psicocrítico, Smith constituiría una suerte de Hudson invertido, mediante el cual se ejerce una venganza sobre la figura del *Englishman* (encarnado en el protagonista), motivada ésta por el resentimiento que la forzosa adaptación a la cultura anglosajona generara en el autor, al tener que renegar de su pasado latinoamericano.

Resulta evidente que, en la actualidad, estas lecturas psicologistas no suelen ser muy estimadas como sustento bibliográfico y que, en todo caso, existen hoy en día marcos psicocríticos más actualizados desde los cuales ofrecer una lectura de este tipo en torno a Hudson. Sin embargo, si escogemos reponer este artículo de Wilson no es tanto por la validez de su planteo teórico, sino por la originalidad de la categoría crítica que percibe como motivo de la novela: una venganza ejercida por el autor *contra* su propio personaje, el cual vendría a encarnar el estereotipo cultural de la sociedad cuyos valores se ponen en duda.

Otros críticos en la misma época que Wilson también problematizaban la identidad de Hudson. Jean Franco lo llama "el exiliado nato" (ix), en una suerte de oxímoron crítico que define muy bien la condición identitaria del autor. Lo interesante en el artículo de Wilson es que percibe cómo este exilio cristaliza en un mecanismo narrativo específico: una venganza cultural expresada dentro de la propia ficción.

Siguiendo lo propuesto por Wilson, *A Crystal Age* se construye como una utopía en la que Hudson pretende infligir a la sociedad

industrializada inglesa una enseñanza acerca del valor de la naturaleza y de la vida "bárbara" que él mismo experimentó en su Argentina natal. El viaje interior y el aprendizaje que atraviesa Smith lo llevan finalmente a encontrarse con la postura del autor. Así, la obra constituye una metáfora de la adaptación cultural y de la pérdida de identidad original que funciona en dos direcciones: como una venganza por parte del colono Hudson hacia la sociedad colonialista inglesa y como una travesía vital y positiva para el *Englishman* Smith, de vuelta a valores olvidados por la sociedad que se ve obligado a abandonar. Sin embargo, la accidental muerte del personaje al final de la novela constituye sin duda alguna una nota pesimista con respecto a la posibilidad que tiene el civilizado de valorar apropiadamente la utopía propuesta por el autor. Sería quizás ingenuo no percibir el carácter de tesis que se introduce como indicio en el hecho de que la solución compositiva vire hacia la tragedia.

Insistiendo con la costumbre crítica de comparar las dos primeras novelas, Carlos Gamerro (188) juega con la hipótesis de que el protagonista hudsoniano en *The Purple Land* sea, como Smith en la obra que nos ocupa, un naturalista de origen inglés debido a la incapacidad del autor para construir, en estas primeras obras, un personaje demasiado alejado de su propia experiencia (a pesar de la poca incidencia que esta caracterización tenga en la trama de ambas novelas). A partir de un paralelismo entre la evolución identitaria de ambos personajes (Lamb y Smith), sería factible disentir con Gamerro y afirmar, junto con Wilson, que los protagonistas hudsonianos se alejan en un principio del yo autoral para constituir un *otro*, definidamente colonialista, al cual se le imparte una enseñanza sobre la alteridad (americana, natural, pretérita, etc.). Los primeros personajes hudsonianos tendrían quizás más de estereotipo cultural (en tanto ingleses) que de proyecciones autorales (en tanto naturalistas autoficcionales).

En torno a la figura de Hudson se ha llegado a erigir un efecto biográfico de identidad escindida e incluso se ha percibido cómo esta ambigüedad cristaliza en los sujetos textuales de sus primeras ficciones. Ahora bien, este efecto de identidad parecería circular entre dos polos antitéticos, los cuales, *grosso modo* y sin el afán de defender una visión binaria, se pueden esbozar a partir de dos claves que las

biografías han insistido tradicionalmente en delinear:

Por un lado, una marcada simpatía por Inglaterra, a la cual el autor se siente pertenecer culturalmente desde su infancia a través de su familia y antepasados. Ésta se ve reforzada con su decisión de viajar a Londres y, eventualmente, terminar de afincarse allí mediante su casamiento con Emily Wingrave y el rechazo de la oferta que su hermano le hace de volver a la Argentina. Hacia el final de su vida, Hudson obtiene la ciudadanía inglesa y adopta una posición conservadora a favor de la monarquía.

Por el otro, una identificación temprana con la tierra que lo vio nacer y con los ámbitos rurales, en los que la naturaleza puede ser apreciada libremente, una necesidad de Hudson a lo largo de su vida. Esta relación simbiótica con la naturaleza se ve truncada por su decisión de vivir en Londres, ciudad en la que se sentía agobiado (de la misma manera que antes había preferido el campo a vivir en Buenos Aires) y que abandonaba frecuentemente para realizar largas caminatas por zonas rurales (que inspirarían sus ensayos al aire libre, como *Afoot in England*, y sus obras de observación ornitológica, como *Birds in London*).

La oscilación entre estas tendencias genera un efecto de medianería identitaria, el cual se activa cuando Hudson decide abandonar Argentina a favor de Inglaterra (donde encuentra una mayor identificación cultural con el ámbito en que desarrollar su labor de naturalista y, eventualmente, de escritor), pero que también es causa de que nunca terminara de sentirse un "inglés completo", siendo incluso considerado exótico por sus contemporáneos.[10]

Ahora bien, la manera en que esta medianería del autor encuentra traducción en el plano literario es a través de una división o duplicación actancial, para representar, de manera hiperbólica, las posturas que entraban en conflicto en el propio Hudson. Así, los polos antitéticos que configuran el efecto biográfico escindido del autor cristalizan ficcionalmente en los siguientes agentes: 1) la simpatía cultural por Inglaterra se convierte en el típico *Englishman* flemático y prejuicioso que se verá enfrentado a una alteridad salvaje, en ocasiones un joven observador y, en un extremo, el inglés degradado que vive en tierras bárbaras, mientras que 2) la identificación con los

ámbitos rurales se encarna en el sabio salvaje, a veces sencillo y otras veces metafísico, pero siempre en profunda conexión con la naturaleza.

Las dos primeras obras literarias de Hudson comparten la misma estructura actancial en lo que a esta medianería identitaria compete, así como el mismo periplo vital por parte del protagonista. En *The Purple Land*, el personaje se ve exiliado desde Buenos Aires a Montevideo después de desposar a una joven sin el consentimiento de su padre. Richard Lamb recorre la Banda Oriental en busca de trabajo, pero se ve involucrado en numerosas aventuras con los gauchos uruguayos, llegando incluso a unirse a una guerrilla. Antes de partir en busca de aventuras, Lamb sube a la cima del Cerro de Montevideo y pronuncia un discurso en que reflexiona sobre el país y lo que podría haber logrado el dominio inglés, de no haber fracasado la invasión de 1807 (*cfr. The Purple Land* 11).[11] Lamb lamenta la falta de decisión de los militares ingleses que, luego de conquistar Montevideo en 1807, se rindieron a cambio de la liberación de prisioneros de guerra por parte de Buenos Aires. Considera que el derramamiento de sangre americana a manos inglesas traería paz y renovación al pueblo uruguayo, bendecido con todo tipo de bellezas naturales mal aprovechadas y cuyas gentes persisten en la desidia y la ignorancia.

Sin embargo, hacia el final de sus aventuras (luego de unirse a la guerrilla de Santa Coloma, de infiltrarse en el bando opuesto, de conocer el amor de muchachas locales, olvidado convenientemente de su esposa Paquita, y la bondad de familias empobrecidas y de presenciar la degradación a la que sus compatriotas también son capaces de llegar en esas tierras salvajes), Lamb ha cambiado radicalmente de idea. Antes de abandonar Montevideo, sube una vez más al cerro, donde reniega de sus anteriores juicios y reivindica la libertad salvaje de ese pueblo indómito (*cfr. The Purple Land* 161-162).

La nueva postura de Lamb, esta epifanía utópica, a raíz de sus recorridos y experiencias entre el pueblo uruguayo, constituye una defensa de la tolerancia hacia la alteridad, poco practicada al parecer por sus contemporáneos. Desde un punto de vista ideológico, sólo queda señalar la indecisión en la que, sin embargo, aún se sostiene la postura de Lamb: es deseable que el pueblo uruguayo mantenga su

sabor indómito, aunque esto requiera de una falta de prosperidad material, pero esa perfección bárbara no resulta un paradigma social deseable para Inglaterra, a pesar de las objeciones que se le hace a la civilización industrial. Podríamos incluso llamar a esta postura "complacencia romántica," no poco plegada a la noción rousseauniana del "buen salvaje," a pesar de que Lamb intenta negar el romanticismo de su punto de vista (la sensación de libertad que le opone también puede considerarse romántica), debido a que, en su anclaje sociopolítico, la conclusión a la que arriba el personaje de Hudson no deja de ser provechosa eventualmente para Inglaterra (pues implicaría mantener esa tierra en un estado semi-colonial económicamente hablando).

Ahora bien, podría decirse que, en su segunda obra, Hudson va más allá en su planteamiento social. Lo que en *The Purple Land* constituía la aceptación de la alteridad indómita, en *A Crystal Age* se transforma en una alternativa deseable para el futuro de Inglaterra. De esta manera, Smith experimentará un viaje interior similar al de Lamb (desde un estado A, de desconocimiento y escepticismo o extrañamiento, a uno B, de integración y aceptación) pero con la diferencia de que Hudson no permite que el viajero del tiempo vuelva atrás. La única opción de Smith es la integración a la sociedad de la edad de cristal, pues la Inglaterra de su época ya no existe, fue reemplazada por una versión mejor. Mientras que Lamb abandona finalmente la tierra purpúrea, llevándose su aprendizaje para volcarlo eventualmente en sus memorias, escritas en el idioma del colonizador, Smith se ve obligado a encontrar su lugar dentro de la comunidad, aunque su final sea paradójicamente trágico.

El arraigo completo de Smith a la sociedad utópica puede producirse porque, mediante la disyunción prospectiva, ésta fue despojada de toda connotación sociopolítica presente en el sistema de dicotomías civilización-barbarie, Inglaterra-América, etc. que domina *The Purple Land*. Este despojamiento de la dimensión sociopolítica puede justamente ser la clave para comprender lo relegada que ha quedado esta obra en relación con otras de Hudson y lo poco reputada que resulta entre sus críticos. Caterina Novák (67) habla directamente de una falta de mérito literario, mientras que el lector común puede pronto notar cierto acartonamiento en la

utilización de algunos recursos narrativos, como la exagerada reluctancia de Smith a percatarse de que está en el futuro. Esto no es simplemente atribuible a Hudson: también debe tenerse en cuenta el hecho de que el género utópico nunca ha sido depositario de las mayores veleidades poéticas y esto debido a que su funcionalidad excede el ámbito de la literatura y migra hacia la proyección social, beneficiando la transmisión de contenido sobre el trabajo de la forma.

Por estas razones, *A Crystal Age* resulta una novela más tosca en su sustrato simbólico, si la comparamos con *The Purple Land* o *El Ombú*, principalmente porque no pone en juego algo que para Hudson resulta central y es lo que está en el fondo de las dicotomías que atraviesan su identidad. En esta obra, el autor trata de adaptarse a un género literario que resulta ajeno a sus intereses más profundos, sólo para desarrollar hasta las últimas consecuencias su concepción de una utopía no *civilizada* (tal vez una asignatura pendiente desde que revisara el tema en *The Purple Land*). La obra incluso constituye un intento de adaptarse al campo literario inglés, alejándose de sus inquietudes personales (con la dicotomía civilización-barbarie como crisis originaria de sus preocupaciones identitarias) para producir un texto de mayor legitimidad cultural entre los lectores ingleses, pero de menor calidad literaria si se consideran sus limitaciones, la ambigüedad de propósitos del propio Hudson y las convenciones novelescas un tanto estereotipadas a las que debe plegarse.

4. CONCLUSIONES

A lo largo de nuestra investigación, hemos podido ahondar en el tipo de relación que la novela *A Crystal Age* de W.H. Hudson establece con el género de la literatura utópica victoriana y cómo el autor hace un uso de dichas convenciones genéricas con intereses ideológicos específicos; esto es, para hacer ingresar al campo literario inglés una postura social conservadora (quizá con ciertos elementos del luddismo), opuesta al optimismo en la industrialización y el progreso que plantearan otros autores como Bellamy, y que reclama el regreso a la naturaleza como base para el futuro de la sociedad. Asimismo, consideramos que el género utópico constituye una estrategia de

legitimación por parte de Hudson al comienzo de su trayectoria literaria, una táctica de ingreso al campo literario inglés, una matriz textual que acaso no favorece el desarrollo de su poética, expresada con mayor libertad y complejidad en obras más personales como *The Purple Land*, *Far Away and Long Ago* o aquellos ensayos en que rememora sus años de infancia y vagabundeos por las pampas.

Siendo Hudson un autor conocido, en especial en Argentina, por la representación del espacio americano y nacional que constantemente atraviesa su obra, resulta lógico buscar vestigios de estos escenarios en *A Crystal Age*. Y es así que encontramos un tipo de representación indirecta, figurada, pautada por la evocación de las experiencias infantiles, que tienen presencia en todas las obras del autor, y por la particular relación que éste estableciera entre los tópicos de infancia y naturaleza como figuras de retorno existencial. Así es que la utopía, en tanto texto necesariamente prospectivo, se transforma en Hudson en un planteo regresivo a los valores que considera perdidos en la sociedad de su época y a un contacto directo del hombre con la naturaleza.

Al repasar el controvertido final de la obra y las consecuencias que la trágica muerte de Smith tienen con respecto a la identidad pendular hudsoniana, que oscila entre el arraigo y el desarraigo, hemos visto cómo esta utopía fundamenta ficcionalmente una escenificación identitaria.

Finalmente, partimos del emfoque de Wilson acerca de la operación discursiva que Hudson lleva a cabo a través de esta obra, consistente en una venganza, en tanto colono obligado a adoptar forzosamente la identidad del colonizador, infligida sobre la figura del *Englishman* que representa el protagonista. Esta venganza toma la forma de una moraleja acerca de la alteridad que se ha visto constreñida por la ideología del colonizador. Lecturas más recientes y de mayor complejidad teórica, como la de Jessie Reeder, introducen nociones desde el marco de los estudios poscoloniales (que tanto se han dedicado a la figura del naturalista en las últimas décadas), como la de hibridez, para analizar la escisión identitaria de Hudson que, aunque la autora se centre en su primera novela, es extensible a lo que ocurre con *A Crystal Age*. El silenciamiento, señalado por Reeder,

que sufre la voz narrativa de Richard Lamb en la ronda de gauchos cuando llega su turno de contar una historia podría también ser visto desde la perspectiva de Wilson: una venganza/lección que la alteridad imparte sobre la figura del colonizador desde la voz del colono cuya propia identidad, atrapada en esa zona de contacto, ha sufrido parcialmente el dominio simbólico del "imperio informal" (574).

El paralelismo con la estructura actancial de la primera obra de Hudson, *The Purple Land*, iluminó nuestro análisis llevándonos a profundizar lo planteado por Wilson inicialmente. Es por ello que encontramos en Hudson una identidad compleja escindida antitéticamente en dos polos a raíz del conflicto de la colonización cultural, que el autor tiene como crisis originaria, y que se expresa como un efecto biográfico que a la vez cristaliza en sus obras ficcionales y ensayísticas a través de estrategias figuradas de representación. Para ello hemos revisado diversas categorías críticas que permiten abordar el problema de la complejidad identitaria hudsoniana: zona de contacto, biculturalismo, *in-between*, sujeto fronterizo y liminalidad, las cuales hemos procurado hacer converger en la expresión de "identidad escindida". De esta manera, las convenciones genéricas del discurso utópico le sirven a Hudson en esta obra para expresar los derroteros de una identidad signada por la ambigüedad y el desarraigo que cristaliza en la forma de la acción novelesca, en la que Smith se verá arrojado a una adaptación cultural inversa a aquella que el autor mismo sufriera con respecto a la cultura inglesa.

A Crystal Age, acaso una de las obras menos valoradas dentro de la producción hudsoniana, demuestra ser, más que un desvío de las tensiones propuestas en *The Purple Land*, el desarrollo de una concepción utópica que atravesará todo su pensamiento y que configura un genuino emblema simbólico de su personal y complejo sentido de pertenencia.

NOTAS

[1] Recordemos una célebre representación del blanco americano en la figura de Bertha Mason, una criolla jamaicana loca y primera esposa

de Rochester en *Jane Eyre* (1847) de Charlotte Brontë. Spivak habla de cómo Brontë recurre a este personaje para difuminar las fronteras entre lo humano y lo animal, permitiendo que el amor de Jane y Rochester sea moralmente deseable para el lector victoriano (*cfr.* Spivak 247).

[2] Incluso en sus esporádicos viajes y estadías en Buenos Aires, Hudson se movía principalmente en el pequeño y cerrado mundo de la comunidad inglesa de la ciudad, cuya idiosincrasia y reglas sociales funcionaban como si fuera una filial de la vida londinense, tal como se refleja en su novela breve *Ralph Herne* (1888). Alicia Jurado se refiere también al "sentido tribal" que observaba la familia de Hudson en sus relaciones con la comunidad inglesa en Argentina, sin que esto le impidiera relacionarse con sus vecinos criollos (26-27).

[3] Como veremos luego, la identidad escindida de Hudson configura un fenómeno singular que no expresa pertenencia a una hibridez identitaria colectiva. La categoría de anglo-argentino no establece un sistema de representaciones sistemático y amplio en la época, de modo que, si bien Hudson experimentó algunos perfiles de la experiencia propia de un habitante de las colonias emigrado a una metrópolis imperial, su situación comporta una complejidad específica: no pertenece a una cultura colonizada, sino a un enclave insular cultural y lingüísticamente conservador (como podrían ser, por poner un ejemplo más extremo, los *Amish* en Pennsylvania), donde se adquiere una identidad de pertenencia territorial, pero no una pertenencia a un estado-nación, cuya formación todavía, de hecho, se encuentra en ciernes ("En Inglaterra, Argentina es la tierra de su añoranza. Pero lo que añora, entendámoslo bien, no es un país como entidad social y política, ni una comunidad humana: añora un paisaje bravío, una soledad salvaje que fue suya […]; añora su infancia libre y feliz", Jurado 18). Conceptos como los de "zona de contacto" de Pratt, pensados más que nada para dar cuenta de fenómenos de transculturación en contextos coloniales, pueden ser operativos en la medida en que se maticen para expresar un fenómeno específico, ambiguo y singular como lo es el de Hudson. En cierto sentido, su identidad escindida podría ser explicada también en términos conceptuales donde lo colonial no posee implicancias políticas tan decisivas (de hecho, lecturas de corte psicologista, como la que veremos de Jason Wilson, resultan interesantes en la medida en que la identidad de Hudson no expresaría la pertenencia a una cultura minoritaria colectiva, sino que configuraría más bien un caso). De

todas formas, estas nociones no terminan de dar cuenta plenamente del matiz de retorno que posee la experiencia de Hudson en Inglaterra.

