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Articles

JACOBSON'S CELEBRATION OF COMEDY IN *KALOOKI NIGHTS*

LA CELEBRACIÓN DE LA COMEDIA EN *KALOOKI NIGHTS,* DE JACOBSON

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Abstract

Most scholars agree that Jewish humour is a relatively modern phenomenon born out of the unique Jewish experience of exile, segregation and persecution. Howard Jacobson is a British Jewish writer who has always praised comedy and paid special attention to Jewish comic sensibility. He has emphasised the coping and liberating function that humour has exercised for the Jews, allowing them to transcend the terrible circumstances of their lives. Jacobson does not believe that humour removes pain, but that it contributes an emotional factor that makes the pain more bearable by affirming and celebrating life. He is convinced that there is something particularly Jewish about the way in which he fuses comedy and tragedy in his novels, since Jews have always joked in the face of affliction. Jacobson also stresses how from the very beginning the novel has been defined by its subversive and God-defying character. After explaining Jacobson's main ideas on comedy and how they are shared by scholars who have examined the characteristic features of Jewish humour, I will analyse how they are reproduced by the narrator in *Kalooki Nights* (2006).

Keywords: Howard Jacobson, Jewish humour, comedy, transcendence, subversion.

Resumen

La mayor parte de los críticos coinciden en que el humor judío es un fenómeno relativamente moderno, fruto de la experiencia única de exilio, segregación y persecución vivida por los judíos. Howard Jacobson es un escritor judiobritánico que siempre ha elogiado la comedia y ha prestado especial atención a la sensibilidad cómica judía. Ha enfatizado la función liberadora que el humor desempeña para los judíos, permitiéndoles transcender las terribles circunstancias de sus vidas. Jacobson no cree que el humor elimine el dolor, pero lo hace más soportable al reivindicar y celebrar la vida. Está convencido de que hay algo particularmente judío en el modo de combinar la comedia y la tragedia en las novelas judías, porque los judíos siempre han bromeado ante el infortunio. Jacobson también subraya que desde el principio la novela se ha definido por su carácter subversivo y desafiante. Después de explicar las principales ideas de Jacobson sobre la comedia y en qué medida las comparten otros estudiosos del humor judío, en este artículo se analiza cómo las reproduce el narrador de *Kalooki Nights* (2006).

Palabras clave: Howard Jacobson, humor judío, comedia, transcendencia, subversión.

1. Introduction

In 1893 Hermann Adler, the Chief Rabbi of the United Hebrew Congregation of the British Empire, delivered a lecture in which he defended the Jews from those denying them the faculty of laughter and the power of evoking laughter:

> With the Hebrews, however, it is otherwise. They, at a comparatively early stage in their history, attained that ripe and strong mental development which the elaboration of wit and the comprehension of humour demand. And there is one leading trait in the annals of the Hebrew race which engendered and stimulated to the highest degree their *vis comica*— the faculty of saying witty and humorous things. (1893: 457)

Little did Adler suspect when he said those words that the situation was going to change drastically in the following years. Thus in 1943 Kohn and Davidsohn already took for granted the existence of a distinctively Jewish sensibility:

> The wit and humor of the Jews are age-old and were present at all times, so that the gift of glossing over in humorous manner and of ironizing about the various forms and expressions of being or of recognizing their comical side may be forthwith asserted to be an essential characteristic of the Jews. Jewish wit and humor have fructified the literature of all people. (1943: 545)

This characterization of the Jews as peculiarly humorous people has been endorsed by both Jewish and non-Jewish scholars. Thus, for instance, Ziv has explained that "[f]rom the end of the last century, Jewish humor became widely recognized as superlative humor and is growing in renown to this very day" (1986: 48), whereas Landmann has claimed that "[e]xperts in Jewish humour are in fact agreed that it is more acute, more profound, and richer in expression than that of any other people" (1962: 194). Most of the critics who have explored the image of the Jews as 'the People of the Joke' have tried to define what makes Jewish humour such a unique phenomenon. Oring, who like most scholars believes that Jewish humour is a relatively modern phenomenon originating in the nineteenth century in Eastern Europe, has given us one of the best descriptions of Jewish humour:

> The conception of a Jewish humor derives from a conceptualization of Jewish history as a history of suffering, rejection, and despair. Given this history, the Jews should have nothing to laugh about at all. That they do laugh and jest can only signal the existence of a special relationship between the Jews and humor and suggests that the humor of the Jews must in some way be distinctive from other humors which are not born of despair. (1983: 266-267)

The main aim of this essay is precisely to analyse the way in which Howard Jacobson, a British Jewish writer, has celebrated comedy and explored the image of the Jews as the People of the Joke and how his main ideas are reproduced by the narrator in *Kalooki Nights* (2006). Throughout the essay I will show that his tenets are shared by scholars who have examined the characteristic features of Jewish humour.

2. Howard Jacobson on Comedy

Jacobson is a British Jewish writer who is proud of being labelled a Jewish writer and does not hesitate to describe himself as "entirely and completely Jewish" (in Jacobs 2008). In fact, most reviewers and critics have pointed out that few Jewish British authors have written so explicitly and overtly about Jewish experience and identity. Like most critics (Cheyette 2003; Gilbert 2013; Weber 2007), Jacobson believes that although there seems to be "a new, unapologetic and unashamed generation, less worried about what will happen if the British notice there are Jews living here" (in Schischa 2011), British Jews do not have the cultural influence Jews have in America. Jacobson thinks that it is time Anglo-Jewish writers should be less embarrassed about what it means to be British Jews. For him the story of Jewish assimilation into British life and culture in order to avoid being accused of introversion and parochialism is one of failure since British Jews have been incapable of addressing directly the challenge of being Jewish, which should have

been "the *raison d'être* for their art" (Jacobson 2006: 45). He insists that instead of seeing America as the model to be imitated, British Jewish writers should delight in the here and now and engage creatively with it: "We have been in this country a while now. The story of our finely tuned accommodations to English culture is a fascinating one, sometimes tragic, often heroic, always funny, and never less than urgent beneath a quiescent surface. It is time we told it. We should be more interested in ourselves as English Jews. ENGLISH… JEWS" (2006: 46).

Howard Jacobson has long been recognized as a great comic novelist. Again and again in articles and interviews Jacobson has argued that humour plays a very important role in life and literature. Interestingly enough, he admits that his constant celebration of comedy is closely linked to the fact that he is a Jewish author writing explicitly about the experience of Jews in Britain: "I think a Jew knows that very funny is very serious. It's part of my errand, something I feel I have to propagandize" (in Manus 2004). Jacobson claims that comic fiction should be taken seriously and denounces the false division between comedy and seriousness that has been created:

> But there is a fear of comedy in the novel today —when did you last see the word "funny" on the jacket of a serious novel?— that no one who loves the form should contemplate with pleasure. […] But we have created a false division between laughter and thought, between comedy and seriousness, between the exhilaration that the great novels offer when they are at their funniest, and whatever else it is we now think we want from literature. (2010b)

For Jacobson the term 'comic novelist' is as redundant as the term 'literary novelist': "The novel was born of restless critical intelligence, and it was born laughing" (2010b). Jacobson stresses how from the beginning the novel has been defined by its subversive character: "Comedy breaks every trance— that's its trance. Comedy is nothing if not critical" (2010b). Jacobson goes so far as to say that it is precisely because the novel is scornful, spiteful, that it should be described as "sacred" (in Irvine 2010). In its God-defying and subversive character the novel resembles the satyr play which was performed after the tragic trilogy and which developed the same narrative and mythological motifs as had the trilogy that preceded it, but showed a different perspective: "This is not to say that the Greeks value comedy higher than tragedy, but they were in no doubt which was the better note to end on. Comedy affirmed the vigorous and unpredictable liveability of life" (Jacobson 2010b).

Jacobson thinks that the novel has been the expression of freedom, as the work of Rabelais or Cervantes patently shows. By challenging the reader's beliefs and sympathies comedy affirms and celebrates life: "[…] comedy spares nothing and spares no one. And in the process asserts the stubbornness of life. Why would we

want to read anything less" (2010b). Jacobson points out that the novel does not exist to make us feel good or, as he puts it, "[n]o good writer ever merely cheered us up" (2012). Nevertheless, at the end of the novel our hope is rekindled: "How not feeling good nonetheless conduces to our not feeling bad, indeed conduces to our feeling exhilarated, is one of the great mysteries of art" (2010b).

Jacobson rejects the notion that comedy comes after tragedy or that tragedy is more profound than comedy: "Maybe, but any fool can make you cry. If I want to see what a writer's made of, I say, go on, make me laugh then!" (in Pearson 2003). He is irritated by the lack of respect for comedy (Irvine 2010) and feels "desperate" to defend comedy because he does not like novels if they are not funny (in Tracy 2011). Jacobson has argued that not only is the comic novel underrated, but that "they will not forgive you for being funny" (in Pearson 2003). Because he firmly believes that comedy can deal with the most tragic themes and circumstances without trivializing them, he insists that a comic writer is as serious as a tragic one: "But I can say I am as serious as anybody else. I am serious in my intentions as anybody" (in "The Plot against England" 2010). In fact, it has been pointed out that Jacobson is too serious for his own good (Cheyette 1999) and that a novel by Jacobson is almost "a comedy about tragedy" (Boylan 2011). This explains why Jacobson has rejected the comparison with Philip Roth. He admires his work, but he regrets that he has stopped being funny:

> He is perfectly within his rights to have stopped being funny, but I feel: "Now more than ever I want you to be funny… now that you are in the toils and at any moment you're going to die and you are fed up with everything and everybody". I feel the same with Woody Allen: "Fine, it was easy before. Joke now". It's never too serious to laugh. (in Jacobs 2008)

He prefers to call himself the Jewish Jane Austen not only because he considers himself "an English novelist working absolutely square in the English tradition" (in "The Plot against England" 2010), but because comedy was central to Austen's themes, however tragic or profound: "Comedy is a very important part of what I do. I sometimes say I'm a Jewish Jane Austen" (in Manus 2004). Gilbert absolutely agrees with Jacobson's description of himself as an author because she believes that he has rewritten "the English novel of manners, turning it instead into a particularly British-Jewish comedy of bad manners" (2013: 107).

When Jacobson was awarded the Booker Prize for *The Finkler Question* (Jacobson 2010a), Andrew Motion, the Booker chairman, said that Jacobson "certainly knows something that Shakespeare knew— that the tragic and the funny are intimately linked" (in Jeffries 2010). The main reason why Jacobson fuses comedy and tragedy in his novels is because he firmly believes that humour allows us to transcend life's miseries: "Comedy is a human invention to deal with the sadness

of life. It's our greatest achievement. Forget the pyramids. *Comedy*" (in Tracy 2011, emphasis in original). Jacobson does not think that comedy removes pain or suffering, but makes these experiences more bearable by affirming and celebrating life:

> There is no being reconciled to loss. What's gone is gone. What's suffered is suffered. But some novelists make it possible for us to stare at pain with bitter and derisive comedy, and because there is a part of us that values truth above illusion, we grab at that bitter comedy for dear life. (Jacobson 2012)

He insists again and again on the same idea: "'Comedy is the handmaiden of tragedy', he said, adding that 'humor doesn't make things light— quite the contrary'. It makes the tragedy of life bearable; 'We affirm life with it'" (in Herschthal 2010). Interestingly enough, like many critics, Jacobson believes that there is something particularly Jewish about mixing tragedy and comedy: "tragedy and comedy at once; how we do it… When I do comedy… it bleeds" (in Herschthal 2010). Jacobson claims that the more tragic the themes the more obliged he feels to exploit the comedy in them: "Jewish themes, in particular, are susceptible to comedy of the most stringent sort. It's what Jews have always done in the face of affliction— joked. Not to make light of catastrophe, but to bring every resource of intelligence to bear on it, to understand it fully, and to affirm the energy of life in the face of horror. Laughter might, in the end, be the only cure for the poisoned heart of memory" (in Mullan 2010). In fact, Tracy establishes a very interesting comparison between the interviewer and writer Paul Holdengräber and Jacobson as representatives of the two archetypes of the Jewish intellectual. Whereas Holdengräber incarnates "the staid German Jew, even-keeled, cerebral, always a step removed from the messiness and flesh and thingness of day-to-day life", Jacobson is "the ribald and morbid Jew from the Pale —that goofy mane of hair, those capital-b Bushy eyebrows, and that gigantic nose!— the fragility of whose life has led him to fear harm and to raise humour as a shield" (Tracy 2011).

This notion of Jewish humour as essentially transcendent in the sense that it allows Jewish people to cope with their suffering and liberates them from the social, political and economic forces that oppress them is shared by many scholars. Thus Saper has pointed out that the comic vision of life has allowed the Jews of America, like the Jews of the Diaspora in general, to cope with the tragic nature of their lives, maintain their dignity, equilibrium and sanity, and look to the future: "At the risk of redundancy, it should be emphasized again that there is a unique tendency —cultural, religious, and ethnic— for the Jew to pick up on the terrible miseries of his/her life as well as its absurdities, to make jokes and laugh at them" (1991: 54). Ziv also believes that Jews have always used humour as a psychological defence mechanism to distort their tragic and threatening reality and make it laughable by seeing the absurd in it:

> Laughing at the absurdity of reality as well as at themselves is an old tradition with Jews. Being the chosen people and living in the worst possible conditions, victims of pogroms and targets of hatred from their fellow human beings, seemed some kind of divine irony. One way of dealing with it was to adopt irony and use it to deal with reality. (1988: 114)

Jews refuse to let their harsh living conditions crush their spirit: "Despite the tragedies that befell them, the Jews nurtured an optimistic element of hope in the redemption that would come in the wake of their suffering" (Ziv 1986: 54).

Berger (1997) also argues that the Jewish comic sensibility that originated in the Yiddish culture of Eastern Europe is defined by the element of tragicomedy. The Jews of Eastern Europe, and especially those living in appalling circumstances in Russia, were aware of the incongruity between the promises of a majestic destiny for Jewish people and the miserable conditions in which they lived. They developed a tragicomic approach to life in order to cope with their painful predicament. Tragicomedy allowed Jewish people to provoke laughter through tears.[1] In fact, Berger affirms that Jewish humour is "a sign of the invincible survival power of the Jewish people that —even as Nazi barbarism had destroyed most of Jewish culture in Europe— it found new incarnations in America and Israel" (1997: 88).

Cohen agrees with Berger that Jewish humour was born out of the awareness of the contradictions between the heavenly promise of being the "chosen people" and their cruel reality and emphasises that Jewish comedy is defined by a peculiar mixture of laughter and trembling which has allowed Jews to survive in a hostile world: "By laughing at their dire circumstances, Jews have been able to liberate themselves from them. Their humor has been a balance to counter external adversity and internal sadness" (1987: 4). Robert Alter not only underlines the mixture of comedy and tragedy that defines Jewish humour, but points to the courage needed to laugh in the face of suffering and despair:

> If disaster, whatever the scale, seems to be our general fate, the persistence of the comic reflex is itself evidence of the perdurability of the stuff of humanity: a shrug is a small and subtle gesture, but, in the face of the harshest history, it may take a world of strength to make. (1987: 36)

Jacobson not only agrees with these critics that here is something particularly Jewish about this mixture of tragedy and comedy, but firmly believes that the ingenious, joking Jew is the Jew in essence: "over hundreds if not thousands of years of exile the Jew had grown emotionally bent instead of straight, contradictory instead of unified, and the clearest manifestation of this bentness was the highly wrought comedy with which he viewed his condition" (2001: 7). Jacobson rejects the notion put forward by many scholars that by laughing at their own ambiguities Jews are betraying self-hatred:[2]

> But I ask you which is the self-hating Jew— the Jew who makes a permanent witticism of the imperfect, not to say contradictory, life he leads, or the Jew who winces at such satire, recoiling from an ancient Jewish recourse, and therefore from an important ancient aspect of Jewish genius? (2001: 7)

Jacobson criticizes Jewish intellectuals who try to hide their Jewishness and therefore their contradictions:

> And if I complain that it isn't strictly Jewish to grow up straight and tall and jokeless, am I not perpetrating that version of Jewishness which every enlightened Jew since Moses Mendelssohn and every Zionist since Herzl has been trying to ditch?
>
> *Yes, I am*. For the simple reason that that's the Jewishness I like and admire and value and see the point *of*, and see a future *for*, most. (2001: 8, emphasis in original)

It is relevant to point out that Jacobson's insistence on the lack of self-hatred in Jewish humour is shared by many scholars who have emphasised that the self-mocking jokes that the Jews are given to making have allowed them to cope with the tragic nature of their lives (Davies 1991; Saper 1991; Ziv 1986).

3. Max Glickman: Jacobson's Voice in *Kalooki Nights*

Gilbert has claimed that although most contemporary British Jewish writers tend to ground their narratives in specific British locations, exploring the particular experiences of British Jews in the here and now, some are also exploring the Holocaust in challenging ways: "Like Jacobson in *Kalooki Nights*, they ask difficult and provocative questions about their own generation's relationship to history" (2008: 403). Jacobson has admitted that with *Kalooki Nights* he had decided

> to go where you're not supposed to go, not as a measure of disrespect, but the very opposite […] That's the great test, if you're going to be a great comic writer, not a humorist, you've got to take it into the throat of grief. Can you make laughter and seriousness so close that they are the same thing? There's nothing more wonderful than when the comedy's got horror in it, got blood in it. (in Irvine 2010)

Jacobson proves in *Kalooki Nights* that it is possible to write about the Shoah in a comic way without trivializing its horrors. In fact, he has explained that his aim in the novel was not to recreate history but to find a different discourse with which to talk about the Holocaust: "Comedy is one way to change the discourse. I believe in taking up the challenge of Hamlet in that wonderful scene, holding the skull of Yorick and confronting him: 'You were a jester'" (in Jacobs 2008). In order to achieve his aim Jacobson has chosen the "perfect" narrator: Max Glickman, a cartoonist obsessed with the Holocaust whose "masterpiece", *Five*

Thousand Years of Bitterness, is a comic history of the crimes committed against the Jewish people. Because Max is a self-conscious artist who constantly draws attention to his own compositional procedures, *Kalooki Nights* embodies dimensions of self-reflexivity that allow Jacobson to "explore a *theory* of fiction through the *practice* of writing fiction" (Waugh 1993: 2, emphasis in original). Metafiction in *Kalooki Nights* lays bare certain literary conventions and in doing so makes the reader revise their ideas about the nature of fictional narrative. Jacobson achieves his goal by making Max, who has spent most of his life drawing caricatures of the enemies of the Jews, echo his own ideas on comedy.[3] Thus, like his creator, Max repeatedly emphasises the subversive character of humour: "A cartoonist, you see, not a landscape painter or gardener or cartographer. Agitation, satire, distortion, not the beauty of the visible world humming exquisitely on its axis" (Jacobson 2007: 88). He warns the reader not to expect respect from a cartoonist: "But a cartoonist isn't there to help. Not in the conventional sense, at any rate. A cartoonist is there to make the complacent quake and the uncomfortable more uncomfortable still" (23). He confesses to the reader that he really does not know why he draws satirically when by nature he is melancholy and withdrawn: "Why —speaking of disloyalties, forsakings and acts that seemingly cannot be explained— did I forsake *myself* to draw cartoons, when I am averse by nature to caricature, ribaldry and violence?" (11, emphasis in original). Max asserts that for the comic mode nothing is sacred, everything can and should be criticized. As he says to his rather peculiar Orthodox friend Manny when the latter accuses him of embracing ugliness as an artist:

> How can I not be in an argument with beauty? I'm a cartoonist. More to the point, I'm a Jewish cartoonist. As an Orthodox Jew yourself, or as a one-time Orthodox Jew —I don't presume to know what you are now— you should approve of this. Leviticus 26, Manny, "Ye shall make you no idols nor graven image". I happen to take that prohibition very seriously. Not in its sensuous applications but in its ethical ones. It is not good to lose oneself in art. It is idolatrous. Lose yourself in art and you end up not knowing where you begin and end. It is a mistake to fuse with the image. Well, you can't fuse with mine, Manny. It won't let you. It won't allow it. If by ugliness you mean the ceaseless mockery, through a visual medium, of all the seductions of visual media, then yes, OK, have it your way, my drawings are ugly. (264)

Max believes that only laughter or mockery save you from idolizing images, from worshipping idols. That is why as a cartoonist he could not "resist comic gods and goddesses who mocked the spiritual" (Jacobson 2007: 281). Mendel, a camp prisoner who fulfils the role of Max's alter ego in the novel, goes so far as to say that because the caricaturist demystifies reality he is a kind of god: "But because the caricaturist is by nature a satirist, and the impulse to satire is denial, he is also the *most* godlike. In his act of creation, the satirist destroys" (358-359, emphasis

in original). Mendel, who makes this statement during a conversation with Ilse Koch, the "Witch of Buchenwald", believes, like Jacobson, that satire is written into Jewish nature:

> She *is* getting better. She reads what he is thinking. "Is it Jewish, this satire of yours, Jew?"
> "It is, Frau Koch. Satire is written into our natures. Nietzsche believed we invented democracy out of a satiric impulse, as a refusal of aristocrats and heroes".
> She doesn't, of course, know who Nietzsche is. The education of the German people, though advanced, is a long way from being complete.
> "So are all Jews satiric?"
> "Only the clever ones, Frau Koch".
> "I thought you were all clever".
> "We are, Frau Koch".
> She strikes his face again, with her gloved hand. "Don't be satiric with me, Jew. I have told you I will remove all satire from your mind. You have said satire is written into your natures. So if I remove the satire from the Jews, there are no Jews, *nicht wahr*?"
> *Ja wohl,* Mendel thinks. (360-361, emphasis in original)

This quotation is comic not only because it explores one of the most common stereotypes of Jews —their pride and preoccupation with cleverness— but because it exploits what Berger considers to be one of the distinctive characteristics of Jewish humour: the use of a question and answer format which has its origin in the dialectical manner of debating the Talmud (1997: 92-93). In fact, Jacobson, who considers that to be Jewish is "to demur" (2001: 5), has described Jewish writing in the very same terms:

> A strong, disputatious voice. You feel you're listening to ethical argumentativeness that reminds you of the Talmudic pedantic disputatiousness. Jews love the meaning of language. They're seeking clarity, seeking to make a law, make a distinction between a law and how does this thing differ from that thing. For a Jew, language is always at the service of intelligence. (in Manus 2004)

This dialectical reasoning which has defined Jewish thinking since the very beginning is, according to Jacobson, the cornerstone of the Jewish joke: "an over-subtle acknowledgement of our own over-subtlety" (2001: 6).

Max's irreverence sometimes gets him into trouble and makes editors reluctant to publish his work as happened with

> a series of irritably lewd cartoons I once drew, a sort of *Rake's Progress* set in Stamford Hill, where every strumpet was a Jewess in a sheitel, but which no reputable publication was prepared to take, not even *Playboy*, despite my offering to redraw the location to make it look like Crown Heights. (Jacobson 2007: 254)

Obscenity is present in most of the cartoons produced by Max and, as Sicher and Weinhouse have explained, by creating a cartoonist who specializes in obscenity Jacobson is "breaking a taboo on things Jews don't do" (2012: 207), since Jewish humour contains almost no scatology and remarkably little sexuality. Sexual humour is even rarer in Israeli culture: "Sexual cartoons are extremely rare and almost never obscene. Jewish humor, even before the new state of Israel, was never sex-minded" (Ziv 1988: 130).

