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Abstract

Ta-Nehisi Coates's *Between the World and Me* (2015) evidences the lack of visibility of black women in discourses on racial profiling. Far from tracing a complete representation of the dimensions of racism, Coates presents a masculinized portrayal of its victims, relegating black women to liminal positions even though they are one of the most overpoliced groups in US society, and disregarding the fact that they are also subject to other forms of harassment, such as sexual fondling and other forms of abusive frisking. In the face of this situation, many women have struggled, both from an academic and a political-activist angle, to raise the visibility of the role of black women in contemporary discourses on racism.

Keywords: police brutality, racism, gender, silencing, black women.

Resumen

Con la publicación de la obra de Ta-Nehisi Coates *Between the World and Me* (2015) se puso de manifiesto un problema que hacía tiempo acechaba a los discursos sobre racismo institucional: ¿dónde estaban las mujeres de color? Lejos de trazar un esbozo fiel de las dimensiones de la discriminación racial, la obra de Coates aboga por una representación masculinizada de las víctimas, relegando a las

mujeres a posiciones marginales y obviando formas de acoso que ellas, a diferencia de los hombres, son más propensas a experimentar. Frente a esta situación, son muchas las mujeres que han luchado, tanto en el panorama académico como en el político-activista, para visibilizar el rol de las mujeres negras en los discursos actuales sobre racismo.

Palabras clave: brutalidad policial, racismo, género, silenciamiento, mujeres negras.

Ta-Nehisi Coates, author and national correspondent for *The Atlantic*, published his memoir[2] *Between the World and Me* (2015) in the midst of a bitter fight over the impunity with which black people were being locked up and shot down at alarmingly increasing rates (Swaine et al. 2015). According to *The Guardian*, 2015 turned out to be the deadliest year for victims of color at the hands of law enforcement officers in the US, reaching an all-time high of no less than 1,134 fatal victims (Swaine et al. 2015). The webpage *Mapping Police Violence,* which was created as a means to denounce both the violent assaults on people of color and the impunity with which they are committed, informs that one out of three victims was unarmed when killed. These numbers had increased compared to the previous year, when Eric Garner, Michael Brown, Laquan McDonald, Tamir Rice, and another 1,127 black individuals had lost their lives in the streets.[3] The proportion of black individuals murdered in 2014 had been lower than in 2015, but was still disproportionally high. Many authors have contended, taking into consideration the slight differences in annual figures, that assaults on black people should not be taken as surprising or new (Coates 2015; Lowery 2017; Ritchie 2017), as "this conversation is old, and […] it's the cameras that are new, [i]t's not the violence" (Goodman 2015). As a matter of fact, Ta-Nehisi Coates has been vocal in making public the dangers black individuals are exposed to on a daily basis through his articles and books. He published, in 2014, "The Case for Reparations", a much-debated essay that positioned him amongst the most prominent and prolific authors on racial issues of the moment. "The Case for Reparations" turned out to be the seed from which *Between the World and Me* sprang almost a year later.

The essay bestowed upon Coates great popularity, practically ensuring that *Between the World and Me* would also be a phenomenal success. And, as a matter of course, the memoir soon represented a breakthrough in racial studies and literary texts dealing with racial profiling and police brutality. Whilst in "The Case for Reparations" (2014) Coates carries out a diachronic analysis of the ways in which history has contributed to the legitimization of racist practices, in *Between the*

World and Me he introduces himself as a concerned father warning his son against the dangers of being trapped in the double-bind of a social illegibility that renders black bodies inhuman whilst simultaneously casting them as problems that need to be dealt with (Miller 2016: 16). For him, the "immi/a/nent death" black individuals are subject to, which is contingent upon their being rendered criminals, not only results from policing, but also from other, less visible types of oppression, such as microracist behaviors or intra-racial struggles, let alone the whole system that perpetuates them (Sharpe 2016). He notes, "I feared not just the violence of this world, but the rules designed to protect you from it, the rules that would have you contort your body to address the block, and contort again to be taken seriously by colleagues, and contort it again so as not to give the police a reason" (Coates 2015: 90).

Coates makes it clear that he is writing as an act of self-abnegation, hoping that his own memories help his 15-year-old son, Samori, to be prepared "for facing police harassment and brutality" (Goodman 2015). At the very beginning of the text he remembers the deaths of Eric Garner, choked for selling cigarettes in the street; John Crawford, shot for buying a gun at a local store; or 12-year-old Tamir Rice, shot twice for playing with a toy gun in the street (Coates 2015: 9). But it is Michael Brown's murder that is crucial in the development of the story that he is recounting.[4] In Ferguson, Missouri, on August 9, 2014, 18-year-old Michael Brown was shot dead by officer Darren Wilson after the former attempted to steal a box of cigarettes from a supermarket. Brown's body was left on the ground for four and a half hours (Lowery 2017: 25), and Wilson was acquitted after testifying that he had fired at Brown six times because of the way "[he] looked up at me and had the most intense aggressive face. The only way I can describe it, it looks like a demon, that's how angry he looked" (in Saucier and Woods 2016: 371). Brown's death epitomizes the monopolization of power that allows black people to be killed with no penalty whatsoever.

Police encounters, however, do not only end up in murders but also in other forms of discriminatory enforcement, such as unwarranted frisking, unjust detentions, or stiff sentences. In 2016, a year after most of the aforementioned deaths took place, black men represented 40.2% of US prisoners even though they made up only 6.5% of US society. This, of course, is the result of biased policing, as black people are 21% more likely to be targeted and wrongly convicted than members of any other racial groups (Duvernay 2016). In fact, most people of color are usually arrested for minor offenses such as drug possession, inebriation, or larceny and, owing to the widespread poverty in many communities of color, they are held for long periods of time in city and county jails because they cannot afford to post bail (Ritchie 2017: 43).

In Coates's view, the fact that officers are allowed to assault black people with impunity is just an effect of a much larger —and also much less individualized— problem.[5] It is, in other words, just the tip of the iceberg, as "the problem with the police is not that they are fascist pigs, but that our country is ruled by majoritarian pigs" (2015: 78). When discussing Darren Wilson's legal acquittal, Coates denounces that the normalization of black bodies being humiliated, frisked, detained, beaten, and ultimately destroyed, is just the result of

> men enforcing the whims of our country, correctly interpreting its heritage and legacy. […] All our phrasing —race relations, racial chasm, racial justice, racial profiling, white privilege, even white supremacy— serves to obscure that racism is a visceral experience, that it dislodges brains, blocks airways, rips muscle, extracts organs, cracks bones, breaks teeth. You must never look away from this. You must always remember that the sociology, history, the economics, the graphs, the repressions all land, with great violence, upon the body. (10)

Taking into account that *Between the World and Me* addresses in such a direct, heartfelt, and harsh manner all the forms of violence inflicted on black bodies, it comes as no surprise that the book attracted so much public attention. A week after its publication, notes Howard Rambsy II, "more than 100 reviews had been published online in major venues" (2016: 202). Whilst many critics applauded Coates's capacity to articulate in writing the difficult experiences endured nowadays by black individuals in the US (Sandhu 2015), others accused him of adopting an overly disheartening attitude that obscured any possibilities of believing "that freedom or equality will ever be a reality for black people" (Alexander 2015). Of particular interest is the reaction of the black feminist community, which highlighted that as much as Coates's narrative engages in a necessary struggle for the empowerment of black folk, it is also one that excludes the ways in which black women, girls, and gender nonconforming individuals are affected by policing. Months after the publication of the book, authors such as Brit Bennett or Shani O. Hilton openly voiced their dissatisfaction with Coates's gendering of racial profiling, claiming that in his text "the dangers of living in a black female body are mysterious, forever unknowable" (Bennett 2015). Even Patrisse Khan-Cullors, cofounder of Black Lives Matter, ended up admitting that Coates's work reflects a generalized reluctance to consider black women[6] victims of racial violence (2018).

Targeting Black Men, Silencing Black Women

The media has played a crucial role in the effacement of black women from discourses on blackness, in particular when they are in some way related to violence (Ritchie 2017: 8-9). In fact, most of the newspapers published after the Ferguson

events reveal a consistency in disregarding black women as targets of policing and racial profiling, turning —and also limiting— attention instead to black men. As an example, *The Guardian* published in 2017 an essay by Jesmyn Ward entitled "Raising a Black *Son* in the US" (emphasis added), where she notes that after being told that she was going to have a boy, "[she] cried" to later "lay awake at nights, worrying over the world I was bearing my son into". She then hastens to add that "my son had never taken a breath, and I was already mourning him". Ward's text is not the only one focusing exclusively on the role that men play in narratives on racial profiling. Clint Smith's talk "How to Raise a Black Son in America" (2015), Marc Mauer's *Young Men and the Criminal Justice System: A Growing National Problem* (1990), or Angela J. Davis's latest book, *Policing the Black Man* (2017) all suggest that "although black women are routinely killed, raped, and beaten by the police, their experiences are rarely foregrounded in popular understandings of police brutality" (Crenshaw 2015).

The exclusion of black women from narratives in both racial and gender studies has been the object of analysis of many feminist works that have defended the view that this silencing is partly due to the fact that society is built upon whiteness and patriarchy. Amongst other seminal works, *All the Women Are White, All the Blacks Are Men, But Some of Us Are Brave* (1982), coedited by Akasha Gloria Hull, Patricia Bell Scott, and Barbara Smith, had already argued that black women are affected by a twofold oppression, being *black* and being *women*, and urged them to construct a new framework from which to consider black womanhood (xxi). As its title very well suggests, the work argued that discourses on womanhood focus on whiteness, whilst discourses on race focus on manhood. Patricia Hill Collins elaborated on this approach in *Black Feminist Thought* (1990), where she contended that the voices of black poor women have been silenced by those of white middle-class men. In a similar vein, as noted by Belknap, Kimberlé Crenshaw, in her work "Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex" (1989), argued that "there is a tendency to treat race and gender as mutually exclusive categories of experience and analysis, with the result that law suits addressing discrimination are defined 'by white women's and black men's experiences'" (Belknap 1996: 17).

The double-oppression suffered by black women has also influenced their being left out of discourses on racial profiling even though they are one of the most overpoliced groups in US society (Ritchie 2017: 10). As political scientist Joy James puts it, the acknowledgement of women as targets of institutional and police violence "is an issue rarely raised in feminist explorations of women and violence or masculinist explorations of racism and policing" (in Kaba 2017: xiv). In this respect, Derrick Clifton highlighted, in a conscious nod to Crenshaw, that whilst "it's understandable why there's so much coverage of black men being killed by

police, the relative exclusion of women from this topic should be cause for concern" (2015). Disregarding women from such discourses results in two further problems. On the one hand, it provides a wrong perception of the dimensions of racial profiling. The focus on black men being the only targets of racist violence fails to account for the magnitude of the problem, as the high proportion of victims constituted by black women and girls, as well as of gender non-conforming individuals, is left out of the analysis. On the other hand, the focus on black men also silences discriminatory policing practices black women are particularly subject to, such as strip-searches and other forms of abusive frisking, sexual fondling, or rape, even if women are pregnant or menstruating (Ritchie 2017: 51-59). Both black women's racial profiling and their susceptibility to sexual harassment conceal a less obvious form of oppression— the underexamination, and often total invisibility, of black women who have been victims of racism and sexism[7] in broader discourses on mass incarceration and police brutality. Andrea Ritchie elaborates on the gravity of this situation when she claims that

> Most people easily recognize the names Trayvon Martin and Eric Garner, while Charleena Lyle's death is quietly put aside after a brief burst of press. Searching "Eric Garner" in Google yields news stories up to just two days ago detailing the family's wrongful death settlement. A Google search of Charleena, who died just this summer, yields only initial reports of her death. She was shot in front of her children by the police responding to her 911 call reporting a possible burglary. She was pregnant. (In Berrett 2017)

Activist and organizer Mariame Kaba has named the exclusion of black women from public discourses on racist violence "racialized gendered violence" (2017: xi).

Whilst Ta-Nehisi Coates writes extensively about the blatant violence the black body is exposed to, he does not provide in-depth descriptions either about black women being subject to sexual harassment or about black women being usual victims of policing. About the former he only writes that "the women around you must be responsible for their bodies *in a way that you never will know*" (Coates 2015: 71, emphasis added). There is no other instance in which this issue is brought up even though "sexual abuse is the second most reported form of police misconduct after the use of excessive force" (Bennett 2015). Many critics have been taken aback by his extremely brief analysis of the ways in which black women's experiences of policing are shaped by sexual harassment, pointing out that "it *feels odd* for a narrator who is otherwise insatiably curious" (Bennett 2015, emphasis added). Nonetheless, even if lingering on the margins of the story, black women's proneness to experiencing sexual harassment as a form of racial domination is there indeed. Something similar occurs with Coates's representation of black women ending up dead, injured or unfairly arrested after an encounter with law enforcement officers. In the initial pages of the text, Coates confesses to his son that

> I am writing to you because this was the year you saw Eric Garner choked to death for selling cigarettes; because you know now that *Renisha McBride* was shot for seeking help, that John Crawford was shot down for browsing in a department store. And you have seen men in uniform drive by and murder Tamir Rice, a twelve-year-old child whom they were oath-bound to protect. And you have seen men in that same uniforms pummel *Marlene Pinnock*, someone's *grandmother*, on the side of a road. (2015: 9, emphasis added)

Black women are thus named as victims of profiling at the beginning of the story, where Coates highlights the deaths of Renisha McBride, a 19-year-old who was shot dead when she knocked at a neighbor's house seeking for help after having had a car accident, and Marlene Pinnock, a homeless woman pulled over and beaten by a California Highway Patrol officer. At other points in the text, Coates also strives to raise awareness of the vulnerability of *both* black boys and black girls by using the generic *children*, and on very few occasions he does so by maintaining both masculine and feminine nouns and pronouns, as when he claims that "all my life I'd heard people tell their black boys and *black girls* to 'be twice as good'" (2015: 90-91, emphasis added), and that "the story of a black body's destruction must always begin with his or *her* error" (6, emphasis added). Nonetheless, his attempts to include women's experiences as part of the discourses on blackness and violence have often been considered few and problematic. In the last pages of the book Coates turns to the use of the exclusive *son*, which hampers, on the one hand, the possibility of black women being acknowledged as victims of policing and, on the other, the possibility of black women empathizing with and seeking answers to their own experiences in Coates's story. Nonetheless, in Coates's own words, this rather masculinized perspective could not be otherwise, as *Between the World and Me* is the story of a black *man* telling his black *son* how to survive within the rampant racism that permeates US society. In a conversation with Isaac Chotiner, Coates claimed that "I understand that it is the male experience and I am a male writing the book. I don't know how to remedy that" (in Chotiner 2015).

Particularly troubling is the last chapter, which comprises an interview with Mabel Jones, Coates's dead friend's mother.[8] After some initial reflections on the ways Mabel is coping with the killing of her son, the conversation leans towards more personal questions, and Coates soon notes that "she [Mabel] was intensely worried about her daughter bringing a son into America, because she could not save him, she could not secure his body from the ritual violence that claimed her son" (2015: 144). Two ideas can be inferred from his words. First of all, the fact that she does not seem to be worried about her daughter but about her daughter giving birth to a boy reiterates that black women are not considered victims of racial profiling, mass incarceration, nor of police violence (Bennett 2015). Second, the fact that her daughter is thus *only* considered a mother birthing a child reveals the extent to which

black women are secluded into oppressive categories of identity. In so writing, Coates seems to be contending that black women are not vulnerable for being black or for being women, but for having an affective relationship with black men.

The delicacy with which Coates talks about the women in the text, by and large, verges on idealization, so much so that even though they are often depicted "lovingly, almost ethereally, […] they rarely appear as complicated, fully fleshed-out people" (Bennett 2015). When he focuses on revisiting his childhood and early adulthood, Coates adopts an awestruck, respectful, almost reverential tone to refer both to his grandmother, whom he describes as a strong and rough woman who had witnessed her two brothers and her husband being murdered, and his wife, whom he admires because of her bravery and smartness. Nonetheless, as well-intended as these portrayals of black women might seem at first sight, one could argue that they border on what Patricia Hill Collins called "negative controlling images of black womanhood" (1990: 10). Black women are always described in their relation to men in the story, and so they are never represented as independent women with responsibilities of their own, but rather as mothers, grandmothers, sisters, daughters, or wives. This portrayal, in turn, as I noted above when analyzing Mabel Jones's reaction to the killing of her son, and as Shani O. Hilton convincingly argues, contributes to the normalization of black women's experiences as being about loving and mourning, when in fact they should also be about "protecting oneself from physical plunder. It's about trying to live free in a black body, just like a man" (2015). The notion that feelings of affection somehow only concern black womanhood is also underscored by Coates's positioning himself within the framework of hegemonic masculinity. Whilst he describes women as caring and warm-hearted towards their acquaintances, Coates confesses that he is stern and utterly incapable of showing his son any bit of affection. He justifies this by claiming that "that is because I am tied to old ways, which I learned in a hard house" (2015: 126) where the men, following Martin Ghaill's analysis of black masculinities and codes of behavior,[9]

> were aware of the historical contradictions of black masculinity as a subordinated masculinity, with the denial of the patriarchal privileges of power, control and authority that are ascribed to the white male role. […] Their adoption of hypermasculine codes of contestation and resistance may be read as attempts to challenge current white institutional practices that they see as attempting to "emasculate them". (1994: 188)

As stereotypical as it might seem, it is Coates's wife who teaches him that loving his son would in no way increase his vulnerability as a black man. He notes, "we are entering our last years together, and I wish I had been softer with you. *Your mother had to teach me how to love you*— how to kiss you and tell you I love you every night" (2015: 126, emphasis added).

Visibility Matters: Exposing the Stories of Black Women and Racial Profiling

At this point it is clear, then, that the experiences of black women as regards racial violence are downplayed and subsumed within the experiences of black men (Belknap 1996). Nonetheless, as Andrea Ritchie elaborates in *Invisible No More*, black women are pulled over and frisked at an identical rate as black men, and "the year before [Michael] Brown was killed, black women in Ferguson were subjected to traffic stops more frequently than any other motorist" (2017: 10). She moves on to contend that the disproportionate rates of incarceration of black women are usually eclipsed by the number of black men being imprisoned although, as illustrated in the report *Overlooked: Women and Jails in an Era of Reform*, "the number of women [of color] in jail nationwide is growing at a faster rate than any other incarcerated population" (Swavola, Riley, and Subramanian 2016: 6).[10] Similarly, even though black women are not portrayed as mortal victims of policing, they are in fact the second largest group in the population mostly affected by it, second only to black men. The research conducted by *Mapping Police Violence* reveals that a total of 102 black women were killed by police officers in 2015.

Despite the alarming rates of black women being arrested or killed, not many of their stories make it into headlines and public consciousness. Renisha McBride and Marlene Pinnock, mentioned by Coates at the beginning of his text, are two of the few women whose fatal experiences with law enforcement caught national attention. A similar case is Mya Hall's, whose death acquired greater visibility after the first reports appeared in newspapers months after she was murdered. On March 30, 2015, black transgender woman Mya Hall, 27, and her 20-year-old friend Brittany Fleming were driving a stolen car around Baltimore when they took a wrong turn and ended up trespassing on the Baltimore Headquarters of the NSA. Authorities opened fire against her although "wrong turns at that particular exit are an extremely frequent occurrence" (Romano 2015). Instead, she was "immediately shot as a potential terrorist" (Ritchie 2017: 65). The brutality of Mya Hall's murder, however, is not restricted to the unethical reaction of law-enforcement officers (Hermann 2015). Her murder was absent from the media for months, and the situation did not get any better when national news decided to shed light on her story, as she was misgendered and constructed as mentally deranged (Teeman 2017). Moreover, many published articles proved to be transphobic in that they "describe[d] Hall and Fleming as 'men dressed as women', a revelation which [the articles] referred to as a 'shocking twist'. [They] also described the street scene where Hall and Fleming worked as a 'choreography of clichés', focusing on the high heels, short shorts, and heavy makeup of the women" (Romano 2015). Their operating outside hetero-patriarchal roles was privileged over the racist misconduct of the agents.

Sandra Bland's murder was also considered critical in the fight for the visibility of black women victims of racial profiling, so much so that it ended up triggering the creation of the #SayHerName campaign. Bland was pulled over by police officer Brian Encinia in Hempstead, Texas, on July 10, 2015. He asked her to put out her cigarette, to which she replied that she was in her car and that she had the right to smoke if she wanted to (K. Davis 2018: min. 00:16:13). The encounter soon escalated, and the officer decided to arrest Bland for allegedly assaulting him.[11] She was afterwards put in custody, and her body was found in her cell three days later, on July 13, 2015. Her death was ruled a suicide by hanging, a fact later undermined by the autopsy results (Botelho and Ford 2015). According to Andrea Ritchie, Bland's story, just like McBride's, Pinnock's, or Hall's, stands out from many others because of its particularities. In her own words, "there are many reasons Sandra's story gained national attention when so many women's [stories] had not" (2017: 9), such as the videos she posted on social networking sites before being arrested, the recording of the officer's car dashcam showing her arrest, or her alleged suicide whilst she was in police custody. After making it into public consciousness right when her body was found in jail, her story soon turned into a national matter for different reasons, such as the strange circumstances surrounding her death, which evidenced the abuses black individuals might be exposed to, or the lack of surveillance of black people in county jails and other facilities, where they would be locked up and not checked on for hours (K. Davis 2018: min. 01:26:43). Sandra Bland thus became one of the first female victims of police brutality to trigger so much social unrest. As Hannah Bonner puts it in the documentary *Say Her Name: The Life and Death of Sandra Bland*, "when Sandra died, we had not seen a woman's name have that staying power that we had seen with Michael Brown, Tamir Rice, Trayvon Martin. Women had died but we had not continued to say their names" (in K. Davis 2018: min. 00:40:21).

On a more positive note, it is clear that significant changes started occurring after Bland's death. As mentioned above, the acknowledgement of the racist experiences endured by women of color such as Rekia Boyd or Sandra Bland herself, amongst thousands of others, has been critical to the development of the #SayHerName campaign, which was set up by the African American Policy Forum (AAPF) in early 2015.[12] Later that year a report entitled "#SayHerName: Resisting Police Brutality Against Black Women" was published with the intention "to serve as a resource for the media, organizers, researchers, policy makers, and other stakeholders to better understand and address black women's experiences of profiling and policing" (Crenshaw and Ritchie 2015). The movement soon turned into a national phenomenon that brought, through demonstrations, activist campaigns, and public exhibits, the status of the visibility of the murders

of black women and girls up to that of black men. As part of a series of acts organized by the movement, the art exhibit *Blood at the Root: Unearthing the Stories of State Violence against Black Women* opened in 2015. Cohosted by women vocal in the denouncement of the situation such as Ayanna Banks-Harris, Rachel Caidor, Mariame Kaba, Deana Lewis, Andrea Ritchie, and Ash Stephens, *Blood at the Root,* in their own words,

> focuses our attention on the fact that all #BlackWomensLivesMatter and all #BlackGirlsLivesMatter. Relying on various artifacts, the curators narrate the experiences and resistance of black women and girls —trans and non-trans— who have been brutalized, imprisoned and killed by the state and its agents. (2015)

The exhibit featured artistic works that elaborated on the long history of silencing which black women have endured for being both *black* and *women*. Also, drawings, artistic pictures, and spray-painted portraits of Rekia Boyd, Joanne Little, or Paris Knox, amongst many others, sought to honor their lives and urged visitors to keep fighting towards the inclusion of black women in discourses on systemic violence.[13]

Andrea J. Ritchie, together with Kimberlé Crenshaw and many others, has also extensively[14] elaborated on the need for black women to be seen as victims of police brutality and other expressions of racialized gendered violence.[15] Amongst other theorists who have engaged in the fight for the public recognition of women as being subject to racial profiling we must also highlight Angela Y. Davis, who published in 2003 *Are Prisons Obsolete?*, Michelle Alexander, with *The New Jim Crow* (2010), and Patrisse Khan-Cullors, whose autobiography and Black Lives Matter memoir *When They Call You a Terrorist* was published in early 2018.[16] Besides the progress achieved in academic scholarship and research, demonstrations and other activist campaigns are also contributing to the expansion of the movement. On June 27, 2015, filmmaker Bree Newsome protested against the exclusion of black women from public discourses on racism by removing the Confederate flag outside the South Carolina Statehouse. After being arrested, Newsome underscored that "it was decided that this role should go to a black woman and that a white man should be the one to help her over the fence as a sign that our alliance transcended both racial and gender divides. I did it for *all the fierce black women* on the front lines of the movement and fo*r all the little black girls* who are watching us" (in Tillet 2015, emphasis added).

Conclusion

As much as a necessary claim for a reconsideration of policing and racism as *Between the World and Me* is, the memoir indeed lacks a thorough analysis on

the ways in which black women's experiences are also framed by racial profiling. The exclusion of black women from discourses on policing, in turn, has proved to be overly unsettling, not only because it limits the dimensions of the problem to the experiences lived by black men, but also because it contributes to a long history in which black women's voices have been silenced from mainstream narratives. It does not matter whether black girls are six times more likely to be suspended from high school than their male counterparts or twelve times more than their female white counterparts (Crenshaw 2015); nor whether black women are subject to traffic stops at a higher rate than any other racial or gender group (Ritchie 2017); nor whether the black women's prison population is growing at a faster rate than any other prison population (A.Y. Davis 2003); nor whether black women are the second largest group more prone to being killed as a result of an encounter with the police (Ritchie 2017). And the fact that texts that have the print-run and success of *Between the World and Me* provide such a limited description of the intersection between sexism, racial profiling, and policing, does not make it any better. In the view of Shani O. Hilton, the fact that most readers of the best-selling memoir will not ever wonder about the displacement of women from the main point of the story contributes to a normalization of men's bodies being the only targets of racism— yet another of the most silent and harmful forms of violence exerted upon black women's bodies (2015).

Andrea Ritchie's theory that only black women's stories with particularities stand out is being undermined bit by bit, as most of them are nowadays making it into public consciousness owing to the increasing number of organizations and social movements in favor of the visibility of black women victims of biased policing. The consolidation of coalitions such as #SayHerName, #BlackGirlsMatter or #BlackWomenMatter, amongst many others, has led to a general acknowledgement of the extent to which black women are overpoliced but underprotected. In a similar vein, many artistic projects, including art exhibits, film screenings or literary conferences have engaged in the fight for the visibility of black women as victims of policing. But even if we are on the right track, there is still much work to do. In the last few years, black women have not ceased to resist and challenge racial profiling, but neither have they stopped being assaulted and killed at alarmingly high rates. Including them in efforts to address racial profiling is critical not only to broaden our understanding of contemporary forms and experiences of racism but also to turn a deafening silence into a rallying cry.[17]

Notes

[1]. This phrase is taken from the title of the first report issued by the #BlackGirlsMatter campaign in 2015. For more information see Crenshaw 2015.

[2]. There has been much debate as to what literary genre *Between the World and Me* falls into. In this article the book is considered a memoir, as it retells the story of the author's childhood, youth and young adulthood, including his opinions and perceptions of the events he has been witnessing for years.

[3]. Numbers obtained from the online database *Mapping Police Violence* (<www.mappingpoliceviolence.org>).

[4]. It is in fact Samori's reaction to the acquittal of Michael Brown's murderer that makes Coates start writing the text. That moment is described as follows: "[T]he men who had left [Michael Brown's] body in the street like some awesome declaration of their inviolable power would never be punished. It was not my expectation that anyone would ever be punished. But you were young and still believed. […] You went into your room, and I heard you crying" (2015: 11).

[5]. In the memoir he claims that "murder was all around us and we knew, deep in ourselves, in some silent space, that *the author of these murders was beyond us*, that it suited some other person's ends" (2015: 114, emphasis added).

[6]. My use of the word women is inclusive of black transgender women, even if they are not the focus of my study. However, I would like to highlight the precarity and vulnerability affecting the lives of black transgender women. Black transgender victims of policing are notably absent from headlines and national reports on police brutality even if, according to a report published by the Human Rights Campaign and the Trans People of Color Coalition in 2017, "since January 2013, […] at least 102 transgender people […] were victims of fatal violence. At least 87 were transgender people of color" (Lee 2017: 34). However, because of a systematic refusal to acknowledge the gender identities of the victims, it is difficult to "track [these] cases as they occur" (33). In his essay "Black Rights, Gay Rights: Civil Rights" (1999), professor Devon W. Carbado contends that the refusal to standardize black transgenderism in contemporary society derives from a "mythologized historiography" that, in the opinion of gay rights activist Marlon Riggs and many others, has normalized the racialization of transgenderism as white and "the ontological conception of blackness as [cisgender]" (in Carbado 1999: 284). Because of the previous assertion, these individuals' bodies are perceived as "problem bodies" (Ritchie 2017: 53). For more information on the experiences of black transgender women and policing, see Carbado 1999, Lee 2017, and Ritchie 2017.

[7]. As Andrea Ritchie suggests, racial profiling and sexual harassment are interrelated. She claims that often blackness is used as a pretext to exert sexual abuse on black women (2017).

[8]. Mabel Jones's son, Prince Jones, was killed during an encounter with a police officer. Coates had met Prince Jones at Howard University, and they had become close friends. After learning that the Prince George's County Police had murdered somebody, Coates saw in a newspaper that the victim had been Prince Jones. He describes it in the following way: "I saw him there. He was dressed in his formal clothes, as though it were his senior prom, and frozen in the amber of his youth. His face was lean, brown, and beautiful, and across that face, I saw the open, easy smile of Prince Carmen Jones" (2015: 77). After telling us that the officer who killed Prince Jones had lied and been accused of misconduct many times before, Coates notes, "the officer had been dressed like an undercover drug dealer. He'd been sent out to track a man whose build was five foot and 250 pounds. We know from the coroner that Prince's body was six foot three and 211 pounds. […] The officer confronted Prince with his gun drawn, and no badge. […] This officer, given maximum power, bore minimum responsibility. He was charged with nothing. He was punished by no one. He was returned to his work" (88).

[9]. Ghaill's contention clearly draws from the canonical study on black masculinities conducted by Mercer and Julien (1988).

[10]. According to Angela Y. Davis, the invisibilization of black women in discourses on racial profiling and mass incarceration owes to the fact that their offenses are usually related to mental illness rather than felony. In her own words, "deviant men have been constructed as criminal, while deviant women have been constructed as insane" (2003: 66). In a similar way, the oppression that black women face when imprisoned is also overlooked. Davis contends that while black men "experience a perilous continuity in the way they are treated in school […], in the streets […] and in prison […], for women, the continuity of treatment from the free world to the universe of the prison is even more complicated, since they also confront forms of violence in prison that they have confronted in their homes and intimate relationships. The criminalization of black […] women includes persisting images of hypersexuality that serve to justify sexual assaults against them both in and outside of prison" (79-80).

[11]. This can be contested after watching both a bystander's video displaying her arrest and the officer's car dashcam recording of that moment. Both are available in K. Davis 2018.

[12]. Prior to that there were also many attempts to include black women and girls in discourses on race, such as the 2014 "#WhyWeCan'tWait campaign, [which] argued against the exclusion of African American girls from President Obama's singular racial-justice initiative, My Brother's Keeper" (Tillet 2015).

[13]. For more information on the exhibit visit <https://bloodatrootchicago.wordpress.com>.

[14]. See her books *Queer (In)justice: The Criminalization of LGBT People in the United States* (2011), *Say Her Name: Resisting Police Brutality Against Black Women* (2015), a report coedited with Kimberlé Crenshaw (Crenshaw and Ritchie 2015), or the most recent *Invisible No More* (2017).

[15]. As mentioned above, police brutality must be seen as one expression of racialized gendered violence, as in most cases discriminatory enforcement implies different forms of sexual abuse. For more information see A.Y. Davis 2003 and Ritchie 2017.

[16]. This is just a limited selection of the works that engage in the movement, but of course there are many others I cannot include here for reasons of space.

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DEFYING ABSOLUTES AND ESSENTIALISM IN DEREK WALCOTT'S *OMEROS:* AN EPIC OF TRACES

EL DESAFÍO AL ESENCIALISMO Y LO ABSOLUTO EN *OMEROS,* DE DEREK WALCOTT: UNA ÉPICA DE TRAZAS

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Abstract

Using poststructuralist and postmodern theory, this article analyses the postcolonial epic poem *Omeros* (1990) by the author Derek Walcott. In using such a genre, Derek Walcott opens up a discussion on the literary canon and the role of epics. The authority of canonical genres is established through the use of some of the epic's formal conventions in order to be subsequently questioned through the subversion of some others relating to register and perspective. In this way, Walcott establishes a poststructuralist approach to identity which is perceived as fluid, heterogeneous, and subject to transformations. The intertextuality and parody at work in the text bring to light postmodern concerns about history and the past, which are presented as non-absolute traces. In the end, the epic recovery of roots becomes in this poem an invocation of anti-essentialism.

Keywords: epic, postmodernism, intertextuality, poststructuralism, postcoloniality.

Resumen

Este artículo analiza el poema épico poscolonial *Omeros* (1990), del autor Derek Walcott, haciendo uso de teoría posestructuralista y posmoderna. Al utilizar este género, Derek Walcott evoca un debate más amplio respecto al canon literario y al

papel de las épicas. Establecer esta autoridad sirve para más tarde cuestionarla al subvertir la forma, registro y perspectiva tradicionales del género. De esta manera, Walcott afirma una visión posestructuralista de la identidad percibida como fluida, heterogénea y sujeta a transformaciones. La intertextualidad y parodia empleadas en la obra acercan preocupaciones sobre la historia y el pasado, que son presentados como trazas no absolutas. En definitiva, la recuperación épica de las raíces es en el poema una invocación de antiesencialismo.

Palabras clave: épica, posmodernismo, intertextualidad, posestructuralismo, poscolonialidad.

By analysing through poststructuralist and postmodernist lenses the long epic poem *Omeros* (1990), written by the 1992 Nobel Prize winner Derek Walcott, this article attempts to show that his subversive use of the epic genre makes a statement about the non-essentialist state of affairs of postcolonial cultures, cultural productions, and identity, especially those of the Caribbean. According to Walcott, the Caribbean is shaped by the influence of distinct coexisting cultures, but also by the recovery of those that were lost in violence and, as he expresses it, by "the restoration of our shattered histories" (1998: 69). Transformation, mobility, and fluidity are, in Walcott's view, characteristic of Caribbean cultural identity. The epic, a genre apparently fossilised, narrates the absolute past according to Mikhail Bakhtin (1981), and is linked to the emergence of new nations, and to the foundation of civilisations (Hamner 1997). However, due to its colonial history, the Caribbean does not have one foundational moment; it is a region that is culturally diverse and in constant motion as a result of the decimation of the native population, the forced displacement of African slaves with its consequent cultural loss, the presence of creole settlers, and the migration which Elleke Boehmer points out as characteristic of once-colonised peoples after the 1980s (1995: 233). By writing this epic, Walcott does not tell the story of how certain travellers settled in a place and founded a new civilisation there. Travel itself is the founding.

The emphasis on fluidity, mobility, and anti-essentialism conveyed by Walcott's epic denotes a poststructuralist approach to history which defies essentialist positions embodied both in the staticity of colonialism and in the historical role of epics. As Boehmer claims, after the 1980s, because of their similar views on anti-essentialism, Postcolonial Studies and Western Poststructuralism begin to converge (1995: 223). These schools of thought show a similarity in their conceptual reconsideration of the structures that restricted worldviews and

"unequal relations of power" have created (Gikandi 2006: 97). A mention of Postmodernism is also necessary for these analyses, especially in its rejection of grand totalising narratives like history (Hutcheon 1988: 12). Thomas Byers claims that "postmodernity is the dominant socio-cultural condition of the most economically and technologically developed countries and regions, most notably the USA, Western Europe, and Japan" (2011: 11). However, I argue in this article that responses to postmodernity can be located within the postcolonial settings he excludes, since *Omeros* considers a hemispheric approach to the Americas, according to which the United States and the Caribbean are constantly influencing each other through tourism, migration, and globalisation.

Furthermore, it is interesting to problematise the relationship between Postmodernism and Postcolonialism. The writer bell hooks worries "that the postmodern call to dismantle identity comes at a historical moment when subjugated peoples are beginning to assert their own identity and to act collectively in its name" (2001: 2508). However, hooks's claim does not translate into a rejection of Postmodernism; it is rather a call for non-white intellectuals to articulate and embrace its poetics of difference and "incorporate the voices of the displaced, marginalized, exploited, and oppressed black people" (2511). Postcolonial writing lends itself to postmodern theory because of its emphasis on "the constructed nature of identity" (Boehmer 1995: 244). According to Linda Hutcheon's thoughts on historiographic metafiction, postmodernist art "has acknowledged [its] ideological positioning in the world" (1988: 179) and therefore aimed at contesting centred positions such as a Western worldview. Walcott's metafictional elements are visible through the pages of *Omeros* —"a poem about writing about the Caribbean", according to Paul Jay (2006: 546)— as well as his belief expressed in the poem LII of the collection *Midsummer* that "No language is neutral" (Walcott 2014: 361). In fact, as Hutcheon states while referring to Robertson's concept of 'game playing', instead of underplaying the relevance of history and fact, postmodern accounts "rather politicize them through their metafictional rethinking of the epistemological and ontological relations between history and fiction" (1988: 121).

I will thus view Walcott's epic through two main theoretical lenses. First of all, *Omeros* will be considered an epic of poststructuralist Derridean traces following Stuart Hall's approach to identity as being fluid, not an essence. I will argue that the poststructuralist approach, with its concept of meaning as transformable, is particularly suited to an analysis of Walcott's subversion and parody of the epic genre. Secondly, I will analyse *Omeros*'s take on the past as transformable, aligning first with Derridean thought to examine a particular chapter of the epic and second with Linda Hutcheon's ideas on Postmodernism as a tool of resistance for the

"silenced ex-centrics" (1988: 179), with its intertextuality bringing awareness of the textually constructed nature of history and the past (for which she also uses the word *traces*). Many elements in *Omeros* lead to the conclusion that the poem is indeed a postmodern work. I will conclude that the poem's epic recovery of the lost homeland establishes such place as an absence, not a presence, thus rejecting the fossilisation of the colonial conceptions of home, roots, and memory as central to the creation of a stable cultural identity.

The Poststructuralist Approach to the Epic Genre: A Postcolonial Device

According to Simon Gikandi, the emergence of Postcolonial Studies in the 1970s would not have been possible without the previous emergence of Poststructuralism (2006). As Ania Loomba points out, the poststructuralist approach to history affirms that there is not a single history but many histories, and that this is the only way for formerly colonised peoples' lives to be articulated and represented (1998). Poststructuralism teaches that interpretation and meaning are transformable, so it becomes a tool for subalterns to explore the (hi)story which they had been denied (Prakash 1994), without turning it into an absolute truth —even a grand narrative—, one of the main concerns in *Omeros*. In this section I will explore how, through taking an apparently fossilized genre according to Hegel (Domínguez Caparrós 2009: 164), and subverting its conventions in the transformable fashion proposed by Poststructuralism, *Omeros* stands for the articulation of a postcolonial cultural identity devoid of essentialism.

Through the imagery of sea travellers and the use of the epic genre, Walcott adopts this poststructuralist perspective in analysing Caribbean cultural identity. Joseph Farrell's defence of Walcott's use of the epic by claiming that the genre is not a Western property but also present in non-Western traditions (1997) does not deny the fact that it is a genre that tries to connect with roots, something which becomes problematic in the Caribbean. According to Haleh Zargarzadeh, cultural identity markers like homecoming and roots cannot work with the same parameters within the context of the Caribbean (2017: 716). Thus Walcott, like Édouard Glissant in his *Poetics of Relation*, establishes a rhizomatic approach towards history and identity, and also towards genre, not adhering to all the conventions of the epic but subverting them. If we follow poststructuralist critique, using the epic genre is not the ambiguous act of engaging with the tradition of white imperialism that Farrell problematises (1997). Rather, it can be understood as postmodern mimicry, as Rei Terada puts it (1992), an assessment of the act of writing as Deleuzian repetition, always entailing difference (Deleuze 1968). Through a process of

self-discovery and exploration in the shape of sea voyages, *Omeros*'s characters realise that identity —like history— does not consist of something fossilised like a ruin but is rather formed by Derridean traces and Deleuzian repetition, more in accordance with the renewal and fluidity of the sea that surrounds their island.

We learn from Farrell (1997: 272) that many critics do not consider *Omeros* an epic, which the author also allegedly believes (Hamner 1997: 33; McGarrity 2015: 10). However, the poem resembles the traditional genre of the epic formally and thematically. It uses hexameters —although not regularly (Callahan 2003: 13)— and terza rima (McGarrity 2015: 9); it is long and narrative in form; it presents a catalogue of boats in chapter two, reminiscent of *The Iliad* (27), and an invocation to the muses in chapter sixty-four; it includes chapters dealing with the actions of gods affecting the fate of the characters, especially in Book III with Achille's journey to Africa, and even a descent to the underworld in chapter fifty-two. In addition, it addresses the fate of a people, race, or nation, as is characteristic of the epic (Toohey 1992; Tynan 2011). On the other side of the coin, the order in which this is done is inverted. Instead of following the journey of a hero towards his new home, as *The Aeneid* does, it is a conscious journey of recovery of what has been lost for the Caribbean people. It also inverts the traditional epic structure in announcing its hero —anti-hero in this case— at the end of the poem (Farrell 1997: 281): "I sang of quiet Achille, Afolabe's son" (Walcott 1990: 320).

Furthermore, *Omeros* breaks with every philosophical conception of the epic. While Lukács describes the epic world as homogeneous (1971: 32), Walcott presents a heterogeneous culture. In addition, Bakhtin argues that the epic has the absolute past as its object (1981: 13), but the postmodern, postcolonial, and poststructuralist vision that permeates Walcott's work rejects the very idea of the existence of an absolute past (Derrida 1997*:* 67). As exposed in Lukács's *Theory of the Novel*, in the times when the epic was possible,

> the members of a particular historical community [were] able to recognize themselves in the ethical world portrayed in the epic poem because this world constitute[d] an adequate presentation of the ethical relations that form[ed] this community's essence and determine[d] its members' thoughts and actions. (In James 2011: 207)

Furthermore, Lukács claims that epics presented a world that was round and could be "taken in at a glance" (1971: 37). It is easy to see how this becomes complicated with the emergence of Empire and, eventually, a postcolonial subject. Walcott's choice of genre ironically calls attention to the perceived fragility of Caribbean identity in comparison with Old World subjectivities (Walcott 1998: 69). While the epic often pointed to a people's settlement in their homeland and dealt with "the fate of a nation or race" (Tynan 2011: xviii), the homeland of the Caribbean subject is lost. The writing of a postcolonial epic in the face of this fact is

metafictional as it exposes that genres such as the epic had a role in legitimising a certain worldview, one of the main tenets of Postcolonial theory. Walcott exposes such epistemic violence and dignifies the Caribbean people with this hybrid, self-referential, metafictional work which, apart from parodying the notion of absolute foundation, also claims legitimacy in Caribbean culture (Farrell 1997).

Hegel called the epic an outdated genre which had been replaced by the novel.[1] Robert D. Hamner also notes that several authors and critics consider it fossilised and defunct (1997: 8). Yet, there are reasons why Walcott decided to use this form, apart from its serving as an ironic reflection on the genre's use in other cultures to express national pride. Using the genre also calls attention to the European and Asian cultural influences in the Caribbean. Walcott includes references to Anglo-Saxon writers like James Joyce as shown in these verses: "Anna Livia! Muse of our age's Omeros, undimmed Master/ and true tenor of the place!" (Walcott 1990: 200). Despite the fact that Walcott's suggestion that European colonial culture has influenced Caribbean cultural identity has often been criticised (McGarrity 2015: 21), an epic tracing the routes of Saint Lucian history cannot deny the cultural consequences —in the form of historical traces— of colonialism's "civilising" mission. The opening of the epic nonetheless quickly mentions the indigenous population of Saint Lucia —the Arawak— who were later replaced with the arrival of another tribe, the Carib (21), who were then decimated after the arrival of the Europeans:

> Although the smoke forgets the earth from which it ascends,
> and nettles guard the holes where the laurels were killed,
> an iguana hears the axes, clouding each lens
>
> over its lost name, when the hunched island was called
> "Iounalao," "Where the iguana is found."
> But, taking its own time, the iguana will scale
>
> the rigging of vines in a year, its dewlap fanned,
> its elbows akimbo, its deliberate tail
> moving with the island. The slit pods of its eyes
>
> ripened in a pause that lasted for centuries,
> that rose with the Aruacs' smoke till a new race
> unknown to the lizard stood measuring the trees. (Walcott 1990: 4-5)

Jeremy Ingalls points out that it is actually in such conditions —"many peoples and coming in transit through many languages"— that the epic occurs (in Hamner 1997: 31). The inclusion of local forms of speech sheds light upon the fact that the Caribbean cannot be thought of without considering merging and heterogeneity. When Walcott talks about the "language [the tribe] had uttered as one nation"

(1990: 6), it is not clear to which tribe he refers— intentionally. Although he makes repeated reference to the Arawak, the earliest settlers of his island who came from South America, he then refers to the "Aruacs' patois", patois or patwa being a French-based creole originating from the French colonisation of Saint Lucia in the seventeenth century (McGarrity 2015: 22).

Acknowledging the cultural influences of colonialism is not the same as sticking to Western epistemology. Postcolonial studies, according to Boehmer, strategically take a poststructuralist approach to language as "indeterminate, multi-layered, and historically contingent to explore how anti-colonial resistance might work in texts" (1995: 173). This is mostly perceived in the conception of history, whose manifestation in *Omeros* I will analyse in the following sections. It is Postmodernism as a poetics which takes its stand against traditional conventions of history in the most self-referential way, while at the same time the poststructuralist take on signification may also be illustrative, as it has been for understanding Walcott's use of the epic genre.

Poststructuralism and the Sea-Voyage: Challenging the Colonial Freezing of the Past

Omeros's flashbacks and symbolic journeys to the past express the need to reconsider the history that has been told. According to Zargarzadeh, the characters of this epic have different attitudes towards the past, either mourning the imminent oblivion of their roots, or forgetting them (2017: 716). This work concludes that for a population as fragmented as that of the Caribbean, the approach to history as something stable is not significant since, according to Hall, Africa as a place of roots or homecoming does not exist for Afro-Caribbean people as something tangible but as something eternally deferred (1989: 231). Jacques Derrida, one of the most influential philosophers articulating Poststructuralism, opposed the idea of the absolute origin to that of the trace, "a passage through the imprint" (1997: 61). Édouard Glissant explains that when arriving in the Caribbean islands, the Europeans imposed the idea or linearity. As with Christianity, but replacing Christ with Columbus, everything became conceptualised in terms of before and after the foundational figure (1997: 48). Furthermore, he explains that "[i]n the Western world the hidden cause (the consequence) of both Myth and Epic is filiation" (47). Glissant's association of filiation with the epic genre demonstrates again that Walcott's choice of genre is not a coincidence. However, this is not an epic of absolute origins but of traces. The epic makes this clear with Achille's final decision to raise Helen's child not knowing whether he is the biological father.