[4] Si bien Hudson llegó a convertirse en un miembro activo de la sociedad inglesa (principalmente a través de su labor como ensayista y de su papel como fundador de la Royal Society for the Protection of Birds, además del reconocimiento literario, que llegó a fines de siglo de la mano de la obtención de la ciudadanía inglesa y de una Civil List Pension que resolvió sus dificultades financieras), lo cierto es que, recién llegado a Londres, con penurias económicas y pocas relaciones sociales, sí experimentó un cierto grado de alienación adjudicable a su origen cultural. Jason Wilson nota cómo Richard Lamb en *The Purple Land* habla en ese discurso de arrepentimiento final desde el cerro de Montevideo de "a quality that Hudson suffered daily, the English contempt for foreigners. […] That he was an Argentine alien in London is the source of that perception. He hardly ever alluded to his national origins" (123). David Miller se refiere al duro aclimatamiento que Hudson vivió durante sus primeros años en Londres, mientras descubría que su abordaje emotivo de la naturaleza no era del todo compatible con la vida académica que había ambicionado y experimentaba la miseria de tener que pasar algunas noches en Hyde Park (*cfr*. Miller 8). Felipe Arocena lo resume diciendo sencillamente que en esos primeros años a Hudson "le falta mucho para aprender a comportarse como un inglés" (86). Alicia Jurado habla de cómo la inadecuación de Hudson era más social que cultural (75), pues si bien sentía una pertenencia cultural a Inglaterra (a través de su familia, de su formación literaria, etc.), no sabía comportarse en círculos de la sociedad que le hubieran granjeado provechosos contactos en esos primeros años: su pertenencia cultural a lo anglosajón no coincide inicialmente con las competencias específicamente sociales de la vida londinense.

[5] Alicia Jurado nos recuerda la estrecha relación entre vida y obra que debemos observar en el caso de Hudson: "Si exceptuamos algunos intentos de ficción –y hasta en ellos se vuelca su personalidad entera– toda su obra está tan indisolublemente unida a su biografía que resulta casi imposible separarlas en un estudio crítico" (14).

[6] Entre el siglo XVI y el XIX, el género utópico tuvo otras muchas

manifestaciones y la literatura inglesa fue especialmente prolífica en esta tradición. En tanto forma de ficción especulativa que lidia específicamente con proyecciones sociales, la dimensión política, más o menos explícita, siempre fue un rasgo central. Pensemos en *New Atlantis* (1627) de Sir Francis Bacon, que en parte aludía a los planes de formación de la naciente Norteamérica. En el siglo XVIII, la utopía se adapta a dos formas particulares, los elementos de la novela moderna y la sátira de costumbres, que pasarán a ser parte constitutiva del género en adelante, a tal punto que en algunos casos se habla de elementos de la novela utópica en otros géneros. Ejemplos de este período son *Robinson Crusoe* (1719) de Daniel Defoe y *Gulliver's Travels* (1726) de Jonathan Swift, que, si bien son principalmente sátiras, contienen también elementos utópicos en su representación de diversos planteos sociales (como Brobdingnag y la tierra de los Houyhnhnms).

[7] El título es un anagrama de la palabra inglesa *nowhere*, que se traduce como "ningún lugar" y es, a su vez, el mismo significado del término inventado por Thomas More para su obra (*outopos* significa "ningún lugar" en griego).

[8] La utopía de William Morris, *News from Nowhere* (1890), y su planteamiento socialista constituyen una reacción a la obra de Bellamy, en defensa de un régimen social que valore la actividad agraria y no refuerce la creciente industrialización.

[9] En realidad, lo más probable es que la similitud diegética entre las obras de Hudson y Morris se deba a que el último concibió su obra como una respuesta a la también utópica *Looking Backward* (1888) de Bellamy (*cfr*. Novák 70). Por otro lado, todas estas obras se estructuran a través del viaje en el tiempo, generando una notable similitud entre sus tramas. Podríamos considerar incluso al anónimo neozelandés *The Great Romance* (1881) como la probable fundadora del subgénero "utopía alcanzada mediante un sueño que transporta al futuro".

[10] Esta expresión la utiliza en su siguiente novela, *Ralph Herne* (1888), para referirse a un personaje en análoga situación identitaria.

[11] Este discurso de imprecación, una "rabid harangue," al decir de Jessie Reeder (568), contrasta con un discurso final de arrepentimiento y juntos constituyen el núcleo de interés crítico de la novela.

OBRAS CITADAS

Arocena, Felipe. *De Quilmes a Hyde Park. Las fronteras culturales en la vida y obra de W.H. Hudson*, Buenos Aires Books, 2009.

Bellamy, Edward. *Looking Backward: 2000 to 1887*, Wisehouse Classics, [1888], 2016.

Bhabha, Homi. *El lugar de la cultura*, Manantial, 2002.

Butler, Samuel. *Erewhon*, Penguin Classics, [1872], 2006.

Franco, Jean. Introducción. *La tierra purpúrea y Allá lejos y hace tiempo*, de G.E. Hudson, 1918, Biblioteca Ayacucho, 1980, pp. ix-xlv.

Gamerro, Carlos. "Hudson y la invención del paisaje." *Facundo o Martín Fierro*, Sudamericana, 2015, pp. 178-189.

Gasquet, Axel. "Hudson y el universo pastoril: naturalismo y utopía." *William Henry Hudson y* La tierra purpúrea. *Reflexiones desde Montevideo*, compilado por Jean-Phillipe Barnabé y Beatriz Vegh, Universidad de la República, Facultad de Humanidades y Ciencias de la Educación, Departamento de Letras Modernas, 2005, pp. 181-186.

Howells, William Dean. *A Traveller from Altruria*, Harper & Brothers, 1894.
https://archive.org/details/traveleraltruria00howerich (accedido el 22 de marzo de 2019)

Hudson, W.H. *The Purple Land*, Project Gutenberg, [1885], 2004.
http://www.gutenberg.org/ebooks/7132 (accedido el 22 de marzo de 2019)

———— *A Crystal Age*. E.P. Dutton, [1887], 1922.
https://archive.org/details/crystalage00huds (accedido el 22 de marzo de 2019)

———— *Idle Days in Patagonia*, Trafalgar Square Publishing, [1893], 2005.

———— *Birds in London*, Nabu Press, [1898], 2011.

———— *El Ombú*, Kessinger Publishing, [1902], 2010.

———— *Green Mansions*, The Overlook Press, [1904], 2018.

———— *Afoot in England*, Oxford University Press, [1909], 1982.

———— *A Shepherd's Life*, Little Toller Books, [1910], 2006.

———— *Far Away and Long Ago*, Eland, [1918], 2006.

———— *A Hind in Richmond Park*, Echo Library, [1922], 2006.

The Inhabitant. *The Great Romance*, editado por Dominic Alessio, University of Nebraska Press, [1881], 2008.

Irving, Washington. *Rip Van Winkle, The Legend of Sleepy Hollow & Other Stories*, Wordsworth Classics, 2009.

Jurado, Alicia. *Vida y obra de W.H. Hudson*, Emecé, 1988.

Macnie, John. *The Diothas; or, A Far Look Ahead*, Putnam, 1883.

Miller, David. *W.H. Hudson and the Elusive Paradise*, Palgrave Macmillan, 1990.

More, Thomas. *Utopia*, Penguin Classics, [1516], 1981.

Morris, William. *News from Nowhere (or An Epoch of Rest)*, Penguin Classics, [1890], 1993.

Novák, Caterina. "Dreamers in Dialogue: Evolution, Sex and Gender in the Utopian Visions of William Morris and William Henry Hudson." *Acta Neophilologica*, vol. 46, no. 1-2, 2013, pp. 65-80.

Oksaar, Eks. "Multilingualism and Multiculturalism from the Linguist's Point of View." *Multicultural and Multilingual Education in Immigrant Countries*, editado por Torsten Husen y Susan Opper, Pergamon Press, 1983, pp. 17-36.

Pratt, Mary Louise. *Ojos imperiales. Literatura de viajes y transculturación*. Fondo de Cultura Económica, 2011.

Reeder, Jessie. "William Henry Hudson, Hybridity, and Storytelling in the Pampas." *SEL Studies in English Literature*, vol. 56, no. 3, 2015, pp. 561-581.
https://muse.jhu.edu/article/627644/pdf (accedido el 22 de marzo de 2019)

Seeber, Hans Ulrich. "Death in Utopia: the Journey to the Underworld." *Viaggi in Utopia*, editado por R. Bacciolini, V. Fortunati y A. Corrado, Longo Editore, 1996, pp. 49-57.

Spivak, Gayatri. "Three Women's Texts and a Critique of Imperialism." *Critical Inquiry* 12:1, 1985, pp. 243-261.

Szurmuk, Mónica y Mckee Irwin, Robert. *Diccionario de estudios culturales latinoamericanos*, Siglo XXI Editores, 2009.

Thomassen, Bjorn. "The Uses and Meanings of Liminality." *International Political Anthropology*, vol. 1, no. 2, 2009, pp. 5-27.

Wilson, Jason. *W.H. Hudson: the Colonial's Revenge*. Working paper no. 5, Institute of Latin American Studies, Universidad de Londres, 1981.

Recibido / Received: 23-4-2018 *Aceptado / Accepted: 10-8-2018*

Airport Terminals and Desert Planes: Re-Visiting the Border in *The Terminal* and *No Country for Old Men*

Ana Moya (anamoya@ub.edu)
Gemma López (gemma_lopez@ub.edu) [1]
Universitat de Barcelona

Abstract

Eighteen years after the 9/11 attacks in New York and Washington and in the present context of bitter conflict over the building of a wall across the US-Mexico border promoted by current President of the United States, Donald Trump, this article reads Steven Spielberg's *The Terminal* and the Coen Brothers' *No Country for Old Men* through the use of border theory and Cosmopolitanism. The main aim of the article is to reveal the mechanisms by which these films promote and intervene in an ongoing debate on the nature of the nation-state and the role of national borders in the creation of national identities. The two films appear to consolidate certain social imaginaries while highlighting the extent to which, though the turn of the millennium seemed to promise a world with more mobile, hybrid identities in multicultural spaces, most social and cultural realities still tend to be trapped within nation-state borders which prove the staying power of national identities.

Keywords: *The Terminal*, *No Country for Old Men*, border studies, Cosmopolitanism, transnational, film studies

Terminales de aeropuerto y llanos desérticos: Reconsiderando la frontera en *La terminal* y *No es país para viejos*

Resumen

Dieciocho años después del 11-S y en el contexto actual de conflicto a raíz de la construcción de un muro entre los Estados Unidos de América y México

promovida por el actual presidente de los Estados Unidos, Donald Trump, el presente artículo analiza las películas *La terminal*, de Steven Spielberg, y *No es país para viejos*, de los hermanos Coen, a través de la teoría de la frontera y del Cosmopolitismo. El principal objetivo es revelar los mecanismos a través de los que estas películas promueven e intervienen en un debate constante sobre la naturaleza del estado-nación y el rol de las fronteras nacionales en la creación de las identidades nacionales. Las dos películas parecen consolidar ciertos imaginarios sociales a la vez que subrayan el grado en que, a pesar de que el milenio parecía prometer un mundo de identidades más móviles e híbridas que habitaban espacios multiculturales, muchas realidades sociales y culturales aún tienden a quedar atrapadas dentro de las fronteras del estado-nación, demostrando así la persistencia de las identidades nacionales.

Palabras clave: *La terminal*, *No es país para viejos*, estudios fronterizos, Cosmopolitismo, transnacionalismo, estudios de cine

1. "SAFE AND UNSAFE": THE POLITICS OF THE BORDER

> "Borders are set up to define the places that are safe and unsafe, to distinguish us from them. A border is a dividing line, a narrow strip along a steep edge. A borderland is a vague and undetermined place created by the emotional residue of an unnatural boundary. It is a constant state of transition. The prohibited and forbidden are its inhabitants" – Gloria Anzaldúa, *Borderlines/La Frontera: The New Mestiza*.

As this article is being written, the US Administration is in shut down due to a disagreement between the Government and the Senate as to who will finance the Wall that will physically divide the US-Mexico border. This "dividing line, a narrow strip," to use Anzaldúa's definition above (25), was one of the proposals which appeared in

Donald Trump's election programme. We consider his attempt to transform a "vague and undetermined place" (Anzaldúa 25) into something solid, concrete, and that will cost real money to US citizens, an ironic yet important context for our discussion here.

The obvious resilience of national identities, which find their symbols in concrete and expensive dividing walls, is an ironic response in the light of recent Cosmopolitan theory. Against Trump's attempts to make an argument for the need to materialise the already noticeable border between two nation-states, we read photographer and media artist Minna Rainio, who considers that "[b]orders are not self-evident and do not exist naturally" (129). Such a statement is surprising in the current state of affairs, but it comes in useful in order to understand the way in which individuals and communities define their identities in relation to spatial, ideological and social borders. There is nothing 'natural'[2] in the existence of borders or in the identities that result from these constructions, but both are immersed in on-going processes which materialise in "the creation and maintenance of boundaries and differentiations" (Rainio 133).

As argued, this is no more than a perception promoted by the concept of the nation-state, the primary agent responsible for the construction of borders that contribute to define and create a fantasy of homogeneity in terms of political identity. Against this notion, at the turn of the millennium, postmodernism tried to articulate a world where both nation-states and geographical borders would become progressively blurred until they would lose their significance (Walby 2003). In this new world, virtual realities, the internet, economic liberalism, and a wider access to global mobility, would become primordial elements to favour the rise of communities and identities characterized by their transgression of traditional geographic and national borders. In other words, a world with hybrid identities in open multicultural spaces would replace traditional modern conceptions of self, identity and belonging upon which the construction of the nation-state was traditionally erected. Alejandro Lugo's work promotes a re-positioning of border theory in the realm of (Foucauldian) power as it has operated in the past two hundred years in the West, where it has been, he argues, "imbricated in the academy, in culture theory, in the global contexts of capitalism and ... in the realms of the changing

'nation' and 'state'" (44). Lugo considers that what he calls "the border region" and its border theory are capable of eroding "the hegemony of the privileged center by denationalizing and deterritorializing the nation-state and culture theory" (44). The concepts of erosion, denationalisation, and deterritorialisation are interesting in our discussion here, particularly when they are read against Steven Vertovec's argument that the nation-state is progressively becoming "a type of political organization or apparatus involving more multiple and overlapping jurisdictions" (86). The commonality of identity of a certain human group is reproduced, according to Vertovec, "through a system of narratives, public rituals and institutions, formal state bureaucracies and informal social relationships, written and unwritten regulations, sets of assumptions and expectations of civility and public behaviour" (87). What we argue here is that with its multiple jurisdictions and overlapping public narratives, the nation-state and its subsequent national identities seem to have the power to constantly reinvent themselves, hence their mesmerising resilience.

In 2008, Ulrich Beck was optimistic about the turn of the millennium when he claimed that a transition could be witnessed from a first age of modernity, based on the nation-state, to a second, cosmopolitan, age of modernity (222-230). Beck's argument then was that at the end of the twentieth century "a new kind of capitalism, a new kind of economy, a new kind of global order, a new kind of politics and law, a new kind of society and personal life are in the making which both separately and in context are clearly distinct from earlier phases of social evolution" (223). In Beck's view, one of the consequences of this transition from a nation-state based to a cosmopolitan society would be that the Western claim to a monopoly of modernity would no longer hold, as alternative modernities in all parts of the world were becoming increasingly visible. At the same time, as "the assumed congruence of state and society is broken down and suspended" (224) and given that the state would no longer necessarily contain all economic and/or social ways of acting, in the new cosmopolitan world of Beck's second modernity, the West and the non-West would stand on equal ground, sharing the same time and space. This would be made possible, among other things, because non-Western societies would no longer be defined in terms of their foreignness and otherness, as was the case in the first age of

modernity. Instead, "in the second age of modernity everyone has to locate himself in the same global space and is confronted with similar challenges, and now strangeness is replaced by the amazement at the similarities" (224). Within Beck's proposal, the cosmopolitan world effectively comes to replace the nation-state project. Ethnic identities usually relate to different nation-states (with some exceptions) and individuality is a consequence of both the conflict amongst and overlap of such different identities. For Beck this is "a creative achievement" for the individual, one where conflict becomes the driving force of integration (225). This is undoubtedly a hopeful and confident view of the dissolution of nation-states or, rather, their transformation into something different, and the consequences associated to such transformation are likewise considered in an optimistic light. Over a decade later, and in the present state of global affairs, Beck's outlook has proved to be rather naive.

This tension created at the core of Cosmopolitanism between what could have been and what has actually happened is addressed by historian David A. Hollinger. In spite of considering that for cosmopolitan citizens of the world, "the diversity of humankind is a fact" (231), on which we obviously agree, Hollinger goes on to observe that Cosmopolitanism may have a tendency to foster what he describes as certain enclosures. Still arguing on a positive note, however, Hollinger accepts these enclosures as necessary, effective domains where people can create diversity. Cosmopolitanism, he states, "urges each individual and collective unit to absorb as much varied experience as it can, while retaining its capacity to achieve self-definition and to advance its own aims effectively" (231). The debate between the hopeful view of Cosmopolitanism as a creative option based on diversity and the resilience of a nation-state concept that refuses to evolve is the theoretical framework we will employ in reading two films which revolve around constructions of border regions: Steven Spielberg's *The Terminal* and the Coen Brothers' *No Country for Old Men*.

2. "CITIZENS OF NOWHERE": *THE TERMINAL*

The Terminal was released in 2004, three years after the attack on the World Trade Center, in itself a proof of the vulnerability of nation-

state borders and, as we will argue, an event ironically connected to the current building of Trump's Wall.