Where Max proves to be more subversive is precisely in his treatment of the atrocities committed against the Jewish people. He can find no publisher for *Five Thousand Years of Bitterness* because he has broken the sacred rule that says that it is inappropriate to deal with serious issues in a comic mode: "Well, what else should I have expected? Adorno famously said that, after the Holocaust, poetry wasn't a good idea. He never thought there was need to include cartoons in that proscription" (Jacobson 2007: 168). Max is referring here to Theodor Adorno's famous dictum: "To write poetry after Auschwitz is barbaric" (1955: 34). This statement generated a great debate about whether the Holocaust is capable of representation. On the one hand there are those who are sceptical about there being an appropriate discourse to evoke the Holocaust. Thus Steiner claims that "[t]he world of Auschwitz lies outside speech as it lies outside reason. To speak of the *unspeakable* is to risk the survivance of language as creator and bearer of humane, rational truth" (1985: 146),[4] while Howe affirms that the literary imagination is incapable of rendering intelligible the extermination of 6,000,000 Jews: "what can the literary imagination, traditionally so proud of its self-generating capacities, add to —how can it go beyond— the intolerable matter cast up by memory?" (1988: 187). The novelist tries to make sense of the Holocaust, but he cannot because he lacks a structuring set of ethical premises and therefore the aesthetic biases which would allow him to integrate his materials.

There are other critics who not only believe that the literary imagination can represent the Holocaust, but argue that comedy can treat the Holocaust respectfully while at the same time offering a different perspective. In "Holocaust *Laughter*?" Des Pres affirms that it is possible for fiction to represent the Shoah and argues that the use of the comic mode to write about the Holocaust helps both reader and writer to transcend the horrors of the event. Des Pres knows that by formulating this thesis he is challenging one of the sets of fictions that shapes Holocaust discourse: "The Holocaust shall be approached as a solemn or even sacred event, with a seriousness admitting no response that might obscure its enormity or dishonour its dead" (1991: 217). Tadeusz Borowski's *This Way for the Gas, Ladies and Gentlemen*, Leslie Epstein's *King of the Jews*, and Art Spiegelman's *Maus* are works that refuse to take the Holocaust on its own crushing terms: "[…] pity and

terror are held at a distance, and this is not, finally, a bad thing. To be mired still deeper in angst and lament is hardly what is needed. The value of the comic approach is that by setting things at a distance it permits a tougher, more active response" (Des Pres 1991: 232).[5] A similar idea is expressed by Cory: "As a literary device it [humour] has lent credibility to witness literature and functioned aesthetically to make the unfathomable accessible to the minds and emotions of the reading public" (1995: 39).

Other critics have concentrated on the use of comedy in the cinema to represent the Shoah and their conclusions are very similar to those of Des Pres and Cory. One of the most interesting texts is "Art, Morality, and the Holocaust: The Aesthetic Riddle of Benigni's *Life Is Beautiful*", in which Haskins analyses Benigni's film and argues that Benigni has not defiled the Holocaust by telling a comic story:

> And whatever else one may think about Benigni, he well understands, as does this film as a whole, that there are no subjects, not even the Holocaust, that an otherwise mature adult cannot, under the right conditions, find funny, and some subjects, including the Holocaust, that many of us, for better or worse, need to find funny. (2001: 380)

Haskins believes that there is no clear criterion to assess the truth claims of Holocaust representation, because there are so many different ways in which the Holocaust can be imagined. In fact, Viano reflects the very same idea in his article on Benigni's film when he asserts that *Life Is Beautiful* demonstrates that comedy can treat the Holocaust respectfully while at the same time offering a different perspective: "It should be noted here that Benigni's project, far from cheapening it, confirms the Holocaust as history's worst nightmare and reinscribes it in the collective memory through an unusual code" (1999: 29).

Des Pres insists that "[c]reative writers, moreover, are quicker to break taboos than critics like ourselves" (1991: 232-233), which is precisely what Jacobson is doing in *Kalooki Nights*. Manny says that it is the use of cartoons, the use of comedy, that makes *Five Thousand Years of Bitterness* "blasphemous" (Jacobson 2007: 39). Max knows that he is right, that it is very difficult to overcome the prejudices against using comedy to deal with profound and painful themes:

> I made a cartoon of it once. Two old Jews arguing. One with a bubble coming out of his mouth declaring "Never again", the other with his fists in the air and an answering bubble, "If I have to hear you saying never again ever again". But I was unable to place it. I gave it away in the end to the plastic surgeon who wouldn't touch my nose. Hard to get people to laugh at the Holocaust. (119)

Like Jacobson, Max believes that the comic writer is as serious in his intentions as anybody: "For a cartoonist I am serious to a fault" (Jacobson 2007: 264).

But he also knows that for many critics and writers comedy is just a trivial form, which explains why Isaiah Berlin and other well-connected Jews never responded when they were sent a copy of *Five Thousand Years of Bitterness*: "Mine was not, that was all I could deduce —since not every one of them had come to hear of me first as a dick-artist— their idea of serious discourse on a Jewish theme" (258). Better than anyone else Max understands the frustration that beset Bernie Krigstein, who gave up illustrating comic books and returned to painting: "[…] he'd grown to be desperately unhappy in what he did, and considered himself to be a serious artist who had squandered his genius on a trivial form" (239). Max admits that the problem with Krigstein "was that he didn't have much of a sense of fun" (421) and points out that his comic-book story "Master Race", which tells the story of the commandant of a Nazi camp who escapes before the Russians arrive but is recognized by one of his victims years later, was a great success precisely because it was not comic, because it obeyed the rule that says that the Holocaust can only be approached in a serious and solemn way.

Max has been hired to write the story of his Orthodox friend Manny Washinsky, who murdered his parents by gassing them in their beds as they slept. Max knows that Manny wonders whether he is fit "as a man of comedy and exaggeration, to interpret his story" (Jacobson 2007: 267), but for Max there are only two sorts of Jews: "I mean Jews who see the funny side of things and those who don't" (421). Jewish authors like Krigstein or Mark Rothko belong to the second group, whereas Max is obviously a good representative of the first one: "but for me nothing was so dreadful that I couldn't see its essential drollery" (422). Jacobson believes that what Jews do best is make jokes —"No one makes jokes like Jews" (in "The Plot against England" 2010)— and Max argues that jokes play an important role in Jews' lives: "Jew, Jew, Jew. Joke, joke, joke. Why, why, why?" (Jacobson 2007: 8). Max knows that laughter has allowed Jewish people to transcend disappointment and suffering: "I was the fruit of Five Thousand Years of Bitterness which meant that I was heir to Five Thousand Years of Jokes" (47). Humour does not obviate sadness or eradicate pain, but makes these emotions more bearable. Thus, referring to Thurber, Max says: "What made Thurber hum*or*ous was desperation. Only I don't think the word for it is hum*or* exactly. It's not hum*or* when you're at the end of a rope. What makes Thurber funny is that you smell death in every sentence he wrote and despair in every line he drew" (57). In the same way that Max's atheist father and his orthodox uncle have ferocious arguments about Hitler and the extermination of the Jews "as a sort of magic, to ward off evil" (4), Max uses humour to help Jewish people bear their misfortunes: "[…] that too is what I'm paid for— excoriating my people when I'm not shielding them from harm" (95). Like his creator, Max believes in the survival value of laughter and this is why he is

sorry that his father has not understood the real meaning of the sexual fantasies portrayed in *Five Thousand Years of Bitterness*: "I wanted to protest that he hadn't taken adequate cognisance of their hard-ons/hards-on; that their hard-ons/hards-on, artistically speaking, stood for the virility of the Jewish people in the face of adversity" (205). It is highly revealing that when Max's uncle refers to Ilse Koch, one of the female Nazi torturers who was said to have made lampshades out of Jews' skin, Max feels that it is his duty to emphasise how ludicrous his mother's attempt to cope with this reality sounded: "'Oh, is she the one who made the lampshades?' my mother asked. It's the obvious joke, but she made it sound like an interior design query. And even if she hadn't, it's my obligation as a cartoonist to make out that she had" (118).

As we saw above, Jacobson believes that there is something particularly Jewish about the tendency to combine tragedy and comedy and has Max quote from Wittgenstein to prove his theory:

> You get tragedy where the tree, instead of bending,
> breaks. Tragedy is something un-Jewish.
> Ludwig Wittgenstein (Jacobson 2007: 121)

In fact Jacobson has acknowledged that he feels that he has a Jewish mind: "What a Jew is has been made by the experience of 5,000 years, that's what shapes the Jewish sense of humor, that's what shaped Jewish pugnacity or tenaciousness" (in Manus: 2004).[6] Jacobson has repeatedly reinforced his sense of Jewishness: "What if our genius *is* our history, what if the distortions of the shtetl and the ghetto and the margins *are* our nature now? I doubt that Israel is going to make a new Jew of us" (2001: 12).

Max also criticises those who believe that by laughing at their own contradictions Jews are betraying self-hatred and therefore would like to take "the bitter self-reflexive comedy out of the Jew" (Jacobson 2004). Like his creator, Max does not think that by removing all references to Jewishness a Jew is showing any kind of self-love (Jacobson 2001: 7). Jacobson's explicit criticism of those Jews who try to ignore their own ambiguities and peculiarities becomes clear in the following conversation when Errol Tobias accuses his friend Max of drawing cartoons that show little respect for Jews:

> "Well, why's that funny, Max? What's amusing about Jews always seeing themselves as being shat on? Isn't it time we outgrew that?"
>
> "Ah, so it's not my shitting on those poor old Jews that bothers you, it's my doing it for the entertainment of the Christians. The accusation is not *Masochismus* but *Nestbeschmutzing*. Well, as far as charging me with *nestbeschmutzing* is concerned, let me tell you that others have got there before you. There isn't a Jew living who isn't

> guilty, in the opinion of some other Jew, of fouling the nest. Unless you take a vow of silence or wire your jaw you're a *nestbechmutzer*. And if you do take a vow of silence or wire your jaw you're suffering from *Judische Selbsthass*. We either love ourselves too much or hate ourselves too much. To a Jew there is no acceptable way of being Jewish […]" (Jacobson 2007: 344)

In fact, Max argues that *Five Thousand Years of Bitterness* was a failure not only because it used the comic mode to evoke a history of suffering, but because it was published at a time when Jews did not want to be reminded of their painful past but celebrate their glorious present:

> I like to think the timing was unfortunate. Winter 1976 was when *Five Thousand Years of Bitterness* saw the light of day here and in America, the warm pro-Yiddler glow of the Entebbe Raid not yet faded. If you were Jewish you were proud again, just as you had been after the Six Day War in 1967, no longer finding your reflection in the furrowed brows of rabbis and philosophers, but in fighter pilots and one-eyed generals. So the last thing you wanted to be reminded of was five thousand years of loss and jeering. Jeer at a Jew post-1967 and you risked a strafing from the Israeli Air Force. Now, post-Entebbe, anyone stealing a Jew could expect to wake to see commandos in his garden. We took no shit. And people who take no shit don't have to go round making jokes about themselves. Jokes are the refuge of the *Untermenschen*. Hadn't that been one of the declared aims of Zionism— the creation of a people who would no longer value themselves only for the wit they brought to bear on their misfortunes? A people, maybe, who would never have to make a joke again. Least of all against themselves. […] We're a country, we're a nation again. We don't do funny and we don't do fucked. (Jacobson 2007: 167)[7]

Max reinforces the same idea when he tells Manny that "Israel's different. You don't laugh in Israel" (Jacobson 2007: 421). It is true that critics such as Landmann (1962) believe that with the rise of the Jewish state, humour as a weapon or a means of transcendence became obsolete, since they were not victims any longer. But what Jacobson is doing here is making fun of people like Chaim Weizmann who, as Jacobson argues, saw in Zionism the opportunity to make Jewish humour disappear: "Israel itself, in other words, came into being, as an idea, to put paid to that 'permanent witticism' which is the Cain's mark of a Jew's wandering, his having no country of his own to live in, and his having therefore set up home, ironically, in his own intelligence" (2004). Jacobson believes that humour is still a valuable talisman for Jewish people: "In an age of perilous certainties, we can't have too much wit or contradiction. I see the dangers inherent in endlessly rehearsing failures and casualties, but the 'permanent witticism' in which they are enshrined is a strategy for remembrance more than it is anything else, both an ironic saga of achievement and a methodology for survival" (2004).

4. Conclusion

Patricia Waugh has argued that metafiction plays with the form of the novel and examines the old rules "in order to discover new possibilities of the game" (1993: 42). In *Kalooki Nights* Jacobson with his characteristic metatextual humour undermines the literary conventions that shape comic discourse, showing that comedy is as serious as tragedy and therefore capable of dealing with the more profound themes without trivializing them. Jacobson draws attention to the fact that comedy can treat the Holocaust respectfully while at the same time offering a different perspective. By self-consciously reflecting on the nature of comedy Jacobson not only vindicates its subversive character, but reaffirms his unconditional faith in the redeeming power of laughter, which he believes derives from his sense of Jewishness. Max tells his friend Errol Tobias that he has not read *Did Six Million Really Die?*, which questions the Holocaust, because "I can tell there are no laughs in it" (Jacobson 2007: 345). By doing so Max is not only celebrating comedy, but validating Jacobson's thesis that the ingenious, joking Jew is the Jew in essence.

Notes

[1]. Nathan Ausubel (1967) was the first to use the expression "laughter through tears" to describe the mixture of comedy and tragedy we find in Jewish humour.

[2]. The idea that Jewish humour is self-derogatory was originated by Freud in an aside on the nature of Jewish jokes in *Jokes and Their Relation to the Unconscious:* "A particularly favourable occasion for tendentious jokes is presented when the intended rebellious criticism is directed against the subject himself, or, to put it more cautiously, against someone in whom the subject has a share— a collective person, that is (the subject's own nation, for instance). The occurrence of self-criticism as a determinant may explain how it is that a number of the most apt jokes […] have grown up on the soil of Jewish popular life. They are stories created by Jews and directed against Jewish characteristics […]. Incidentally, I do not know whether there are many other instances of a people making fun to such a degree of its own character" (1966: 156-157). Freud made this causal remark in the context of a general discussion concerning the nature of tendentious jokes. He believed that tendentious jokes fulfilled a liberating function since they allowed people to criticize individuals or institutions to whom they were hostile or by whom they were oppressed.

[3]. Ziv has argued that the reason why Jewish cartoonists were latecomers to the humour scene may have been because painting or drawing human images is prohibited by Jewish tradition (1988: 121).

[4]. As Langer has explained, although it is hard to believe that nowadays Steiner would not modify some of the ideas he explored in *Language and Silence,* it is undeniable that he contributed to bringing to light many of the dilemmas faced by the writers concerned with the Holocaust: "His conceptions are fruitful as formulations of the tensions that afflicted the artist despite the fact that they led Steiner himself to negative judgments on the possibility of an art of atrocity" (1975: 15).

[5]. Gilman disagrees with Des Pres. He believes that none of the comic representations of the Shoah are intended to evoke laughter: "It is clear, in spite of Des Pres's title, that no one ever actually laughed while reading Maus" (2000: 282). He affirms that only in the cinema has the comic seemed appropriate to deal with the Shoah.

[6]. The notion that there is a distinctive Jewish mind has been endorsed by other Jewish authors. Thus, for instance, Cynthia Ozick believes that what Jews have in common is not so much language as the content of a civilization. No matter what language the Jewish writers use, Jewish culture is mainly a metaphysical culture: "Jews have many languages but one mind. Or, to put it yet another way: it is possible for Jews to have two 'homes' one linguistic and the other metaphysical" (Stavans et al. 1999: 49).

[7]. Jacobson is absolutely right in his evaluation of the effect of the Six-Day war and the Entebbe Raid on Israeli people. As Ziv has explained, the euphoria generated by the great military victory reinforced Israeli self-confidence, which did not encourage the creation of humour (1988: 127-128).

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FORMS OF CAPITAL IN F. SCOTT FITZGERALD'S "WINTER DREAMS"

LAS FORMAS DEL CAPITAL EN "WINTER DREAMS", DE F. SCOTT FITZGERALD

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Abstract

This paper offers a reading of F. Scott Fitzgerald's "Winter Dreams" (1922) in the light of Pierre Bourdieu's theorization of forms of capital. Fitzgerald's story is centrally concerned with social class and addresses the rise of consumer culture in the 1920s. It is about a Midwest American trying to improve his economic and social status to win the hand of a wealthy girl he loves. At issue here are different types of capital (economic, social, cultural, symbolic), hence the relevance of Bourdieu. Thus, we explore in Fitzgerald's story the way characters are engaged in everyday practices as social agents competing with other social agents to accumulate 'capital'. In the process of socialization, the economic capital provides the protagonist with luxury but the lack or shortage of other forms of capital —especially cultural capital— cause him to fail in the pursuit of his heart's desire.

Keywords: F. Scott Fitzgerald, Pierre Bourdieu, social capital, cultural capital, symbolic capital.

Resumen

Este ensayo presenta una interpretación de "Winter Dreams" (1922) de F. Scott Fitzgerald basada en la teorización de las formas del capital de Pierre Bourdieu. La

historia de Fitzgerald se centra especialmente en la clase social y aborda el auge de la cultura consumista en los años 20 del siglo XX. Es la historia de un americano del medio oeste que trata de mejorar su estatus social y económico para conseguir casarse con la chica rica de la que está enamorado. Se aborda la importancia de los diferentes tipos de capital (económico, social, cultural y simbólico), de ahí la relevancia de las teorías de Bourdieu. A partir de esto, los autores trazamos en la historia de Fitzgerald la forma en que los personajes llevan a cabo prácticas cotidianas como agentes sociales que compiten con otros agentes sociales con el fin de acumular 'capital'. En el proceso de socialización, el capital económico proporciona lujos al proonista, pero la falta o escasez de otras formas de capital —principalmente, capital cultural— provoca el fracaso en su meta de conseguir sus deseos románticos.

Palabras clave: F. Scott Fitzgerald, Pierre Bourdieu, capital social, capital cultural, capital simbólico.

1. Introduction

Francis Scott Key Fitzgerald (1896-1940) "properly belongs with the American social realists and social historians, the line that extends from Wharton, Dreiser, Tarkington" (Bruccoli and Baughman 1996: 173). As Malcolm Cowley stated, he never lost a sense of living in history as if he "wrote in a room full of clocks and calendars" (2002: 85). His fiction provides some of the best insights into the lifestyle of the rich during one of America's most prosperous eras, one remembered by critics and readers as capturing the ambiance of the twenties. The financial and literary success of Fitzgerald's stories was limited, gradually they sold less and less and the *Saturday Evening Post* finally refused to publish them in 1937 (Meyers 1994: 80); hence, his short fiction, as Gerald Pike notes, "exhibits maturity of form and style, but it has received very little serious critical scrutiny" (1986: 315). In line with other late 19th-century realist writers, Fitzgerald attempted to portray various manners, classes, and stratifications of life in America combining a wide range of details derived from observation and documentation, to this end. Corina Grosu in "The Roaring Twenties and the Effects of Consumerism in Fitzgerald's Novels" believes that the characters portrayed by Fitzgerald have a tendency to see and value each other in terms of their materialistic possessions; thus, they consider people as objects that can be bought and sold (2012: 238). The central thematic concerns of Fitzgerald were of course those of his time and of his country and, as Reinsch notes, the Jazz Age, of which Fitzgerald is the best-known writer, was a time of economic prosperity, cultural and social changes (2012: 31). These issues figure clearly in "Winter Dreams" —a short story representative of the Roaring

Twenties— about class. "Virtually everything F. Scott Fitzgerald wrote contains an inherent consciousness of class struggle", observes Johnson (2008: 9). Exploring the worlds of the characters in Fitzgerald's fiction indicates that they are always pursuing the American dream of wealth and social status. What Fitzgerald, then, presents here could be fruitfully read through Pierre Bourdieu's sociological views on individual relations in terms of four forms of capital: economic, cultural, social, and symbolic. The present article attempts to read "Winter Dreams" in terms of these forms of capital. The Sociology of literature is an interdisciplinary area where two disciplines present a vast array of interrelated and interdependent fields: history, politics, society, manners, customs, culture, philosophy, and religion. At issue here is the interrelationship between social structures and text structures. Our reading of Fitzgerald's "Winter Dreams" based on Bourdieu's theorization of culture generally lies within this large interdisciplinary area of study.

Searching through the considerable body of criticism on this short story we see that what is mainly discussed is sociological concepts such as money, the American Dream and representation of women and stylistic issues. As examples of more sociologically-oriented studies, Wendy Perkins (2002) and Ronald Berman (2005) stand out among those critics who discuss Dexter's version of the American Dream and how it fails him. Similarly, Todd Fisher in "American Masters. F. Scott Fitzgerald: 'Winter Dreams'" (2002), looks into Fitzgerald's luxurious lifestyle as reflected in the story. "'Winter Dreams' and Summer Sports" (1982) by Neil Isaacs, likewise, discusses how such luxuries as golf depict Judy Jones' true value. Among studies focusing on the representation of women, mention could be made of "Tamed or Idealized: Judy Jones's Dilemma in 'Winter Dreams'" by Quentin Martin (2000), which explores contradictory ways in which men treat Judy Jones. Analogously, "Fitzgerald's Women: Beyond Winter Dreams" by McCay (1983) examines two kinds of women portrayed by Fitzgerald: 'useless women' (such as Judy Jones and Daisy Buchanan) and those depicted in later works who contrast with them (such as Kathleen and Cecilia). Clinton S. Burhans in "Magnificently Attuned to Life: The Value of 'Winter Dreams'" (1969) comments on Judy's inconsistencies and considers her behavior towards men. Similarly, Zhang and Cui in their article "A Feminist Reading of Fitzgerald's 'Winter Dreams'" (2014) argue that the story mirrors the disillusion of the American dream and the fact that even in the 1920s America women had to surrender to the doctrine of patriarchy. As for psychologically-oriented readings of the story, James Mellard's "Oedipus Against Narcissus: Father, Mother, and the Dialectic of Desire in Fitzgerald's 'Winter Dreams'" (2002) takes on board the Oedipal aspects of the story in connection with the hidden plot and the Family Romance. In "Four Voices in 'Winter Dreams'" Pike (1986) discusses the poetic language, its authorial voices, and the writer's method of showing Dexter's romance with Judy. Tim Randell's

'Metafiction and the Ideology of Modernism in Fitzgerald's "Winter Dreams"' (2012) reads the story as a metafiction deploying the Brechtian concept of the alienation effect, ten years before Brecht, and argues that it is one of modernist's greatest achievements incorporating dialectical metafiction. In light of these developments, the present contribution considers the applicability of Pierre Bourdieu's theories to F. Scott Fitzgerald's "Winter Dreams", a work which is "richly evocative, containing some of [his] best writing" (Prigozy 1989: 99). Bourdieu's work is empirical and grounded in everyday life and can be considered as cultural sociology or a theory of practice. Thus, we aim to look into the story from a specifically sociological perspective arguing that it uncannily puts on display the operation of different forms of capital.