Derrida destabilises the idea of origin with his definition of traces as not pointing to something essential in the "real" world and within a specific time period. There is no source of identification outside the self. Traces are constituted as chains of differences that continuously appear within signification (1997: 65). In other words:

> The trace is not only the disappearance of origin— within the discourse that we sustain and according to the path that we follow it means that the origin did not even disappear, that it was never constituted except reciprocally by a nonorigin, the trace, which thus becomes the origin of the origin. (61)

All the travels described in *Omeros* are a reverse tracing of traces to explore what constitutes the becoming-identity of the characters through these differences with their ancestors, colonisers, and contemporaries. According to Stuart Hall, for these dispossessed communities that have lost their original homeland, cultural identity is related to discovering their Caribbeanness within the workings of culture, history, and power (1989: 225). Walcott claims in "The Antilles" that the reassembling of lost fragments of the past and the exploration of roots (and routes) have created a powerful identity since these are conscious processes which do not take a particular essentialised cultural identity for granted (1998: 69). On the contrary, detractors of this poetry of the New World and advocates of the colonial order negotiate their past and cultural identity as if it were a myth, accepting fixed definitions of their origins and their identities (37). Dispossessed communities, on the other hand, have a say in what they are defined by: "Deprived of their original language, the captured and indentured tribes create their own" (70).

Hall explains:

> We must not collude with the West which, precisely, normalises and appropriates Africa by freezing it into some timeless zone of the primitive, unchanging past. Africa must at last be reckoned with by Caribbean people, but it cannot in any simple sense be merely recovered. (1989: 231)

The Western perception of the past as "unchanging" would prevent Afro-Caribbean people from identifying with a history. Though writing a community's neglected history —as Major Plunkett, non-coincidentally an English character, intends to— is also partly necessary because the notion of an unchanging past distorts and fossilises events (Walcott 1998: 36-37), it is important to continuously rethink the past according to the historical process. As Walter Benjamin's thought suggests, the way we see the past changes as the present situation from which it is perceived does (2003).

This absolute, essentialised past is symbolised in Walcott's essays, his poems, and in *Omeros* with the trope of ruins. Ruins are the remnants of the past, a past defined by a history appropriated by the Western world and made unchangeable

(Walcott 1998: 41). As Walcott put it in his Nobel Prize acceptance speech, "[t]he sigh of History rises over ruins, not over landscapes, and in the Antilles there are few ruins to sigh over" (1998: 68). This idea is portrayed in *Omeros* when the narrator reflects on the fact that art has been appropriated by —and symbolises— a static notion of history, leaving its signs all over the globe: "Art has surrendered/ to History with its whiff of formaldehyde./ […] Art is immortal and weighs heavily on us,/ and museums leave us at a loss for words./ Outside becomes a museum…" (Walcott 1990: 182, 183). The Caribbean, free of ruins, becomes this place in which a new culture that is able to reinterpret the frozen past can arise, since this view of the past "denies the essentialism of a prior given original or originary culture [and] *all* forms of culture are continually in a process of hybridity" (Bhabha 1990: 210, emphasis added).

The opposite of these ruins is the sea which, according to Tynan, is witness to all the events of the past and the transformations that took place in the course of history (2011: xiii), but it is not static like the ruins. Walcott changes the figure of the Greek Homer, whose native Greece is an example of a multitude of ruins, for Omeros, "the poet of the Seven Seas" (Tynan 2011: xvii), allowing a more flexible approach not only to the analysis of Caribbean history but of European history as well. The sea is able to wash the islands clean in "a continuous process of erasure and re-inscription" (xxi). No wonder that the mythical figure of the bard blends with one of the characters who is given the name of Seven Seas. The several sea-journeys dramatised in *Omeros* are undertaken by characters who wish to explore history and power relations in order to understand themselves in relation to them. Walcott suggests that history has been appropriated by the Western world in textbooks and historiography and expresses the need for a history that is not written according to Western paradigms (1998: 41, 46). Acknowledging and investigating how fragmentation and displacement have become Caribbean history establishes a powerful postcolonial identity for *Omeros*'s characters. Nevertheless, they need to go through a long yearning to achieve a firm sense of identity.

There is a particularly significant part of the epic —which may stand as its climax— that best represents this Derridean approach to the past. Book Three opens with the fisherman Achille being transported to a past Africa by a sea swift, a symbol of hybridity and crossbreeding (Tynan 2011: xv). God reminds Achille that it was He who sent the sea swift, indicating the island's religious acculturation. Achille has been acculturated and cannot remember "the name/ of the river— and the tree-god in which he steered" (Walcott 1990: 134). Neither is he able to speak his ancestors' language or even to recall the meaning of his name. Afolabe, whom he recognises as his father (136), has also been forgotten. Achille says that "Everything was forgotten. You also. I do not know./ The deaf sea has changed around every

name that you gave/ us; trees, men, we yearn for a sound that is missing" (137). Achille recognises the erasure of identity process which people of African descent have gone through. His reflections are intertwined with references to culturally diverse —both European and African— works like the *Aeneid*, Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, and Tutuola's work on Yoruban culture (McGarrity 2015: 100) which represent the influence of the coloniser's culture on Achille's frames of reference. Furthermore, at the beginning of Book Three, it is said that all the connections Achille had with Africa were "the African movies/ he had yelped at in childhood" (Walcott 1990: 133). In conclusion, after the trip, Achille achieves a firm grasp of the idea of the trace as something inherent to his historical identity.

Afolabe relates that there has been a loss in meaning and therefore in identity to which Achille responds that "In the world I come from/ we accept the sounds we were given" (Walcott 1990: 138), alluding to the coloniser's perceived superiority. His replacement of the idea of loss with acceptance acknowledges transformation as an inherent part of all culture-forming and history. Hall explains that the original Africa from which the slaves came does not exist anymore, but that this imagined Africa that works as a metaphor for a consciously reconstructed identity is what counts (1989: 231). In terms of negotiating identity, this epic aligns with Hall's idea that identification is not a matter of common attributes, history or ancestry in essentialist terms, but always a question of Derridean différance (Hall 1996: 2-3). The ending of this ancestor-descent encounter is ambiguous. To Afolabe's reproaches that his son has forgotten many things about his ancestry, Achille responds by alluding to the symbolism of the sea swift bringing him to Africa and reconnecting him with his roots, suggesting that something of Africa is still in him, even if he does not wish to recover his lost tribal language. Afolabe still mourns this loss and claims that Achille is "only the ghost of a name" (Walcott 1990: 139). His final two questions are cryptic: "Why haven't I missed you, my son, until you were lost?/ Are you the smoke from a fire that never burned?" (139). The amalgamation of these two positions regarding lost heritage —accepting the loss and being unable to forget the past— seems to be necessary for the creation of a postcolonial identity.

Walcott explains in "The Muse of History" that New World literature does not treat the past as something which defines subjects. New World poets refuse to be chained to historical fact, since the more one clings to facts, the more unchangeable history becomes. History must be formed by presences (1998: 37), something which Stuart Hall and Derrida discuss— though the latter calls them absences. Hall, using Aimé Césaire's term, refers to the *Presence Africaine*. Africa is present everywhere in the Caribbean, he claims, in the way the dominant language, religion, and cultural practices become modified (Hall 1989: 230), subject to transformations. To account for these transformations, Achille and other characters

must be aware that there had been certain repressed aspects in their history. Part of the oblivion shown in *Omeros* is not only due to the characters' inability to trace their roots, but also because of the ongoing repression of their race. The cure for Philoctete's wound which Ma Kilman has forgotten is something her grandmother used to know: "It have a flower somewhere, a medicine, and ways/ my grandmother would boil it" (Walcott 1990: 19). This indicates that some voices continue to be silenced, as is shown in one of the last chapters of the book in which it is claimed that the children at the local school continue to be told the myths and ruins of this appropriated history: "School-texts rustle to the oval portrait of a/ cloud-wigged Rodney, but the builders' names are not there,/ not Hector's ancestor's, Philoctete's, nor Achille's" (315).

Another example of silencing ethnic voices is the treatment of religion. During the narrator's descent into the underworld, he encounters Hector who purportedly is there because of his embracing of Christianity. His punishment is justified in the book by the claim that the God he worshipped was "the One that gathered his race/ in the shoal of a net" (Walcott 1990: 292). This claim highlights the necessity to be informed about the strategies of power that were used during Empire to repress certain voices. However, as Hamner points out, *Omeros* does not show a total embracing of tribal religion either. Instead, in Achille's attempt to blend the African traditions that he learns through his experience in the New World, the "Africanized Catholicism makes [the characters] respect not only living creatures but also the ancestral ghosts of Aruac and Carib tribesmen" (Hamner 1997: 37). Caribbean identity is thus characterised by a multiplicity which renders homage to those whose voices cannot be heard anymore. It is Ma Kilman who voices reflections about religion but, from early in the poem, it is claimed that the African tongue sounds to her as strange as Greek: "But his [Seven Seas'] words were not clear./ They were Greek to her. Or old African babble" (Walcott 1990: 19). Ironically, it is she who eventually heals the racial wound, but only after reconnecting with her roots, as the Yoruban gods explain to her how to find the herbal remedy. Repetition with regard to tradition is present in *Omeros*, but it is a repetition with a difference (Tynan 2011: 146-147), in accordance with Derridean and Deleuzian theory.

This ambiguous reclaiming of annihilated cultures together with the celebration of characters who have forgotten or readapted them under the influence of colonialism in the creation of a hybrid culture is portrayed in this work using postmodernist literary techniques such as intertextuality, multiple voices, parody, pastiche, and metafictional reflections on historiography. As explained in the introduction, Postmodernism should not be treated as a cultural movement exclusively pertaining to the West because of the effects of globalisation which are also referred to in

some of the voyages described in the epic. Such voyages are not only those of Achille to the tribe of his ancestors or through the Middle Passage, but also the contemporary migration of the narrator to the United States, all mixed and intermingled defying traditional historiography and linear storytelling. Elleke Boehmer explains that an unprecedented demographic change took place after decolonisation and has thus become something quite characteristic of postcolonial populations (1995: 233). She makes reference to Homi Bhabha's notion of the postcolonial text as hybrid in claiming that "the migrant text is that hybridity writ large and in colour" (234). It is a consideration of the postmodern world on the part of Walcott to use the diasporic experience of a character (the narrator) and the so-called "transnational aesthetic" (234) to articulate the postcolonial. The next section will explore the postmodern poetics identifiable in this epic and the purposes which Postmodernism may serve. Considering *Omeros* a postmodern text adds valuable insights to the previous analysis of its poststructuralist characteristics with regard to the treatment of history and the past.

Omeros as a Postmodern Text

As with the previous consideration of Derridean différance in the analysis of the poem, if we look at it through Linda Hutcheon's theory of Postmodernism and historiographic metafiction, it becomes apparent that this epic reconsiders the way the past has been told and that history is a particular way of making fiction (White 1978: 122). According to Hutcheon, postmodern theory and art stress the fact that both fiction and history are "linguistic constructs, highly conventionalized in their narrative forms, and not at all transparent" (1988: 105). If "Postmodern fiction suggests that to re-write or to re-present the past in fiction and in history is, in both cases, to open it up to the present, to prevent it from being conclusive and teleological" (110), we can conclude that Achille's voyage to his ancestors' land in Book Three, for example, is part of a postmodernist poetics of re-interpreting the past. Perhaps most interesting from the point of view of this article is Hutcheon's belief that Postmodernism's deconstruction of grand narratives like history results in an "ideological awareness" of "political, social, and linguistic repression" (181), becoming relevant for the articulation of postcolonial theories. By analysing several aspects of this epic, one can conclude that it is a postmodern work we are dealing with.

By way of introduction to Postmodernism, Hutcheon explains that:

> the postmodern's initial concern is to de-naturalize some of the dominant features of our way of life; to point out that those entities that we unthinkingly experience as 'natural' (they might even include capitalism, patriarchy, liberal humanism) are in fact 'cultural'; made by us, not given to us. (1989: 2)

Jean-François Lyotard terms these dominant discourses that become challenged 'metanarratives', and defines Postmodernism as the distrust of such narratives (1985). From these definitions one can conclude that Postmodernism becomes a valuable tool for the once colonised since it was these metanarratives that perpetuated the oppression and silence of certain population groups or racial minorities. Apart from the playful subversion of the epic genre already analysed, other worth mentioning formal features in Walcott's work which serve to challenge the metanarratives defined by Lyotard are self-referentiality, metafiction, parody, pastiche, or intertextuality.

Hutcheon reminds readers of Walter Benjamin's famous text "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction" (1935) when she describes the pastiche of fragments of history and/or information that many postmodernist novels are, claiming that "the aura of the original, genuine, single work of genius is [gone]" (Hutcheon 1988: 181). This is of great relevance to the previously mentioned debate on Walcott's use of a canonical genre, in this case the epic. Walcott's own essay, "The Caribbean: Culture or Mimicry?", which borrows Naipaul's notion of 'mimic men', the title of one of his novels, ironically reflects on this idea too. In a postmodern poststructuralist fashion, Walcott claims that "everything is mere repetition" (1974: 7), dismissing the accusations that mimicry is not creation, claiming that every creation is an act of mimicry and has always been so since the evolution of ape into man (10). With this claim Walcott asserts his poststructuralist take on all writing as a chain of differences along signification. This naturalising approach to mimicry would not be problematic but rather an assumption for Postmodernism, as it is for Walcott, who "appropriates Naipaul's dismissive apothegm that 'nothing has ever been created in the West Indies, and nothing will ever be created'" (Edwards and Walcott 1996: 32) in order to claim that what the Caribbean has done is to imagine and invent more than any other nation (Walcott 1974). "Everything can only be mimicry" (8), he claims, meaning of course either everything or nothing, for a creation is "nothing one has ever seen before" (9).

Walcott's words evoke Kristeva's notion of intertextuality, that "[e]ach word (text) is an intersection of words (texts) where at least one other word (text) can be read" (1986: 37). Hence the metafictional parodic inclusion, among many, of a Greek character named Antigone who, reminding readers of her Greek homologue, plays the exile and, like the Saint Lucian narrator, wishes to go back to her islands: "'I'm tired of America, it's time for me to go back/ to Greece. I miss my islands.' I write, it returns—/ the way she turned and shook out the black gust of hair" (Walcott 1990: 14). The inclusion of Homeric homologues is recurrent in the poem, as when one of the Saint Lucian characters, Helen, is walking on the beach and we learn that a cloud of smoke separates her from where "white Helen [of Troy] died"

(34). While she keeps walking, Helen sings The Beatles' *Yesterday* and in the next subchapter the word "yesterday" continues to be used for introducing episodes of the Trojan War, triggered by Helen's spotting of a boy on a horse (35). Not only are references to classical Greece included; the following chapter associates the fruits found at the local market with ancient empires: "Mohammedan melons", "bananas from a Pharaoh's casket", "lemons gold as the balls of Etruscan lions". The list of references is immense in *Omeros*.

These canonical figures —or at least characters named after them— interact with common ones. This reminds us of Bakhtin's definition of parody as "the 'absolute past' […] brought low, represented on a plane equal with contemporary life, in an everyday environment, in the low language of contemporaneity" (1981: 21). What we can know about history is learnt through texts like the *Iliad*, in accordance with a more postmodern definition of parody by Hutcheon as "an opposition or contrast between texts" (2000: 30). Hutcheon calls such knowledge traces, reminding us of Derrida's previously explored concept. Parody and intertextuality then go hand in hand because of their constant reminder that history only becomes known through textual activity, which is always interpretative and meaning-making (Hutcheon 1988: 125). This would explain Walcott's often criticised and ambiguous relationship with European culture, its discursive and textual practices being traces to understand or get to know the past. With the postmodern poetics as explained by Hutcheon, this text —with its many references to classical Greek and European traditions and texts— asserts the authority of such Western epistemology to later question it: "this, once again, is the postmodern paradox" (126).

This way of writing has been termed historiographic metafiction. Patricia Waugh defines metafiction as "fictional writing which self-consciously and systematically draws attention to its status as an artefact in order to pose questions about the relationship between fiction and reality" (1984: 2). A clear example of metafiction occurs in Book 1, Chapter V, when Major Plunkett, an English former colonial officer retired and settled in Saint Lucia, recalls in the narrative first person singular an incident in which his head was wounded during a battle in the Mediterranean. In the midst of this recollection, another "I" makes an appearance: it is the narrator who admits to writing this story:

> This wound I have stitched into Plunkett's *character*.
> He has to be wounded, affliction is one theme
> of *this work*, this fiction, since every "I" is a
> fiction finally. Phantom narrator, resume:
> Tumbly. Blue holes for his eyes. And Scottie wiser
> when the shock passed. Plain men. Not striking. Not handsome.
>
> (Walcott 1990: 28, emphasis in original)

Adding the modifier "historiographic" to the metafiction concept supposes a destabilisation of the nineteenth century belief that "historical discourse […] would consist of nothing but factually accurate statements about a realm of events which were (or had been) observable in principle" and which led to an objective truth (White 1978: 123). Although this fragment only describes the conscious choice of a character's attributes, the idea of invisible control remains present throughout the whole epic. What if such decisions were taken in history writing? This first encounter of the reader with metafiction is particularly significant as a few pages later Major Plunkett decides that he will write Helen's history (Walcott 1990: 30). While, as already stated, the poststructuralist approach points to the existence of many histories, historiographic metafiction throws light on the narrative nature of all of them.

Each chapter in *Omeros* starts with a different time, space, and focalisation, not respecting chronological linearity, thus rejecting the unified colonialist view of the Caribbean and its inhabitants. As such, the narrator affirms that "every 'I' is a fiction" (Walcott 1990: 28), not assuming that colonialist theorisations of the region are incorrect, but rather affirming that other versions would be equally valid. And, in fact, there are many different and contradicting ones combined along the poem's pages. With the presentation of multiple voices and perspectives —multiple "I"s— this work defies Bakhtin's perception of the epic as monoglossic (1981: 12). This rejection of absolute truth and monolithic history confirms the previously explained perception of the homeland in the epic as an absence rather than a presence, something experienced differently by each character. Hence the multiplicity of perspectives. Ireland for Maud, Major Plunkett's wife, is no more real than Africa for Achille. It is the very nature of the Caribbean, or Walcott's broader sense of the Americas, that is associated with the ability to take this approach, for it is the European character who wants to write an absolute history for his maid Helen: "It was at that moment that he felt a duty/ towards her hopelessness, something to redress/ (he punned relentlessly) that desolate beauty/ so like her island's. He drained the foaming Guinness" (Walcott 1990: 29-30). The characteristic of the Caribbean epic is that it is composed of many histories, not one foundational history. In consonance with the multiplicity of voices and perspectives, what is constant throughout the epic is the rejection of a single version of truth, history, and the homeland. Walcott made this clear with the ending of his essay "The Caribbean: Culture or Mimicry?", where the following is stated:

> The New World originated in hypocrisy and genocide, so it is not a question for us, of returning to an Eden or of creating Utopia; out of the sordid and degrading beginning of the West Indies, we could only go further in decency and regret. Poets and satirists are afflicted with the superior stupidity which believes that societies can

> be renewed, and one of the most nourishing sites for such a renewal, however visionary it may seem, is the American archipelago. (1974: 13)

The postmodern work of literature, with its emphasis on intertextuality, becomes relevant in order to articulate the notions of postcolonial home and roots that *Omeros*'s characters seem to be looking for. Postmodernism establishes the conditions required to know the past, which is never going to be absolute but discursively composed (Hutcheon 1988: 119). In this way, it is not only Achille's voyage to the mythical Africa that serves to establish roots for this community, but the global intertextual parodic elements present throughout the whole text.

Conclusion

Walcott's epic makes use of a series of theoretical, philosophical, and narrative devices in its articulation of the recovery of a lost homeland and identity. The poststructuralist and postmodern approach that the poem denotes can be a useful tool for the much desired self-representation of postcolonial peoples, in opposition to what Gayatri Spivak, following Foucault's idea of discourse (2001), has termed "epistemic violence" (Spivak 1994: 76).

The epic form of *Omeros* ironically reflects on the traditional role of epics in presenting foundational myths as something absolute. Walcott's epic defines the past as non-absolute because its perception is —and will continue to be— subject to many transformations, as Derrida's concept of différance illustrates. Derek Walcott's epic reconceptualises the way one should approach Caribbean history, especially because of the effects of colonialism on the identity of Caribbean descendants of African slaves: deprived of their culture, only having the coloniser's language to self-represent themselves. The postmodern parodic and poststructuralist approach to literature is the only way of articulating in this context a genre which has traditionally been used to talk about roots, homecoming, and recovery.

According to the Saint Lucian poet, there are two ways of looking at the past; as stable and frozen or as iterable and subject to transformations. Both views are addressed in *Omeros* through the trope of the sea —renewable, purifying— or the ruins —static, unchangeable. Most of Walcott's Caribbean characters have strong connections with the sea, as the fishermen motif or the presence of a poetic conscience named Seven Seas show. The sea metaphor stands for how cultural contact makes identity fluid and transformable.

The consideration of the postmodernist poetics of the text which includes intertextuality, parody, multiplicity of perspective, and metafiction, contributes to our understanding of Walcott's view of Caribbean identity as mobile rather than

static. Therefore, Naipaul's accusations that Caribbean texts are mere mimicry become absurd, as such poetics defies notions of texts and other cultural productions as original works of genius. The inclusion of a metafictional narrator throws light on the fact that history is a fiction, as well as the epic, and as well as "every 'I'", in Walcott's words (1990: 28). *Omeros*, as a postmodern text, reflects theories of historiography, historical knowledge, and identity formation as explained by Linda Hutcheon in *A Poetics of Postmodernism*: history is non-absolute and only known through textual activity. The paradoxes that this approach entails explain the open ending of the text in which the characters are presented as fated to new transformations and ready to endure the unavoidable historical processes which have defined them as a people so far.[2]

Notes

[1]. Domínguez Caparrós explains how Hegel described the novel as "épica de los tiempos modernos" (2009: 164) ("the epic for modern times") and at the same time declares a modern epic impossible (James 2011: 205, 207).

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TRANSGRESSING GEOGRAPHICAL AND GENDER BORDERS: A STUDY OF ALTERNATIVE MANHOODS IN YOSEMITE'S CLIMBING HISTORY

TRANSGRESIÓN DE LAS FRONTERAS GEOGRÁFICAS Y DE GÉNERO: ESTUDIO DE LAS MASCULINIDADES ALTERNATIVAS EN LA HISTORIA DE LA ESCALADA EN YOSEMITE

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Abstract

The last few years have been eventful as far as mountaineering in Yosemite is concerned with the soloing of el Cap and the freeing of the Dawn Wall. The documentary film *Valley Uprising: Yosemite's Rock Climbing Revolution* (Mortimer et al. 2014) not only traces the history of climbing in the Park but offers a more profound analysis of the evolution of society and gender roles in America in the last half-century, showing that, although the Valley is fairly isolated from urban communities, it is by no means disconnected from the ideological, political and cultural revolutions that the country has lived through. Yosemite is, in actual fact, a liminal space where gender roles and identities are contested, contracted and re-formulated. This article analyses three differing climbing styles that have dominated Yosemite in the 20th century, to prove that they overstep the physical borders of the territory and that each becomes paradigmatic of the dissenting masculinities that have continuously threatened the establishment outside the geographical limits of the Park. This genealogy of the particular masculinities of each group allows us to see that these manhoods —perceived as deviant or dissenting outside the Park— were, for insiders, the normative modes of being a man.

Keywords: masculinities, liminality, power, subversion, counterculture.

Resumen

Los últimos años han estado plagados de acontecimientos relevantes en el mundo de la escalada, tales como la escalada en libre del Dawn Wall o la escalada en solitario del Cap. El documental *Valley Uprising: Yosemite's Rock Climbing Revolution* (Mortimer et al. 2014) no solo narra la historia de la escalada en Yosemite, sino que además ofrece un profundo análisis de la evolución de la sociedad americana y de los roles de género en el siglo pasado. El documental muestra a la perfección que, a pesar de su aislamiento geográfico, Yosemite no está completamente aislado o al margen de las revoluciones ideológicas, políticas y culturares que sacudieron al país en el siglo XX. Yosemite es, en realidad, un espacio liminal en el que se han cuestionado, y aún se cuestionan, desafían y reformulan, tanto el género como la identidad. Este artículo analiza las tres escuelas de escalada que han dominado este deporte en Yosemite durante el siglo XX para demostrar que todas ellas traspasan los límites físicos del territorio donde se practica este deporte, ya que cada una de estas escuelas representa a una de las masculinidades alternativas que continuamente desafían y amenazan el status quo fuera de los bordes que delimitan el espacio natural. Esta genealogía de las masculinidades de Yosemite permite entender que estas maneras de ser un hombre, percibidas como aberrantes o disidentes fuera de este microcosmos, eran vistas como normativas por los individuos que pertenecían a cada una de estas escuelas de escalada.

Palabras clave: masculinidades, liminalidad, poder, subversión, contracultura.

The last few years have been eventful as far as mountaineering in Yosemite is concerned: the success of the film *Free Solo* (Chin and Vasarhelyi 2019) in the BAFTAs and Oscars, the freeing[1] of the Dawn Wall (and the accompanying film documenting the feat), the death of legendary climber and BASE jumper Dean Potter, and the release of the documentary film *Valley Uprising: Yosemite's Climbing Revolution* (Mortimer et al. 2014), point towards a growing interest not just in the sport but in the Valley. While people have seen climbing as pure escapism for decades, and while they have seen the Park as a peaceful retreat from the hustle and bustle of modern-day city life, both the sport and Yosemite are by no means disconnected from the ideological, political and cultural revolutions that the country has gone through. The borders that separate the National Park from urban spaces are far more permeable and flexible than what we have been led to believe. In fact, it may be argued that Yosemite "was actually intensely

engaged with the broader world" (Taylor 2011: 3) and can be viewed as a microcosm reflecting social and cultural changes, a liminal space, and "a realm of pure possibility whence novel configurations of ideas and relations may arise" (Turner 1987: 7).

Through a study of the history of climbing in Yosemite from the 1950s to the 1990s, this article traces an archaeology not just of the different groups that dominated the sport in the 20th century, but it also creates a genealogy of the countercultural movements that surpassed the geographical borders of the Park, permeating the sporting practice and gender identities of the three elite groups that in turn exercised power over the Valley for 60 years: the Beats, the Stone Masters, and the Stone Monkeys. The analysis of these gender identities and modes of being will centre on middle-class white masculinities, as the sport itself, probably due to its origins, attracted this demographic, especially during the 1950s, 70s, and 80s.

The article will first analyse Yosemite's liminal character and its potential as a significant and transitional scenario where limits are blurred, where the canonical meanings of manhood can be negotiated or redefined, and where novel understandings of what being a man is can take root. The second part of the article will be a study of the three most significant groups that made Yosemite their home and of the masculinities associated with each of them. Special attention will be paid to the correlation between the three groups and the countercultural movements that were questioning established gender roles during the 1950s, 70s, and 90s and to the changeability of the concepts of hegemonic and subordinated masculinities. While Yosemite's extreme masculinities would be considered subordinated, marginalised, or rejected as an acceptable way of being a 'man' (Connell 2005: 75) and deviant within an urban context, they become hegemonic masculinities or "configurations of gender practice […] which guarantee the dominant position of men and the subordination of women" (77) within the borders of the National Park.

Still, as the article will argue, this hegemony of supposedly subordinated masculinities within the Park is short lived for, as Raewyn Connell points out, hegemony is not a monolithical entity, but "open to historical change" so that "there could be a struggle for hegemony, and older forms of masculinity might be displaced by new ones" (2005: 832-833). This fact explains the rotation of power that allowed the three groups to unseat their predecessors and impose their own ideologies of gender and sport, an argument that serves as the organising principle of this article.

Liminality, Identity, and Geographical Borders

During the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, society viewed untamed nature, and especially mountains, as dangerous, unpleasant and undesirable places to inhabit; writers talked about savage groups living there, about monsters and dragons using the peaks as dwelling-places which would be better avoided by any God-fearing man (Macfarlane 2009: 14-15). It was not until the coming of Romanticism that this view changed and that the wonder of mountains became part of our culture. As Fletcher explains, "in the western view, the nature-culture division is seen as characterised at the extremes, by spaces of 'civilization' and 'wilderness'" (2014: 115) which are clearly defined and separate from one another. In the present day this idea of mountains as awe-inspiring places has become ingrained in the popular imagination and it has strengthened with the passing of time and with the urbanization of our lives: the more we live in the city, the more we yearn to escape to the mountains to experience the wild and the wilderness (Macfarlane 2009: 15). Thus, because they are spaces away "from society, […] an 'out-of-ordinary' experience, […] [they are] subversive of the central values of society, whereby individuals are free to choose and seek liminoid experiences on a voluntary basis" (Foster and McCabe 2015: 49).

While we consider mountains as the epitome of all that is opposed to city life and civilization, they are, in fact, a cultural product, a reflection of our own experiences and memories. As MacFarlane explains, "what we call a mountain is […] in fact a collaboration of the physical form of the world with the imagination of humans— a mountain of the mind" (2009: 19). When we refer to mountains as wild, savage or bleak, we do not really describe their intrinsic attributes, but our own culturally-dependent views on them. When we talk about National Parks, this "disjunction between the imagined and the real" (Macfarlane 2009: 19) is even more marked: places like Yosemite or Yellowstone are not really natural but cultural spaces with clearly delineated borders and limits. Even if they are marketed as natural spaces, they are in fact, "small pockets of wilderness within an overarching human landscape […] that [have] been extensively mapped and managed, tidied and trimmed, purged of much of their 'wilder' elements" (Fletcher 2014: 118). Although we are told that they are savage and wild, the National Parks are not absolute or natural spaces, but clear cultural spaces stemming from human intervention upon nature, proof that "an ostensibly wild, unruly 'nature' has been transformed into our contemporary concept of the 'environment', a domesticated landscape to be managed by and for human interests" (Escobar in Fletcher 2014: 118). Hence, National Parks are an intersection of nature and culture, of wild and urban, they are an in-betweenness, a junction between untouched nature and cities, standing at the edge of both and none, areas in which boundaries are

blurred. While Natural Parks are liminal spaces, a wilderness where the rules of urban life do not entirely apply (so unruly and extreme masculinities are perceived as normative here) they are still not completely untouched by society. The boundaries separating them are flexible, which means that the inhabitants of the Natural Parks, as much as they think that they live on the margins, are still influenced by social and cultural movements (in this case, countercultural movements). Thus, National Parks are not just liminoid spaces because the climber's body is in conversation both with the rock and the air (Varley 2011: 92), but they are also the stages on which climbers perform their identities as the National Parks are "environmentally, socially and physically quite distinct from whatever their [the climbers'] versions of everyday life happen to be" (93) while still being permeable and susceptible to the influence of cultural and social movements beyond their physical and geographical borders.

Furthermore, as Varley explains, "the liminality of […] [Yosemite], poised as it is on the margins of so many facets of modern life, promotes a sense of communitas and belonging, woven together with an adventure-narrative drawn from the activity's historical and cultural origins" (2011: 87). This article argues that the three groups of climbers studied are examples of the spontaneous communitas that inevitably emerge from liminal spaces and experiences: all of them are a "communion of equal individuals who submit together to the general authority of the ritual elders" (Turner 1995: 96) after moving or being pushed towards the margins of mainstream society. In fact, as Fletcher explains, "ecotourism", including adventure sports like climbing, "is strongly associated with the counterculture [and] practitioners commonly describe their pursuits as a form of escape from or resistance to aspects of mainstream modern social life with which they are dissatisfied" (2014: 91-92). Soon these peripheral groups or spontaneous communitas become hegemonic within the borders of the liminal space they inhabit and, after a time, see their dominance challenged by peripheral groups who move from the borders of their communitas towards the centre.

This article, then, posits the idea that Yosemite's (and by extension all National Parks') liminality, its lying in the in-between, its being a point of intersection amidst society and wild nature, confers upon it a further layer of significance; further, it contends that, as Westaway explains in his study of mountaineering and war trauma, its strategic position as distinct but still related to mainstream society turns it into a "liminal and […] liberal space […] [which] enable[d] the exploration of realms outside the economy and state regulation" (2013: 174), allowing for the rejection of canonical values and the construction of new ways of being. Moreover, I argue that the act of climbing itself has not only been used as a means to build one's identity, but that it has been redefined by every new generation of Yosemite

climbers so that it can be now viewed "as an alternative countercultural activity embodying a fundamental critique of many tenets of western civilization" (Fletcher 2014: 9).

The Beats and the Decline of Climbing Clubs

Climbing had its origins in Europe in the 1700s; the Romantics were the creators of "a new activity— mountaineering" (Bainbridge 2012: 1) that allowed men to come into touch with Nature and its 'Sublimity', creating a new identity linked to this new activity. This pastime appealed to Romantics since it tapped into the idea of a Sublime experience that stirs up both fear and delight in the individual. Authors like "Burke insisted [...] that pain, terror and delight occupy the same space" (Colley 2010: 15) and that space is the mountain, while Ruskin argued that experiencing fear (and consequently the Sublime), an inextricable part of climbing practice, was a desirable rite of passage in the manhood-acquiring process (Hansen 1995: 321).

Climbing, in its origin, was taken up by the new upper-class professionals (doctors, teachers, etc.) as a means to distinguish themselves from the aristocracy, a social group that, at the time, was seen as corrupt and disinterested in the progress of the Empire. This genteel middle-class who controlled "unprecedented wealth and power" (Hansen 1995: 306) needed to find a "range of cultural codes of status, gentility and masculinity" (Hansen 1995: 306) as well as cultural practices that allowed them to define themselves as the new ruling elite.

From the mountains of Europe climbing travelled to the USA, where the abruptness of the landscape attracted men like the Scottish-American adventurer John Muir, who is often considered to be the father of American National Parks (McGuckin 2015). For more than 80 years —1870s to 1940s— the history of climbing in Yosemite was marked by the dominance of clubs, like the Sierra Club founded in 1892 by Muir. These associations saw the sport as "practice for mountaineering with a conservative focus on safety" (Mortimer et al. 2014: min. 9) and "disciplined members to an ethos of sober fun" (Taylor 2011: 107). The clubs were "venues for socializing as well as climbing" (62) where banquets, meetings and parties were not just common, but expected. The heterosocial (heterogenous) nature of these organisations is extremely interesting as it clearly contrasts with the European clubs on which the American climbing clubs were modelled: while "London's Alpine Club was a fraternal organization, an all-male enclave that excluded women until the 1970s [...] North American clubs were normally inclusive" (65) and usually encouraged families to join them. More importantly, these clubs not only included men and women, but promoted the

idea that all members were equal independently of their gender and climbing ability. Thus, more experienced or skilled members were expected to help, instruct and support those who did not possess the same amount of talent, a policy which "for those few who had ability and ambition [...] represented a tyrannical force that restrained and even coerced" (107). This meant that many young and ambitious climbers started abandoning these clubs. As Roper, one of the original Yosemite Beats, explains, "we appreciated those groups, for they had taught us well [...] yet we had also come to realize that the club members tended to socialize rather than climb. Rather than seek new adventures they generally preferred the status quo" (1998: 106).

Most of these dissident climbers came from a Beat movement which "called on young people to shake the conformity and explore new ways of life" (Mortimer et al. 2014: min. 8), stemming from a counterculture characterised by a "distinctive individuality" (Holmes 2001: 10) that clearly clashed with the post-war American values of solidarity (Nash 2006: 54). As Chouinard, one of the most prominent climbers of this generation, explains, they were rebellious youths, disenchanted with the materialism and alienation of consumer culture and, as Fletcher explains, inspired by Kerouac and "his call for a rejection of mainstream sedentary society and the embrace of an itinerant life" (2014: 91), they flocked to the Valley in search of a space that they could call their own and in which they could express their own identity, forming "a separate society, living on the boulder-strewn slopes above the flats where the tourists stayed" (Denny et al. 2007). These Beat "pre-eminent climbers [who] were individualists [...] read widely about European traditions [...] and imbibed their climbing values from the Victorians" (Taylor 2011: 110), enforcing a total break with the co-operative spirit of the American climbing clubs and a return to Romantic ideas (Colley 2010: 15; Westaway 2013: 174).

Royal Robbins was the guru, spiritual leader and climber extraordinaire for this new independent climbing communitas, the Yosemite Beats (Isserman 2017: 322-324). After leaving the scouts and the Sierra Club when he felt that traditional organizations stifled his creativity (Taylor 2011: 146), this fiercely individualistic man in search of a 'philosophy' of life (Holmes 2001: 11) found it in the Victorian climbing tradition and in Ulman's praise of "the sturdy Brits" (Taylor 2011: 150)— who used climbing to define their identity through a type of muscular Christianity based "in the fervent belief that physical exercise and competitive games [...] would fortify the human spirit against the beguiling allurements of big-city life" (Baker 2007: 3). According to Taylor, "Ulman honoured a masculine form of climbing that stressed mastery of the self" (2011: 150) arguing that climbing was "a great challenge to their own qualities as *men*; a chance to conquer

their own weaknesses, ignorance and fear; a struggle to match achievement to aspiration and reality to dream" (Ullman 1941: 22, emphasis in original). Robbins became obsessed with this ethos and turned these century-old ideas into the cornerstone of his identity (Taylor 2011: 151) transforming his sporting practice into "an elevated, almost spiritual endeavour" (Mortimer et al. 2014: min. 25), an ecstatic experience, in consonance with Kerouac's men in *The Dharma Bums* — one of the most influential books for the Yosemite Beats (Block 2015)—, who claimed that "the closer you get to real matter, rock air fire and wood, boy, the more spiritual the world is" (Kerouac 2008: 157).

Under these influences, the Beats saw mountains as the landscape upon which to inscribe their identity in opposition to the bourgeois values and lives of their parents. Mountains then became liminal spaces "marking a spatial transition from one milieu to another, or margins or peripheries reflecting socio-spatial exteriority" (Fourny 2013: 12) and this became the Beats's mark of Otherness: in Yosemite they could express a non-urban Victorian-inspired identity which stood in clear opposition to the hegemonic manhood of the all-American white-collar breadwinner.

Like the Victorians before, the Beats used both the sport and the natural space to distinguish themselves from other social classes and groups which still flocked to the Valley during the weekend. The encounter between these two clashing groups meant that Yosemite became a liminoid space where "relations between parties are established and where, at the same time, through this process, the parties present are redefined" (Fourny 2013: 10), where they could live "immersed in a lived critique of routinised everyday life" (Varley 2011: 87) and where they could resist and question the attempts at domination by hegemonic masculinities.

With Robbins at their head, the Beats' lives and sporting practice revolved around a "homosocial ideal of manly individualism" (Taylor 2011: 181), a homogenous (in class, gender and race) counterculture that despised mainstream values and "defied contemporary social conventions by tossing away the career and family prototype of the 'American Dream'" (Hanson 2011: 1). In their rejection of the values of their middle-class parents, "the young men of Beat culture […] valorised masculinity and bonded primarily with other young men […] [contributing] significantly to their marginalization of women" (Kearney 2017: 49-50). Thus, during the Golden Age of Yosemite, "climbing evolved from a heterosocial avocation that stressed safety and group fun into a quest that reflected the concerns of extremely ambitious individuals in homosocial enclaves" (Taylor 2011: 147). Consequently, this Beat masculinity which had started out as subordinated outside the borders of the Park soon became hegemonic. As Taylor explains "their [Beat] deeds and words revealed that, while many yearned for 'the freedom of the hills',

all nevertheless functioned within a stridently-patrolled social system" (2006: 192). In fact, Robbins's Beat rejection of mainstream culture, his Victorian-infused view of Nature, and of sport as a manhood-acquiring process reigned over Yosemite and the sport for more than 20 years as the normative and prescriptive climbing style and identity, until a new generation, who had been relegated to a position of subordination, took over the Valley.

Along Came the Vandals: The Rise of the Stone Masters

Robbins's dominance over Yosemite was challenged by one of his former rope-brothers, Warren Harding. While Robbins saw climbing as a spiritual experience which elevated the spirit, Harding "pursued hard climbing and hard drinking with equal commitment" (Taylor 2011: 153). His ascents were not just risky but lacked any of the careful planning of the Beats which meant using as many bolts, pitons or screws as necessary, thus 'defacing' Robbins's pure walls.

While Harding's style was largely mistrusted by climbers, it was his lifestyle and personality that endured in Camp 4.[2] With the dawn of the 1970s, the times started to catch up with the Beats, who were now abandoning the Valley. They started looking back at their glorious deeds with nostalgia, signalling the beginning of the myth of the Golden Age of Climbing in Yosemite, a nomenclature that not only frames "the Beat era as an apogee [but] also made Beat values normative and, by implication, relegated other views and groups to signs of declension" (Taylor 2011: 190). The exodus of Beats out of the Valley signalled the moment for peripheral groups to take over and "in the early 1970s a fresh crop of climbers began to trickle into Yosemite" (Mortimer et al. 2014: min. 38), heirs of Harding's wild lifestyle: the *dirtbag* Stone Masters. During the 1970s "in camps and on walls, younger climbers were asserting a new cultural framework for nature play, one that seemed to conflict with the traditional values of older climbers" (Taylor 2006: 196). Thus, once more, a subordinated masculinity (Stone Masters) displaces the dominant masculinity (Beats) and becomes hegemonic.

While the Beats viewed climbing as an ascetic experience that elevated them, Jim Birdwell —"the wise elder of this new Valley clan" (Mortimer et al. 2014: min. 39)— argued that climbing "had become a cause to live for— a way to prove the freedom of my mind" (Bridwell in Taylor 2011: 196). As heirs to Harding, this new group of climbers sought to find ever-more perilous routes (Taylor 2011: 196), raising the stakes of the sport and imposing a new style and a new level of athleticism (Mortimer et al. 2014: min. 45) which were a reaction against the normative way to climb that had reigned over the Valley for twenty years. Their drinking, drug-taking, and their fast and risky climbing came to challenge the

purist, contained, and philosophical Beat style. By the 1970s, the Victorian idea that "a gentleman risked his reputation if he acted irresponsibly" which the Beat had adopted as their own, was being displaced by the idea that "notoriety came only to those that pushed the boundaries" since "danger was incrementally becoming an essential element of adventure" (Taylor 2006: 205-206).

The Beats, as marginal and subordinate as they had started out, had become normative in the climbing world, as evidenced by the "1971 *Mountain* magazine cover featuring four European climbers in matching sweaters before the North face of the Eiger" (Taylor 2011: 210). This image attested to the normalization of the Beat style as the reigning climbing practice in outdoor sports. Birdwell appropriated this image and subrogated it when, in 1975, he posed in front of The Nose with his two climbing partners, all of them clad in hippie clothing, smoking cigarettes and defiantly looking into the camera. This photo followed their one-day ascent of The Nose, and the subversion of the asceticism of the Beats "underscored the degree to which the climb was as much an aesthetic statement as a technical feat" (Taylor 2011: 211), a challenge to the Beat dominance over the Valley.

By the time the Stone Masters established themselves as the reigning group in Yosemite, it was not just the Beat Golden Age that had passed, but also the American Dream with "the cultural rift in America […] growing wider" (Mortimer et al. 2014: min. 37). The 1960s and 1970s saw the emergence of countercultures that questioned authority in ways that the Beats had not. Counterculture was based on the idea of breaking with the alienating institutions of mainstream society and its outdated notions of manhood, and while the archetypical image of the hippie (long hair, beard, flowery shirts and fringe vests) might not seem traditionally masculine, the fact is that "the revitalization of masculinity formed an important dimension of [the] countercultural movement" (Hodgdon 2003: 112) to which hippies subscribed. The hippies felt that the traditional social institutions (Hodgdon 2002: 384) were responsible for the post-war crisis of masculinity and for the lack of spirituality in an industrialized consumer society. Thus, they proposed two possible alternatives for the hippie revitalization of gender: anarchism and mysticism (Hodgdon 2002: 385; 2003: 112). While mystical hippies strove to recover the human connection with God and the Universe through various means (drugs, eastern religions and communal living), the anarchist hippies, who "saw freedom as the total absence of imposed authority" (Hodgdon 2002: 385), opted for *dirtbagging* and an outlaw lifestyle.

The anarchist movement believed that the image of the man as the breadwinner was more repressive than liberating or asserting, for it implied the subjection of men to a higher authority in the workplace in the name of economic enrichment (Hodgdon

2002: 384; 2003: 112). Money was the root of all evil, the cause of the crisis of masculinity and so they sought to love without it (Hodgdon 2002: 384; 2003: 112). The Stone Masters —"connected to the West Coast's cultural capital in the San Francisco Bay Area" (Chaundy-Smart 2015: 73) and living in a liminal space as Yosemite was, with its permeable 'borders' which allowed for the exchange of ideas— created their own anarchist collective around Camp 4 and the figure of Birdwell, "who looked every inch the counterculture hero" (Fawcett 2011: 51). The most influential anarchist collective in the urban area closest to Yosemite, San Francisco, were the Diggers, a group established in 1966 and which professed admiration for the dispossessed, racial and social minorities, outlaws and criminals, as groups that had maintained their marginal character and their individuality in the face of mainstream bourgeois pressure to conform (Hodgdon 2002: 385). The Stone Masters, heavily influenced by the Diggers, "cultivated an outlaw masculine ideal that valorised brotherly generosity, visionary artistry, candour, indifference to authority and social connections, and trust in the legitimacy of one's own impulses" (Hodgdon 2003: 113) while keeping "pace with the rest of society in questioning authority, consuming intoxicants, and using leisure to define themselves" (Taylor 2011: 198), turning climbing into both their identity and profession (Fawcett 2011: 52).

As hippies "sought to reclaim an 'authentic' and 'natural' masculinity by constructing a new society" (Hodgdon 2002: 385), the Stone Masters transformed Camp 4 into a place the Beats would no longer recognize, morphing it into the new pilgrimage destination for youths eager to explore and experience the *dirtbag* life. As Ron Fawcett explains "reaching Camp 4, Yosemite's infamous *dirtbag* campground, felt like reaching the Promised Land" (Fawcett 2011: 44), a microsociety built up around Birdwell and his particular brand of hippie masculinity, a spontaneous communitas.

The twilight of the Stone Masters came in the 1980s, when the group began to separate from the philosophy that had been at the core of their foundation. Some of the members of the clan started getting media attention and publicity contracts, leading to a split: while "many [...] embraced this emerging trend of sport climbing which involved competitions on artificial walls" (Mortimer et al. 2014: min. 58), others despised this professionalization of what had originated as a counterculture movement. The Stone Masters were no longer the anarchist hippies who constructed a Promised Land in Yosemite (Fawcett 2011: 44), but an elite group of athletes with contracts signed with leading brands and star appearances on television.

But it was not just the Stone Masters that had changed, Yosemite itself had also suffered a major transformation, becoming a tourist attraction complete with hotels and restaurants and losing a part of its character as a liminal space, a realm of possibility

and intersection. This change in the landscape and the change in their climbing philosophy brought the Stone Masters' reign over the Valley to an abrupt end.

Yosemite in the 1990s: Grunge and the StoneMonkeys

After the Stone Masters abandoned their lives of hard climbing and wild excesses for a life of sponsorship and publicity deals, Yosemite saw the arrival of "a critical mass of ambitious young climbers [who] revived the Valley scene" (Mortimer et al. 2014: min. 65), a group of young men and women described as "a right bunch of misfits" (min. 66) that would change the reigning ideas about the sport and its homosocial character, a new generation of climbers which was hugely *influenced by* and *influential on* the gender identity embedded in all fields of the grunge subculture.

The Stone Monkeys mostly belonged to what has been known as the 'Generation X', which, drawing from Sally Kane's ideas, Callais defines as a group of Americans born between 1965 and 1980 typically characterized by cynicism, political apathy and a disdain for authority (2012: 6). This generation is better known for its actors —Johnny Depp, Winona Rider or River Phoenix— and grunge music personalities —Nirvana's Kurt Cobain or Eddie Vedder from Pearl Jam— young men and women who publicly displayed a gender identity which frontally opposed the hypermasculine attitude of the rock bands of the 1970s and 1980s. Their attitude was soon labelled as grunge and it

> was the ultimate expression and fusion of most of the defining cultural, ideological and social threads of the modern western world. Feminism, liberalism, irony, apathy, cynicism/idealism (those opposite sides of one frustrated coin), anti-authoritarianism, wry post-modernism, and not least a love of dirty, abrasive music; grunge reconciled all these into a seminal whole. (McManus 2008)

Both the Generation X actors and the lead singers of grunge bands became the representatives of this new way of being: women were now "intelligent, non-conformist, cool" (McManus 2008), while (white middle-class) males came "to impersonate the new type of man, torn angrily between hegemonic masculinity and the 'new men' of the 1970s, and [...] the ideal man of the 'post-feminist' era" (Lay 2000: 235). A plethora of academic articles and books have proved that grunge icons like Eddie Vedder or Kurt Cobain were not just fiercely feminist but displayed a brand of masculinity that consciously moved away from the macho aesthetics of rock and into a more fluid and less restrictive understanding of gender. It can even be argued that, in fact, "grunge masculinity provides new modes of masculine performativity that do not require the subjugation of the feminine" (Johnson 2014: 53).