In the film, Viktor Navorski, played by Tom Hanks, is travelling to New York to search for a jazz singer and ask for his autograph. Though the reason for his trip may seem trivial, Viktor is on a mission on behalf of his father. Throughout the film, audiences see him carrying a tin box which contains an old photograph of a group of famous jazz players and bits of paper with their autographs, a collection which his father has been unable to complete before his death. Initially, Viktor has the status of tourist in the US, flying from Krakozhia, an imaginary Eastern-European country where a military coup has taken place during his flight. As he lands at New York Kennedy airport, he goes through passport control to find out that he is not allowed to enter the US as his passport is no longer valid. He has become "an immigrant from an imaginary country," (Peña-Acuña 112). Viktor is promptly taken to see Frank Dixon, the Director of Customs and Border Protection and new Acting Field Commissioner, responsible for immigration at JFK. Dixon informs Viktor that:

> Currently you are a citizen of nowhere […] You do not qualify for asylum, refugee status, temporary protective status, humanitarian parole or non-immigration work travel. You don't qualify for any of these things. […] You don't really have a home. Technically [your country] doesn't exist. It's like a twilight zone. […] You have fallen through a small crack in the system. (*TT*, 06:50 - 08:18)

And so, Viktor becomes a "threatening visitation" (Benito 205). He is confined to the International Transit Lounge, he is deprived of his passport and he has no money. He is given back his suitcase, some food tickets, a phone card and a pager and is finally dismissed with an "America is closed," to which he reacts with "What I do?" to which Judge Thurman replies: "There is only one thing you can do here, Mr Navorski … shop." (*TT*, 10:13 - 10:16)

As Viktor's case ironically proves, without a country to belong to, the whole world is closed for the individual. Therefore, the loss of

country brings along a loss of individual identity. The film, in this way, points to the nation-state as absolutely indispensable in the shaping of individual identity. Viktor is trapped inside the border, a space that is a non-place (Augé 122), and which only acquires meaning as transit from one country to another but which, nonetheless, "help[s] define the nation" (Benito 208). With its "rituals of hospitality and the welcome" later "qualified by the political constrictions," Viktor's "status as a temporary visitor" is confirmed (Benito 208-210).

Therefore, Viktor is forced to survive in the terminal with no money, no friends, nothing. He does not despair and manages to make sense of this non-place to which he is sentenced. And so he survives in the International Transit Lounge by "manag[ing] to reorganize space and to wrest personal places from the heart of the non-place" (Benito 212). He manages to get food, wash, build himself a sort of home at gate 67, find a job and even fall in love. The passing of his days is marked by his daily encounter with Dolores Torres at her desk and her repetition of the daily mantra: "You cannot enter New York without a visa. You cannot get a visa without a passport. You cannot get a passport without a country. You are simply … unacceptable," as she puts the red stamp on his form (*TT*, 21:53 - 22: 13).

Viktor makes several friends during his stay at the terminal: Joe Mulroy, an African-American who works in the luggage department and runs an after-hour poker game with his friends, Enrique Cruz, a Latin-American man who works delivering food to the aircrafts and is in love with Dolores Torres, and Gupta Rajan, an Asian-American janitor who comes from Madras. All of them are "undesirables" in Dixon's words, yet they are all American and therefore ironically represent a multicultural America. For Dixon, however, they all exist on the margins of the nation-state, conforming to the fantasy of the US as a homogeneous community in terms of identity. At the turn of the millennium, furthermore, these "undesirables" promote the rise of new communities and identities that may replace traditional conceptions of self, identity and belonging. In the non-place of the International Transit Lounge, these three characters shape an alternative modernity, one more aligned with Beck's proposal. Viktor can integrate in this model and construct himself as an individual and

acquire a selfhood that the nation-state model denies him. His fall through the crack in the nation-state model paves his way to a new modernity, so that although his transnational experience may initially be read as devastating, it may in fact be the seed for a new social model, the cosmopolitan one that Beck refers to above. Viktor's experience with Mulroy, Enrique and Gupta points to Beck's notion of global space, one where strangeness is replaced by similarity. As was said before, individuality has become a consequence of both the conflict and the overlap of different identities.

The film presents the characters of Viktor and Frank Dixon as counterparts to explore the complex ramifications of the debate about identity. On the one hand Viktor is living proof of the strength of the nation-state in shaping individual identity, while Dixon ironically represents the fragility of dominant powers and discourses. Viktor is trapped at the border yet, ironically, Dixon is trapped there with him too: "Everything he does comes back to me," he confesses to Thurman (*TT*, *22*: 57). The unacceptable Viktor will shake the establishment, impersonated in the character of Dixon. The metaphor of the vulnerability and artificiality of the nation-state through the relation between these two characters is successfully conveyed by film director Steven Spielberg. Viktor's manipulation of the translation to help Milogradovich travel with the drugs he is taking to his father in spite of American regulations is an example of how the establishment, embodied by Dixon, may be challenged and undermined from the outside. Dixon, the representative of US mainstream discourses and power, is repeatedly ridiculed in the film, as in the first interrogation, during which he smashes a packet of crisps with an apple to explain the military coup in Krakozhia.

In spite of the film's focus on this temporary challenging of established power in the juxtaposition between Viktor and Dixon, it is made clear that the situation cannot go on for long. After nine months inhabiting this alternative second modernity at the airport, Viktor receives the news that the war in Krakozhia has ended and he finally agrees to return home. His final words when he gets in a taxi (*TT*, "I am going home," 112 : 11) confirm the notion that the all powerful nation-state has its ways to reaffirm its authority and resilience, and that such vindications of alternative identities as those we have

witnessed throughout the film are temporary challenges which promote a transitory glimpse of a more cosmopolitan, diverse future.

3. DISTURBING ALIENS: *NO COUNTRY FOR OLD MEN*

Another instance of a cultural non-place as disturbing as the JFK International Airport may be found in the desert planes of Joel and Ethan Coen's film *No Country for Old Men* (2007), their personal rendering of Cormac McCarthy's homonymous novel. The setting here is the West Texas plains, a county the Coens had already visited in 1984 for the shooting of their first feature film, the dark comedy *Blood Simple*.

One of the issues critics welcomed at the time the *No Country for Old Men* was released was the way in which the directors had successfully subverted the traditional tenets of genre. In fact, no critic seems to be able to come up with an accurate label for a film which is in turn described as a thriller, a suspense film, a Western, a border movie, and a Western noir, among others. When the DVD version was released, Rob Mackie in his review for *The Guardian* finally suggested, in our view, the most accurate description: a "crime Western noir horror comedy" (Mackie 2008). The subversion of genre which critics found so titillating at the time is achieved through the use of pastiche and the medley of a several original ingredients, as Mackie's labelling above suggests. The genre of the Western and its conventions seems to tie in well with the challenging landscape and the weird characters inhabiting it. The minimal use of dialogue contributes to building up tension, quite a feat if we consider that the Coens refuse to use a musical score for the film. Likewise, the rhythm is slow, a deliberate cadence which partakes in a general, apocalyptic tone of complexity, depth, and gravity. *No Country for Old Men* is a story of extreme violence which starts after a hunter decides to keep the money from a drug deal gone wrong. From this very enticing opening, the paths of three men overlap in 1980s West Texas, depicted as a wide open and desolate country.

The men are Sheriff Ed Tom Bell, played by Tommy Lee Jones, probably the character for whom the title was chosen if we are to consider his initial lament for the increasing violence in the area.

The hunter who escapes with the money is Llewelyn Moss (James Brolin). The third man in the savage equation is Anton Chigurh, ironically pronounced 'sugar,' and played by Javier Bardem, a disturbing killer hired to recover the money at whatever cost. His chase of Moss is relentless and cruel, and it affects all those who accidentally cross his path.

In this section of the present article, we will focus on a reading of *No Country for Old Men* which contends that part of the film's tension is based on the difficult, ambiguous relationship established between tradition and (post)modernity, between national discourse and global threat or, even, between what might be described as 'local color' and the outlandish menace which comes from dislocated subjects. In order to do so, we will focus on the Coens' use of border landscape and the ways in which it affects the three main characters.

It would not be far-fetched to state that, as the film progresses, spectators become increasingly aware of the importance of landscape and its impact upon all the characters inhabiting it. Although the film was shot in different parts of the Mexican border, it is made clear from the first scene that the setting is West Texas, near the Río Grande, a forlorn area which becomes an integral part of the story, as it is in McCarthy's novel. In the film, the beautiful photography by Roger Deakins greatly increases the general effect initiated by the novel which the Coen brothers wanted to convey visually. The desolate and bleak beauty of the desert opens the movie, functioning as a remarkable setting for Sheriff Ed Bell's initial monologue.

As Joel Coen emphasized in an interview for *The Guardian*, landscape is of the utmost importance in his films (2011). Surely, it is one of the interests of the Coens to underline the relationship of characters and story to the landscape and, particularly, the way humans deal with their confrontation with this harsh environment. Landscape, with its powerful and mythical presence, leaks into the characters to the point that it can help explain their reactions, behaviours, personalities and, more specfically, their accents.

The unequivocal and abstruse Texas accent which most of the characters display greatly contributes to the general atmosphere of

remoteness and isolation. Ironically, the character who participates more actively in the creation of this alienating atmosphere through his general demeanour and performance, Anton Chigurh, is the only one not to have a Texan accent: the implications of this are particularly significant, and will be discussed at length subsequently.

Another way in which landscape affects the characters is through the physical and psychological impact of the frontier. In the traditional tenets of the Western genre, the border between the United States and Mexico reverberates with the strife for the defence of North-American 'civilization' against the savage Other represented by those subjects living beyond the borderline. Most of the characters in *No Country for Old Men* seem to move in and out of the border which separates civilization from savagery in more or less fluid fashion. Scott Foundas in *The Village Voice* reminds audiences that

> like McCarthy, the Coens are markedly less interested in who (if anyone) gets away with the loot than in the primal forces that urge the characters forward … In the end, everyone in *No Country for Old Men* is both hunter and hunted, members of some endangered species trying to forestall their extinction. (2007)

The strife here is taken to its most basic level: to hunt or be hunted, to kill or be killed. Following this line of argument, Judie Newman argues that the climactic moments in *No Country for Old Men* are those in which the porous border between prey and predator becomes mobile and thus "destiny and evolutionary progress apparently reverse" (142). A striking case in point is the very beginning of the film which sets the story's ruthless logic: Lewellyn Moss is hunting antelope and due to a fatal error of judgment becomes the prey of Anton Chigurh. Chigurh's "weapon of choice," Newman reminds us, is "a stun gun," thus implying "that men are cattle, animals bound for slaughter" (142). The boundary between victim and victimiser is as porous as that other border, the one between the United States and Mexico, which Llewelyn Moss crosses at a climactic point in the film.

In "The Ghosted Other: Ethno-Racial Violence in *No Country for Old Men*" Alison Reed aptly states that "it seems no coincidence that

the Coen brothers' filmic reproduction of Cormac McCarthy's *No Country for Old Men* erupts in a xenophobic political era obsessed with national boundaries" (2007). After a particularly violent encounter between Moss and Chigurh, the Coens decide to take their plotline exactly to the point between the United States and the Mexico border stations: the Río Grande. The river becomes a crossover point which successfully disrupts the fixed line between two stereotypes: the Spanish-speaking dark-skinned Other and the Western cowboy (Reed).

Wounded and drowsy from the injuries Chigurh has inflicted upon him, Llewelyn Moss reaches the Río Grande bridge and walks unsteadily along it. He takes a moment to look back towards the US side, while he continues to walk in the direction of the Mexican checkpoint. Suddenly, he is approached by a group of three young men who return to the US after partying in Mexico. The men, who are drinking Mexican beer, are clearly codified as North American in clothes and behaviour. They look shocked when they see Moss, and although one of them asks him three times whether he was in a car accident, the only thing he can do is produce some blood-stained dollars to pay for one of the guys' coat and the beer.

Unable to explain his present state or even what he is doing there, the young men codify Moss as the Mexican Other. Reed contends that this incident changes something in Moss, and his progress from then on will be marked by this frontier encounter which turns him into the figure of the codified Other. It is also important to highlight that the scene takes place at the border between Mexico and the US, which mimics that between self and Other and, more clearly, between life and death (Reed, n.p.). The scene reverberates with a multiplicity of meanings not only because of the impact that Moss's predicament produces on the spectator, but also because it happens precisely in this particular no-man's-land, the in-between space which is neither the US nor Mexico. We agree with Reed's interpretation that something profound must strike Llewelyn Moss when he decides to get rid of the money he had risked his life over. He plainly decides to toss it over the fence to make sure it disappears into the wilderness. The scene resumes with Moss walking to the Mexican side after getting rid of all the external Texan markers which identify him as a Western cowboy: hat, white shirt, and denim.

As noted earlier, Anton Chigurh is the only character who does not speak with a Texan accent, using instead a more diluted sort of inflection which remains unidentifiable. Had Spanish actor Javier Bardem adopted his standard accent when speaking English, the vicious killer Chigurh would have been identified as a Spanish-speaking Other, which would not have tied in well with the novel and the film's interest in making him of no identifiable racial origin. One of the most fascinating facets of the character, and partly what makes him so frightening, is that his identity stands outside any definitions, including those which derive from the racial division between Anglos and Mexicans. The Coens, therefore, decided to make Bardem use a non-specific accent in order to make it impossible for the audience to locate the origin of such an ambiguous and disturbing character. As Joel Coen states in an interview, Chigurh is "the thing that doesn't grow out of the landscape," as 'unnatural' and 'alien' as if he had just landed from outer space. In fact, the Coens sought an actor "who could have come from Mars" (*The Guardian*).

The first time we see Chigurh the image is significantly blurred. This is how Jim Emerson describes the character's first appearance on screen:

> as he moves forward into focus, to make his first kill, we still don't get a good look at him because his head rises above the top of the frame. His victim, the deputy, never sees what's coming, and Chigurh, chillingly, doesn't even bother to look at his face when he garrottes him. (2008)

The use of the word "chillingly" in Emerson's description should not go unnoticed. The film opens with a fade in on the mountains at nighttime and the voiceover of an old man who identifies himself as the county Sheriff. As he speaks his monologue on the ways in which crime has become crueller and harder to understand, we are offered several dissolves[3] through a number of landscapes, none of which show any signs of human activity. The last landscape is surveyed through a long slow shot which brings into frame the flashing lights of a police car stopped on the road. As the monologue continues, we are given a close-up of a pair of hands handcuffed behind someone's

back, and all we see of the prisoner is his dark hair. The opening monologue is over, but it still echoes in our minds as we witness the prisoner scurrying his manacled hands out under his legs while sitting in silence and strangling the deputy from behind while the latter is on the phone. This is Anton Chigurh and these are his brutal ways.

Chigurh's physical appearance is, at the best of times, unsettling. The first scene described above focuses on his hair precisely because it is a marker of his identity and the audience will later associate him to this fleeting first image. He sports a weird haircut, apparently derived from a 1979 book that featured photos of brothel patrons and clients on the Texas-Mexico border, but which could also be inspired in a medieval crusader or a 1960s pop star. The haircut, described by Mark Kermode as "anachronistic pudding-bowl," suggests to this critic "a timeless madness unbounded by contemporary culture" (2008, n.p.). It successfully inspires ridicule and fear at the same time.

Secondly, his intriguing weapon which the above scene also focuses on, and which serves him as a door-opening device on occasion, is another ingredient which is connected to the Sheriff's initial lament for old times. The carbon dioxide powered captive bolt pistol is eccentric as a weapon, parodying, in Postmodern fashion, the archetypal "manly" weapons of Western cowboys in classic films, the Colt.45 and the Winchester.73.

One of the more chilling and menacing attributes of Chigurh's character might be his complete absence of empathy. Very early on, we start to understand that the line between life and death is blurry when Chigurh is around and, most of the times, it depends on a mere toss of coin. This becomes literal. Twice in the film, Chigurh is pleaded with through the line "You don't have to do this." (1: 21) The first to beg for his life is Carson Wells, in a scene which will later be mimicked in the final encounter between Chigurh and Carla Jean Moss. Edna McCaffrey reads these two scenes as examples of Chigurh's "ethical wasteland":

> In both exchanges, Chigurh does not respond to the moral reproaches implied by the riposte; to do so would be a tacit acknowledgment of the secular morality he

> opposes … In requesting Carson and Carla to choose life or death on the toss of a coin, Chigurh is not just deferring choice to the realms of gratuity but he is also handing responsibility over to 'fate' in an act of bad faith that prevents him from taking responsibility for his own ethical choices. (128)

From the very beginning of the film, Chigurh's criminality follows a pattern that has to do with the more fearsome aspects of the contemporary, globalized world. This is the subject of Sherrif Ed Bell's lament in the opening monologue. Some might dismiss Chigurh as "just a goddamn homicidal lunatic," (*NCOM*, 88: 21) as Sheriff Giddens describes him, but Sheriff Bell knows better: "I'm not sure he's a lunatic," (*NCOM*, 98: 25) he replies. The character stands outside what is humanly comprehensible, including the boundary between sanity and insanity.

Chigurh's accent, as noted above, is obviously impossible to locate. His surname is somewhat strange and does not seem to provide any further clues as to his potential origins. His physical appearance is deeply perturbing, the weapon with which he kills is bizarre and his behaviour is unaccountable. With all these ingredients, Chigurh becomes the 'thing' to be feared in the film, a menacing presence which means much more than one might understand at face value: "resourceful, relentless, psychopathic, a primeval figure seemingly sent by the devil to challenge the human decency of Sheriff Bell" (French 2008). Indeed, he is possibly the reason why this has become "no country for old men." But he is also something else. In his ambiguous provenance and his postmodern way of killing, he becomes a dislocated subject of global proportions which successfully menaces the once solid discourse upon which national identity was based and for which Sheriff Ed Bell displays some nostalgia.

The film opens with a voiceover by Sheriff Ed Bell that is set against several dissolves through a number of barren Texan landscapes. The monologue opens with a meditation on an episode in his career: a teenager whom he sent to the chair after finding him guilty of murder. Increasingly, Sheriff Bell widens his focus of attention and transforms the monologue into a lamentation for a past

which is long gone. In his performance, Tommy Lee Jones charges his words with extraordinary emotion, and his delivery is unique and beautiful in its cadence and rhythm. This is enhanced by the images which accompany the roll of Jones's voice, "controlled with a musician's flair," as defined by Peter Bradshaw (2008). The screen is black when Jones's voice is heard for the first time, thus functioning as a sort of prologue, and a pre-dawn landscape with some hills in the distance is seen right after he speaks the first sentence. Eleven shots follow, each tracing the growing light of dawn across empty land with Jones's voice evoking a kind of life which reaches as far back as the Old West. Contents and form go hand in hand, Sheriff Bell's evocation finding its visual translation in the landscape being shown. The fact that this is a landscape devoid of human activity is significant, as it points to an idealized past which nobody seems to inhabit anymore.