2. Discussion

For Bourdieu, capital includes both material and symbolic resources leading to power and control in the social field. Agents strive to maximize their capital, since accumulation of capital provides them with various opportunities to define their 'social trajectory' (their life chances) which in turn leads to their success within a certain field. According to Bourdieu, capital takes four principal forms: economic, social, cultural, and symbolic capital (1986: 241). Economic capital embodies actual or potential finances of the agent which could include the primary form of money, assets and property rights and is considered the most fundamental type of capital (Moore 2008). Bourdieu places social capital in relational analysis with other forms of capital and with *field* (1986) which, in turn, provides an opportunity for a more functional and relational understanding of situations. The focus of social capital is that "relationships matter" and "social networks are a valuable asset" (Field 2008: 13-14); it can be defined as a set of opportunities and relations within groups and social networks that increases the agent's chances, information, material sources, and social status. The third capital is cultural capital, also referred to as 'cultural competence' or 'cultural knowledge' (how to dress, table manners, etc.) (Lareau and Weinniger 2003: 576, 578) demonstrating social actors' familiarity with the dominant culture in a society. According to Bourdieu, cultural capital bears three sub-forms: embodied, objectified, and institutionalized. The embodied cultural capital is analogous to *habitus* because it represents dispositions that are carried by social actors. Accordingly, "the very attitudes, beliefs, and dispositions that become embodied cannot be transmitted instantaneously; they come with time, engagement, practice and want" (Hampton-Garland 2009: 43). Contrary to the embodied state of capital is the objectified state —existing outside the agent's mind and body, embodying physical objects, such as works of art—

which symbolically convey the agent's status. Finally, there is symbolic capital, which is the institutionalized state of capital whereby agents are measured, certified, and ranked (Bourdieu 1986: 243). Like the embodied form, it cannot be transmitted and is acquired only under certain conditions.

Symbolic capital is an ideological form interrelating the three fundamental forms of capital. As Bourdieu illustrates, these fundamental powers are economic capital (in its different forms), cultural capital, social capital and symbolic capital, which is the form that the various species of capital assume when they are perceived and recognized as legitimate (1990: 28). Symbolic capital is a perception that bears no meaning by itself; it becomes meaningful when it is recognized by others and acts as a "magical power" (Bourdieu 1998: 102). In its symbolic form, it enables the agent to define and influence the reproduction of certain values.

Another key term here is the concept of field which is a social class-based hierarchy where due to "a sense of placement" or a "game sense", the agents compete for the most symbolic and economic capital (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992: 97). Every field embodies a set of common assumptions taken for granted by the actors and the agents within that field who are encouraged to invest their different forms of capital to acquire symbolic capital (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992: 98). Through the concept of field, one can explain the behavior of the agents in a certain market, for it explores a network of objective relations between positions. The relation between field and types of capital is illustrated by Richard Jenkins in the following passage:

> A field, therefore, is a structured system of social positions —occupied either by individuals or institutions— the nature of which defines the situation for their occupants. It is also a system of forces which exist between these positions; a field is structured internally in terms of power relations. Positions stand in relationships of domination, subordination or equivalence (homology) to each other by virtue of the access they afford to the goods or resources (capital) which are at stake in the field. These goods can be principally differentiated into four categories: economic capital, social capital (various kinds of valued relations with significant others), cultural capital (primarily legitimate knowledge of one kind or another) and symbolic capital (prestige and social honor). (1992: 53)

According to Kirk Curnutt, "entrepreneurial young men discover that, despite a talent for mimicking the fashions and leisure of the wealthy, they are not accepted by that class but can only achieve instead what Thorstein Veblen in *The Theory of the Leisure Class* (1898) calls 'pecuniary emulation'" (2004: 99). Bourdieu's theories go beyond Veblen by considering the economic as well as three other forms of capital to examine what and why agents do engage in certain practices (subjective) in their social structures such as field, institutions, discourses, and ideologies they inhabit (objective), shedding light on both the subjective and the objective.

2.1. Field of "Winter Dreams"

The plot of "Winter Dreams", published in Fitzgerald's collection of short stories *All the Sad Young Men* (1926), at the beginning of the Roaring Twenties, revolves around Dexter Green, a young American man from the mid-west, who meets and falls in love with Judy Jones, a girl who belongs to the glittering world of the upper-class. Dexter fails to enter Judy's world of East Coast high society despite his toils. As this story was based on Fitzgerald's idea for *The Great Gatsby*, which also portrays social class through romance, our Bourdieusian analysis also refers to the novel.

To read the story in the light of Bourdieu's view of society we have to take into account the different positions of characters in the social arena and the way they strive to acquire capital of different kinds. Firstly, as Bourdieu suggests, mapping out the field is essential as this allows one to identify various positions for individuals in the field (Bourdieu 1984: 87). Accordingly, the setting or the social space presented in the novel should be identified which then permits observation of how people are classified in terms of those who succeed and those who lose the 'game'. Subsequent to identifying the field, the characters' different positions in addition to the form(s) of capital they possess and strategies used are considered. By locating the field of competition and specifying the kinds of capital the agents strive to acquire one can delve into the field in terms of positions and 'dispositions' of the agents. This way, ideologies defining 'success' and the amount of capital required could be explored.

In "Winter Dreams", the field (the social space where the competition takes place) is East Coast high society, Sherry Island. As Bourdieusian social space bears social status: the characters classify and make judgments about each other based on the social space they identify with (the social background they come from and/or the social space they are affiliated to/belong to or aspire to belong to). Hence, the geographical and social barriers that divide the Black Bear Village (where Dexter is from) from the Sherry Island (where Judy comes from) represent two diverse sets of values: the culture of the dominant/established (the old money) and the marginal but rising (the new money). At issue here is not a distinction of good and bad within the two cultures but the concept of change. Is change possible? Can a character alter his status in the social space? East Coast high society —where the game is played— is a social space which has its external boundaries and internal divisions in which each player is supposed to be aware of his/her position, and also of their position in relation to other players whose positions are predetermined within the field. Dexter and Judy must know the rules of the game and this knowledge is particularly vital to new players such as Dexter and Gatsby, in *The Great Gatsby*, who have to compete with all the high society men and the secret circle in the subfield of courtship to win Judy's and Daisy's hands respectively. In

The Great Gatsby, Fitzgerald distinguishes a two-fold division: West Egg, 'new money', and the East Egg, 'old money', as two luxurious neighborhoods mandating different codes of behavior and values. This division illustrates the geographical and social barriers representing two diverse sets of values: the culture of the dominant and that of the dominated.

2.2. Dexter's and Judy's Habitus and Symbolic Capital

Another concept to consider in our Bourdieusian analysis is *habitus*, that is, "a socially constituted cognitive capacity" (Bourdieu 1986: 255). As the social structures embodied in the agent, habitus is central to the agent's pursuit of symbolic capital —the ultimate form of capital— and the practices the individual engages in to accumulate this kind of capital. It is thus both a structured form and a structuring drive for the agent; the conditions and the society structure habitus, and in turn it structures the practices of the individual. As Pine explains, an agent's manners and strategies designed to accumulate any form of capital, specifically symbolic capital, are structured by their habitus, "symbolic capital is the intrinsic knowledge of how and when to employ manners in order to achieve social distinction by demonstrating superior taste, and those manners and tastes themselves are embodied in habitus" (2008: 27). The success of the characters in Fitzgerald's story depends on following the rules of the East Coast society; Dexter is aware of the differences of social status between Judy and himself. He does not approach her and only observes her from a distance; initially, he tries to be noticed and categorized as just a caddy and later, he thinks that the best measure is to quit being a caddy. "Suddenly, involuntarily, he laughed, a short abrupt laugh— then, startled by himself, he turned and began to walk quickly away" (Fitzgerald 1926: 166). The gap goes beyond economic aspects since Judy belongs to a class with certain codes of conduct distinguishing her from new money. These dos and don'ts embodied in habitus are related to different forms of capital possessed by agents. As Green, Neubert and Kersten put it, "Economic and cultural capitals are crucial conditions for the realization of social capital, that is, the network of relations and liabilities that inform the *habitus*" (2011: 172). There is also the more mysterious form of capital, that is, symbolic capital, "a form of power that is not perceived as power but as legitimate demands (or recognition, deference, obedience, or the services of others)" (Swartz 1997: 90). Dexter, then, has a more daunting ordeal to face than that of getting rich.

2.3. Dexter's Economic and Cultural Capital

Another key term to be considered in our analysis of Fitzgerald's story is the concept of capital and its subdivisions. As for economic capital, there are many references to money in the story, even love is measured in terms of money. Dexter's

father owns "the second best grocery-store in town" (Fitzgerald 1926: 156) but Dexter still has to work for his pocket money. His career on the golf course as caddy makes him, as a boy with no inherited privileges, realize that the sparcity of his economic resources means disempowerment and that his social status will be altered if he becomes one of the golfers on the green. If he earns enough money, he thinks or fantasizes, he will be transformed from a caddy to a golfer that can win Judy, an Old Money woman, and the daughter of an upper-class businessman, Mortimer Jones, who has inherited her wealth through a long line of ancestors. Once Judy asks Dexter "Are you poor?" and he assures her that he is "probably making more money than many [his] age in the Northwest" (200). Money is an important issue to Judy as she cannot imagine marrying a man without a fortune. (It is only when she becomes certain that Dexter is not poor that she kisses him.) Dexter thrives in his business and before he is twenty-seven he manages to own the largest string of laundries in the Midwest thinking that now he is about to realize his dream of joining the club, of becoming a member of high society.

Although Dexter's first concern is the accumulation of economic capital, he understands that to be a part of the exclusive world inhabited by Judy, to be in the circle of the upper-class, and to be socially fit, he needs more than money: he needs to acquire cultural capital. Bourdieu emphasizes that possessions may be material and/or symbolic, hence the two main forms of capital: economic and cultural. As Nick Crossley explains,

> Every individual, on Bourdieu's account, has a portfolio of capital, they have a particular amount or volume of capital, and their capital has a particular composition. Among the rich, for example, we find those whose wealth is weighted in the direction of economic capital and others whose wealth is weighted towards cultural capital (in practice Bourdieu's mapping of social space tends to focus upon these two forms of capital alone). (2008: 87)

Bourdieu further divides cultural capital into three: embodied, objectified, and institutionalized cultural capital. He holds that cultural practices are largely dependent on the agent's educational credentials, and social background (1984: 5). As Rob Moore illustrates:

> In one form, capital is objectified. It is materially represented in things such as art works, galleries, museums, laboratories, scientific instruments, books, etc.— artefacts of various kinds. In another form, capital is embodied. Here, the principle of a field is incorporated within the corporality of the person as principles of consciousness in predispositions and propensities and in physical features such as body language, stances, intonation and lifestyle choices. Between these two is a third expression of capital in the form of habitus. Unlike objectified and embodied capital, habitus does not have a material existence in itself in the world since it includes attitudes and dispositions. (2008: 105)

Moore continues that "these forms of capital should be seen as being, in an important sense, continuous with each other, as 'moments' of one thing rather than three different varieties of the thing". Thus, prime instances of *objectified* cultural capital are "galleries, museums, libraries, concerts, etc"; for cultural capital as expressed in *habitus* (dispositions and attitudes) we have "knowledge of the canon, discrimination of genres and periods, the rules of the game", and for *embodied* cultural capital we have "cultivated gaze, poise, taste, desire for the recognition of distinction" (2008: 105-106).

The embodied form of Dexter's cultural capital is easily understood once his humble background is revealed: his money is not inherited but acquired through hard work making him a nouveau riche or New Money. And this of course affects his manners, the way he conducts himself in society —note especially his poise in the company of those belonging to higher classes— as well as his taste and his penchant for recognition. In contrast, Judy hales from a well-to-do, established family. Her "cultivated gaze" and "poise" are emphasized throughout the story to signify her being born into high society, the manners, gestures and subtle ways of the rich —the high and mighty— are second nature to her. However, Dexter has a hard time trying to maintain the right poise and tone in the company of high society. Although he is not "poor as sin", he is not one of "the wealthy people from Sherry Island" either (Fitzgerald 1926: 156). His is a humble background: "His mother's name had been Krimslich. She was a Bohemian of the peasant class and she had talked broken English to the end of her days. Her son must keep to the set patterns" (194). Dexter feels embarrassed about his mother's background, his father's job, and his own job; he moves to the East Coast mostly to leave behind his low social origins, to fashion a new identity for himself. He knows what he is and what patterns of behavior he must stick to. Here family and origins are highlighted as Dexter tries to leave his humble origins behind. For instance, he lies about his background and introduces himself as someone from Keeble. Similarly he "did not consider it necessary to remark that he had once carried Mr. Hart's bag over these same links. [...] he found himself glancing at the four caddies [...] trying to catch a gleam or gesture that would remind him of himself, that would lessen the gap which lay between his present and his past" (177). This shows how desperate he is to remake his identity as one belonging to the rich, hence his constant imitation of the cultivated manners and poise of the rich. Arguably, Judy is able to captivate many men not just because she is rich and beautiful but also because she is well endowed with embodied cultural capital. For instance, her "cultivated gaze" is emphasized by which she seems to mesmerize men. Dexter describes her "slender lips, down turning, dropping to his lips like poppy petals, bearing him up into a heaven of eyes [...] The thing was deep in him" (218). To him she is a goddess.

This type of cultural capital can be traced in *The Great Gatsby* too. Upon Gatsby's death, his father shows Nick a novel on which he had written his schedule and list of resolutions such as "read one improving book or magazine per week" in an attempt to accumulate embodied cultural capital. Gatsby thinks that by altering his habitus a sense of membership within his desired field becomes attainable as his actions, perceptions, and thoughts would assimilate to those of the class above him. Although he brings all his resources into the social space, he fails for not having the adequate capital which in this case is embodied cultural capital. He does not realize that cultural alignments learned during childhood are unconscious, taken for granted, hard to change, and powerful in shaping responses to later experiences. Unlike external wealth, embodied state is converted into an integral part of character, into a habitus, and cannot be transmitted instantaneously by gift or bequest, purchase or exchange. Thus, Gatsby cannot compete with Tom in winning Daisy's hand as he does not have the right knowledge of 'legitimate' — high culture— acquired through time.

Taste as a subcategory of cultural capital is the most relevant concept to be discussed here as it is central in marking out distinctions in the social space. The agent acquires taste in the early family setting; it signifies how one has been raised, the privileges and deprivations of one's life, showing people around you who you are and what you are made of by wearing certain brands, attending certain places and entertainments such as opera, preferring certain foods, works of art, etc. or generally interests which are played out in terms of attitudes and "cultural consumption" (Bourdieu 1984: 6-7). In short, in Bourdieu's formulation, taste is a social marker: "Taste classifies, and it classifies the classifier. Social subjects, classified by their classifications, distinguish themselves by the distinctions they make, between the beautiful and the ugly, the distinguished and the vulgar, in which their position in the objective classifications is expressed or betrayed" (1984: 6).

Contrary to economic capital, which controls the actors' relations in terms of production, cultural capital controls the individuals' relations with consumption. Golfing, dinner parties, boating expeditions, extravagant cars and clothes embody the lifestyle of the upper-class. One's social class, then, is not merely a matter of financial status; manners, taste, and lifestyle figure too. Dexter knows that Judy's suitors are "the men who when he first went to college had entered from great prep schools" and are distinguished "with graceful clothes and the deep tan of healthy summers" (Fitzgerald 1926: 192). He has to compete for Judy with the sons of the well-established families and "wish[es] his children to be like them" (192). His manners, taste, and lifestyle, especially early on in his relationship with Judy, do not fit the upper-class circle. Judy is a girl who "simply made men conscious to the highest degree of her physical loveliness" (202). When she asks

Dexter "Who are you, anyhow?" (199), she actually means to inquire about his taste and lifestyle. Dexter has to learn about how to dress, etiquette, and all the codes of the Old Money, things that are to mark him out as one of *them*. Judy's luxurious lifestyle indicates what living in the upper class would be like for Dexter. Once Judy is out to dinner with Dexter, he waits for her to come downstairs, trying to observe the appropriate upper class etiquette. He is dressed perfectly for this date with Judy: "He had acquired that particular reserve peculiar to his university […]. He recognized the value to him of such a mannerism and he had adopted it; he knew that to be careless in dress and manner required more confidence than to be careful" (193). Dexter's objective is to win Judy's hand and this presupposes the lifestyle of the upper classes. The problem, however, is that Dexter is not brought up in the same context as Judy; he has not internalized the codes. The nonchalance of the upper classes is hard, if not impossible, to imitate. Judy has dressed informally, which may signify the triviality of the occasion to her. Judy's upbringing sharply contrasts with Dexter's and operating here is taste as the marker of social class, a way of ensuring social recognition and status. To Bourdieu tastes and aesthetic preferences create various life-styles; hence, consumption is not only a response to needs but is related to the workings of symbols, signs, and distinctions. To win the affections of Old Money, Dexter has to win Judy's heart and hand by internalizing the codes. He tries to reconstruct his identity in order to be considered comparable to "rich men's sons" who "were peddling bonds precariously, or investing patrimonies precariously, or plodding through the two dozen volumes of the 'George Washington Commercial Course'" (174). Just as people vary in economic capital, they are different in matters of taste and preference. Dexter eventually becomes rich and joins "two clubs in the city and lived at one of them […] He could have gone out socially as much as he liked— he was an eligible young man, now, and popular with the down-town fathers" yet he "despised the dancing men who were always on tap for Thursday or Saturday parties and who filled in at dinners with the younger married set" (210). Comparably, in Gatsby's case it is cultural capital —in all its forms— rather than economic capital which constitutes a significant aspect of social life and of consumption of distinctive goods in particular. He is introduced as having a luxurious and flashy lifestyle; his house is modelled on a typically European style like a Hôtel de Ville from Normandy "with a tower on one side, spanking new under a thin beard of raw ivy, and a marble swimming pool and more than forty acres of lawn and garden" (Fitzgerald 1993: 5). Gatsby's flashily imposing mansion is that of a newly rich man who has gone to extremes to flaunt his financial status. In sharp contrast to Gatsby's mansion is the Buchanans' house, portrayed as classical in style, reminiscent of governmental buildings, reflecting order and balance. Although Gatsby's venture into luxury is supposed to reflect East Eggers' social codes, it fails

him because taste is a matter of habitus. Gatsby has never been exposed to such living before coming to money, hence his display of taste and manners is artificial. His parties signify not only his economic capital but also the amount of cultural capital he possesses by displaying his taste in colors, clothing, drinks and food, dance and music. His parties are flamboyant in contrast to the Buchanans' well-ordered and controlled dinners. No matter how magnificent Gatsby's house or fabulous the parties, he is simply not a member of the upper class.

As for objectified cultural capital, there are not many references to places associated with art (galleries, museums, etc.) but references to parties, dance and music abound. Seeing Judy at a dance club, after becoming eligible as a successful young businessman, Dexter ruminates about his cultural capital: "He sat for an hour with Irene Scheerer and talked about books and about music. He knew very little about either. […] [H]e had a rather priggish notion that he —the young and already fabulously successful Dexter Green— should know more about such things" (Fitzgerald 1926: 215). The fact that he knows that he should know "more about such things" indicates that Dexter knows that his overall capital is mostly composed of economic capital. Similarly, the only objectified cultural capital owned by Gatsby is his library and uncut books "imply[ing] that their consumers apply distinctive practices, and so, serve as surrogate representations of these practices" (Holt 1997: 102). Having such a grand library but lacking the means of 'consuming' its books suggests Gatsby's effort to draw attention to the different material manifestations of his assumed class status. He must therefore have found ways of appropriating the embodied capital as the assumption of consuming and appropriating such embodied cultural capital bestows distinction since it embodies scarcity value.

The institutionalized state of cultural capital —knowledge or skill earned by official or academic documents— is exemplified by Dexter's insisting on passing up "a business course at the State university —his father, prospering now, would have paid his way— for the precarious advantage of attending an older more famous university in the East" (Fitzgerald 1926: 172). Dexter chooses a prestigious Eastern college over a state school (easier to afford) to achieve more distinction. After college, he borrows a thousand dollars on his college degree and buys a partnership in a laundry, which soon grows to be the largest chain in the northeast. This way, his academic degree leads to promotion in economic and social status. Earning such kind of cultural capital becomes crucial to Gatsby too. Despite all his money, he still feels the need to pretend to be an Oxford graduate in order to be accepted as an equal in the eyes of the Buchanans. As Bourdieu reminds us, the children of the elite are best-equipped to accumulate the spoils of education.

2.4. Dexter's Social Bond

In terms of social capital, Dexter becomes financially successful and is soon socializing with upper-class society, including T.A. Hedrick and Mr. Hart, who once had Dexter as their caddy. He makes money and the right contacts; however, we are told, "he had no social aspirations" and had no interest in associating with upper class people, with the exception of Judy (Fitzgerald 1926: 184). Essential to social capital is that "relationships matter", that "social networks are a valuable asset" (Field 2008: 2-3). After Dexter becomes financially successful, he plays golf with the very men for whom he used to caddy. Though he seems to be forming a social bond with them, he remains an outsider. Likewise, Gatsby's parties are supposed to provide the social capital in a network of partygoers. Gatsby tries to accumulate social capital by having valued relationships with the East Egg community. As for Gatsby's acquaintance with Nick, Nick does not trust Gatsby at first but later he evaluates him as being far "better" than the people of the West Egg. When Nick tells Gatsby "You're worth the whole damn bunch put together" (Fitzgerald 1993: 98), he, ironically, means that Gatsby "turned out all right at the end" (4) precisely because he failed to became a member of the community he aspired to join.

What is important in accumulating social capital is how people establish relationships but Dexter is "at bottom hard-minded […] completely indifferent to popular opinion […]. He did not possess in himself the power to move fundamentally or to hold Judy Jones" (Fitzgerald 1926: 234). Bourdieu quotes Pascal on the benefit of being born into a noble family: "at the age of 18 it places a man within a select circle, known and respected, as another would have merited it at 50. It is to gain 30 years without trouble" (Bourdieu and Emanuel 1996: 373). This seems very relevant to Dexter's case. He is not from a noble family and he has not won Judy's hand in marriage. He works for the rich and he seems to be more concerned with amassing wealth than just associating with the wealthy. Thus, he does not establish strong bonds with the rich and this means that he does not possess an adequate social capital.

We are told that Dexter does not seek "association with glittering things and glittering people— he wanted the glittering things themselves" (Fitzgerald 1926: 173), that is, his accumulation of wealth is not just a matter of material things. As Cowley puts it, "the real dream was that of achieving a new status and a new essence" to ascend in the "hierarchy of human worth" (2002: 89). At issue here is symbolic capital, the ultimate form of capital. Dexter covets a life of wealth and affluence, certainly, but what he really longs for is the assumed effects of this mode of life: attention, status, admiration and of course Judy who symbolizes the things he desires. He rises from being a caddy to a businessman but joining high society is

a complex process. For Bourdieu, power and dominance in social space is not limited to economic resources but is also a matter of cultural and social factors. Since "the value of any form of capital depends, in part, upon social recognition", it can be gathered that the values of different forms of capital depend on how important they are considered to be by individuals (Crossley 2008: 88). It would seem then that social recognition is dependent on the willingness of a series of individuals to place value on the social factors that are under discussion. Dexter believes that if Mr. Jones was "among those who watched him in open-mouthed wonder", he would be a proven member of the upper class (Fitzgerald 1926: 160) since its members are the ones who can bestow upon him the ultimate capital, symbolic capital. What Dexter and Gatsby cannot change are their backgrounds, where they come from. Dexter and Gatsby see marrying Judy and Daisy as acquiring symbolic capital. However, Dexter finds himself just "one of a varying dozen" of men "who circulate about her" (204). "Each of them", he realizes, "had at one time been favored above all others —about half of them still based in the solace of occasional sentimental revivals" (204). In Mr. Mortimer Jones' words, Dexter has "Never lost a ball! Willing! Intelligent! Quiet! Honest! Grateful!" (162). The key word here is that he is grateful; Mr. Jones believes that Dexter should be grateful for having the opportunity to caddy on the golf course. When Mr. Hart, nine years later, invites Dexter to the Sherry Island Golf Club to play, the rich see him as a successful businessman and condescendingly say "Now *there's* a boy" (174, emphasis in original). He has gained some recognition but is not yet given the pass to their circle. In other words, he does not yet possess the symbolic capital that comes with wealth. Even Judy repeatedly calls Dexter "Boy" instead of mentioning his name (166). Finally, Judy marries Lud Simms, a rich man, and even though he mistreats her —"drinks and runs around"— she "[s]tays home and takes care of her kids" (239). Although they do not have a happy marriage yet there are things that tie them together. It is evident that Judy and Lud's bond goes beyond mere wealth as they share the same origin and background. They seek to preserve their class and social order based on family and Old Money. Dexter's quest for a high position among the upper-class fails since he has not inherited his money. Judy is assertive with Dexter but when she marries a man of her own class she becomes submissive and stops "run[ning] around" on men (239).