Such a construction of gender is also present in Yosemite: torn between the assertively masculine Beat model and the fiercely homosocial world of the Stone Masters, the Stone Monkeys were also trying to come to terms with the irruption of women into the elite climbing world and the subsequent disappearance of its homosocial subculture. Climbing has been, from its origins, a male-dominated sport (Plate 2007: 4) not only because male participants have always greatly outnumbered female participants but also because "although many women are involved, the sport retains a particularly male image and culture" (Robinson 2008: i) associated with concepts like risk, discipline, strength and athleticism that is only now starting to be challenged.

In Yosemite the Beat group was "overwhelmingly young, single and male […] a homosocial hierarchy with the strongest enjoying the greatest prestige" (Taylor 2011: 140) and where "the few women [present] were wives or dates" (142) who would usually try climbing to accompany their 'men'. Thus, although some women like Elizabeth Robbins, Jan Baker or Penny Carr did excel at the sport, their feats were always obscured by that of their male counterparts. Similarly, Beverly Johnson and Lynn Hill had been a part of the Stone Masters, although their gender had pushed them towards the margins of a group Hill describes as "a fraternity of men, […] [where] there was little encouragement or, frankly, inclination for women to participate" (Taylor 2011: 221). Moreover, top athletes like Birdwell saw Stone Masters female climbers more as pets than competitors (218-219). The routes themselves were a testimony of a subordinate/hegemonic masculinity that still relied heavily on the objectification of female bodies, with routes bearing names like Jugs, The Cuntress, or Nipples, and with panties and dildos being left at the top of routes as a testament to male prowess both on and off the walls (222). It was not until the 1990s that Hill was taken seriously as a sportsperson: soon she became "the top athlete in the world" (232) and her triumphs in El Cap and the World Cup favoured the incorporation of even more women to the sport as climbers in their own right.

The permeable borders of Yosemite meant that both the success of female climbers and the changing ideology of gender embedded in the grunge masculinity model affected the Stone Monkeys and their gender identity and climbing practice. In the same way that grunge masculinity is seen as "incorporating all extremes, the 'macho' and the softie, everything to the right degree" (Lay 2000: 235) in its "disavowal of the patriarchy perpetuated by glam metal cock rock" (Johnson 2014: 54), the Stone Monkeys's identity and climbing style is also a palimpsest which rejects the homosocial element of the climbing culture, while still retaining and embracing some of the Beat and StoneMaster ideas. Just as "the grunge subgenre of rock emphasized a rejection of many of the musical and cultural values

of glam metal" (Johnson 2014: 37) showing "an aversion against [...] [the] excesses of theatricalism" (Lay 2000: 234) of previous generations, the Stone Monkeys sought to abandon the antics of the Stone Masters and took the sport to new heights, stripping climbing down to the bare minimum with their emphasis on speed, lightness and their preference for free soloing, while still rejecting the homosocial model of the Beats, replacing it with a more inclusive one. A new spontaneous communitas, a new liminoid group had emerged in Yosemite, the promised liminal land, representing "a 'freedom to' transcend social structural limitations, a playful 'as-if' experience" (Foster and McCabe 2015: 49), while still vacillating "between embracing and resisting the past" (Taylor 2011: 259) and a homosocial culture that ignored women's experience.

Yosemite itself changed in the 1990s: society, walking inexorably towards the new millennium, saw the popularisation of outdoor sports, a "rush to consume nature as experience" (Taylor 2011: 233) which meant that the number of people taking up sports like hiking or rock-climbing dramatically increased. Beats like Robbins or Chouinard had capitalised on their fame as climbers, founding companies that provided these "well-educated, relatively wealthy, aggressively consuming professionals who claimed wilderness as a private playground" (233) with the gear needed to enjoy these landscapes that they had previously enjoyed.

The arrival of masses of weekend-climbers meant that Yosemite was no longer a "closed society" (Taylor 2011: 233), but rather a product ready to be consumed. This led to a dilemma in the ranks of Yosemite climbers, who had resisted professionalization for decades and who believed "climbers who took lucre for their love were whores" (235). Traditionalists like Robbins or Birdwell tried to oppose professionalization, while still seeking to benefit from the interest that the sport had awoken in 'civil' society through the sale of sports clothes and climbing gear. Soon the climbing community split into two. Traditionalists argued that while it was acceptable to work as a mountain guide or to be an entrepreneur, they "adamantly opposed publicizing climbs because it adulterated the sport" (235): professionals were not real climbers, since they had sold out to 'the man'.

Paradigmatic of this split between tradition and innovation, between homage and rejection, between respect and a desire to inscribe one's name in the history of climbing is the man who "spearheaded the revolution" (Mortimer et al. 2014: min. 68), Dean Potter, who performed some of the most astounding feats of climbing in the last century (Taylor 2011: 272). Potter resembled traditionalists in his vision of climbing as transcendental (Mortimer et al. 2014: min. 51), as more than a sport and closer to a ritual, as a way of creating art. He was called "soulful and spiritual and likened to Stylite monks for his fanaticism" (Taylor 2011: 272),

a label that appealed to the Beats, who had been condemned for their staunch defence of what they perceived to be 'the right way to climb'.

His fierce advocacy for the purest form of climbing —free solo— and his regarding climbing as art, as well as his way of inscribing his identity and vision in the history of the sport, are the reasons that first attracted Patagonia to sponsor him. The company, founded by one of the original Beats, Chouinard, hoped to attract more customers capitalising on Potter's innovative view of the sport (Taylor 2011: 272), while still hoping to appeal to traditionalists, like the founder himself, who saw themselves reflected in Potter's spiritual quest through climbing. He was seen as the perfect spokesperson for the climbing establishment.

Meanwhile, outside the borders of Yosemite, the popularity and visibility of this new grunge masculinity was perceived as a threat by a hegemonic culture that sought to neutralise this emerging masculinity by incorporating elements of it into its own discourse of truth, thus taming it into normativity through what Demetriou calls the "'dialectical pragmatism' of internal hegemony, by which hegemonic masculinity appropriates from other masculinities whatever appears to be pragmatically useful for continued domination" (Connell and Messerschmidt 2005: 844). This was met with an even more extreme performance of subversive masculinity by these young men, in an attempt at resisting erasure.

Similarly, Potter's identity and vision were far more complex than Patagonia had bargained for. Potter was, indeed, a visionary, but the "male adolescent narcissism" (Lay 2000: 234) exhibited by most of the members of the Generation X meant that he was willing to break all the Beat and StoneMaster rules that had ensured the functioning of the climbing subculture. He was one of the many climbers who believed that he could very well make a living out of his spiritual quest, an idea that clearly contradicted the ethos of his sponsor. When he decided to climb the forbidden Delicate Arch, he argued it was done "as an artistic expression and to commune with nature" (Taylor 2011: 272), never taking into account that the arch was a cherished symbol of the state and a delicate landmark respected by all local climbers. His ascent meant that even more strict rules were enforced to prevent a repeat of the feat, enraging locals and Park authorities.

To add insult to injury, Potter had made sure that his 'piece of art' had been thoroughly documented in video and photographs, practices that contradicted his claims to artistry and spirituality as well as traditionalists' ideas on professionalization: his climbing practice was a slap in the face to a climbing establishment that had tried to use him as a symbol for a hegemonic climbing masculinity with which he clearly did not agree.

Accused of seeking publicity regardless of the consequences, Potter lashed out against his critics and showed his disregard for 'authority', refusing to apologize

and arguing that it was his prerogative as a top athlete, a label Beats and Stone Masters had rejected, to pursue his vision and make economic profit from it at the same time (Taylor 2011: 273). Potter, dropped by Patagonia soon after, became a controversial figure in Yosemite climbing, by baring "the tensions between industrial and romantic orientations to nature" (273). Before his climb of Delicate Arch, Potter had appealed to the older climbing generations, Yosemite's *status quo*, since the Beats identified with "his desire to escape society for a solitary engagement with wilderness" (273) and the Stone Masters appreciated his unwillingness to accept the rules and regulations that limited his artistic vision and his *dirtbagging*. But when this *status quo* censured him and put pressure on a climbing practice which he used to express his identity, Potter rejected both traditions. Soon he turned his back on sponsors, taking his sporting practice and philosophy to the extreme with the invention of new varieties of climbing, like high-altitude slack-lining, or free BASE— soloing a wall and using a BASE jump suit as a descent method (Mortimer et al. 2014: min. 50).

This parallel fight against the dialectical pragmatism of hegemonic masculinity in climbing and music not only underscores Yosemite's permeable borders, but strengthens its character as a liminal space where identities can be challenged and where, in spite of its marked 'separateness' from mainstream society, the struggle between hegemonic identities and subordinate ones can still be felt, as a place where liminoid communities can attempt to "reconfigure[re] social roles, hierarchies or values" (Thomassen and Balle 2012: 84).

Conclusion

This article demonstrates, through the study of three different periods of climbing in the Valley, that Yosemite, due to its permeable borders and thanks to its separatedness from mainstream society, has been the breeding ground for dissenting identities that bear witness to the energy of the counterculture of the 20th century. The Beats, the Stone Masters and the Stone Monkeys shared the values and ideas of countercultural groups outside the Valley that emerged as points of resistance against hegemonic gender identities which "spread over time and space at varying densities, at times mobilizing groups or individuals in a definitive way, inflaming certain points of the body, certain moments in life, certain types of behaviour" (Foucault 1990: 96). When pushed to the margins and borders of society, these groups find refuge in the apparent wilderness of the National Park, a liminal space that allows them to experiment with testing and challenging the limits of identity and gender. Yosemite, as a liminoid space, becomes the breeding ground for dissenting identities and "a preferred way to express manhood,

[...] a stage for extreme performances of manliness" (Taylor 2011: 104). The remoteness of the Valley, "the strange vertical world of the rock climber [...] an alien, marginal, liminoid world" (Varley 2011: 85) attracted those looking to escape a society that did not accommodate their dissenting or non-conformist identities, becoming thus a place "where they could experiment with new forms of social relations and address issues of identity" (Westaway 2013: 174) which would have been left untackled outside the geographical limits of the Park.

As differing as the climbing philosophies studied may be, they all merge in one respect: after a period of struggle during which they are seen as subordinated masculinities, they become the normative way of being a man, turning into hegemonic masculinities within the geographical borders of the Park. The liminal nature of the area where these climbers establish themselves (on the borders and peripheries of society) and the undeniably liminoid character of climbing, an activity "pursued at the margins of modern life socially, geographically, bodily and elementally" (Varley 2011: 93), mean that these three groups start out as existential or spontaneous communitas (Turner 1995: 132) "displaying comradeship and homogeneity" (Foster and McCabe 2015: 49), living on the boundaries, free from norms, and so can be understood as border masculinities.

This article has traced an archeology of three border communitas, who alternated in their rule over the Park and the sport and who, in their attempt at differentiating themselves from previous generations, rejected the values and philosophies of their elders; three distinct climbing styles and gender identities heavily influenced by countercultural movements which originated beyond the geographical limits of the Park. The study of this 'rotation of power' shows that, in spite of all their dissimilarities and attempts at distinguishing themselves from one another, the Beats, the Stone Masters and the Stone Monkeys share one very basic similarity: as separated as the Valley may be from mainstream society, the influence of counterculture could still be felt within its borders, as is proved by the climbers' acceptance of the lifestyle of the Beats, the hippies and the grunges, countercultural groups formed by "the 'cool' members of the adolescent and young-adult categories […] who 'opt out' of the status-bound social order and acquire the stigmata of the lowly, dressing like 'bums', itinerant in their habits, 'folk' in their musical tastes, and menial in the casual employment they undertake" (Turner 1995: 112).

All three groups were seen as the elite of the sport, displaying hegemonic masculinity, while they were also viewed as outcasts since their philosophies rejected the previous climbing style and ethics. The Beats' homosocial group rejected the heterosocial and egalitarian ideas of the climbing clubs; the Stone Masters rejected the measured style and asceticism of the Beats; the Stone Monkeys

rejected the rigidity of the Beats, the sexism of the Stone Masters and the traditional homosociality of Yosemite climbing. Furthermore, these fringe microsocieties which inhabited the periphery and rejected the status quo were seen as outcasts in their rejection of the established rules of American mainstream society. Thus, Yosemite surfaces as the liminal space where these otherwise subordinate masculinities become hegemonic and dominant, as the borders where new modes of being can be expressed, experimented with, questioned and tested.

Notes

[1]. Freeing refers to climbing natural rock faces with no assistance from pegs, using ropes and belays as a security measure, rather than a method to progress vertically.

[2]. Camp 4 is one of the many campsites located inside Yosemite National Park; from the 1950s onwards, it became the preferred campsite for rock climbers and is still closely associated with the sport.

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"AT LEAST I HAVE THE FLOWERS OF MYSELF": REVISIONIST MYTH-MAKING IN H.D.'S "EURYDICE"

"AT LEAST I HAVE THE FLOWERS OF MYSELF": REVISIONISMO MITOPOÉTICO EN "EURYDICE", DE H.D.

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Abstract

Taking its cue from the rediscovery of H.D.'s works initiated in the 1980s, this article aims to advance the efforts destined to recover the modernist poet's revisionist legacy and, in particular, her revisionary myth-making. To this end, adopting a myth-criticism interpretative approach, I will analyse one of the most relevant examples of H.D.'s work in this respect: her lyric poem "Eurydice" (1925). In particular, I will examine H.D.'s 'tactics of revisionary mythopoesis', that is, narrative strategies which distance her poem from the dominant account of the myth and that enable the poet to contest the established classical tradition. The examination will ultimately bring to the surface H.D.'s invaluable contribution to the re-shaping and re-writing of myth from a female perspective and the way in which she created a different, subverted, version of the classical account.

Keywords: Hilda Doolittle (H.D.), poetry, myth-criticism, re-writing, mythology.

Resumen

Este ensayo tiene como objetivo último contribuir a desenterrar el legado revisionista de H.D. y, en particular, su uso revisionista de los mitos. Para ello, y a través del enfoque de la Mitocrítica, analizaré uno de los ejemplos más relevantes de dicha

práctica: el poema breve "Eurydice" (1925). En particular, examinaré las estrategias narrativas que alejan "Eurydice" de las versiones clásicas del mito y que sirven a la autora no solo para cuestionar la tradición clásica, sino, también, para transformarla. En último término, el análisis pondrá de manifiesto la contribución de H.D. a la tarea de reescribir los mitos desde una perspectiva femenina, así como el modo en que la autora propone una nueva y subversiva versión de la historia de Eurídice.

Palabras clave: Hilda Doolittle (H.D.), poesía, mitocrítica, reescritura, mitología.

1. Introduction

> Rome and the outposts of Rome. That runs in my head, arma virumque, that beats down the battered fortress of my brain, cano. I sing of arms and a God… What do I sing? I don't know what I sing. What anyhow does it matter what I sing, I, a nebulous personality without a name. (H.D. 1920: 7)

In 1975 Stanford Friedman launched a feminist recovery of H.D.'s work with her article entitled "Who Buried H.D.? A Poet, Her Critics, and Her Place in the 'Literary Tradition'". The title already hints at the idea that H.D.'s poetic legacy, which consists of more than fifty works —including lyric and epic poetry, novels, essays, theatre plays, translations and scripts— was already buried or at least in the process of becoming so. The recovery initiated by Friedman has been successful, as several of H.D.'s poems now have a rich critical history and other hitherto unpublished poems have been issued in recent years. Indeed, much work has appeared since 1980 on H.D., especially from the point of view of gender, her lesbian vision, and her relations with other modernist male and female writers.[1]

Despite the fact that H.D. studies have thrived, with many critics contributing in the last four decades, it is also true that close readings of the author's relation to and revision of the classics are scarce. In light of the scant critical attention H.D.'s revisionist myth-making has received, this article seeks to advance the efforts to unbury the modernist poet's revisionist legacy. For this purpose, I will analyse one of the most compelling instances of H.D.'s work in this respect, i.e. her lyric poem "Eurydice" (1925). The investigation will be divided into three distinct parts: firstly, I will offer an overview of H.D.'s special relation with the classics in order to thoroughly appreciate the poet's ground-breaking response to classical myth; secondly, moving on to the examination of the poem itself and by means of employing a myth-criticism interpretative approach, I will study the manner in which H.D. constructs her female figure and the extent to which her recreation departs from the classical source, thus proposing a different version of the well-known myth; thirdly, having examined the poem, I will trace the revisionary tactics

—of form and content— H.D. makes use of in the construction of her mythological woman. For the most part, the scrutiny will reveal that H.D.'s manner of re-elaborating myth is highly innovative and uncanonical, as she does so from a female perspective, hence re-shaping the established classical tradition. Ultimately, this essay will bring attention to the necessity of acknowledging (and studying) H.D.'s pioneering and revisionist poetic legacy.

2. H.D.: "An Inspired Anachronism"

Hilda Doolittle —henceforth, H.D.— has been called "an inspired anachronism", "a Greek reborn into modern times" (Swann 1962: 1): she devoted her entire professional career to the reading, translation, imitation and recreation of the classics as a means of developing herself as a writer. H.D.'s extensive output of poems, memoirs and novels is thus characterised by a pervasive Hellenism which evolved in accordance with the shifting conditions of her life and art, but remained her constant idiom (Murnaghan 2009: 63). However, to be a woman classicist, even in the early twentieth century when improvements in the provision of education for women had already taken place (Winterer 2007: 71), constituted a highly arduous undertaking for two main reasons: on the one hand, twentieth-century women with classical aspirations suffered from what Gilbert and Gubar have termed "the anxiety of authorship" as a result of the inexistence of female precursors from which to derive support (1979: 49) and, on the other hand, they experienced feelings of inferiority due to the inadequacy of their classical education and their inability to catch up with the knowledge to which their male counterparts had been exposed from a very young age (Hurst 2006: 7).

H.D. enjoyed an intensive classical education,[2] and yet, as her biographer Barbara Guest has pointed out, the poet did experience some of these difficulties during her educational years. Despite the writer's initial enthusiasm to enter Bryn Mawr, she withdrew from the college after three semesters. Her motives for leaving are not certain; nonetheless, the catalyst may have been her struggle against the authority of her parents (they wanted her to choose a different career path), illness, poor grades, a sense of inadequacy or her problematic relationship with her father, who forbade H.D.'s romantic relationship with Ezra Pound (Guest 1984: 86). Therefore, even though she was not barred from studying the classics, her incapacity to meet the required standards and thus to conform to expectations led her to a distressing state of anguish, estrangement and negativity. She would not be Marie Curie, as her father had wished, nor a schoolteacher, as her mother had been (Showalter et al. 1993: 85). Except for a brief enrolment during 1908-1909 at the University of Pennsylvania's College Course for Teachers, her formal

education had reached its end (85). Interestingly, these difficulties did not prevent H.D. from infusing all her literary production with a pervasive and ever-developing Hellenism (Guest 1984: 8-10).

Insofar as entering the classics entailed confronting the issue of cultural authority, since knowledge of the classics, previously barred to women and certain males, was in the words of Rachel DuPlessis, "the sigil of knowledge and authority, the main portal of the liberal humanist hegemony" (1986: 17), H.D. was able to assume a degree of critical cultural authority by selecting subjects and methods which directly challenged the prescriptive, normative models of classical modernism. H.D. "was the woman against male culture, the mystic against the scholars, and the intuitive supporter of all who pierced the word to its spirit" (18).[3] From this it follows that the character of H.D.'s classicism was marginal not only because of her problematic status as a woman poet, but also because she deviated from the classical line proposed by the founding fathers of modernism, adhering to a tradition which was, at the turn of the century, branded as "effeminate", impure and non-canonical. In an effort to build a space of her own in a field which appeared as exclusionary, elitist, regulatory and masculinist, H.D., similar to other twentieth-century women classicists, approached the classical text as a site in which to contest and subvert the dominant understandings of classical material, developing, in the process, the poetics of an opposition.

More specifically, H.D. was prompted by a desire to put an end to female silence as a characteristic of classical literature; she sought to rewrite the traditional canon of classical literature from a woman's perspective. With this in mind, H.D. set out to reconstruct written traces of the female presence in the main genres of the classical world. Her goal was clear: to put women's hitherto untold stories, motives and thoughts at the centre of the narration. Indeed, H.D.'s lifelong ambition to "re-invoke", "re-create" what has been "scattered in the shards/ men tread upon" (H.D. 1983: 303) materialised in her revisionist poems, which configured a literary landscape in which women's lives and voices could be heard. In what follows, I will examine what is, arguably, one of the most powerful examples of H.D.'s oppositional and revisionist practice, one which emerged from the poet's "revisionary" seeing and which inexorably came to challenge the very foundations of myth.

Before starting the analysis, one thing should be made clear. H.D. has a revisionist attitude towards myth, and she presents classical themes from a new, female perspective. Yet, her innovations, revisions and remaking of myth need to be considered within the general modernist agenda to "Make it New!" H.D. belongs to the great modernist tradition that renewed poetic language; indeed, she forged close ties with Ezra Pound and William Carlos Williams. Together with them, she

would discuss both the work of others and the poems which they themselves had begun to write or translate (Showalter et al. 1993: 85; Swann 1962: 45). In this manner, they read and examined the Latin and Greek poets, Shakespeare, Balzac, Swedenborg, Swinburne, Ibsen, Shaw, William Morris, and others (Debo 2012: 34; Showalter et al. 1993: 85). This collaborative exposure to the classical sources influenced her thinking about classicism and about writing in general, and helped shape her literary career (Debo 2012: 34). What is more, upon reading her earliest poems, Ezra Pound described H.D. as "the perfect imagist", and her writings as "pure Greek" (1913: 205), thus solemnising her position as the most prominent exponent of Imagism. In a letter to Harriet Monroe, the founder and editor of the Chicago based magazine *Poetry*, Pound referred to H.D.'s poems "Hermes of the Ways", "Orchard" and "Epigram" in the following laudatory terms: "I've had luck again, and am sending you some *modern* stuff by an American, I say modern, for it is in the laconic speech of the Imagistes, even if the subject is classic" (Paige 1971: 11, emphasis in original). Furthermore, in the Vorticist manifesto *Blast* (1914), it was again H.D.'s poem "Oread" which Pound selected as a paradigmatic example of the Vorticist aesthetic. Pound effectively introduced H.D. into the modernist literary scene, providing her with the indispensable confidence that would later in her career help her to reshape original classical sources.

Finally, it is also important to mention that, during her time in London, H.D. fully immersed herself in the study of antiquity: she would spend her mornings at the British Museum Reading Room painstakingly perusing volume after volume. In the evenings, she would meet with other writers and editors of the period, namely D.H. Lawrence, May Sinclair, Brigit Patmore, Amy Lowell and Richard Aldington. By way of these associations, H.D. widened her knowledge and experience in the literary world: she learnt about emerging literary theories, concepts and authors (e.g. the existentialist point of view, the stream of consciousness technique; the impressionistic manner of composition, etc.); she gained an acquaintance with the classical modernism propounded by T.S. Eliot and Pound in their manifestos and, ultimately, she became familiar with the work produced by her contemporaries, participating in discussions which enriched her overall grasp of the classics and of the literary scene in general (Guest 1984: 85).

3. Eurydice: "At Least I Have the Flowers of Myself"

As Reid and Rohmann's *The Oxford Guide to Classical Mythology in the Arts, 1300-1900s* reveals (1993: 52-80), Ovid's *Metamorphoses* (Book X) constituted the main classical source through which the myth of Orpheus (*Orpheús*) and Eurydice (*Eurydikē*) —which has become one of the most acclaimed and memorable love

stories in Western literature— was disseminated to the Western world. According to this source (Ov. *Met.* X. 1-85), Eurydice, "the newly wedded bride", was walking through the grass when "a bite on her ankle, from a snake" killed her. Upon knowing the tragic event, the Thracian Orpheus, "the poet of Rhodope", travelled to the Underworld to "see if he might not move the dead". Stirred by Orpheus's tune, Proserpine and Pluto decided to release Eurydice on the condition that Orpheus should not turn "his eyes behind him", until he had emerged from "the vale of Avernus". Unhappily, when the couple was "drawing near to the threshold of the upper world", the poet, "afraid [that] she was no longer there, and eager to see her", glanced back, and, as a result, Eurydice was immediately "dropped back" to the Underworld where she was doomed to remain forever.[4] Her hope shattered, Eurydice articulated no recriminations whatsoever, merely muttering "Vale!" ("Farewell!") before slipping back to the Underworld.

Ovid dedicates two final lines to Eurydice before continuing with the narration of Orpheus's ensuing exploits: "Dying a second time, now, there was no complaint to her husband (what, then, could she complain of, except that she had been loved?)" (Ov. *Met.* X. 1-85). The Roman poet thus shows no interest in acknowledging Eurydice's state of mind after having been propelled back to Hades; what is more, from Ovid's perspective, it appears that Eurydice has no right to feel dejected and that the only "appropriate feeling" she has a right to experience is that of gratitude for Orpheus's immense sacrifice. Remarkably, the narrative abandons Eurydice as a character in order to subsequently draw attention to Orpheus's quandary after having lost Eurydice forever. From this it follows that Ovid's preoccupation for his characters is gendered, and Eurydice's feelings are, as a result of that, deemed unimportant. Taking their cue from Ovid's narration, successive classical authors accepted Ovid's unconcerned disregard of Eurydice's plight.[5] Still more relevant is the fact that modern recreations of the legend, adhering to the model set by the classics, still pay no heed to Eurydice's thoughts and experiences.[6] Accordingly, while most sources provide a detailed account of Orpheus's suffering, no report is offered about Eurydice's feelings, this being a void in literary and mythological history that demands to be filled. Ultimately, at the level of what Sword (1989: 408) terms 'symbolic baggage', and as a direct corollary of the treatment Eurydice has received, this heroine has consistently been denied meaningful archetypal significance (and thus her symbolic baggage is scarce), while Orpheus has come to embody universal values of life, death, love and art.[7]

In view of this lack of representation of Eurydice's thoughts and emotions, numerous twentieth-century female writers endeavouring to find a space of their own in the overwhelmingly-male classical tradition set out to explore the Orpheus and Eurydice story from the point of view of the woman.[8] Rejecting the well-

exploited Eurydicean role as forgiving wife, abandoned lover, patient and selfless muse, and death-filled archetype, they carefully examined Eurydice's thinking and feelings and offered this mythological woman a voice with which to challenge the dominant renderings and readings of her being and her story (Sword 1989: 413). H.D.'s 1925 poem "Eurydice"[9] constitutes one of the main twentieth-century contestations to the canonical version of the Eurydice myth, this poem being a key instance of H.D.'s project of appropriating lost female voices of antiquity with the purpose of telling stories which have remained untold. In contrast to Ovid's narration where Eurydice is relegated to a supporting role, in H.D.'s reconstruction Eurydice is placed as the heroine at the centre of the story, while Orpheus is demoted to a secondary position. Moreover, H.D. wrote "Eurydice" as a dramatic monologue, allowing her heroine to talk in the first person singular; thus, arguably for the first time in literary history, Eurydice is granted a voice with which to recount her own story. Regarding Eurydice's newly-acquired voice, it should be mentioned that although H.D. adheres to Ovid's narrative pattern, the interpretation of each event related in the classical text varies by putting the female eye, concerns and voice at the centre of the tale. Overall, the narrative displacement to the "other side" of the story —that is to say, to the non-canonical, Eurydician side— alerts the reader to the fact that disparate causes and different responses occur in the same Ovidian plot (DuPlessis 1985: 109).

As indicated above, one of the main concerns of H.D.'s poem is Eurydice's long-disregarded suffering after her condemnation to Hell by Orpheus's imprudent turn. Fittingly, the poem is divided into eight stanzas which follow Eurydice's evolving emotions and thoughts subsequent to Orpheus's backward glance. Section one begins with Eurydice addressing Orpheus from her new abode, the Underworld; she is filled with rage, resentment and bitterness at her lover's failed attempt to rescue her:

> So you have swept me back,
> I who could have walked with the live souls
> above the earth,
> I who could have slept among the live flowers
> at last[.][10] (H.D. 1983: 51)

Eurydice's bitter resentment at having looked forward to release and then being forcibly returned to death is immense. She has all along been at the mercy of others —first, the gods determined her fate, and then Orpheus sealed it— and the complete lack of choice has enraged her. Whereas H.D.'s Eurydice never blames the gods for her decease, she accuses Orpheus of "arrogance" and "ruthlessness" in trying to outwit the natural order of things: "so for your arrogance/ and your ruthlessness/ I am swept back" (H.D. 1983: 51). In stark opposition to the passive

Eurydice of Ovid's poem, H.D.'s heroine, rather than submissively accepting her fate, cries defiance against Orpheus and his oppressive power over her own destiny. What is more, Eurydice rejects the widespread image of Orpheus as the faithful lover whose glance back signals both "his ambitious aspiration and his human imperfection" (Sword 1989: 414). Orpheus's backward glance, this Eurydice reassesses, is more an act of callous greed than one of love or passionate need (414). Eurydice further relates that she had grown accustomed to the "dead lichens" and the "dead cinders upon moss of ash" (H.D. 1983: 51), and that she was at last in the process of acquiescing to her new-found situation (51); yet, Orpheus's arrival had aroused the prospect of regaining life "above the earth", an expectation which soon evaporated (51). Having twice lost life upon the earth, Eurydice confesses "I am broken at last" (51), which points to her fragile emotional state, and to the great impact Orpheus's actions have on her. Ultimately, it is worthwhile noting that even though the poem follows the classical plot sequence, by shifting to the woman's point of view H.D. arouses our sympathy not for Orpheus, who has lost his wife twice, but rather for Eurydice, who has twice lost life upon the earth (Dodd 1992: 10).

In the midst of her resentment towards Orpheus, in section two, Eurydice earnestly looks for the answers she has never been offered. She demands to know what indeed was Orpheus's motivation in turning around, for the familiar explanation (his great love) no longer suffices for her. The enraged Eurydice of the first section now adopts a critical attitude to inquire into the real reason that compelled Orpheus to glimpse back:

> why did you turn
> why did you glance back?
> why did you hesitate for that moment?
> why did you bend your face
> caught with the flame of the upper earth,
> above my face? (H.D. 1983: 52)

She continues to confront Orpheus asking him "what was it that crossed my face/ with the light from yours/ and your glance?/ what was it you saw in my face?/ the light of your own face,/ the fire of your own presence?" (H.D. 1983: 52). In these lines, Eurydice suggests that Orpheus turned back only for fear that, in losing his muse, he would also lose his chance to become a great poet. H.D.'s heroine realises that Orpheus's descent into the Underworld was, rather than an act of true love —which is how it has been traditionally glossed—, an act of selfishness since he was interested in her not as a lover but as a muse. Eurydice is, indeed, accusing Orpheus of ruthlessly "seeking to regain her in order to reappropriate her presence as a muse" (DuPlessis 1985: 70). As the critic Margaret Bruzelius has posited, in this

poem H.D. questions the notion of an all-powerful (implicitly male) artistic gaze whose gain must necessarily come at the expense of the object-muse (1998: 455). By giving enraged speech to the object of the male gaze, H.D. challenges the main assumptions promulgated by the workings of the artistic gaze, namely that the creation of art only takes place within a hierarchical paradigm in which a passive (and female) object, exposed before the artist's active (and male) eye, submits to the power of the latter.

Such a notion of the artistic (male) gaze is further developed in the last part of this section, when Eurydice asserts that in her face the Thracian poet sees only the "reflex of the earth/ hyacinth color/ caught from the raw fissure in the rock/ where the light struck" (H.D. 1983: 52). Through her mouthpiece, H.D. is hinting at the idea that Eurydice existed for Orpheus only as a reflection of the earth, a realm which she has now irrevocably lost by being looked at by the man (Bruzelius 1998: 455). In addition, it is suggested that Orpheus's relation to Eurydice was based exclusively and inexorably on the woman-as-mirror (muse-object), a relation wherein the woman continued living only insofar as she fulfilled her role as an object of contemplation, as a reflection of the earth and of Orpheus himself. Interestingly, Eurydice's abandonment by her husband has enabled her to comprehend a situation later explained by Virginia Woolf in her celebrated essay *A Room of One's Own*: "women have served all these centuries as looking-glasses possessing the magic and delicious power of reflecting the figure of man at twice its natural size" (1998: 45). Orpheus found the self-confidence he needed for his grand mission as a poet in the satisfying mirroring interaction with Eurydice; indeed, he depended upon the woman's praises (hence women as magnifying mirrors) to feel at ease with himself. As many other mythological female figures such as Helen, Medea or Iphigenia, Eurydice was relegated to the object position, her agency curtailed to that of Orpheus's mirror image: deprived of the agency to create, the only role available to her was that of being the object on which the artist (i.e. Orpheus) shed his creative light. This situation is reversed in H.D.'s "Eurydice", as the poet has given the woman —traditionally, the object-muse— a creative voice of her own.

In the middle sections of the poem (sections three and four), Eurydice laments what she has lost as a result of Orpheus's fatal backward glance. Significantly, among the pleasures of the upper world she lacks in Hades, Eurydice does not refer to Orpheus's love. This is relevant since, in this manner, the poem deviates from one of the most poignant and renowned stories of heterosexual loyalty and love in Western culture. What she does allude to is the very presence of the living earth, described in imagery of beautiful flowers and intense colours (Dodd 1992: 10). For Eurydice, flowers symbolise the epitome of earthly existence, an existence

for which she longs and which, nonetheless, is now beyond her intrinsic grasp; all life has left her:

> Fringe upon fringe
> of blue crocuses,
> crocuses, walled against blue of themselves,
> blue of that upper earth,
> blue of the depth upon depth of flowers,
> lost[.] (H.D. 1983: 53)

In section five, H.D.'s heroine returns to the notion of the artist as someone who controls the light and who has, unlike the muse-object, a fully self-governing presence: "you who have your own light,/ who are to yourself a presence,/ who need no presence" (H.D. 1983: 54). As a result of her abandonment by Orpheus, Eurydice seems to have gained a deep understanding of the workings of the artistic (male) gaze. Towards the end of section five, after having bemoaned the loss of her world, Eurydice becomes determined to make the best of her lot. Once she has expressed (and hence liberated) her feelings of intense anger towards Orpheus, Eurydice is ready to move a step forward in her emotional growth and thus abandon hostility in search of more useful feelings that allow for self-actualisation. In the remaining three stanzas, Eurydice conveys her renewed faith and confidence in herself and in the Underworld. Such a transformation from helplessness and powerlessness to female power and self-assertion provides the poem's turning point:

> yet for all your arrogance
> and your glance,
> I tell you this:
> such loss is no loss,
> such terror, such coils and strands and pitfalls
> of blackness,
> such terror
> is no loss[.] (H.D. 1983: 54)

Furthermore, these lines represent what the critic DuPlessis has termed "a thematic displacement" (1985: 109), that is, a reversal of the values which have historically been regarded as good, valuable and legitimate. The "loss" of the earth (the light, the man, and other "live souls") is redefined as "no loss" by the woman herself, who declares that she has attained a better position in Hades than Orpheus has achieved on earth— "Hell is no worse than your earth" (H.D. 1983: 54). As can be observed, "Eurydice" operates on the opposition established between two separate visual levels— the upper world has flowers, colour, light and Orpheus, and the Underworld has blackness, red sparks, "colorless" light which is "worse than black", and Eurydice (Bruzelius 1998: 448). The woman is proposing a

change of paradigms —from male to female, from heterosexual love to self-love, from the upper-world to the Underworld, from light to darkness— in which the other side (which had previously been discarded) is once and for all valorised, put into the centre, made powerful and significant (DuPlessis 1985: 71). This is the reason why critics such as Helen Sword have perceptively contended that H.D.'s poem executes an Orphic "turn" of its own, a "Eurydicean" turn away from patriarchal dogmas (1989: 414). In fact, in an act of defiance against her oppressor and the society that has relegated her to silence, Eurydice has appropriated Hell —the negative space of marginality into which the woman has been forced— as a power source. In the Underworld, Eurydice claims to have gained fervour and creative light of her own, the light of which she had been deprived in the upper world:

> Against the black
> I have more fervour
> than you in all the splendour of that place,
> against the blackness
> and the stark grey
> I have more light[.] (H.D. 1983: 54)

Eurydice has reappropriated the space to which she has been condemned by turning it into a place of self-creation. She has decided to reign in Hades and turn to her own self for inspiration. In the words of DuPlessis, Eurydice, locked in a space she cannot escape, has declared "the colourless and contingent hell of the poem as the sufficient space of poetic creation, not the arena of rejection, negation, and loss, but of the splendor of her essential life" (1985: 411). Eurydice has been forsaken by Orpheus's attempt to rescue her, but she eventually regains her autonomy in response to this act, transforming the place of otherness and marginalisation into a powerful realm. Now, although embracing (and celebrating) the space to which she has been confined constitutes an act of indisputable courage and vigour, it should not be forgotten that Eurydice is there against her will. The Underworld is the epitome of a space normatively constructed as "feminine", and it is into this space Eurydice is inexorably hurled. The mysterious Other as a feminine space, rooted in male clichés of the feminine as a dark, unknowable continent[11] and the masculine as a light, knowable land, is a restricting space for women, which offers no room for deviation.[12] Thus, although Eurydice's response is subversive and to some extent liberating, it does not constitute a solution in its own right, as she remains imprisoned within the boundaries carefully designed by a patriarchal society to contain her.

What is undeniable, however, is Eurydice's emotional growth and enlightened understanding of the dynamics of her relationship with Orpheus. Having definitely

abandoned the mad rage of the opening sections, in the final movement of the poem she again asserts herself, declaring her reliance on her own personhood and at last feeling safe from external intrusions on the part of Gods and mankind alike:

> At least I have the flowers of myself,
> and my thoughts, no god
> can take that;
> I have the fervour of myself for a presence
> and my own spirit for light[.] (H.D. 1983: 55)

With this statement Eurydice seems in fact to have become Orpheus, but a female Orpheus, who is to herself "a presence" and who has light of her own (H.D. 1983: 52). Eurydice's presence is a powerful one, capable of illuminating the darkest of all places, i.e. the Underworld. Notwithstanding the fact that the woman can no longer revel in the external beauty of the earth, she will always own "the flowers of [her]self", which symbolise her inner and all-transformative light— a light she employs to illuminate the place into which she has been swept. Eurydice's death has offered her the opportunity to discover her self-worth, which she previously had not completely appreciated. The apocalyptic description of the final lines with its imagery of hell as a red rose opening —"before I am lost,/ hell must open like a red rose/ for the dead to pass" (55)— further endorses the idea that Eurydice's "flowers of myself" are powerful blooms indeed (Sword 1989: 414); ultimately, the motif of the blooming rose mirrors Eurydice's resurrection as a self-reliant woman.

In summary, "Eurydice" constitutes an exploration of the woman's tumultuous emotional development as she comes to terms with what has just taken place and adapts to her newfound independence in Hades' abode. Her feelings of intense anger in the first sections are superseded by more useful feelings of self-assertion, independence and resolution in the final stanzas of the poem. The poem thus traces Eurydice's self-actualisation from an enraged, helpless wife to an autonomous, powerful woman who is able to embrace and rejoice in the marginal place she has forcefully been swept into, making this place her own, and ascribing to it the positive qualities she inherently possesses and of which she was hitherto unaware, i.e. "the flowers of her own". Eurydice's emotional growth and acquired understanding of the dynamics of her relation with Orpheus ultimately reinforce the poem's subversive nature, since H.D. has traced a story in which Eurydice's gains are not dependent on Orpheus or the gods, but on herself as a woman and creator of light. Similarly, H.D. rejects the portrayal of Eurydice as the passive object of her heroic husband's quest and makes her stand as a figure who uses her own voice, as Bruzelius puts it, to "successfully articulate a vibrant female reality that contests the dominant masculine worldview" (1998: 448). Remarkably,

H.D.'s heroine effectuates a turn of her own, a Eurydician turn, as she rejects the former representations of her self and her story through which she had been confined to the role of subservient and dependent wife, thereby becoming a different, more outspoken and, above all, self-sufficient Eurydice. Most of all, H.D.'s poetic landscape has opened up a space for the drawing and re-drawing, for the picturing and the creation of a story that has all along remained untold, repressed and disregarded.

As a final point, H.D. infuses Eurydice, a dead woman and a lost soul, with consciousness, thus succeeding in giving shape to the intangible, to the indescribable, to the elusive. H.D.'s revisionism is thus of considerable scope: she re-writes myth from a gendered perspective and, at the same time, she dares to address the complex issues of existence, experience and the afterlife. H.D. faces and gives voice to the unsayable: Is there an afterlife? Is life worth living?

4. Tactics of Revisionary Mythopoesis: Towards a Poetics of Displacement

Having examined the poem in great detail, it remains to be seen how the poet succeeds in deviating from the classic line in crafting an alternative story and heroine. H.D. resorts to what I call the 'tactics of revisionary mythopoesis', that is, narrative strategies which distance H.D.'s poem from the dominant account of the myth and that serve the poet to contest the established classical tradition. Three revisionary techniques are deployed in "Eurydice": the selection of a canonical story and heroine and the telling of such a story from a non-canonical perspective, the writing of an anti-war and anti-heroic version of the myth, and the evocation of a different Eurydice, one which transcends and surpasses the traditional conception of this mythological woman as the faithful wife. As shall be seen, these techniques constitute a novel manner of understanding myth, one which directly challenges its classical conception.

To begin with, it is necessary to draw attention to the fact that H.D. recreates an Ovidian heroine in "Eurydice"; she thus chooses to rewrite a hegemonic and time-honoured narrative. Undoubtedly, the union between Orpheus and Eurydice is a constitutive story of Western culture, one which is deeply ingrained in the collective imagery and which has been the object of recreation throughout centuries of literature and mythology. Thus, to assume cultural authority as a woman poet, H.D. throws her revisionist dart at a founding story highly relevant in the configuration of Western societies. As has been shown, in her revisitation H.D. does not depart completely from the canonical narrative and thereby create a completely different story; rather, she introduces certain innovations and

subversions into the Ovidian story that ultimately challenge the well-recognised myth. According to De Certeau, "a tactic insinuates itself into the other's place, fragmentarily, without taking it over in its entirety, without being able to keep it at a distance" (1984: xix). H.D.'s revisionary tactics depend on adopting "well-accepted attitudes" and, at the same time, introducing "subversions, deviations" (32). By means of this combination, marginally-positioned people, "without leaving the place where they have no choice but to live and which lay down its laws for them, establish within it a degree of plurality and creativity" (30). Accordingly, H.D.'s tactical proposition constitutes a weapon of everyday life (in De Certeau's definition of the term) through which she recomposes one of the most fundamental places of resistance— the classical literary tradition.

While H.D. chooses to rewrite a canonical story with a traditional heroine, she relates the story from a non-canonical perspective, i.e. the woman's point of view. The woman in "Eurydice" is offered a voice with which to tell her own story and, in this manner, contest the dominant renderings and readings of her being and her experience. In contrast to Ovid's narration in which Eurydice appears as a silent figure relegated to a supporting role, in H.D.'s reconstruction of the myth, the mythological woman is placed as the heroine at the centre of her narrative, while the man is relegated to a secondary position. By way of a slight shift in perspective and voice, H.D. presents an alternative destabilising perspective of the well-known episode. Furthermore, it is possible to observe how this narrative displacement to the 'other side' of the story conditions its overall interpretation. The change of perspective reveals that the new interpretation of each event narrated in the classical text differs by putting the female eye at its centre. It is only when Eurydice's line of reasoning is explored that the reader is able to realise that, for her, Orpheus's rescue attempt was an act of selfishness. Without the woman's point of view, half of the story is missing. Most important of all, H.D.'s poem constitutes an argument for the necessity of reconfiguring a classical literary tradition that does not speak for the woman so that it lets the woman speak for herself. H.D. is suggesting that the woman's voice (Eurydice's) cannot be replaced by the man's, owing to the fact that when this happens, misunderstandings and misrepresentations ensue. Thus, mythological women require a voice of their own to speak their own story. And this is what H.D. accomplishes not only in "Eurydice", but also in many other poems where she gives voice to Homer's and Ovid's voiceless heroines.[13]

The repercussions of letting the woman speak are multiple, since to bring to the surface "the other side" of a myth is to contest the dominant masculine worldview, that is, the values a culture assumes to be universal, natural or archetypal.[14] While most people are aware of the dominant side of the story, which is to say Orpheus's plight after losing his wife, Eurydice's emotions when she realises that she has been

doomed to Hell for a second time have not been explored (at least not to the degree to which the story of Orpheus has been examined). And H.D.'s revisionist poem attempts precisely to fill this void in literary history. Accordingly, when H.D. re-enters myth, she does so from the perspective of, to use DuPlessis's words, "taboo, despised, marginalised" (1985: 27) individuals who articulate opinions systematically disregarded in the classical accounts. In this manner, the understanding of well-known events is not just destabilised, but also potentially delegitimised, as prevailing interpretations are challenged in a process of renegotiation of the rules previously regarded as legitimate and true. As an illustration, in "Eurydice" the woman's critical view challenges the archetypal representation of Orpheus as the faithful lover. He is presented as a selfish artist uninterested in the woman and, in this fashion, the normative ideals of marriage and romantic love are undermined. The displacement to the other side of the story is, therefore, conducive to the realignment of narrative elements: disparate causes and different responses occur in the same classical plot; hitherto unknown motivations and resolutions are unveiled; new sequences and material which rupture the story-as-usual and dissent from social norms are introduced and sympathies towards previously-disregarded characters are aroused.

At this point it is worth noting that, in her recreation, not only does H.D. enact a shift of perspective, but she also effectuates a shift of subject matter. The modernist poet removes the focus from Greek heroic and epic culture, putting emphasis on neither war nor adventure (central for an epic poet) but on other feelings hitherto disregarded by classical authors (DuPlessis 1985: 19-20). Accordingly, the narrative core of *Metamorphoses* is in H.D.'s reworking omitted and, instead, the woman's emotional development, desires and needs occupy a pivotal position. H.D. is more interested in examining Eurydice's evolving emotions and thoughts following Orpheus's backward glance than in recounting the minute particulars of her confinement in the Underworld. While classical accounts —and subsequent recreations— tend to opt for chronicling the exploits of great mythic (male) heroes, recording in detail their battles and adventures, H.D. puts the stress on the woman's internal struggle, the product of which is emotional growth, thus enacting an interpretative displacement from Greek heroic culture. In view of this, it is my contention that, by bringing attention to the woman's feelings and emotions, H.D. is indeed proposing an anti-heroic and anti-war version of myth— a female approach to mythology or, in Pater's terms, an "Ionian" approach (1980: 162). Ultimately, the change of perspective —from man to woman— in conjunction with the change of subject matter —from adventure and battle to inner feelings— operates to inscribe H.D.'s work within an alternative, underground tradition of classical literature, one which develops in defiance of the established classical canon.