When the monologue focuses on crime –"The crime you see now, it's hard to even take its measure" (*NCOM*, 02:05) – the camera accompanies this movement to show the parked police car and the young deputy pushing the mysterious manacled man. Through this subtle synchronization of movement and voice, we are allowed to understand that this man in handcuffs will prove an example of the kind of crime that Bell describes as "hard to even take its measure."

With Sheriff Bell's voice dominating the film's opening, the Coens successfully suggest the main topic behind the plotline, namely Chigurh and his ways. Thus the kind of values and (national) identity which Bell champions and of which he is a fine example clashes with the global threat Chigurh will come to represent. The decadence of this nationalism which is related to the Old West comes to its full effectiveness in the scene in which Sherrif Bell goes to see his uncle Ellis.

The scene is constructed upon all the ingredients which conjure up the Old West. It starts with the camera framing the barren landscape outside the window of an isolated cabin, a pickup truck approaching. Inside the cabin, Bell finds Ellis, an old man in a wheelchair wearing cowboy overalls and checked shirt. In their exchange, Ellis confirms to an "overmatched" Bell that "what you got ain't nothin' new. This country is hard on people. Hard and crazy. Got the devil in it yet folks never seem to hold it to account" (*NCOM* 127: 01). Bell leaves

unconvinced, still believing things have changed in the crime department, hence his feeling overmatched by the situation. Ellis clearly belongs to another age, probably like Bell himself, and neither of the two men seem to be moving on with the times. Plot progress proves Bell right when he is left powerless in the present situation in spite of his impressive instinct for detective work. He is finally identified as the old man for whom this is no place anymore.

Joel and Ethan Coen's *No Country for Old Men* is an extraordinarily bizarre and hypnotic film which successfully redeploys classic Western material to explore the difficult relationship between tradition and (post)modernity. Through the use of a villain of unknowable origin whose physical appearance makes him even more outlandish, the Coens illustrate the tension between a somewhat dated national discourse and the global threat posed by such dislocated subjects. The clash between old and new, national and global, has tragic consequences according to the Coens and to McCarthy in so far as it leaves countries unrecognizable for those who had been living there, turning them into barren landscapes where, as Sheriff Bell reminds us, a man has to put his soul at hazard.

4. THE INTERSTICE: DIFFERENCE NEGOTIATED

Homi K. Bhabha argues that in-between spaces "provide the terrain for elaborating strategies of singular or communal selfhood that initiate new signs of identity, and innovative sites of collaboration, and contestation, in the act of defining the idea of society itself" (333). It is precisely in "the emergence of the interstices … that the intersubjective and collective experiences of nationness, community interest, or cultural value are negotiated" (Bhabha 333) As Celestino Deleyto argues, Bhabha theorises a space where differences are negotiated, creating a tension which is "peculiar to borderline existences" and which "produces hybridity in a transnational world" (Deleyto 194). What is theoretically innovative, for both Bhabha and Deleyto, is precisely the study of the processes which are constructed in the articulation of cultural differences, beyond narratives of origin and initial subjectivities. In this sense, and as Elizabeth Ezra and Terry Rowden contend, transnational cinema, in its interest in moving

beyond the local and the global, proves its value as a fruitful means to the exploration of the in-between spaces of culture since "many films that problematize national or cultural identity take place in the "non-places" of the postindustrial landscape" (4, 8).

Such "non-places" are the airport terminals and desert planes which are used as locations for the two films we have read in the present article. Both films intervene in the debate of the nation-state, although from very different perspectives. In *The Terminal*, Spielberg successfully allows audiences to envision what Ulrich Beck would describe as a second modernity: the globalised, cosmopolitan world, "a creative achievement" for the individual where the dissolution of the nation-state and the supremacy of the West has been achieved. The film explores the tensions created by such discourse from a light-hearted and optimistic stance, even if the final consequence of the proposal is, inevitably, a return to what its protagonist calls "home," however this is conceptualized. *No Country for Old Men*, on the other hand, follows a different tone and approach as it observes how the potential erosion of the "privileged center," its denationalisation and deterritorialisation on the part of the unknown global threat, may bring with it challenges which the national does not know how to negotiate.

Eighteen years after the 9/11 attacks on New York and Washington and in the present context of conflict over the financing of Trump's border wall, Spielberg's *The Terminal* and the Coens' *No Country for Old Men* successfully promote and intervene in a debate on the nature of the nation-state, the role of national borders, and the performance of both individual and national identity. Both *The Terminal* and *No Country for Old Men* become narratives "capable of strengthening certain social imaginaries" (Hjort 20), while they highlight the extent to which, although the turn of the millennium seemed to promise a world with more mobile, hybrid identities and open multicultural spaces, our lives still tend to be trapped within nation-state borders.

NOTES

[1] The authors would like to thank the project "Between Utopia and Armaggedon: The Spaces of the Cosmopolitan in Contemporary

Cinema" (Ministerio de Industria, Economía y Competitividad) which founded the research for the present article.

[2] The use of inverted commas around the term "natural" is meant to highlight the ambiguity of the notion of nature itself. Despite its manifold meanings, we would like to clarify that we are using "natural" in the same way that Rainio does above. Borders are constructions that have everything to do with architecture, culture, and society and even when such natural incidents as rivers and/or mountains are used as borders, these still fall under the category of "cultural constructs."

[3] A dissolve is a gradual transition from one image to another, as used in film editing.

WORKS CITED

Anzaldúa, Gloria. *Borderlines/La Frontera: The New Mestiza*, Aunt Lute Books, 1987.

Beck, Ulrick. "The Cosmopolitan Perspective: Sociology of the Second Age of Modernity." *The Transnational Studies Reader: Intersections and Innovations*, edited by Sanjeev Khagram and Peggy Levitt, Routledge, 2008, pp 222-230.

Benito, Jesús. "Hospitality Across the Atlantic: American Guests and the International Space of Flows in Spielberg's *The Terminal* and Frears's *Dirty Pretty Things*." *The Transnationalism of American Culture: Literature, Film, and Music*, edited by Rocío G. Davis, Routledge, 2013, pp. 205-220.

Bhabha, Homi K. "Locations of Culture." *The Transnational Studies Reader: Intersections and Innovations*, edited by Sanjeev Khagram and Peggy Levitt, Routledge, 2008, pp 333-338.

Bradshaw, Peter "No Country for Old Men." *The Guardian*, 18 Jan. 2008. http://www.guardian.co.uk/film/2008/jan/18/drama.thriller. Accessed 17 January 2018.

Chapman King, Lynnea, et al. *No Country for Old Men: From Novel to Film*, The Scarecrow Press, Ltd, 2009.

Coen, Joel & Ethan Coen. *No Country for Old Men*. Paramount & Miramax Pictures, 2007

Deleyto, Celestino. *From Tinseltown to Bordertown: Los Angeles on Film*, Wayne State University Press, 2016.

Emerson, Jim. "No Country for Old Men: Out in All That Dark." *Suntimes* November 2007. http://blogs.suntimes.com/scanners/2007/11/no_country_for_old_men_out_in.html. Accessed 17 January 2018.

Ezra, Elizabeth & Terry Rowden. *Transnational Cinema. The Film Reader*, Routledge, 2006.

Foundas, Scott. "Badlands." *Village Voice* 30 Oct. 2007. http://www.villagevoice.com/2007-10-30/film/badlands/full Accessed 17 January 2018.

French, Philip. "No Country for Old Men." *The Guardian* 20 Jan. 2018. http://www.guardian.co.uk/film/2008/jan/20/coenbrothers.thriller. Accessed 17 January 2018.

Hjort, Mette. "On the Plurality of Cinematic Transnationalism." *World Cinemas, Transnational Perspectives*, edited by Natasa Duronicova and Kathleen Newman, Routledge, 2010, pp. 12-33.

Hollinger, David A. "Not Universalists, Not Pluralists: The New Cosmopolitans Find Their Own Way." *Conceiving Cosmopolitanism. Theory, Context and Practice*, edited by Steven Vertovec and Robin Cohen, Oxford University Press, 2002, pp. 227-239.

Kermode, Mark. "DVD Review: *No Country for Old Men*." *The Guardian* 31 May 2008. http://www.guardian.co.uk/film/2008/jun/01/dvdreviews3. Accessed 17 January 2018.

Lugo, Alejandro. "Reflections on Border Theory, Culture, and the Nation." *Race, Identity, and Representation in Education*, edited by Cameron McCarthy, Warren Crichlow, Grey Dimitriadis, and Nadine Dolby, Routledge, 2005, 43-58.

Mackie, Rob. "DVD Review: *No Country for Old Men*." *The Guardian* 2 June 2008. http://www.guardian.co.uk/film/2008/jun/02/dvdreviews.thriller. Accessed 17 January 2018.

McCaffrey, Enda. "Crimes of Passion, Freedom and a Clash of Sartrean Moralities in the Coen Brothers' *No Country for Old Men*." *Existentialism and Contemporary Cinema: A Sartrean Perspective*, edited by Jean-Pierre Boulé and Enda McCaffrey, Berghahn Books, 2011, pp. 125-142.

McCarthy, Cormac. *No Country for Old Men*, Vintage International, 2005.

Newman, Judie. *Fictions of America: Narratives of Global Empire*, Routledge, 2007.

Peña-Acuña, Beatriz. *Understanding Steven Spielberg*, Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2018.

Rainio, Minna. "It Was So Sacred: The Finnish-Russian Border Imagined and Constructed in the Stories of Border Area Inhabitants." *Post-National Enquiries. Essays on Ethnic and Racial Border Crossing*, edited by Jopi Nyman, Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2009, pp.120-130.

Reed, Alison. "The Ghosted Other: Ethno-Racial Violence in No Country for Old Men." *JGCinema.com: Cinema and Globalization* 2007. http://www.jgcinema.com/single.php?sl=violence-no-country-for-old-men. Accessed 17 January 2018.

Shone, Tom. "The Coen Brothers: the cartographers of cinema." *The Guardian* 27 Jan. 2011. http://www.guardian.co.uk/film/2011/jan/27/coen-brothers-interview-true-grit. Accessed 17 January 2018.

Spielberg, Steven. *The Terminal*. Paramount & Miramax Pictures, 2004.

Vertovec, Steven. *Transnationalism*, Routledge, 2009.

Walby, Sylvia. "The Myth of the Nation-State: Theorizing Society and Polities in a Global Era." *Sociology* vol. 37 (3), SAGE Publications, 2003, pp. 529-546.

Recibido / Received: 18/1/2019 *Aceptado / Accepted: 4/2/2019*

Political Violence in Northern Ireland: The Violent Loss of Male Figures in Deirdre Madden's *Hidden Symptoms* and *One by One in the Darkness*

Luis Antonio Sierra Gómez (luisansierra@hotmail.com)
Universidad de Jaén

Abstract

In this work I intend to examine Deirdre Madden's *Hidden Symptoms* (1986) and *One by One in the Darkness* (1996) taking into consideration the historical, material and ideological contexts in which these novels were produced. I will specifically focus upon the male characters, paying particular attention to the way in which their deaths are naturalized through a feminization process. Likewise, I will scrutinize their relation with concepts such as hegemonic, alternative/subaltern masculinities and patriarchal order, seminal to this article. These two works have been widely analyzed by criticism and the conclusions reached range from considering them as deeply conservative novels to regarding them as typically female products or clearly postmodern texts. My approach comes closer to the earlier analysis although adding meaningful nuances.

Keywords: Deirdre Madden, Northern Irish Fiction, Hegemonic and Subaltern Masculinities, Victimhood, Feminization of Men.

Violencia política en Irlanda del Norte: La pérdida violenta de las figuras masculinas en *Hidden Symptoms* y *One by One in the Darkness* de Deirdre Madden

Resumen

La pretensión de este artículo no es otra que la de examinar las novelas de Deirdre Madden *Hidden Symptoms* (1986) y *One by One in the Darkness* (1996)

teniendo en consideración el contexto histórico, material e ideológico en el que fueron producidas. El análisis se centrará de manera especial en los personajes masculinos y en la forma en que sus muertes son naturalizadas a través de un proceso de feminización. Asimismo, se tratará su relación con los conceptos de hegemonía, masculinidades subalternas/alternativas y orden patriarcal, todos claves para este artículo. Estas dos novelas han sido ampliamente analizadas por la crítica y las conclusiones alcanzadas abarcan desde una consideración de las mismas como obras profundamente conservadoras, pasando por valorarlas como productos típicamente femeninos o bien como textos claramente posmodernos. Nuestro enfoque es cercano al anterior análisis, aunque con la inclusión de significativos matices.

Palabras clave: Deirdre Madden, ficción norirlandesa, masculinidades hegemónicas y subalternas, victimismo, feminización de los hombres.

Literature, like any other superstructural production or cultural artifact, takes part in the ideological, material and social context to which it belongs. Not only does it passively reflect that milieu, but also contributes to its shaping.[1] Thus, the literary text becomes what Frederic Jameson has called a "socially symbolic act" which literary criticism must use to disclose the "political unconscious" behind its production (Jameson, 20-21).[2] It is not surprising, then, that, since the end of the 1960s, a great number of literary works, those socially symbolic acts, published in Ireland, have dealt with an extremely relevant political issue, the conflict in the North. However, those creations have not always succeeded in making the texts become symbolic solutions to real but unconsciously felt social and cultural problems. According to Michael Storey (10), there have been more than five hundred works of fiction published between the end of the 1960s and 2004 which deal with the so-called 'Troubles,' along with a significant number between that year up until now, and there are scholars who have pointed out that a significant number of those works do not reach, from a political perspective, their potential as

subversive literary products.[3] This seemingly depoliticized literary trend, which commonly highlights the private sphere of individuals and tends to present the conflict as an unnatural event that breaks up an ordered world, conceals a strong political stand. Either consciously or unconsciously, these works and their authors contribute to uphold the hegemonic neoliberal order which draws on any strategy to prevail over alternative, subaltern or subversive modes that struggle to unveil and transform the political unconscious which the Establishment strives to hide in its own interest.[4]

Feminism has become a subversive tool in literature since a gendered perspective implies the questioning, and perhaps the transformation, of the hegemonic patriarchal order.[5] Within these parameters, subversion may take place in every woman's refusal to accept any imposed truths on her. The feminist motto "the personal is political" also lies behind these postulates, since the interrelation of the private and public spheres makes individual acts, literary works in this case, not only instruments of self-awareness but also agents of political change while, at the same time, politics deeply affect and condition individuals on a daily basis. However, and as far as feminist writing is concerned in the overwhelmingly conservative North of Ireland, subversive models that may shatter the Northern Irish political unconscious are still hard to find in literary productions due, among other factors, to the prevalence of violent masculinities as social role models. However, we can perceive a certain evolution in some of these works in the last two decades, as we witness how Northern Irish literature is slowly making the transition from a prevailing violent hegemonic masculinity to a more sophisticated, money-centered mode that has seemingly displaced the ideal of manliness in the North.[6]

With all the aforementioned ideas in mind, this article will concentrate on the implications that, as a result of political violence in Ulster, the absence of male figures has on the two Deirdre Madden's novels that explicitly deal with the Troubles: *Hidden Symptoms* (1986) and *One by One in the Darkness* (1996). *Hidden Symptoms* tells the story of Theresa and her attempts to cope with her life after the murder of her twin brother, Francis, during a random attack by loyalist paramilitaries. Her grief becomes almost insurmountable, affecting

her relationships with both her mother and friends. Her religious beliefs also stagger as she undergoes an internal and moral conflict. *One by One in the Darkness* recounts the efforts of the three Quinn sisters and their mother to overcome the death of their father and husband Charlie at the hands of a loyalist commando. Together with this story-line, the novel also focuses on the particular implications that Kate's pregnancy has, not only for the whole family but also for Northern Ireland, as a symbol of hope in the future.

Before going any further, it is convenient to briefly allude to recent critical evaluations of both novels. Some scholars have criticized Madden's lack of commitment to make her novels become subversive weapons that disclose the Northern Irish political unconscious. For that reason, critics like Gerry Smyth deem Madden's *Hidden Symptoms* "a deeply conservative and reactionary novel" since "individual insight is won at the expense of any larger political vision" making these individuals engage with the 'Troubles' only from apolitical and ahistorical perspectives (Smyth 119). Elmer Kennedy-Andrews (238-58) follows Smyth's view when arguing that Madden's interest is not directed at political violence, but at its consequences on individuals, thus stripping her fictional characters' experiences of any historical or political content. Furthermore, and from a feminist perspective, neither does Sylvie Mikowski appreciate any sign of subversion in Madden's works since she does not observe any kind of alternative to the traditional roles imposed on females by the Northern Irish patriarchal society.

On the other hand, other scholars have clearly emphasized that the political reading of Madden's novel is not as important as her insight on individuals' grief and their attempts to survive after the violent loss of a male beloved one. Graham Dawson underscores the personal implications of violence, but not the political ones. He believes that Madden's writing works

> as a means to explore the inner worlds of her grieving fictional victims as they negotiate a social world permeated by cultural representations of victims, interpersonal relationships structured by attitudes towards victimhood, and mores which determine what can and

> cannot be told and heard about their experiences of violent bereavement. (145)[7]

Contrary to the opinion of critics like Smyth, Kennedy-Andrews or Mikowski, Marisol Morales Ladrón ponders over the elements of subversion in both Madden's works because of their challenge to "meanings and received assumptions that go beyond the wrongs of a segregated society" (79). Thus, according to Morales Ladrón, Madden deconstructs traditional identitarian binaries that have subjugated Northern Irish society for ages. Maeve Eileen Davey adds a very valuable remark concerning another subversive element in Madden, that is to say, the male body becoming a victim so that the stereotyped image of white male virility and strength becomes an "outmoded, colonial façade", which, at the same time, harks back to Caroline Magennis's description of the evolution of hegemonic masculinities in Northern Ireland. In a similar vein, Michael Parker supports the subversive element in Madden's novels. He believes that Deirdre Madden uses the background of the Troubles to question traditional and assumed truths through strategies of disruption in her narrations. The fact that both novels deal with the sudden death of a beloved one, as the aftermath of the political turmoil, is not reason enough to focus on the sociopolitical context that provoked those deaths, but to delve into the consequences those casualties have on individuals. According to Kennedy-Andrews, the outlook of all these scholars has something in common: they are framed within postmodern criticism where individuals' inner experiences count above any other type of happenings, where the interest, in the Northern Irish case, "is not in the act of violence but in the psychological effects of violence" on individuals (Kennedy-Andrews, 153).