2.5. Judy and Symbolic Capital

For Bourdieu, symbolic capital acts as a field of power because it leads to other agents paying attention to its possessor. However, using symbolic power against another implies symbolic violence. This is how individuals impose a specific meaning as legitimate while concealing the relations of power at its source (Bourdieu and Passeron 1990: 7-8). An instance of this in the story is Dexter

being ordered about, at times insultingly, on the golf course— "Go pick up the young lady's clubs […] What you standing there like a dummy for?" (Fitzgerald 1926: 170). Symbolic violence can further be traced in Judy's mistreatment of others. For instance, she persuades Dexter to cancel his engagement with Irene and Dexter accepts it. Even when Judy breaks her promise after a month Dexter does not "bear any malice toward her" (188), allowing her to treat him like that because he feels inferior to her. Judy ruins things or does damage and expects others to clean up the mess for her. Like Dexter, others easily allow themselves to be manipulated by her. Thus, symbolic capital can be considered as a weapon in a competition because this violence is not merely a matter of boasting about symbols, it is also about the need to maintain and nourish one's status. In other words, the agent tries not only to sustain whatever power he has won but to increase it where possible. Since it is not physical it can be expressed in many ways; in accordance with the function of this power, social control is produced symbolically and indirectly (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992: 174).

It is evident that matters of appearance, taste, and manners are integral components of the cultural, social and symbolic capital possessed by the elite —a sort of mysterious community— as they maintain their supremacy through symbolic power and social order. In *The Great Gatsby*, both Daisy and Tom have a secure network of people as demonstrated by their ability to "[retreat] back into their money" and "their vast carelessness", "[letting] other people clean up the mess", an advantage given to them for being "old money" (Fitzgerald 1993: 114). This is evidenced in Tom's treatment of Gatsby. He is perceived as a threat to their social order and they exert symbolic power over him through their comments and judgements. Tom alludes to the consequences of intermarriage between people from varied racial and socioeconomic classes, from an article he had read about the desterilization of civilization:

> The idea is if we don't look out the white race will be— will be utterly submerged. It's all scientific stuff; it's been proved […]. This fellow has worked out the whole thing. It's up to us, who are the dominant race, to watch out or these other races will have control of things. "We've got to beat them down", whispered Daisy, winking ferociously towards the fervent sun. (10)

Tom is practically voicing concerns about the menace to the hierarchy of distinctions by such (mis)alliances. Interestingly, Tom rejects Gatsby's attempt at joining the privileged class in racial terms. Gatsby would be 'Black' and Tom 'White' representing 'New Money' and 'Old Money' respectively. Tom does not like the idea of Gatsby climbing the social order through bootlegging as this flouts the rules of the East Eggers. Social and economic change is feared by this secret society. Concerned about Gatsby's economic position, Tom refers to him as "Mr. Nobody from Nowhere" (Fitzgerald 1993: 138). Gatsby's nouveau riche ways are mocked,

for they are not the ways of the secret society of which Tom is a member by birth. This is how the dominant group excludes individuals who are deemed a threat to order. All they do is tolerate Gatsby but as soon as he loses control over his manners they turn their backs on him. Dexter, however, remains an outsider to this elite society partly because he does not seem to be that passionate about joining it. He seems to be somehow having gone half-way on his journey to join it.

3. Conclusion

If "Winter Dreams" is a success story, it is also a story of failure. Drawing on the perennial American dream motif, it delves into the complexity of privilege. It is the story of an American boy of humble origins who works hard to reinvent his identity to win the hand of a girl who represents the East Coast high society. To be admitted into this society, he first increases the volume of his economic capital; then accumulates cultural and social capitals in order for the girl and her father to bestow upon him the symbolic capital he yearns for. He successfully makes his way through the business world and endeavors to acquire the required cultural capital through education. What he cannot alter though is his humble background. He fails in the field of courtship in which the rivalry is between him (a nouveau riche) and the more eligible suitors because he can never acquire the desired symbolic capital; this ultimate type of capital is given rather than accumulated by individuals. Despite his triumphal appearance in the world of the wealthy and influential elite, his beloved, a high society girl, does not seem able, or does not wish to close her eyes to his humble origins. His dream thus can only be a barren one, an instance of winter dreams. Similarly, in the novelized version of the story, Gatsby "does not know how to conform to the class to which Daisy belongs and to this class he seems ridiculous" (Chase 1957: 166). Marrying Daisy would bestow upon him an "image which might mask the deficiencies of his origins" (Goldsmith 2003: 447) which is more effective than his mansion, car, and grand parties; that is why he sees her as his "grail" (Fitzgerald 1993: 95). This does not happen of course because privilege has its codes and protocols according to which Gatsby cannot possibly qualify.

"Winter Dreams" is a typical Fitzgerald story in its depiction of success and its emotional and psychic cost. It is the story of an American boy who once "could not afford the luxury of proms, and he had stood *outside* the gymnasium and listened" (Fitzgerald 1926: 185, emphasis added). Described by Fitzgerald as "A sort of first draft of the Gatsby idea" (Bruccoli and Baughman 1995: 121), it is —like the famous novel— the story of an outsider who works hard to become an insider. Reading it through Bourdieu's theorization of capital helps unpack the complexity of what is at stake in such an enterprise.

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LO PLAUSIBLE: SIMILITUDES Y DIFERENCIAS ENTRE LA MALINCHE Y POCAHONTAS

PLAUSIBILITY: SIMILARITIES AND DIFFERENCES BETWEEN LA MALINCHE AND POCAHONTAS

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Resumen

Los mitos desarrollados a lo largo de varios siglos a partir de los personajes históricos de la Malinche y Pocahontas han tenido en ciertos aspectos un desarrollo dispar, que es un reflejo de las políticas coloniales de los imperios español y británico, así como de las diferentes posturas postcoloniales que surgen en los Estados Unidos y en México tras su independencia. Este artículo analiza las similitudes existentes entre estos dos *personajes* históricos y trata de explicar la divergencia que se produce en el desarrollo de sucesivas narrativas tanto "históricas" como ficticias de las que son el eje central. De dicho análisis se concluye que los extremos norte y sur de la frontera norteamericana elaboran un discurso diferente a partir de realidades históricas plausibles en cuya base se encuentran las señas de identidad de las naciones mexicana y estadounidense.

Palabras clave: historiografía, convención narrativa, Malinche, Pocahontas, plausibilidad.

Abstract

The myths developed over several centuries on the historical figures of the Malinche and Pocahontas have had different developments that reflect the colonial

policies of the Spanish and British empires, as well as the distinctive postcolonial positions that arise in the United States and Mexico after their independence. I intend to question the apparent similarities existing between these two historical figures and try to explain the divergence that occurs in the development of successive narratives (both historical and fictional) of which they are the central axis. I conclude that the North and South sides of the North American border elaborate different discourses based on plausible historical realities that were developed by, and would develop the signs of Mexican and American national identities.

Keywords: historiography, narrative convention, Malinche, Pocahontas, plausibility.

1. Introducción. Coincidencias plausibles

Cierto es que mucho se ha narrado desde principios de los siglos XVI y XVII sobre las que se conocen comúnmente como la Malinche y Pocahontas. Pocos, sin embargo, han notado que ya se las narraba desde mucho antes, aunque será en el relato que Hernán Cortés haga de su conquista territorial (Valdeón 2011: 213) o en las cartas de Rolfe solicitando permiso en 1613 para contraer matrimonio (en Stymeist 2002: 113-114), cuando se las llame con los nombres que se indican arriba. En el caso de la Malinche, la progresión cronológica podría ser desde *ce malinalli*, lo que según Maurice Collins significaría "guerra y derrocamiento del orden establecido" en el *náhuatl* original (1954: 43),[1] o con el sufijo indicativo de nobleza *-tzin* añadido "Malintzín" (Grillo 2011: 16). Cortés se referiría a ella como "la lengua" en alusión a su labor de intérprete (Kirtley y Kirtley 2012: 50), pero Francisco López de Gómara y Bernal Díaz del Castillo, así como otros cronistas oficiales de la época, la llamarían "Doña Marina" (Grillo 2011: 18). En la búsqueda de una identidad mexicana por oposición a la española durante el periodo postcolonial se la rebautizaría como Malinche; Octavio Paz la identificaría con "la Chingada" en su psicoanálisis nacional de 1950 (Paz 2000), y las chicanas del lado norte de la frontera empezarían a rescatarla como figura positiva en relación con el discurso feminista de los años setenta en el siglo XX (Pratt 1993: 860). Pocahontas fue originariamente la powhatan Matoaka, apodada Pocahontas en referencia a su lascivia, bautizada en su conversión al anglicanismo como Rebecca Rolfe, mitificada Pocahontas como emblema de la identidad norteamericana (Downs 2008: 400) y finalmente proyectada al mundo infantil como Barbie mestiza (Ono y Buescher 2001: 32).

A pesar de las múltiples versiones que se proponen de ambas historias y que revisaré a continuación, la crítica actual coincide en un dato fundamental: nada de lo que se sabe de ellas proviene de ellas mismas. Ambas son "lenguas" silenciadas por el

discurso de otros, ya sean conquistadores o colonos, indígenas o mestizos, contemporáneos o posteriores, que han contado sus vidas. En relación con la Malinche, Roberto Valdeón llega a describir muy acertadamente el proceso de su creación y evolución como "invención de una narrativa" (2011: 211), aunque, en mi opinión, yerra de pleno al presuponer la existencia de esas figuras históricas como factuales, muy probablemente por desconocimiento de la historiografía en sí como disciplina, o quizás por prejuicio eurocéntrico; idea que también discutiré más adelante.

Los paralelismos existentes entre los dos personajes —americanos por consenso en su atribución y europeos por consenso en su generación— ya han sido explorados extensamente con anterioridad por Kristina Downs (2008: 397), quien destaca similitudes tan obvias como imprecisas tales como su cultura de nacimiento (indígena, sin ahondar en diferencias insignificantes) y su papel de mediadoras con lo que llama la "cultura europea" (a la sazón dividida entre dos naciones enemigas irreconciliables en el siglo XVII). Downs destaca la similitud en su edad adolescente, su maternidad mestiza, su muerte a temprana edad y sus historias "sorprendentemente similares" (2008: 397), a la vez que resalta la disparidad de su papel cultural a uno y otro lado de la frontera. En este artículo defenderé la idea contraria a esta aparente similitud en la evolución de sus historias, así como a la disparidad que hay en su evolución en cuanto arquetipos culturales que han resultado de adaptaciones narrativas a los discursos literarios, políticos, religiosos, económicos y sociales y la relación que tienen dichas adaptaciones con la admisibilidad, más que con la verosimilitud, en los discursos mencionados. Por último, contribuiré al desarrollo de dichas adaptaciones con una versión que quiero presentar como plausible dentro de la reconstrucción del contexto discursivo pre-eurocéntrico.

2. Principios y narrativas plausibles

Empezaré describiendo lo que podría haber sido el principio: Cortés llega al Golfo de México en agosto de 1519. Para quien entonces era *ce malinalli*, la vida habría empezado, según las fuentes de las que ahora se dispone, diecisiete años antes como hija de un cacique de la región (Kirtley y Kirtley 2012: 123; Valdeón 2013: 163). Según Díaz del Castillo, su madre la daría como esclava tras la muerte de su padre y su posterior matrimonio con un segundo esposo, del que engendró un hijo varón a quien querrían ceder el cacicazgo. A pesar de la dudosa veracidad de las fuentes de Díaz del Castillo, este fragmento de la *Historia verdadera de la conquista de la Nueva España* debió llegarle de boca de la misma *ce malinalli*, aunque supuestamente le fue corroborado por la propia madre de la protagonista en 1523

(Díaz del Castillo 2005: 91). Díaz del Castillo, sin embargo, tendría una perspectiva interesada y unos motivos evidentes para subrayar su presencia y su conocimiento de lo ocurrido y narrado, ya que la propia "historia verdadera" debe enmarcarse dentro de su objetivo original, que no era otro que obtener la merced real que solicitaba en su obra. El adjetivo "verdadera" del título es un juramento de veracidad testimonial de los méritos y de los servicios prestados por Díaz del Castillo en la conquista, que son lo que realmente relata la obra. Si se presupone que el propósito de su narrativa podía haber influido en la forma de su composición, no sería de extrañar que los personajes que describe se adecuasen a ciertas convenciones narrativas de la época que no se limitarían necesariamente a las meramente históricas. Dicha adecuación se ajustaría a lo que dichas convenciones establecían como plausible, apelando al imaginario literario más que a la veracidad factual, y estarían en consonancia con las propias aspiraciones imperialistas de la Corona española. Las narrativas de aventuras en las Indias ya estaban causando furor en Europa por aquel entonces y en su vertiente oriental se remontan a *El Libro de las Maravillas* de Marco Polo o incluso la *Odisea* y la *Eneida* (Young 1962: 409). El patrón narrativo se mantiene, mientras que cambian los nombres de los protagonistas y los detalles se adaptan a los diversos contextos geográficos y temporales. En 1519, las Indias Occidentales no estaban aún conquistadas, pero ya estaban imaginadas como la continuación del proyecto original que las ubicaba en Oriente. Así pues, no es de extrañar que las tradiciones literarias que ya existían antes de su conquista y cuyas historias se desarrollaban en el mítico Oriente, se adaptasen a la narración de una nueva realidad geográfica mientras se mantenían los motivos literarios originales. Así pues, *ce malinalli* sería, siguiendo la convención, una princesa cautiva rescatada por un héroe cristiano; de su romance surgirán un hijo e innumerables victorias de armas. El hecho de que Cortés tuviese una esposa y varias concubinas, tanto españolas como indígenas, o que Doña Marina se casase con Juan Jaramillo son datos factuales que no encajan en el patrón narrativo que Díaz del Castillo tomaría como modelo, además habrían puesto de relieve ciertas prácticas que hubieran sido de difícil encaje en la justificación religiosa del expansionismo colonial español. Para el lector español a quien se dirige el texto de Díaz del Castillo, la narrativa es *plausible* sobre la base de los textos que ya conoce y asimilable a los discursos y códigos de conducta que pueden encontrarse en un texto de carácter oficial.

La tradición literaria exige, en su adaptación al contexto de las Indias Occidentales, la cristianización, por similitud con los patrones narrativos orientales de lucha contra el infiel, y lo hace no solo por convención poética, sino porque el poder de la época se sustenta en la coherencia de dichas narraciones: desde el expansionismo territorial de Castilla a finales del siglo XV y su alianza-connivencia con Roma, hasta la fundamentación de la Corona sobre la herencia de sangre. Así pues, para

encajar mejor la nueva realidad en los patrones de plausibilidad aceptados por la convención literaria y política europea, la infiel *ce malinalli* se transforma en la cristiana Doña Marina. "*ce*" se muta en "Doña", que es un título comparable, y "*malinalli*", en la católica "Marina". Pero la católica Marina del relato de Díaz del Castillo no sería plausiblemente cristiana más que por tratado. Nunca salió de México ni dejó su identidad indígena, ni en el vestir, ni en el peinar, ni en el gobernar. Su imaginario religioso también sería azteca, como sugieren de nuevo los cronistas de la época, tanto españoles como indígenas.

Malintzin, o Doña Marina, tradujo para Cortés y para Moctezuma; pero, sobre todo, y más plausiblemente, tradujo para ella misma. Digamos que el sujeto existió y que era mujer, pues les dejó descendencia biológica tanto a Cortés como a Jaramillo. Digamos que tradujo, o los tratados y conquistas que efectivamente se llevaron a cabo no hubieran podido efectuarse. Si así fue, Doña Marina tendría que haber sido de origen noble, y no solo porque lo afirmase Díaz del Castillo, sino por el profundo conocimiento que poseía de la retórica de la nobleza azteca (Valdeón 2013: 164), de sus políticas económicas y territoriales (Navarrete 2007: 293-294), y de sus mitos religiosos (Kirtley y Kirtley 2012: 50; Robinson en Valdeón 2013: 160; Pratt 1993: 859), vetados a la población de origen humilde. Si como narra Díaz del Castillo, fue necesario fingir su muerte para usurpar sus derechos sucesorios, habría sido plausible que ejerciese como cacica o Malintzín. Así que, cuando los españoles le preguntasen su nombre y este saliese ya con el título nobiliario añadido, debía de sonar al oído castellano algo así como "Malinche".

Tanto las convenciones literarias de la época como el carácter oficial del texto de Díaz del Castillo omiten los detalles explícitos de sus relaciones sexuales, pero se presupone una relación tanto romántica como política del hecho de que, como sí se menciona en el texto, Cortés nunca se separase de ella y tuviesen una descendencia reconocida por el propio Cortés, y también del hecho de que los indios llamasen al propio Cortés "el Malinche", como si tras la unión, él hubiera adoptado el apellido maya de su *concubina* (Malintzín). ¿De dónde salen pues todos estos elementos: el romance, la descendencia y la identificación? Cortés no menciona a Doña Marina en sus cartas más que de pasada, otorgándole un papel insignificante en los hechos heroicos de su conquista. Algunos autores (Pratt 1993: 866; Sten en Valdeón 2011: 214; Valdeón 2013: 162) argumentan que Díaz del Castillo lo hizo así para maximizar ante la Corona española sus propios méritos de armas, que se hubieran visto reducidos si el mérito parcial de sus logros se hubiera atribuido a su alianza con una autoridad local —y por ende, mujer— como Doña Marina. Así pues, hasta que la bula papal reconociese a tres de sus hijos ilegítimos en 1529, Cortés no tendría el más mínimo interés en reconocer la existencia de dicha descendencia, puesto que además necesitaba de un matrimonio cristiano, tan

conveniente para obtener su título de Marqués del Valle de Oaxaca, como el que contraería con la hija del conde de Aguilar en 1528. Hasta que llegó la bula y mientras se aseguraban las posiciones españolas en los territorios aztecas, la unión tanto carnal como militar de Cortés y la Malinche habría sido un valioso instrumento político para ambos al lado oeste del Atlántico. En los encuentros y batallas que desembocaron en el derrocamiento de Moctezuma, a Doña Marina se la representa como la "lengua" que traduce para Cortés,[2] un mero instrumento al servicio del capitán español. Sin embargo, sería plausible intuir que Doña Marina hiciera muchas cosas más, incluyendo actuaciones de carácter diplomático, interviniendo en las negociaciones militares con los pueblos que apoyaron la revuelta contra Moctezuma y determinando su propio margen de beneficio político tras las victorias en las que participaría Cortés. Sería entonces la instrumentalización que el discurso imperialista hiciese de su intervención lo que, tras la independencia, propiciase el desarrollo de su imagen como símbolo de traición a una patria mexicana (Gaspar de Alba 2014: 65) cuya identidad nacional se construiría como continuación de la herencia precolombina.

Pero volvamos a *ce malinalli*, la desheredada. Cuando, según Díaz del Castillo, es cedida a Cortés como esclava, su autodenominación como cacica (*ce*) supone la reclamación de sus propios derechos dinásticos, dejando entrever el carácter político que desde un principio tendría interés en poner de relieve en su relación con Cortés. Dada su educación noble, *ce malinalli* conocería la anunciada llegada del dios Quetzalcóatl, que según el calendario azteca, estaría próxima (Pratt 1993: 869), y aprovecharía el impacto intercultural que el exotismo de las naves, los animales, los soldados y las armas que Cortés llevaba tendría en la población local para favorecer su interpretación dentro del marco del discurso religioso azteca. Determinar hasta qué punto dicha interpretación realmente convencería a los pueblos sometidos por Moctezuma o hasta qué punto éstos la instrumentalizarían a su vez a ella para dar legitimidad a la sublevación es ciertamente debatible, aunque elegir la primera opción presupondría un estado de inocencia política en la población indígena que es más propio del discurso imperial europeo que del ejercicio del sentido común histórico.

Para los mexicanos del siglo XIX, cuyo discurso político y de género es herencia del propio discurso imperial, la Malinche (ya no *ce malinalli* ni Doña Marina) sería una mera concubina y una espía,[3] pero para los indígenas de su tiempo sería cacica desheredada (incluso resucitada) con un ejército de carácter supuestamente sobrenatural bajo su influencia (si no bajo su control) que haría valer tanto sus derechos dinásticos como la restitución de una justicia divina que rectificase las políticas territoriales de Moctezuma. De este modo, Cortés, con su armadura puesta por consejo de Doña Marina, sería la encarnación plausible de Quetzcacóatl,

y para los amerindios que luchaban a su lado (o más bien que eran sus aliados), y formaban el 95% de su ejército, "el Malinche" (Kirtley y Kirtley 2012: 50-52). Grillo explica esta identificación de Cortés con el "Malinche" como resultado de su relación romántica (2011: 16-17),[4] pero Díaz del Castillo la interpretará dentro de la dimensión militar del apelativo: "en todos los pueblos donde pasamos y en otros en donde tenían noticia de nosotros, llamaban a Cortés Malinche [...] el capitán de Marina" (2005: 180).[5] Desde el prisma amerindio prehispánico, sería plausible entender a Cortés como el instrumento de *Malinztín* en la venganza contra su familia y a los tratados que establecería con los tlaxaltecas (Navarrete 2007: 294) como el instrumento de liberación de los pueblos oprimidos por Moctezuma (Downs 2008: 404). Así pues, lo que sería la conquista para los españoles se codificaría paralelamente como la primera revolución americana con aliados europeos, un enfoque del que el nacionalismo mexicano se habría beneficiado de cara a justificar la independencia, tal como lo hiciesen las trece colonias americanas del norte. El problema de dicho enfoque sería que impediría la construcción nostálgica de la identidad nacional que toma como base la idealización del indigenismo originario; un impedimento que en el norte se salvó gracias a la exclusión de la población indígena del discurso político que sustenta la declaración de independencia de los Estados Unidos.

Sería plausible suponer que la alianza militar entre *Malintzín* y Cortés se sellaría mejor con descendencia, tal como era costumbre a ambos lados del Atlántico (Navarrete 2007: 303-304). También sería plausible que para los españoles, que reconocerían la dimensión política y militar de su femineidad, *Malintzín* fuera Doña Marina, pues una alianza política con el infiel estaría fuera de toda justificación político-religiosa en Europa. En la época de la conquista, solo Moctezuma la llamaría plausiblemente, en azteca, "la Chingada", como hiciera Octavio Paz en el siglo XX.