Another thing H.D. does in her poem is to offer a different portrayal of Eurydice, one which greatly differs from that proffered by Ovid. To the classical poet's submissive Eurydice, H.D. opposes a woman who is able to overcome the rage she feels at having been betrayed by Orpheus and to move forward in her search for self-reliance and agency. In a deliberate attempt to transcend the plain and limiting rendering of Eurydice as the faithful wife, the modernist poet fashions a woman beyond the archetype, a particularised and complex Eurydice who, as a result of her newly found state —of independence, abandonment, confusion and grief— sets out to re-assess the dynamics upon which her relationship with Orpheus relied. H.D.'s poem shows the process by which the 'I', which represents the voice of a strong female figure, embarks on a hermeneutic quest to reread herself, to reinterpret the dominant story that has confined her, to re-consider her role as woman, wife, lover, etc. The heroine in "Eurydice" becomes argumentative and insistently requests answers from Orpheus in order to gain a further understanding of who she is and of her story. Eurydice demands that Orpheus tell her the reason why he glanced back, condemning her to a life in Hades. H.D.'s heroine thus assumes the role of reader, interpreter and translator of her own life, story and self: she is engaged in a project of unearthing who she was and of coming to terms with her past self in order to subsequently plunge into the mission of reshaping and rewriting herself. Accordingly, her quest is not for heroism or fame, but for authentic self-definition, for redefining and rewriting a self which, albeit internally felt, has been externally constructed and circumscribed. Ultimately, H.D.'s revised Eurydice departs from the traditional representation of woman as a static, symbolic object of a quest, displayed to be seen and interpreted from the outside, since she is a paradigmatic instance of woman-as-subject, actively engaged in an individual quest for identity.

The above tactics of revisionary mythopoesis set out to propose a new manner of approaching myth, both at the level of form and content, thus challenging its canonical conception. In fact, H.D. forges for herself an oppositional poetics with which to contest dominant representations of gender in the classical world.

5. Conclusion

The objective of this article has been to explore H.D.'s largely-unrecognised practice of revisionist myth-making, acknowledging in so doing the poet's contribution to furthering an alternative tradition of classical literature. I decided to focus on an examination of one of the most relevant examples of H.D.'s revisionist practice, i.e. her lyric poem "Eurydice". After having offered a general idea of the poet's relation with the classics, I set out to examine the poem itself,

concentrating specifically on the manner in which H.D. crafts her mythological woman and on the degree to which she deviates from Ovid's account, hence producing a non-canonical version of the well-known myth. Lastly, I have traced the revisionary tactics —of form and content— the poet makes use of in the creation of her Eurydician story. "Eurydice" has served as an example of the growing revisionist dialectic in H.D.'s use of classical materials.

At this point, it is of the utmost relevance to emphasise that H.D.'s project of revisionist myth-making necessarily exceeds this article's selection and scope: there is plenty of material for future lines of investigation. In "Eurydice" H.D. explores a very specific aspect of the mythological woman, namely the woman as lover; however, the author's repertoire includes many other female mythological and historical figures that assume other roles traditionally assigned to the realm of womanhood. For instance, her short lyric poems "Circe" (1921) and "Cassandra" (1924) focus on the woman as a witch (a figure already hinted at in H.D.'s "Calypso"), and offers an original interpretation of such a classical figure, considerably challenging the symbolic meaning the figure of the witch carries, both in antiquity and in modern times.[15] Another representation H.D. recasts is that of the mother: in poems such as "Demeter" (1921), "Leda" (1921) and "Thetis" (1921), H.D. suggests a reading of woman as a very different kind of mother to that traditionally represented.[16]

H.D. devoted her entire professional career to reformulating the trace of the female presence in antiquity: she looked back to ancient women writers for inspiration, she read the works of nineteenth-century women classicists for guidance and, eventually, she wrote about mythological and historical women. All the ever-questioning, artistic, intellectual heroes of her epic and lyric poetry and novels were women. As a woman writing about women, H.D. explored the untold half of the human story, and by that act she enhanced and changed the classical tradition. In her endeavour to re-imagine and reconceive the lives and experiences of women in the ancient world, H.D. ended up crafting a woman's mythology in which women's stories and experiences were not covered over or made absent, but became the centre of a vibrant female reality. The study of "Eurydice" has brought to light H.D.'s revisionist pattern of interaction with tradition, one which is grounded on the re-writing of myth from a female perspective.

As a final point, H.D. was successful in supplying subsequent female classicists with a revisionist pattern of myth to follow and, in this respect, she stands as an influential precursor for the many women writers who, from the mid-twentieth century on, have retold myths from the perspectives of women and other marginalised figures, articulating viewpoints and values that are not fully explored in the male-authored versions we have inherited from antiquity.[17]

Notes

[1]. Of particular interest are the essays indexed by MLA and the many books published about H.D., as well as the new editions of her work. I particularly recommend work by Morris (1986 and 1991), McCabe (2000), Detloff (2002), Bryant and Eaverly (2007), Vetter (2010 and 2017), Debo and Vetter (2011), Debo (2012) and Walsh (2015), to name some of the most representative.

[2]. In 1901 H.D. started attending the Miss Elizabeth Gordon's School (Friedman 1990: 32) and, a year later, she enrolled at Friends' Central School, a Quaker preparatory school ranked among the best-performing academic, athletic, and artistic schools, highly respected by the elite colleges for the quality of its education (Showalter et al. 1993: 85). Having successfully completed her secondary studies, H.D.'s father, liberal in his beliefs about the education of women, encouraged his daughter to enter Bryn Mawr, the college that trained the era's New Women to excel in fields hitherto reserved for men, and that offered an educational programme modelled upon those of men's schools (Winterer 2007: 191). H.D.'s having been granted access to Bryn Mawr positions her as one of the first twentieth-century women who profited from the changes in the educational provision for women that were being implemented at the turn of the century, changes which resulted from the nineteenth-century struggle to achieve classical parity (Guest 1984: 8-10).

[3]. H.D. has been associated with the "classical" as much as any other modern poet; nonetheless, her Hellenism is not situated within the range of variants propounded by the most prominent figures of the modern period (Gregory 1997: 22-40). Concerning H.D.'s reading of direct classical sources, she developed an interest in non-canonical authors, namely female classicists and critical male figures. With regard to her exposure to non-literary discourses, the new findings in the field of archaeology informed the manner in which she described the ancient world. Her reading of the anthropological studies of the period, especially those of Jane Harrison, awakened in her an interest in the occult, the mysteries and primitive religion. H.D.'s encounter with Freud and his novel ideas about myth further shaped her view of myth's spiritual dimension (Friedman 1981: 157-206). Her early affiliations with non-canonical classical authors (i.e. Sappho and Euripides) and untraditional ideas (i.e. Jane Ellen Harrison, Robert Graves, etc.) marked her variance from the modernist classical line, and thus placed her within an alternative tradition. Overall, H.D.'s early allegiance to a pattern of cultural iconographical resistance foreshadowed the path she would take as a female classicist.

[4]. Different authors across time and space have interpreted Orpheus's turning back in a different light, which accounts for the productivity, richness and malleability of mythical sources. Thus, while some writers have emphasised Orpheus's great love and sacrifice as well as his internal conundrum regarding a promise made to him by the gods, others have focused on the fatal consequences his backward glance had on Eurydice. For a thorough account of the reception of the Orpheus figure and story in English literature and culture, see Miles (2002).

[5]. See, for instance, Virgil's *Georgics* (IV. 453) (cf. Sword 1989: 408).

[6]. See, for example, Rainer Maria Rilke's *Sonnets to Orpheus* (1922) or Maurice Blanchot's *The Gaze of Orpheus and Other Literary Essays* (1981). An exception to this tendency is Rilke's short poem "Orpheus. Eurydike. Hermes" (1907), which renders Eurydice's subtle and inexpressible anxiety as she follows Orpheus out of Hades.

[7]. Helen Sword asserts that Eurydice is a mythological nobody, as her only obvious "archetypal significance is a negative role, that of woman-as-Other, woman-as-death, the 'dark continent' Freud found so threatening and irresistible" (1989: 408).

[8]. This revisionist practice continues today, one very recent example being Sarah Ruhl's 2003 play *Eurydice*.

[9]. Written during the painful disintegration of her marriage to Richard Aldington, "Eurydice" is included in her first collection of poems *Sea Garden*, a collection which is dominated by imagist practices. "Eurydice", however, lies outside the core of H.D.'s early imagist poetics and has been read as a prelude to the poet's later appropriations of the lost female voice of antiquity (Bruzelius 1998).

[10]. All quotations from H.D.'s poems are from the *Collected Poems 1914-1944* (New York, 1983), to which the page references in the text refer.

[11]. See Freud's "Female Sexuality" (1932) and Lacan's *La sexualité féminine* (1964) for an insight into the postulations of the female as the mysterious Other.

[12]. As Simone de Beauvoir argues in *The Second Sex*, through this major image of Otherness, men and women escape fully authentic life, since people are expected to fit into prescriptive ontological categories which ultimately limit the possibilities of being and living to a set of already-closed alternatives (1970: 48). Further, de Beauvoir contends that human evolution will only come about through the rupture of dualisms (the gender binary, among others) which problematise the conditions of choice for both genders (65).

[13]. See, for example, "Helen", "Calypso", "Demeter" and *Helen in Egypt* (Friedman 1990: 56).

[14]. As Ostriker phrases it, aligning with "otherness" involves the reevaluation of "social, political, and philosophical values, particularly those most enshrined in occidental literature, such as the glorification of conquest and the faith that the cosmos is —must be— hierarchically ordered with earth and body on the bottom and mind and spirit on the top" (1982: 87).

[15]. The witch's most recurrent role in the Greek and Roman imagination was that of a destructive, emasculating force that challenged the established dogmas. Overall, the witch functioned as a negative model for proper female behaviour, and classical authors (e.g. Hesiod) tended to portray witches as evil and deceptive beings (for an updated study of the figure of the witch in antiquity, see Stratton and Kalleres 2014). In contrast to such negative readings of the witch, H.D.'s revised Circe is portrayed as the most powerful sorceress on Earth, a sorceress respected by everyone: she controls men —"it was easy enough/ to bend them to my wish,/ [...]/ It is easy enough to summon them to my feet/ with a thought" (H.D. 1983: 118, 119)—, and the natural elements —"It is easy enough/ to make cedar and white ash fumes/ into palaces/ and to cover the sea-caves/ with ivory and onyx" (120). The figure of the witch has maintained the same connotations in modern times, when this word has usually been applied to any woman who, in one way or another, challenges the social conventions (Ballesteros 2005).

[16]. For instance, in "Demeter" we hear the goddess comment angrily on the conventions through which she is normally portrayed ("Ah they have wrought me heavy/ and great of limb—") and reject the male-centred tradition by advocating the recuperation of the mother: "Enough of the lightening/ enough of the tales that speak/ of the death of the mother" (H.D. 1983: 113). At the end of the poem, Demeter turns to Persephone and contrasts her own strong maternal arms, which tend and protect her beloved daughter, with the grasping arms of Hades: "Ah, strong were the arms that took/ (ah, evil the heart and graceless),/ but the kiss was less passionate" (115).

[17]. Some of the most prominent examples include Anne Sexton, Margaret Atwood, Rita Dove, Linda Pastan, Adrienne Rich, Judy Grahn (of whom the last two have been especially clear about H.D.'s importance for their own revisionist, feminist, and lesbian poetics).

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BIBLICAL ECHOES AND COMMUNAL HOME IN JESMYN WARD'S *SALVAGE THE BONES*

ECOS BÍBLICOS Y HOGAR COMUNAL EN *SALVAGE THE BONES,* DE JESMYN WARD

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Abstract

Jesmyn Ward's second novel, *Salvage the Bones* (2011), offers a literary account of an African American family in dire poverty struggling to weather the horrors of Hurricane Katrina on the outskirts of Bois Sauvage, Mississippi. This article focuses on the novel's 'ideology of form', which is premised on biblical models of narration —grounded on a literary transposition of The Book of Deuteronomy— that serves to portray the victimization of African Americans in mythical tones to evoke the country's failed covenant between God and his chosen people. It also brings into focus the affective bonds of unity and communal healing relying on the idiosyncratic tenet of home understood as national space— following Winthrop's foundational ideology. As I will argue, the novel contends that the revamped concept of communal home and familial bonds —echoing Winthrop's emblem of national belonging— recasts the trope of biblical refuge as a potential tenet to foster self-assertion and to rethink the limits of belonging and acceptance.

Keywords: Hurricane Katrina, African Americans, Bible, Deuteronomy, home.

Resumen

La segunda novela de Jesmyn Ward, *Salvage the Bones* (2011), expone el recuento literario de una familia afroamericana luchando para sobrevivir al horror del impacto

del huracán Katrina en la más extrema pobreza en las afueras de Bois Sauvage, Mississippi. El presente artículo se centra en la forma ideológica de la novela, la cual sigue los preceptos de la narración bíblica —partiendo de la transposición literaria del Deuteronomio— que sirve para ejemplificar la victimización de los afroamericanos en términos míticos con el fin de evocar el pacto roto entre Dios y el pueblo elegido, así como para traslucir los lazos afectivos de unidad y curación comunitaria alrededor de la lectura idiosincrática del hogar como reducto nacional, siguiendo los preceptos fundacionales de Winthrop. Como se demostrará, la novela ejemplifica que la lectura revisitada de este hogar comunitario y de los lazos familiares —como emblema nacional de pertenencia imitando el modelo de Winthrop— refigura el concepto de refugio bíblico para transmutar en un potencial elemento que fagocita la asertividad y repiensa los límites de pertenencia nacional y aceptación.

Palabras clave: huracán Katrina, afroamericanos, Biblia, Deuteronomio, hogar.

1. Introduction

"Everything need a chance"
Jesmyn Ward, *Salvage the Bones*

Hurricane Katrina, which struck New Orleans in 2005, was the worst hurricane reported in recent US history. It resulted in over 1,417 deaths and over 75 billion dollars in damage. More than ten years later, the recovery process — physical, emotional, and otherwise— is still ongoing. As cultural trauma theorist Ron Eyerman says, "Katrina was remarkable not only because of its devastation, but also because of how it was experienced, understood, and interpreted" (2015: 5). Following Mary Ruth Marotte and Glenn Jellenik's complaint that in the "ten-year anniversary of the Hurricane Katrina […] scholars and critics have done surprisingly little in the way of systematically processing […] creative processings" (2015: viii), it is intriguing to examine how writers have aestheticized the tragedy into fiction. This article focuses on an African American reading of this tragedy in *Salvage the Bones*, the National Book Award-winning novel by African American writer Jesmyn Ward, published in 2011. As Marotte and Jellenik explain, the novel "is representative of a distinct and meaningful body of literature that has emerged following the disaster of Hurricane Katrina, literature that seeks to examine not only the personal lives affected by the storm but also the ways that Americans deal with disasters, both natural and man-made, public and personal" (2015: ix).

Since the impact of the hurricane was far more damaging for the black community than for the white,[1] Hurricane Katrina brought to light much societal unhealthiness

including poverty, racism, debilitating political partisanship, social hostility, and governmental neglect as well as sanitary issues.[2] Ward's novel shows how deeply Katrina reached into US culture, particularly within the southern African American community. The story brings forth a sense of debacle that reflects a set of cultural and identity issues exposed by the storm. In an attempt to unpack the story, I will focus on the biblical imagery that shapes the novel's narrative. In so doing, I will explain how this literary strategy evokes the social failure of the mythical way in which the country has been historically understood. To readdress this failure, I argue that the novel privileges the affective bonds of unity and communal healing upon the idiosyncratic tenet of home as national space, following Winthrop's foundational creed.

In Ward's conception of the Southern land as reflected through the tragedy of hurricane Katrina, the United States becomes a destructive place and the biblical Eden is turned into a doomed netherworld. The novel's "ideology of form" —to use Frederic Jameson's coinage (2008: 146) to explain typological readings— is therefore shaped by the "religious idea of America", as Nina Baym would put it (1985: 64), that praises individuals before society. Even though African Americans had theoretically been accepted as participants in the egalitarian dream of the US as a nation, their utter exclusion —a reversal of the country's hospitable ethos— is founded on the biblical predicament that suffuses the narrative: "so that you may be sons of your Father who is in heaven. For he makes his sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust" (Matt. 5:45). In this light, I argue that the novel is rooted in biblical forms of narration as an African American literary form, since the black family's spiritual alienation can be traced and understood through scriptural episodes, allegories, and typologies.

More precisely, as prefaced in the novel's paratext, the story offers echoes from The Book of Deuteronomy, paralleling its literary evaluation of God's covenant with his chosen people as well as the violence and teachings it is suffused with, as Stephen Cook (2015: 20) observes in his literary reading of Deuteronomy, and includes biblical echoes to showcase the mythical nature attached to the family's tragic whereabouts. Moreover, a biblical interpretation of the novel informs the ways in which different readings of hospitality are exposed and aestheticized since a discourse of hospitality and hostility permeates the Bible, as Ana Mª Manzanas and Jesús Benito explain (2017: 4-5). Both in form and in content, *Salvage the Bones* is premised on biblical typology, making the novel a native output that partakes in the critique of the nation's blemishes. Also, this is the framework in which hospitality/hostility and the quest for healing through interconnected conceptions of home are molded and worked upon between the national creed and the characters.

The novel follows the actions of a poor family of African Americans, the Batistes (a distressed black father and his children Skeetah, Esch, and Junior, and their prized pit bull China), in the twelve days leading up to and immediately after the hurricane. Throughout the twelve chapters, each of which chronicles a single day in the lives of the characters, the hurricane builds as an oxymoronic absent presence which remains unnamed until chapter six and unseen until chapter eleven. Premised upon biblical terms, the storm defines the characters' moves and prompts their sense of place and belonging. In this way, Ward offers a blunt account of this family in this particular junkyard of land as the epitome of the social and racial inequalities that have for so long defined the ethos of the US south. Written in sometimes lyrical and sometimes minimal prose, the novel follows a southern literary tradition cultivated by writers such as Ralph Ellison, Alice Walker or Eudora Welty.

By rooting her work in the literature of the southern landscape, Ward openly pays literary homage to William Faulkner. Echoes of *As I Lay Dying* can easily be found in *Salvage the Bones*.[3] Both texts share a plot about a family of brothers, one pregnant teenage sister, and a father living in the deprived South and wrestling with the recent death of a mother and wife.[4] Both fictional families also wind up finding refuge in the land that surrounds their houses. However, Ward's novel departs from Faulkner's by revising what the inner space of home may represent for a family that is torn apart in a geography of disposability. In the hospitable scope of the household, the absence of motherhood allows Esch to capitalize affection and familial bonding as assets that salvage the family from being engulfed both literally and symbolically. Hence, communal affection and parental love appear as national tenets able to recompose the subjectivity of (African) Americans, as John Winthrop envisioned for the colonists. The biblical typology that permeates the novel proposes the possibility of national redemption through an affective transposition of bonding and communal interrelationships.

Rick Crownshaw's reading of Ward's novel as 'post-naturalistic' is appropriate since he affirms that "Ward's post-naturalism suggests a progression of the relation between subject and environment in which the subject's sovereignty over itself has further weakened but in which new forms of cognition have arisen" (2014: 161). However, building upon these claims, I base my assumptions on a religious-based reading of the novel to argue that the story is fashioned in biblical modes of narration to provide an explicit account of the social tragedy of Hurricane Katrina and its impact on the subjectivity and representation of African Americans. In so doing, the novel participates in the national continuum of the biblical narrative of the nation through a specifically Christian reading of the Scriptures focused on the role of God as a divine father which infuses African American literature from slave narratives onwards. I suggest that Ward's portrayal

of the victimization of African Americans conforms less to naturalistic and environmental practices than to mythical ones. By interpreting the destructive effect of the hurricane on the black characters through a literary transposition of the Book of Deuteronomy and by a biblical reading of concepts such as hospitality and a feminine household based on the workings of affection and love, the novel offers an alternative narrative of national redemption and revisits some tenets that have historically affected African Americans: motherhood, family and national adherence to the country.

2. *Salvage the Bones:* The Bible, Shared Home and Belonging

For the land is mine,
for you are strangers and sojourners with me
Leviticus 25:23

In *Salvage the Bones*, caring for property and the alluring warmth of the inner space —as read through Winthrop's national lens— become central to the process of healing and understanding following affective modes of love and help for survival. In this sense, the right to own property becomes the equivalent of the commendable path towards belonging and acceptance within the premises of affection and fondness in a country in which land —as territory— encapsulates the concept of exclusion and may well turn into a hostile ground. Ward resorts to the real tragedy of hurricane Katrina to recreate and narrate a biblical scenario of natural disaster prone to push African Americans to the edge of dispossession and poverty. Thus, the dichotomy between inner space and the open dwelling becomes firmly established from the outset, and the affection of the protective house is upheld at the expense of the hostile nature of exteriority. In this way, in the novel, to use Levinas' words, "the openness of space signifies the outside where nothing covers anything, non-protection, the reverse of retreat, homelessness, the non-world, non-inhabitation" (1998: 179). In contrast, the affective relationships around and inside the home as a retreat appear attached to a specific reading of hospitality akin to Derrida's conception of the term: "for there to be hospitality, there must be a door" (2000: 14). Accordingly, "[t]he image of the door […] relocates hospitality within the closed shelter" (Manzanas and Benito 2017: 31). Moreover, the concept of home is unrelentingly connected to the land and the inhabitants' subjectivity, as Bachelard explained in *The Poetics of Space* (1994: 6). Both the act of building and protecting a house —the open door to the family's affective home— become constant actions that propel the plot.

The feeling of being homeless permeates the narrative, and this fact acts as a catalyst to prompt the black characters to build a shelter where they can feel at home. Indeed, the citation that opens the novel is crucial to understand the family's sense of place and belonging, and will act as the definition of the Batistes' role in the US: "See now that I, even I am he, and there is no God with me; I kill and I make alive, I wound and I heal, neither is there any that can deliver out of my hand" (Deut. 32:39). The act of shaping the story in biblical modes of narration from its inception establishes the novel's ideology of form and infuses the story with mythical characteristics. The novel purposefully participates in the idea of the American civil religion as a "powerful symbol charged with great cultural meaning" (Howard-Pitney 2005: 3). Drawing on the Puritan John Winthrop's foundational myth of the 'City upon a Hill' (derived from the much-celebrated sermon "A Model of Christian Charity"), which became the paradigmatic text of the nation's exceptionalist cause and ideology, the illustration of a unique socio-religious perfection paved the way for the coming of God's earthly kingdom and served as the cornerstone for the creation of a civil religion based on Protestant civic piety. This civil religion was conceived as a "shared set of myths, symbols, and rituals underpin[ning] American society and seek[ing] to unify its diverse polity into one moral spiritual community" (Howard-Pitney 2005: 4).

Ward has acknowledged her engagement with the Bible and the mythical understanding of the nation in the making of *Salvage the Bones*. The link between the mythical reading of the nation and my interpretation of the novel's engagement with biblical modes of narration is thus upheld by Ward's own words. In an interview about the novel she declared that "Biblical myth is as integral to the spirit of the South as the heat and humidity. The epigraphs [that open the novel] acknowledge that history" (Hoover 2011). In this regard, the fact that the novel is introduced by a quote from Deuteronomy is an instant declaration of the author's literary intentions. The biblical Book of Deuteronomy presents the words of Moses delivered before the conquest of Canaan, the Promised Land. In contrast to the narratives of Leviticus and Numbers, here Moses' words are an explicit allusion to God's wishes for his people. In the Book of Deuteronomy (meaning 'repetition of the law'), Moses delivers his epic farewell discourses to prepare the people for their entrance into Canaan. In them, Moses emphasizes the prominence of the laws that were especially needed at such a time. Thus, the words of Moses come to us from his heart as a vivid example of the covenant that this servant of the Lord had to press on his people. The citation that Ward has chosen speaks about the precise moment in which, through Moses, God is determined to speak to the Israelites in the extremity of their need, to lead them to a better judgement and place, and to grant them victory over their flaws and foes.

In a similar way, the family in the novel is in need of a place where they can feel secure and find their peace of mind. Indeed, the day-to-day journey towards salvation in light of the upcoming tragedy is shaped following God's warning to extol love and survival: "These commandments that I give you today are to be on your hearts" (Deut. 30:15). This typological reading of the story allows Ward to shape her novel with mythical tones and also to follow Deuteronomy's message of how to act towards national redemption in the promised land. Hence, the biblical echoes that pervade the plot work as literary schemes to shape the story and to convey its message. For this reason, the twelve days that chronicle the lives of the African American family are invested with a biblical message from the very beginning. As in the Bible, the number twelve is sacred since it leads to an eventual epiphany and the birth of the Saviour: in *Salvage the Bones* the twelve days leading up to the arrival of the hurricane are premised upon the prophecy that requires commitment and unity: "This day I call the heavens and the earth as witnesses against you that I have set before you life and death, blessings and curses. Now choose life, so that you and your children may live" (Deut. 30:19). This also mirrors the land in which God pitched his tent; the place where the African American family in the novel live echoes the pit in which God places the Israelites.

If the Book of Deuteronomy's purpose was to prepare the new generation of God's chosen people to be the representatives of his kingdom on earth in the land he had chosen for them, in *Salvage the Bones* the covenant is broken since the land itself turns out to be unsuitable for their settlement. In a biblical intertextual exercise, the land where the Baptiste family live was inherited from their ancestors Mother Lizabeth and Papa Joseph, ex-slaves who gained the land after the Emancipation Proclamation. The land acquires the biblical imagery of disposal and displacement and, just as the Israelite people overlook the importance of the land for their survival, in the novel black men disregarded the dangerous situation of the land they obtained from white people. That is why Papa Joseph nicknamed the land the "Pit" —a literary move that mirrors the characteristics of the land in which God placed his tent according to Deuteronomy (21:1)— after he let the "white men he work with dig for clay that they used to lay the foundation for houses", which eventually left a huge hole where they had excavated the side of a hill (Ward 2011: 14). Thus, the Pit appears as a desolate landscape, the Batistes' house "nearly invisible under the oaks and behind the rubbish, lopsided", a space of "discarded plastic garbage cans, detached fenders" (126). Ward's conception of the land as hostile and exclusionary rebuts the biblical message of Deuteronomy and presents the US South as a location that resists the covenant between God and his people. The Pit is not the land of milk and honey but rather showcases "the ruins of the refuse-laden yard" (18) placed openly "in the dirt" (59).

Recasting the land as hostile in biblical terms revisits the trope of hospitality as proposed in the Bible. Ward takes on a biblical rendering of hospitality to highlight the broken covenant between God and his chosen people, which in the novel is implied by the way in which African Americans were abandoned in the catastrophe of hurricane Katrina.[5] In Deuteronomy, the workings of hospitality focus on how the stranger is perceived and embraced. It is a law of universal hospitality that "emanat[es] from the biblical injunction to cater to the needs of the stranger" (Manzanas and Benito 2017: 19). Conversely, the novel emphasizes the way in which the approaching hurricane spurs the family's eventual removal since their presence in the Pit is read in hostile terms. Drawing on such a biblical point of view, hospitality turns from "a discourse of generosity into a discourse of spatiality and displacement, from an interpersonal moral act into a national political issue" (Manzanas and Benito 2017: 19). Therefore, out of the broken covenant, "the house cannot be redeemed" (Bailey 1999: 23). The Batiste family has no choice but to seek shelter to prepare themselves for the destructive storm. As Henri Giroux points out, African Americans "had become an unwelcome reminder of the state of poverty and racism in the United States, and for that they should be punished" (2006: 176), a clear vision that transforms the presence of African Americans into shapeshifters of strangeness within the country.[6] This conception of the homeless as "intrinsically wandering and exiled on earth is […] widespread in the Bible" (Manzanas and Benito 2017: 52). In a similar way, the Batiste family is pushed into displacement and unbelonging.

The displacement is evident when Katrina strikes the Pit and the family is forced to leave their house. The episode is filled with biblical imagery since it is fashioned after the flood narrative in Genesis. Following God's instruction for the upcoming catastrophe: "I set you today life and prosperity, death and destruction" (Deut. 30:15), the family also listens to the government's warning: "*Hurricane making landfall tomorrow. If you choose to stay in your home and have not evacuated by this time, we are not responsible. You have been warned* […] *You can die*" (Ward 2011: 217, emphasis in original). The precariousness of the house and its material instability deepen the sense of hostility that suffuses the Batiste family. Once the hurricane strikes, chaos pervades. As in the biblical flood, there is only one way of salvation: gathering together in a neighbour's secure home. In the Bible, salvation is through the door of the ark —the door that enacts the act of hospitality— which may be akin to the Christian way of salvation through Christ. Indeed, salvation is achieved through redemption, which is the communal act for Christians by all means linked to hospitality, since it has the holy *communion* as the most important moment to come together as one body in order to remember and celebrate what Christ did for humanity. Likewise, in the novel, salvation is only achieved when

African Americans get together in a communal understanding of nurturing and bonding under the protective shelter of affective homes.

The connections interwoven in *Salvage the Bones* are related to family bonds and to alternative readings of motherhood. When Katrina engulfs Bois Sauvage, the family awaits the opportunity to find shelter at Big Henry's (their neighbour) in their attic, the only spot where they can find refuge. However, once the attic also begins to flood, the family is forced to leave the house in a sort of exile— "*An exile, oh God*" (Ward 2011: 225, emphasis in original). With the house falling apart and "the bones of the ceiling folding so low" (240), Esch is about to be engulfed by the flood. Like Jonah in the Bible, Esch embodies here God's mercy turned into flesh, and her survival signals her and her family's acceptance, thanks to her embracing of family bonds related to God's message in his covenant with the chosen people. In this vein, also as in the biblical flood —in which, through a Christian reading of the Scriptures, life is highlighted over death as a sacred understanding of existence (Pet. 3:20-21) that attests the Christian comprehension of God as a divine father— the ark may be connected to the resurrection of Christ. The resurrection takes the form of the waters burying the old world but raising Noah to a new life— Esch is brought back to life thanks to her brother Skeetah. He rescues her in preference to China and embraces, literally, the act of communal bonding according to Esch's words: "I put my legs to either side of his thighs, scooted up behind him, slid my arms under his armpits, and rested my face on his shoulder" (Ward 2011: 238). The depiction of Esch's salvation —or resurrection in biblical terms— echoes the fellowship alluded to in Deuteronomy's message (22:19), consistent with the Lord's example and words: "A friend loves at all times, and a brother is born for a time of adversity" (Prov. 17:17).

Once the water level has gone down and the family is reunited, the exile comes to an end since they find shelter at Big Henry's home. In the terrible scene of decay and disaster —"the houses clustered, there were people in the street, barefoot, half naked, walking around felled trees, crumpled trampolines, talking with each other, shaking their heads" but the African American community managed to survive and be "alive, alive, alive" (Ward 2011: 242)— the family manages to persevere thanks to a shared vision of hospitality. Big Henry's illuminating figure is based upon Moses' redemptive ethos in the Book of Deuteronomy. According to God's mission, the prophet should cater for the dispossessed for "there will always be poor people in the land. Therefore I command you to be openhanded toward your brothers and toward the poor and needy in your land" (Deut. 15:11). In a hostile land that excludes the poor, the mythical drive toward community and bonding represents an alternative way to eschew precariousness and abandonment.

In addition, Big Henry's home acts as a surrogate home that embraces the precarious black family and becomes a biblical refuge of sorts (Deut. 32:31). This understanding of home, based on religious grounds, portrays the communal dwelling as a way to dodge national exclusion, since it relates the national ethos of the country to the needs of African Americans. In so doing, Ward's replica of a national and communal home for the dispossessed may be linked to Winthrop's foundational ascription to home and community: "if the place of our habitation be our owne, then no man hath right to come unto us" (2003: 145). Indeed, Winthrop's foundational idea relies heavily on the comfort of home to "strengthen, defend, preserve and comfort each other" (1630). In order to reunite a sundered community, Ward echoes Winthrop's Christian emphasis on mercy that bespeaks the prospects of sustaining a sense of being through communal love: "If one member suffers, all suffer with it, if one be in honor, all rejoice with it".

By interconnecting such religious and foundational rights to a home with survival and belonging, the novel contributes to a divergent characterisation of Americanness by offering possibilities for African Americans to resist the covenant's national betrayal. Certainly, Ward has acknowledged that home and community have a decisive hand in the family's survival. Explaining the closeness of the word savage with the title's salvage, she emphasizes that "[a]t home, among the young, there is honor in that term [savage]. It says that come hell or high water, Katrina or oil spill, hunger or heat, you are strong, you are fierce, and you possess hope" (Hoover 2011). Yet, it is only in the community that "you resolve to fight, you do the only thing you can: you survive. You are savage" (Hoover 2011). The savagery of this ethos explains the name of the community where the Batiste family live — Bois Sauvage— and the title of the novel: to survive, to salvage is to be savage.

As Lloyd further observes, "[t]hat Sauvage etymologically derives from wild and wood roots Ward's observation into the rural landscape that she is describing and that the Batistes inhabit" (2018: 163). Accordingly, "[s]alvaging is thus not simply a personal condition rooted in precarity, but also a way to transform a vision of communality, collectivity, and region in the face of catastrophe" (Lloyd 2018: 163). In this mythical reading of the novel, the title also conjures up Winthrop's ideological rhetoric that couples God's mercy and national attachment. Thus, if for the Puritan leader love comes from God and "it works like the Spirit upon the dry bones" (1630), the novel's title carries the echoes of "a Model of Christian Charity" and avows America's destiny and promise of erecting a social model that "must be knit together" (Winthrop 1630)—those "dry bones" that shall be salvaged: "Bone came to bone" (Ezek. 37:7). It should also be noted that in the Bible the concept of 'salvage' is also linked to both communal survival and resilience (Amos 3:12).

In this light, Raymond Malewitz submits that the novel "bases its sense of region on what persists in spite of the hurricane's destructive power: the bonds that still hold the family and the larger community […] together" (2015: 717). As stated before, the nature of such bonds relies on an alternative vision of motherhood. At the very beginning of the story, we learn that the mother of the family died whilst giving birth to Junior, the youngest of the siblings, and also that China, Skeetah's pitbull, is giving birth. The primeval act of mothering —whether present or absent— modulates the relationships among the Batistes. Skeetah's protection towards the little puppies, Junior's fascination with the birthing, the father's initial indifference —later turning into tender moments when it comes to taking care of the pets— and Esch's mimesis with the act of giving birth, since she is pregnant with Manny's child, not only reunites the whole family but also displays the collective trauma derived from their mother's death and prompts an alternative vision of motherhood.

In a full circle that links motherhood from the beginning of the story until the end, the novel finishes in the aftermath of Katrina read in feminine terms and infused with maternal characteristics. In Esch's mind, Katrina is "the mother that swept the Gulf and slaughtered […] left us naked and bewildered as wrinkled newborn babies, as blind puppies […] She left us to salvage. Katrina is the mother we will remember until the next mother […] comes" (Ward 2011: 255). Motherhood is complicated in the novel and is far from the nurturing prototype of the caring and suffering mother that the Bible depicts. Although the Bible never states that every woman should be a mother, it does say that those whom the Lord blesses to be mothers should take the responsibility earnestly. Biblical mothers have a unique and crucial role in the lives of their children. Motherhood is not a chore or unpleasant task but a divine mission of unconditional love and commitment, as Kirk-Duggan and Pippin have pointed out in *Mother Goose, Mother Jones, Mommie Dearest: Biblical Mothers and Their Children* (2009: 1-2).

However, rather than the memories of her mother, the tangible exemplars of motherhood for Esch are China and the myth of Medea. Like China and Medea, she envisions herself as able to sacrifice her baby (Ward 2011: 205). Hence, Esch's fascination with the story of Medea is unrelentingly attached to the upcoming hurricane and equates maternity with a myth embroiled in death, tragedy and separation. Since Medea killed her own children, and China also wound up killing one of her puppies and losing the fight, Skeetah forced her to battle with a view to protect her honour as a mother, Esch's sense of motherhood is openly in need of alternative models of nurturing, as Stevens (2018: 164) and Henry (2019: 74) explain. China's sense of motherhood is invalidated since it is paired with the family's mother and therefore appears as doomed to failure from the very

beginning. China's relationship to the Batistes is familial, as Esch recognizes when she describes the kinship between the dog and her brother Skeetah: "He has turned from lover to father. She is his doting daughter" (Ward 2011: 98). Esch herself also compares China to her mother: "She had shook like China, threw her head back" (93). Accordingly, by killing her puppy, China embodies the perfect mixture of the family's mother and the mythical Medea and therefore offers a precise model for a mythical motherhood which Esch is unable to live up to: "I try to read the entire mythology book but I can't. I am stuck in the middle" (154).

Unloved and rejected by her lover and her child's father, Esch turns to communal bonding for support. This alternative model of motherhood falls into the category of *othermothering*, as proposed by Stanlie James. For James, othermothering is "the acceptance of responsibility for a child not one's own, in an arrangement that may or may not be formal" (1999: 45). The concept of othermothering derives from the familial instability of slavery and was used to furnish bonds between the communities of slaves to provide parental figures. However, it only applies to women since "[c]ommunity mothering and othermothering also emerged in response to Black mothers' needs and served to empower Black women and enrich their lives" (O'Reilly 2004: 6). This concept of othermothering is also found in the Bible, where there are different examples of women raising children other than their own, such as Tamar (Gen. 38), Miriam (Exodus) or Jehosheba (Kings 11:2-3). In the novel, Ward also offers an alternative —a counteralternative— to othermothering by presenting men able to play their part in the process of nurturing an upcoming baby. Thus, *Salvage the Bones* offers the possibility to veer from othermothering to otherfathering. This is clearly seen when, after the outcome of the hurricane, Esch confides to Big Henry, a sort of honorary member of the family, her concern that her baby "don't have a daddy", to which Big Henry responds: "You wrong [...]. This baby got plenty daddies" (Ward 2011: 255). Not only does this response legitimize Esch as a different mother to the models that she was familiar with; it also expands the concept of motherhood to include otherfathers as a renewed familial act of communal bonding and healing. This move again recalls Winthrop's rendition of hu*man*ity within the covenant: "we must delight in each other; make other's conditions our own" (Winthrop 1630, emphasis added). What is more, Big Henry talks about "this baby", a move that consciously reinstates the subjectivity of Esch's child within the perimeters of otherfathering in a process of total assertion, as she is finally able to proclaim: "I am a mother" (Ward 2011: 258). In this sense, Moynihan aptly refers to "mutual responsibility" (2015: 559) as a term that includes otherfathering within the "multiple role models for children" (Wane 2000: 113) reorganized to chip in with the foundational creed —an idea which follows Winthrop's aforesaid conception of familial bonds as the way to "preserve and comfort each other" (1630)— in

order to "nurture both themselves and future generations" (Wane 2000: 113). Interestingly, the communal nurturing and otherfathering takes place inside the rehabilitated space of Big Henry's house. Consequently, if the Batistes' dirty and somber home was doomed to disappear in the face of precariousness —"The house is a dying animal skeleton" (Ward 2011: 58)— once the black family and their community have managed to survive and rethink their present marked by this past precariousness but not locked into it, Big Henry's house embraces communality —"we got plenty of room" (Ward 2011: 257)— breathing flesh to new opportunities through bonding and communal affection. So if, as Ursula K. Heise explains in *Sense of Place and Sense of Planet*, a house might represent "local autonomy and self-sufficiency" (2008: 29), the novel's ending demonstrates Blunt and Dowling's statement that "[h]ome is much more than a house or the physical structure in which we dwell. Home is both a place or physical location and a set of feelings" (2006: 254).

Out of this conception of the communal space as a place for bonding and healing, Big Henry's house departs from the idea of the house as a skeleton to a house that takes "human shape" (Ward 2011: 257) where "the scattered bones" (Winthrop 1630) are knitted together. This specific place of abode appeals, at once, to the biblical representation of hospitality. In this depiction, the concept of shelter —being and feeling homed— "refracts the inherent instability of the grounds of hospitality" and signifies a "space capable of welcoming while at the same time underlining its own vulnerability" (Manzanas and Benito 2017: 25). This concept of home that the novel displays —as sanctuary and a sacred abode— equally comes from Deuteronomy which has been called the Magna Carta of the home that guarantees the well-being of the family (6:4-10). This link with Deuteronomy also applies to the final episode of *Salvage the Bones* since it connects the principles of the sacred home —which, again, resonate in Winthrop's idea of national belonging— to the fulfilment of God's glory through the perpetuation of faith in the Lord from generation to generation, as Esch's future offspring attests. It is within the communal space of home that God's people "through the perseverance […] of the Scriptures might have hope" (Rom. 15:4).

In this context, Esch's acceptance of motherhood under the roof of community, bonding and the intrinsic potential of otherfathering gives her the endurance to hope for China's return and, with her maternity values reinstated, the young girl's final assertion resonates with complete comfort: in the hypothetical case that China may be alive to come back, "[s]he will know that I am a mother" (Ward 2011: 258). Thus, the story's final words hint at a rethinking of the assumed but broken covenant that lurks behind the biblical shaping of the novel by revisiting the typological vision of John Winthrop's idiosyncratic reading of the United

States as a country in which, in times of despair, the "degree of loyalty required was not fundamentally contractual or political in nature; it had to be familial" (Anderson 1990: 1), as *Salvage the Bones* forthrightly evinces.

3. Conclusion

God is the builder of everything
Hebrews 3:4

Salvage the Bones is a multi-layered novel that offers a literary account of the tragedy of hurricane Katrina and its effects on African Americans. The story is focused on a poor African American family which manages to survive the catastrophe, poverty and exclusion. The novel's ideology of form is articulated following biblical modes of narration to shape the story in mythical patterns rather than in naturalistic ones, and to point to the shortcomings of the foundational covenant when it comes to including African Americans. In doing so, Ward resorts to the Bible and to its mythical ethos to inscribe the novel into canonical traditions in the national discourse that view the typological narrative of the US as a covenant between God and his chosen people. The novel is prefaced by a quote from Deuteronomy which acts as a starting point to consider the story as a literary retelling of Deuteronomy's ethos —understood as literature (Cook 2015: 5)— and which at the same time facilitates a wider biblical interpretation of the whereabouts of the Batiste family. As the hurricane approaches, the African American family's preparations for the disaster finds full articulation when they reunite in the safety of a communal home they wind up sharing with Big Henry and some neighbours in the black vicinity.

I have studied how the story is primordially premised on the Book of Deuteronomy's message to showcase the national betrayal represented by the breaking of the covenant between God and his African American sons and daughters. Ward capitalizes on the story of Deuteronomy by adapting its mythical and religious sense and transporting it to the real context of dispossession and precariousness attached to the US South. This mythical reading of the text illustrates the shortcomings of the national covenant, contemplates the ethical and religious boundaries of hospitality/hostility, and explodes the egalitarian ethos of the nation in its treatment of African Americans in the aftermath of the tragedy of Katrina.

Advocating the typological message of Christian charity in Deuteronomy, *Salvage the Bones* mythicizes the story to offer alternative possibilities of belonging and survival. Within a frame of reference that favours unity, Esch offers a renewed

familial act of communal bonding and healing, suggesting a fresh discourse on motherhood. Her eventual understanding of motherhood is assumed by means of including the men from the black community in a shared act of fathering —or rather otherfathering— that not only rethinks the act of mothering toward inclusiveness but also reaffirms the affective bonds of community as a feasible way to resist dispossession and exclusion and also to rework the shortcomings of God's crippled covenant.

The novel suggests that the rehabilitated concept of this communal home, which echoes Winthrop's emblem of national belonging, recasts the trope of biblical refuge as a potential tenet to foster self-assertion and to rethink the limits of belonging and acceptance. Ward's characters dwell in isolation and despair in scenes that recreate their alienation from the national discourse and reveal the corruption and abandonment that white America inscribes on black Americans. To overcome this twofold tragedy —the national and the atmospheric— the novel draws from the Bible and its mythical recounting in favour of unity and communal bonding to narrate and reclaim resistance to the historical legacies of dispossession and exclusion associated to African American subjectivities.[7]

Notes

[1]. See Kenneth Nunn's chapter "'Still Up on the Roof': Race, Victimology, and the Response to Hurricane Katrina" in *Hurricane Katrina: America's Unnatural Disaster* (2009).

[2]. As Alyssa Robillard contends, among the ills that sprung from Katrina it is also worth mentioning "an implicit disregard for the health and well-being of a people whose health was already severely compromised. Every individual directly touched by the hurricane has, in all likelihood, experienced health consequences as a result. These consequences range from minor cuts and bruises to pervasive post-traumatic stress disorder to the greatest of all consequences, death. The notion of health, for many individuals, is a ubiquitous yet often suppressed concern, until it becomes too great to ignore. Before, during, and after the storm, residents faced unparalleled health challenges, and this is especially true for African Americans. Their health needs remain too great to ignore" (2009: 132-133).

[3]. Sinead Moynihan's article "From Disposability to Recycling: William Faulkner and the New Politics of Rewriting in Jesmyn Ward's *Salvage the Bones*" (2015) studies this intertextual relation in detail.

[4]. Previously, Esch gets ready for a summer with her brothers whilst reading and commenting: "After my ninth-grade year, we read *As I Lay Dying*, and I made an A because I answered the hardest question right: *Why does the young boy think his mother is a fish?*" (Ward 2011: 7, emphasis in original).

[5]. Lloyd states that "African Americans in the US South were not only disregarded in social life before the storm, but revictimized by Katrina's effect: rendered disposable by the government's lack of

response to their civil and human rights" (2018: 140).

[6]. This is also Rubén Peinado Abarrio's contention in his cultural analysis of the tragedy of Hurricane Katrina as seen in his article "'Like Refugees in their Own Country:' Racial Formation in post-Katrina US" (2012).

[7]. This article results from the Project "Troubling Houses: Dwellings, Materiality, and the Self in American Literature", funded by the Spanish Plan Nacional I+D+i (ref. FFI201782692-P, 2018-2020).

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POST-ENLIGHTENED POE: ANALYSING THE PATHOLOGIES OF MODERNITY IN "THE PURLOINED LETTER" AND "THE COLLOQUY OF MONOS AND UNA"

POE POST-ILUSTRADO: UN ANÁLISIS DE LAS PATOLOGÍAS DE LA MODERNIDAD EN "THE PURLOINED LETTER" Y "THE COLLOQUY OF MONOS AND UNA"

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Abstract

This paper delves into the long-debated tensions that critics have found in Edgar Allan Poe (1809-1849)'s writings, which have placed him as a liminal figure between the Enlightenment and Romanticism. In particular, I will maintain that these tensions are representative of the contradictions inherent in the modern project, which I will argue are present in Poe's writings and which situate Poe's texts as both a symptom of and a reaction to the pathologies of modernity.[1] To this end, I will consider Max Horkheimer and Theodor W. Adorno's *Dialectic of Enlightenment* (1944), arguing that the problems addressed in the volume were foreshadowed by Poe's writings a century earlier. After a brief introduction, I will analyse the widely-discussed "The Purloined Letter" (1844) and the attitudes towards rationality that Poe presents in the story. I will then explore the lesser-known "The Colloquy of Monos and Una" (1841),[2] where Poe anticipates some of the problems that Horkheimer and Adorno voiced, most notably the confusion between progress and technification.

Keywords: Poe, Romanticism, Enlightenment, rationality, progress.

Resumen

El presente artículo ahonda en las tensiones que a lo largo de la crítica se han encontrado en los escritos de Edgar Allan Poe (1809-1849), y que lo sitúan como

una figura a caballo entre la Ilustración y el Romanticismo. En particular, se argumentará que dichas tensiones son representativas de las contradicciones inherentes al proyecto moderno, las cuales están presentes en los textos de Poe, situándolos como un síntoma y una reacción a las patologías de la modernidad. A este fin, consideraré *Dialéctica de la Ilustración* (1944), de Max Horkheimer y Theodor W. Adorno e indicaré cómo los problemas que trata este volumen fueron anticipados por Poe un siglo antes. Tras una breve introducción, analizaré la muy discutida "The Purloined Letter" (1844) y las actitudes sobre la racionalidad que Poe presenta en la historia, para después explorar la menos conocida "The Colloquy of Monos and Una" (1841), donde Poe anticipa algunas de las cuestiones sobre las que alertaron Horkheimer y Adorno, especialmente la confusión entre progreso y tecnificación.