According to Caroline Magennis (8), masculinity can be defined as "a series of practices that are regarded as the ideal for men [and characteristic] in a given socio-cultural context". Following Magennis and also Antonio Gramsci's notion of 'hegemony' as the active struggle for dominance (245-46), I will define hegemonic masculinity as that mode of masculinity (behaviour, attitude, social standing) that prevails over other expressions of this same notion which may be considered as subaltern. It also acts as a means to secure the gender order with respect to female subordination. Connell and

Messerschmidt (829-59) lie behind Magennis's formulation, though further reflections proposed by these scholars must also be taken into consideration. For both researchers the ideal mode of behaviour that hegemonic masculinities stand for is simply a set of patterns to be followed, as no man entirely fulfills the model. They also highlight the constant evolution of the hegemonic model of masculinity as the need to accommodate to challenges coming from both alternative/subaltern masculinities and women's resistance to patriarchy.

The hegemonic Northern Irish masculinity at the time both novels were written has been labeled as "traditional" (Connell, 10): men are presented as providers for their families, participants in the public sphere and, if necessary, administrators of their dominance through violence. Within the context of the Northern Irish conflict, most literary discourses portraying alternative or subaltern masculinities found themselves subsumed by the hegemonic one. However, as time went on, mainly from the 90s and, above all, since the signing of the Good Friday Agreement in 1998, this hegemonic masculinity referred above started to be seriously challenged and led the way to new definitions of what being a man meant. Magennis wisely summarizes this shift, which has obviously been reflected in literature:

> Northern Irish fiction has represented the transition in hegemonic Northern Irish masculinity from a mode defined by sectarian violence to one that favours material status with its own tactics of resistance and subversion of the dominant mode of masculinity. (145)

It must be said that, although I generally agree with Magennis's tenets about hegemonic masculinity, there are other nuances to be brought in. The evolution from a violent and sectarian to a more money-centered mode of masculinity has not been as radical as one would think. This new hegemonic model of the corporate world, according to Connell (9), goes hand in hand with the new socio-political context that not only Northern Ireland, but the whole world, has experienced. Since the end of last century, and within a global neoliberal context, hegemonic masculinity has been redefined,

though keeping its core values. This new masculinity is not as explicitly violent as its former expression, though violence is still exerted in more subtle ways. In terms of women's status, neither do contemporary hegemonic masculinities help accomplish gender equality. In fact, women's progress very often implies the fragmentation of their identity and their partial alienation through masculinization (Ergas 603). Ultimately, what we are witnessing are the attempts of patriarchal capitalism to keep its hegemony through a strategy of disguise, through a series of apparent changes that make it seem modern and updated.

Within the context of the novels under analysis, sectarian hegemonic masculinity prevails and contributes, as mentioned above, to secure a traditional gender order at all levels, both among men and between men and women. In *Hidden Symptoms*, conventional gender roles are strictly distributed in Robert's family, accordingly contributing to the preservation of long-established gender structures. Robert's sister, Rosie, is portrayed as an archetypically devout housewife serving men and taking care of children. Meanwhile, her husband, Tom, who has Rosie at his entire disposal, is shown as an openly sectarian individual involved in the IRA. The prevalence of hegemonic masculinity associated with sectarian violence is also uncovered when Theresa relates a group of men drinking at a pub with the death of her brother: "any one of them might have done it" (Madden 2014: 44). *One by One in the Darkness* exemplifies this idea, too. This is what the owner of a shop, who refuses to serve British soldiers under the threat of the IRA, tells Charlie: "'there's men in this country and if they thought I was serving soldiers they wouldn't leave me with one stone on top of the other of either house or shop'" (Madden 2013: 99).

But the patriarchal order also affects women's imposed submission in other aspects of life such as their access to, or exclusion from, the labour market. The narrator in *One by One in the Darkness* recalls how Emily, Charlie's wife, found herself, like most women in Northern Ireland in the 1950s and 60s, socially forced to quit her job to get married despite the timid hints of subversion shown by certain women refusing to go home after their wedding day. These first defiant movements provoked an immediate reaction from patriarchy

that started to threaten the status quo. The newspaper letter that Emily's mother sends her after she learns Emily is engaged clearly shows this reaction:

> One notes with sorrow the growing number of girls who, on marrying, selfishly retain their jobs in our Catholic schools, thereby denying employment to unmarried girls who need teaching posts, and, more importantly, to men, many of whom may have wives and children on their own to support. To see such a lack of understanding of their own Christian vocation as wives and mothers makes one wonder if closer attention needs to be paid to the type of girl who is selected to be trained as teachers. (Madden 122)

In the conservative Northern Irish society that Madden portrays, men customarily populate the public sphere and women the private one. Therefore, it is not surprising that men are more exposed to common and naturalized behaviours within the public realm, such as violence. Charlie Quinn's death in *One by One in the Darkness* goes in line with that naturalization of men as victims, although his demise has to do, too, with the process of feminization of his masculine persona developed by Madden throughout the novel. Charlie's murder invokes certain sympathy for this character, which would not have arisen had the victim been his brother, Brian, an exemplary archetype of hegemonic masculinity and real target for the paramilitaries. This is so precisely because Charlie provides elements of subversion to hegemonic masculinity that break the traditional understanding of manliness in Northern Ireland. Charlie is depicted as a man who does not properly belong to the public sphere, someone who has never publicly expressed his support for the Republicans, but whose opinions are more private, more reserved, just like women have traditionally complied. Besides, other circumstances contribute to this character's feminization, as Bill Rolston points out: "As mothers, women come to empathize with all children. Everyone is someone's child, so the concern with protecting goes far beyond the bounds of family" (3). In fact, when a group of British soldiers comes to the Quinns' home (Madden 96-98), it is Charlie who sympathizes with them, and is then rebuked by his wife, Emily. Charlie's response is revealing:

> 'He was no more than a child; I'm sure his ma isn't getting a wink of sleep with him over here. I'm glad I was civil to them,' he went on, digging into his pocket for his cigarettes and matches. 'There's no harm in being civil.' (Madden 98)

Not only does Charlie's wife censure his behaviour, but so does his brother Brian: "'You should have told them hell roast all,' Brian insisted. 'You're too bloody soft, Charlie, that's your trouble.'" (98) As a culminating step in Charlie Quinn's process of feminization, it is revealing to remark that his death takes place within the most traditionally private and sacred place for a woman, the kitchen, an improper place for a man to be according to hegemonic standards of masculinity.

In *Hidden Symptoms*, Theresa's brother, Francis, is also feminized since he is presented as a spiritual and sensitive man, more prone to dealing with feelings and religious issues than to identifying with hegemonic masculinity. In order to support this statement, Francis' reflections on art and religion while looking at the Pietà in Rome may be revealing:

> 'Were I to break that, I would only be breaking stone. People do not look for God, they only look for bits of metal and stone and glass. They come for art's sake; they don't believe.'
>
> 'And without belief', she said, 'it's just a piece of white stone.' (Madden 55)

At another point in the novel, he also reveals himself as a representative of a subaltern masculinity. This happens when he voices his reasons to quit university and start working at a supermarket: "'I like boring work,' he said. 'It leaves my mind freer for higher things'" (Madden 63). Francis' closeness to his twin sister also makes him more feminine in cultural terms (Davey 17).

All this implies that alternative, or subaltern, readings of male gender, mainly represented in these works by Francis and Charlie, will

be defeated by physical and sectarian violence. Both men are shown assuming some of the roles that convention and tradition have ascribed to women, namely, sensitivity, passivity, or the domestic realm as the natural place, and both will be punished for that in a world where these features are scorned by the hegemonic discourse. In other words, Madden's feminization of these characters, which might seem a progressive stance and make these novels look groundbreaking, unconventional and transgressive, ends up in nothing since their subversion is defeated by hegemonic masculinity. Judith Butler states that gender is not innate, but something we learn to perform:

> … gender is in no way a stable identity or locus of agency from which various acts proceed; rather it is an identity tenuously constituted in time – an identity instituted through a *stylized repetition of acts* (…) [T]he conception of gender (…) requires a conception of a constituted *social temporality*. (…) What is called gender identity is a performative accomplishment compelled by social sanction and taboo." (Butler 519-20)

Thus, by feminizing these men, Madden is unconsciously reinforcing the patriarchal discourse because neither do they fit in hegemonic definitions of masculinity nor become strong enough to overcome them. As a consequence, the process of feminization that both Francis and Charlie undergo makes them appear as more vulnerable individuals and, therefore, easier targets for paramilitaries, preventing them from becoming effective tools that would subvert the already established order.

Deirdre Madden's narrative seems to require an examination of the actual emergence of new meanings, values and practices in Northern Irish culture. Whether these entail new phases of the dominant cultures or, instead, some alternatives to them, as Raymond Williams famously expressed in *Marxism and Literature* (1977: 121-27), I am persuaded that in her novels Madden narrates new modes which seem to break away with the Northern Irish dominant culture, that is, new models of men that confront the traditional, accepted and leading roles. Neither Charlie nor Francis fit into the stereotypical male models and represent new and alternative masculinities, defined above

as feminized masculinities. However, this redefinition of what being a man means, this conflict with the most traditional meaning of patriarchy is resolved with the defeat of these emergent and alternative masculine models. Yet with both Francis's and Charlie's murders, social order is reestablished and the message the political unconscious grasps is that social and material reality cannot be altered, thus turning the approach of the narration towards a defeatist and conservative stand. This assessment does not necessarily imply that Madden has to be labeled as a conservative narrator, as scholars like Gerry Smyth assume when commenting on *Hidden Symptoms* (1997: 119). She is more likely to be rated as an insightful observer, as an author who accurately describes a particular socioeconomic context and its consequences at a time when the strength and prevalence of certain dominant masculinity in the North of Ireland prevented its overcoming or, at least, its accommodation to alternative modes of masculinity.

All of the foregoing is also deeply related to Raymond Williams' notion of "structures of feeling" (Williams 132). As a matter of fact, in this narrative we witness the evolution of certain forms of masculinity (embodied by Francis and Charlie), which seems to reproduce a process that started in the mid-1980s. These structures will recur in later novels, from the mid-nineties on, and there will be a shift in hegemonic masculinity models, with all due cautions mentioned above when referring to Maguinnes's proposals. This change will go hand in hand with the political, material and social changes that have taken place from the beginning of the peace process. But as far as Madden is concerned, though these new structures are present in both *Hidden Symptoms* and *One by One in the Darkness*, they do not succeed because they are outstripped by the traditional and sectarian hegemonic masculinity.

If we want to understand the whole scope of victimhood in the Troubles, it is necessary to reflect on how the killing of male characters, a straightforward consequence of the conflict, turns women into collateral victims of that same strife. Their multidimensional status as victims is usually highlighted in Troubles fiction with respect to the aftermath of the assassinations. These sequels are ultimately reflected both in their material world, that is, their families, and in relation to their inner or spiritual world. Thus,

women will undertake material responsibilities such as keeping their household united, sustaining their children, or assuming the traditional role of fathers as guardians of order (Rolston 44-46). But they will also face internal conflicts which may shatter their systems of values and beliefs, although these same conflicts may become, at the same time, an opportunity for them to subvert their traditional social stance (Morales Ladrón 76).

One of the characters in *One by One in the Darkness*, Helen's closest friend David, lets her know that his mother turned into an unintended subversive individual when she had to assume all those allegedly male roles after her husband's assassination: "She told me she'd been terrified at the prospect of bringing up five children on her own, having to provide for us and get us educated and keep us out of trouble" (Madden 49). Emily, Charlie's wife, also takes on that responsibility. The "solid stone house" (Madden 1, 181) built by Charlie helps Emily fulfill her duty since it holds its familiar meaning even after her husband's death, thus becoming the place of reference for the three sisters around the figure of their mother. Going home at weekends is a "safety valve" (Madden 6) for Helen. Home turns into the only place where they have the chance of staying together, of tightening their knots and overcoming their loss (Madden 8-9).

Madden acutely focuses on the most private side of female victimhood in *Hidden Symptoms*. Theresa goes through a terrible spiritual struggle with her religious beliefs, the only tools at hand for her to cope with loss. She questions her brother's death as God's will and the fact that she, as a Catholic, has to accept his fate. Her inability to understand and assimilate that plan leads her to a process of self-annihilation that almost exceeds her mental and physical limits:

> 'I have to go on living without him, and I have to go on believing in God, a good God, a God who loves and cares for me. Do you think that's easy? I have to believe that my brother's death was a victory. I have to forgive the people who killed my brother; I have to try to love them as I loved him (…) You tell me what's easy about belief. You tell me where the comfort is.' (Madden 138)

Theresa's behaviour transcends traditional female stereotypes of submission and passivity, but, at the same time, the element of subversion her conduct may imply is not that unconventional, since it goes in line with other long-established female manners which suggest women's tendency towards emotions. Despite the potential subversion in her internal strife and the danger of self-annihilation it implies for her, Theresa finally accommodates to one of the traditional roles Bill Rolston observes in Northern Irish fiction, that of women as peace-loving individuals in an extension of their domestic role:

> The division between men and women in relation to violence is not only biological, but almost metaphysical. Men come to represent violence and women peace with all the force of a Greek myth. The only proper, acceptable, natural role for a woman is that of mother – both in the domestic sense of caring, and in the more global or mythical sense of peace-loving. Because they care for children, women care about peace. (Rolston 44)

This view is also endorsed by Carly J. Dunn in her reflections about the political dimension of Madden's novel. According to this scholar, Theresa's "struggle to forgive the men who murdered Francis, and her knowledge that horrific acts of violence occur on both sides of the conflict … lead her to desire not revenge or Catholic victory, but peace and equality" (122).

Gerry Smyth insists on the need to deal with political violence as an opportunity to wheel out the stereotypes of the Troubles. He believes that Irish writers have the moral obligation to engage with politics and history, "to challenge the received forms of 'Troubles' narrative, and to develop new languages and new perspectives as a contribution to the imagination of change" (Smyth 116). Unfortunately, he argues, novelists like Deirdre Madden evade historical explanation and focus on "individual intervention and psychological motivation" (Smyth 114), thereby introducing a distance in the novelistic vision which reinforces traditional positions. Thus, Madden's writing explores the (im)possibilities of moving forward

from pain, suffering, and loss, but not communally. Like Smyth, Sylvie Mikowski does not observe any progress in Madden's novels either as regards subverting patriarchy.

Nonetheless, Smyth and Mikowski's readings have been challenged by other scholars like Morales Ladrón, Davey or Parker who have underscored Madden's skills in depicting the anomalous environment which her characters inhabit and their individual responses to the socio-political context that entangles them, sometimes even providing elements of subversion against long-term observed traditions such as capitalist patriarchy. This perspective goes in line with the prevailing postmodernist trend in literary criticism, which focuses more intensely on individuals and less on collective responses to moments of crisis. The prevalence of postmodernism is not surprising at all in Western societies, as it easily accommodates the hegemonic neoliberal ideology where individuals lie in the center and become responsible for every single action they carry out, whereas any collective, supportive or communal positioning is despised.

The two novels by Madden under scrutiny here, *Hidden Symptoms* and *One by One in the Darkness*, convey the beginning of the transition of hegemonic masculinity in Northern Ireland, as well as the shift in the material and sociopolitical conditions that determine it. The author presents emerging elements of subversion, Williams' "structures of feelings," which turn out to be defeated by the still hegemonic and traditional masculinity. These alternative masculinities will force capitalist patriarchy to show its plasticity in order to adapt itself to the changing times. However, this transformation does not take place in Madden's works. She only depicts the emergence of alternative masculinities, the tension between hegemonic and subaltern, but the sociopolitical context shows itself incapable of assuming these new challenges.

The violent loss of a beloved one is, without a doubt, a traumatic experience. In the Troubles literature, it is quite common to find men, usually fathers, among the victims of sectarian violence, with all the implications this has for the female family members. What this article has tried to show is twofold. On the one hand, it contends that, from the point of view of patriarchy, the feminization of male victims helps to accept and better understand their violent deaths, apart from

showing the defeat of alternative masculinities in the Northern Irish context. On the other hand, this work exposes that women, whether wives or sisters, become the other collateral victims in the conflict and their traditionally assigned roles make their status as victims seem natural. Besides, these female victims will find themselves compelled to undertake certain public roles that, in principle, patriarchal society had not envisaged for them. Thus, they will often end up with the obligation to become heads of their families, providers for their children, or keepers of familial order. In other words, they will have to masculinize their roles in order to cope with tragedy. The physical violence exerted on these men as well as the (in)ability of many women to overcome their loss come to demonstrate, in both novels, the prevalence of conservative and sectarian patriarchy not only in Northern Irish society but also in its literature.

NOTES

[1] As is well known, Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels already claimed this much (Storey). Louis Althusser (242) also reformulates this idea when he claims that "it is impossible to think the work of art, in its specifically aesthetic existence, without taking into account the privileged relation between it and ideology, i.e. *its direct and inevitable effect*," and Terry Eagleton further explains it by saying that "to understand literature, then, means understanding the total social process to which it is part" (Eagleton 5-6).

[2] In other words, there are "certain kinds of knowledge about society [that] are encoded in literary texts and in their forms" (Jameson 157).

[3] Among these scholars it is worth mentioning Gerry Smyth and Elmer Kennedy-Andrews. The former split the authors of these works into two differentiated groups: on the one hand, those who merely used the conflict as a background where stories about individual desire and conflict took place, and, on the other hand, those who examined "the ways in which cultural representations impact on the received realities of life in Northern Ireland," thus challenging, or attempting to challenge, assumed, naturalized and stereotyped representations and roles (Smyth 116-117). In a similar line of criticism, Elmer Kennedy-Andrews (238-258) claims that there is a very

important amount of 'Troubles' literature which disregards the socio-political context and observes violence under Tom Nairn's (211-213) "myth of atavism," that is, as a mere expression of irrationality rather than as the result of social and political conditions.