Antes de diciembre de 1607, la que ahora conocemos como Pocahontas era conocida localmente como Matoaka y Amonute (Downs 2008: 398). La hija del vecino jefe powhatan Wahunsenaca, según la revisión que el capitán John Smith hiciese de su encuentro en la *General Historie of Virginia* de 1624, tenía entre 12 y 13 años de edad, aunque Smith los dejaría solo en 10 en su primera *A True Relation* de 1608. En su *Historie of Travaile into Virginia Britannia*, escrita alrededor de 1615 y publicada 234 años más tarde, William Strachey la describiría como "una jovencita bien parecida pero lasciva" (en Young 1962: 395, traducción de la autora),[6] una opinión que justifica con detalles de sus relaciones con los colonos de Jamestown. La estancia de la joven allí a partir de 1613, sin embargo, no parece que fuese del todo voluntaria. Angela L. Daniel argumenta que fue entregada por uno de los suyos al capitán Argall (2005) a cambio de una tetera y

otros enseres para que sirviera de rehén contra los ataques de su padre. Permanecería entonces en Jamestown hasta que en 1614, fuera bautizada para poder contraer matrimonio cristiano con John Rolfe (Young 1962: 393). En 1616, viajaría a Londres con los honores de una princesa y sería recibida por el propio rey Jaime I y (según el testimonio de Purchas) el señor obispo de Londres, incluso con más pompa de la que se les proporcionaba a otras grandes damas de la ciudad (en Young 1962: 394).

Las costumbres que los indios de la Bahía de Chesapeake tenían a principios del siglo XVI nos llegan filtradas por los convencionalismos narrativos, impedimentos morales e intereses económicos de los colonos, para quienes era plausible interpretar la desnudez de las jóvenes indígenas y su sumisión al ser ofrecidas como regalo sexual a los colonos como un signo de lascivia femenina (Tremblay 2002: 121), en vez de como un gesto de bienvenida por parte de las autoridades nativas. Gail Tremblay subraya que tres historiadores diferentes informan de que los británicos tradujeron el nombre de Pocahontas por "*little wanton*" (2002: 121), lo que generalmente se traduce por "traviesa", incurriendo en cierta lítote que evitaría el uso de un lenguaje que, por soez, sería menos apropiado tras el matrimonio con Rolfe y la fastuosa bienvenida en Londres. El propio fundador de la colonia de Virginia, Walter Raleigh, daba vehemente e implausible (Tratner 2009: 130) fe de que ninguno de los hombres de su compañía hubiera tenido jamás relación carnal con ninguna de las mujeres indígenas, a lo que sigue una descripción bastante significativa del mérito que ello suponía, puesto que "vimos muchos cientos, y teníamos muchas en nuestro poder, que eran muy jóvenes, y de excelente belleza, que se nos acercaban sin engaño [entiéndase 'abiertamente'], completamente desnudas" (en Stymeist 2002: 114, traducción de la autora).[7] El detalle de la descripción es en sí mismo de carácter pornográfico, lo cual puede atribuirse a la anticipación y al deseo de satisfacción de los ánimos de sus lectores, o al propio subconsciente narrativo del testigo. Se podría entender, quizás, que los propios deseos de los colonos son metafóricamente trasladados a las mujeres indígenas siguiendo el patrón bíblico del *Génesis*. En su carta al gobernador real de la colonia, donde solicita permiso para contraer matrimonio con Pocahontas, Rolfe defiende que su solicitud no está motivada en modo alguno por los desenfrenados deseos del afecto carnal,[8] lo cual, además de apropiado en una misiva dirigida a un gobernador, sería cuando menos plausible. Rolfe, al igual que los nativos, vería la conveniencia de instrumentalizar el matrimonio en los ámbitos político y económico, y con ello la evidente ventaja de contraer matrimonio con la hija del jefe Powhatan, pues la pacificación de la zona propiciaría sin duda el éxito de sus plantaciones de tabaco.

A pesar del testimonio de su evidente lascivia y de que, según Strachey, Matoaka ya estabaría casada desde 1610 con un capitán ("*private captaine*") de su tribu

llamado Kocoum cuando conoció a Rolfe (en Young 1962: 395), el personaje de Pocahontas evolucionaría hacia la virginidad el mismo año en que dio a luz a su primer hijo con el inglés. En un folleto de 1615, Ralphe Hamor comparaba el matrimonio entre Matoaka y Rolfe con el éxito de la colonia de Virginia (Tratner 2009: 130). Una vez independizada del reino europeo, Pocahontas reemplazaría a la Reina Virgen (Isabel I) que había dado nombre al estado en su papel de encarnación de la maternidad de la nación. Mientras que la inocencia que se atribuye a la tierna edad en la que Swift describe a Pocahontas permitiría una primera visión de la joven como virgen, tras su cristianización e inmediato matrimonio con Rolfe, sería más adecuado para el discurso religioso colonial buscar patrones literarios en el Antiguo Testamento que reforzasen la narrativa de apropiación de Virginia como tierra prometida al pueblo elegido por Dios. Así pues, sería necesario que el reverendo Whitaker la bautizase, y apropiado que lo hiciese con el nombre cristiano de "Rebecca", que la identificaría plausiblemente con la buena esposa israelita que Abraham envió a buscar a su hijo Isaac (ahora Rolfe, encarnando simbólicamente en su persona a todos los "israelitas" de la Compañía de Virginia), la benefactora de los extraños. El relato bíblico se fusiona con la literatura de viajes y aventuras en 1624,[9] cuando Smith le atribuye a Pocahontas el mérito de salvarle la vida, ayudar a los hambrientos y moribundos colonos con provisiones y de prevenirles contra un ataque de su propio padre, del que Smith saldría gravemente herido con destino a Inglaterra.[10] Y nace así el mito de Pocahontas, no solo como 'buena salvaje', sino como *belle sauvage*. Con su maternidad en 1615, el simbolismo religioso e imperialista de Rebecca se extendería al mestizaje, pues la Rebeca bíblica fue madre de dos pueblos, el nómada que salió de Esaú, y el descendiente del sedentario Jacob, a quien su madre prefería, y del que descendería el pueblo de Israel. Los paralelismos con el patrón del discurso colonial británico son evidentes y justifican a través de la figura de Rebecca la voluntad divina de entregar Virginia a los colonos (Tremblay 2002: 122). Al llegar a Inglaterra en 1616, Lady Rebecca Rolfe ya era princesa[11] por tradición narrativa e imperativo colonial, y tenía un aspecto muy europeo cuando la recibieron en la corte del rey Jaime I. Según Philip Young, su imagen pública en Londres estaba destinada a publicitar las plantaciones de tabaco de Virginia, tan necesitadas de fondos como del favor del rey, de los que carecían (1962: 393) incluso a pesar de haber llamado al conflictivo asentamiento en su honor. Aprovechando este interés, en 1624, Smith transformaría a Pocahontas en heroína de romance[12] al más puro estilo europeo, incluyendo elementos eróticos de modo poco caballeroso si se considera la situación de su viudo.

A los dieciséis años de edad, secuestrada por los colonos y nunca rescatada por los suyos, Pocahontas contrae matrimonio con Rolfe, según él mismo, más atraída por la gloria de Britania que por su persona (Tratner 2009: 130), poniendo de relieve

el carácter político y económico de la unión. En 1624 y en una clave más acorde con el género literario del romance que destilan ciertos pasajes de su narrativa, Smith atribuiría el matrimonio al mutuo afecto de los esposos, señalando sin embargo, el efecto positivo que dicho enlace tuvo en las relaciones de los habitantes de Jamestown con los algonquianos. En esta dirección apunta Edward Ragan (2005) cuando presenta el matrimonio de Pocahontas con Rolfe como parte de una tregua tras tres años de luchas entre los ingleses y los indígenas. En 1624, el personaje de Pocahontas habría acumulado una serie de elementos narrativos pertenecientes a diversas tradiciones y convenciones que se superpondrían y competirían según qué intereses abrigase cada narración: sería lasciva y objeto de lascivia, heroína de romance, buena salvaje y samaritana, bisagra política, imagen publicitaria de las plantaciones de su marido, elemento de propaganda británica, '*celebrity*'[13] y madre colonial.

A pesar de que no existen fuentes que califiquen a Doña Marina de lasciva en los primeros años de la conquista española de México (aunque según los estándares morales de la época, había motivos para hacerlo, al menos habida cuenta de su concubinato con Cortés), para Paz será por encima de la traidora, "la chingada", haciendo sangre del origen bastardo, más que mestizo, de la nación. La que sería esposa de Rolfe, sin embargo, fue repetidamente tildada de lasciva en fuentes bastante cercanas a los hechos que acontecieron o podrían haber acontecido y, por lo tanto, supuestamente más fidedignas que las que —como en el caso de las fuentes españolas respecto a Doña Marina— sucederían a su muerte. A pesar de ello, Pocahontas evolucionaría hacia un personaje completamente positivo a la sombra del cual se formarían las diversas identidades nacionales que la tomaron como referente. ¿Qué explicación podría darse a esta evolución tan dispar desde unos orígenes aparentemente similares y a lo largo, sobre todo, de los siglos XIX y XX?

Sería razonable considerar que Pocahontas no fuera tan princesa como la publicitaron en Londres, ni tan cacica como la Malinche.[14] Cabría suponer que fue su padre, y no ella —tal y como relata Smith en 1608— quien enviase las provisiones a los habitantes de Jamestown. Entonces sería plausible suponer que nunca se enfrentó a los suyos y que su defensa de la vida de Smith, como argumenta Chief Webster Little Eagle Custalow, fue parte de un rito de iniciación que le permitiría a él convertirse en *werowance,* o jefe del área de Capahowasik (en Daniel 2005). Su papel de mediadora sería en tal caso más físico que verbal, más de rehén que de señora; una indígena más a quien asimilar al resto como exótico icono sexual con el que aderezar una buena narrativa de viajes. Digamos que los primeros relatos, donde se describe su comportamiento lascivo, no tuvieran intereses ante la Corona como los de Díaz del Castillo, sino que fueran mero entretenimiento para un público morboso, lector de una industria editorial floreciente a la sombra del

anglicanismo. La imagen de Pocahontas con su vestimenta europea, más que de rebelión, es de sumisión, como mujer y como indígena (Downs 2008: 407). Al contrario que la Malinche, su entrega a los intereses de los demás parece total e irredimible (Young 1962: 414).

De lo que pensaban los indios de Chesapeake no se sabe más que lo que citaba Smith en su inspirada versión de 1624. Sin embargo, basándose en la tradición oral nativo-americana, Custalow argumenta que (igual que lo harían con la actitud sexual de sus mujeres) los colonos malinterpretaron los gestos de los algonquianos bajo un prisma europeo, achacándoles una mala intención que no formaba parte de su cultura pacífica, según la cual se debían evitar encuentros violentos siempre que fuera posible (en Daniel 2005). Con este argumento se justifican actos como el de que se abasteciese a los colonos, que Pocahontas fuera entregada por el jefe patawomeck Japazaws a Argall en 1613, que Wahunsenaca abandonase a su hija con los colonos y finalmente, que Rebecca y Rolfe contrajesen matrimonio (en Daniel 2005). Según la lógica de este patrón narrativo, la niña inocente Pocahontas iría a Jamestown como símbolo y garantía de la buena voluntad de su padre o, como apunta Custalow, como símbolo de paz y garantía del orden y de los tratados establecidos por su pueblo. Nada más alejado de imagen de la concubina Malinche que liderase la lucha contra Moctezuma; y sin embargo, ambas serán en vida para los suyos un emblema de la salvación de su pueblo y de la derrota de sus enemigos.

3. Divergencias narrativas plausibles

La primera diferencia entre la Malinche y Pocahontas estaría ya en el origen. Las culturas que Downs tan genéricamente identifica como indígenas habrían sido muy diferentes, así como lo sería el estatus de cada una de las protagonistas en su respectiva sociedad. Tsenacommacah no era Tenochtitlán, Wahunsenaca no era Moctezuma y su dominio de los pueblos algonquianos se basaba en la alianza y no en la opresión (Daniel 2005). Nadie desheredó a Pocahontas, ni *ce malinalli* era la hija de Moctezuma.[15] En Virginia no habría revolución, sino ocupación americana. O por lo menos no la habría en el siglo XVII.

En el siglo XVIII, sin embargo, las trece colonias americanas se rebelarían ante la larga lista de repetidas injusticias de las que se considerarían objeto por parte de su legítimo rey Jorge III, y, a causa de la falta de modelos de identidad nacional frente a Gran Bretaña, surgió la madre del mestizaje, que debería ser Pocahontas como personificación de la madre tierra Americana[16] y no la isabelina Matoaka, quien miraría entre triste y desconfiada a Simon van der Meer mientras él la pintaba en Londres en 1616. Para cuando los mexicanos quisieron independizarse de la

Corona española a principios del siglo XIX, México ya era mestizo, las deidades aztecas ya se habían fusionado con las católicas y la figura de Doña Marina se superponía a las de Eva (Messinger Cypess 1991: 6, 147-148; Messinger Cypess 2005: 17) y La Llorona (Pratt 1993: 860; Lefevere en Valdeón 2013: 176). Pocahontas, sin embargo, fluctuaba entre las figuras y dibujos que publicitaban el tabaco de Virginia y una especie de mutación ilustrada de la *Gea Americanna*. La inicial lascivia que Strachey identificase en ella, así como la traducción del apelativo "Pocahontas" por "*little wanton*" del primer periodo colonial desaparecerían cuando la identidad del personaje pasase a fusionarse con la colonia de Virginia (Young 1962: 711; Green 1975: 703-704; Downs 2008: 402), la "virginidad" (no la posesión) de cuyas tierras justificaba que los colonos se apropiasen de ellas. En el marco político de la independencia de Estados Unidos, el rechazo a la Corona británica requeriría la forja de símbolos nacionales que de ningún modo pudiesen relacionarse con Europa (Downs 2008: 400), de modo que en su ausencia, la adaptación del motivo literario imperial de la princesa indígena se convertiría en la figura postcolonial de semideidad clásico-nativa identificada con la naturaleza, con quien los nativos americanos compartían la atribución de "salvajes".

La cristianización, que haría una Doña Marina de *ce malinalli* y por la que el imperio español se apropiaría de su identidad cultural indígena, serviría paradójicamente a los intereses nacionalistas del México sublevado, que verían en el imperio azteca un modelo de unidad política nacional y que perderían en el proceso la oportunidad de enlazar con una narrativa plausible, de base estrictamente política, en la que el pueblo se rebelaría contra el monarca opresor, sin necesidad de apelar a motivos étnicos o culturales. Aferrarse a dichos motivos para sustentar el rechazo a la Corona española supondría, tras siglos de ocupación, el rechazo a las propias señas de identidad mexicanas, ancladas ya en el mestizaje. Así pues "la Malinche", en la apropiación que el castellano haría del nombre original del personaje histórico, pasaría a ser "la Chingada" antes que volver a ser *ce malinalli*. Mientras que los colonos británicos celebraron a Pocahontas como exotismo de las Indias, los soldados españoles lucharían bajo las órdenes de Doña Marina, subordinando en ambos casos las características de cada personaje a los diferentes requisitos de la respectiva narrativa colonial; económica en el caso de la colonia británica, bélica en el caso de la Corona española.

Una vez liberada de Moctezuma, la élite poscolonial mexicana —a la sazón descendiente directa de los colonos españoles— esgrimiría de nuevo a Doña Marina, ahora convertida en la Malinche, a modo de Cid maldito, para minar una vez más las fuerzas del imperio, desde dentro. Así pues, la "*little wanton*" Pocahontas será luego "Virginial",[17] con la serpiente de cascabel a sus pies, rezando el "*don't tread on me*" de Gadsden a modo de ensalmo de la victoria de María

Inmaculada sobre el demonio. Y la nobleza de *ce malinalli* y Doña Marina, que aparece en los códices tlaxaltecas como figura central desplazando a Cortés hacia la derecha para sugerir un estatus superior político y social (Navarrete 2007: 297), acabaría siendo primero la Malinche, luego la Chingada. De ahí que, aunque incluso después de su matrimonio con Jaramillo la Malinche siguiese ostentando signos de identidad maya en su apariencia externa, Cortés —también desnudo— todavía se recreara en la desnudez de su cuerpo en los murales de principio del siglo XX (Downs 2008: 408-409). De la evolución de estos dos personajes femeninos, desde su origen narrativo colonial hasta su mutación en la independencia, se desprendería que para ser mexicano sin trazas de españolismo sería necesario renegar de la colaboración hispano-indígena en la lucha contra Moctezuma, mientras que para ser estadounidense sería necesario celebrar la colaboración. Los mexicanos mestizos, para borrar la conquista que subyacería a su mestizaje, necesitarían encumbrar a Moctezuma como paradigma identitario y reducir a Doña Marina a una Chingada a partir de la identificación de su cuerpo de mujer con la tierra mexicana, penetrada por Cortés (Downs 2008: 406). Los estadounidenses, necesitados de manera creciente de una constante celebración de su mestizaje, por otra parte cada vez más complejo, se identificarían con el símbolo del pacto social (Downs 2008: 407) y con la apropiación de la tierra en la figura de Pocahontas.

Cuando en 1846, el honorable Waddy Thompson recogía en las memorias de su ministerio en México que Pocahontas había seguido la estela de la intérprete de Cortés, la de Doña Marina ya estaba manchada por la lujuria, para redención de la entonces ya virginal Pocahontas (en Young 1962: 397). En los años que precedieron a la guerra civil norteamericana, a Pocahontas la reclamaría como emblema de identidad, la Confederación de Estados del Sur, lo que llevó a que la Unión comenzase a poner en tela de juicio las dudosas fuentes coloniales de Smith o Strachey (Downs 2008: 400). Pero tras la guerra, la apropiación de las fértiles tierras sureñas implicará también la apropiación —más que el rechazo— de sus mitos.[18]

Al igual que la Malinche, Pocahontas no se sacudiría nunca el estigma del discurso colonial. Pero al contrario de lo que hace el mexicano, el nativo americano celebra a Pocahontas, proporcionando una imagen de los indígenas del siglo XVII que es más bien reflejo de su progresiva reducción a lo largo de la historia de los Estados Unidos. A finales del siglo XIX, derrotados finalmente por el ejército estadounidense, los indios powhatan, con más necesidad de recursos económicos que de armas, tratarán de rentabilizar el mito colonial de Pocahontas a través de representaciones teatrales (Gleach 2006: 435-436). Un siglo más tarde, esta tendencia se mantendría operativa cuando un consejo asesor nativo americano formase parte del equipo de

Disney para mejor justificar la (in)corrección política de la película animada de 1995 (Faida en Ono y Buescher 2001: 36). Todavía a principios del siglo XXI, Custalow seguirá la estela colonial de Smith titulando la suya *La verdadera historia de Pocahontas*,[19] mientras alega seguir la tradición narrativa oral nativoamericana. Su retrato, sin embargo, representa a los indígenas tal y como los colonos los hubieran deseado que fueran en 1605: tribus enteras de buenos salvajes, tan pacifistas como los estudiantes que se manifestaban contra la Guerra del Vietnam en los sesenta. Finalmente, el discurso feminista estadounidense del siglo XX denunciará el paradigma tradicional de Pocahontas como el de una víctima del racismo androcéntrico, pero también lo reclamará como instrumento de su propia lucha de género (Green 1975: 703-704; Dundes 2001: 355; Tremblay 2002: 123), instrumentalizándolo para su causa, como se habría venido haciendo desde el principio.

En el caso de la Malinche, esta apropiación llegará tan lejos como Custalow en su victimización de los indígenas del periodo colonial, cayendo en la visión sexista que la victimiza como mujer y como indígena al intentar rescatarla de la acusación de traidora y concubina (Downs 2008: 410). En los años setenta, las chicanas del lado norte de la frontera incorporarían el personaje de la Malinche como motivo narrativo al movimiento de rebelión sociocultural que reclamaba sus derechos tanto de género, como de lengua y de raza por analogía con la participación de *ce malinalli*/Doña Marina en la conquista española de las Indias Occidentales (Pratt 1993: 860). Sin la necesidad ya de construir una identidad nacionalista mexicana, pero acuciadas por la necesidad de construir su propia identidad doblemente mestiza en términos positivos, proyectarían su propio discurso sobre el personaje de una Malinche que adquiere cualidades que se presentan como plausibles dentro de esta nueva narrativa. Al igual que plausiblemente hiciera la Malinche, las chicanas buscan su propio empoderamiento (Kirtley y Kirtley 2012: 55) en la sociedad estadounidense que las deshereda como tales erigiéndose en herederas de una Malinche que ya no es una Chingada, sino una cacica frente al discurso etnonacionalista que las reduce política y sexualmente (Pratt 1993: 861-862). Es curioso ver cómo en su discurso, las diferentes narrativas coloniales a ambos lados de la frontera se fusionan, superponiendo la rebelión y la colaboración, y establecen similitudes entre los modelos narrativos originales de la Malinche y Pocahontas.

En el siglo XXI, serán las grandes compañías, aunque ya no tabacaleras, las que más rentabilicen el emblema de Pocahontas. Desde esta perspectiva, Tremblay verá de manera retrospectiva cómo

> la tragedia de la asimilación británica de Pocahontas y el éxito que éstos (los británicos) consiguieron al sobrevivir y conquistar a sus "parientes belicosos e incomprensibles" se convirtió en un gran romance. Primero fueron los anuncios de

> tabaco, luego, las representaciones teatrales, los poemas, los musicales y ahora son las películas de animación y las muñecas las que la erotizan en la imaginación tanto de los niños como de los adultos. (2002: 123, traducción de la autora)[20]

Ono y Buescher analizan la tematización de Pocahontas en el film de Disney de 1995 como un código o una cifra (*cipher*), un tipo de bien de consumo del capitalismo tardío que construiría una forma visual fácilmente reproducible y la usaría para comercializar miríadas de productos. La narrativa que instrumentalizaría a Pocahontas como código mercantil serviría para comercializar productos, identidades sociales étnicas y de género, e incluso historias, apareciendo como un sistema de significado en sí mismo (2001: 25, 33, 35). Según Kent A. Ono y Derek T. Buescher, el "código Pocahontas" de Disney, prometería satisfacer la necesidad de acabar con la historia colonial, el racismo y el sexismo, y legitimaría la apropiación que de él hacen varios movimientos y grupos de lucha por la liberación en el seno de la cultura nativo americana y del feminismo (2001: 35-36).

Mientras que, al norte de la frontera, el mito se generaría sobre una base narrativa de carácter económico, al sur, dicha base sería de carácter político. Entrelazadas con estas narrativas se encuentran también diversas tradiciones narrativas religiosas. Pocahontas salvaría a Smith de la ejecución interponiendo su propio cuerpo preadolescente, lo cual sería signo metonímico de la elección divina del pueblo de Jamestown en particular (Young 1962: 413),[21] y de la excepcionalidad estadounidense en general. Los rituales de adopción en la tribu, también ligados a las concesiones de poder y a los tratados políticos, son reinterpretados en clave cristiana, con Smith como revisión del personaje de Cristo a punto de ser sacrificado a modo de cordero y rescatado en el último momento por una gracia divina que actuaría, salvando las distancias del símil, a través de una pagana. El imperativo de plausibilidad narrativa dentro del discurso religioso cristiano haría que dicha pagana se adaptase al personaje de Rebeca, una israelita de pura sangre que propagaría la estirpe colonial de los "Red Rolfes" que acabarían heredando Virginia.