Palabras clave: Poe, Romanticismo, Ilustración, racionalidad, progreso.

1. Liminal Poe

It is my contention that Poe's writing embodies the aporetic, ambiguous nature of modernity.[3] Marshall Berman has reflected in his now canonical *All That is Solid Melts into Air* on the contradictory nature of the modern world, "a world where everything is pregnant with its contrary" (1988: 22). He further asserts that "[t]o be modern is to live a life of paradox and contradiction" (13). This emphasis on contradiction ties in with Horkheimer and Adorno's diagnosis of the aporias of the Enlightenment which they formulated forty years prior to Berman's volume. In *Dialectic of Enlightenment,* they explicitly set out to discover why an emancipatory movement that attempts to give rise to, in Kant's words, "man's emergence from his self-incurred immaturity" (Kant 2003: 54), brought about a new kind of barbarism, embodied in the self-destruction of the Enlightenment itself: "The aporia which faced us in our work thus proved to be the first matter we had to investigate: the self-destruction of enlightenment" (Horkheimer and Adorno 2002: xvi). The concerns of Horkheimer and Adorno were related, among other things, to what are considered two essential pillars of the Enlightenment, namely, a deep faith in rationality, which relies on "strong conceptions of reason and of the autonomous rational subject developed from Descartes to Kant" (McCarthy 1998: viii), and an acritical assumption that the development of technification equals (moral) progress. However, the enlightened programme was unmasked as a movement not only of lights, but also of shadows. Horkheimer and Adorno perceived that the said ideological foundations of strong rationality, technical science and the myth of progress, far from achieving a more enlightened humanity, had actually contributed to the alienation of the individual.

These tensions, I will argue, are embodied in Poe's texts. This was not uncommon for a writer of his time, for, as Berman asserts, "[o]ur nineteenth-century thinkers were simultaneously enthusiasts and enemies of modern life, wrestling inexhaustibly with its ambiguities and contradictions; their self-ironies and inner tensions were a primary source of their creative power" (1988: 24). As both a romantic and a prominent inheritor of the enlightened emphasis on rationality, Poe identified some of the flagrant contradictions of modernity, adopting the attitude of one of Paul Ricoeur's philosophers of suspicion.[4] If the hermeneutics of suspicion involve reading texts in order to find hidden and potentially unattractive meanings, Poe, in his writings, read his own present and navigated the liminality between an enlightened and a romantic ethos. Dorothea Von Mücke, reflecting on this duality, has asserted that "many of Poe's texts […] are characterised by a strange hybrid component" (2009: 19, my translation).[5] It is true that Poe is mostly known for his Gothic scenarios, deranged characters and beautiful dead ladies. It is hard to come across a book by him without a sinister raven or a decrepit house on the cover. The epitome of American Dark Romanticism, Poe was much distanced from the nostalgic and joyful mood of the English romantics, whom he utterly despised (Prestwood 2010: 19-20). Indeed, Poe's romanticism has less to do with pastoral landscapes and indulging nature, and more with the appetites of the irrational and the repressed. However, Poe's interest in the irrational is at odds with his interest in the rational. Several critics have established "The Man of the Crowd"[6] as the turning point in Poe's writing, marking the difference between the Gothic phase and the "ratiocinative cycle", in Gerald Kennedy's words (1975: 185). Poe prided himself on his analytical method, famously described in his piece "The Philosophy of Composition". But it is perhaps his story "The Purloined Letter" that best exemplifies the opposing attitudes towards rationality in a way that anticipates Horkheimer and Adorno's critique.

2. Diagnosing the "Pure Arrogance of Reason" in "The Purloined Letter"

The discussion on "The Purloined Letter" is, as John T. Irwin states, a "well-worn path" (1999: 29). This short story has received a wealth of commentary and praise, with Poe himself asserting that it "is perhaps the best of my tales of ratiocination" (in Muller and Richardson 1988*:* 3). The tale tells the story of how a letter is stolen by Minister D–, a criminal of high intelligence, at least as high as that of the detective Dupin. The Prefect of Police engages in a minute investigation of the case and makes use of every possible explanation to solve it, but to no avail. Conversely, Dupin unravels the mystery by combining an utterly rational method

with his imaginative instinct: "His *method* is a finer thing, a seemingly more supersensual mechanism, than the ordinary processes of rational reckoning. It partakes of the *irrational*, and is therefore the highest kind of ratiocination" (Hoffman 1972: 107, emphasis in original). Indeed, the interest of the story lies precisely in Dupin's method of solving the crime and not in the crime itself, which acts as a pretext for the unfolding of the story. Or, in Hoffman's words: "the center of the tale […] is not *Who is guilty?* but *How will Dupin infer his guilt?*" (106-107, emphasis in original).

The story is largely built upon duplicity and antagonism, as shown by the oppositions between darkness and light, the William Wilson-esque identities of Dupin and Minister D–, or imagination and rationality. Critics such as Daniel Hoffman (1972) or Lianha Babener (1988) have taken the pairing of Minister D– and Dupin as the most relevant in the story.[7] However, for the purposes of this study, I prefer to focus on the antagonism between Dupin and the Prefect of the Parisian Police. Their antagonism is, from the beginning of the story, symbolised by the contrast between light and darkness. The word "dark" appears no less than three times in the very first page of the story, setting out the dichotomy that will structure the whole text. Dupin and the narrator are in a room in Paris "just after dark" (Poe 1992: 684), quietly pondering some cases when the Prefect of the Parisian Police comes in to ask for help with an investigation. The narrator insists that they "had been sitting in the dark" (684) and that Dupin stood up in order to light a lamp but soon changed his mind, leaving the room in darkness in order to better study the case: "'If it is any point requiring reflection', observed Dupin, as he forebore to enkindle the wick, 'we shall examine it to better purpose in the dark'" (684).

Understood in symbolic terms, one could argue that Dupin stands for darkness inasmuch as the Prefect stands for light, that is to say, enlightened reason. The Prefect's reliance on a thorough analytical method to solve the case has turned into sterile bureaucratisation, as he is unable to accomplish his task. The Prefect is presented as a representative of a socially respectable institution which makes a conventional use of reason that struggles to be effective. The ineffectiveness of the Prefect is ironically reinforced by the pompousness of his speech: "The Prefect was fond of the cant of diplomacy" (Poe 1992: 686). After the Prefect's exposition of his precise and minute exploratory methods, Dupin engages in an explanation of how mathematics are not to be used as the only reasoning system, as they are only functional in their own field of application and not in, say, moral probing. As Dupin notes: "Mathematical axioms are not axioms of general truth. What is true of relation —of form and quantity— is often grossly false in regard to morals, for example. In this latter science it is very usually untrue that the aggregated parts are equal to the whole. In chemistry also the axiom fails" (695).

Dupin's indictment of mathematical reasoning holds a striking parallel with Horkheimer and Adorno's warnings in *Dialectic of Enlightenment*. They advise against attempts to measure everything in terms of mathematical reasoning and the enlightened cliché of equating thought with mathematics. Poe had realised long before the German authors did that mathematical theorems cannot give an account of "the insoluble and irrational" (Horkheimer and Adorno 2002: 18) nor be applied to anything beyond the scope of mathematics themselves. The same can be contended about the Prefect's method which, as Dupin acknowledges, is apparently perfect but not apt for analysing Minister D–'s *modus operandi*. In other words, the problem lies not within the method itself but rather its use in realities that transcend it: "'Yes', said Dupin. 'The measures adopted were not only the best of their kind, but carried out to absolute perfection. Had the letter been deposited within the range of their search, these fellows would, beyond a question, have found it'" (Poe 1992: 692). If in *Dialectic of Enlightenment* we read that the Enlightenment is totalitarian, it is because it relies on the certainty of the infallibility of reason, which Poe mocked in tales such as this one.

The Prefect not only miscalculates about the methods he should use to solve the case; he also misreads the identity of the criminal. Following Horkheimer and Adorno, this misreading may be defined as totalitarian. An important tenet of the Enlightenment is its tendency to reduce identities to realities that can be easily assimilated, hence perpetuating the enlightened project by appropriating the world, as we read in *Dialectic of Enlightenment*: "The self which learned about order and subordination through the subjugation of the world soon equated truth in general with classifying thought, without whose fixed distinctions it cannot exist" (2002*:* 10). The Prefect constitutes a parody of this way of reasoning, along with the investigative methods used by the police in general, which seem to be accurate and infallible but in the end turn out to be sterile. The totalitarian aspect of the Enlightenment thus lies in the Prefect's assumption that reality will conform to his expectations and to his reasoning:

> What is all this boring, and probing, and sounding, and scrutinizing with the microscope, and dividing the surface of the building into registered square inches — what is it all but an exaggeration of the application of the one principle or set of principles of search, which are based upon the one set of notions regarding human ingenuity, to which the Prefect, in the long routine of his duty, has been accustomed? (Poe 1992: 694)

It is not by chance that the figure who represents this authoritarian condition of the Enlightenment is a police officer worried about his honourability and motivated not by a sense of duty but by the reward he will obtain if he solves the crime. It is no accident that one of the first interventions of the Prefect in the conversation

refers to his concern about losing his position (Poe 1992: 685). This points to a blatant inversion of ends and means, an idea which Horkheimer criticised in *Dialectic of Enlightenment* but which was given wider attention in his book *Eclipse of Reason* (2004: 3-39). Ends and means are upturned: what should be the end of the police investigation (solving the case) becomes the means to gaining honour and money, that is, to the Prefect's self-preservation as an honourable server of society. The Prefect is making use of an instrumental reason, i.e. a subjective reason —subjective because it is based on personal interest— with "operational value" which considers only "heteronomous contents" (Horkheimer 2004: 14-15). Dupin himself is not exempt from this reality: he also participates in the inversion of ends and means and relies on subjective reason, as he very straightforwardly confesses that, far from wanting to solve the case for the sake of it, he is seeking revenge against Minister D–.

The use of instrumental reason has further consequences. By considering the mystery as a means to the end of personal profit, the Prefect objectifies Minister D– as a "criminal", completely regardless of his individual dimension. The Prefect, who believes only in his own methods to solve crimes and who cannot help his bemusement when he discovers that he is not able to solve the enigma of the purloined letter, reifies Minister D– as a criminal and applies his deductive rules upon him. By restricting Minister D–'s identity to merely that of a criminal, the Prefect and his colleagues are putting into practice the principle of abstraction, called "the instrument of Enlightenment" in *Dialectic of Enlightenment* and which "makes everything in nature repeatable" (Horkheimer and Adorno 2002: 10). This explains why the Prefect had certain (unfulfilled) expectations about the criminal's *modus operandi*: he had expected him to be a mere iteration of every other criminal. The Prefect's arrogance is enhanced by the fact that he believes the Minister to be a fool because he has gained notoriety as a poet. As Dupin observes, this is the reason for his failure as a detective: "the Prefect and his cohort fail so frequently, first, by default of this identification, and, secondly, by ill-admeasurement, or rather through non-admeasurement, of the intellect with which they are engaged" (Poe 1992: 693). The fact that the Prefect is so convinced about his being right leads him to misinterpret not only the facts but most importantly the capacities of the criminal in question: "the remote source of his defeat lies in the supposition that the Minister is a fool, because he has acquired renown as a poet. All fools are poets; this the Prefect feels; and he is merely guilty of a non *distributio medii* in thence inferring that all poets are fools" (694).

It could be argued that the Prefect suffers from the "pure arrogance of reason" which Poe alludes to in his short story "The Imp of the Perverse" and which is responsible for overlooking key aspects in the study of human identity (1980b:

58). In this text, Poe establishes an interesting parallel that could be applied to the main characters of "The Purloined Letter". He distinguishes between the "intellectual or logical man" and the "understanding or observant man" (58). If the Prefect falls into the category of logical man, one could argue that Dupin is more of an observant man. However, Dupin is a much more complex character than that, and despite his instrumental sympathy with the criminal and his intuitive method, his mind is nothing but analytical. As Paul Hurhe has stated, Poe's most acclaimed detective combines a romantic attitude based on his imagination with a calm enlightened confidence in the power of reasoning: "Poe is not merely working against the "vulgar dictum" that imagination and reason are discrete and unrelated antagonistic faculties; rather, he asserts their interrelation through their opposition" (2012: 473). On a similar note, Gerald Kennedy writes:

> C. Auguste Dupin balances imaginative involvement with analytical detachment. Like his adversary in "The Purloined Letter", Dupin is both poet and mathematician. […] According to Poe's epistemology, the two modes of cognition are inextricably related; "the truly imaginative [are] never otherwise than analytic", he writes in "The Murders in the Rue Morgue" (IV, 150). (1975: 194)

The problem outlined in "The Purloined Letter" has further consequences for the criticism of the Enlightenment. Ultimately, it is suggested that reason as we have traditionally conceived it cannot give an account of the whole experience of reality. The criticism we extract from Poe's fiction and from Horkheimer and Adorno's philosophy is that humans are merely supposed to recognise the limitations of their own capacities (and every consequence which that entails) and to accept that faculties other than reason are at stake when it comes to the potential understanding of a problem, of an individual or of the world. In a typically romantic exaltation, Poe claims that "instinct, so far from being an inferior reason, is perhaps the most exacted intellect of all" (1980a: 65). Leaving romantic outbursts aside, it is interesting to see how this feeling is embodied in Dupin himself, who exemplifies "the shadowy nature" of "the boundary between instinct and reason" (66). The very act of categorising them as completely separate entities obeys a characteristic enlightened urge to classify all entities in the world. And of course, reason and instinct do have distinct features but, as mentioned previously, it is the cooperation of both that actually solves the crime and ultimately permits comprehension: "The leading distinction between instinct and reason seems to be, that, while the one is infinitely the more exact, the more certain, and the more far-seeing in its sphere of action— the sphere of action in the other is of the far wider extent" (66). It is precisely Dupin's instinct that leads him to measure his intellect against that of the criminal, whom he regards as an equal, and eventually solve the crime. As Babener maintains, Dupin's method "stresses detection through psychological identification with an adversary" (1988: 323). When the identity of the other is not objectified,

there is room for understanding, regardless of Dupin's vengeful intentions in this case. Minister D– is not conceptualised by Dupin as "a criminal" but as an "opponent", as a peer: "'It is merely', I said, 'an identification of the reasoner's intellect with that of his opponent'" (Poe 1992: 693). Dupin's intellectual comradeship with the criminal, even if permeated by a desire for vengeance, allows him to accurately grasp his identity in a way that the Prefect fails to do.

Poe leads us to the realisation that human beings are most unlikely to be innately good or cooperative with what the social order expects from them. The principle of a homogenised society, as Horkheimer and Adorno realised, needs social coercion to be effective, because human beings are in fact *not* the same. While Dupin treats Minister D– as an individual, even if he does so moved by his desire for revenge, the Prefect relies on the enlightened principle of a homogeneous society where all individuals are the same and will behave following the same patterns. Humans under this modern condition are thus "forced into real conformity" (Horkheimer and Adorno 2002: 9) and individuality is denied in favour of a manipulated society, whose unity "consists in the negation of each individual and in the scorn poured on the type of society which could make people into individuals" (9). The Enlightenment aims at the universal, but always at the cost of the particular. Poe was aware of this fact, and so was Dupin when he said, referring to the Prefect's failure to gauge the criminal's cunning: "They are right in this much— that their own ingenuity is a faithful representative of that of the mass; but when the cunning of the individual felon is diverse in character from their own, the felon foils them, of course" (Poe 1992: 693).

3. The Collapse of Civilisation in "The Colloquy of Monos and Una"

If the analysis of "The Purloined Letter" shows how it prophesised several of the indictments put forward by Horkheimer and Adorno, it is "The Colloquy of Monos and Una" which in my view best exemplifies Poe's diagnosis of the pathologies of modernity. Poe had already treated the issue of progress in his satirical piece "The Man that was Used Up", published in 1839, where he mockingly commented upon "the rapid march of mechanical invention" (1992: 385)— a theme that he would later reprise in his "Colloquy" in a more serious manner. Nicolás Casullo defines what he considers to be the shiny characteristics of Modernity: "equality, knowledge, conquest, mutation of the landscapes, an exteriority that can be potentially industrialised. Docility and progress" (2004: 26, my translation).[8] It is striking that virtually all of these features are present —and denounced— in Poe's tale. There is a sense that these supposedly praiseworthy

elements are in fact destroying civilisation, probably in the name of civilisation itself. The communion between what are deemed positive aspects of the so-called progress of civilisation and a feeling of impending doom are identified by Berman as core aspects of the modern experience: "To be modern is to find ourselves in an environment that promises us adventure, power, joy, growth, transformation of ourselves and the world— and, at the same time, that threatens to destroy everything we have, everything we know, everything we are" (1988: 15). This aporetic duplicity ties in with the marked resemblances between Poe's tale and certain ideas posited in *Dialectic of Enlightenment*. The aim of its authors was "nothing less than to explain why humanity, instead of entering a truly human state, is sinking into a new kind of 'barbarism'" (Horkheimer and Adorno 2002: xiv). Indeed, Poe's tale seems to accurately exemplify the process of the self-destruction of the Enlightenment that Horkheimer and Adorno discussed.

What Poe describes in "The Colloquy" appears to be a post-apocalyptic world that has succumbed to human excess. It seems as though the epigraph of the tale, which reads: "These things are in the near future" (Poe 1992: 512), had uncannily prophesised the collapse of civilisation witnessed by Horkheimer and Adorno during the 20th century. A feeling of impending disintegration was not infrequent among authors at the time, and Poe's was not the only voice to denounce what he perceived as the barbarian state of contemporary society. Baudelaire, probably the most important heir to Poe's literary legacy, writes that

> [i]t is impossible to find a magazine from whatever day […] without encountering, in every single line, the signs of the most horrifying human perversion, right beside the most surprising boasting about integrity, kindness, charity, and the most insolent assertions about progress and civilisation. All newspapers, from the first line to the last, are but a tissue of horrors. (2016: 118-119, my translation)[9]

Such disaster has already been consummated in "The Colloquy". The story begins with the aftermath of Monos's death and his reencounter with his beloved Una in a post-apocalyptic afterlife. Monos, who has just left the world of humans, asks Una at what point shall he begin telling his story, and she replies, befuddled by his question, that "in Death we have both learned the propensity of man to define the indefinable" (Poe 1992: 513). This constitutes the first hint —or the second, if the epigraph is considered— about the meaning of the tale. The power of this utterance lies in its relating death with the enlightened impulse to categorise and define reality. Not by chance is the tree of knowledge termed as "death-producing" (513). This corresponds to a traditional enlightened attitude to the world in which individuals perceive themselves as outside, or above, the natural world which they need to categorise and systematise in order ultimately to master it. The incommensurability of the world is reduced to calculability, and the first realm to

be dominated for human profit is that of nature. Indeed, the relationship between humankind and nature is crucial to understanding the enlightened approach to reality, which incidentally has pervaded the western world up until the twenty-first century when the technification of nature for man's profit is the order of the day. This idea was central to Horkheimer and Adorno's indictment; they argued that "what human beings seek to learn from nature is how to use it to dominate wholly both it and human beings. Nothing else counts" (2002: 2). They cited Francis Bacon as one of the first thinkers who realised that scientific progress would result, necessarily, in man's dominion over nature (1). In other words, they denounced the fact that science allows mankind to rule the world. This idea is present in Poe's tale, as formulated by Monos:

> Man, because he could not but acknowledge the majesty of Nature, fell into childish exultation at his acquired and still-increasing dominion over her elements. Even while he stalked a god in his own fancy, an infantine imbecility came over him. As might be supposed from the origin of his disorder, he grew infected with system, and with abstraction. He enwrapped himself in generalities. (1992: 514)

It is a well-known fact that the romantic writers changed the perception of the relationship between man and nature, and saw themselves as a part of nature itself rather than as a separate entity from it. The Lake poets in England epitomised this relationship in what has become a paradigmatic poetic style, and the communion with nature stands at the core of English romantic poetics. Casullo provides an insightful explanation of the change that the romantics underwent in the conception of their relation to nature: "Romanticism […] was born perceiving the modernisation of the world as an ontological break between nature and man" (2004: 30, my translation).[10] Monos also laments the dominion of man over nature and believes that there should have been some "principles which should have taught our race to submit to the guidance of the natural laws, rather than attempt their control" (Poe 1992: 513). In the tale, there is a pastoral nostalgic memory of a nature that has not been destroyed by human action —"holy, august and blissful days, when blue rivers ran undammed, between hills unhewn, into far forest solitudes, primæval, odorous, and unexplored" (514)— in disquieting contrast to "huge smoking cities" (514). A sickness motif appears and Monos laments that a diseased humankind is to blame for the destruction of nature: "[T]he fair face of Nature was deformed as with the ravages of some loathsome disease" (514). This sickness motif is also present in a previously mentioned passage, where the urge to categorise reality is conceptualised in terms of illness: "system and abstraction" are infectious agents that bring about destruction. And this is one of the aspects that make the two German authors claim that "Enlightenment is totalitarian" (Horkheimer and Adorno 2002*:* 4). As explained in the analysis of "The Purloined Letter", the Enlightenment not only equates

reason with mathematical thought; it also establishes systematic categories that enable humans to appropriate reality and thus dominate it:

> In thought, human beings distance themselves from nature in order to arrange it in such a way that it can be mastered. Like the material tool which, as a thing, is held fast as that thing in different situations and thereby separates the world, as something chaotic, multiple, and disparate, from that which is known, single, and identical, so the concept is the idea-tool which fits into things at the very point from which one can take hold of them. (Horkheimer and Adorno 2002: 31)

The dominion over nature is intimately related to the concept of progress. Certainly, the mastery of man over nature is more often than not accomplished in the name of such progress, as though moral improvement were equated with a process of mere technification. Poe is aware of this fact, and the criticism that he makes of the idea of progress is predominant in this tale. Before engaging in a detailed description of the moment of his death, Monos tells Una about the state of civilisation in which he lived:

> MONOS. One word first, my Una, in regard to man's general condition at this epoch. You will remember that one or two of the wise among our forefathers —wise in fact, although not in the world's esteem— had ventured to doubt the propriety of the term "improvement", as applied to the progress of our civilisation. (Poe 1992: 513)

What is at stake in this passage is the confusion between moral progress and progress as understood by an increasingly technified society. The faith in progress that the Enlightenment presupposes developed suddenly into faith in the technical possibilities of an industrial society. Baudelaire, attuned to Poe's feelings about society, writes an uncanny foreshadowing of the barbaric state of society that Horkheimer and Adorno witnessed: "the universal ruin, or the universal progress; for the name matters little" (2002: 87). This is almost a paraphrase of Monos's words: "the Earth's records had taught me to look for widest ruin as the price of highest civilisation" (Poe 1992: 515). It must not be forgotten that Poe was writing in the first half of the nineteenth century, a time when the questionable consequences of the industrial revolution were beginning to be self-evident, while simultaneously intellectuals were celebrating the supposed progress that society was undergoing. It is not by chance that the publication of this story coincides in time with the beginning of the Victorian era, in which the general public opinion, including men such as Herbert Spencer, had it that their own society was at the peak of civilisation— an idea which was in painful contrast with the actual situation of most of the English population. We must consider that Poe lived in a society that he found utterly despicable. Baudelaire, drawing on the intellectual intimacy he felt with Poe, articulates this hostility as follows, emphasizing the pragmatism and utilitarianism of a nation concerned with material success:

> Edgar Poe and his country were not on the same level. The United States is a gigantic infant […] Proud of its material development, abnormal and nearly monstrous, this newcomer in history has a naïve faith in the almightiness of industry […] Time and money are national treasures! Material pursuit, exaggerated to proportions of a national mania, leaves little room in the mind for unworldly pursuits. (1980: 81-82)

The fact that the industrialised society of the United States is called by Baudelaire "a gigantic infant" is of extreme relevance. There are abundant references to this childish condition of humanity throughout the tale, and it is probably not by chance that the core of Kant's answer to what the Enlightenment is was precisely the liberation from "a self-incurred immaturity" (2003: 54). The characterisation of humankind in Poe's tale seems to be a deliberate negation of Kant's proposal. As Monos says, a humanity engaged in "childish exultation" (Poe 1992: 514) before its own powers and dulled by an "infantine imbecility" (514) is doomed to fail. The "infant condition of [man's] soul" (513) as the reason for a juvenile adoration of the dogma of progress is also criticised by Nietzsche, who claimed that "the self-deception of the masses […] in all democracies— is highly advantageous: making people small and governable is hailed as 'progress'!" (in Horkheimer and Adorno 2002*:* 36). In less elegant words but conveying essentially the same idea, Baudelaire reflects on Poe's feelings about progress, claiming that he "considered Progress, that great modern invention, to be an ecstasy for dupes" (1980: 82).

The uncritical acceptance of progress and the confusion of progress with technification bring about a regression in the truly humane, truly enlightened state of humankind. As Monos notices, some individuals have tried to voice this confusion: "At long intervals some master-minds appeared, looking upon each advance in practical science as a retro-gradation in the true utility" (Poe 1992: 513), and Horkheimer and Adorno acknowledged that "progress is reverting to regression" (2002: xviii). Society has become so corrupted that it can no longer continue to be: "for the infected world at large I could anticipate no regeneration save in death. That man, as a race, should not become extinct, I saw that he must be '*born again*'" (Poe 1992: 515, emphasis in original). The disquieting silence that reigns at the end of the tale can be considered an antecedent of the silence of Auschwitz, which Horkheimer and Adorno understood as the epitome of the self-destructive impulse of the Enlightenment, of the rationality of progress: "Dust had returned to dust. The worm had food no more. The sense of being had at length utterly departed, and there reigned in its stead —instead of all things— dominant and perpetual— the autocrats Place and Time" (520). The bleak, apocalyptic ending of "The Colloquy" only emphasises the criticism of the myth of progress, wrongly assimilated as a dogma. The identification between progress and

technification results, fatally, in the perpetual infantile state of mankind which eventually negates the enlightened enterprise itself.

4. Conclusion

The elective affinities between the themes in Poe's work and modern and postmodern philosophical debates of the twentieth century, as well as the fact that his writings have continued to trigger commentaries throughout two centuries after his birth, can only be a sign of his contemporary relevance. The themes we find in his texts still resonate with meaning to the modern ear and encapsulate what has been described above as the inherently contradictory and ambiguous experience of the modern world. Poe emerges as an acute critic of modernity whose texts remain an inexhaustible testimony of the endeavour to debunk some of the tenets of the complex, uncertain and even contradictory modern tradition, in a way that establishes him as "a beacon for […] all Modernity" (Adorno 2002*:* 20).

Notes

[1]. I have been loosely inspired by the title of Reinhart Koselleck's Critique and Crisis. *Enlightenment and the Pathogenesis of the Modern Society* (1988). There have been other critics who have treated Poe as a pathologist of modernity. See for instance Dorothea Von Mücke's text "Entre la patología y la moralidad: 'El demonio de la perversidad'" (2009).

[2]. I have selected these two texts as paradigmatic examples or case studies of issues and problematics that we may find in all of Poe's work. That is, this article does not intend to be exhaustive; on the contrary, the investigations presented here might (and should) be pursued further as other texts by Poe lend themselves to analogous interpretations.

[3]. See *Poe. La mala conciencia de la modernidad* (2009) edited by Félix Duque for a survey of Poe's multi-faceted relationships with modernity.

[4]. Ricoeur famously coined this expression in his book *Freud and Philosophy* to refer to Marx, Nietzsche and Freud who, he argued, were the "masters" of the "school of suspicion", a type of interpretation based on a "single method of demystification" (1970: 32).

[5]. *"Muchos de los textos de Poe* […] *se caracterizan por un extraño componente híbrido."*

[6]. Besides being a turning point in the themes tackled in Poe's tales, "The Man of the Crowd" is also a key text for the study of the modern experience, especially the cosmopolitan one, as David Cunningham acknowledges: "it represents a decisive moment not only in the development of Poe's literary canon but in that of modern fiction itself" (2009: 45, my translation ["*representa un momento decisivo no solo en el desarrollo del canon literario de Poe sino en el de la ficción moderna* per se"]).

[7]. For a study of the importance of pairs and doubles in the story, see Lianha Babener's essay "The Shadow's Shadow: The

Motif of the Double in Edgar Allan Poe's 'The Purloined Letter'" (1988).

[8]. "*igualdad, saber, conquista, mutación de los paisajes, exterioridad industrializable. Docilidad y progreso*".

[9]. "*Il est impossible de parcourir une gazette quelconque, de n'importe quel jour* […] *sans y trouver, à chaque ligne, les signes de la perversité humaine la plus épouvantable, en même temps que les vanteries les plus surprenantes de probité, de bonté, de charité, et les affirmations les plus effrontées, relatives au progrès et à la civilisation. Tout journal, de la première ligne à la dernière, n'est qu'un tissu d'horreurs*".

[10] . "*El Romanticismo* […] *nace percibiendo la modernización de mundo como escisión ontológica entre naturaleza y hombre*".

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ELEGIES AND GENEALOGIES OF PLACE: SPATIAL BELONGING IN ITALIAN/AMERICAN CULTURE AND LITERATURE

ELEGÍAS Y GENEALOGÍAS DEL ESPACIO: PERTENENCIA ESPACIAL EN LA CULTURA Y LITERATURA ITALOAMERICANAS

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Abstract

This article examines the poetics and politics of place in Italian/American culture and in Tina De Rosa's novel *Paper Fish* (1980), particularly its portrayal of 'elegies and genealogies of place', an appropriate framework through which to read the importance of spatial belonging. It investigates the way in which cultural identity is mostly built on both imagined communities and imagined places, as is common in migrant and diasporic cultures, through the evocation or creation of ancestors and the homeland. In addition, the Italian/American community leaves the characteristic Little Italy enclaves or undergoes displacement due to urban renewal projects and the move to the suburbs in the mid-twentieth century, which is sometimes compared to a second migration or diaspora. As a consequence, former urban enclaves come to assume a centrality as lost sanctuaries, which is captured in the trope of the Old Neighbourhood. The article contributes to existing contemporary research on the binomial place-identity by tracing how key events of US urban history impacted on Italian/American culture. Furthermore, the goal is to offer new critical readings of *Paper Fish* through the focus on place-making.

Keywords: Italian/American culture, Little Italy, (sub)urban migrations, imagined places, place-making.

Resumen

Este artículo examina la poética y la política espaciales en la cultura italoamericana y en la novela *Paper Fish* (1980), de Tina De Rosa, particularmente la representación de las 'elegías y genealogías del espacio', que suponen un marco apropiado para el estudio de pertenencia identitaria a los lugares. Se analiza el modo en que la identidad cultural se construye principalmente a partir de comunidades y lugares imaginados, como sucede en los grupos migrantes y diaspóricos, a través de la evocación o creación de sus antepasados y de la tierra natal. Además, la comunidad italoamericana abandona los enclaves característicos de Little Italy puesto que sufre una expulsión debido a los proyectos de renovación urbana o se traslada a los suburbios a mediados del siglo XX, desplazamientos que a veces se comparan con una segunda migración o diáspora. En consecuencia, los enclaves urbanos tradicionales asumen una centralidad destacada como santuarios perdidos que se refleja en la recurrencia de alusiones al 'Antiguo Barrio' (*Old Neighbourhood*). El artículo contribuye a la investigación contemporánea existente acerca del binomio identidad-espacio al examinar cómo los eventos clave de la historia urbana de Estados Unidos impactaron en la cultura italoamericana. Por último, el objetivo es ofrecer nuevas lecturas y aproximaciones críticas de *Paper Fish* a través de la perspectiva de la construcción espacial (*place-making*).

Palabras clave: cultura italoamericana, Little Italy, migraciones (sub)urbanas, lugares imaginados, construcción espacial.

> *When an accidental detour or a missed expressway exit brings us into contact with the world we left behind, we can still place all the blame firmly and squarely elsewhere.*
> (Ray Suárez, *The Old Neighborhood*)

1. The Development of Little Italies in North America: Place and Ethnic Identity

This article provides a review of the scholarship about Italian/American identity and of its links with US urban history before moving on to a literary exploration of the topic through Tina de Rosa's novel *Paper Fish* (1980) in order to contextualize the impact of spatial changes depicted therein.[1] To this end, sociological studies, cultural geography and feminist urban theory are used to read a novel which has been thoroughly examined by Italian/American scholars. Yet, a focus on the concept of place-making has drawn less critical attention. Although

place-making is an everyday practice and particularly common to reflect identity politics, the spatial relevance in *Paper Fish* has not been sufficiently explored to explain the representation of Italian/American identity and its connection to key events in US urban history. In particular, this article contends that the theoretical perspective of place-making deeply informs the reinvention of ethnic identity, which is in turn affected by larger forces such as spatial exclusion and competition.

Definitions of Little Italy have considerably evolved from a simplistic linearity based on a trajectory of immigration, assimilation and eventual displacement or relocation. Both historians and writers have contributed to a redefinition of place that complicates traditional conceptions of these stages. For this reason, it is important to critically address the Italian/American spatial imagination and history. In William Boelhower's opinion, Little Italy should be regarded as a construct in its representation of a dominant, coherent culture that scholarship has privileged or contributed to establish. This configuration emerged to fulfill a necessary "collective subject" linked to the newly-formed demographic space in the United States after Italian immigration at the end of the nineteenth-century (2010: 21). However, this unity was not achieved even in the case of intense urban concentration in the main cities of settlement such as New York. According to historians Philip Cannistraro and Gerald Meyer, "[c]ommunities were generally divided within themselves based on the place of origin of their residents" (2003: 11). The nascent Little Italies were mostly made up of relatives or people from the same regional villages. In other words, communities were rather fragmented, which was also due to the absence of other unifying organizations at the time.

Consequently, this prevailing model of unity shifted to account for perspectives that have come to complicate the homogenizing picture of the perception of Little Italy. Although (collective) identity is often linked to a certain material space known as Little Italy, this space has been more conceptualized in cultural terms. Little Italy is first and foremost conceived as socially interpreted and constantly reworked. This definition of Little Italy is also endorsed by Dennis Barone and Stefano Luconi when considering the "ethnic neighborhood as […] an ever-evolving social construction more than a series of discrete geographical entities" (2010: 4). On the one hand, early ethnic formation undoubtedly demands a physical and geographic dimension. In the Italian/American case, it entailed "taking over a space demographically" (Boelhower 2010: 18), notably the area of Manhattan's Mulberry Bend in New York, where immigrants mostly settled because of work opportunities and the network of *paesani* who tended to foster further immigration: "this movement assumes the form of a convergence and creates a density that covers and inscribes a site so that it represents a recognizable degree of ethnic homogeneity" (18). On the other hand, Little Italy came to exist

also discursively when assuming the cultural values of the home country in order to achieve a certain coherence. As such, this "symbolic confluence" underlying the concept of Little Italy in Italian/American historiography subsumed all differences in terms of gender, class or region, an integration or homogenization which has been recently questioned (18).

Boelhower has mostly credited the role of Italian/American women writers in unsettling those old notions of symbolic confluence through an "outpouring" of writing that "radically challenged the continuing validity of a merely collective, heavily patriarchal, and often mythologically sustained representation of 'Little Italy'" (2010: 15). Additional perspectives are accounted for due to a "generational change-over" among writers and scholars of Italian/American culture and to a commonly shared sense of "leaving Little Italy" (15). Nevertheless, this is a very limited recognition and is uncritical of the suggested linearity of spatial configurations. For instance, historian Donna Gabaccia has variously addressed the complex Italian/American identity in relation to place, even before migration. Urban concentration or the typical ethnic enclaves of the US landscape, due to the compound factors of kinship ties and job opportunity, also feature in other chain migrations, chiefly Greek and Polish (King 1995: 17). The Italian localized sense of identity was further nuanced, given that the political and natural history in Italy had shaped Italians' conceptualization of place and of regional or local identity. Features of the home country's geography, such as mountainous and isolated places, together with abuse of the elite classes, account for the fact that trust was reserved for the more immediate kin, often the nuclear family, although kin partnerships were commonly enhanced in order to get diverse benefits. Similarly, the mass migration experience is commonly equated with the idea that Italy is a country in geographical more than national terms: an "abstraction" out of the fragmented history of foreign invasions and failed Unification (Gabaccia 2000: 1). In this respect, Gabaccia argues, "[i]t is no accident that the modern Italian word for country is the same as its word for village (paese)" (3), which makes her reframe her theoretical position of Italian migration as creating *many* diasporas (6).

This difference would then inform inter and intra-ethnic relations, as settlement and discrimination were played out in regional and more localized identities. On the one hand, as Gabaccia corroborates in relation to Sicilians and their major settlement in New York's Elizabeth Street,[2] family refers not to the conjugal or nuclear unit but to the "lineal group of closest relatives", which includes, for instance, parents of the couple and their siblings (1984: 4). On the other, as historian Rudolph Vecoli explains, not only were Sicilians most likely to be racialized in relation to Northern Italians, but they were equally distinguished within "regional antipathies *among the Italians*" (1999: x, emphasis added). In other words, *regionalismo* was

"reflected in the geography of settlement, the social organizations, and even the churches of the Little Italies" (x). Furthermore, prior to Boelhower's essay about the shift from a unifying picture of Little Italy to models acknowledging differences, Robert Orsi's 1985 *The Madonna of 115th Street: Faith and Community in Italian Harlem* paid attention to the formation of ethnic as well as gender identity in relation to the intense expression of spatial belonging already apparent during early settlement. Recently, Gabaccia has also researched the "invention of the term Little Italy" from as early as the 1880s, resulting in the creation of certain representations of ethnicity which have become enduring in the cultural imagination despite contradicting geographical evidence:

> New Yorkers invented "Little Italy" but they long disagreed with urban tourists about its exact location. Still, from the moment of its origin, both visitors and natives of New York associated Little Italy with entertainment, spectacle, and the search for "safe danger". While the location of Little Italy changed over time, such associations with pleasure and crime have persisted, even as the neighborhood emptied of its immigrant residents. (2007: 7)

This proves that the idea of Little Italy has always been malleable or subject to ongoing (re)construction. Place-making continued when the Italian/American community or former immigrants started to leave Little Italy in significant numbers in the second half of the twentieth century and required a new project of identity. Traditional enclaves did not become simply extinguished as generally believed, given that they were transplanted to other (sub)urban areas or repopulated with new immigrants, for example after the other significant wave of Italian migration to the US in the post-II World War decades (Ruberto and Sciorra 2017: 9). In other words, at the same time that Italians were moving out, other demographic changes counteracted that decline. As a case in point, this post-war influx of Italian immigrants into neighborhoods such as New York's Bensonhurst eventually led to the emergence of Guido culture, which greatly revitalized and brought to public attention discussions of Italian/American ethnicity. As Donald Tricarico states, "[u]rban Italian American youth made a significant turn to popular American culture after World War II; Doo Wop mobilized a discernible youth culture practice in the 1950s and 1960s inside Italian American neighbourhoods" (2019: 31).

Yet, Italian/American culture and literature are certainly filled with that early act of departure, either real or figurative. They commonly refer to the resettlement from the old communities or enclaves to new spaces throughout the city, notably to the suburbs in the mid-twentieth century. This move is commonly associated with becoming 'white' and middle class, as in Mario Puzo's novel *The Fortunate Pilgrim*, which ends with Lucia Santa's satisfactory confirmation to her children that "yes, now they were on Long Island" (Puzo 2004: 276), a final hard-earned

conquest away from the filthy and clamoring tenements in lower Manhattan. Fred Gardaphe notes that "the shift from urban to suburban ethnicity is the subject of the writing of many young Italian Americans who watched as their families moved from working-class to middle-class life" (2004: 39). As a consequence, it is no wonder that old neighborhoods or urban enclaves come to be depicted as (lost) "urban Edens" (158).

Together with the national development of urban renewal in American cities in the 1950s and 1960s, this relatively voluntary move to the suburbs was a significant episode in the decline of Italian/American ethnicity, equated with a second migration or diaspora (Hendin 2003: 14; Bona 2010: 139), and the disappearance of the enclave of Little Italy as it was known. A witness to "the death of Chicago's Little Italies", which were "under siege from urban 'renewal', highway construction and changing population patterns", Vecoli concludes that, as a phenomenon across the country, this "marked the end of the first chapter of the history of the Italians in America" (1996: 3-4). This interpretation and Boelhower's questions about the role of "the scattered children of immigrants" when they resort to the "*ars inveniendi* —the steeped commonplaces— of Italian-American culture" (2010: 16) reveal the crucial relationship between identity and place: from the tendency to regard cultures as placed to the practice of place-making in response to social and cultural changes. This is not to suggest that place-making is simply reactive, defensive or nostalgic. On the contrary, it is a quotidian and vernacular practice which is not limited to the work of elites or of published writers nor can it be exclusively associated to moments of crisis. For instance, Joseph Sciorra (2015: xvii) locates New York's Italian/American distinctive place-centred ethnicity as reflected in the urban building traditions, which express a combination of religious and secular landscapes.

However, as spatial exclusion, expulsion and competition are recurrent in US urban history, focusing on such heightened moments of place-making can help our understanding of how expressions of power (or powerlessness) are enacted or reflected through space. As Orsi states in his "The Religious Boundaries of an Inbetween People", Italian Americans (re)affirmed their identity through a 'sacralization' of the streets. Claiming whiteness and occupation of space in particular were strategies to distance themselves from their "dark-skinned" neighbours, to which they were closely associated not only because of urban contiguity and/or conviviality, but also due to racial prejudice (1999: 257). This shows that Italian/American place-making operates within different scales and racialized contexts, which only seems to increase due to the more profound changes of the post-World War II era. As a result, the use of a theoretical framework of the poetics and politics of place allows us to better elucidate Italian/American identity and to analyze the importance of spatial belonging in the culture as well as the literary imagination.

2. The Poetics and Politics of Place: (Sub)urban Migrations

Demographic and social changes lead to common anxieties of a shrinking identity as traditional place-bound identification and closely-knit living is gradually lost. Many Italian Americans experienced this loss first with migration from Italy to the US and later with the mid-twentieth century move to the suburbs. At the same time, empirical and theoretical evidence show that attachment to place evades any definite conclusions about the decline of ethnicity linked to displacement. For instance, a strong sense of place may derive from the lack of other cultural anchors or venues. This is expressed in Vecoli's concerns about the costs of urban renewal projects for the Italian/American community due to the absence of ethnic associations or a field of Italian/American studies in the 1950s. Nowadays, artistic preservation and support are identified as a primary site of ethnic identity, particularly for the new generations (Tamburri et al. 2000: 9). This confirms that writing, as much as place, figures as a cultural signifier in Italian/American ethnicity, although the latter retains a marked prominence.

In "New Cultures for Old", Stuart Hall explains the prevalence of certain practices in identity politics, namely the concepts of 'placed cultures' and place-making. In the obsession with "landscaping culture" he observes that the association of culture to place is very powerful or that place represents one of the "key discourses in the systems of meaning we call culture" (Hall 1995: 181). Hall also draws on the concept of 'imagined communities', as proposed by Benedict Anderson in 1983, as the clearest illustration of this tendency in relation to the nation. In other words, place is a central narrative, as is language or religion, in the construction of cultural identity. Hall remarks that culture does not "really" need place: "cultures can be sustained by peoples who do not live in the same place and have never met" and yet "we continue to *imagine* cultures as 'placed', to landscape cultures in our mind's eye. They are 'imagined communities'" (183, emphasis in original).

An illustration of the issues discussed so far can also be seen in *Paper Fish* (1980), the best-known novel by Tina De Rosa, which deals with the (re)invention of ethnic identity and larger urban changes in US society. It perfectly captures this tendency to "landscape cultural identities" and to "give them an imagined place or 'home'", thus abiding by a definition of culture and cultural identity as *strongly bounded*, that is, attached to a place (Hall 1995: 181, emphasis in original). This is so, Hall explains, since for some individuals place may be experienced as a genetic or biological fact, given that, traditionally, a given place has been "tied up with the sharing of the culture between members with a long and unbroken common genealogy, kinship, residence and descent" (181). As for cases of population

dispersal, places are still important, if not more so, inasmuch as place-making symbolically allows necessary legitimizing projects, working "to stabilize cultures" and providing the possibility of "unified identities" (183). As David Storey states, "people behave territorially because they need to, or perceive the need to" (2001: 15). The defense of territory is not only a human instinct but also a tool of power, which is particularly evident in the case of nation-states and their shifting boundaries. In addition, this political dimension of place-making applies at different scales, "from the geopolitical strategies of superpowers down to the home and the workplace" (16). As displaced people typically tend to do, Italian Americans cling either to Italy —although often to a regional and very local sense of place for historical and geographical reasons— or to closely-knit communities that were formed in America and that soon acquired a physically and culturally marked dimension.

The strong sense of place in *Paper Fish* is unmistakeably linked to the identity politics of the ethnic community. It is a metanarrative about the attempt, through writing, to record a culture on the brink of dissolution by such a paramount transformation as that caused by urban renewal projects in US cities, a period that is now identified as a "second enforced migration" (Bona 2010: 139) or "second diaspora" (Hendin 2003: 14). Apart from urban mobility, social mobility was brought about by post-war economic prosperity that also extended to the Italians. These changes were accompanied by a loosening of the 'observable' traits of ethnic identity, as the second generation more generally melted into American middle-class values (Conzen et al. 1990: 42). As a result, ethnic recovery and affirmation is enacted by the third-generation main character Carmolina through recourse to oral stories told by a grandmother figure, grandma Doria, establishing a connection with an ancestral culture which also allows her to embrace a distinctly female tradition. Carmolina has a central role in recovering her cultural community and the demolished Little Italy in Chicago. As the Italian/American ghetto was cleared and "[n]o one snapped a picture" (De Rosa 2003: 117), she takes to writing from memory and storytelling to recover both her people's past and their literary tradition.

Hence, places have not become meaningless but are re-conceptualized. There are various strategies that are generally used to cope with social and cultural changes. Accounting for the processes and elements that play into the (re)creation of cultural identity, the role of memory and nostalgia attests to the relationship between power and place-making. Orsi notes how Italian parents started to create an image of Southern Italy in order to ensure that family order was maintained. Orsi admits this is "a violence of the imagination" characteristic of immigrant groups, using place as a means of discipline (1990: 135-136). The famed

intergenerational conflict among Italian Harlemites —as Orsi is using Covello's papers, although he points to further evidence in other New York Italian communities—[3], is "*inevitably* cast in the idioms of geography" by recourse to the binary logic of opposites (Orsi 1990: 133, emphasis added):

> Parents and children accounted for themselves —to each other and to themselves— by telling stories about different places. Conflict over the meaning of 'American' and 'Italy' (or 'Harlem' and the 'the South', or 'New York' and 'Puerto Rico') was the community's most intimate moral discourse: when the generations talked about these two places they were […] marking the boundaries of acceptable and unacceptable behavior. (134)

Memory, therefore, is all about the present, since it is used to try to control children, mostly in fear of the erosion of the institution of the family, which has always relied on mutual dependence, particularly in the context of the industrial economy and immigrant difficulties therein: "The memories of 'Southern Italy' […] were not frozen at the moment of the immigrant's departure, but in the moment they encountered their maturing children. 'Southern Italy', in other words, was born of fear, desire, and denial in East Harlem" (Orsi 1990: 140). By the same token, nostalgia, although reasonably reflecting immigrants' suffering, was also an apt instrument to be "transmuted into discipline" (138).