[4] The strife between hegemonic and subaltern modes brings to mind Raymond Williams' argument in *Marxism and Literature* (121-127) claiming that cultures undergo the emergence of new elements (meanings, values, practices,…). Yet the heart of the matter resides in discovering if these only imply a new phase of the dominant culture or, on the contrary, are alternative or opposite to it. These new elements, which Williams called "structures of feeling," can be found in social life and "exert palpable pressures and set effective limits on experience" (132).

[5] Christine St. Peter develops these ideas in her seminal work *Changing Ireland. Strategies in Contemporary Irish Fiction* (151-153).

[6] In order to deepen on this issue, Caroline Magennis's *Sons of Ulster: Masculinities in the Contemporary Northern Irish Novel* (2011) proves to be invaluable.

[7] This is also the case of Geraldine Higgins, Tamara Benito de la Iglesia or Carly J. Dunn. These scholars tend to highlight Madden's awareness on the implications of violence on individuals, leaving political concerns of the conflict, at best, in the background.

WORKS CITED

Althusser, Louis. *Lenin and Philosophy and Other Essays*. Translated by Ben Brewster, Monthly Review Press, 1971.

Benito de la Iglesia, Tamara. "Born into the Troubles: Deirdre Madden's *Hidden Symptoms*." *International Journal of English Studies*, vol. 2, no. 2, 2002, pp. 39-48.

Butler, Judith. "Performative Acts and Gender Constitution: An Essay in Phenomenology and Feminist Theory." *Theatre Journal*, vol. 40, no. 4, December 1988, pp. 519-531.

Connell, Raewyn. "The study of masculinities." *Qualitative Research Journal*, vol. 14, issue 1, 2014, pp. 5-15.

Connell, Raewyn and James W. Messerschmidt. "Hegemonic masculinity: rethinking the concept." *Gender and Society*, vol. 19, no. 6, December 2005, pp. 829-859.

Davey, Maeve Eileen. ""She had to start thinking like a man": Women Writing Bodies in Contemporary Northern Irish Fiction." *Estudios Irlandeses*, no. 5, 2010, pp. 12-24.

Dawson, Graham. "Storytelling, Imaginative Fiction and the Representation of Victims of the Irish Troubles: A Cultural Analysis of Deirdre Madden's *One by One in the Darkness*," *Reimagining Ireland: Ireland and Victims: Confronting the Past, Forging the Future*, edited by Lesley Lelourec and Grainne O'Keeffe-Vigneron, Peter Lang, 2012, pp. 139-158.

Dunn, Carly J. "The Novels of Deirdre Madden: Expanding the Canon of Irish Literature with Women's Fiction." *Theses and Dissertations*. Paper 106, 2014. https://knowledge.library.iup.edu/etd/106/. Accessed 14 September 2015.

Eagleton, Terry. *Marxism and Literary Criticism*. 1976. Routledge, 1992.

Ergas, Yasmine "El sujeto mujer: el feminismo de los años sesenta-ochenta." *Historia de las Mujeres. Vol. 5. El Siglo XX*," edited by Georges Duby and Michelle Perrot, translated by Marco Aurelio Galmarini. Santillana, 2003, pp. 593-620.

Gramsci, Antonio. *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*. 1971. International Publishers, 1999.

Higgins, Geraldine. ""A Place to Bring Anger and Grief": Deirdre Madden's Northern Irish Novels." *Writing Ulster*, no. 6, 1999, pp. 142-61.

Jameson, Fredric. *The Political Unconscious. Narrative as a Socially Symbolic Act*, Cornell University Press, 1981.

Jameson, Fredric and Ian Buchanan, Ian. *Jameson on Jameson: Conversations on Cultural Marxism*, Duke University Press, 2007.

Kennedy-Andrews, Elmer. *Fiction and the Northern Ireland Troubles since 1969: (de-)constructing the North*, Four Courts Press, 2003.

Kennedy-Andrews, Elmer. "The novel and the Northern Troubles." *The Cambridge Companion to the Irish Novel Cambridge*, edited by John Wilson Foster, Cambridge University Press, 2006, pp. 238-258.

Madden, Deirdre. 1996. *One by One in the Darkness*. Faber & Faber, 2013.

Madden, Deirdre. 1986. *Hidden Symptoms*. Faber & Faber, 2014.

Magennis, Caroline. *Sons of Ulster. Masculinities in the Contemporary Northern Irish Novel*. Peter Lang, 2011.

Mikowski, Sylvie. "Deirdre Madden's Novels: Searching for Authentic Woman." *Reimagining Ireland: Irish Women Writers:*

New Critical Perspectives, edited by Elke D'hoker, Raphaël Ingelbien and Hedwig Schwall. Peter Lang, 2011, pp. 245-253.

Morales Ladrón, Marisol. "Deirdre Madden's Fiction at the Crossroads of (Northern-)Irish Politics, Art and Identity." *Words of Crisis, Crisis of Words: Ireland and the Representation of Critical Times*, edited by María Losada-Friend, Auxiliadora Pérez-Vides and Pilar Ron-Vaz. Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2016, pp. 75-90.

Nairn, Tom. *The Break-Up of Britain: Crisis and Neo-Nationalism*. Verso, 1981.

Parker, Michael. "Shadows on a Glass: Self-Reflexivity in the Fiction of Deirdre Madden." *Irish University Review*, vol. 30, no. 1, spring-summer 2000, pp. 82-102.

Rolston, Bill. "Mothers, whores and villains: images of women in novels of the Northern Ireland conflict." *Race and Class*, vol. 31, issue 1, July 1989, pp. 41-57.

Smyth, Ailbhe, ed. *Wildish things: an Anthology of New Irish Women's Writing*. Attic Press, 1989.

Smyth, Gerry. *The Novel and the Nation. Studies in the New Irish Fiction*. Pluto Press, 1997.

St. Peter, Christine. *Changing Ireland. Strategies in Contemporary Irish Fiction*. MacMillan, 2000.

Storey, John. "Marx and Culture." *Culture Matters*. 27 March 2018. https://www.culturematters.org.uk/index.php/marx200/item/2786-marx-and-culture. Accessed 20 October 2018.

Storey, Michael L. *Representing the Troubles in Irish Short Fiction*. The Catholic University of America Press, 2004.

Williams, Raymond. *Marxism and Literature*. Oxford University Press, 1977.

Recibido / Received: 18-1-2019 *Aceptado / Accepted: 3-5-2019*

Recensións / Reseñas
Reviews / Rezensionen

Pilar Guerrero Medina, Roberto Torre Alonso, and Raquel Vea Escarza, editors. *Verbs, Clauses and Constructions: Functional and Typological Approaches*. Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2018. 439 pages.

Zeltia Blanco Suárez (zeltia.blanco@unican.es)
Universidad de Cantabria

This volume includes a selection of twenty papers originally presented in the 2014 and 2016 editions of the *International Symposium on Verbs, Clauses and Constructions*, held at the University of La Rioja. The book opens with an introduction by the editors and is divided into three main parts, devoted to verbs, clauses, and constructions, respectively. The wide variety of studies presented here, from both a theoretical and an applied perspective, clearly attest to the interplay between semantics, morphology, syntax, and pragmatics. Moreover, the miscellany of linguistic approaches and the typological diversity of the languages discussed are a great asset to this monograph. This most comprehensive and enlightening volume succeeds in bringing together numerous articles from both a diachronic and a synchronic dimension, thereby providing further insights into functional-oriented disciplines such as corpus and cognitive linguistics.

Part I (*Verbs*) opens with a corpus-based study by Kereković on the types of verbs used in mechanical engineering textbooks and papers, taking as a reference the categories established by Biber et al. (1999) and Beck et al. (2002). In her corpus, activity verbs are the most common, while aspectual verbs show the lowest degree of use. This finding concurs with Biber et al.'s (1999) data from the Longman corpus. Nonetheless, the remaining verbal categories pattern differently. Beck et al.'s (2002) typology distinguished between general English, general scientific, and technical verbs. Kereković's results indicate that general English verbs are far more frequent than any other types in both textbooks and papers. Technical verbs, in turn, are rare in papers but predominate in textbooks, since students need to fully grasp the concepts and acquire this vocabulary.

The next three chapters focus on different aspects of the morphology of Old English (OE). The first one, by Metola Rodríguez,

addresses the process of lemmatisation of OE strong verbs with the lemmatiser *Norna*, a software which was developed at the University of La Rioja by the *Nerthus* research group and which is based on the *Dictionary of Old English Web Corpus* (DOEC). The lemmatiser comprises an index, a concordance, a reference list of preverbal and inflectional endings, and a number of queries and filters, all of which are designed to minimise the process of manual revision. For this reason, the queries and filters take into consideration potential effects of spelling variants, *i*-mutation, and consonant assimilation, among others. The automatic searches in the lemmatiser *Norna* have an accuracy of about 80%, which is quite remarkable considering that the inflectional forms corresponding to lemmas starting with letters H-Y have not been published in the *Dictionary of Old English* (DOE) yet. The second paper, by Ojanguren López, is also concerned with OE strong verbs, but concentrates instead on participles, which could be inflected (e.g. *gebundenne*) or uninflected (e.g. *gebunden*). More specifically, it explores the variation within and across tense (past and present participle) and case (nominative, accusative, genitive, and dative). Participial variation was rather widespread at the OE period, since both the inflected and uninflected variants could be attested for the same verb, text, and function. Taking the DOEC as a basis, this corpus-based study supports the general literature on the loss of inflectional marking in OE adjectives and proves that it is the past participle that leads this change, whereas the present participle lags slightly behind. The corpus data additionally reveal that the lack of inflectional marking takes place earlier in certain cases, such as the accusative singular and the dative plural. Along the lines of Metola Rodríguez's chapter, the chapter by García Fernández discusses the process of lemmatisation of OE derived preterite-present verbs, a category which comprised many of the present-day auxiliaries, including *can* (< OE *cunnan*) and *shall* (< OE *sceal*). The data are also issued from the DOEC and the different inflectional forms for the participles are assigned to a given lemma taking as a reference the list of preterite-present verbs from the lexical database *Nerthus*. The high degree of spelling variation at that period accounts for the lower rates of precision of the lemmatiser in this case, since approximately one third of the lemmas resulting from the automatic lemmatisation are valid. Therefore, García Fernández points to the need to revise and provide the lemmatiser with richer input, especially for the verbs

starting with the letters I-Y and for the different spelling variants of the prefixes involved in complex verbs.

The remaining papers in part I tackle different verbal issues in languages other than English. Thus, chapter five analyses verb derivation in three different dialects of the Australian Western Desert group, namely Pitjantjatjara, Yankunytjatjara, and Ngaanyatjarra (PYN). For his analysis, Pyle takes Role and Reference Grammar (RRG) (*cf.* van Valin 1992) as a framework and draws on materials from the PYN corpus, based primarily on oral recordings. This research work shows that in PYN different types of nominals without an auxiliary such as English *to be* can predicate as statives. Moreover, these nominals may take different verb endings, yielding both intransitive and causative verbs.

Chapter 6 approaches verbal inflections and the role of analogy in the Spanish and Judeo-Spanish verb systems. Herce thus challenges the use of well-established notions such as (*ir*)*regularity* and *predictiveness* in morphological theories, especially in Information Theory, hence casting doubt on their usefulness and applicability in contrastive and cross-linguistic research. In his own words, "the new approach to morphological analysis would and should profit from insights from other research paradigms and specially from the evidence provided by analogical changes and diachrony in general" (124).

Basque is the focus of chapter 7, which deals with a rather productive periphrastic construction involving the light verb *egin* and a non-referential noun: ([N + *egin*] $_{V}$ (e.g. *lan egin* 'to work', literally 'to make work'). In these cases, the noun serves as a semantic base, while *egin* is a dummy verb. By resorting to a variety of sources, including corpora and dictionary data, Martínez Etxarri applies a number of semantic and syntactic tests to analyse the degree of union of the constituents of these locutions (e.g. topicalisation, focalisation, or insertion of linking words, among others). The results of these tests serve to classify these constructions into three main types, from a higher degree of freedom at the far left hand-side of the continuum to the locutions which form a tight indivisible unit, at the right end of that continuum. As a result, [N + *egin*] $_{V}$ constructions, which are accounted for in terms of reanalysis, constitute a rather heterogenous category.

Part I closes with Al Zahrani's paper on epistemic modals modifying verbal clauses in Hijazi Arabic (HA), which looks into the interplay between the epistemic modal constituents and the functional categories (TP, AspP, Tax-AspP and VP). In line with previous morphosyntactic and semantic studies, Al Zahrani proves that epistemic modals are generated in the node which he labels as *Epistemic Modal Phrase* (EModP) and are the highest functional category in a hierarchical structure (higher than TP, AspP, and VP). They are located higher than TP becausethey cannot be preceded by the temporal auxiliary *kaan*. In turn, non-epistemic modals (deontics and dynamics) scope lower than TP, which is also in keeping with previous research on this type of verbs.

Part II (*Clauses*) provides insights into different clausal aspects from a cross-linguistic perspective, with studies on a wide variety of languages, including Arabic, French, and Upper Sorbian, a language of the Slavonian branch spoken by around 15,000 people in eastern Germany. The first chapter, by Premper, analyses a type of clauses characteristic of Arabic, namely circumstantial clauses (CirCl), with sentences extracted from a novel and several grammar books. There are two types of CirCl: syndetic and asyndetic. In the former, the second clause (CirCl) is syndetically added by the coordinating conjunction *wa* 'and' and has S-P word order. In turn, the asyndetic type has P-S order and in this case the second clause (CirCl) is asyndetically added to the first. It is precisely the asyndetic type that Premper focuses on, discussing the different uses and related constructions. The author thus shows that these are not isolated constructions, as they can modify sub-events such as manner or motion and express purposive relations, thereby sharing a prototypical function: the codification of *motion-cum-purpose*.

Botalla's contribution (chapter ten) examines the use of the so-called *non-sentential utterances* (NSUs) in French, which refer to those utterances that are not headed by a verb (e.g. *how about a cup of coffee*?). Drawing on corpus data from both written and spoken French, Botalla is particularly concerned with fragments, one type of NSUs which depend on the previous utterance, since it is precisely that utterance that contains the syntactic governor. In order to study fragments and their syntactic relationship with the preceding utterance, she

subdivides fragments into additions and piles. In addition, the previous utterance with the governor has a different syntactic function, so this addition opens a new syntactic function. By contrast, in the case of piles the utterance which contains the governor already has an element with the same syntactic function.

Chapter eleven presents an experimental investigation on subordinate clauses and their identification by Lebanese university students majoring in English language. In this study, Sabra designed a diagnostic pre-test, which the students had to complete before the course, and a post-test, delivered at the end of the module. The results of the initial test revealed that Lebanese students had difficulties in identifying dependent clauses introduced by the same subordinator (e.g. *where*). Nonetheless, following a form-focused type of instruction which highlights the major differences between these dependent clauses, as well as the similarities with their mother tongue (positive transfer), students were eventually able to overcome these initial problems and performed significantly better in the post-test. In addition to the linguistic benefits, therefore, the focus on form served to enhance the students' (meta)cognitive skills.

In contrast to the previous chapters in Part II, Salaberri's paper has a diachronic focus, as he approaches word order in Old Saxon clauses. With evidence from the *Heliand*, the first recorded Old Saxon document (c. 830 CE), he looks into factors such as the argument structure of the predicate (intransitive, transitive or ditransitive), the clause type (main or subordinate), and word order (SV vs. VS, SVO vs. OVS, etc.), in addition to the discourse type (e.g. narration or (in)direct speech). In the light of the data consulted, he concludes that syntax only cannot account for word order preferences in Old Saxon, since there are other considerations, such as discourse, pragmatic, and narrative factors, which also play an important role.

In line with Botalla's paper (chapter 10), Sasahara's contribution tackles post-sentence-final elements in German and Upper Sorbian. Resorting to oral data from a number of interviews with young speakers (aged 17-18), Sasahara examines non-modal and modal uses of post-sentence-final elements in both languages (among others,

relative clauses, prepositional phrases, tag questions, or interjections), which may not only signal the speaker's attitude, but may also signpost the end of the sentence.

Part III, the last one in the monograph, is devoted to constructions. The first paper, by Cominetti, explores marked and unmarked syntactic nominalisations in Modern Standard Chinese, with examples retrieved from corpora and other sources. Cominetti proves that most of the syntactic criteria used to establish Part-of-Speech (PoS) distinctions are not met by this language, given that in Chinese a large part of the lexicon can perform different syntactic functions. In that regard, semantic criteria are more adequate. The author thus shows that marked nominalisations (with the particle *de*) apply only to first-order entities (people, animals, or objects); second- and third-order entities take unmarked nominalisations. Moreover, the author questions the appropriateness of distinguishing between verbs and adjectives in Chinese, as both categories seem to be very closely related in this language.

In chapter fifteen, Kalnača and Lokmane present a corpus-based study on Latvian constructions involving the indeclinable participle in *-am*(*ies*)/*-ām*(*ies*), traditionally considered as raising constructions. These participial forms have their origin in passive declinable present participles, to which the suffixes *-am*(*ies*)/*-ām*(*ies*) are added. The authors then look more closely at the different constructions in which the indeclinable participle may occur in this language (raising and control constructions), and suggest that it is more frequent in control constructions (e.g. with transitive matrix verbs of perception or cognition).

As in the paper presented in Part II, here Salaberri's study also approaches word order, yet on this occasion he focuses on extraposition as a trigger for word order changes, providing ample diachronic evidence from typologically different languages (Indo-European, Niger-Congo, and Sino-Tibetan languages). Salaberri thus shows that in some languages of the Niger-Congo family, for instance, extraposition has led to word order changes, since the extraposed elements were reanalysed as the unmarked order. This reanalysis, however, requires a change in focus from preverbal to postverbal

position. That is why no such development has taken place in languages such as Basque or Georgian, whose focus has remained stable over time.

The next chapter, by Yasuhara, investigates i. the uses of the causative alternation and the induced action alternation, which can both occur transitively and intransitively, but differ regarding the types of verbs licensed, ii. the selectional restriction on the subject NP (allowing, e.g., a natural force subject), and iii. the obligatory occurrence of a directional phrase. Yasuhara argues that the transitive variant of the induced action alternation in particular, called the secondary agent construction (*the nurse walked the patient to the room*), "should be uniformly treated with manipulated object constructions" (334) (*John hit the stone against the wall*), given that the object of secondary agent constructions is also construed as a manipulated object.