Tras la guerra civil, cuando la Unión los desheredase de su tierra virginal, el enemigo yanqui también poseería a Pocahontas, más que renegar de ella, pero (y a pesar de la guerra) no lo haría de forma que la transformase en una Chingada, sino —siguiendo el patrón narrativo bíblico— como un buen hermano con su cuñada viuda, todavía y a pesar de su progenie, en virgen. Cuando el México mestizo expulsara a la Corona española, habría de renegar, como explica Paz, de su propio mestizaje; lo cual hará de manera ritual a través del chivo expiatorio de la Chingada. La paradoja es que, al hacerlo, renegaría también de su herencia azteca, de los mitos precolombinos que profetizaban una nueva era tras la llegada de Quetzacóatl, de la complejidad social de una civilización cuya sofisticación y fuerza serían

plausiblemente la brecha que posibilitase su caída. Y aunque sea incorrecto decirlo en los tiempos que corren, renunciando a una narrativa que pusiese de relieve la liberación política que, con el paso de los siglos, supondría el mestizaje. ¿Sería acaso plausible suponer que si Moctezuma hubiese sido más benevolente, si los pueblos a los que sometiera le hubiesen amado más que temido, éstos no hubiesen apoyado la ofensiva de Cortés? El inconveniente de esta narrativa plausible estaría en que suponerla no solo minimizaría la importancia militar del imperio español, sino que impediría la narración nacionalista de un México unido e independiente, cuya glorificación solo sería posible con la demonización del personaje de la Chingada. Doña Marina no encarnaría su tierra a los ojos de los conquistadores, sino que sería para ellos un instrumento para la conquista, mientras que los aztecas la verían como la señora y cacica que propiciase el advenimiento del dios Quetzacóatl. Desde la ironía histórica de una narrativa plausible, la Malinche daría origen simbólico (en clave biológica, política y cultural) a un nuevo orden mestizo tanto azteca como cristiano, tanto redentor como apocalíptico. Al igual que *ce malinalli* y Doña Marina, Rebecca Rolfe no sobreviviría a los tiempos imperiales. Una narrativa plausible podría igualmente representarla como traidora a su pueblo, a sus costumbres y religiones, así como a su propio cuerpo; un cuerpo que junto con su tierra, rendiría a los intereses coloniales de su esposo. Dicha narrativa haría a los nativos americanos acreedores plausibles de su traición, del injusto regalo de su herencia tanto económica como cultural, política y biológica. En los respectivos contextos narrativos en los que los hechos que fueran factuales se producirían, estas dos narrativas no serían, sin embargo, plausibles, lo cual excluiría de entrada su posibilidad histórica.

4. Conclusión

Me parecería que se equivocan aquellos (Downs 2008; Tratner 2009; Navarrete 2007, entre otros) que tratan de discernir los hechos que realmente acontecieron de los que podrían haber acontecido, porque los primeros ocurrieron ya filtrados por las narrativas previas[22] que permitieron su codificación en origen y nunca existirían fuera de ellas, ni siquiera para sus protagonistas, que también aparecieron ya entretejidos en dichas narrativas. También se equivocarían quienes ven en los personajes y en los hechos el origen de posteriores narrativas, nacidas como brotes a la sombra de los intereses y visiones de generaciones posteriores (Young 1962: 414-415; Tratner 2009: 130); estas narrativas se desarrollarían sobre aquellas otras anteriores a uno y otro lado de lo plausible, dependiendo de los contextos en los que prosperasen, a la vez que los alimentarían de manera simbiótica.[23] Nunca dejará de fascinarme el poder factual de las figuras retóricas, de la génesis narrativa;

su capacidad de fluctuar entre lo abiertamente ficticio y lo religioso, de saltar desde lo mítico a lo político, y desde lo científico de vuelta a lo político y lo sociológico, de sustentar tanto lo legal como lo económico. Consideradas como constructos narrativos plausibles dentro de sucesivas convenciones literarias de conquista y seducción (o rebelión y apropiación), la Malinche y Pocahontas muestran una dirección rizomática y una estructura disipativa con el único límite performativo de lo plausible.

Notas

[1]. Grillo ahonda más en otros significados posibles de su nombre original y en la evolución posterior en castellano: "Su nombre original, Malinalli, significa 'hierba torcida' en náhuatl —su lengua materna—, pero es también el decimosegundo signo del ciclo de 260 días, día funesto [...]. Y hay también otra referencia posible: la diosa lunar, única hembra entre los hombres-estrella, que era llamada Malinal Xóchtil o Malintzin. [...] En algún momento fue llamada también Tenépal, hecha de cal, es decir, de piel clara como la luna [¿quizás con el sentido de 'la que va con los blancos?' (Pratt 1993: 864)], otra etimología quiere que Tenépal signifique dueña de la palabra" (Grillo 2011: 16). Según Carlos Montemayor el nombre también significaría "hierba para hacer cordeles" (2008).

[2]. La atribución de un papel instrumental de la Malinche es la visión más extendida del personaje a lo largo de los siglos (Downs 2008: 397; Valdeón 2011: 212-213; Kirtley y Kirtley 2012: 50), y la que permite su transformación en mujer objeto como Chingada y en injusta víctima de la conquista machista de Cortés y del posterior machismo mestizo para las feministas del s. XX (Pratt 1993).

[3]. Cabe matizar en este sentido que en ciertas obras de la literatura indigenista de la época, tales como *Doña Marina* (1883) de Ireneo Paz, también se daría la necesidad de incorporar el legado indígena valorándolo positivamente.

[4]. "El proceso de identificación entre Cortés y Malinalli en el mando de las operaciones [...] habría permitido llamar a los dos con el mismo nombre. Esto no debe extrañarnos ya que la dualidad —o identificación hombre-mujer— era propia de la cultura religiosa mexica" (Grillo 2011: 17).

[5]. Para Grillo, la explicación androcéntrica, eurocéntrica de este sobrenombre sería diferente. Grillo explica que tras su bautismo como Marina, "[l]os indios siguieron llamándola Malinalli y a Cortés 'el señor de Malinalli', ya que señor, dueño, en nahua, se indica con el sufijo 'tzin', de respeto. Cortés pasó así a ser Malinalli-tzin. A su vez, los españoles reconvirtieron este nombre en Malinche, cambiando el sonido dulce 'tzin' en 'che'. Así, en un principio Malinche fue Cortés— 'el Malinche' y no 'la Malinche'" (2011: 16).

[6]. "*well-featured but wanton young girle*".

[7]. "*yet we saw many hundreds, and had many in our power, and those very young, and excellently favored which came among us without deceit, starke naked*".

[8]. "*no way led* [...] *with the unbridled desire of carnall affection*" (en Stymeist 2002: 113-114, traducción de la autora).

[9]. Young reconoce el motivo como el de "*The Enamoured Moslem Princess*" o la princesa musulmana enamorada (1962: 409).

[10]. El historiador "Little Bear" Custalow, sin embargo, señala lo implausible de que, según las costumbres powhatan de la época, una niña de diez años cruzase sola el río Pamunkey (actualmente York) en una canoa de unos 180 kilos (en Daniel 2005).

[11]. En 1624, Smith se referiría a una carta que le escribiera a la reina Ana, donde le pedía que tratara a Pocahontas como a un miembro de la realeza. Y el propio Jaime I, aprovechándose de este fruto narrativo y pensando en el parlamento, manifestaría su incomodidad por el hecho de que Rolfe contrajese matrimonio con un miembro de la realeza, pues él mismo carecía de título (Hulme 1986: 143).

[12]. Sobre la base de un patrón con larga tradición narrativa, Smith construye una historia de Virginia que ya no es "*True*" (verdadera) como la de 1608, sino una adaptación del motivo del aventurero de ultramar que es salvado por la princesa extranjera (Green 1975: 699-700; Tratner 2009: 133).

[13]. En 1616, Lady Rebecca sería la estrella de Londres, donde los pubs más avezados cambiarían su nombre por el de "*La Belle Sauvage*" (Young 1962: 394).

[14]. Green (1975: 704) y Downs (2008: 408) coinciden en señalar que el título de "Princesa" de Pocahontas aparece unido al de su cristianización y que podría derivar directamente de la misma. En mi opinión, las fuentes serían más narrativas que religiosas, y provendrían de la narrativa de viajes sobre la que se fundamenta la *General Historie* de Smith.

[15]. En la versión de Disney de 1995, la Pocahontas animada adquiere el liderazgo político de *Malintzín* ante a su pueblo cuando renuncia a su amor con Smith para seguir siendo virgen y líder (Virginia) en América (Dundes 2001: 354).

[16]. Young explica que los europeos en general, "*easily adopted the Indian as the iconographic representative of the Americas* [...] *Indians, portrayed amidst exotic flora and fauna, stood for the New World's promises and dangers*" (1962: 701) y describe cómo la iconografía europea de los cuatro continentes de 1575 representa América como una reina americana agresiva o como una diosa-madre reemplazando a la pareja de indígenas de principios de siglo y cómo esa figura agresiva se domestica en cierto modo cuando a mediados del siglo XVIII es reemplazada por la figura de la princesa indígena, quien porta el cetro de la libertad y viste una túnica clásica (702).

[17]. Tratner llega a justificar esta identificación a través de la concepción humoral de la edad moderna temprana, según la cual, tanto las tierras como las personas forman su carácter a partir de los cuatro humores que, en este caso, compartirían las tierras de Virginia y Pocahontas (2009: 133).

[18]. Young explica que, a lo largo de los últimos 150 años, "*Pocahontas is represented in countless paintings and monuments; she gives her name to ships, motels, coal mines, town, counties, and pseudonymous writers, to secret orders and business firms*" (1962: 399).

[19]. *The True Story of Pocahontas*, 2007. El subtítulo continua "*The Other Side of History*", reconociendo la dicotomía entre la versión de Custalow (story) y la visión disciplinar de la "Historia", y da por sentado que la suya es relato, cuento o ficción.

[20]. "*[t]he tragedy of Pocahontas' assimilation to British ways and the success of the British at surviving in the colonies and conquering her 'war-like, incomprehensible relatives' became a great romance. First it was tobacco ads, later plays, poems, musicals, and now animated features and dolls that eroticize her in the imagination of adults and children alike*".

[21]. Young también verá en la narración de Smith un patrón narrativo cuya simbología religiosa ha permitido que se utilice a modo de parábola en la que el aventurero es la raza humana que cae en la prisión del pecado y la joven doncella extranjera es Cristo que lo salva. Young señala la incongruencia de que en esta parábola Cristo acabe siendo hijo del diablo, pero justifica su prevalencia a lo largo de los siglos a través de su funcionalidad (1962: 412).

[22]. Downs también distingue entre los personajes históricos y su posterior evolución narrativa, como si fuesen algo diferente (2008: 397), se maravilla con sarcasmo de que la vida sea reflejo del arte hasta tal punto que la historia de Smith de 1624 siga tan fielmente el trazado del "*Young Beichan*" que Gilbert Becket publicarían antes de 1300 en Inglaterra (Green 1975: 699). Pero el concepto de originalidad no llegaría a Inglaterra hasta finales del siglo XVIII y, siendo narrativas ambas, es normal y hasta recomendable que se adapte algún éxito previo en la redacción de cada obra nueva.

[23]. Young describe esta forma de creación/evolución narrativa con increíble precisión léxica: "Dramatizar la historia a partir de hechos presuntos, llenando los huecos o inadecuaciones con un material inventado que se presenta normalmente como factual, da lugar a tantos tratamientos diferentes —desde lo serio hasta lo absurdo— que comienzan a parecer incontables" (1962: 399, traducción de la autora ["*Dramatizing the story from the alleged facts, and filling gaps or inadequacies with invented material usually presented as fact, there are so many different treatments, ranging from the serious to the absurd, that they begin to look numberless*"]).

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"SPEAKING THROUGH ANOTHER CULTURE": FRANK MCGUINNESS'S VERSION OF FEDERICO GARCÍA LORCA'S *THE HOUSE OF BERNARDA ALBA (LA CASA DE BERNARDA ALBA)*

"HABLANDO A TRAVÉS DE OTRA CULTURA": LA VERSIÓN DE FRANK MCGUINNESS DE *LA CASA DE BERNARDA ALBA,* DE FEDERICO GARCÍA LORCA

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Abstract

Translation and adaptation play an essential role in Irish contemporary theatre. Irish playwrights have turned to continental writers, such as Federico García Lorca, to rewrite their culture through another culture. Frank McGuinness has followed this tradition but, while his rewritings of Euripides or Sophocles have been widely discussed by scholarship, his version of Lorca's *The House of Bernarda Alba* (1991) remains an unpublished text and, consequently, has not been the object of critical attention. This article intends to engage in close analysis of the play, addressing the strategies used by McGuinness to accommodate Lorca in the Irish context, and how the Lorquian themes voice the situation of women in the Northern Ireland of the 1990s, where McGuinness's play was first produced.

Keywords: Frank McGuinness, Federico García Lorca, *The House of Bernarda Alba*, Irish contemporary theatre, Irish woman.

Resumen

La traducción y la adaptación desempeñan un papel esencial en el teatro irlandés contemporáneo. Los dramaturgos y las dramaturgas han recurrido al teatro escrito en el continente por autores como Federico García Lorca para reescribir su cultura

a través de otra cultura. Frank McGuinness ha seguido esta tradición, aunque, si bien la crítica ha estudiado sus revisiones de clásicos como Eurípides o Sófocles, su versión de *La Casa de Bernarda Alba* no ha recibido demasiada atención académica porque aún no se ha publicado. En este artículo se analiza con detalle el manuscrito y se abordan las estrategias que utiliza McGuinness para contextualizar a Lorca en el nuevo espacio irlandés. Además se examina cómo los temas lorquianos se utilizan para hacer visible la situación de la mujer de los años 1990 en Irlanda del Norte, donde la obra se representó por primera vez.

Palabras clave: Frank McGuinness, Federico García Lorca, *La casa de Bernarda Alba*, teatro irlandés contemporáneo, mujer irlandesa.

1. Irish Contemporary Theatre, Frank McGuinness and Continental Drama

Irish contemporary theatre has been read by critics from different perspectives. In "Irish Theatre: The State of the Art" Fintan O'Toole identifies three main periods in the 20th century, differentiated by the diverse images of Irish society represented on stage. From his point of view, the first movement, headed by Yeats and Gregory, portrays an idea of Irishness related to Nationalism "patently bounded, close, sharing a common ground" (O'Toole 2000: 49). The second revival, from the 1950s onwards, visualizes an Irish society which includes other worlds, and represents the clash of cultures in Ireland at the hands of playwrights such as John B. Keane, Brian Friel and Tom Murphy. The third phase leaves aside conflict between tradition and modernity to get involved with the performance of isolated realities that can represent the whole story. A good example of this would be Frank McGuinness, an author for whom "singleness is a matter of gender, men and women existing in different zones whose borders cannot be crossed" (O'Toole 2000: 55), and he is well-known for his representation of women in Irish society, both in Northern Ireland and the Republic, who question stereotyped images.

On the other hand, Llewellyn-Jones in *Contemporary Irish Drama and Cultural Identity* approaches Irish theatre in relation to its cultural personality, and considers it as an expression of multiculturalism in terms of its interchange with other European contexts. Irish theatre has left behind the English influence to favor "a more egalitarian two-way traffic than the past imperial relationship between Britain and Ireland" (Llewellyn-Jones 2002: 143) in the plays of Becket, Friel, Murphy and McGuinness, who turn to continental drama through their versions, translations and cross-references. This abandonment of the local perspectives implies that "while the plays may have a realistic grounding, the language,

characters, action and form tend to invite a shift in register" (Jordan 2010: 7). Thus, different modes of representation appear and the relationship between the text and its context is made explicit by historical references, real events or the spaces used in the plays to contextualize the characters as well as the language used. As Irish plays have a readership outside the borders, the relationship between this theatre and European drama will make playwrights adopt different strategies to speak through other cultures. Within this scope, the theatre of McGuinness adds to the picture through his use of other cultures to speak about his own culture, writing forward, for instance, the plays of Lorca.

The most recent accounts of Irish theatre (Morse 2015) look back in time and acknowledge its malleability to adapt to the circumstances without losing its unique cultural identity despite its international expansion. These transitions can be seen in the changes that took place from the foundational Irish National Theatre of Yeats and Gregory to the contemporary Irish theatre. The result of this flashback is the notion that theatrical representations of the different changing realities in Irish society have been marked by the depiction of historical events, and different approaches adopted to achieve this include innovation and metatheatre, but also turning to previous dramatists and looking for inspiration in European playwrights. Contemporary analysis of Irish drama recognize the 1990s, when McGuinness's *The House of Bernarda Alba* was first produced by Lyric Theatre in Northern Ireland, as a period of thriving transformations which affected theatre. From that decade, plays in Ireland have been innovative in "striking technological advances, revisions to the stage-audience relationship, the development of devised practices, and the staging of controversial topics" (Etienne and Dubost 2017: 2), and McGuinness has contributed to this process. His theatre of revision and translation involves the consideration of the new audience and the development of new techniques to adapt the text to the new space and time.

It is essential then to identify in Irish contemporary theatre multiculturalism and mutual influences between local and European theatre. Translation and adaptation, especially since the middle of the twentieth century, have been crucial in this attempt to negotiate cultural identity. This has taken two directions mainly. Firstly, there has been a considerable increase in interest in the Greek classics,[1] and secondly, and more relevant for the purpose of this article, Irish playwrights have turned to writers such as Henrik Ibsen, Anton Chekhov, Bertolt Brecht and Federico García Lorca to rewrite Irish tropes and Frank McGuinness has been one of the most prolific.

McGuinness (1953-) was born in Buncrana, County Donegal and he currently lives in Dublin. He has been Professor of Creative Writing at University College Dublin since 2007 and has just retired. He is considered as one of the most

important Irish writers and his works have been produced and toured internationally. He has written extensively, 26 original plays and 22 adaptations or versions of Greek tragedies and European plays.[2] His theatre parallels the Irish society's transformations and he has placed women at the heart of his plays. This can be seen in his early works, *The Factory Girls* (1982), where five women from Donegal face the threat of losing their jobs, *Mary and Lizzie* (1989), about two Irish women and their relationship with Engels, or *Dolly West's Kitchen* (1999), which addresses the different points of view of the Irish conflict within the context of a family and with World War II raging in Europe.

McGuinness has reflected in his theatre the realities outside the Republic of Ireland. First, "as a native of Donegal, whose border location in the province of Ulster creates ties to Northern Ireland, he was close to a region that seemed […] more mired in the past tensions and divisions than capable of moving into the modern, globalized world the Republic embraced" (Lojek 2015: 191), and he wrote about the political Irish conflict in *Borderlands* (1984), exploring the differences between Northern and Southern views, or in *Gatherers* (1985), where people meet around the religious events of the Eucharistic Congress (1932) and the Papal visit (1979). He has also depicted the conflict with the British Empire in *Observe the Sons of Ulster Marching towards the Somme* (1985), a play recently acknowledged as "an established emblem of cross-cultural understanding" (Lojek 2015: 193), about those Irishmen from the Ulster Division who died in the Battle of the Somme fighting for the English Crown. In *Carthaginians* (1988) the crudest side of the social troubles in Northern Ireland is shown through characters from Derry who recall what happened after the Bloody Sunday events.

The interest in his plays has crossed borders and he is internationally known as a playwright who is able to transcend locality and present universal themes. In 1992 he wrote *Someone Who'll Watch Over Me* which presents three men, from Ireland, England and America, imprisoned together in Lebanon and they debate on survival, personal feelings and nationalism with a tone that mixes humor with insanity. After that, *The Bird Sanctuary* (1994) portrays three siblings who remember their childhood in an attempt to resolve the tensions of their present, and in *Mutabilitie* (1997) the writer goes back to the Ireland of the seventeenth century to explore the effects of myth, the poet and the playwright on reality: it is set in Munster and Edmund Spenser meets The File, a woman poet, and William (Shakespeare). *Speaking like Magpies* (2005) is about the Gunpowder Plot of 1605 and *There Came a Gypsy Riding* (2007) depicts the family meeting of the McKennas in the west of Ireland.

McGuinness's latest plays to date have been *The Match Box* (2012), which is the story of Sal, a damaged woman who retreats into her memories, and *The Hanging*

Gardens (2013), where Sam Grant, a novelist suffering from Alzheimer's, is looked after by his family who show an inability to understand each other. In 2016 he co-wrote *Signatories*—together with Emma Donoghue, Marina Carr, Joseph Connor, Thomas Kilroy, Éilis Ní Dhuibhne, Hugo Hamilton and Rachel Feehily— about the insights of those who signed the Proclamation of the Irish Republic during the Easter Rising which ended with the leaders sentenced to death. *Donegal* (2016) is a musical play telling the story of the Day family and their reencounter in Ireland after their son comes back from the States.

Apart from the original plays mentioned above, McGuinness is well known for his versions and adaptations of European dramas. He has rewritten Ibsen, as part of his 20-year project to translate his whole dramatic output, for example, *Rosmersholm* (1987), *Peer Gynt* (1988), *A Doll's House* (1996), *The Wild Duck* (2003), *Ghosts* (2007), and *John Gabriel Borkman* (2010). He has also taken on Chekhov in *Three Sisters* (1990) and Strindberg in *The Stronger* (1993) or *Miss Julie* (2006), and Italian playwrights such as Pirandello, in *The Man with the Flower in his Mouth* (1993), or the Spanish dramatists Federico García Lorca in *The House of Bernarda Alba* (1991) and Valle Inclán in *Barbaric Comedies* (2000) or Tirso de Molina's *Damned by Despair* (2012). He has also adapted Ostrovsky, Racine and many others and is currently adapting *Tartuffe*. Critics have acknowledged him as "the foremost Irish playwright of his generation" (Long and McGuinness 1999: 9), playing an essential role as a translator and becoming "one of the finest proponents of the theatrical adaptation working in the English language" (O'Mahony 2008).

There are some aspects of McGuinness's theatre that have been related by critics to Lorca. For instance, the use of spaces in *Gates of Gold* (2002) has been compared with *La Casa de Bernarda Alba* (1936) by Lojek (2011): both the Irish and the Spanish playwrights portray inside spaces to express the relationship between stage space, the home in this case, and confined interior worlds of the characters. Just as Lorca uses metaphors in his play to depict the struggle of the characters between their interior and exterior worlds, so McGuinness's theatre has made of the Irish stage a space "where a wide variety of individuals may belong and where 'home' has a complex meaning and a flexible meaning" (Lojek 2011: 126), which escapes traditional views. Lorca and McGuinness also share a special interest in women. They are the protagonists of Lorca's rural trilogy, *Blood Wedding* (1933), *Yerma* (1934) and *The House of Bernarda Alba* (1936). McGuinness's work has been included in a volume dedicated to women playwrights, *The Girls in the Big Picture. Gender in Contemporary Ulster Theatre* (2003), where his plays are acknowledged for their gendered nature and he is read as a writer who "championed the rights and lives of ordinary women and promoted the politics of gender as integral and homogeneous within social constructs" (Foley 2003: 110), as Lorca did.

A discussion of the strategies adopted by Irish playwrights to (re)write versions of continental drama helps focus McGuinness's craft. As mentioned above, the relationship between Irish and European theatre has been addressed by critics as a rapport born in the second half of the 20th century to escape the English influence, offer new Irish versions of the European texts and become more international. From this perspective, different categories have been established to describe the various approaches. According to Kosok (2004), for instance, translations such as McGuinness's *Peer Gynt* (1988) would constitute a first type, where no major changes are introduced in the new play; sometimes, Irish writers have local audiences in mind and, thus, they adapt their versions since they consider the English translations did not take this into account; in these cases the playwrights "employ Irish speech patterns and Irish expressions, sometimes even Gaelic words in order to place them in an Irish cultural context" (Kosok 2004: 43). Friel's *Three Sisters* (1981) would be an example of this technique, which is known as linguistic acculturation and tries to free the original play from the linguistic boundaries imposed by English translations. Thomas Kilroy's *The Seagull* (1981) is considered as a translocation to Ireland, where the playwright makes a "skillful and highly successful attempt at accommodating the play in Ireland which pervades the whole text" (Kosok 2004: 45); he does this for instance, by changing the original location to an Irish one, making references to the process of colonialism and using Irish words. Similarly, John Banville's *The Broken Jug* (1994) has an Irish location, evokes the Famine and uses Gaelic words. In addition, Banville changed the structure of the original play so his adaptation would also be an act of acculturation. Finally, when the process includes major changes, such as the use of the theme of the original play to evoke Irish social realities, or when it involves a reduction in the number of characters, critics consider the resulting text to be a new play, such would be McGahern's *The Power of Darkness* (1991).