In *Paper Fish*, this "moral topography" is most obviously lacking (Orsi 1990: 137) due to an intergenerational lack of communication, which is expressed in "Part I. The Memory" through an insistence on the "surly silence" surrounding the immigrant father, Marco (De Rosa 2003: 4). By contrast, the first encounter of Carmolina with Italy is through a variety of audible artifacts, stories and songs, as well as food, through which "Grandma was making the world for her" (15). This transmitted memory of "how beautiful Italy was" (15) is mobilized as a way of coping with the identity divide Carmolina experiences as she observes her grandma's kitchen from her home and is distinctly aware of being sometimes on one side, sometimes on the other, and often not being able to tell the distinction. As is evident, this is not the Italy of the clichéd "bitter bread" and feudal/government oppression that resurfaced in other migration memories (Barolini 1999: 29) and in historical accounts, but a country of sunny, soft landscapes and of mystical fantasies. Drawing on William Dalessio, this place-making is also to be understood in the context of the need to preserve ethnic identity. He describes the role of the grandmother as a whole as that of a "cultural harbinger", "by preparing edible signifying units of ethnicity" (2012: 12), particularly in the postwar period when Americanness and ethnicity were mutually exclusive and assimilation pressures were unshakeable.

3. The 'White Flight' and Urban Displacement: Gendering and Racializing Place

Sometimes forced, sometimes voluntary, the diaspora to the suburbs represents a marked moment of assimilation for white ethnics,[4] since traditional urban patterns and culture became dissolved. Dalessio specifically remarks on the postwar erosion of ethnicity with the demolition of ethnic neighborhoods, especially because of urban renewal projects in cities and also a generalized migration to the suburbs in the 1950s. For example, he refers to Peter Balakian's *Black Dog of Fate: A Memoir* on the Armenian experience, which strongly depicts cultural assimilation. This novel starts precisely at the moment when the family moves to suburbia, unlike De Rosa's *Paper Fish*, which ends at this point.

As the phenomenon of migration to the suburbs swept the whole country, it has strongly remained in the American imagination, mostly as a golden era of peaceful and communal urban living in the Old Neighbourhood. This is shown by the recollections and interviews in Ray Suárez's book by the same name. Yet, according to Suárez, there was also a "wild racial mythology that marked these same decades— the deep separation that actually existed between Americans" (1999: 13). Micaela Di Leonardo also emphasizes that "there was no 'era of northern amity' prior to the civil rights movement and black power", given that the cities in the north showed a great deal of racial prejudice against blacks through riots and public policies, among others (1994: 175). All this did not preclude, however, that "those outside the white mainstream bought into the same bourgeois dreams as their distant neighbors" (Suárez 1999: 13).

On the one hand, the suburban home became an asset in the US, subsidized by the government and widely promoted as socially and morally superior. Postwar economic prosperity participated in the exploitation of this fundamental gendered spatial layout, since it represented an "ideal of mass consumption" that could redirect "defense industries into peacetime production of domestic appliances for millions of families" (Hayden 1980: S173). Karen Franck further explains that "The Suburban Sanctuary" implied not only "moral and religious beliefs about the nuclear family", but "a retreat from the world of work, public activities and all people unlike one's self and one's neighbors" (1997: 166). She presents the paradoxical "immoral consequences" of the ideal, as it promotes a life "free of fiscal or moral obligations to other people" (167). Suburban life was attractive since it avoided "encounters with the pain of others less fortunate or with situations less pleasant" (167). In other words, this appeal involves evading not only the stress and profanity of work and money, but also the contact and conflict with unknown or 'undesirable' people. In fact, this social ideal reveals a planned scheme

to (re)distribute power relations, which clearly reveals a racial and class construction of place.

On the other hand, mid-century urban restructuring clearly attests to the practice of "Mapping the Pure and the Defiled" signaled by David Sibley to contend that the fear and exclusion of difference was spatially figured, enacted and reinforced. The suburban home combines a gender and a racial ideology, being a purified haven from the "defiled city" (2008: 386). The government budget for suburban housing widened the US racial gap, accounting for today's continuing disparity (Suárez 1999; McKenna 2008; David and Forbes 2016). Only a few African/Americans finally accessed the benefits of the GI Bill for housing, education and job placement given that, if formally eligible, they found many obstacles, "fighting the administration's arbitrary, discriminatory, and indifferent treatment" (Herbold 1994: 105). This uneven (welfare) distribution was indeed entrenched since, by the late 1960s, when the 'white flight' had already deteriorated the inner cities, welfare programs again benefited "poor *whites*" in the city (Di Leonardo 1994: 175, emphasis in original), money was not equally diverted to impoverished areas, mostly black, affected by urban renewal relocations. According to Micaela di Leonardo, urban renewal projects displaced African/American or Latino populations by two-thirds to "inhospitable, poorly built, and badly maintained government housing projects" (175).

Finally, ethnicity played a key role in the suburban ideal. The popularity of ethnic food was key to aiding the post-World War II reestablishment of traditional domestic ideology in the 1950s as it involved the call for feminine ornamental and elaborate cookery (Neuhaus 1999). According to Dalessio, De Rosa does not reproduce the joys of food preparation associated with ethnic identity, as Balakian does even in suburbia and having affirmed a desire to go mainstream (2012: 164). *Paper Fish* offers a disheartened portrayal of the rituals of domesticity through Carmolina's parents, Sarah and Marco, particularly from Sarah's perspective and her gender roles. This depiction also differs from other interpretations of women as cultural harbingers previously discussed. Dalessio reads Sarah's cultural alienation —being a Lithuanian forced to leave behind her ethnic heritage when marrying— regarding her husband Marco's Italian background as a consequence of the family's observance of US gender ideology (2012: 58).

Rather than their different ethnicity, the separate spheres and roles of the male breadwinner and female childrearing account for their failed marriage. Marco does not enter the kitchen when his wife is cooking. There is a marked contrast to the Mexican immigrant couple of neighbors living downstairs who are shown sharing the kitchen space. This is reflective of Marco and Sarah having moved up the social ladder and adhering to a "postwar gender ideology, which sharply delineates a man's space from a woman's" (Dalessio 2012: 68). This marital

situation is far from being represented as a benefit of having embraced mainstream values. In addition, the family cannot ultimately leave the ghetto and become suburbanites either, due to the social status of low-paid Marco which keeps the family at a distance from the rest of society. In Suárez's interviews, mobility appears as an assumed choice although "it is an option not as easily invoked across the racial divide or lower down the economic scale" (1999: 14). The so-called "factor-M" —standing for "movement, migration and mobility", which defines the American spirit— then proves to be very limited in light of the subject's location within the more prominent class, racial and gendered systems (Roberson 1998: 4).

4. Elegies of Place: Leaving Little Italy

This suburban migration, either due to a forced displacement or as part of the 'white flight', figures as a change that is deeply mourned. This is well captured in the sense of loss seen in *Paper Fish* or what Sandra Gilbert calls the "Elegy for a Distant Land", which refers to the lament for both the Italian mother country and the former urban neighborhood:

> In the end, of course, the city razes the buildings of Berrywood Street as part of a project for 'urban renewal'. And in the end, therefore, *Paper Fish* becomes not just an elegy for 'the land that got lost across the sea' but also an elegy for the delights and despairs of the temporary encampment on whose 'pinched back porches' Italians strengthened and succored one another before inexorably drifting into the so-called melting pot of a sometimes all-too chilly New World. (2003: xv)

Elegiac sentiments are not only present in the fiction. As the interviews from Suárez's book show, the former residents' memories are expressed in the typical language of migration experiences. For instance, they remark on the motivations of "upward mobility" and the desire for children to do better, as recounted by Tom O'Connell, touring his old block in Chicago: "When we left in [19]76 […] I raised seven kids here […] we had one more after that" (Suárez 1999: 16). As with general migration movements too,[5] beyond personal aspirations a motivating agent is also involved. As it is described, "the number one concern" for their move is security (20). This is intended to explain the "forces behind [the] white flight [which] were in part malign"; these forces included "panic peddlers", who unveiled how the worry of safety often spread around "neighborhoods targeted by business interests" (17). Quite often, this concern with security is a fallacy used to legitimize other underlying ideological reasons for urban planning. According to Charles Manelli's account in Suárez's book, which describes an overnight drastic change as "an exodus", the reason why the city of St Louis was transformed in only about

five years was contagious panic at the unrecognition of the "same atmosphere" (23). By contrast, he perceives his times "like living in a small town", remarking that the whole city was made up of neighborhoods like that, or rather that it was "a big neighborhood", where everyone knew each other and "you could walk anyplace" (23). As a consequence, Manelli is profoundly haunted by the loss, given that, forty-five years later, he is "still poking around his old neighborhood in the car. He would drive by his house and take the car up the alleys where he played ball as a boy before the war" (23).

A sense of place remains meaningful, shown by psychological scars around a phenomenon which, as stated above, is "continuing to shape the country" (Suárez 1999: 2). Suárez' record shows "hundreds of people who mourn the loss of a sense of place tied to block, school, and neighborhood church" (25). This is nostalgia easily fed by the feeling that they were forced out, that "they were obeying the American siren call to mobility" (16). Suburbanization deeply affected or transformed ethnicity in particular, shaping later Italian/American relations to space, mostly in a nostalgic fashion or around a narrative of authenticity. Lament or blame articulate how this suburban migration significantly destroyed ethnic communities (Vecoli 1996: 3; Hendin 2003: 14; Bona 2010: 139; Dalessio 2012: 55), and that the former enclaves, if they have partially survived at all, are often no more than theme parks, that is, a marketed rendition of ethnicity for tourist purposes (Candeloro 2005: 249; Kosta 2014). However, the Old Neighborhood figures as a larger trope in the US imagination, which contextualizes the Italian/American distinct spatial experience of fundamentally living in urban enclaves. In Frank Cavaioli's terms, they were "slow to leave the city" (2001: 6). Italian Americans are commonly said to be the last minority to abandon the city —e.g. as late as 1976 in O'Connell's above-cited account. This dominant, *largely national* narrative of an Old Neighborhood may also account for Italian/American representational practices or identity differences with respect to other literatures. In the Italian/American case, migration heightens a clinging attachment to place, although certainly reterritorialized, as (re)connection to ethnic identity is also facilitated through food and the memory of immigrant forebears, as well as through writing.

5. Locating Identity: Place-Making and Cultural Change

Geography has tended towards a revised conceptualization of space in a concomitant way to gender as categories of analysis. The by now familiar cultural turn in feminist and geographical research has shifted the focus from material critique towards the analysis of discourse and the basic connection with identity

formation, reproduction and contestation. In this sense, the relation of place and identity has moved "beyond 'culture'", the transparent understanding of cultures as placed, denoting "the way [in which] space functions as a central organizing principle in the social sciences at the same time that it disappears from analytical purview" (Gupta and Ferguson 1992: 7). It is further argued that with postmodernity, "space has not become irrelevant, [but] it has been *re*territorialized" (9, emphasis in original). This is especially marked by the heightened changes caused by globalization, which commonly assumes that an increased mobility has disrupted the stable or fixed —or so-imagined rather— sense of identity and place (Massey and Jess 1995). Yet, according to Linda McDowell (1999: 2-3), the significance of place has not only continued but been intensified, which is clearly manifested by revivals of ethnic nationalisms. Many scholars stress that a sense of place has not been destroyed but reconstructed, as has always been the case, since localities are fluid and produced as well as transformed through socio-spatial practices. This is a useful perspective for the study of Italian/American social and urban mobility, particularly during the white flight and urban renewal projects, as it explains their heightened sense of loss of cultural identity accompanying a relatively benign geographical dispersal:

> while the settlers a century ago, and blacks, earlier this century left all that was familiar to start again in a strange new world, these modern migrants sometimes headed just a little past the city line. Their old world was not 'gone' but now just a car ride away. (Suárez 1999: 2)

People have "*always* been more mobile and identities less fixed" than assumed (Gupta and Ferguson 1992: 9, emphasis added), even though the singularly fast and generalized mobility of both people and products in the last decades "give[s] a profound sense of a loss of territorial roots, of an erosion of the cultural distinctiveness of place" (9). At the same time, "senses of place may become intense when those who feel they belong there feel threatened" (Rose 1995: 97). Hence, just as today's increasing indeterminacy of place ironically turns into an intensified attachment to place, so too formerly "displaced peoples cluster around remembered or imagined homelands [and] places" (Gupta and Ferguson 1992: 10-11). These are "imagined places" that function as "symbolic anchors" of equally "imagined communities" (10-11). As deduced from these scholarly observations, such an imagining of space is not normally arbitrary but a way of registering and coping with larger socio-structural forces.

The way in which places are imagined needs to be thought of as a relational expression, as McDowell contends in her assertion that "locales are constructed through social relations" (1999: 5). Notably, places are defined and maintained by exclusion and force, although she admits that the formation of boundaries is also

enacted by subtle means. This is related to the conceptualization of territoriality as a "spatial form of power", even when this is not always that overt as in the case of states or street gangs claiming space (Storey 2001: 15). By considering place as a political and analytical tool, we can examine which processes of change are at play in the Italian/American communities, as well as responses to them. A representative case study is offered through the above-mentioned notion of the elegies of place and the consequences for Chicago's Little Italy arising from urban renewal projects that displaced the Italian/American community (Gilbert 2003: xv).

Spaces are certainly meaningful although not as the old truth had it, as an anchor or a 'neutral' background site on which to inscribe social and cultural differences, but as a political instrument and, for this reason, in continuous contestation and formation. Although there exist "regimes of places" —quite established sets of spatial configurations that tend to hold through time (McDowell 1999: 5)—, spatial meanings also constitute a means through which to claim and maintain power. This is illustrated by Talja Blokland's analysis (2009) of Italian/American historical narratives of place dominating or silencing other claims and meanings of place. Following Massey's concept of 'place-making' —that is, spatial meanings not as fundamental but as related to claims of power (2005: 179)— Blokland shows the extent to which space still matters or continues to play a role for Italian Americans despite geographical dispersion and demographic change. Mostly because of community or spatial loss, their particular practice of place-making and way of "doing community" is out by means of urban and public structures after the demolition of a neighborhood formerly known as Little Italy in order to construct a highway (Blokland 2009: 1607). Even when the place has been gentrified, Italian Americans consider themselves still the legitimate residents and manage to be regarded as such at the level of local polity and access to resources, in contrast to perceptions of African/American residents who are 'absent' in historical narratives. This signals the crucial role of spatial collective memories in accounting for the stratification of places.

In addition, this particular example in which Italian Americans remember their Little Italy community displaced by the construction of a highway displays a discourse organized around "oppositional images of place", which shows the way in which the "imagination of place is politicized" (Gupta and Ferguson 1992: 12). Those celebrating their former neighborhood in New Haven's Little Italy also resort to a view of place validated by history which, as Doreen Massey and Pat Jess explain (1995), is a common strategy in struggles for place and their use. These authors argue that the supposed history of a particular place should be seen in a particular way: as often relying on the erasure of other histories of place. Meanings of place are seen in light of the concept of "place-*making*" (Massey 1995: 68,

emphasis in original), as they constitute narratives that work to establish strong associations of people and place, obliterating other voices.

A final example of the politics of space attests to the shift already identified by Gupta and Ferguson from the "power of topography" to the "topography of power" which has been concealed by the former (1992: 8). In other words, a focus on the binomial of space and power analyzes the "radical operation of interrogating the 'otherness' of the other, situating the production of cultural difference within the historical processes of a socially and spatially interconnected world" (16). It coincides with McDowell's or Massey's claims, among others, that there is no such thing as an autonomous space (Massey 1994: 5; McDowell 1999: 5). They disrupt such a fiction and establish the idea that places are (hierarchically) interconnected, which helps us better to understand social change and cultural transformation. Thus, as Suárez remarks, the postwar bourgeoning economy and economic benefits of the GI Bill meant that buying houses aided the migration to the suburbs. However, the racial construction of place proved key to selling the dream of suburban life, elucidating why the phenomenon is known as 'white flight': "as the cities that have become the home to the largest minority populations are consistently described as places of 'blight' and 'decay', the largest and fastest-growing cities, with few exceptions, are inhabited by whites in percentages higher than that of white people in the overall national population" (1999: 9). He adds that "one of the Great Migrations of American history" has shaken the country not only demographically but also socially and culturally (2).

The "ubiquity of place making" is enacted in a variety of collective projects, not limited to nationalism nor to the right, and including a politics of nostalgia (Gupta and Ferguson 1992: 13). As already mentioned, nostalgia, as well as memory and narration, are central in Italian/American place-making. As a representative example, in *Paper Fish*, oppositional images of place are expressed in the community's rendering of place as nurturing and innocent or defenseless *versus* investors' own perceptions deciding to raze the Italian enclave of Taylor Street in order to build the University of Chicago: "'The city, you think she do it?' the seedman asked. 'You think she come tear us down like we a rotten building?'" (De Rosa 2003: 117). Since the city is personified as an all-powerful agent that comes to clear a people who are perceived as rotten in themselves and need to be pulled down, the novel as a whole constitutes an elegy of place. This pattern of place-making is a counter-narrative, given that the community is destroyed for commercial interests that resort to ethnic prejudice as legitimation. At the crucial moment of destruction, the neighbors show their astonishment and deliver contesting narratives: Stephanzo and Sophia decide to leave "piling full

the truck with their pictures, the couch, the lamps, the children" as "the city she run over your children and smash them flat, like this […] They call us wops. They say these streets have to go" (118). Giovanni, by contrast, firmly admonishes them and decides to stay, thinking that "the city, she change her mind, then you be sorry" (118). To no avail, however, as he

> went to sit alone on the concrete stoop of his house. Berrywood Street had disappeared as though it were a picture someone wiped away. The city said the Italian ghetto should go, and before the people could drop their forks next to their plates and say, pardon me?, the streets were cleared. (120)

As Doreen Massey (1995: 50) and Gillian Rose argue (1995: 97), place-making often functions as a "defense" or intensifies under feelings of "threat". For instance, senses of place are mobilized in order to avoid re-building or different people moving into a given neighborhood, as is the case in the novel. Similarly, the portrayal of a closely-knit, 'bounded' community through writing and memory represents a common articulation in the project of 'fixing' culture and identity as a way for people to "seize their destiny" in the face of destructive or dominant forces (Duncan and Duncan 2004: 393).

As mentioned earlier, today the prevalent spatial belief concerning Italian/American spaces is that of theme parks, and many Little Italy enclaves are "decried as inauthentic" (Kosta 2014: 225). This is linked to an essentialist idea of ethnic identity which rather privileges 'visible' signs such as food, communal living, as well as close ties and very precise symbols (flags or music). The identity of place is also generally conceived in terms of authenticity, due to a similarly essentialist conceptualization of space as bounded and unchanging. This explains the wide-reaching phenomenon of "exclusivist claims to places— nationalist, regionalist and localist" (Massey 1994: 4). The extended belief of Italian/American conspicuous "attachment to place" and nostalgia is not unique, therefore, as individuals' general sense of a "place-bound identity" (4) is integrated into and mobilizes collective narratives of belonging.

Patterns of settlement and ethnic relations have mostly been conceived in terms of racial conflicts, although a critical analysis of spatial organization reveals fights for space deriving from the interests of power. The politics of space explains how such a fight is often as much over resources as over identity: "Who and what a city is *for* is a matter of diverse social, economic and cultural claims. These competing claims open onto conflicts over space and power, cut lines of division and difference in the city, and are fought over meaning and representation" (Tonkiss 2005: 63, emphasis in original). The characteristic sense of displacement experienced by Italian Americans in the second half of the twentieth century took place in light of economic and urban restructuring, as well as of new racial

dynamics in the United States. According to Simone Cinotto, this "influx" of Italians to the suburbs, together with the "ethnic and racial succession" in the former enclaves as a consequence of the arrival of Puerto Ricans and African Americans from the rural South, entailed "resettling in second-migration areas" and "resuming the work of place-making" (2014: 167). As a result, "Italians emerged from the rapid process of urban change with the label of the toughest 'defenders of place' and most passionate 'lovers of place' among white ethnic groups, uncompromisingly, and even violently, upholding their ethnic-inflected working-class community life" (167). In this vein, to the binomial identity and sense of place, the related element of territory (Storey 2001: 15) is especially relevant to the discussion in that Italian/American strong sense of place is sometimes regarded in a pejorative way such as when they are referred to as 'territorial people'.

This territorial and political sense of place is not unique to Italian/American identity. The contributions by Monika Kaup in her study about the "architecture of ethnicity" (1997) and by Raúl Homero Villa on the concept of "place-identity" (2000: 5), which describe the emergence of Chicano history from the fight for space, can be useful as an approach to certain aspects of Italian/American spatial history. For instance, they contextualize the so-called sacralization of the streets (Orsi 2010: 183), which refers to Italian/American way of 'competing' for space and claiming belonging through religious festivals and processions. The comparison can also explain other geographical settlements and conceptions of place, notably the postwar suburban diaspora, other processes of urban restructuring and their (enduring) effects on Italian/American identity. This well-known white flight to the suburbs, for instance, is too easily taken for granted as voluntary, for example for social climbing or as a way of catching up with mainstream new ideals. Neighborhoods were also frequently destroyed for profitable building schemes, as argued by Jerome Krase regarding Chicago's shrinking Little Italies (1999). In addition, Italian Americans were not always that 'white' either (Guglielmo and Salerno 2003: 2), and the *call* to the suburbs, as was previously explained, was equally embedded in very distinct racial and gender discourses.

6. Conclusion

Renewal projects in US cities in the 1950s and 1960s represent a turning point often referred to as a second migration or enforced diaspora (Hendin 2003: 14; Bona 2010: 139). While at other times the Italian/American move to suburbia responded to less violent motivations, such as to conform to American ways and

escape the inner-city, it is a fact that urban mobility accompanied social mobility, and these changes were expressed in a language standing for immigration and ethnic identity. As Matthew Jacobson affirms, the "equation of mobility and suburbanization with 'diaspora' —a dispersion from the 'promised land' of immigrant immediacy— says a great deal about the reveries of the second, third, and fourth generation at mid-century" (2009: 18). This explains a certain spatial prominence in the Italian/American imagination, portraying the urban enclave as a kind of ancestor or homeland. In addition, it invites fruitful comparison with other cultures in the US, given that the Old Neighborhood becomes a national narrative or, following literary scholar Marcus Klein, "[e]verybody wants a ghetto to look back to" (in Jacobson 2009: 18).

Suárez also shows that life in the Old Neighborhood is a US reality and a key element of its cultural imagination, since "one in seven of us can directly connect our lineage through just one city, Brooklyn" (1999: cover). He provides a compilation of statistical data, historical sources and individual recollections of people who describe an American way of life that has vanished. Starting around 1945, more marked since the mid-1960s, and extending well into the 1980s, this period is popularly identified as the "decline of urban America" (8), when "millions moved from central cities to newly created suburbs, and from the northeast quarter of the country to the south and west" (4). This also represented a change in the restructuring of the economy and the decline of old industry. Urban life was still in vogue, as demonstrated by the rise of cities in the west, such as Los Angeles, which by 1960 had grown by a third of its size and surpassed Philadelphia, until then the third in the top ten American cities in the Northeast or Midwest. This difference between the perception of an urban decline and the continuing growth of cities, therefore, merits an analysis of the constructions of place as this relates to cultural identity and, more importantly, to broader power relations.

The genealogy of place is worth analyzing for the way in which place matters in identity formation in a very broad sense, not only physically or literally but also fulfilling the work of cultural preservation. There is a considerable discursive dominance of the spatial and the street(s) in accounts by the Italian/American community. As De Rosa's *Paper Fish* clearly emphasizes, place is akin to a cultural ancestor and is equally important in the production of difference, in order to claim or (re)affirm distinctive legacies within the framework of identity politics. Space is firmly linked to the (re)invention of ethnic and gender traditions through generational and genealogical discourse. That is to say, evocation of and attachment to place is not simply a manifestation of Italian/American history and culture or of a vanished past that needs to be recovered, but an expression of *place-making* and of the future.

Notes

[1]. I am following Anthony J. Tamburri's (1991: 11) cautions on the ideological charge of the hyphen and using instead his proposed slash when 'Italian American' is employed as an adjective.

[2]. Maria Laurino also notes that "each block tended to attract specific regions from Italy". Apart from the Sicilians' well-known settlement 'district', she reports that "Mulberry Street tended to be Neapolitan […] in the newly defined boundaries of Manhattan's narrow streets" (2015: 43).

[3]. Leonard Covello is the famous Italian/American educator who devised community and Italian-oriented programs as a way to solve this 'intergenerational crisis'. Orsi refers to his memories in *The Heart is the Teacher* about Orsi's life-time dedication "to bring immigrant parents and their New-York children to some understanding of each other" (1990: 134).

[4]. This is how European/American groups came to be defined in the late 1960s and 1970s. The cultural terrain of the new civil rights movements since the late 1960s had a big impact for former immigrants or groups of a European background to (re)affirm their identities, marking a new period in US racial history known as the white revival (Jacobson 2009). This ethnic renaissance, as it was also known, unfolded as a response to the stigmatization of Italians, a racialization and discrimination which, if not depriving them of basic rights, forced many to assimilate, for example in terms of the general abandoning of their language and cultural traditions.

[5]. See, for instance, Saskia Sassen for some transnational perspectives on migration that aim to explain this not only as a matter of personal choice, but as "the intersection of a number of economic and geopolitical processes that link the countries involved" (1999: 1).

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WUTHERING HEIGHTS AND KLEIST'S *NOVELLEN:* ROUSSEAUIAN NATURE, SPONTANEOUS LOVE, INFANCY AND THE PERFORMATIVE SUBVERSION OF THE LAW

WUTHERING HEIGHTS Y LOS RELATOS DE KLEIST: NATURALEZA ROUSSEAUNIANA, AMOR ESPONTÁNEO, INFANCIA Y LA SUBVERSIÓN PERFORMATIVA DE LA LEY

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Abstract

This article analyses the numerous thematic similarities between *Wuthering Heights* and Heinrich von Kleist's *Novellen*, especially "*Der Findling*". I justify this seemingly unconventional comparison on the basis that both Kleist and Emily Brontë were deeply influenced by Rousseau's works and by his novel, *Julie, ou, la Nouvelle Héloïse* (1761). The works of both authors share a typically Rousseauian theme: a hostility toward urban civilization and a strong intimacy with nature. This theme is loaded with ideological force and is present in at least four subthemes: the communion with nature, natural childhood, the nature of spontaneous love and the parodic reiteration of the normative community. Thus, although there is no evidence of Brontë's direct knowledge of Kleist's work, I suggest that their shared recourse to a common precursor may account for the uncanny similarity between Kleist's *Novellen* and *Wuthering Heights.*

Keywords: *Wuthering Heights*, Kleist's *Novellen*, "*Der Findling*", Rousseau, Romanticism.

Resumen

Este artículo analiza las numerosas semejanzas argumentales entre *Wuthering Heights* y los relatos de Kleist, especialmente "*Der Findling*". Justifico esta

comparación aparentemente poco convencional partiendo de la base de que tanto Kleist como Emily Brontë fueron profundamente influenciados por las obras de Rousseau y por su novela, *Julie, ou, la Nouvelle Héloïse* (1761). Así, las obras de ambos autores comparten un tema central típicamente Rousseauniano: una hostilidad exacerbada hacia la civilización urbana y una fuerte conexión con la naturaleza. Este tema central está cargado de fuerza ideológica y, a su vez, está presente en al menos cuatro sub-temas: la comunión con la naturaleza, la naturaleza de la infancia, la naturaleza del amor espontáneo y la reiteración paródica de la comunidad normativa. Aunque no existe evidencia de que Brontë conociera directamente las obras de Kleist, sugiero que la influencia en ambos de un precursor en común podría ser la causa de la llamativa similitud entre los relatos de Kleist y *Wuthering Heights*.

Palabras clave: *Wuthering Heights*, los relatos de Kleist, "*Der Findling*", Rousseau, Romanticismo.

1. Heinrich von Kleist and Emily Brontë: A Remarkable Match

In *Fiction and Repetition: Seven English Novels*, J. Hillis Miller has claimed that "one of the most obvious characteristics of works of literature is their manifest strangeness" (1982: 18). He does not hesitate to include *Wuthering Heights* among the selected seven novels as one of these strange works of literature. Indeed, *Wuthering Heights* has always been analyzed as a 'hapax' or isolated singularity in the history of English literature. The first reactions following its publication in 1847 relegated it to the category of impenetrable mystery. Thus, a reviewer in the *Douglas Jerrold's Weekly Newspaper* described *Wuthering Heights* as "a strange sort of book, baffling all regular criticism; yet it is impossible to begin and not to finish it, and quite as impossible to lay it aside afterwards and say nothing about it" (Dunn 2003: 284). More recent scholarship on *Wuthering Heights* still foregrounds the novel's singularity. Joseph Carroll regards it as "a masterpiece of an imaginative order superior to that of most novels" but "elusive to interpretation" (2008: 241), and Louise Lee highlights the novel's "sui generis appeal" as well as "its singular critical animus" (2016: 81), reinforcing the deep-rooted assumption that *Wuthering Heights* is an anomalous text or a singularity within the English literary tradition.

Similarly, Heinrich von Kleist's works have been considered a literary singularity in the history of German literature. His *Novellen*, published in 1810-1811, and his dramatic works have posed the critical problem of indeterminacy. Hence, the poet and editor Christoph Martin Wieland was elated when hearing a reading of *Robert*

Guiskard; Goethe, whose support and appreciation Kleist was very eager to obtain, was indifferent to *Amphitryon* and reacted with aversion to *Penthesilea*. In a review of Tieck's *Dramaturgische Blätter* from 1826, Goethe would later express that Kleist provoked in him "*Schauder*" ["shiver"] and "*Abscheu*" ["disgust"] (Howe 2012: 1). The fact that only three of Kleist's seven completed dramas were put on stage during his lifetime suggests that these works did not conform to the dominant aesthetic and ethical modes considered appropriate for performance. Recent scholarship has indeed revived Kleist's importance as an Enlightenment figure and has placed his literary oeuvre within the parameters of the *Aufklärung* in general, alongside Kant in particular (Howe 2012: 1).

These critical reactions suggest that Kleist and Brontë's baffling texts have surpassed the horizon of expectations of both critics and readers since, apparently, there is no hermeneutic frame which would allow them to classify these narratives within a specific literary tradition. I want to argue that the hermeneutic indeterminacy of *Wuthering Heights* might be due to its indebtedness to the German *Novelle*, specifically with Kleist's *Novellen*. Hence, my purpose here is to throw new light on *Wuthering Heights* by using some of Kleist's *Novellen* as intertexts —paying particular attention to "*Der Findling*" ["The Foundling"]— in order to detect the common thematic resemblances that these narratives share. The central point in my analysis is that Kleist and Brontë's shared resort to Rousseau may account for the uncanny similarities between their narratives.

My hypothesis, in a nutshell, is that Rousseau's influence on these authors could be the cause of the emergence of such similar narratives. Thus, I will analyze how Rousseau's views on human nature, articulated in *Discourse on the Origin of Inequality* (1755), *Julie, or the New Heloise* (1761) and *Emile, or On Education* (1762), inform Kleist's *Novellen* and *Wuthering Heights*, and, more particularly, how these views inspire the development of Nicolo and Heathcliff from a natural state to a social one. These views are expressed in the following themes: nature as a source of genuine feelings and as the basis of human identity; the conflict between spontaneous love and social or moral principles; Nicolo and Heathcliff as natural children who are finally corrupted by an abrupt socialization and by private property; and how the subversive repetition of the law exposes and proves its inaccessibility and malfunction. I will also enrich my analysis with other contemporary theories, like Jacques Derrida's theory of hospitality, Julia Kristeva's concept of the 'abject' or Judith Butler's idea of 'enabling violation'.

Despite the general lack of comparative studies on Kleist and Brontë, these names have very selectively begun to crop up jointly as a remarkable match. Cecil Davies (1978) places *Wuthering Heights* within the tradition of the German *Novelle* of the eighteenth and nineteenth century and Carol Jacobs (1989) contextualizes Emily

Brontë's novel and Kleist's narratives in terms of Romanticism, hermeneutic ambiguity and estrangement. Ralf R. Nicolai (1973) and Andrea Kirchknopf (2004) have drawn the undeniable thematic similarities between Kleist's "The Foundling" and *Wuthering Heights*. Nicolai assumes that Emily Brontë was familiar with Kleist's work and bases this assumption on "internal evidence" of the similarities between *Wuthering Heights* and "The Foundling", which, of all of Kleist's *Novellen*, is undoubtedly the most similar in plot to Emily Brontë's novel (1973: 23). Nicolai analyzes how some characters and episodes in *Wuthering Heights* seem to have their inspirational source in Kleist's "The Foundling": the similar way in which Nicolo and Heathcliff enter the houses, usurping the place of a dead son; Elvire and Catherine's similar state of mind after the death of Colino and Heathcliff's exile, respectively; Piachi's violent outbursts and Heathcliff and Hindley's brutal quarrels. Andrea Kirchknopf analyzes the resemblances of character constitution in "The Foundling" and in Emily Brontë's novel. She particularly focuses on the foundling characters; social identification; self-identification through "the other"; the recurring substitution of family members and names; and the recurring illnesses and deaths.

Although these critics put forward a fresh reading of *Wuthering Heights*, they still evince a lack of critical conviction in their approaches, which do not go beyond "internal evidence" and which, consequently, fail to account for the conspicuous similarities between Kleist's narratives and Emily Brontë's novel. I want to account for these thematic resemblances by arguing that Kleist's and Brontë's resort to a common precursor, Rousseau, may be the cause of the emergence of such similar stories. Besides, I will also enrich the comparison by analyzing the thematic similarities that *Wuthering Heights* also shares with other *Novellen* by Kleist, such as "The Earthquake in Chile", "The Marquise of O", "Michael Kohlhaas" and "The Betrothal in Santo Domingo", all of them collected in David Luke and Nigel Reeves' edition, *The Marquise of O and Other Stories* (2004). Therefore, in this article, I will follow in these critics' footsteps and I will argue that *Wuthering Heights* —though fairly dissimilar from what had been written in the English literary tradition— was quite consistent with the German tradition of the *Novelle* and, in particular, with Kleist's narratives.[1]

2. The Influence of Rousseau on Kleist and Emily Brontë

There is a cultural context that supports this pairing: the indisputable influence of Rousseau on both Kleist and Brontë. Kleist had read Rousseau in French when he was sent to Berlin after the death of his father, in 1788, and the Rousseauian ideal of communion with nature as the only escape from a decadent feudalism and an

incipient capitalism had a great impact on his thought (Pérez 1999: 14). Indeed, when he was living in Switzerland, Kleist entertained the Rousseauian idea of going back to nature, and he eventually decided to become a peasant and work the land (Luke and Reeves 2004: 10). It is also unquestionable that the Brontës were deeply acquainted with Rousseau's works. In fact, we find direct evidence that Charlotte Brontë read Rousseau in *Shirley,* where the Swiss author is the subject of a discussion between the protagonist and Caroline. Although critics like Elizabeth Gargano have pointed out Rousseau's inevitable impact on Charlotte Brontë's works (2004: 786), his influence on Emily Brontë has not been sufficiently or satisfactorily studied.

The English Romantic poets, especially Wordsworth, Byron and Shelley —whom Emily Brontë had surely read[2]— were also deeply influenced by Rousseau's emphasis upon the preeminence of instinct and feeling.[3] Thus, Rousseau's emotionalism has permeated British Romantic discourse, which is characterized by a rejection of urban civilization, the celebration of the freedom of nature, the belief in emotional spontaneity and honesty and the conception of literature as an instrument of human unification and purification (Wellek 1958: 141). What I want to stress is that Emily Brontë, whose novel openly engages Romantic motifs, shares common Rousseauian ground with the British Romantics.[4] Indeed, critics have seen *Wuthering Heights* as influenced by the incestuous passion in Byron's *The Bride of Abydos* and *Manfred* (Lodge 2012: 146) and the character of Manfred —and Byron himself— has always been considered a partial inspiration for Emily Brontë's fatal hero: "*Wuthering Heights* is *Manfred* converted to prose romance, and Heathcliff is more like Manfred, Lara, and Byron himself than is Charlotte Brontë's Rochester" (Bloom 2007: 134). Heathcliff's emotional misanthropy and his worship of wild nature is in fact truly Byronic. Apart from this, Shelley's *Epipsychidion,* with its famous manifesto of free love and its portrayal of metaphysical love, has also been identified as a potential source for the novel (Lodge 2012: 146-147). Besides, the Romantic poets' conception of nature as an inherently spiritual place is also a pervasive theme in Emily Brontë's poems and *Wuthering Heights.*

Emily Brontë adopted the Rousseauian and Romantic conventionalism of representing the inward self as authentic and the external social world as alienating and hostile to authentic selfhood. The inevitable escape from society, the Romantic rejection of mundane conventions, erotic sacrifice and tragic power were all rather common themes in Romantic poetry, but were rarely present in nineteenth-century English novels.[5] However, and this is my point here, these Romantic tropes were quite recurrent in *Wuthering Heights.* Surely, there are few lovers in English fiction who are as unrestrained in their behaviour or in the expression of their passions as Heathcliff and Catherine. Kleist and Brontë assimilated Rousseau's

dictum that the history of man lies not in books or treaties "but in nature which never lies" and that "everything issuing from nature is true" (Rousseau 2009: 25).

The common denominator between Kleist's narratives and Brontë's novel is a Rousseauian hostility toward urban civilization and their closeness to an external nature. "Nature", as the English poets of the eighteenth century understood it, was "a consciousness of our common humanity, of the bond between all people and the unity between man and external nature" (Wellek 1958: 140).[6] The right of nature predominates. This theme is loaded with ideological force and is present in at least four subthemes: the communion with nature, the nature of infancy, the nature of spontaneous love and the parodic reiteration of the normative community.

3. Communion with Nature

One of the most prevalent themes that appears in both Kleist's *Novellen* and *Wuthering Heights* is a strong desire to escape from a corrupted civilization which thwarts the characters' more genuine feelings. To this end, these characters try to escape from the *nomos* to a natural setting which proves to be a site of spiritual immanence, promoting authenticity and a kind of Christian confraternity and revitalizing religious faith. "The Earthquake in Chile" brilliantly emblematizes the conflict between sexual instincts and social, civil and ecclesiastical law. In this novella, Kleist depicts the situation of two victims of an inhuman society, Jerónimo and Josefa, who find their salvation in an idyllic nature, after an earthquake has pulled down the city, paradoxically preventing Josefa's execution for sacrilege and Jerónimo's suicide attempt after having been imprisoned. Ironically, the lovers go back to hell when they decide to go to the only church which the earthquake has spared: they are used as scapegoats and murdered by the people attending the mass. Miller points out that the very laws that have been interrupted by the earthquake return with more strength in the church, instigated by a Judgment Day sermon (1995: 84). For Jerónimo and Josefa, religion is an emotional instinct guided by individual conscience and cut off from all institutions since "[t]rue worship is of the heart" (Rousseau 1991: 287).

To a sharp reader, this plot will bring to mind Rousseau's *Julie, or The New Heloise,* in which the purity of the love between the protagonists is of a piece with the idyllic nature of the Swiss landscape: "It seemed that this deserted place was meant to be the sanctuary of two lovers who alone had escaped nature's cataclysm" (1997: 425). What is remarkable here is that Saint-Preux, the lover, compares an idyllic place in nature with a sanctuary for two lovers who, like Jerónimo and Josefa, have survived a natural disaster. Both narratives disrupt the opposition between the sacred and the secular, borrowing ideas from Christian theology and

creating a new response to nature as a source of genuine feelings and as the basis of human identity. Therefore, Kleist's and Rousseau's lovers find "the chief means of self-preservation" in their passions and in nature (Rousseau 1991: 182). The struggle between genuine love and religious and social prejudices is essentially Romantic. Its impossible conflicts make the lovers' final death a dramatic necessity.

In "The Marquise of O", nature plays a slightly different role, that of reliever, a catalytic agent that promotes moral relief and a sense of confidence. In this *Novelle*, Kleist makes use of the Cervantine motif of the fainted woman who is raped and gets pregnant. It makes an ironic allusion to the Christian dogma of the immaculate conception of the Virgin Mary. When her aristocratic family learns about the Marquise's condition *intéressante*, she loses the support of her parents, on whom she is financially dependent, and is tyrannically banished from the house. The Marquise's only yearning is to prevent her child, whom she considers the most divine of all human beings, from suffering the social stigmatization to which she is condemned. It is when she moves to her country house with her two daughters, leading a life of "perpetual cloistered seclusion" and cut off from an oppressive and despotic society, that she recovers her self-confidence and assumes a Christological persona: "her grief had been replaced by a heroic resolve to arm herself with pride and let the world do its worst" (Kleist 2004: 93).

The Marquise assumes then the Rousseauian psychology of *laissez-moi faire*, which is experienced in a natural setting and which avoids the hollowness of conventional social opinions and values, giving free reign to an instinctive self-esteem of the natural self (Rousseau 2009: 176). In this case, it is the Marquise's self-love and individual conscience —which is symbolically attained in a natural setting— that is opposed to social prejudice and religious stigmatization. Conscience, for the Marquise, is that "divine instinct" which serves as "guide for a creature ignorant and finite indeed, yet intelligent and free; infallible judge of good and evil, making man like to God!" (Rousseau 1991: 268). Tellingly, passionate love, self-love and individual conscience are always attained in communion with nature in Kleist.

Similarly, Emily Brontë's lovers strongly sympathize with a wild nature which is the site of spiritual immanence. Thus, Heathcliff and Catherine construct a mystic vision of their love that cannot be identified with the Christian Heaven but with the wild and free nature of the fields that surround Wuthering Heights, as can be seen in Catherine's dream, when she claims that she prefers wandering on the moors rather than going to Heaven. Catherine's own paradise is embodied in the savage nature of Wuthering Heights. When she is sick, Catherine states that she feels like an outcast and an exile in a world where she does not belong and, in her delirium, she yearns for her savage and free childhood in the hills of Wuthering Heights:

> Oh, I'm burning! I wish I were out of doors— I wish I were a girl again, half savage, and hardy, and free… and laughing at injuries, not maddening under them! Why am I so changed? Why does my blood rush into a hell of tumult at a few words? I'm sure I should be myself were I once among the heather on those hills… […] (Brontë 1998: 126)

In Alliston's view, Brontë rewrites the Rousseauian theme of "naïve quasi-sibling lovers" living in what she calls "utopias of sympathy" (2002: 141). As in *Julie, or the New Heloise,* nature in *Wuthering Heights* is portrayed as a mystical and spiritual place where the lovers can spontaneously relish their love. However, unlike Saint-Preux and Julie, Heathcliff and Catherine do not find solace and satisfaction in a peaceful and bucolic nature, but in a violent and inhospitable landscape which responds to Romantic conceptions of the sublime as well as symbolizing the lovers' tormented and unsatisfied love.

4. Spontaneous Love

The nature of spontaneous love that threatens moral or social principles and causes disarray appears in *Julie, or the New Heloise* and in most of Kleist's *Novellen* and *Wuthering Heights.* When Nelly returns to the house after having been expelled, she hears that Heathcliff and Catherine have suddenly become "very thick" (Brontë 1998: 36).[7] This is indeed the representation of the relation between Eros and Psyche, who are frequently represented as embracing or gazing at each other. This image captures the childlike unconscious state of both infant innocence and sexual unconsciousness (Doody 1997: 364). This infant innocence ends when Catherine acquires a social conscience after her short stay with the Lintons: "Why, how very black and cross you look! And how— how funny and grim! But that's because I'm used to Edgar and Isabella Linton" (Brontë 1998: 52). Later, she would recognize to a bewildered Nelly that "[i]t would degrade [her] to marry Heathcliff now" (80).

According to Rousseau, "the more violent the passions, the more necessary are the laws to contain them", but it is also true that the disorders and crimes caused by these passions clearly disclose the inadequacy of these very laws (2009: 48). Thus, it would be convenient to examine whether or not civil, social and moral laws cause these disorders "for then, if the laws were capable of suppressing such disorders, the very least that one would demand of them is that they should put a stop to an evil that would not exist without them" (48). In *Wuthering Heights*, it is precisely Catherine's newly acquired social conscience and her incorporation into the "civilized world" that trigger the tragedy in the novel since "Eros is —and should always be— *lawless*" (Doody 1997: 360). Similarly, in Kleist's narratives

and in *Julie,* the application of the law —whether it is the law of the father, the social law or the moral law— causes an erotic or anomic implosion.

Kleist's lovers are in some way bound to confront civil, social and moral laws in order to be together. In "The Earthquake in Chile", Josefa never renounces her lover and even becomes pregnant by him whereas in "The Betrothal in Santo Domingo", Toni betrays her mother and her people and falls in love with the white man in whose murder she is supposed to be assisting. She tries to save the stranger and to elope with him in order to marry him in Europe. In Rousseau's *Julie, or the New Heloise,* it is not only the Law of the father that interposes between Saint-Preux and Julie but an inner desire to fulfill ethical norms and expectations. Thus, Julie accepts a socially enforced marriage with Wolmar in a desperate attempt to become the personification of virtue: "I felt my heart was only made for virtue", she writes, "and that it could not be happy without it" (Rousseau 1997: 282). Julie willingly renounces her true love, Saint-Preux, whom her father abhors, in order to satisfy her father's —and society's— expectations. Eventually, her ethic of personal will ends up becoming an ethic of constraint (Hall 1961: 30): "Dear friend, do you not know that virtue is a state of war, and that living in it means one always has some battle to wage against oneself?" (Rousseau 1997: 560). It is always the imposition of the Law that brings calamity. Therefore, Josefa is forced into a convent for refusing to renounce her lover and condemned to death for fornication and sacrilege, whereas Jerónimo is also imprisoned and plans to commit suicide. Toni is shot to death by her lover, who believes her to be a traitor, and Julie —like Catherine— ends up immolating herself in a socially enforced marriage with a man she does not love. What all these narratives betray is a common Rousseauian principle: the ethics of authenticity are above rational, moral or social principles.

The erotic dimension and the emotional idyll of the lovers in *Wuthering Heights,* "The Betrothal in Santo Domingo", "The Earthquake in Chile" and *Julie* confer on these narratives a quasi-religious dimension. This is symbolically borne out at the end. Thus, whereas Heathcliff and Catherine are said to have acquired a spectral existence, Mr. Strömli literarily monumentalizes Gustav and Toni by erecting two statues representing them in his garden, and Jerónimo and Josefa's transcendental love finds its sacralization in their son, Felipe, who miraculously escapes from Master Pedrillo's violent massacre and is adopted as a surrogate son by Don Fernando and Doña Elvira. In Rousseau's novel, Julie, on her death-bed, finally acknowledges that she still loves Saint-Preux and expresses her desire to be reunited with him in Heaven: "Nay, I leave thee not, I go to await thee. The virtue that separated us on earth shall unite us in the eternal abode. I die in this flattering expectation" (Rousseau 1997: 610). The mystical resolution of these narratives finally cancels the possibility of an alternative community of (adulterous) lovers

who challenge and confront collectively sanctioned norms. And yet, even if they do not fulfil this narrative possibility, these narratives unleash a disruptive energy. Consequently, behind these transcendental implosions, there is a subversive energy that timidly hints at an alternative, more authentic community because, as Maurice Blanchot put it, a community of lovers is that "antisocial society or association", which, no matter whether the lovers want it or not, "has as its ultimate goal the destruction of society" (1998: 48).