Staudinger's contribution discusses a type of constructions in French with psych-predicates ([*ça* PRON PRED *de* INF PROPOSITION], in which the dependent clause is introduced by cognitive or speech act verbs. By drawing on synchronic and diachronic corpus data, she considers the different uses and functions of these constructions, not only to express the speaker's attitude towards a given topic, but also for politeness purposes. The rise of these constructions is argued to constitute a case of actualisation and is connected with the development of narrative techniques.

Chapter nineteen approaches idioms from a constructional perspective and takes issue with those studies that interpret them in terms of metaphors (cf. Croft and Cruse 2004). Fulgêncio and Ciríaco argue that idioms are non-compositional, since their meaning cannot be derived from their individual parts and they are instead memorised in the speaker's minds as a given chunk. Metaphors, on the other hand, cannot be retrieved directly and require the transfer from a source to a target domain to be interpreted. In synchronic terms, therefore, they cannot be described as metaphors, although from a diachronic perspective some of these expressions were initially conceived metaphorically. According to the authors, then, idioms are best treated as a type of construction (*cf.* Goldberg 1995).

The monograph closes with the chapter by Pile. As in his previous contribution, he is also concerned with Pitjantjatjara and Yankunytjatjara (P/Y) and takes Role and Reference Grammar (RRG) as his theoretical framework. In this case, he focuses on the mechanisms of compounding and derivation in P/Y. His findings reveal that the most frequent type of compounding is that of noun to verb, yet there exist different types (e.g. verb-active adjective or verb-spatial adverb). Unlike in some other languages, compounding in P/Y does not constitute a case of noun incorporation. Derivation is also rather productive in P/Y, with a number of bound morphemes that can be attached to verbs in order to create nominalisations and to nouns to create verbs.

To conclude, the twenty high-quality papers in this volume make it a very challenging and stimulating reading and undoubtedly open new pathways for future research. This selection of papers provides access to a wealth of languages and variety of methodologies and perspectives supporting a functional approach to the study of language. This is, barring a few minor formatting errors that are hardly worth mentioning, a very welcome and invaluable contribution to the field of linguistics in general.

WORKS CITED

Beck, Isabel L., et al. *Bringing Words to Life*: *Robust Vocabulary Instruction*. Guildford, 2002.

Biber, Douglas, et al. *Longman Grammar of Spoken and Written English*. Pearson, 1999.

Croft, William, and D. Alan Cruse. *Cognitive Linguistics*. Cambridge UP, 2004.

Goldberg, Adele E. *Constructions*: *A Construction Grammar Approach to Argument Structure*. University of Chicago Press, 1995.

Van Valin, Robert D., editor. *Advances in Role and Reference Grammar*. John Benjamins, 1992.

Thomas, M. Wynn. *All that is Wales: the Collected Essays of M. Wynn Thomas*. University of Wales Press, 2017. 320 pages.

Daniel Hughes (daniel.hughes@bangor.ac.uk)
Bangor University

This book collects a mixture of published and unpublished essays by M. Wynn Thomas. Thomas, Wales's leading literary scholar and one of its leading intellectuals, has published over twenty books on Welsh literature (in both English and Welsh) and on American literature. Welsh Writing in English as a formalised academic discipline is relatively nascent, having developed in the latter half of the twentieth century. Over the last three decades, M. Wynn Thomas has consistently been one of the guiding lights within the field. Much of Thomas's career has "been consciously devoted to the excavation and rehabilitation of the neglected writers of Wales" (4) and thus the volume includes eleven essays which explore nine of Wales's modern and contemporary anglophone authors in detail, as well as an introductory chapter. In short, the assembled essays offer a microcosm of Welsh Writing in English's academic development thus far: a handful of internationally renowned writers are just the tip of the iceberg when it comes to the depth and breadth of Wales's anglophone literary culture, which still struggles to receive both national and international attention.

Thomas's introduction to the collection offers concise summaries of his various studies over the last three decades, indicating both the development of his thought and effectively, though only implicitly given Thomas's characteristic modesty, outlining his immense contribution to our current understanding of Welsh culture. As well as tracing the shifting academic and cultural environment in Wales, which allowed the formal development of Welsh Writing in English as a discipline, Thomas's introduction also explores the personal, biographical foundation of his critical mindset. Thomas's personal meditation on the multiple sub-cultures of Wales to which he belongs complements the theoretical frame with which he begins his introductory essay: Michael Cronin's term "micro-cosmopolitanism" (1). This approach, Thomas suggests, "seeks to diversify or

complexify the smaller unit" (1) and "cosmopolitan," a term often synonymous with large units of social organisation (major cities and populous countries), becomes instead "a signifier of a richness born of a constant process of cultural exchange wherever that is to be found and whatever distinctly local forms it takes" (2). If we understand "the smaller unit" of Wales as cosmopolitan in this way, Thomas's volume of essays now becomes a book which signifies the richness born of Wales's cultural processes and the local forms that Welsh writers give to those processes.

The first chapter explores the ways in which the Argentine-Welsh writer Lynette Roberts defined herself, analysing the relationship between her "international [and] intercontinental" background and her adoption of Welsh customs and culture (32). Thomas's analysis of Roberts's recently republished poetry and diaries shows her "devising strikingly original strategies of adaptation that would guarantee the creative survival of her singular identity" (33) and offers valuable insight into a still underappreciated modernist. Characterised by Thomas as a "participating outsider" (40), Roberts is one of three little-studied Welsh modernists that Thomas features in the first three chapters. That label "participating outsider" could just as easily apply to one of the subjects of Thomas's second chapter, the border country writer Margiad Evans. Born in England as Peggy Whistler, Evans, like Roberts, adopted and constructed a Welsh identity. Drawing on his twin expertise in American and Welsh literature, Thomas offers a comparative analysis of Evans and the Mississippi writer Eudora Welty, which replaces discussion of the 'influence' writers may be subject to with a more nuanced exploration of "confluence" (57). Confluence points to a complex and multifaceted relationship between writers, one in which writers experience "the shock of self-recognition" (57) in one another's work. In rejecting the simplistic question of 'influence,' Thomas offers an illuminating comparison of Evans and Welty's use of space within their short fiction, demonstrating "the uncanny similarities of their minds" (74). In the third chapter, Thomas emerges as one of the few advocates of the fascinating Nigel Heseltine, another border country writer who made a "brief but valuable contribution to his country's emergent English-language literature" (77). Thomas's theoretical sophistication is displayed in this chapter, as he analyses Heseltine's short fiction

through the frames of both cultural hybridity and Deleuze and Guattarri's concept of the "schizo man" (78). Yet, this chapter also demonstrates the validity and importance of understanding Wales as a "micro-cosmopolitan" space. Heseltine is an unknown writer from a neglected part of the Welsh social-cultural sphere (the anglicised gentry) and his work remains out-of-print and barely studied. With a critic as accomplished as Thomas, even a volume of collected essays remains path-finding. There is little doubt, too, that these three oft-marginalised modernists are cosmopolitan in their cultural richness.

The fourth chapter turns to Wales's most famous literary son, Dylan Thomas, analysing the complex relationship between Dylan and his hometown of Swansea. M. Wynn Thomas deftly characterises the ambivalence and ambiguity of Thomas's linguistic experiment, demonstrating that not only is Dylan Thomas "a clever arranger of words" but he is also "a clever arrangement *of* them" (100). The fourth and fifth chapters analyse two novels by Emyr Humphreys, who recently celebrated his 100th birthday. Thomas emerges here not only as one of the most persuasive and perceptive readers of Humphrey's work, but also of Nonconformity's complex and enduring legacy in twentieth-century Welsh culture.[1] The sixth chapter, on Humphrey's 1965 novel *Outside the House of Baal*, is informed not only by Thomas's characteristically deep understanding of Welsh religious life but also by sustained study and use of archival sources tracing the development of the novel.

The seventh and eighth chapters serve as further evidence of Thomas's commendable and illuminating grasp of the complex religious life of modern Wales, this time in relation to the Church in Wales and R. S. Thomas. The first one of these chapters explores the schisms and conflicts within the Church in Wales (especially between Welsh-speaking culture and the Church) and in turn the implications that this had for Thomas's poetry. The second chapter on R. S. considers the "mixed and ambivalent" (185) results that Thomas's retirement from the priesthood had for his thinking and writing. M. Wynn Thomas identifies three phases that R. S. went through following his retirement, and primarily analyses the second phase, the period between 1985 and 1992, which includes "important sections that highlight the fraught circumstances of his retirement" (186). In

concert with his chapters on the regrettably neglected Emyr Humphreys, Thomas's chapters on R. S. noticeably expand our scholarly understanding of the religious dimensions of modern Welsh literature, helping to dismantle the misguided (if perhaps understandable) assumption that modern Welsh literature was purely a reaction against organised religion, powerful as that impulse is in some writers. Furthermore, these chapters demonstrate the volume's careful balance between writers whose work has been given little or no consideration (such as Emyr Humphreys and Nigel Heseltine) and otherwise widely known writers (like the two Thomases) with little-studied sides to their work. M. Wynn Thomas is particularly adept at mining these otherwise unconsidered crevices.

The final three chapters take in Vernon Watkins, Leslie Norris and Gillian Clarke. Watkins, a friend of Dylan Thomas's, was once an internationally renowned writer and following the pattern of some writers collected in this volume (like Lynette Roberts), has since faded from view. Thomas locates Watkins as a "Gower poet" exploring "the native territory of his imagination" (214) as well as a writer who constructed himself as "the Taliesin of Gower" (219).[2] In the tenth chapter, Thomas concentrates on Leslie Norris's translations from Welsh into English, demonstrating the way Norris defined himself (implicitly and explicitly) in stark contrast to another great translator of Welsh poetry, Tony Conran. The comparison between the two points to the richness of the so-called 'Second Flowering', juxtaposing as it does the communal, socialised identity of Conran's translations and creative practise with the more individualised voice of Norris, noticeably more rooted in the English-national tradition.[3] An additional benefit of this essay is that it makes us aware of Conran as another significantly underserved voice in Welsh writing. Thomas primarily illustrates the ways Norris's translations "point up one limitation to be consistently found in Norris's faultlessly temperate poetry: its perpetual anxiety not to offend" (238). Finally, Thomas's eleventh chapter rounds out the volume with a consideration of the early poetry of Gillian Clarke, one of Wales's finest contemporary writers. This essay considers the ways in which women have been written out of and are writing themselves back into textual history, recounting Clarke's "gradual and phased awakening" as a poet (259). Thomas identifies Clarke as a pioneering woman writer during the

Second Flowering, concentrating on "her emphasis on the provisional, exploratory and tentative nature of the stances and images women tend fluidly to produce in their writings" (267).

Broadly, the collection makes clear the cosmopolitan nature of these individual writers and of Welsh Writing in English. The volume is, unlike some academic writing, a genuine pleasure to read. Thomas has done more than most to define his field, and this volume serves as both a statement of how far the study of Welsh Writing in English has advanced, of the riches it contains, and of the paths yet waiting to be trod. It is therefore an excellent tool for specialists in the area, but an even more valuable guide for those who want to enter this micro-cosmopolitan scene; for those who wish to begin to know all that Wales is.

NOTES

[1] It is a topic on which Thomas has predictably already written the book: *In the Shadow of the Pulpit: Literature and Nonconformist Wales* (University of Wales Press, 2010).

[2] The Gower is a peninsula in South Wales, immediately west of the city of Swansea (and part of the modern-day Swansea County area). Taliesin is the name given to two famous Welsh figures. The first is a historical figure and sixth-century poet, as well as one of the founders of the Welsh poetic tradition. The second is a folkloric figure, a magician and shapeshifter and, most famously, one of the characters found in the *Mabinogion*.

[3] The 'Second Flowering' of Welsh Writing in English is used to refer to the generation of writers that came to prominence in the 1950s and 1960s, including Leslie Norris, Gillian Clarke, and Tony Conran. The 'First Flowering' of the 1930s is regarded as the first sustained manifestation of Welsh Writing in English, consisting of writers such as Dylan Thomas, Vernon Watkins, Lynette Roberts, Margiad Evans, R S Thomas and Nigel Heseltine.

Welbon, Yvonne, and Alexandra Juhasz, editors. *Sisters in the Life. A History of Out African American Lesbian Media-Making*. Duke University Press, 2018. 276 Pages.

María Platas Alonso (mplatas@uvigo.es)
Universidade de Vigo

In *Sisters in the Life. A History of Out African American Lesbian Media-Making*, editors Yvonne Welbon and Alexandra Juhasz have compiled a thorough collection of critical thought on US out Black lesbian media-making. Despite its value, this field of knowledge and creativity has been largely unheeded by mainstream cinema historians and cultural critics, a lacuna that the impressive contributions of this collection address. Through a wide variety of essays, interviews, and conversations, *Sisters in the Life* gives a broad insight into African American lesbian cinema and video making from its emergence in 1986, beginning with Sylvia Rhue's video *Women in Love: Bonding Strategies of Black Lesbians* "as the first film by an out black lesbian about black lesbians" (16) and moving on to current training projects like Queer Women of Color Media Arts as one example of "the robust future of Black lesbian filmmaking as a transformative community-building practice" (249).

By bringing to the forefront the disruptive voices and ground-breaking gazes of this unacknowledged "tightly knit" (ix) community of Black lesbian filmmakers, this unprecedented anthology firmly contributes to raising awareness of a cinematic movement that changed, and still keeps on transforming, the course of film history. From the exquisite preface to inspiring interviews and accurate essays, this noteworthy collection offers exhaustive approaches to US Black lesbian media-making, its contexts, networks, main artists and works, also underscoring their further influence and advancing critical views on Black lesbian legacies and queer film futures. Divided into two well-differentiated parts, the volume embodies an open invitation to both the general public that have missed out on a relevant side of American film history and a more versed audience eager to gain access to materials that were originally delivered in a difficult-to-access format, like Thomas Allen Harris and Raúl Ferrera-Balanquet's "Narrating Our History," a comprehensive dialogue among LGBT media-makers.

The collection opens with a preface by co-editor Alexandra Juhasz that foretells the circular structure of the volume. Juhasz's prologue begins with scholar Alexis Pauline Gumbs's words on Black lesbian filmmaking as a "tangible practice for representing and creating the world" (251), a quotation from Gumbs's chapter "Creating the World Anew: Black Lesbian Legacies and Queer Film Futures", which closes the compilation. With this forceful statement of intent, Juhasz foretells what the reader is about to plunge into: a rhizomatic collection of directions and connections that seek public recognition of an understudied group of artists committed to "nonlinear or non-traditional arrangements for time and place, media and human connection" (ix), a community of creators, distributors, producers and curators characterized by "care, protest and possibility" (ix). The general introduction that follows, written by co-editor Yvonne Welbon, is also revealing. In "Sisters in the Life Archive Project", Welbon offers a further explanation about the transmedia project that she leads called *Sisters in Cinema* "that seeks to promote all African American women media makers" (2). This larger archival project includes a documentary film, a website, a media archive, as well as the book reviewed here.

Part I of the collection covers the period 1986–1995, framing the first years of out African American lesbian media-making from its earliest contacts to the year of production of the valuable film documentary *A Litany for Survival: The Life and Work of Audre Lorde* (1995) by Michelle Parkerson and Ada Gay Griffin. This "seed of a trend toward full-length documentary and dramatic productions concerning black lesbian life and history" (25) honours the celebrated Black lesbian poet Audre Lorde while fostering cooperation and kinship among "a large community of lesbians of colour filmmakers" (37). The first three chapters are reprints of earlier inspiring publications and are preceded by a comprehensive introductory section written by Yvonne Welbon that contextualizes this period. "Birth of a Notion: Toward Black, Gay and Lesbian Imagery in Film and Video" was originally printed in *The Advocate 570* in 1991. Written by pioneering filmmaker Michelle Parkerson, the essay promotes "using media to reverse decades of misrepresentation, replacing negative myths with whole and humane depictions" (21). By introducing the names of a younger generation of lesbian and gay

filmmakers whose short films managed to reach "the screen in the face of tremendous odds" (25), Parkerson highlights the importance of making films "that are lesbian-specific but, just as important, race-conscious" (25) as a powerful way to extend the manifold experiences and broad imagery of the LGBT community "beyond the celluloid closet" (25). Chapter 2 by Thomas Allen Harris further contextualises the collaborative process that favoured one of the first recorded creative dialogues among queer media artists from the African diaspora. Transcribed in chapter 3, Thomas Allen Harris and Raúl Ferrera-Balanquet's "Narrating our History" is a reprinted version of a collection of thoughts and remembrances shared in the early 1990's by a group of ground-breaking queer filmmakers such as Jocelyn Taylor, Yvonne Welbon, Dawn Suggs, and Shari Frilot, whose career paths are substantially analysed through various chapters in this collection. This unusual conversation, built in a reflective tone, offers a glimpse of the birth of Black queer media-making and was originally published in Germany in 1997 as part of the *XII Black International Cinema Anthology 1993-1997*.

Chapters 4, 5 and 6 consider creator Pamela Jennings and her devotion to experimental computational media as a mechanism to entangle art and knowledge with living beings and technology. Readers plunge into Jennings's multi-dimensional world through "Construction of Computation and Desire," an introductory essay by scholar Kara Keeling that guarantees a solid base on which to build further knowledge about this unconventional Black lesbian artist. Making use of specific terminology that draws attention to Jennings's scientifically experimental spirit, Keeling's introduction invites the reader to enter a realm of multimedia creativity and speculation, delving into the "low-tech pixel vision", "kinetic sculptures" and "new technocultural formations" as formulations that are part of a volume where the contributors may "complicate received notions of that body of work by creating new concepts through it" (49). Chapter 5, "Ruins and Desire," offers an in-depth consideration of Pamela Jennings's career through a personal interview with the artist led by Yvonne Welbon, who opts to edit the conversation and omit her questions, thus resulting in a fluidity that accompanies the artist when narrating her career path. Conclusively, Chapter 6 submits a third angle on this experimental artist since Jennings's herself offers

unpublished documentation on the creative process of her interactive mechatronic sculpture *the book of ruins and desire* (1996). This multimedia work goes beyond the screen-based projects and explores the interactive book in the form of sculpture as a medium to challenge the constructed categories of blackness, gender and sexuality since they are "caught within the transformations wrought by computational interactivity" (48).