Other translation scholars (Johnston 2013) who have looked at McGuinness's work have identified the relevance of the reception in the process of translating theatre. The practice adopted by the translator implies "in terms of performance, a re-making of the text" (Johnston 2013: 367). The translator for performance writes forward and this means that translation

> is not just the act of re-producing a given text by shepherding it across the so-called third space; it is about infusing that re-production (no matter how that is conceived) with the richness of a process that is simultaneously alive to the contexts of the original text […] and responsive to the cognitive and affective processing of a new audience. (373)

From this perspective, Johnston considers McGuinness's translation of Lorca as a play with a unique Irish tone acquired through the "coupling of Lorca's highly

imagistic style to a heightened Irish idiom" (Johnston 2013: 380). McGuinness's play can be understood as an act of writing forward the Lorquian play as it travels in time and context.

McGuinness would be following other Irish playwrights who, before him, had shown interest in Lorca; this was the case of Aidan Mathews who rewrote *The House of Bernarda Alba* in 1989, or Dermot Healy who revisited *Blood Wedding* in the same year. After McGuinness's version, Trevor Ó Clochartaigh and Ursula Rani Sarma rewrote *Yerma*, in 1991 and 2011 respectively, Lynne Parker and Sebastian Barry provided new versions of *The House of Bernarda Alba* in 1993 and 2003, and Brendan Kennelly adapted *Blood Wedding* to the Irish stage in 1996. Rewritings of Lorca in Ireland, especially during the decades of the 1980s and 1990s, have been focused on the rural trilogy, *The House of Bernarda Alba* being the play which has been most often adapted. Moreover, it should be highlighted that many of these texts remain unpublished, including McGuinness's play.[3] In spite of this fact, some of them have been of interest for academics and journalists who have already established links between the two cultures. This has been the case of Brendan Kennelly's version of *Blood Wedding,* read as resonating "with issues that have for long been central to Irish identity" (Persson 2009: 69), or Lynne Parker's *The House of Bernarda Alba,* defined as "amazingly at home in Ireland" (Sullivan 1994: 137). The performance of Sebastian Barry's new translation of the same play was reviewed as "replacing poetry with colloquial Irishisms" (Fricker 2003). In the case of McGuinness's version, special attention must be paid to the situation of women in Northern Ireland in the 1990s, when the play was first performed, to understand why and how the Lorquian themes fit the new context.

2. Women's Situation in the Northern Ireland of the 1990s

An analysis of the situation of women in both contexts of reception —Lorca's Spain in the 1930s and McGuinness's Belfast of the 1990s— contributes to highlighting the sense of affinity between the two plays. McGuinness's version was first performed in Belfast, by the Lyric Theatre, in 1991 and announced in *The Belfast Telegraph* as a play that exposes the conflict fired by passion and jealousy at the lack of freedom that women suffer:

> Lorca's play of repressed passion and jealousy opened at the Lyric Theatre last night —the story of six women imprisoned by their sexuality— directed by Helena Kant-Hudson. Only the eldest daughter sees the possibility of escape from her mother's blanket of oppression, as the village Romeo, money in mind, woos her through the

> bars of her window at night. The other sisters can only dream, "starving for marriage, grinding their hearts to dust", as passions soar and the drama unfolds. (McFadden 1991)

In the programme of the play, the artistic director at the Lyric, Rolland Jaquarello, makes reference to the similarities between the contexts of Lorca and McGuinness. He announces the performance as a major project which involved the revision of a text which had "so many affinities with Irish life" (Jaquarello in Lyric Theatre 1991: 6). McGuinness himself confirmed the universality of the play when he wrote for the occasion that repression should still be a topic of debate in Ireland:

> Repression speaks the same language through the world for it lacks in its vocabulary the one word James Joyce recognized as the only universal— Love. *The House of Bernarda Alba* is a study of love, but love denied, love damaged, love silenced. To break the silence requires courage, and courage needs a voice. To do Lorca's courage justice, that voice must be our own if we are to face the challenge of this play, and that challenge must be faced, for the subject is ourselves, alone, in pain. (McGuinness in Lyric Theatre 1991: 7)

Lorca's *La Casa de Bernarda Alba* (1936) addresses the situation of women in the Spain of the 1930s from different perspectives; women and family, religion and power or politics are amongst the main topics. Lorca's intention to write about the reality that surrounded him is clear when he indicated that "these three acts are intended as a photographic documentary" (García Lorca 1992: 118). He depicts family as an asphyxiating institution where long periods of mourning are an obligation for women, who are forced to wear black; this virtually makes them prisoners within the walls of their homes, where they become obedient domestic servants; religion, too, is another main force that clamps down on, for instance, sexual freedom; being a woman and having power are mutually exclusive opposites; women are expected to remain silent and, as a consequence, voiceless and unable to fight injustices. Lorca depicts the political situation he was living: the dictatorship of Primo de Rivera and the conservative government which followed drawn from the extreme right. This is reflected in the play mainly through the character of Bernarda, described as "the personification of repression" (Edwards 2003: 193). She is also understood as a classic example of the rich landowners who ruled and exploited farmers and exemplifies extreme Catholicism when she condemns and punishes her daughters' instincts of blooming sexuality. McGuinness's *The House of Bernarda Alba* appropriates these Lorquian themes to voice the situation of women in (Northern) Ireland in the 1990s.

McGuinness's play transcends the locality of Belfast and can be read as a critique of the stereotypical images of women in Ireland. In order to understand this affinity, attention must be paid to the Irish political and cultural constructions of

iconic women to personify Ireland. From the Celtic goddesses Cailleach Bhéirre, Medb, Deirdre or Gráinne, mythological characters who symbolize the Irish land, Ireland has been a woman; in the aisling poems of the 18th century the spéirbhean or sky-woman was used to name Ireland under the harsh British oppression. After these, Ibernia was used in the 19th and 20th centuries, this time by the English colonizers, to (re)present Irish women as frail opposed to British masculinity. Irish Nationalism added to the picture, and brought the figures of Dark Rosaleen, who asked for freedom and embodied Catholic values, Cathleen Ní Houlihan, an old woman who keened and lamented the loss of her green fields and told young Irish men to recover their land by warfare, or the iconic Mother Ireland, used when Catholicism and Nationalism were closer in Ireland, as a mother ashamed of her children who had failed to defend her. It can then be concluded that this

> iconografía femenina de la nación como madre genera un patrón de sacrificio —de la madre que ofrece el martirio de sus hijos por el bien de la nación y de los hijos que mueren por la "Madre Irlanda"— y crea un modelo de maternidad asexual imposible de alcanzar en la realidad, que atrapa a las mujeres irlandesas en unos determinados roles reduccionistas y opresores. (Rosende Pérez 2008: 264)

These oppressive Irish roles for women match Lorca's depiction of female imprisonment in Spain and can also be read in McGuinness's Irish Bernarda and her daughters.

Religion and politics continued to affect the situation of women in the Northern Ireland of the 1990s. After the Anglo-Irish Agreement, signed in 1985 to try to find an end to terrorism and The Troubles, laws related to women's rights were quite restrictive: abortion was illegal in all cases except when the mother's life was in danger, and divorce was difficult to obtain. Sociological approaches to the institution of family at that time indicate how it continued to be politicized: "If there is one element of life in Northern Ireland which is presumed to be common across the sectarian divide, it is the importance of family and kin relations, in both urban and rural settings" (McLaughlin 1993: 553). Households were formed by big families during the 1980s and 1990s and, while the role of women within these families seemed to have evolved in some senses towards a positive position, in so far as they shared responsibility with their partners as regards the earning of money, this was thrown out of kilter by the rise of unemployment in the 1980s. Marriage was still seen differently by men and women and whereas a young woman saw it as centrally related to love and sex, a married woman would probably think of having children as one of the most important reasons for getting married. In this context, contemporary social constructions of the identity of Irish women perpetuated previous stereotypes and figures like the Derry Mother appeared. The term was coined and defined by sociologists as a strong, silent woman, a strong influence on

the whole family and, evoking preceding iconic figures, a woman for whom "martyrdom [again] was a worthy goal in itself" (McLaughlin 1993: 560). In Belfast, the city where *The House of Bernarda Alba* was first released, a matrilineage was identified attached to the figure of the mother and its importance, while at the same time women's independence continued to be obstructed by religion and notions of decorum and reputation which demanded the absence of sex "as 'respectability' involves nonsexual morality and qualities such as decency, cleanliness and thrift" (McLaughlin 1993: 562). In this context, moreover, female solidarity was problematic since the fight for individual freedom was compatible with it, as happened in Bernarda's home.

The appearance of feminist groups in Belfast, such as the Women's Liberation Group in 1974, the creation in 1975 of the Northern Ireland Women's Right Movement, followed by the opening of the Women's Centre, confirm their need for support. Regardless of their political identity, women shared "a basic sense of injustice" (Kilmurray 1987: 179) and, while their involvement in issues related to their culturally and politically imposed role as peacemakers was applauded, their attempts to gain more freedom in matters concerning abortion or divorce were condemned by the Catholic Church. Family values should be preserved at all costs and silence pervaded while "the harsh realities of female survival in the working class areas of the Province continued to be either a minority or a whispered concern" (Kilmurray 1987: 180), i.e., silenced by religious conservatism. Thus, women were located on the margins during The Troubles and Northern Ireland considered as a peripheral area, between Britain and the Irish Republic, where "the sectarian polarization of Catholic and Protestant communities, which is both the cause and the result of it, has had unpleasant consequences for women" (Roulston 1989: 219). In addition, some political campaigns continued to foster the image of women "as the guardians of family life and in the interests of the community rather than as fighters for women's benefit alone" (Roulston 1989: 222) and, consequently, in political terms, it has been recognized that both the unionists or loyalists, mostly Protestant, and the nationalists/republicans, mainly Catholic "endorse the role of wives/mothers in furthering the cause of the community and political movement, thereby underscoring women's association with the domestic sphere" (Stapleton and Wilson 2014: 2073) and with a cloistered existence which echoes Lorquian spaces.

These social realities were not invisible for theatre and both scholars and Northern Irish playwrights reflected them in their work. For Fiona Coffey, author of *Political Acts: Women in Northern Irish Theatre, 1921-2012*, the theatre produced in Northern Ireland during the Troubles (1968/9-1998) constituted an expression of social realism and "has played an important yet unrecognized role in the North

as a critical and creative voice for civic and social change" (Coffey 2016: 4). The works of Anne Devlin or Christina Reid respond to this intention and need to be acknowledged. Devlin wrote, for instance, plays about women such as *Ourselves Alone* (1985) where three sisters suffer the effects of the 1981 hunger strikes in Northern Ireland, or *After Easter* (1994) in which Greta confronts her identity in her home after being exiled from her country; *Titanic Town* (1998) by Devlin is set in the Belfast of the 1970s and tells the story of Bernie McPheliny, a mother who tries to protect her family from the violence of the region. This same interest is depicted in the plays of Reid. *Tea in a China Cup* (1983) tells the story of three generations of Protestant women who try to protect family and the community in Belfast, the city which is also the setting for *The Belle of the Belfast City* (1989) where women from the same family confront their realities and expose their conflicts within the context of the anniversary of the Anglo-Irish Agreement. In the same year *My Name, Shall I Tell you My Name?* uses the character of Andrea to remember Irish history through her stories with her grandfather. Other examples of playwrights from Northern Ireland who exposed the Troubles through Catholic/Protestant differences are Marie Jones in *Somewhere Over the Balcony* (1987) or *A Night in November* (1994) and Stewart Parker in *Pentecost* (1987). Frank McGuinness adds to the picture with his version of *The House of Bernarda Alba* where social realism that focuses on the (hi)stories of women can also be seen.

3. Frank McGuinness's Version of *The House of Bernarda Alba*

When interviewed about his intentions for turning to European dramatists, McGuinness refers to them as one of his greatest influences and as a possibility for Irish culture to "speak to other cultures and even through another culture" (McGuinness 1989: 270). Moreover, he makes reference to the process of rewriting their works as an essential part of his craft. Lorca is, for him, one of the writers that should be a familiar literary reference in Ireland, and McGuinness considers this cultural act of ventriloquism, of writing forward, as a commitment to escaping from the imposed English influence and understanding other traditions that could compare with his own and be used to rewrite contemporary Irish realities:

> It's also a liberation. Irish literature has always been far too much defined in terms of its relationship with English literature. It's been a part of the taming of the Irish by the English to do that. But in fact if you look at our major authors of this century, O'Casey has much more in common with Brecht than he would with any other

> playwright, particularly in English. Joyce and Beckett looked to the continent. Joyce was deeply in touch with Dante and the Greeks, and Beckett with both French and Italian literature. I remain at home and try to make these great European playwrights part of our vocabulary. That is definitely a cultural ambition. But the private ambition is there too, which is to learn more about writing plays, really. Because these authors, Ibsen more than anybody, and Lorca, Strindberg, Chekhov, they teach you more about your craft. We are dealing with an art form, unapologetically dealing with an art form, and we need to know more about it. A painter has to go and look at other traditions, you have to go and look at other theatres and know at least what you're rejecting. (McGuinness in Long and McGuinness 1999: 16)

Lorca's *La Casa de Bernarda Alba* tells the story of Bernarda and her five unmarried daughters, Angustias, Magdalena, Amelia, Martirio and Adela, whose ages range from thirty-nine to twenty. They live imprisoned in the family house where their mother Bernarda rules with a rod of iron. Set in a rural Spanish village of 1936, and significantly subtitled *A Drama about Women in the Villages of Spain*, it exposes the effects of different types of socially-imposed repression on women. After the death of their father, Bernarda decides her life, and that of her daughters, will be an eight years' mourning within the walls of their immaculately whitewashed house. However, the girls' passions and jealousies unfold and cause the final tragedy, when Adela, the youngest, hangs herself, as she is unable to live without love. After that, individual emotions are forbidden forever in the house and Bernarda announces a resumption of her rule and so a cloistered existence for women. Lorca's play has been read as a depiction of the situation of Spanish women who, as happened with Irish women, "For centuries […] were idealized as willing saints and martyrs, passionately wishing to devote their entire lives to their Savior God; or they were envisaged, in diametrically opposite terms, as whores worthy of hell and damnation, torture and burning" (Knapp 1984: 383), and who were "a vessel, a container, and a procreating agent to be fertilized. [Thus,] Germination of the woman's individual personality, of no consequence, merits no consideration" (Knapp 1984: 383). Lorca was deeply concerned about social issues and he thought the playwright should put on stage issues people were afraid to face, such as the situation of women, depicted in his play as a suffocating existence strongly determined by a patriarchal society which did not accept any individuality or independence for mothers and wives.

McGuinness had already directed Lorca's play in the late 1970s, as a student in Coleraine, when he discovered the Spanish writer:

> I was always very fond of Lorca's poetry when I was a student and in my second year at college I had seen a production of *The House of Bernarda Alba*. I loved it and *The House of Bernarda Alba* was the first play I directed when I went to Coleraine. Ian Gibson had just produced his book on the death of Lorca so for about a year I was very steeped in Lorca. (McGuinness in Hurtley 1998: 61)

When he rewrites the play in the 1990s he keeps the original plot and accommodates Lorca in Ireland through different strategies. First of all, by means of his particular use of language, characterized by a process of simplification and rewriting of the words of the original text in an attempt to reach their essence. He uses his characteristic short sentences which provide the new text with a "nervous energy" (Kosok 2004: 45) which fits modern times. McGuinness offers "a sense of language being pushed to the limit, almost beyond the limit" (McGuinness in Long 2001: 303). He explains the process he follows for his translations and adaptations, making reference to his use of the language: he starts from a first version which should be "the more basic the better, to get to the bare bones" (McGuinness in O'Byrne 1989: 14), and he continues writing subsequent drafts, up to four, before reaching the final text trying "to get familiar with the fabric of the text … to see how the author has created individual characters and patterns of speech" (McGuinness in O'Byrne 1989: 14). As a result, a series of variations from the translation can be perceived. In order to understand this process of accommodating the text into the Irish context an English translation has been used, rather than the Spanish original play. This will allow me to propose McGuinness as a writer involved in the process of acculturation rather than as a translator.

McGuinness eliminates the original context of production, by replacing the subtitle "A Drama of Women in the Villages of Spain" by "A Version of Frank McGuinness"; and he lists the characters eliminating their ages and making reference only to their relationship with Bernarda. The initial stage directions are adapted to his style and, as a consequence, there is a necessary simplification of the language, an elimination of the ornaments and modernization of words:

> A dazzlingly white room in Bernarda's house.
> Thick walls with arched doorways, hessian curtains with tessels and flounces.
> Rush chairs.
> Pictures of unlikely landscapes, populated by nymphs and legendary kings.
> It is summer.
> A gloomy silence pervades the scene.
> The curtain rises on an empty stage.
> Church bells are ringing.
>
> (McGuinness 1991: 1)

> A very white inner room in BERNARDA'S house. Thick walls. Arched doorways with jute curtains trimmed with black beads and ruffles. Rush-bottomed chairs. Pictures of nymphs or legendary kings in improbable landscapes. It is summer. A great, shady silence envelops the stage. When the curtain rises, the stage is empty. Church bells are tolling.
>
> (García Lorca 1992:[4] 119)

The same technique is maintained throughout the play, and Act 3 starts with another stage direction where McGuinness uses the same verbal tense repeatedly, shorter sentences placed in different lines and, again, a renovation of English, creating a language which is, in the Irish version, more blatant, unconcealed and modernized:

ACT 3

Four white walls, faintly blue.
The interior patio.
It is night.
The scenery has a perfect simplicity.
Illuminated by the inside light the door lends a faint brilliance to the scene.
Stage center is a table with a lamp where BERNARDA and her daughters eat.
PONCIA serves them.
PRUDENTIA sits apart.
There is deep silence, broken only by the noise of plates and cutlery.

(McGuinness 1991: 65)

ACT THREE

The interior patio of Bernarda's house. It is night. Four white walls lightly bathed in blue. The décor must be one of perfect simplicity. The doors, illuminated by the light from inside, cast a delicate glow on the scene. At center, a table with an oil-lamp where Bernarda and her daughters are eating. Poncia is serving them. Prudencia is seated at one side. The curtain rises on total silence, interrupted only by the clatter of dishes and cutlery.

(García Lorca 1992: 155)

An additional significant variation in McGuinness' text is the presence of informal English or slang which can be seen, for instance, in the expressions used by Poncia to insult Bernarda, such as "Bossy bitch" (McGuinness 1991: 2), or "the big top? dog" (3), instead of the more neutral "Bossy! Tyrant!" (García Lorca 1992: 119) or "the most superior" (120), that are used in the English translation. McGuinness uses other techniques to make the text Irish. He changes some words that emphasize questions of social importance, mainly related to religion, in the new Irish context of reception. This is the case of expressions such as "Damn her" (García Lorca 1992: 120), used in the English translation by Poncia to refer to Bernarda, which become in McGuinness's text "God's curse on her" (McGuinness 1991: 3), or "God rest her soul" (5) instead of "may she rest in peace" (García Lorca 1992: 120).

With the same intention of emphasizing social realism, women's behavior and comments as regards certain controversial themes in Northern Ireland are made more explicit in McGuinness's text; this is the case of sexual comments about carnal desire; women who are "on the prowl for a man" (García Lorca 1992: 124) trying to reach "the heat" (124) in McGuinness's version are looking "for the warmth in the trousers" (McGuinness 1991: 10) or "for a man's water" (10). Some characters are especially affected by this attempt to find a sense of affinity

between the two cultures and McGuinness addresses Catholic/Protestant differences and sectarian division through Bernarda's discourse. Her violence and Catholicism are stressed in the new adaptation; when she criticizes the neighbors who arrive at her house during the wake for her dead husband: the "Go home and criticize everything you've seen! I hope many years go by before you cross my threshold again!" (García Lorca 1992: 125) from the translation becomes more violent in McGuinness and Bernarda animalizes her neighbors as follows: "Crawl back to your caves and criticize. God send it's many years before you're through my doors again" (McGuinness 1991: 11).

The rebellious and passionate Adela is transformed and made more of a rebel in the adaptation. This can be seen clearly in the language she uses to face her sisters; while in the translation she explains and complains that "I can't be locked up! I don't want my body to dry up like yours! I don't want to waste away and grow old in these rooms" (García Lorca 1992: 134), McGuinness rewrites her, adding strength and determination through a declaration that shows more determination: "I will not be locked up. I will not let my body turn like yours. I will not lose my life in these rooms" (McGuinness 1991: 28). Her suffering, moreover, is also reinforced and, after she has been told about Pepe el Romano's intentions to marry Angustias instead of herself, she enters the stage "with pains all over" (McGuinness 1991: 39), and not just feeling unwell as in the English version. The Irish writer does not use the term *curiosity* to refer to her sisters' interest in her state but "More like an inquisition" (40); she is referring to the lack of female solidarity that becomes apparent when each fights for her individual freedom. Her battle with Martirio is another example of how the Irish Adela uses transparent language:

> ADELA: No joke. You don't play jokes. Something else burns you up and it wants to come out. Say it now, clearly.
>
> (McGuinness 1991: 53)

> ADELA [exploding with jealousy]: it was not a joke — you've never liked games, never! It was something else, exploding in your heart, wanting to come out! Admit it openly, once and for all!"
>
> (García Lorca 1992: 148)

Finally, McGuinness's version contains some Irishisms such as *stór* (McGuinness 1991: 80) instead of *beloved*, used by María Josefa to refer to her imaginary child, or *tinker*, which is used as an insult hurled by Angustias at Adela, and evokes, in the play, the pejorative meaning of the word in Ireland: a tramp, an errant, a poor person who wanders without a proper sense of identity. *Tinker* can also be read in positive terms from a contemporary point of view as a member of a distinct ethnic group with a dissident identity.

The linguistic variations introduced by McGuinness are in consonance with the socio-cultural affinities that can be found between the Lorquian text and his own, specifically through the themes of family, marriage and religion. Bernarda's family is made up of women whose lives are marked by their lack of economic power, or, in the words of McGuinness's Poncia, "a house of women, five ugly daughters. They haven't a ha'penny. Apart from Angustias... The rest have their embroidered lace and plenty of good shifts" (McGuinness 1991: 4) and live in a "damned town where even the water won't flow" (12). Women are immobilized, their future marked by the socially imposed mourning, spending their time embroidering their bridal clothes, like Penelopes eternally waiting for a happy ending which will not come, doing what is expected of them by a society which assigns different obligations to men and to women: "Needle and thread for her, whip and mule for him" (13), as Bernarda says. They are expected to be silent and to keep within the domestic space, as mothers. They do not mix with men, who are the ones who have and control the money, are mourned for years, go to funerals to talk, look after each other and "care about land and cattle, and some silly bitch who feeds them" (22). However, women resent their lack of agency when "Even your eyes don't belong to you" (48). The figure of the Derry Mother as a contemporary representation of a Mother Ireland who perpetuates previous models finds a voice through Lorquian women, especially her tendency to embrace martyrdom as a necessary sacrifice for the common good. Traces of this personality can be read in McGuinness's Bernarda and the control she exercises over others, her position as the guardian of her kingdom and her statement that "I run my affairs and all of yours" (31).