5. Children of Nature

Thematically, no novella is more analogous to *Wuthering Heights* than "The Foundling". Both narratives have as hero —or villain— a foundling of unknown origins who shares many traits with Rousseau's description of the natural child in *Emile, or On Education*: they are both robust and vigorous children of nature who have not acquired the art of rhetoric and who are finally corrupted by an abrupt socialization and by the lures of private property. Both stories begin in a strikingly similar manner: a father who, after the death of his son, adopts another in his place. Like Mr. Earnshaw, Piachi finds an orphan, Nicolo, during a business journey. Both Nicolo and Heathcliff have an ambiguous nature as both fiend and angel. Thus, when Piachi asks the doctors if he is allowed to take Nicolo, they answer that he is "the son of God" and that he "would be missed by nobody" (Kleist 2004: 271). Nicolo is also depicted as cracking and eating nuts, a habit associated with the devil in folklore traditions of superstition (Kirchknopf 2004: 36). Mr. Earnshaw's first words about Heathcliff are equally ambiguous: "See here, wife! I was never so beaten with anything in my life: but you must e'en take it as a gift of God; though it's as dark almost as if it came from the devil" (Brontë 1998: 34). Both Nicolo and Heathcliff have a dark physiognomy and a hostile attitude. Nicolo "was handsome in a strangely statuesque way; his black hair hung down from his forehead in simple points, overshadowing a serious, wise-looking face which never changed its expression" (Kleist 2004: 271), and Heathcliff is first described by Nelly as "a dirty, ragged, black-haired child" (Brontë 1998: 35).

These two foundlings are children without provenance, illegitimate children out of the silences of fiction who bear the physical and psychic marks of terrible traumas. Thus, Nicolo has recently lost his parents and has contracted the plague. He begs Piachi "in the name of all the saints to let him come with him and not leave him behind to perish in the town. As he spoke he clasped the old man's hand, pressed it and kissed it and covered it with tears" (Kleist 2004: 270). Similarly, Mr. Earnshaw finds Heathcliff "starving" and "houseless" in the streets of Liverpool and, since "not a soul knew to whom it belonged", he decides to take "it" home

with him. It is a striking difference that, whereas Nicolo begs and cries, Heathcliff should do neither. Tellingly, Heathcliff does not need to resort to these subterfuges in order to move his benefactor.

Both Nicolo and Heathcliff have been hardened by their shared infancy as vagrant and nomadic children who belong nowhere. According to Rousseau, when beasts are domesticated, they lose energy, strength and spiritedness, and the same is true of human beings themselves; when they become sociable and domesticated, they also become weak, fearful and submissive (2009: 31). Hence, while Piachi's refined and vulnerable son, the eleven-year-old Paolo, became infected with the plague and died within three days, the robust Nicolo recovered his full health in the hospital. Also, Heathcliff is described by Nelly as a "sullen, patient child; hardened, perhaps, to ill-treatment" who would "stand Hindley's blows without winking or shedding a tear" (Brontë 1998: 36). When the children fell ill of the measles, Heathcliff "was as uncomplaining as a lamb" and would "give little trouble" (36). Darwin's evolutionary theory of natural selection is at work in both cases, since "as some individuals are produced than can possibly survive, there must in every case be a struggle for existence, either one individual with another of the same species, or with individuals of distinct species, or with the physical conditions of life" (Darwin 2008: 88). Nature has taught Nicolo and Heathcliff to be robust and sturdy and to "bear pain bravely" (Rousseau 1991: 48). It is society and nurture which later "debase the heart and make us afraid to die" (48).

As uncivilized children, Nicolo and Heathcliff do not master the art of language or, if they do, they prefer to remain uncommunicative. The word "infant" comes from the Latin *infantem*, "young child, babe in arms", a noun use of the adjective meaning "not able to speak", from *in-* "not" and *fans*, present participle of *fari* "to speak". Besides, communication impairment and selective mutism are always related to isolation and anti-social behaviours. While Nicolo sits in a corner, "uncommunicative and absorbed in himself, with his hands in his trouser pockets, looking pensively and diffidently out of the windows of the carriage as it sped along" (Kleist 2004: 272), Heathcliff can only stare around and repeat "over and over again some gibberish that nobody could understand" (Brontë 1998: 34). Both foundlings are introduced as a kind of "blank slate" with respect to their previous lives, and they appear to have lost or never fully learned the art of language (Staten 2014: 135). Their initial communication failure is indeed a sign of the unspeakable now verbalized, that is, of the trauma and damage that has been done to them during infancy.

Nicolo and Heathcliff only possess "a pathetic or expressive voice" which serves "as the language of passions" (Rousseau 1991: 119). They do not need to master rhetoric because they are indifferent to everyone but themselves; "they take no

interest in anyone and they do not pretend to take such an interest; they are less deceitful than others" (Rousseau 1991: 194). As vagrant and forsaken children who have no relations with others or do not need them, "the necessity or indeed the possibility of language is inconceivable, if it could be done without" (Rousseau 2009: 38). When they are taken into the house of their benefactors, both Nicolo and Heathcliff are uncivilized children and all they know at that time they have learned from experience (Rousseau 1991: 225). This possibly explains their communication impairment and the fact that they have more vigour, strength and courage than Paolo or Hindley. It is due to their abrupt and violent socialization into a family that they learn "the force of the arts of persuasion" (Rousseau 1991: 225) and are finally degenerated by private property. Thus, Nicolo and Heathcliff alienate themselves from nature and become both destructive and egotistical adults.

6. The Performative Subversion of the Law

The subversion of the normative community is pointedly present in Kleist's "Michael Kohlhaas" and "The Foundling", and in Emily Brontë's *Wuthering Heights*. For Miller, no other story by Kleist is more dominated by legal questions than "Michael Kohlhaas" (1995: 85). Kohlhaas is a wealthy and honorable man with a strong sense of justice [*Rechtgefühl*] that will turn him "into a robber and a murderer" and make him "one of the most honorable as well as one of the most terrible men of his age" (Kleist 2004: 114). After having his two horses unlawfully detained and ill-treated on his journey to Dresden, he tries to take legal action but fails because of corruption in the administration, which Hamlet wisely called "the insolence of office" (Shakespeare 2008: 97). Frustrated, Kohlhaas decides to take the law into his own hands. He hires an armed band, pursues Junker von Tronka and burns down his castle and part of Wittenberg. During his interview with Martin Luther, he defends himself stating: "I call that man an outcast [*verstoßen*] […] who is denied the protection of the law! […] Whoever withholds it from me drives me out into the wilderness among savages [*unter den Wilden der Einöde*]" (Kleist 2004: 152).

"Michael Kohlhaas" proves the failure of the law and illustrates how "an affront to the law is repaired by a repetition of an affront to justice" (Miller 1995: 103). This novella establishes, then, the unavailability and the failure of law since, quite ironically, an attempt is made to repair an affront to the law by violent and numerous affronts to justice. Kleist cunningly suggests here that the operation of the legal system is undermined by the power interest and the selfishness of those who dispense justice. He also examines the intrinsic flaws of bureaucratic law,

problematizing the idea of personal responsibility in a way that makes it difficult to blame someone unequivocally. Like Michael Kohlhaas, Heathcliff takes the law into his own hands but, while Kohlhaas proves to have a subversive and reformist ideology, Heathcliff is not moved by a utopian will to reform or expose the unkindness of the legal system. He is just a possessive individualist who has been forced to understand the ways of the world. When he has finally achieved all his carefully planned purposes, Heathcliff, instead of articulating a powerful reformist dictum, expresses his despondency:

> "It is a poor conclusion, is it not?" he observed, having brooded awhile on the scene he had just witnessed: "an absurd termination to my violent exertions? I get levers and mattocks to demolish the two houses, and train myself to be capable of working like Hercules, and when everything is ready and in my power, I find the will to lift a slate off either roof has vanished!" (Brontë 1998: 323)

Both Michael Kohlhaas and Heathcliff want to take revenge on the institutions, the law, the state and society; and both of them are ultimately in their rebellion driven to despair. The key difference between them is that whereas Kohlhaas exerts a conscious revolt against the law, Heathcliff's rebellion is not driven by revolutionary or reformist energies; on the contrary, Heathcliff's revenge is more rudimentary and instinctive since he uses the law for his aims. Nevertheless, even if Heathcliff seldom expresses a subversive ideology, Emily Brontë does establish an understated game of subversion. Unlike Kohlhaas, Heathcliff does *not* return to a state of nature. He frames, rather, a new social contract. He has assimilated the social system, and wishes merely to reduplicate its very laws and contracts. But in doing so, he —though unconsciously— proves the unavailability and failure of the law, inaugurating the law of absence. Ironically, the repetition of the law becomes itself an affront to justice. Both "Michael Kohlhaas" and *Wuthering Heights* prove Rousseau's theory that the origin of society and of laws destroyed natural freedom irreversibly, set down the law of property and inequality, made skillful usurpation into an irreversible right, "and henceforth subjected, for the benefit of a few ambitious men, the human race to labour, servitude, and misery" (Rousseau 2009: 69).

The subversion of the law of property and legal inheritance also triggers the action of "The Foundling". Nicolo, the adoptee, usurps the place of the legitimate son in the family, Paolo, whereas Heathcliff is named after a dead brother of Catherine. Both children pollute the well-ordered and happy existence of the wealthy Roman Piachi and the Earnshaw family, respectively. We can see that Nicolo tries to accommodate to the normative community by complying with a socially accepted marriage with Constanza Parquet, leaving behind his illicit relationship with Xaviera Tartini. Besides, he is introduced into the family business and, subsequently, becomes the legal heir of all of Piachi's possessions:

> when Piachi reached the age of sixty he took for Nicolo the final step that a benefactor could take: he gave him legal possession of the entire fortune on which his property business rested, retaining only a small capital for himself, and withdrew with his faithful, virtuous Elvira, whose worldly wishes were few, into retirement. (Kleist 2004: 273)

Nicolo's marriage to Elvira's niece, his incorporation into the labour market and the inheritance of Piachi's possessions are performative acts within the judicial and legal frame. The first one turns him into a husband, the second into a worker and the third into a legal heir, overlapping titles that sustain the family and the three basic pillars —matrimony, patrimony and genealogy— lending support to the traditional community itself. Heathcliff's assimilation of the normative community is more violent and sadistic. He seduces, abducts and marries Isabella in order to take revenge on Linton. Then, he sadistically inflicts his vengeance on Hindley's son —who is his own surrogate— and to Cathy, forcing the latter to marry his dying son, Linton Heathcliff, in order to inherit the two properties, Wuthering Heights and Thrushcross Grange: "I want the triumph of seeing *my* descendant fairly lord of their estates; my child hiring their children to till their fathers' lands for wages" (Brontë 1998: 234).

But not only do Nicolo and Heathcliff subvert the law of property and legal inheritance, they also transgress the implicit social and moral laws of hospitality. Both constitute two figures of alterity which threaten and destabilize the organic community of blood, birth, social status and genealogy of the family. In Jacques Derrida's theory of hospitality, they would be the encroaching satellites of the family system, the domestic intruders who "shake up the threatening dogmatism of the paternal logos" (Derrida and Dufourmantelle 2000: 5). Nicolo is charitably admitted to the house as a surrogate son but —like Heathcliff— he ends up as a legitimate owner, even forcing Piachi to leave the house, "for he, Nicolo, was now its owner by deed of gift and he would defend his title to it against all comers" (Kleist 2004: 285). Derrida argues that it is the master of the house, the chief guardian, who lays down the laws of hospitality (Derrida and Dufourmantelle 2000: 149). Absolute hospitality requires, then, that the master of the house opens up his home and gives place to the outsider, to the foreigner or to the absolute other without asking anything from them (25). According to Derrida, what distinguishes a guest from a parasite is the obedience to moral and social law. For a newcomer to be received as a guest, he has to be submitted to a limiting authority. Both Nicolo and Heathcliff have been welcomed as absolute and unknown aliens who have acquired the rights of guests. Their family duties are the entrance into the business market —and a respectable marriage in Nicolo's case— and obedience to the rules of legal inheritance.

These two guests cannot help their satanic and vindictive nature. Nicolo is described by Kleist as an "infernal scoundrel" (2004: 285) and is compared to Tartuffe (285), whereas Heathcliff reprises the role of the diabolical self of Gothic tradition, "dark almost as it came from the devil" (Brontë 1994: 38), an "imp of Satan" (38) with a "devilish nature" (172), a "fierce, pitiless, wolfish man" (102), a "ghoul" or a "vampire" (330). As children of nature, they were guided by their instincts and passions and yielded impetuously to the "impulses of human feeling" (Rousseau 2009: 47) but once they are taught the importance of private property and wealth, they pass from a natural state (childhood and innocent primitivism) to a social one (adulthood and experience).

As a result, Nicolo and Heathcliff become avaricious and corrupt. They end up biting the hand that feeds them, which is one of the greatest transgressions of hospitality. When a guest encroaches on his host's authority, he becomes a hostile subject and the host risks becoming his hostage (Derrida and Dufourmantelle 2000: 53). By the same logic, Nicolo and Heathcliff have become hostile subjects to both Piachi and Hindley, respectively, who, therefore, have turned into hostages, victims of their original guests. Both foundlings display an exceptional mastery of the law of inheritance. Thus, the government issues a decree giving Piachi's property to his foster son and Nicolo knows how to take advantage of this. Similarly, Heathcliff tries to perpetuate both his genealogy and his landed property by marrying Isabella Linton, having a son with her and arranging the marriage of his son to Catherine Linton, so that the whole property of the two families is controlled by him.

Ironically, the destruction of this traditional community is performed through the parodic usurpation of the normative conventions that govern it. Both Nicolo and Heathcliff are 'abjects' in Kristeva's terminology, beings who do "not respect borders, positions, rules", and "disturb identity, system, order" (1982: 4). They destabilize the normative community, not standing out as completely different but challenging it from within, performing what Judith Butler —borrowing from Gayatri Spivak— would call 'an enabling violation' since acts of disobedience must always take place *within* law. Although individuals are always implicated in these relationships of power, they are at the same time enabled by them, not merely subordinated to the law (Butler 1993: 79). Nicolai mentions that, in both narratives, "the villain enjoys protection by the law" (1973: 25), but it is Eagleton, in *Myths of Power: A Marxist Study of the Brontës* (1975), who develops this argument further: "Heathcliff is a dynamic force which seeks to destroy the old yeoman settlement by dispossessing Hareton; yet he does this partly to revenge himself on the very Linton world whose weapons (property deals, arranged marriages) he deploys so efficiently" (2005: 112).

Both Nicolo and Heathcliff make a parody of the legal and social contracts which sustain society, but the result is neither comic nor satirical; it is subversive and disruptive. They come through as parasites which throw into disarray the family system and prove the inauthenticity of the three fundamental pillars —matrimony, patrimony and genealogy— that sustain the endurance of the traditional community. This parodic subversion exposes the usurpatory origin of the social classes; it represents the ethnic otherness which perturbs the purity of lineage, and stresses the porosity between the different social classes, readjusting the social system. These two adoptees have proved how paradoxical and corrupting the law of inheritance is: it ironically legitimates usurpation.

To conclude, I hope to have shown that, although there is no direct evidence that Emily Brontë read Kleist's narratives, there is a strong thematic connection between Kleist's Novellen and Emily Brontë's *Wuthering Heights*. This striking connection may have its origin in Rousseau's ideas, which were in vogue in the last decades of the eighteenth century and which influenced the works of both Kleist and Emily Brontë: a hostility toward a corrupt civilization which thwarts the characters' most genuine feelings, and the view of nature as a source of new feelings and as the basis of human identity. This theme is present in four subthemes that appear in most of Kleist's narratives and in *Wuthering Heights*: a spiritual union with nature; the nature of spontaneous love; the child as a source of natural and spontaneous feeling; and the subversive repetition of the normative community, which proves that laws destroy natural freedom irreversibly and legitimate property, inequality and usurpation.

Notes

[1]. Two of Kleist's *Novellen* had been translated into English in Charles Whiting's collection of German tales. This edition, dated 1844, includes a translation of "Michael Kohlhaas" and of "St. Cecilia; or, the Power of Music" by John Oxenford. This has been, to the best of my knowledge, overlooked by Brontë critics. Besides, Kleist's *Novellen* were translated into French in 1830 by Adrienne I. and Joël Cherbuliez. We know that Emily Brontë was quite proficient in French and that she had some knowledge of German (Lonoff 2012: 110). However, I cannot ascertain whether or not Emily Brontë was acquainted with Whiting's edition, whether she was able to read Kleist's prose in German or whether she read the French translation of the *Novellen*. And yet, the fact that *Wuthering Heights* has many important intertextual similarities with Kleist's "The Foundling" justifies and reinforces the conjecture that Emily Brontë may have been acquainted with Kleist's work.

[2]. In her letters to her lifelong friend, Ellen Nussey, Charlotte Brontë expresses her deep admiration for Byron, Wordsworth and Southey. In addition, the sisters sent complimentary copies of their poems to Thomas de Quincey, Hartley Coleridge, Ebenezer Elliot,

John Gibson Lockhart, Alfred Tennyson, and William Wordsworth (Brontë 2010: 85).

[3]. There are several critical accounts of the legacy of Rousseau in British Romanticism. Henri Roddier (1950) reviews Rousseau's reception in eighteenth-century England and analyzes his undeniable influence on William Blake, William Godwin, Edmund Burke and Charlotte Smith, whereas Joseph Texte (1899) and Jacques Voisine (1956) focus on Rousseau's powerful impact on Byron, Shelley and Hazlitt among others. More recent Anglophone equivalents have also appeared. Edward Duffy's *Rousseau in England* (1979) examines Rousseau's reception in England and his influence on Wordsworth, Coleridge and Shelley, and Russell Goulbourne and David Higgins' *Jean-Jacques Rousseau and British Romanticism* (2017) offers a comprehensive analysis of Rousseau's influence on British Romanticism.

[4]. Leaving aside the exceptional case of Sir Walter Scott, whose novels are often, and perhaps rightly, called Romantic, there are cases of nineteenth-century novelists strongly influenced by Romantic poetry, like Charles Dickens's *David Copperfield* (1850) — which is full of Wordsworthian overtones— or George Eliot's *Daniel Deronda* (1876)— which includes several epigraphs by, and references to, Wordsworth, Coleridge, Byron, Shelley and Keats.

[5]. There are, however, exceptions. We find a myriad of Romantic motifs in some nineteenth-century novels, such as Sir Walter Scott's *The Bride of Lammermoor* (1819) — which Emily Brontë had surely read— with its portrayal of a tragic love affair, or Charles Maturin's *Melmoth the Wanderer* (1820), full of Gothic excesses. The case is different with eighteenth-century English novels, some of which could have influenced Emily Brontë. Thus, William Godwin's *Caleb Williams* (1794) or Matthew Lewis's *The Monk* (1796) share many (Gothic) motifs with *Wuthering Heights,* such as revenge, extreme violence, incarceration, and insanity.

[6]. This is central in Wordsworth's poetry. In poems such as "The Old Cumberland Beggar" and *Resolution and Independence*, he celebrates the spirit of the individual living in communion with nature and away from the corrupt city (Carter and McRae 2009: 205).

[7]. Shelley's lines in *Epipsychidion* and his conception of Platonic love resonate in this passage: "One passion in twin-hearts, which grows and grew,/ Till like two meteors of expanding flame,/ Those spheres instinct with it become the same" (Shelley 1994: 67).

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BREAKING CONSENSUAL SILENCE THROUGH STORYTELLING: STORIES OF CONSCIENCE AND SOCIAL JUSTICE IN EMER MARTIN'S *THE CRUELTY MEN*

ROMPIENDO EL SILENCIO CONSENSUADO A TRAVÉS DEL RELATO: NARRATIVAS DE CONCIENCIA Y JUSTICIA SOCIAL EN *THE CRUELTY MEN* DE EMER MARTIN

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Abstract

In recent years Irish society has witnessed an upheaval in public opinion before the discovery of conspiracies of silence hiding stories of institutional abuse which had remained concealed from the public domain. These narratives of secrecy have been consistently identified and stripped away by writers like Emer Martin whose novel *The Cruelty Men* (2018) denounces the fact that forgetting and silence are woven into the fabric of society and politics in Ireland. Drawing on the notion of consensual silence, the article explores *The Cruelty Men* as a text that addresses institutional abuse and challenges official discourses by rescuing the unheard voices of the victims and inscribing their untold stories into the nation's cultural narrative. As the article will discuss, ultimately the novel calls attention to the healing power of storytelling as a way of renegotiating Ireland's relationship with the silences of the past.

Keywords: silence, Irish storytelling, institutional abuse, Emer Martin, *Cruelty Men*.

Resumen

En años recientes la opinión pública irlandesa se ha conmocionado ante las frecuentes noticias de abusos en el seno de las instituciones y la existencia de una conspiración de silencio para evitar que los escándalos saliesen a la luz. Estos

secretos encubiertos han sido identificados y abordados por escritores y escritoras como Emer Martin, cuya novela *The Cruelty Men* denuncia precisamente que el silencio y el olvido están inextricablemente vinculados al devenir mismo de la sociedad y la política en Irlanda. Basándose en el concepto de silencio consensuado, este artículo analiza *The Cruelty Men* como un texto que expone el tema de los abusos y contradice los discursos oficiales al rescatar las voces silenciadas de las víctimas e inscribirlas en la narrativa cultural de la nación. El artículo concluye que la novela subraya el poder regenerador del relato por su capacidad de renegociar la relación de Irlanda con los silencios del pasado.

Palabras clave: silencio, narrativa irlandesa, abusos institucionales, Emer Martin, *Cruelty Men*.

> *Surely the systematic cruelty visited upon hundreds of thousands of children incarcerated in state institutions in this country from 1914 to 2000, the period covered by the inquiry, but particularly from 1930 until 1990, would have been prevented if enough right-thinking people had been aware of what was going on? Well, no. Because everyone knew.*
>
> John Banville, "A Century of Looking the Other Way"

> *The most successful ideological effects are the ones that have no need of words, but only of laissez-faire and complicitous silence.*
>
> Pierre Bourdieu, *The Logic of Practice*

1. Introduction: "The Silences of Our Past"[1]

On 7 March 2017, in an impassioned address to the Dáil (the Irish Parliament), former Taoiseach Enda Kenny referring to the discovery of a mass grave with the remains of children at the site of an old Mother and Baby Home in Tuam, County Galway, denounced the fact that Irish society was complicit with what he described as Ireland's "social and cultural sepulchre". He acknowledged the official conspiracy of silence and the responsibility of the State as he admitted that the situation had been known about since 1972.[2] Kenny blamed Ireland's restrictive moral culture for hiding away, out of sight and out of mind, those judged as "transgressors" for the sake of "our perverse, morbid relationship with what you would call respectability" as he noted: "we did not just hide away the dead bodies of tiny human beings, we dug deep and deeper still to bury our compassion, our mercy and our humanity itself" (2017).

More recently, on 10 May 2019, Ireland remembered that twenty years ago Taoiseach Bertie Ahern had apologized to the victims of childhood abuse in State institutions, also before the Dáil, for the past failures to provide care and security to children.[3] In *The Irish Times,* religious affairs correspondent Patsy McGarry, writing on Ahern's reflections two decades later, explains that the former Taoiseach remains convinced that the apology he offered to those held in religious-run institutions (the first official apology to victims who had been abused while they were institutionalized as part of the nation's child care system) was "absolutely necessary" and he remembers how Ahern asked for forgiveness on behalf of the State:

> the government wishes to make a sincere and long overdue apology to the victims offered for our collective failure to intervene, to detect their pain, to come to their rescue. All children need love and security. Too many of our children were denied this love, care and security. Abuse ruined their childhoods and has been an ever-present part of their adult lives reminding them of a time when they were helpless. (In McGarry 2019)

Whereas it has taken a number of years for politicians and society at large to speak out about the hidden 'inconvenient truths' of what another more recent Taoiseach, Leo Varadkar, has called "the very dark part of our history" (in R. Pine 2019), these narratives of secrecy have been consistently identified and stripped away by writers and journalists whose work has denounced the fact that forgetting and silence are painfully woven into the fabric of society and politics in Ireland. In a context in which not to speak is to speak, many Irish journalists and creative writers have pioneered the excavation of the "social and cultural sepulchre" by bringing to the public light untold stories buried under the authority of official chronicles. Thus, individuals who were once considered socially transgressive, citizens such as unmarried mothers and "illegitimate" children, cast aside and consigned to silence because of the dictates of moral assumptions, religious conventions and social norms, have become the protagonists of untold unofficial narratives and their own inconvenient truths have finally been exposed to the public eye.[4]

In 1999, Mary Raftery's three-part television series *States of Fear* shook the nation's conscience with an in-depth exploration of Ireland's industrial and reformatory school system which uncovered the rampant institutional child abuse and gave voice to the victims who had suffered in silence.[5] For the first time, Raftery's documentary broke silence on a secretive past not available in official chronicles of Irish history, with the media assuming a new role as Irish society's social conscience.[6] This transformation in Ireland's cultural expression has been exhaustively explored by James M. Smith in his *Ireland's Magdalen Laundries and the Nation's Architecture of Containment* (2007) where he explains that "although traditionally silent when challenged with controversial social problems, Ireland began to 'speak out' in the 1990s with a new openness" (87). As Smith appropriately

argues, the cultural significance of the stories revealed by the documentaries is doubly relevant since:

> they give voice to a history that Irish society traditionally prefers not to acknowledge, and they break the culturally imposed closed ranks and silence typically accompanying such sensitive issues as rape, incest, illegitimacy, and domestic physical and sexual abuse. (2007: 88)

Yet, before Raftery's well-known documentary had publicly exposed the systematic abuse of children in State institutions, the topic of physical, emotional and sexual abuse already figured in novels of the early 1980s and 1990s which challenged and contradicted the State's official narrative through their retelling of the past.[7] In his study of the contemporary Irish novel, Linden Peach explains that what is characteristic of cultural criticism and fiction in the 1980s and 1990s in Ireland, North and South, is "a readiness in most areas of life to be sceptical about what has been achieved […] to take a critical scalpel" (Peach 2004: 11). He further contends that: "It is impossible to separate all of this from the presence of what was previously at best an absent presence, and from what has come forth not simply from marginalized but concealed spaces" (11).

Through a careful examination of texts by some of the most representative voices of contemporary Irish fiction, Peach concludes that "in bringing what has been silenced out of silence" contemporary novels provide "extraordinary interrogative opportunities which lead back to what has been hidden, to the secrets and the impact —often the trauma— of keeping those secrets, in national, local, domestic and personal life" (2004: 221). Although the critic's exploration focuses on a range of texts between 1973 and 2000, certainly more recent narratives have continued to challenge the ideological forces shaping the official version of Ireland's national narrative of the past, thus illustrating what writer Joseph O'Connor has explained in eloquent terms:

> A nation is a text, a collective work of imaginative fiction, a country is an idea with many histories, and how you read them, and why, is what matters about them in the end. The same is true of a culture. And I think in recent times that we have begun to read ourselves differently, finding new stories, new characters and metaphors and symbols, often in the margins, the evasions, the silences of our past. (1998: 247-248)

In the pages that follow I propose to approach Emer Martin's latest novel, *The Cruelty Men* (2018), as another "exemplary text" (Smith 2001: 117), one that tells new stories by looking back to "absent presences", concealed spaces of historic elisions, in order to rewrite silenced experiences back into the nation's cultural memory and, thus, encourages a conciliatory reading of "the silences of our past". As Martin indicates in her acknowledgements, the novel is partly inspired by the *Ryan Report Commission to Inquire into Child Abuse* published on 20 May 2009

and *The Murphy Report Commission of Investigation into the Catholic Archdiocese of Dublin* of 26 November 2009.[8] In this respect, *The Cruelty Men* joins the list of contemporary post-Ryan report reactions (E. Pine 2011), both in the media and in cultural representations, which address institutional abuse and function as retellings that not only resist but challenge the official version of the past, demand further interrogation and, as I will argue, ultimately manifest a crucial desire to heal the wounds that Irish society has inflicted on itself through concealment and silence.

2. Consensual Silence and National Narratives

In his *A History of the Irish Novel* Derek Hand notes that the cultural legacy of the past is often balanced against the wrongs and ills of the present: "it is still the Irish past, particularly its nationalist past, which exercises many novelists who continually rewrite history's centrality to the dilemmas of the present moment" (2011: 258). Revisionist critics have repeatedly remarked that the project of national identity formation in the decades following political independence, which had initially relied on covert communities, underground organizations and clandestine activities, later adopted a homogenizing hegemonic discourse to which all other subject identities were subordinate, ultimately fostering the privileging of certain groups over others and imposing silence on experiences which were marginalized.[9] Unsurprisingly, in the past twenty years, reformulations of the notion of Irish identity have often had to negotiate many of these problematic legacies, through the development of new stories speaking for Ireland's modern diversity. In this context, in his emblematic *Postnationalist Ireland* Richard Kearney argued for what he termed as the "postmodernist politics" of "dissenting stories" which favours "the story of the detainee in opposition to the Official Story of the Commissar" (1997: 63).

In an interview in *the journal.ie* in which she significantly comments on the Ryan and Murphy reports as "unfolding of stories", Emer Martin explains that "It was as if we hadn't heard them before, or hadn't been able to listen to them. Suddenly we were listening" and she confesses: "Even within my own family, people were telling stories that were astounding [and] that they had kept secret until they were in their 70s" (in Barry 2018). Martin's remarks about the silencing of the "dissenting stories", which the Ryan and Murphy reports uncovered, aptly illustrate what historian Jay Winter has identified as socially constructed silences, spaces either beyond words or conventionally delimited as left out of what is spoken. As Winter pertinently observes, within these spaces of silence, writers are "liminal figures" (2010: 30) that, by speaking about that which everyone knows but no one says in public, can draw away the veil of silence. He further reflects on how "consensual silence" affects the construction of national narratives:

> Silence, we hold, is a socially constructed space in which and about which subjects and words normally used in everyday life are not spoken. The circle around this space is described by groups of people who at one point in time deem it appropriate that there is a difference between the sayable and the unsayable, or the spoken and the unspoken, and that such a distinction can and should be maintained and observed over time. Such people codify and enforce norms which reinforce the injunction against breaking into the inner space of the circle of silence […]. Groups of people construct scripts which omit, correct and occasionally lie about the past. Repeated frequently enough, these scripts become formulaic or iconic, which is to say, they tell truths rather than the truth. Consensual silence is one way in which people construct the mythical stories they need to live with. (Winter 2010: 4, 23)

Winter's reflections are extremely relevant for a discussion of social and cultural practices of "consensual silence" in the context of "post-nationalist" Ireland where many secretive stories were often performed before the public eye and yet, paradoxically, remained unspoken and removed from official discourses, as a result of complicit social practices of silence and acceptance. From the perspective of memory studies, Irish scholar Emilie Pine has explored how the commemoration of the past in Ireland is always fraught with tension because certain traumatic events that do not fit the official version resist representations and as a consequence "such resistance can lead to a sanitized rendering of the event or, in the case of events that are still problematic to recall, a silencing" (E. Pine 2008: 223). In her 2013 lecture about the role of Irish culture in the recognition and commemoration of institutional abuse, "Commemorating Abuse: Gender Politics and Making Space", Pine turns to the concept of agnosia, a cognitive inability linked to perception which impedes understanding of the significance of what is being seen, and reflects on what she describes as a case of 'social agnosia'. She explains:

> [industrial schools, mother and baby homes and Magdalen laundries] were seen by the communities that abutted their walls, by the families who sent members to them, by the courts who sentenced children and women to them, by the government inspectors who visited them […] However, as the Ryan Report states: "The general public was often uninformed and usually uninterested. All these pools of unknowing reinforced each other". (E. Pine 2013: 6)

Pine's words appropriately speak for the way in which in Irish society, traditionally subjected to a prohibitive Catholic regime, the enforcement of normative silence resulted in the codification of what was sayable and unsayable and in the naturalization of forms of consensual silence through the construction of mythical stories "which omit, correct and occasionally lie about the past" (Winter 2010: 23). In this context, Emer Martin's *The Cruelty Men*, a novel which exposes the scandalous institutional practices embodied by "The Cruelty Men" of the title and reaches Irish readers just as Magdalen laundries and Tuam mother and baby home victims are remembered and honored, appropriately functions as a text that resists

normalized social agnosia and destabilizes the sanitized discourse of consensual silence. In opposition to the communities formed by "pools of unknowing" that the Ryan Report refers to, Martin's storytelling favours the emergence of an altogether different community, a community of awareness which does not turn a blind eye to the silenced crimes of the past as evils of a different era which "normal citizens" didn't know anything about, but rather acknowledges them in order to be aware of their implications for Irish society past and present. As the writer herself has expressed, she hopes that telling the stories will show that victims of abuse have finally been listened to, thus contributing to Ireland's collective healing:

> I think it's time to acknowledge all of their stories and acknowledge what happened here to us in Ireland, and every family has a story. Nothing in the book is an exaggeration. Stories are medicine for the soul that we need to heal. (In Barry 2018)

3. *The Cruelty Men*

The Cruelty Men is the story of an Irish speaking family, the O Conaills, who are forced to move by the Irish Government in 1935 from Cill Rialaig, their home village on Bolus Head in the township of Ballinskelligs, County Kerry, to Ráth Cairn in County Meath. Martin's novel is thus set against the historical background of a ground-breaking governmental plan of social engineering in the early years of post-independent Ireland which combined the need to palliate overpopulation and poverty in the west of the country with the anxiety to establish an identity separate from the previous colonial power through the promotion of the Irish language. Under a scheme developed by the Land Commission, Irish-speaking families from the economically stagnant counties of the west coast, Kerry and Connemara, were re-located to establish a *Gaeltacht* colony at Ráth Cairn. Each family received land, livestock and farming implements, and a community school was established (Pegley 2011). Significantly, the man from The Land Commission intrudes upon a ghostly landscape imbued with post-famine memories of "accepted sadness" where the ruins of houses "were just like the dead" and the ditches children played in "were full of their bones" (Martin 2018: 12). In this world of ruined houses and forgotten people, "things were changing so fast" that often men from the Folklore Commission "got the stories from the old people before they disappeared into their graves" yet, as the family realizes, this is a different type of man; "This man was not looking for our stories. He had come for us body and soul" (13). In a speech charged with patriotic overtones, the intruder explains:

> Now that we are an independent country for over a decade, we want to decolonize the country. The Irish language, once outlawed, in our very schools, has disappeared so quickly […] But we are free now and everything will be better. We must take pride

> in ourselves again, and our language is our pride. We want to revive the Irish language in the East and the Midlands. Everyone has forgotten how to speak there. (13-14)

The O Conaills become suspicious when they first learn that they will be transplanted from their home and the new government of Ireland will give them land "just like that […] why would anybody give land for free?" (Martin 2018: 13). In a novel that ultimately explores how the Irish State treated its citizens in the name of independence and where the threat of the repressive and cruel practices of control of poverty-stricken families by the eponymous Cruelty Men becomes a major motif, the early intrusion of this other State man from The Land Commission appropriately foreshadows the devastating consequences of what is to come after their enforced removal.

Reviewers have referred to *The Cruelty Men* as an "epic novel", "an epic family saga of 20th century Ireland" (Traynor 2018), and "an epic journey through Irish history" (Barry 2018). The Oxford English Dictionary provides the following definition for epic: "long poem, typically one derived from ancient oral tradition, narrating the deeds and adventures of heroic or legendary figures or the past history of a nation" (Pearsall and Hanks 2010: 588). In a more informal use, epic is employed as an adjective referring to an exceptionally long and arduous task or activity. This 435 page-long novel proves to be an arduous reading of a rather ironical epic narrative since it dwells not on the deeds and adventures of heroic or legendary figures of Ireland's past history but rather focuses on the personal chronicle of misfortunes affecting the O Conaill family members, from the time of their displacement and resettlement in the 1930s to the Ireland of the 1970s, although the interwoven tales and legends take readers back to much earlier times.

The book is divided into five sections or parts ("Displacement and Resettlement", "Institutionalization", "A Marriage and a Birth and a Death", "The Curse", "The Clearing") introduced by quotations which include a proverb, several poems and an old Irish curse, all functioning as epigraphs for the different chapters which conform to each of the parts. Martin draws from the spirit world of Ireland's myths and legends and includes many ancient folktales remembered by some of her characters and set in italics in the book to convey that, as she acknowledges, "one of the aspects of folktales is that they get passed down word by word" (Martin 2018: 439). Although Martin engages in a conversation with the ancient past and invokes the Cromwellian era and the Great Hunger, this is not the "island of saints and sages", as James Joyce would have it, but rather, as author Irvine Welsh writes in the blurb on the back cover, "A Bible of fucked up Irishness" (Martin 2018).

The voices of the most vulnerable and dispossessed individuals in post-independence Ireland, represented by the O Conaills, are rescued from their silent limbo in a novel in which the characters speak for themselves. The actual plot unfolds mainly

through the telling of a chorus of first person narratives which provide an unmediated access to the minds of the three O Conaill daughters, Mary, Bridget and Maeve, and the three sons, Padraig, Seán and Séamus whom we follow through several decades after the establishment of the Irish Free State. Each of the above-mentioned sections of this polyphonic novel consists of individual chapters, headed by the name of the protagonist of the chapter in question. As has been remarked: "By giving the children their own chapters, Martin gives them a voice—a haunting, realistic, voice that reveals the damage from a child's point of view" (Ebest 2019: 2). A great deal of the narrative revolves around Mary, the good-hearted eldest daughter, the self-proclaimed storyteller of the family —"I had committed a whole welter of stories to memory by age five and I never missed a word" (Martin 2018: 15)— who represents ancient beliefs and whose old tales of spirits, fairies, hares, wolves and hags are offered as means of protection for her siblings in the hostile modern world vulnerable citizens like them inhabit.

Like the rest of the family Mary is an Irish speaker, who must give up her native tongue in order to survive in the new "free" State:

> We were all only children in that wee house. Children of a defeated people who had been summoned back to reconquer stolen lands in a newly independent country, but little job we made of it, instead we became their servants. We learnt their tongue and not they ours. (Martin 2018: 213)

This is indeed one of the book's many ironies, a major paradox through which Martin reflects on the complex debate about the failure of language politics and cultural nativism in the modern independent Irish State.[10] The O Conaills' relocation to revive the Irish language eventually proves to be the cause of their language loss and, significantly, they become the silent speakers of their own native tongue. Seamus marries an English speaker, "so it was the end of the old language in our house" (Martin 2108: 48); Mary works hard on her "rusty and formal English" (75) so that she can keep her job as a house servant; Maeve's identity gets lost in translation and she is renamed Teresa in one of the institutions where she is incarcerated; Bridget goes to America where she will speak mainly English; Seán's education among the Christian Brothers is primarily conducted in Latin and English, whereas little Padraig's autism-related speech and communication problems increase because he would have never heard English before his institutionalization and yet English was "the language of devils and doctors for him" (202).

Another paradox around which the novel revolves is related to Martin's interrogation of official notions of Irishness as derived from the definition of the family contained within the 1937 Constitution where it was "enshrined as the cornerstone of the new Irish nation-state" (Conrad 2004: 10). As has often been remarked, the family played an instrumental role in the promotion of a

national ethos in post-independence Ireland with references to the welfare of the nation directly attached to rigid conceptualizations of the family firmly sustained by Catholic ideology.[11] Thus, whereas the narrative of the Irish family as portrayed by official discourses heavily relied on idealized images of domestic bliss, these romanticized images actually concealed harsh realities of poverty, oppression and disaffection which were nevertheless silenced and hidden from public opinion.

So, whereas the new State guaranteed to protect and safeguard the institution of the family and politicians praised family life in a rural Ireland "bright with cosy homesteads" (Brown 2004: 134), in *The Cruelty Men* Martin undermines the consensual silence underlying the construction of the national narrative of the family as she exposes the psychic damage and abuse inflicted by Church and State institutions upon the O Conaill children. After being abandoned by their father, Mary, who had promised she would keep the family together, becomes a surrogate mother at age eleven and by the time she is sixteen and her black hair has turned completely grey she realizes: "And there I was old" (Martin 2018: 39). She and her siblings live a dangerously marginal life due to the hostility of local landless farmers but mainly because of the vulnerable position their parents' absence has left them in. They become an easy prey for those known as the Cruelty Men who search for children to send them to industrial schools:

> The neighbor, Patsey, became a constant visitor and he told us about the Cruelty Men. "They usually are retired guards or teachers and they wear brown shirts. If you see them get out of their sight. They answer to no one and I've heard tell that they take bribes from the local industrial school to get more kids in there and put them to work. They're shoveling childer in there and they never get out […] If they got their hands on you in one of them schools you'd be a slave for the rest of your childhood." (22)

In her study *The Cruelty Man: Child Welfare, the NSPCC and the State in Ireland, 1889–1956* (2013) author Sarah-Ann Buckley argues that, in the first decades after independence, Ireland witnessed a weakening of parental rights since this was a time when Irish lawmakers prioritized questions of religion and faith at the expense of the rights of biological parents and children themselves. As Buckley explains, NSPCC (National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children) inspectors "entered the homes of thousands of working-class and poor families, identifying intemperate mothers, fathers failing to provide for their families, children in the streets […] and others who fell short of meeting the ideals of the middle class home" (2013: 65). She contends that, despite the public rhetoric praising the family, the NSPCC sought to control working-class families, and mothers in particular, through prosecution in cases of child "neglect":

> Legislation on compulsory education, institutional provision, welfare and illegitimacy placed poor parents and children in impossible situations […] Although the sanctity of the family was being espoused from the pulpit and the parliamentary chamber, the reality of the family, or specifically the working class family, was not supported by the State. (4)

Ironically, NSPCC inspectors, who engaged in child protection practices, became "the cruelty men" who worked for state-run institutions, particularly industrial schools, in themselves institutions characterized by inhumanity and cruelty and, thus, "while post-war Western States moved away from the nineteenth century philanthropic tradition, the Irish State guided by the Catholic Church, continued its policies of institutionalization of children, stigmatization of single mothers and charity as opposed to welfare" (Buckley 2013: 70).

It is not accidental that Martin's plot focuses on the ideological framing of child neglect underlying the NSPCC policies which, as Buckley highlights, failed to contextualize poverty and inequality as the natural outcome of social and structural factors and saw them instead as mainly the symptoms of individual pathology and family dysfunction.[12] Despite Mary's efforts to keep the family together, "hiding from the Cruelty Men, trying to avoid being scattered to the wind like a dog's litter" (Martin 2018: 203), the children of the O Conaill family are scattered one by one. Seamus, the eldest boy, becomes the ruthless legal owner of the farm when he comes of age and personifies the dangers of endemic domestic abuse in a world imbued with patriarchal values which he himself abides by— "where comes a woman, there follows trouble" (195). He arranges for his autistic brother Padraig to be institutionalized in a mental asylum where the boy experiences all kinds of unspeakable cruel treatments and where his inability to communicate forces him to bear with abuse in silence: "A man in black like a neat jackdaw came hopping-again-again […] Pulled the curtain around the bed […] The priest touches. Touch of a priest-consecrated-sacrified […] Can't move but can still cry" (225-226). Bridget manages to work in Dublin first and then she emigrates to the US and corresponds for a time. Hers is the untold story of many Irish immigrants, often young women, who would have never been seen again, thus remaining an absent presence for their families in Ireland for the rest of their lives.

In a world where women are disempowered second class citizens, *The Cruelty Men* looks at the relationship between gender, silence and power specifically though the character of Maeve who becomes pregnant out of wedlock while working as a shop girl and, consequently, spends the rest of her life incarcerated in different institutions:[13] a mother and baby home where she gives birth to twins who are taken away from her, a Magdalen laundry and, finally, an asylum where she encounters her little brother Padraig. Maeve represents the traumatic experience

of women who are excluded because they do not fit the model of sexual morality and are thus punished and doomed to historical silence and societal shame. Significantly, it is only during her long episode of unconsciousness, when she feels as if she were "going underground" (Martin 2018: 286), that Maeve's mind is free to denounce the abuses engineered by the post-independence Irish politics of "shame and hide".[14]

Seán, an intelligent and sensitive young man whom Mary manages to send to school and college, becomes a Christian Brother who witnesses the evils of physical and emotional abuse around him —"Boys are coming to me, Brother; they talk of badness being done to them […] It's endemic" (Martin 2018: 336-339)— until he finds it too overbearing and can no longer live with the scandals and distressing secrets he himself has had to endure in painful silence. Despite the resistance of his superiors who scorn him for his "weakness" and "femininity" (337) and accuse him of being "insolent" and "untrustworthy" (338), he makes attempts to break out from within what the Ryan report referred to as "an iron curtain of silence" (E. Pine 2011: 22).

Mary, the storyteller, goes into service with a nice middle-class family where she becomes the guardian of ancient Ireland. She retells her folktales and recites her poems to her employer's child, Baby —"I took my place by the fire, with Baby on my knee, and closed my eyes to see which story would come to me first" (Martin 2018: 223)— while she witnesses the country's movement into modernity among the educated classes:

> Brian and Patricia were in their late twenties and expecting their third child. Patricia was a schoolteacher and Brian was a solicitor […] They gave me tea and bread and butter. The next day Patricia and I took the pony and trap into Trim town and bought me my first pair of shoes and a change of clothes […] I had never encountered anyone before who had no fear of the other world. Who had never seen a fairy. Who had never heard the banshee […] This was the world of the educated people. Gentle people. Patricia and Mr. Lyons never fought in front of me. They lived decently and quietly and dedicated themselves to their children. (74-79)

Beyond the garden gates which safeguard the Lyonses' bucolic household and pleasant life of "blackberry picking and glowing turf" (Martin 2018: 430), Mary comes in contact with "the rubbish of Ireland" (232) as she befriends Elizabeth, the local priest's housekeeper, whose warning that "the silent are often the guilty" (231) contains a whole world of meaning. Elizabeth explains that she was herself the victim of "one of them schools" where "they didn't even teach us anything well […] We had to spend every day four hours after school making rosary beads. If we didn't make sixty sets […] a day we were sent up at night to the corridor for a beating" (230). The description of a childhood spent in terror and a system that

preys on the poor with "schools that are no more than concentration camps" (231) meets Mary's reaction of shock and disbelief: "I never heard the like of that […] Maybe it was just your orphanage. They can't all be like that" (231). Elizabeth's story becomes a source of distress for good-hearted and naïve Mary, one of those good Catholics who would have found it too hard to cope with this particularly inconvenient truth of Irish life— "Sure, aren't the church doing their best?" (231).