Rounding out Part I, Chapters 7 and 8 are noteworthy contributions on two outstanding figures in Black lesbian filmmaking. In "A Cosmic Demonstration of Shari Frilot's Curatorial Practice," Roya Rastegar presents an overview of Shari Frilot, early curator and experimental filmmaker, who has proved to be a key piece within the network of queer artists of colour. Besides analysing her experimental creativity in *Cosmic Demonstration of Sexuality* (1992), Rastegar's essay places her focus on Shari Frilot as a disruptive film festival curator committed to programming rooms that foreground queerness and experimentation in works by filmmakers of colour, making them accessible to broader audiences and "demonstrating the value of diversity" (82) and "refiguring racial, sexual, and gendered subjectivities beyond fixed categories of identity" (86). To conclude Part I, Devorah Heitner's essay on Yvonne Welbon's film *Remembering Wei-Yi Fang, Remembering Myself: An Autobiography* (1995) explores how this thirty-minute performative documentary, which blends 16mm, Super-8 and video footage, is constructed as an alternative narrative that draws the audience's attention to American discourses of racism and homophobia. In "Identity and Performance," Heitner analyses Welbon's film as a self-reflexive tool that presents "conceptions about the meanings and possibilities of Black histories that transcend nationality" (94), a cinematic piece fully concerned "with race, the challenge of hybridity, and straddling multiple identities" (104).

Part II offers an insight into the years 1995–2016, also preceded by a contextual introduction where co-editor Yvonne Welbon foretells significant differences in the processes of production, creation and distribution about a period when "black lesbian media-makers began to reach larger audiences" (115). Chapter 9, "Producing Black Lesbian Media," opens a large window to those spaces behind the scenes that are inhabited by African American lesbian producers, filmmakers,

exhibitors and distributors who work untiringly to support media creation through both mainstream and alternative channels. Tina Mabry, Cheryl Dunye, Effie T. Brown, Debra Wilson and Angela Robinson are among the Black lesbian media innovators connected by "a sense of shared responsibility for the identity representations" (141) whose varied works, challenges, and achievements are the primary issues in following chapters.

Cheryl Dunye's *The Watermelon Woman* (1996) is at the centre of Karin D. Wimbley's essay in Chapter 10. Profoundly engaged with unmasking the Mammy stereotype, filmmaker Cheryl Dunye manages to subvert this monolithic vision of black women's identity "to produce a fertile site where African American womanhood can be recovered, (re)constructed, and (re)interrogated" (144). Wimbley points to the exquisite parody and masterful use of hybrid aesthetics that characterise *The Watermelon Woman*, where the "mockumentary frame creates and archives the construction of black lesbian subjectivity" (147).

Referred to as "urban lesbian filmmaker," Coquie Hughes has the leading role in Chapters 11 and 12. As a stunning introduction to Yvonne Welbon's conversation with the filmmaker, Jennifer Devere Brody's essay points out the cinematic genius of Hughes as well as her "entrepreneurial spirit and passion for filmmaking" (161). As a continuation on Coquie Hughe's journey into becoming an impressive filmmaker, "Stepping Out of Faith" gives space for Coqui Hughes's own words to flow and draw the many lines that compose her splendid artistic trajectory. Thus, Chapter 12 brings the reader closer to an amazing human being full of passions and anxieties, a media creator that invites other Black lesbian filmmakers to tell their own stories "regardless of the funding or regardless of what the powers that be say what constitutes your film being a legitimate film" (174).

Standing at the threshold of Hollywood, film writer, director and TV producer Angela Robinson is the next African American lesbian artist to be outlined in Chapter 13, "Invite Me In!" As an executive and consulting producer for HBO, Robinson is "one of the still-small number of African American women to direct a studio feature" (177) with *D.E.B.S* (2004), financed by Screen Gems (a division of Sony Pictures Motion Picture Group), and *Herbie: Fully loaded* (2005), her

first contract with Walt Disney Pictures. This essay by Patricia White invites readers to follow Robinson's cinematic career to date as a "strong example of tapping into the power of the culture industry" (177).

Last, but not least, three fascinating careers full of different strategies of resistance and empowerment are revealed in Chapters 14, 15 and 16. "Shine Louise Houston: An Interstice of Her Own Making" is the title of L.H. Stallings's essay on director and producer Shine Louise Houston, whose work has been popularly tagged as "revolutionary lesbian porn" (192). As Stallings brilliantly shows, Houston's films explore many questions that early Black lesbian filmmaking left aside, such as the "representations of interracial desire and intimacy, black butch and trans expressions" (192). By analysing Houston's porn mockumentary *In Search of the Wild Kingdom* (2007), Stallings reveals the filmmaker's strategies to "dismantle legitimate genres of filmmaking that represent sex on screen, specifically lesbian sex on screen, as well as other discursive mechanisms that produce sexual myths and misrepresentation" (197). In Chapter 15, scholar Marlon Rachqel Moore examines Tina Mabry's feature film *Mississippi Damned* (2012) from a comparative perspective, as a cinematic response from rage to resignation to the civil rights anthem *Mississippi Goddam* (1964) by Nina Simone. While the latter has been analysed as a representative song for African American self-determination and social justice, Mabry's film is seen as "a message from the movement's beneficiaries that overwhelmingly conveys disappointment and frustration with promises unfulfilled" (213). Finally, Dee Rees's feature-length film *Pariah* (2012) about a black lesbian teenager coming into her own is the focus of Chapter 16, "The Circuitous Route of Presenting Black Butch," by Jennifer DeClue. Originally conceived as a short film released in 2007, *Pariah*'s full-length version offers an insight into the protagonist's first lesbian encounter with a schoolmate and her tense relationship with her conservative mother, showing the impact of both religion and homophobia on her family. "The culture of dissemblance and the politics of silence" (234) are pivotal concepts analysed in DeClue's essay, considering *Pariah* as "the cinematic journey of a black lesbian teenager who embraces herself without mollifying her contradictions or apologising for her sexuality" (242).

Finally, Chapter 17, "Creating a World Anew: Black Lesbian Legacies and Queer Film Futures," works as the closure for both Part II and the entire volume. As a way to encourage Black lesbian creative spirits to continue on with the productive legacies of their predecessors presented so far, Alexis Pauline Gumbs's essay offers an overview of current training programs as artistic promoters of Black lesbian and queer filmmaking "as a holistically transformative experience" (256).

In *Sisters in the Life* the editors and contributors have overwhelmingly proved that African American lesbian media-makers have taken up a range of resources to tell their own stories of self-determination thus creating a volume that undoubtedly marks a substantial insight into the history of these compelling artists. An invaluable resource for academics and *herstorians* alike, *Sisters in the Life* offers an in-depth look at some of the most influential US Black lesbian media-makers of recent decades. As the authors of the volume demonstrate, the women considered here go beyond mere representation, engaging with parody, technological empowerment, a variety of film genres and industry discourses, to dismantle fake dichotomies and create cinematic gazes of resistance, and show the diversity of voices and practices that make up the community of out African American lesbian filmmakers.

WORKS CITED

XII Black International Cinema Anthology 1993-1997. Fountainhead, 1997.

Cosmic Demonstration of Sexuality. Directed by Shari Frilot, Third World Newsreel, 1992.

D.E.B.S. Directed by Angela Robinson, Screen Gems, 2004.

Herbie, Fully Loaded. Directed by Angela Robinson, Walt Disney Pictures, 2005.

In Search of the Wild Kingdom. Directed by Shine Louise Houston, Pink and White Productions, 2007.

Jennings, Pamela. *the book of ruins and desire*. 1996. Interactive sculpture.

A Litany for Survival: The Life and Work of Audre Lorde Directed by Michelle Parkerson and Ada Gay Griffin, ITVS, 1995.

Mississippi Damned. Directed by Tina Mabry, Morgan's Mark, 2009.
Nina Simone. "Mississippi Goddam." *Nina Simone in Concert*, Philips Records, 1964.
Pariah. Directed by Dee Rees, 2007.
Pariah. Directed by Dee Rees, Chicken and Egg Pictures, 2012.
Remembering Wei-Yi Fang, Remembering Myself: An Autobiography. Directed by Yvonne Welbon, Women Make Movies, 1995.
The Watermelon Woman. Directed by Cheryl Dunye, Dancing Girl, 1996.
Women in Love: Bonding Strategies of Black Lesbians. Directed by Sylvia Rhue, 1986.

Nadal, Marita, and Mónica Calvo. *Trauma in Contemporary Literature. Narrative and Representation*. Taylor and Francis, 2014. 253 pages.

Maya Zalbidea Paniagua (mpzalbid@ucm.es)
Universidad Complutense de Madrid

Edited by Marita Nadal and Mónica Calvo, this volume offers a wide spectrum of updated essays dealing with representations of trauma in contemporary literature. The topics discussed in the book are organised into three sections, namely part I, entitled "Global Trauma and the End of History," part II, "Trauma and the Power of Narrative," and part III, Trauma and the Problem of Representation." After the rewriting of trauma theories by Freud (*Nachträglichkeit*, translated as 'belatedness'), LaCapra, Derrida and Rothberg explore the notions of belatedness, silence, repetition and polytemporality in literary works that reflect the effects of individual and collective trauma in a globalised world.

The volume opens with a chapter by Cathy Caruth entitled "After the End: Psychoanalysis in the Ashes of History" where Freud's (1907) essay "Delusion and Dream in Wilhelm Jensen's *Gradiva*" and Derrida's (1995) *Archive Fever* are studied to argue that in psychoanalytic discourse, "impressions" and "repressions" are unveiled and what has been inscribed is repressed again. According to Caruth, there are two dimensions in twentieth-century history to which psychoanalysis bears witness, namely the concept that gets repeated and the memory that erases it.

In the second chapter, "Apocalypses Now: Collective Trauma, Globalisation and the New Gothic Sublime," Avril Horner examines how Gothic apocalypse narratives are used to explore the fragility of individuals, who are well informed and traumatised by either bombings or environmental disasters, in a globalised world. Horner analyses apocalyptic situations in literary works and films in the last twenty years: Danny Boyle's *28 Days Later*, P.D. James's *The Children of Men*, Cormac McCarthy's *The Road*, Liz Jensen's *The Rapture*, and W.G. Sebald's *Austerlitz*. Horner groups apocalyptic fictions into three categories, namely "plague" narratives, environmental disasters, and war narratives relating to either terrorism or nuclear explosions. She

concludes alleging that the objective of trauma and Gothic horror is raising awareness of global responsibility in retrieving the sublime.

In the following chapter, "Not Now, Not Yet: Polytemporality in Fictions of the Iraq War," Roger Luckhurst, relying on theories developed by Steven Connor and Michael Rothberg, argues that the reason why some of the most interesting Western world cultural responses to the Iraq war do not mention the war must be the fact that cultural narratives about it are often displaced. Luckhurst's second thesis is that the refraction of polytemporality is the only way of grasping war in its contemporaneity.

The second part, "Trauma and the Power of Narrative," focuses on narratives about trauma, including postcolonial narratives. In "The Turn to the Self and the History in Eva Figes' Autobiographical Works: The Healing of Old Wounds?", Silvia Pellicer-Ortín aims to prove that Fige's realistic projection can be studied from the perspective of Trauma Studies, and that the writing-healing process of liberation that the author-narrator uses makes it possible to reconcile with the past.

In "History, Dreams and Shards: On Starting Over in Jenny Diski's *Then Again*," Bayer explains that in its approach to transgenerational memory and the Holocaust, the novel offers artistic and aesthetic work as a countermeasure to traumatic moments of crisis. For Diski, the novel transmits the idea that creativity and aesthetic work have a healing power.

In "Plight versus Right: Trauma and the Process of Recovering and Moving Beyond the Past in Zoë Wicomb's *Playing in the Light*," Dolores Herrero explores the traumatic experiences of the character called Marion Campbell in Zoë Wicomb's *Playing the Light*. The author explores the phenomenon of the ghost that Marion sees with Nicolas Abraham and Maria Torok's theory of the ghost as a figure that keeps the interpersonal and transgenerational consequences of silence.

Isabel Fraile Murlanch continues dealing with literary reflections on trauma in "Seeing it Twice: Trauma and Resilience in the Narrative of Janette Turner Hospital." She considers that this narrative supports

the idea that people can recover from trauma through generating resilience, receiving affection and being able to reconcile themselves with their own history.

The last chapter in the second part is "The Burden of the Old Country's History on the Psyche of Dominican-American Migrants: Junot Díaz's *The Brief Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao*," in which Aitor Ibarrola-Armendáriz studies the collective traumas of an immigrant family during the "Trujillato" regime in the Dominican Republic (1930-1961). The author highlights the common features of collective trauma narratives, such as fragmentation, displacement, hesitation, repetition, and resistance. He also highlights the special introspection of the Caribbean popular culture and applies Kenneth Thomson's theories on social psychology to argue for the healing process of the community.

In the third part, entitled "Trauma and the Problem of Representation," the use of storytelling as a therapeutic device is analysed by contrasting theories about psychoanalysis, affect, contemporary history and popular culture. In the first chapter of this section, "H.D.'s Twice-(Un)Told Tale)", Marc Amfreville analyses Hilda Doolittle's "Writing on the Wall," the first part of the volume later published as *Tribute to Freud*, as a literary adventure about the real nature of trauma. Amfreville's hypothesis is that, although H.D. insisted on the fact that the conversations during her therapeutic sessions with Freud were directly taken from her notebooks, some creative elements must have been added to the text. As an imaginative speaker, H.D. transcribed these psychoanalytic meeting records not only transmitting her personal trauma but also showing that a whole generation shared the collective trauma of the two World Wars.

Within the field of collective trauma, Bilyana Vanyova Kostova explores the fragmented collective memory in Jeffrey Eugenides' novel in "Time to Write them Off? Impossible Voices and the Problem of Representing Trauma in *The Virgin Suicides*." Kostova analyses how the use of the uncommon first person plural narrator in this gothic novel dealing with teenage suicide produces empathy on the readers representing the cruel confrontation with reality of a group of teenagers who perceive sexuality and death simultaneously.

Analysing the topics of representation and death, María Jesús Martínez-Alfaro carries out a comparative study of two works related to the Holocaust experience in "Fugal Repetition and the Re-enactments of Trauma: Holocaust Representation in Paul Celan's "Deathfugue" and Cynthia Ozick's *The Shawl*." Martínez-Alfaro finds parallelisms between Celan's poem and Ozick's story in the treatment of the silencing effects and the horror of violence, as well as in the symbolism and structure of both texts. The repetitions in both represent the madness characteristic of the effects of trauma that provoke paralysis and silence, which are finally contrasted with the need to address somebody to find relief.

In chapter twelve, "Of Ramps and Selections: The Persistence of Trauma in Julian Barnes' A History of the World in 10 ½ Chapters," Jean-Michel Ganteau argues that critics have not applied trauma theory to the novel except for Onega (2008) (356, 359). Contrary to Onega's position that it is an individual type of trauma, Ganteau argues that it is rather the collective and historical trauma of the Shoah. Ganteau considers that this parody of a sacred text, the biblical chapter of Noah associated with the genocide, is a clear example of "traumatic realism."

In "The Trauma of Anthropocentrism and the Reconnection of Self and World in J. M. Coetzee's *Dusklands*," Susana Onega sheds light on Rothberg's perspective that *Dusklands* should be analysed as an instance of Holocaust fiction as well as Coetzee's attempt to deconstruct the original idea of progress that the Enlightenment gave of the events of the Vietman War and the colonisation of Africa.

Maite Escudero-Alías examines the effect of shame in a narrative within the field of trauma studies in the chapter "There's that curtain come down: The Burden of Shame in Sarah Waters' *The Night Watch*." The author challenges the psychoanalytic accounts of human affects, chiefly mourning and melancholia, from Silvan Tomkins' theory of affects, through Nicholas Abrahams and Maria Torok's view of Freudian psychoanalysis, up to more recent notions of affects not only as spatial emotions, but also as structures of feeling which may provide a reflection of personal and communal identities.

The volume closes with Bárbara Aritzi's chapter dealing with the trauma of terrorism in contemporary history in "Welcome to contemporary trauma culture: Foreshadowing, Sideshadowing and Trauma in Ian McEwan's *Saturday,*" which discusses McEwan's novel, set in London after the 9/11 attacks and a month before the invasion of Iraq. Aritzi uses Elena Semino and Gary Saul Morson's explorations of the treatment of trauma to analyse the forms of trauma and temporality in this novel.

To conclude, in this book writing is seen as a therapeutic mechanism to recover from traumatic experiences and the literary works express what history cannot tell. It is a highly recommendable book to acquire a global and postmodern perspective of contemporary trauma literary studies.

WORKS CITED

Abraham, Nicolas, and Maria Torok. *The Shell and the Kernel: Renewals of Psychoanalysis*. Vol. 1. Edited and translated by Nicholas T. Rand, University of Chicago Press, 1994.

Derrida, Jacques. "Freud and the Scene of Writing." *Writing and Difference*. Translated by Alan Bass, University of Chicago Press, 1978, pp. 246-91.

Freud, Sigmund. *Delusion and Dream: An Interpretation of the Light of Psychoanalysis of "Gradiva," A Novel by Wilhelm Jensen*. Translated by Helen M. Downey, New Republic, 1927.

Onega, Susana. "The Nightmare of History, the Value of Art and the Ethics of Love in Julian Barnes' *A History of the World in 10 ½ Chapters*." *Ethics in Culture: The Dissemination of Values through Literature and Other Media*, edited by Astrid Erll, Herbert Grabes, and Ansgar Nünning, De Gruyter, 2008, pp. 355-68.

Rothberg, Michel. *Traumatic Realism: The Demands of Holocaust Representation*. University of Minnesota Press, 2000.

ENVÍO DE COLABORACIONES

A partir de 2020, a través del siguiente enlace:
https://revistas.webs.uvigo.es/index.php/AFIAL/about/submissions

CONTACTO

Jorge Figueroa Dorrego (jdorrego@uvigo.es)

SUBMISSIONS

From 2020, please use the following link:
https://revistas.webs.uvigo.es/index.php/AFIAL/about/submissions

CONTACT

Jorge Figueroa Dorrego (jdorrego@uvigo.es)

Artigos / Artículos / Articles / Artikel

Recensións / Reseñas / Reviews / Rezensionen

ISSN 1132-7332

Universidade Vigo