In an article entitled "'For Lack of Accountability': The Logic of the Price in Ireland's Magdalen Laundries", Sheila Killian explains how among the general population the awareness of the Laundries seems to have been characterized by an unarticulated sense of "shame and stigma" (2015: 29). She exemplifies this idea with the comments from a woman who grew up near the Galway Magdalen Laundry:

> I really had no idea what the Magdalen was about. I had an idea that maybe it might have been a school of some sort because I was aware of all the ladies that lived in there. I never actually would go near that place because there was something in me that knew that it was out of bounds. (29)

As Killian argues, such a statement paradoxically expresses both lack of awareness and yet, at the same time, an awareness of the shame and stigma surrounding the institution. She further explains that:

> Through the promulgation of its new post-independence identity or national habitus [Ireland] created the psychological barriers not only within the Laundries, but also in society at large that rendered the topic of the Laundries taboo. This suppression of the subject extended in an unconscious way even within the national parliament, and prevented the light of public opinion from shining too brightly on what happened in and around them. (29)

In this respect, *The Cruelty Men* exposes mainly the damage inflicted upon innumerable underprivileged citizens in Church dominated post-independence Ireland and denounces the fact that the State was ultimately responsible for the well-being of those who were victims of institutional abuse— "they are not charities. The government is sending them money for each child" (Martin 2018: 231). Yet, beyond its indictment of a system of tyrannical measures of control which enforced a regime of silence on its victims, Martin's novel becomes an exemplary post-Ryan report text where the voices of those who were incarcerated alternate with the perspective of ordinary citizens, unable to see and act, uninformed and uninterested despite what was happening around them. Good Catholics like Mary O Conaill, and right-thinking people like the Lyonses, decent members of society who, trapped within a culture of shame and fear, passively consented and cooperated in silence:

> Elizabeth sighed […] "I was raised in an orphanage. All the food was slop when they weren't starving you" […] If it wasn't for Mary no one would talk to me in the whole town". We were all silent. I had never heard anyone admit they were raised in an orphanage. (222)

4. Conclusion: Stories of Conscience and Social Justice

Emer Martin has claimed that *The Cruelty Men* is about "two parallel Irelands" that are "still there":

> There is a beautiful way of life in Ireland, a very comfort idyllic way of life, one of the best lifestyles you can have on the planet probably, and then there is a huge underclass who don't get this type of life and who are shut out completely from the economy. (In Barry 2018)

Accordingly, her novel ends in 1969 with Ignatius, Seamus's son, himself a representative of the underclass, homeless, drunk and showing signs of mental illness as he stumbles over Dublin's cobbled streets.[15] Ignatius is recognized by Baby, the youngest daughter of the Lyonses, precisely when she hears him tell the stories that Mary had also told her and realizes that he has the "O Conaill knack of storytelling" (Martin 2018: 430). Ignatius's stories of the "fairy world" —"that Mary had told Seán and herself [Baby], and Seán had told me [Ignatius] and I was telling them back" (434)— mingle with a narrative of personal traumas that he refers to as "secrets", "grief" and "lies" (428-429). His "mad" storytelling characterized by a hallucinatory quality which incorporates disparate levels of experience and allows for a surreal blending of the mythological, the personal, the historical and the mystical, ultimately becomes a powerful form of communication[16] of untold stories which he hopes someone like Baby will collect:

> We gave them the children of the poor. Human sacrifices. Bog bodies. The hag that hungered for us […] The hag of Ireland? So many scooped up and locked away. So many buggered children abandoned. So much beauty wrung out in the laundries […] Did you ever hear tell of the Cruelty Men? All of us, legions of us, generations of us, poor children snatched away and made unlovable […] The boys and the girls, all of us said the same, that in all those years not one kind word, not one kind touch. That was the poison. (429-434)

As discussed earlier, Irish writers have played a crucial role in instigating the narrative retelling of institutional forms of abuse, thus breaking the previous conspiracy of consensual silence and allowing those dissenting voices who had been absent from the official narratives to tell their stories and reassert their own identities. The notion that stories are helpful because they provide a common link between individual and communal identity and, at the same time, foster a

continuous and necessary revision of this link by renegotiating Ireland's relationship with inherited cultural traditions was at the heart of President Mary Robinson's 1990 inaugural address speech:

> [t]he Ireland I will be representing is a new Ireland, open, tolerant, inclusive […] I want Áras Uachtaráin to be a place where people can tell diverse stories —in the knowledge that there is someone there to listen. I want this presidency to promote the telling of stories— stories of celebration through the arts and stories of conscience and social justice. (In Smith 2001: 114)

Martin, who playfully and cunningly closes her novel with a typical ending in the Irish oral storytelling tradition —"*That is my story. And if there is a lie in it let it be so. It was not I who composed it*" (Martin 2018: 439)— also writes in the acknowledgements: "The bravery and endurance of the people caught up in this hideous system was both moving and devastating […] their courage in telling their stories changed Ireland forever" (439). *The Cruelty Men* emphasizes the power of Irish storytelling and resonates with the idea that "the stories could not be burned or cut down or hunted. The stories were an unconquered place" (10). Yet, since the novel is clearly addressed to an "open, tolerant, inclusive" Ireland where the silent narratives of institutional abuse in the past must be acknowledged and collected as part of the national heritage, the writer is not only a teller of old tales but, more importantly, she becomes the fabricator of new stories of "conscience and social justice" for the future.

Notes

[1]. This article is part of the Project "INTRUTHS: Cultural Practices of Silence in Contemporary Irish Fiction" FFI2017-84619-P AEI/FEDER, UE. This research was conducted during a stay at UCD School of English, Drama and Film funded by a scholarship from the *Salvador de Madariaga* mobility programme (2018-2019). For their insightful comments and the opportunities to share parts of this research with audiences in Ireland, I thank Anne Fogarty and Lucy Cogan (UCD), Maureen O'Connor and Clíona Ó Gallchoir (UCC), and Nessa Cronin and Seán Crosson (NUI, Galway).

[2]. It was not until 2015 that the Mother and Baby Home Commission of Investigation was established by an order of the Irish government to investigate the claims, first raised by local historian Catherine Corless, that nearly 800 babies and young children had died in the Tuam home and had been buried in unmarked graves. Run by the Bon Secours order of nuns, the Tuam home was one of the Irish institutions to which about 35,000 unmarried pregnant women are thought to have been sent. A child died there nearly every two weeks between the mid-1920s and the 1960s. Together with the Magdalen laundries, the mother and baby homes were part of a system of institutions for women who were pregnant with "illegitimate" babies or thought to be a threat to sexual purity and moral respectability and could be incarcerated after a family member and the

parish priest had signed them in. For more on the origins and development of punitive mechanisms for the institutional confinement of women charged with sexual transgression, see the introductory chapter "The Politics of Sexual Knowledge: The Origins of Ireland's Containment Culture and the Carrigan Report" (1-22) in James M. Smith (2007).

[3]. As O'Donnell (2018) explains, the new Free State relied on the former structure of Victorian institutions run by Catholic religious orders which had provided relief to the Irish poor. The project of national identity formation in the decades following independence emphasized Catholic notions of morality which were oppressive for vulnerable citizens, like women and children. As has often been remarked, 1 in every 100 Irish citizens was incarcerated in an institution operated collaboratively by Church and State; these included a network of State institutions in the charge of religious congregations such as orphanages and industrial and reformatory schools for children excluded from society.

[4]. One of the most recent examples is Caelainn Hogan's *Republic of Shame: Stories from Ireland's Institutions for fallen Women* shortlisted for the 2019 "An Post Irish Book Awards: Bookselling Ireland Non Fiction Book of the Year".

[5]. Based on the same materials, Raftery and Sullivan's book *Suffer the Little Children: The Inside Story of Ireland's Industrial School* (1999), was subsequently published.

[6]. For more on other challenging documentary films dealing with social issues such as physical and psychological abuse in industrial and reformatory schools and Magdalen laundries see Smith (2007: 113-135). See also Savage 1996, Inglis 1998, Pettitt 2000, Barton 2004, O'Brien 2004, O'Flynn 2004 and Gibbons 2005. Pine refers to Cathal Black's docudrama *Our Boys*, produced in 1981 and not screened until ten years later, as an example of "the culture of silence on the issue of institutional abuse" (2011: 19).

[7]. Smith makes this point in relation to novelists such as Bernard MacLaverty, Dermot Bolger, Mary Morrissey, Dermot Healy, Roddy Doyle, Kathleen Ferguson and Edna O'Brien as he claims that they "insistently explored the lives of those trapped within Ireland's architecture of containment" (2001: 116). He discusses Patrick McCabe's novel *The Butcher Boy* (1992) along the lines of the documentary *States of Fear* (1999).

[8]. For more on this see Pine et. al (2017). Pine explains that the Ryan Report, followed by others like the Murphy Report (2009) and the McAleese Report (2013), concluded that over the course of seventy years the system of residential institutions, run by the orders of the Catholic church and supervised by the departments of education, health, and justice, had constituted an emotionally, physically, and sexually abusive system in which thousands of children were seriously damaged. Between 2015 and 2018 Pine was the Principal Investigator of the Industrial Memories Project, funded by the Irish Research Council, at University College Dublin. The results of the project, which used digital-humanities and text analysis methodology to explore the Ryan Report, can be accessed online at <https://industrialmemories.ucd.ie/>

[9]. R.F. Foster (1988) has referred to the "intentional amnesia" (472) of Irish history when traumatic events that do not fit a nationalist version of the Irish past are excluded from the historical narrative.

[10]. For a perceptive and provocative examination of the decline of an indigenous Irish culture and language see Seán de Fréine, *The Great Silence* (1965).

[11]. José Carregal Romero has written extensively on the ideology of the family in Ireland. For a well-informed discussion which combines historical and cultural analysis and gender theory see "Gender, Sexuality and the Ideology of the Family in Ireland" (2013).

[12]. In his analysis of Martin's 1999 novel *More Bread or I'll Appear*, Asier Altuna-García de Salazar explores the writer's concern with the Irish family as "dysfunctional" and argues that her portrayal of family dysfunctions reveals "hidden issues" linked to economic, gender, social, political and religious discourses (2019: 111). For more on issues of dysfunction in the context of the family in Ireland see Marisol Morales-Ladrón (2016).

[13]. Diarmaid Ferriter remarks: "Up to 30,000 young women and girls are estimated to have been sent to such laundries (the last one in Drumcondra, Dublin, did not close until 1996), many for the 'crime' of being unmarried mothers, simple-minded, assertive, pretty or having suffered rape and talked about it" (2005: 538). For more on the disempowerment and vulnerability of women incarcerated in Magdalen laundries see also O'Donnell (2018).

[14]. Ferriter has commented on the "shame and hide" approach of care and welfare for the underprivileged in the Ireland of the 1960s and 1970s when, as he remarks, "young pregnant women were still being committed to Magdalen laundries run by Catholic nuns for their 'crimes'" and subjected to a "violent enforcement of a regime of heavy physical labour", without access to the outside world and "most cruelly of all, their babies snatched away from them when they were barely out of the womb" (2005: 538).

[15]. In his examination of the decade of the 1960s, Ferriter refers to journalist Michael Viney and his uncovering of a whole series of "hidden Irelands" related to poverty, alcoholism and mental illness among other factors and explains the emergence of a public discourse "aided by the expanding media, that, at the very least, was shedding light on dark, often shameful, corners" (2005: 536).

[16]. Interestingly, Winter notes that the mentally ill may draw away the veil of silence "normal" people construct around difficult events in their lives and in the life of their society (2010: 16).

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Reviews

THE LITERARY POLITICS OF SCOTTISH DEVOLUTION: VOICE, CLASS, NATION

Scott Hames
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Within Scottish Literary and Cultural Studies, the field to which this book belongs, parliamentary devolution has been defined by prominent scholars such as Cairns Craig (1996), Douglas Gifford (2007) or Robert Crawford (2000) as a political process detonated by the 1980s cultural revival in which artists figure as the instigators of the Scottish parliament established in 1999, regarding cultural expressions of Scottishness as signs of support for self-government. *The Literary Politics of Scottish Devolution: Voice, Class, Nation* stands out as the first complete study which traces the shift of Scottish devolutionary politics and Scottish culture from their state as separate domains to their discursive conflation from 1967 to 1999, considering the joint responsibility of Scottish intellectuals, critics and politicians in stimulating this synthesis. This wide approach locates Scott Hames in the middle ground between culturalist and socio-political scholars as he addresses the full picture, examining the limitations of the cultural understanding of devolution as well as providing an account of the interactions between political and cultural agents. Hames's study spans over seven chapters preceded by an introduction.

In the introduction, by far the longest chapter of the book, Hames thoroughly explores the main arguments and theoretical concepts he will be working with throughout the book, from the most general to the most specific. In the first section, Hames addresses the limitations of collective identity politics by explaining

the theories of American political scientists Wendy Brown and Nancy Fraser, as well as those of Pierre Bordieu. These academics posit that, when managed through institutions, the emancipatory movements of collective identity politics often fall into essentialist tendencies which further subordinate them to the centralised status quo they were seeking liberation from. In the second section, Hames brings these ideas to the arena of Scottish literary nationalism. In particular, the author assesses the reductive constructions which —under the labels of Scottish cultural difference and identity— were strategically employed by pro-devolutionary politicians to adjust the parliamentary model, therefore excluding other expressions of identity from the critical discussions on national culture. Finally, in the third section, Hames revises the two competing narratives of devolution which constitute the main focus of the study. A first understanding of devolution, what Hames calls "The Grind" (xii), is the story of devolution as a strategic and conservative political process grounded in the need to provide the Scottish people with a Westminster-bound parliament which ensured both the continuity and renewal of the United Kingdom's parliamentary democracy. A second understanding of devolution, what Hames calls "The Dream" (xii), is the idea of political devolution as a radical process of liberation from the Union initiated by Scottish artists in the 1980s.

The first chapter examines the various reactions within the Scottish literary community to the growth of Scottish nationalism since the first victory of the SNP in the 1967 Hamilton by-election until the failed devolution referendum in 1979. What is interesting about this chapter is how Hames describes the diverse conceptualisations of Scotland and Scottishness which existed in this period. Hames sheds new light on the differences between political nationalism, spearheaded by the SNP and economically-driven, and the endeavours of cultural and literary nationalists, who embarked on a romanticised theoretical discussion of what Scottishness ought to be. Within the cultural and literary nationalist arena, Hames distinguishes two main tendencies: an internationalist and outward-looking understanding of Scottish cultural values, whose beliefs were exemplified in the magazines *Scottish International* and *Lines Review,* and a parochial and romanticised conception of Scotland, derived from Hugh MacDiarmid's ideas and led by the magazines *Scotia Review* and *Akros*. Finally, the importance of *Scottish International* as a pioneer in the merging of Scottish culture and nationalist politics in the cause for self-government is highlighted. Due to the assumption that there was no native cultural consumption in Scotland, *Scottish International* acted as a cultural spokesperson for the Scottish public, anticipating the idea that culture could function as a political layer of national representation.

The post-Hamilton period is reviewed again in the second chapter from a purely electoral and political perspective. The aim of this chapter is to cover the omissions

of the cultural narrative which, as Hames illustrates, overtly disregards the essential role played by party politics. In order to do so, Hames gathers the investigations of political historians such as James Kellas, Tom Devine and James Mitchell and the declarations of politicians to reconstruct the political path towards the first devolution referendum in 1979. According to Hames's research, the origins of devolution as a political strategy can be found in the creation by Labour, under Harold Wilson's leadership, of a Royal Commission on the Constitution, which first determined devolution as a solution to appease Scottish national feeling and recognise it while ensuring the stability of the Union. Most importantly, Hames establishes a chronology in which the political strategy of devolution precedes the cultural debate on Scottishness, dispelling the cultural devolution myth that it was in the cultural field where a Scottish parliament was first imagined.

The devolutionary interplay of politics and culture is closely examined in Chapters 3 and 4. In Chapter 3, Hames identifies which aspects of the cultural conceptualisation of Scottishness were underlined in the cultural and political magazines *Radical Scotland* and *Chapman* and instrumentalised by the pro-devolution political movement between 1979 and 1987. After the failed devolution referendum of 1979, members of the Labour party and a left-wing section of the SNP joined to find common ground. By conflating nationalism and socialism in a new construct of Scottish identity —left-nationalist, anti-Tory and working-class— which exploited Scottish difference within the Union as a political justification of the need for self-government, devolution was able to become a powerful alternative to Thatcher's mandate in Britain. Hames devotes the last part of the chapter to explaining how, although the enablers of devolution were the politicians, cultural magazines, among which *Radical Scotland* stands out, were involved in the left-nationalist political strategy, contributing to a rhetorical refinement of a devolutionary Scottish cultural identity which actively omitted ideologically diverse discussions on Scottish literature.

In Chapter 4, Hames stresses certain specific concepts which, although used in the cultural and political arena with different meanings, were conflated in the discursive framework of devolution from 1987 to 1992. The first of these concepts is "Scottish voice" (161), employed as an element of national cohesion and of polarisation against the English. The second concept Hames identifies, "self-determination" (171), is defined as an action of personal emancipation as well as as a process of national autonomy. Self-determination as an anti-institutional act of liberation featured in *Edinburgh Review*, an anarchist cultural magazine highly influenced by James Kelman's grassroots agenda. The third concept is "Scottish cultural difference" (178). The difference of Scotland within the Union and the idea that there had been a disregard for Scottish institutions were used as

arguments for self-government by political bodies like the Campaign for a Scottish Assembly and the Scottish Constitutional Convention. Moreover, in the cultural 'Festival of Democracy', held in 1987, and the festival 'A Day for Scotland', celebrated in 1990, Scottishness was marketed as a left-wing, proletarian, internationalist identity, contrary to neoliberal and Toryist England. In this vein, Hames shows how Scottishness and the claim of cultural difference were fashioned in a radical anti-Union discourse which rendered devolution electorally appealing and masked its conservative roots.

Inaugurating the more literary section of the book, Chapter 5 examines the dilemmas of narrating and accurately representing history, specifically focusing on an analysis of James Roberston's story of devolution in his novel *And the Land Lay Still* (2010). At the beginning of this chapter, Hames acknowledges the difficulty of reconstructing something as intangible and ephemeral as history. The slippery and subjective quality of history has been magnificently addressed in Scottish literature by Alasdair Gray, whose novels *Lanark* (1981), *Poor Things* (1992) or *A History Maker* (1994) attempt to examine how history is produced, questioning its epistemological foundations and exploring the interconnections between personal and national histories. Concerning Robertson's work, the idea that our experience of history is biased and incomplete is explored in the short story "Republic of the Mind" as well as in his first novel *The Fanatic* (2000). Yet, *And the Land Lay Still* attempts to narrate the totality of the cultural and political processes of devolution. For Hames, the struggle of Robertson to write a full-scale history of devolution is palpable throughout the novel. By citing scholars such as Georg Lukács or Fredric Jameson, who have aimed to explain how history can be narrated and measured, Hames assesses which literary tools allowed Robertson to effectively write a convincing history of devolution —selection of specific events, journalistic style— and which did not.

The sixth chapter expands on the concept of 'Scottish voice' by examining the particular role of vernacular Scottish languages as national identity markers during the devolutionary period. Hames describes German philosopher Johann Gottfried von Herder's theory, which defines language as a pivotal element in the creation of an autonomous national literary space, to explain to what extent the Scottish case differs from this model. None of the vernacular languages of Scotland, neither the Celtic-rooted Scottish Gaelic nor the group of Scottish dialects and subdialects collectively known as Scots, have official national status. Moreover, the linguistic proximity between Scots and English hinders the establishment of a clear division between the two. However, Hames argues that, in the process of creating a national space during the 1970s, the West and Central Scotland varieties of Scots were chosen, due to their working-class affiliation, as the linguistic

markers of left-nationalism. Rather than viewing it as a drawback, Hames considers that the linguistic uncertainty of Scots in relation to English and its flexibility increased the appeal of the devolutionary movement. In the conclusion, Hames claims that while the ambiguous position of vernacular Scots hampers its consideration as an official language, thus departing from the German model of romantic-nationalism as well as from MacDiarmid's modernist-primitivism, there is a different type of romanticisation underway. Indeed, the peripheral status of Scots is crucial for fuelling the victimhood discourse of contemporary Scottish nationalism which asserts Scottishness on the grounds of its dependence and marginality within the Union.

Finally, Hames devotes the last chapter to analysing how voice is integrated in Scottish Literature. The first author Hames examines is Irvine Welsh. According to Hames, in Welsh's magnum opus *Trainspotting* (1993), voice is presented as one of the elements of commodification and self-fashioning in which the novel's characters constantly participate. In A.L. Kennedy's novels, the second author Hames examines, the sense of community and belonging is so fragmented that identity and voice are configured as performative disguises. While gender is not among the identity variables Hames pays attention to in this book, it is worth noting that Kennedy's experimentation with voice is characterised by a nebulous representation of gender constructions which further problematises the fixity of identity, alienating characters and readers alike. Lastly, Hames highlights how James Kelman, in the expression of his anarchist libertarian political agenda, employs the vernacular to liberate voice from the machineries of the establishment. Despite the clear differences between these authors' use of voice and the politics of representative parliamentary democracy, the influence of the left-nationalist devolutionary framework is so widespread in Scottish literary and cultural studies to date that Welsh's, Kennedy's and Kelman's proposals are often misinterpreted as pro-devolutionary revindications of cultural representation rather than as artistic and subversive uses of language detached from the self-government agenda. By revealing how limiting the over-nationalisation of Scottish art is for the study of its literature, this book argues for an open and unprejudiced reading of Scottish authors.

The Literary Politics of Scottish Devolution is an innovative, groundbreaking and complex book. It skilfully brings major contributions to the study of voice and class as crucial elements in the contemporary cultural conceptualisation of Scottishness, paying special attention to the pervasive influence of their political instrumentalisation. Despite its historical focus not being contemporary —the book only covers the constitutional politics of devolution until 1999— its findings are extremely relevant for understanding the antecedents of the current Scottish

pro-independence movement. Moreover, it presents new research on the part played by the 1980s cultural journals *Radical Scotland*, *Cencrastus* and *Edinburgh Review*, crucial sources for understanding the crystallisation of Scottish national identity as it stands today. With this publication, Scott Hames establishes himself as one of the leaders, together with scholars like Alex Thomson (2007), of a bold academic expedition which seeks to shake the foundations of the linkage between Scottish culture and political nationalism and thus diversify and enrich Scottish Literary and Cultural Studies.

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MEMORY FRICTIONS IN CONTEMPORARY LITERATURE

María Jesús Martínez-Alfaro and Silvia Pellicer-Ortín, eds.
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It may seem that our world is caught in the present, swept up by the pandemic, climate change, migration, economic crisis and social unrest. Yet, many social movements of today (most notably Black Lives Matter/BLM and #MeToo) clearly call for another reconsideration of how the past is represented, commemorated, or silenced; of what may be deemed 'important' memories and which pasts and traumas are discarded as small and insignificant, or even shameful; and what the instruments are for making a former smallness big and impactful. These and many other questions are asked by the authors of the collection of critical essays intriguingly titled *Memory Frictions in Contemporary Literature* (2017), edited by María Jesús Martínez-Alfaro and Silvia Pellicer-Ortín. On the one hand, the volume responds to the ongoing 'memory boom' of recent decades and the overflowing of traumatic narratives in literature, which may be seen as their natural vehicle. As Marc Amfreville, one of the contributors to the collection, suggests, "the reason why trauma has met with such success in literary and even social studies [is] the fact that it is radically indissociable from the question of representation" (107). On the other hand, the book is a timely response to the paradigm shift in trauma and memory studies, prompted by Michael Rothberg's seminal work on multidirectional memory (2009), and an upsurge in studies of postcolonial and indigenous memory, postmemory, as well as negotiations between individual and communal memory.

The strong point of this book is the diversity of topics, materials and methodologies, including psychoanalysis, place theory, postcolonial studies, indigenous studies, as well as feminism, gender studies and narratology. An array of memories and traumas are addressed, often of a conflicting and disturbing nature, from the post-memory of the transatlantic slave-trade to commemorating 9/11, thus moving across time and space in multiple directions. As the editors stress in their detailed critical "Introduction" (Chapter 1 of the book), the purpose is to move beyond the Eurocentric model in memory studies and provide visibility for other memories, so far overshadowed by the magnitude of the atrocities of the Holocaust, but without creating a competition of suffering, which is one of the tensions of the 'memory boom' that the collection addresses. Martínez-Alfaro and Pellicer-Ortín propose instead to benefit from the "link between cultures" that memories of suffering and loss provide, "especially at a time marked by multiculturalism and the aftermath of decolonisation" (5). After providing a thorough overview of current debates, the "Introduction" ends by drawing attention to the inherent rich connotations of the word 'friction', so effectively chosen for the title, a word implying at once convergence and resistance, thus being multidirectional. As Robert Eaglestone so rightly points out in the "Conclusion", each of the critical readings comprising this volume is of itself a "'friction', a complex interaction of text, ideas and critical sense" (278), making this book a model of good literary criticism, but certainly going much beyond just this.

Part I, titled "Experimentation and Genre: Formal Memory Frictions", comprising three chapters, explores narrative and generic possibilities for communicating traumatic memories and the inherent vulnerability of subjects in possession of these memories. In Chapter 2, Jean-Michel Ganteau explores elegy as a literary vehicle allowing for a creative possibility emerging from traumatic responses. The nature of elegy lies in idealizing the past and reconnecting it with a painful present, becoming, in Ganteau's view, a site of melancholia, pain, revision and negotiation simultaneously, as shown in Graham Swift's *Last Orders* (1996), Nicholas Royle's *Quilt* (2010) and Ann Enright's *The Gathering* (2007). Focusing on mourning as performance and the politics of relationality, he shows how elegy may both tap into the utter vulnerability of all subjects, and become a site for the production of a "narrative democracy" while also revealing a potential for solidarity (38). In Chapter 3, Susana Onega scrutinises traumatic memory from an African American perspective on the basis of the late Toni Morrison's *Home* (2012). Springing from Gavriel D. Rosenfeld's tenet that the "politics of recognition" (42) of specific under-represented and oppressed social groups and the 'identity politics' emerging in the late 1980s had contributed to the 'memory boom' of the 1990s, with special attention to the history of oppression of ethnic minorities, women and homosexuals, Onega turns to the racial and gender tensions illuminating Morrison's oeuvre to

show how the Nobel Prize laureate's creation has been instrumental in the "refocusing of perspective from the centre to the margins of US society and culture" (42)— an angle particularly topical in light of the recent BLM movement. In a nuanced and compelling manner, Onega explores narrative strategies employed by Morrison (including "self-fragmentation" [47], dialogic mirroring, traumatic dissociation, childhood as a trope and the borrowed structure of a fairy-tale) to discuss perpetrator trauma against the backdrop of the US-Korean war, the McCarthy era, racist eugenics and the Harlem Renaissance. Further on, in the third chapter of the section, Sandra Singer applies the narrative approach of multiperspectivity to explore Colum McCann's *TransAtlantic* (2013), a novel blending Irish and African colonial experience, following Rothberg's concept of multidirectional memory. One important consequence of applying the notions of multidirectionality and multiperspectivity, as stressed by Singer, is contesting the tendency of earlier memory studies to hierarchize suffering, recognizing only the "real trauma" (67) of a privileged group (most often on gender grounds, as theorized by Laura S. Brown [1995]), and proposing instead a multifocal and, thus, more inclusive representation, for instance of the often muted and silent suffering of women, as recounted in *TransAtlantic*.

Part II, titled "Collective Tensions and the Politics of Remembrance", engages with material representations of memory, such as memorials, places as sites of memory, food, and political tensions around these. In Chapter 5, Paula Martín-Salván meditates on the role of public art in producing a sense of communal and national identity through the experience of a traumatic event uniting a nation, or indeed segregating social or ethnic groups in what she sees as a peculiar hierarchy of mourners. Martín-Salván discusses Amy Waldman's 2011 debut novel *The Submission*, recounting the processes surrounding the controversial 9/11 in the US and the even more controversial process of its commemoration. Among the important questions asked in this essay are: "Who are the legitimate 'carrier groups' in the cultural trauma of 9/11?" (90); and what is the role of art in creating this legitimacy, particularly for American Muslims? In Chapter 6, Marc Amfreville examines the short story collection *Once the Shore* (2009) by South Korean American writer Paul Yoon, in which stories and characters are linked by fragmented memories, as well as by the human capacity to fill the gap of traumatic absence by imagination. In addition, Amfreville touches upon the environmental agenda present in the stories, prompted by the insular and oceanic setting and abundant natural imagery and symbolism present in the narrative. This aspect of the analysis could have been developed further, making for a fascinating ecocritical discussion. The section is concluded by Nieves Pascual Soler's discussion of Eduardo Machado and Michael Domitrovich's *Tastes like Cuba* (2007) in Chapter 7. Taking the subject of food as a medium of memory and national identity, as well as national,

familial and sexual tensions, the chapter is one of the most thought-provoking in the collection. It advances a compelling discussion of the protagonist's inner and outer conflict, his overcoming of various compartmentalizing pigeon-holes (of class while in Cuba, native/migrant identity in the USA and of a returning migrant back home) and eventually coming out as both queer and a nation's in-between, all through the semiotics and materiality of food. The insightful analysis in this chapter would have benefitted even more from a more explicit queer theory angle, as well as from Jopi Nyman's concept of "culinary memoir" (95), strengthening its theoretical output.

Part III, titled "The Haunting Presence of the Holocaust: Multidirectional, Transgenerational and Memorial Struggles", takes the Holocaust as a starting point in exploring other forms of genocide occurring throughout history and the world, in tune with Rothberg's concept of multidirectionality. First, in Chapter 8, Bárbara Arizti analyses Carmel Bird's *The Bluebird Café* (1990) and its representation of the extermination of Tasmanian aboriginals through the lens of the Nazi Holocaust while stressing her intention not to view the two genocides as rivals, but rather following Hannah Arendt's tenet of linking imperialism and totalitarianism. Next, in Chapter 9, Susanne Baackmann explores Rachel Seiffert's story "Lore" (2001) as an example of postmemory writings, in which the shift to perpetrator trauma in the second generation (the protagonist being a daughter of Nazi parents) contributes, as Baackmann argues, to the general shift of the focus in memory studies, presenting the position of the subject as more fluid and less fixed to earlier binaries, and thus contributing to our understanding of the great complexity involved in violent events of the past. In Chapter 10, concluding the section, María Ferrández San Miguel focuses on E.L. Doctorow's *City of God* (2000) as simultaneously an instance of "traumatic realism" (188) and an attempt to eschew being yet another "Holocaust novel" (189) proliferating in recent decades. Focusing on the literary representations of Shoah that Doctorow makes, she calls for what may be seen as the objective of the collection as a whole, to emphasise "the impossibility of coming to terms with the horrors that reside within human nature and the deeply felt moral duty to remember them, […] in order to facilitate the necessary ethical, social and political change that would make another Holocaust impossible" (202).

The final section of the book, "Mapping Memories, Spatial F(r)ictions and Troubled Identities", continues the project of adapting Western trauma theory to more specific native realities. In Chapter 11, Silvia Martínez-Falquina discusses the problematics involved both in applying mainstream trauma theory to Native American experience and in developing a more culture-specific, indigenous trauma theory, including the novel concept of American Indian historical trauma (AIHT).

Focussing on Louise Erdrich's short story "Shamengwa" (2002), Martínez-Falquina convincingly examines narrative ways (such as focalization and multivocality, and the poetics of place) of expressing the relationality of truth and the power of storytelling, writing and the language of music as a means of overcoming grief and also of avoiding the dangers of a "single story" (216) about Native Americans, using Chimamanda Adichie's concept (2008). Next, Dolores Herrero's analysis in Chapter 12 evokes the space/place dialectic developed by Tuan, Augé and Lefebvre, used widely in environmental studies, and now entering trauma theory as well (Baker 2012). Herrero's discussion of narrative representation of place, movement, individual and communal memory, as well as ethical responsibility in Burmese-American Wendy Law-Yone's *The Road to Wanting* (2010) is among the strongest contributions to the collection. Finally, in Chapter 13, Aitor Ibarrola-Armendariz returns to Louise Erdrich, this time focusing on her novel *The Round House* (2012), to examine communal memory, grief and vulnerability in a postcolonial setting, applying Toni Morrison's term "sites of memory" (260). Faithfully adhering to the 'postcolonial turn' in memory studies, Ibarrola-Armendariz inadvertently illuminates another important aspect of 'sites of memory', which he could have developed further, namely the material and environmental rhetoric applicable to indigenous experience, highlighted in the image of "flooding" (256) as both a metaphor for trauma *and* a way of dealing with it (through writing) and in the image of a buffalo as a "force" (260) and what we may call a transcorporeal connection of body, house and land.

Despite its diversity of topics, approaches and methodologies, the book achieves a remarkable unity by supporting a polyphonic and multidirectional approach to memory, and paying due attention both to the narrative, structural and literary peculiarities of the material, and its thematic, geographic and political scope. The chapters often form a multivocal dialogue with each other, illuminating similar issues from differing angles: for instance, the history of slavery, the Korean war, colonialism, the politics of mourning, the rhetoric of place, as well as polyphonic story-telling, multifocality and palimpsestic reading as a method. However, these dialogic connections are addressed in the "Introduction", but not within the chapters themselves. The collection would have benefitted from cross-referencing these interconnections, thus stressing its property as a unified monograph. Also, in addition to the laudable diversity in going beyond a Eurocentric model in trauma and memory studies, the authors may consider including in their future investigations such important angles as queer memory studies and queer black and racial studies, thus widening the proposed multidirectional paradigm even further, making it less straight and even more inclusive. Another intriguing aspect, hinted at in several chapters, but awaiting development in further writings by the authors, is drawing attention to the material, environmental connection of the precarious,

mourning body and the surrounding nature. This is only to stress that the proliferating field of memory studies has enormous potential for widening the paradigm in these directions, and I am looking forward to sequels of *Memory Frictions* by the authors of this profound and inspirational collection.

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REPRESENTING WARS FROM 1860 TO THE PRESENT: FIELDS OF ACTION, FIELDS OF VISION

Claire Bowen and Catherine Hoffmann, eds.
Leiden and Boston: Brill/Rodopi, 2018

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War, as the saddest manifestation of human interaction, features heavily in a vast array of art products, both popular and highbrow, and it has progressively elbowed its way into Academia. In this sense, some of the most fruitful critical perspectives deal with *war as representation* and, conversely, *the representation of war*; a word game introducing interesting issues and viewpoints in relation to the theatrical character of war and the manifold narratives derived from it. The conception of war as performance has recently been addressed, among others, by Jestrovic (2013), Greenbaum (2015), and Mantoan (2018) and it is visible in a number of representations of conflict which have evolved from the static nature of paintings of battles fought in the distance to the extreme dynamism of TV news or private videos shared through social networks which, according to Baudrillard, have turned spectators into "hostages of media intoxication" (1995: 25). In addition, there is an impressive number of volumes on war as depicted by TV, films, literature or photography, among other art genres (Paris 2007; McLoughlin 2011; Carrabine 2018; Flanagan 2019).

Representing Wars from 1860 to the Present: Fields of Action, Fields of Vision, edited by Claire Bowen and Catherine Hoffman, presents a collection of analyses of multidisciplinary and multicultural perceptions of war as both depicted and mediated by authors and artistic formats alike, the latter ranging from literature or documentary, to film or urban sculpture, thus demonstrating the multi-layered

quality of the phenomenon. Neither the choice of the publishers, nor the title of the volume nor the structure of the sections is trivial. Brill is an established publishing house specialising in academic works mostly in the field of Humanities, a large number of them dealing with war-related issues. In addition, the conflicts that defined the world in the twentieth century, to which we are still in some way indebted, are rooted in the last decades of the previous century (Judt 2005: 4) as continuity clearly underlies historical rupture (Jackson 2005: 6). Similarly, the four sections labelled and arranged according to the vision/action dichotomy entail both passive and active agency on the part of the various focalisers implied by the different narratives studied. These four sections ultimately rotate around two main issues: the theatrical character of war and the distancing mechanism operating between war and its chroniclers.

The first section, "The Spectacle of War", includes Monica Michlin's study of the deconstruction of the spectacle of war through three American films about the Iraq War that challenged the audience's mediated conceptions of the conflict. By means of technical alienating effects that stress their character of artifice, they present the trauma of war from different conflicting points of view, resulting in disturbance and fragmentation. Sandrine Lascaux focuses on the pictorial character of Juan Benet's narrative in *Herrumbrosas Lanzas* (1983) and his use of different descriptive devices to create a juxtaposed game of images employed to portray fictional events allegedly mirroring real ones, namely, the Spanish Civil War. Clément Sigalas explores the concept of war as spectacle in a bunch of French post-war novels dealing this time with a limited field of vision as defined by liminal elements such as windows and, especially, balconies. Beyond the concept of liminality being particularly productive for literary analysis (Dass 2013; Decker and Winchock 2017; Jacobson et al. 2018), these spaces are analysed as privileged vantage points from which to observe an armed conflict which provoked deep clashes in French society at that time.

"At a Distance from War" is the title of the second section, which digs into the multiple meanings of distance in relation to war, implying both physical and intellectual detachment from the conflict and achieved, in turn, through different mechanisms (Favret 2010; Porter 2015). However, although apparently absent, war can be read between the lines, thus proving the ineffectiveness of any distancing stance. Catherine Hoffmann provides an analysis of William Gerhardie's novels on the Allied intervention in Russia right before the end of World War I to supply anti-Bolshevik armies with arms and equipment. Humour and indirectness are the distancing mechanisms chosen by Gerhardie to eventually define the Allied expedition as a comic opera. Teresa Gibert studies the pervasive presence of war in Margaret Atwood's narratives by arranging the author's works along two different

axes: temporal, useful for recalling past conflicts and predicting future ones, and gendered, as women are on many occasions the focalisers of the narrative— as studied by Wibben (2016), among others. Finally, Catherine Collins considers the narrative quality of memorial sites placed in different locations of the United States to commemorate the internment of the Japanese-American population during World War II. These memorials, erected to counteract the terrible consequences of carrying the motif of 'the enemy within' to the extreme, are artistic representations of trauma, imbued with a semantic quality based on their specific locations and the symbols related to Japanese culture.

The third section, "Bringing the War Home", delves still further into the concept of distance from war as either officially instigated and manipulated, ideologically impossible or geographically conflictive. Éliane Elmaleh analyses a series of photomontages of the Vietnam and Iraq wars by the American artist Martha Rosler. Through contraposed images of shocking war scenes and nice home interiors, Rosler defies the alleged remoteness of the conflicts, opposing the officially commodified concept of war as alien. Marie-France Courriol opens the apparently limited lens of a civil conflict, the Spanish Civil War, and describes the use of documentary as a tool for propaganda, analysing two examples intended to support both sides involved, also stressing the irregular reaction of international audiences due to the limited scope of these pieces as persuasive propaganda, for they only reinforced the public's preconceptions. Christopher Lloyd reviews Jean Lartéguy's historicized fiction of the unfruitful secession of South-Katanga from Congo immediately after its independence from Belgium. Permeated by postcolonial echoes of Achebe's reading of Conrad, the analysis stresses the clashing positions which clearly inform the distancing mechanism operating at different levels. The conflict passed unnoticed in Western countries but it was just one of the multiple wars marking the birth of a nation. In this last case, distancing from war was impossible. Lastly, Claire Bowen examines the way in which, by using storytelling, official and media discourses contributed to constructing a war narrative around the killing of a lance corporal and his service dog in Afghanistan in 2011. The Foucauldian concept of truth dominates the media manipulation of the bare facts of a story which was repeated ad nauseam. In bringing the soldier and his dog home for their burial, war was also brought to British homes but through a deeply sentimental and politically biased account which was eventually counterproductive even for the military.

"Experiencing War and Bearing Witness" is the title of the fourth section, which features three contributions dealing with war accounts using two different artistic formats. William Gleeson studies the collections of American Civil War photographs focusing on absence and silence, considering what is not present and, therefore,

unsaid in the photographs and always taking into account that our view is not innocent as it is influenced by our own image of current wars. Guillaume Muller analyses Hayashi Fusao's collection of war accounts of the Second Sino-Japanese War. Fusao's vision is clearly overwhelmed by events and, despite his attempts at distancing from the actual conflict, war did exist around and outside him, which resulted in a metanarrative game since, according to Muller, for Fusao "writing about war becomes writing about himself writing about the war" (207). The last contribution to both the section and the book has been aptly chosen by the editors: Misako Nemoto's study of Ōoka Shōhei's autobiographical narration of both forced drafting and conflict witnessing. The author's field of vision is an attempt to understand the futility of war, and the distancing mechanism chosen, an objectification of his own self, a separation between a narrative and a narrator whose experience is diluted by the thousands of similar experiences of others like him.

The volume reviewed in these lines intends to articulate a series of analyses of war as something experienced, perceived and, ultimately, depicted by arranging the variety of contributions it includes under different labels, irrespective of the artistic genre they refer to, which has been a particularly fruitful decision of the editors. Although literature may appear to predominate in the collection, this is a misleading perception. An almost even balance between narrative and other artistic domains is present. However, other possible contributions from different literary genres such as theatre or poetry would have completed the whole panorama. Similarly, reflections on war displayed by painting or the graphic novel would have been welcome in order to offer a wider vision of a by no means monolithic phenomenon.

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WOMEN'S VOICES AND GENEALOGIES IN LITERARY STUDIES IN ENGLISH

Lilla Maria Crisafulli and Gilberta Golinelli, eds.
Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2019

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This publication addresses the ever-shifting realm of feminist literary studies in English, focusing on works that show how women have experimented with literary forms to investigate their gender identities and relationships with the patriarchal norm. The editors of this collection have opted for a wide variety of different influences and approaches, ranging from methodological surveys to more specific case studies. Contrarily to other works on the same topic published in recent years, original analyses of selected critics and authors have been preferred to a more comprehensive chronological discussion on the subject matter. In this respect, the volume under review is very different from *A History of Feminist Literary Criticism* (2007), edited by Gill Plain and Susan Sellers, or the very comprehensive *The Cambridge Companion to Feminist Literary Theory* (2006), edited by Ellen Rooney. While the first work provides an extremely dense historical overview from protofeminism to poststructuralism, the second takes a more theoretical stance, adopting a philosophical approach to gender and feminism which is not always applied to specific literary texts. In contrast, the literary text is at the core of *Women's Voices and Genealogies in Literary Studies in English.* 'Voices' and 'genealogies' highlight the plurality of women's experiences across time and space. The area of interest is referred to in the book title ("Literary Studies in English"), and the first chapters seek to give a methodological and theoretical overview of the collection that can also be applied to other texts not dealt with in this volume. The second section provides interesting insights into female writers of the past, ranging

from the early modern period to eighteenth-century novels and plays. The last part of the book looks at more recent instances of female writing and writing about the female self, drawing from genres like autobiography, science-fiction and others that offer additional coverage of class, race, and nationality.

In the first chapter, Vita Fortunati begins with a reassessment of key terms like 'sisterhood' and 'solidarity', claiming their relevance to the feminist debate even today. In her lengthy discussion of social responsibility, she relies on the theories of Martha Nussbaum, which espouse a pluralistic vision of international feminism and are used in her analysis of two case studies, Virginia Woolf's *To the Lighthouse* and Elizabeth Strout's *Amy & Isabelle*. Raffaella Baccolini's contribution intends to reaffirm the notion of gender as pivotal in the intersection of other social abstracts. In her view, the crisis of the classical subject, at the core of post-structuralist thinking, is what led to the subsequent rejection of the concept of gender —seen as a universal superimposition against Foucault's principle that the author is dead or, better, has no identity. As explained in other ways by feminist critics like Nancy K. Miller, who have encouraged the intersection of gender with other categories such as race, class, age, religion, culture, and sexual orientation, the author's voice can be dismissed only after it has been heard, and in the case of women writers this has hardly ever happened. What Baccolini, quoting Miller, calls "anonymous textuality" (32) works against women, since it is still relevant today when someone is speaking as a member of a group that has been silenced throughout history, like women. Rita Monticelli closes this first methodological section with a discussion on theories by Irigaray, Cixous, Braidotti, Haraway and Butler, which are used to deconstruct the "western symbolic order where women have represented the 'other' of man" (41). After an overview of the ways in which these scholars have envisaged female re-figurations (the 'queer', the 'drag', the 'abject', the 'posthuman nomadic subject' and the 'cyborg'), Monticelli claims that these scholars have "re-signified experiences for a political, material, and inspirational feminism" (55) with re-visions of the female body which become the pivotal subject of feminist investigation through different perspectives within literary studies, sociology, and psychoanalysis. The author skilfully compares the contrasting critical accounts of a variety of scholars, presenting them as the starting point for new feminist alliances in the posthuman, global world. The first section of the book lays the groundwork for the redefinition of concepts like 'solidarity', 'sisterhood', 'gender', and 'otherness', which are re-contextualized and brought back to the contemporary debate. The aim is to deliver up-to-date tools to students and scholars for the interpretation of literary texts, not only from the English context, but from global perspectives as well. Overall, this selection of theoretical frameworks is well thought out, with compelling explanations in accessible language.

The next part puts to use the methodologies established above, giving the reader an understanding of the impact of a gendered approach to both canonical and lesser known texts, with literary genres ranging from the novel to historical plays and poetry. Gilberta Golinelli offers a close reading of Aphra Behn's masterpiece *Oroonoko* and its implications in questions of class, race, gender and nationality, which helped its author gain agency as a writer and independent individual demonstrating how fiction can work towards both the consolidation and the subversion of ideology. Serena Baiesi examines important female voices that were able to innovate Romantic fiction. Mary Wollstonecraft, Elizabeth Inchbald, Ann Radcliffe and Jane Austen, among others, are taken as case studies for the analysis of the emergence of new narrative forms and contents. Baiesi insists on the heterogeneity of their production and the different literary genres they explored, which makes them important innovators of the modern novel. In her essay, Lilla Maria Crisafulli looks at issues of agency in British Romantic women's drama, with a focus on how women playwrights re-appropriated history to reflect on their condition through the centuries. In a delightful lament, Crisafulli questions the depth of theorization of Romantic drama, in comparison to the new feminist approaches toward early modern drama. This is a much-needed appraisal in that early modern drama is predominantly populated by male authors, whereas the Romantic period sees the emergence of important women playwrights like Elizabeth Inchbald, Hannah More, and Joanna Baillie, and could thus be re-interpreted from a gender perspective. Valentina Pramaggiore investigates Mary Darby Robinson's poetic works and demonstrates how they reflect her political and social engagement in defence of women's unprivileged condition. Pramaggiore points out Robinson's experimentation with gender roles in her literary production and stresses how "she embodied an ideal of gender as fluid and performative" (111), thus anticipating Judith Butler's notion of gender performativity.

The final section is a fitting conclusion, further enlarging the spectrum of literary genres to include slave narratives, autobiography and science fiction. It opens with Josmary Santoro's study on early modern English drama with her analysis of Shakespeare's *Cymbeline* and Webster's *The Duchess of Malfi*. The author unfolds questions of linguistic construction of the female gender on the stage through the figure of the misogynist. Thanks to a combination of feminist and semiotic approaches, Santoro reveals the dramatic irony that makes early modern playwrights insightful commentators on contemporary views of gender. Valeria Morabito contributes to the debate with an analysis of female slave literary works in conversation with English feminist history. After a thorough introduction of the concept of 'genealogy', Morabito proceeds to an analysis of the *History of Mary Prince, A West Indian Slave*, explaining how gender and racial discriminations are intimately intertwined. Wilmarie Rosado Pérez considers the experiences of the

French émigrés who arrived in England during the late eighteenth century. The poetry of Charlotte Turner Smith and Mary Darby Robinson represents the efforts of women of their time to enter the public debate around gender related issues and find a voice in questions of subjectivity. Cristina Gamberi's contribution focuses on new interpretations of Doris Lessing's autobiographical texts in order to reassess the theme of motherhood in her output. Gamberi stresses the relevance of this literary genre to the popular feminist assumption that the personal is political. Speaking overtly in her autobiographies, Lessing "is able to inscribe the maternal narrative within the colonial metaphor and to question dominant discourses on motherhood and colonial racism" (165). Eleanor Drage closes this collection with her study on works of science fiction and the way in which they can address the issue of the "spatial construction and policing of gender and 'racial' identities" (180), with case studies like the television series *Lost*, Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World* and Octavia Butler's *Dawn*. Finally, the book is enriched with an appendix by Janet Todd, one of the most outstanding pioneers of feminist literary criticism, who gives a compelling account of Mary Wollstonecraft's life and work.

Overall, after reading the table of contents of this collection one could argue that its miscellaneous nature may confuse the reader looking for a *fil rouge* and a thematic subdivision of the chapters. With the exception of the first section, which functions as a methodological introduction, the other two could easily be joined into one single section, since all the essays in the second and third parts deal with specific case studies and do not follow a particular thematic path. Nevertheless, with methodical and analytical perspectives, the topics that play a pivotal role in feminist debates are reassessed and reaffirmed for a new generation of feminist scholars to apply in their own research. Hence, this collection of well-researched essays will prove to be an invaluable resource for scholars and students in the fields of Gender and English Studies. The authors certainly pay homage to the legacy of feminist pioneers like Wollstonecraft, Woolf, and second-wave scholars, but also initiate a dialogue with more recent theories and assumptions on gender.

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