Marriage, a problematic issue in (Northern) Ireland, due to controversies about abortion and divorce legislation, can also be read in the Irish version as having a negative effect on women. This is exemplified through the story of Adelaida, who was not allowed to go out of her house form the day she got married, or through Pepe's unemotional proposal to Angustias: "I need a good, obedient woman. That's you, if you want it" (McGuinness 1991: 36). McGuinness's play also fits into the 1990s new context through Lorquian references to religion and politics. Religious moral concerns such as purity are articulated, for instance, by means of the allusions to cleanliness in the play; from the very beginning Poncia states that everything in the house must be "shining like a new pin" (2), Bernarda orders the yard to be whitewashed, evoking Christian purity, and all the rooms inside the house are white. This is linked to the banning of sexual behavior or appetite, which are reprehensible and forbidden since they are seen as dirty. Bernarda accuses Angustias of hooking her "eyes into a man the day of your father's funeral" (15), wants to keep her daughters' bodies decent and the house is referred to as a convent. These women fear scandals and the all-too observant mob, ready to

punish female misbehavior in the name of decency with death. The inquisitive community, who watch behind their curtains, fit the Northern Ireland of the times where the Troubles and sectarian division cause social mistrust and suspicion. In the Irish version they make the women of the house feel they are rotting "in fear about what people say" (23).

For McGuinness, Lorca's play was mainly about love as the force that triggered the tragic ending. Love and passion explain the lack of solidarity among the women in the play, and when they hear that Angustias will marry Pepe el Romano she is seen as "ancient, sickly, the least woman of us all" (McGuinness 1991: 25). These feelings will also unleash Angustias' answer: "I'm all right, and if anyone doesn't like it they can go to hell" (33), and Adela's demand for freedom and her rights over her body, "I give my body to whoever I choose" (41), together with her openness on sexual desire: "I'd put down my mother to feed this fire burning between my legs" (43). Consequently, explosions of jealousy cause Martirio's anxiety for revenge and her fight with Adela, whose final attempt to find light and voice is silenced by Bernarda, McGuinness's cruel mother (Ireland).

4. Conclusion

When asked what attracted him to Lorca in the first place McGuinness referred to the similarities between the two cultures:

> I think that as an Irish writer you're very much aware of his Catholicism and of his rituals, and the immense debt that he has to liturgy, and his imagery, and his dialogue, and his crystallization, if you like, of peasant society, which wasn't that far removed from my own immediate background. (McGuinness in Hurtley 1998: 61)

The examination of the play by McGuinness has proved that literary criticism of his version of *La Casa de Bernarda Alba* throws light on the craft of the writer and on the universality of Lorquian themes, which closely fit the (Northern) Ireland of the 1990s. An analysis of the strategies used by the playwright to revive Lorca show that Irish women can express their realities through Lorquian voices. The fact that Lorca's play feels at home in Ireland could be a confirmation that the effects of Catholicism, politics, traditions and male dominance constitute key concepts that affect the processes of negotiation of identity for women at that time, in that place.

Frank McGuinness's *The House of Bernarda Alba* continues the tradition of Irish theatre of addressing Irish tropes that voice, in this case, the situation of women, but also the issues of social division and life within communities. Moreover, his play confirms Irish dramatists' interest in continental drama and Lorca in particular, which was especially productive during the 1980s and 1990s, when questions

related to Irish identity were being renegotiated after the important changes that were taking place in society. *The House of Bernarda Alba* in the hands of McGuinness can be understood as an adaptation, an act of acculturation conceived as an act of writing forward the English version, taking into account the new context of reception, so that the Irish audience identifies the meanings from the original play and the playwright talks through another culture.

Notas

[1]. See, for a comprehensive list of Irish plays based on Greek tragedies, McDonald 2002. Also, more recently, a full study in Arkins 2010.

[2]. See, for updated details on McGuinness's plays and adaptations, Irish Theatre Institute 2019.

[3]. I take the opportunity here to express gratitude to Frank McGuinness and his editor for giving permission to use the unpublished manuscript of *The House of Bernarda Alba* for academic purposes.

[4]. All the quotations given in this article from García Lorca's play have been taken from the translation by Michael Dewell and Carmen Zapata for the Penguin edition of *The House of Bernarda Alba* (1992).

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RESILIENCE AS A FORM OF CONTESTATION IN LANGSTON HUGHES' EARLY POETRY

LA RESILIENCIA COMO FORMA DE CONTESTACIÓN EN LA POESÍA TEMPRANA DE LANGSTON HUGHES

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Abstract

The history of the African American community has been inexorably bound to the concepts of oppression, downgrading, racism, hatred and trauma. Although the association between racism and concomitant negative psychological outcome has been widely assessed, little work has been done to study the role of literature as a cultural means to promote resilience among this oppressed group. Langston Hughes (1902-1967) stands out as a novelist, poet and playwright, and is one of the primary contributors to the Harlem Renaissance movement. Following the framework of theories of resilience, this article analyses the representation of adversity and positive adaptation in Langston Hughes's early stage poetry, and assesses his contribution to resilience among the African American people at a time of hardship and oppression.

Keywords: Langston Hughes, African American poetry, resilience, Harlem Renaissance.

Resumen

La historia de la comunidad afroamericana ha estado inexorablemente vinculada a los conceptos de opresión, degradación, racismo, odio y trauma. Aunque la

relación que hay entre el racismo y los efectos psicológicos negativos se ha estudiado ampliamente, aún son escasos los trabajos que analizan el papel de la literatura como medio cultural para promover la resiliencia entre los grupos oprimidos. Langston Hughes (1902-1967), destacado novelista, poeta y dramaturgo, es uno de los principales contribuyentes al movimiento conocido como Renacimiento de Harlem. Siguiendo el marco de las teorías de la resiliencia, este artículo analiza la representación de la adversidad y la adaptación positiva en la poesía temprana de Langston Hughes, y evalúa su contribución a la resiliencia de la población afroamericana en un momento de grandes dificultades y opresión.

Palabras clave: Langston Hughes, poesía afroamericana, resiliencia, Renacimiento de Harlem.

1. Connecting Psychological Resilience and African Americans

The African American people have for long experienced oppression, racism and trauma. The treatment of the former slave as a mere commodity, the broken promise of the American dream, and the racial subjugation translated into the annihilation of basic human rights. The traumatic effects of the African American struggle are still visible in the current situation of the African American community in the United States (Bonilla-Silva 2003; Feagin 2010). The association between racism and concomitant negative psychological outcome has been widely assessed in order to demonstrate the extent to which African Americans have been increasingly at risk from exposure to stressful life events (Karlsen and Nazroo 2002; McCord and Freeman 1990; Thoits 1991). That sustained trauma has been defined as "a reaction to profoundly injurious events and situations in the real world and, indeed, to a world in which people are routinely wounded" (Burstow 2003: 1302). Naturally, it has had a direct and grievous impact on African Americans' psychological and physiological health with effects ranging from the development of somatic complaints, negative affect, depression and anxiety (Bowen-Reid and Harrel 2002) to post-trauma responses (Bryant-Davis and Ocampo 2005). Added to this, chronic exposure to racism has aggravated the psychological and physiological responses among the African American community (Kwate et al. 2003; Williams et al. 2003).

Notwithstanding the evidence, many African Americans have not succumbed to psychological stress. Instead, they have shown psychological resilience. According to Rutter, this term is an "interactive concept that refers to a relative resistance to environmental risk experiences or the overcoming of stress or adversity" (2006: 1).

Furthermore, this author defines psychological resilience as a concept "concerned with the combination of serious risk experiences and a relatively positive psychological outcome despite those experiences" (2006: 2). It should be noted that resilience is a process that changes over time across the individual's lifespan and from situation to situation. Therefore, resilience is also the changing capacity of reaction an individual can show to the same stressor over his or her life (Davydov et al. 2010). But for resilience to occur, two pivotal concepts must occur, namely, adversity and positive adaptation (Luthar 2006; Luthar and Cicchetti 2000). The term adversity has been defined as any hardship and suffering connected to difficulty, misfortune and trauma (Jackson et al. 2007), while positive adaptation has been considered as "behaviorally manifested social competence, or success at meeting stage-salient developmental tasks" (Luthar and Cicchetti 2000: 858). In fact, the concept of resilience is correlated with general protective factors, not necessarily associated with issues of race. These factors are defined as "influences that modify, ameliorate, or alter a person's response to some environmental hazard that predisposes to a maladaptative outcome" (Rutter 1985: 600). Thus, optimism, curiosity, high levels of energy and the ability to detach and conceptualize problems (Block and Block 1980) are some of those factors that together with hardiness (Bonanno 2004), positive affect (Zautra et al. 2005), self-efficacy (Gu and Day 2007), self-esteem (Kidd and Shahar 2008), positive emotions (Tugade and Fredrickson 2004), spirituality (Bogar and Hulse-Killacky 2006) and extraversion (Campbell-Sills et al. 2006), constitute the universe that protects the individual from potentially harming issues.[1]

Research demonstrates that empirical experience with traumatic stressors promotes the implementation of mechanisms that display resilience (Breslau et al. 2006). That would explain why African Americans and other minority ethnic groups show statistically more resilience than the average white American individual. Additionally, Clauss-Ehlers (2008) incorporates the term culture to the definition of resilience and considers cultural factors as the centrepiece to understand resilient processes. Following this trend, a growing body of research suggests that certain aspects present in African American culture may have had a protective function and thus contributed to the individual's ability to overcome distress from racial discrimination (Miller 1999; Miller and MacIntosh 1999; Utsey et al. 2007). Racial socialization and social support networks are two empirically demonstrated aspects of African American culture used as defensive devices when facing psychological distress. Also messages that promote cultural pride, heritage and history contribute positively to the promotion of resilience and have commonly been associated with improved academic achievement, racial identity development and positive cognitive and socioemotional outcome (Caughy et al. 2002).

2. The Foundations of the Harlem Renaissance and the Consolidation of a New Movement

Past centuries have witnessed the atrocities committed in the name of white supremacy against the African American community. This racial dichotomy has always been present in the United States in spite of various attempts at improving the situation. Under the principle "separate but equal", the Jim Crow laws enforced racial segregation in public places between the end of Reconstruction in 1877 and the passing of the Civil Rights Act signed by President Lyndon B. Johnson in 1964. The mass protests against this *de jure* segregation reached its peak in the mid-1950s under the American Civil Rights Movement. This movement, to which many whites also committed, marked a milestone in the history of the United States not only because it meant a quest for equal rights legislation, but also because it served to convey an endeavour to face the *de facto* oppression and injustice experienced by blacks on political, cultural and social grounds. It became an unprecedented courageous march for freedom and racial equality, and it inspired the generations to come in their search for the status and support they deserved.

World War I had been a "kind of puberty rite for peoples the world over" (Huggins 2007: 83). These feelings of empowerment, independence and bold forcefulness inspired African Americans to find the origin of a culture they had inherited but that seemed, in Langston Hughes's words, "so long, so far away" (Rampersad 1995: 129). Furthermore, these feelings were to lay the foundations of the New Negro, which was a result of this race-building period (Huggins 2007). According to Huggins, such a quest for race reformulation was mainly based on the Americanization process African Americans had been subject to since their arrival in the Americas: "So, black men yearned, as American provincials, to find meaning and identity in Africa; their frustration was a measure of their Americanization" (2007: 83). This annihilation of cultural foundations combined with the alienation of the individual, the enslavement and violence, was the spark that set off the renouncement of the principles imposed by the white American society of the time. The materialization of a new redefined identity was to be founded upon an enriched folk culture whose spiritual freedom jarred moralizing conventions and codes of the American society. This attempt to rethink and redefine race, combined with the dreadful situation of blacks, constituted a truly heroic task to undertake. Thus, it can be affirmed that the struggle of the African American people took the form of positive adaptation strategies to alienation and violence through the gestation of a new movement. Feelings of empowerment, race, pride and reformulation converged to embody a determined defence of blackness through a massive cultural production that materialized in the Harlem Renaissance. The

prospective consolidation of the Negro as a first-class citizen needed the reaffirmation of a rooted past and the appraisal of the race. Black intellectuals, poets and writers came to the fore advocating the reformulation of a new identity, the New Negro, that would emphasize its worth and its culturally enriched past. This movement emerged in the early years of the 1920s in Harlem, a district of New York City occupying a large part of northern Manhattan. This area would later become the mecca of the Negro artist and epitomize the artistic movement of the so-called Harlem Renaissance.

3. Langston Hughes and the Harlem Renaissance

Undoubtedly, the role played by the Harlem Renaissance in the reconstruction of African American sense of identity was essential. This artistic movement became a shelter from the cultural trauma this oppressed group had been experiencing for too long. Since cultural trauma involves "a dramatic loss of identity and meaning, a tear in the social fabric, affecting a group of people that has achieved some degree of cohesion" (Eyerman 2001: 2), the Harlem Renaissance movement succeeded in putting a collective memory into words, transforming negative into positive and reconstructing the African sense of identity.

Amidst the intellectuals and writers of the time, Langston Hughes (1902-1967) stands out as a poet, novelist and playwright, and particularly as one of the primary contributors to the Harlem Renaissance. Hughes succeeded in speaking his mind by portraying a many-sided picture of the African American at a time when America was designed and reserved for whites. His personal evolution and refinement into a poet of the people goes hand in hand with the progression of the historical and sociopolitical events impinging on the African American of the time, to whom he predominantly showed a positive and optimistic approach in his literary contributions.[2] By the same token, the tribulations reflected in his work were generally used as an opportunity to find hope in hardship. He did not let bitter experiences defeat him. On the contrary, the struggle, inner strength and courage he cultivated are also detectable in his prose, poetry, newspaper columns, autobiography and fiction, thus demonstrating a high degree of resilience. The so-called leading voice of the Harlem Renaissance had a strong sense of race pride. His production focuses on the ordinary lives of the black community contextualized under the shadow of racism, oppression and injustice. Likewise, moral, political and social issues are present in his work where he always adopted a sociopolitical stand translated into a fierce defence of dignity and humanity. His social activist profile emanated from the admiration he professed towards authors of the American literary tradition, among whom we find Harriet Beecher Stowe, whose

novel *Uncle Tom's Cabin* (1852) he described as "a moral battle cry" (Rampersad 2002: 203). Hughes's development as a social poet was undoubtedly inspired also by Whitman, Twain and Du Bois, whose humanity and sense of freedom he incorporated into his art (Tracy 2004).

But Hughes's aesthetics was also endowed with clear features of the folk heritage he so much worshipped. The essence of the spirituals is undeniably linked to the essence of the black race and its history of suffering, sorrow and oppression (Chinitz 1997). Hughes's attempt to use the oral tradition as a template for the African American poetry constitutes a hallmark in his early stage (Onwuchekwa 1977). The emotional power of the folk materials is incorporated in a legacy of poems aimed at capturing the imagination of the ordinary citizen and expressed in their own vernacular. This shows that cultural factors are central to understanding how resilience shows in Langston Hughes's work.

The way his personal life and the course of history influenced his production would inspire his ideological transformation. Particularly relevant were the Jim Crow laws as forms of subjugation which he contested through an appeal to cultural pride and racial awareness, especially during his early years as a poet and the attempts at the Americanization of the Negro in the 1920s. At this time, Huggins averts, "the black man's metamorphosis was assumed by everyone, and thoughtful people knew the change would have a profound effect not only on the American Negro but on American culture, and, indeed, the multi-colored world itself" (2007: 56). African Americans were then in a position to reaffirm themselves as first-class citizens by rejecting former, fictional stereotypes and exercising their full rights as free people. Through the rediscovery and redefinement of their culture, and the defence of their values and race, they would contribute to the development of a new budding but sceptical American civilization. This new identity, still to be negotiated, inevitably presented the African American with a dilemma that implied coming to terms with a racist society that would reject any contribution of value based on race-building and that was by no means willing to welcome the Negro in complex urban life. W.E.B Du Bois, an author much admired by Hughes, had already shed some light on this matter in 1903 in his theory of double-consciousness in *The Souls of Black Folk*, by stating the following:

> In this merging he wishes neither of other selves to be lost. He would not Africanize America, for America has too much to teach the world and Africa. He would not bleach his Negro soul in a flood of white Americanism, for he knows that the Negro blood has a message for the world. (Du Bois, Washington and Johnson 1965: 215)

It was indeed this need to show to the white world the talents and worthiness of a well-grounded culture that set Langston Hughes on his quest for race appraisal through his cultural production between 1920 and 1930. Despite the reawakening

of racism through the new Ku Klux Klan, this period was key to the history of the African American in the United Sates. Accordingly, Hughes's initial period as a poet mirrors different forms of resilience incorporated in his art. In the words of Alain Locke, one of the catalysts of the New Negro Movement, this new American Negro was "acting as the advance-guard of the African peoples in their contact with the Twentieth Century civilization […] and had the sense of a mission of rehabilitating the race in world esteem from that loss of prestige for which the fate and conditions of slavery[3] have so largely been responsible" (1997: 14).

4. Langston Hughes's Early Literary Contributions

Hughes's repertoire all through the 1920s shows an absolute pride in his race despite racial tensions, and an unshakeably positive attitude no matter the effect his work might have on a white audience. In his essay "The Negro Artist and the Racial Mountain", published in *The Nation* in 1926, Hughes gives proof of how positive adaptation is embraced when facing adversity, a stance that would serve as a basis for his literary production:

> We younger Negro artists who create now intend to express our individual dark-skinned selves without fear or shame. If white people are pleased we are glad. If they are not, it doesn't matter. We know we are beautiful. And ugly too. The tom-tom cries and the tom-tom laughs. If colored people are pleased we are glad. If they are not, their displeasure doesn't matter either. We build our temples for tomorrow, strong as we know how, and we stand on top of the mountain, free within ourselves. (Hughes 1926: 694)

During the 20s, the reader encounters a series of poems that celebrate difference. They constitute a landmark by looking on the bright side when modern America in the making was not yet willing to embrace the principles and morals that Hughes advocated for. In this sense, his poetry has been qualified as "a fundamentally new kind of verse, one that told of the joys and sorrows, the trials and triumphs, of ordinary black folk, in the language of their typical speech" (Rampersad 1995: 4). This gives Langston Hughes' work scope and consistency enough for it to offer a corpus for research upon resilience. During this early period (in 1921), before the poet makes a major ideological turn to the left after his trip to Haiti in 1931, Hughes enrols at Columbia University. He withdraws one year later and starts laying the foundations that will so uniquely characterize his art. His failure to visit his father in Mexico in 1922 forms one of the most crucial episodes in Hughes's first autobiographical work, *The Big Sea* (1940), where he confesses: "My father hated Negroes. I think he hated himself, too, for being a Negro […] and when I thought of my father I got sicker and sicker. I hated my father" (1993: 40-49).

Later, through his voyage to the west coast of Africa in 1923, he discovers the real meaning of blackness, as he writes: "[…] my Africa, Motherland of Negro peoples! And me a Negro!, Africa!" (1993: 10). But it is not until 1925 that Hughes establishes first contact with one of the white patrons of the Harlem Renaissance, Carl Van Vechten, and other writers and intellectuals such as Alain Locke, Zora Neale Hurston and Wallace Thurman, who so passionately commit to the same cause and help him channel his literary success.

All in all, the decade between 1920 and 1930 represents the awakening of his career as a celebrated artist, materialized in an arsenal of poetry that embodies a celebration of difference and an appraisal of race from a positive and resilient perspective. At this point, his work is not yet sullied by the pessimism and sadness later reflected in his art as a result of the injustice and helplessness undergone by African Americans in the United States. On the contrary, this decade encompasses a firm determination, namely, "to explain and illuminate the Negro condition in America and obliquely that of all human kind" (Rampersad 2002: 418). This aspiration would imbue his poetry for more than forty years.

5. Exploring Hughes's Poetry of Resilience

Following the theoretical pathways that resilience studies takes, this analysis focuses on Langston Hughes' early poetry (1920-1930). During this period, he published two collections of poems, *The Weary Blues* (1926) and *Fine Clothes to the Jew* (1927). And then, some of the poems included in *The Negro Mother and Other Dramatic Recitations* (1931), *Dear Lovely Death* (1931) and *The Dream Keeper and Other Poems* (1932) had been conceived and published elsewhere during this early stage. The poems under study here were later collected and edited by scholar, literary and cultural critic Arnold Rampersad in *The Collected Poems of Langston Hughes* (1995), a volume dedicated to Hughes's fruitful career as a poet from 1920, the moment when the desire to become a writer is born, to his death in 1967. In the interest of clarity, all references to Langston Hughes's poems will be to this comprehensive volume. In order to detect both adversity and positive adaptation, the two factors required for resilience to emerge, particular attention is paid to his representation of the features of adversity in the form of racial discrimination, and the hopes and dreams that allow resistance and hope. These can be traced in the tone of speech, the use of the voice and the semantic fields used to convey rage and hope, tradition and change, when calling upon the Negro community to show resilience.

The assertive tone heard in most poems is achieved by the use of the present and imperative tenses and avoiding the conditional forms. This way Hughes voices

the familiar situation of oppression but also expresses his unshakeable hope for a different future. Particularly meaningful is "Mother to Son", first published in *Crisis* in 1922, where the painful experience of prior generations is voiced through the mother figure speaking. Strategies of resistance are evidenced in the use of the first person speaker who explains the historical struggle his people had to endure. Here, the mother embodies trust and hope. Her direct illocutionary act is both colloquial and demanding and positions the author as a witness of a situation too real to be questioned. Through the metaphor of life as "no crystal stair", tacks, splinters and boards torn up symbolize the hardship that has been overcome:

> For I'se still goin', honey,
> I'se still climbin'. (Rampersad 1995: 30)

Here, the past struggle and the triumphant tenacity that the mother figure embodies justify the imperative verses: "Don't you set down on the steps" and "Don't you fall now". Through the use of the universal bond mother-son, this poem addresses the African American community and witnesses both adversity and positive adaptation strategies. Underneath, it is possible to discern the speaker's intention or, as Thomas rephrases, "the force of an utterance" (2014: 2). He is the collector of history, the witness of change and the voice of tomorrow.

The use of voice is a distinctive device that Hughes displays to address the conflict between reality and utopia. By means of a natural conversational tone and direct speech, Langston Hughes favours the use of the first and the second person singular, 'I' and 'you'. His aim is to voice the struggle and become a sort of guardian of history as well as the treasurer of hope. He shows a tendency to use the "I" pronoun to identify with an experience of oppression, as in "Mother to Son". Also in "I, Too", first published in *Survey Graphic* in 1925, he relates different forms of adversity from an inclusive and assertive perspective, thus nullifying any possibility of contestation, as the following lines illustrate:

> I am the darker brother.
> They send me to the kitchen
> When company comes,
> But I laugh,
> And eat well,
> And grow strong. (Rampersad 1995: 46)

Already at this early stage, Hughes' poem "To Certain Intellectuals", first published in *Messenger* in 1925, bluntly expresses the duality between adversity and positive adaptation, using the first person singular for self-identification with adjectives such as "poor", "black", "ignorant", "slow". On the contrary, he uses a "you" to establish an emotional distance with those who do not meet those attributes

altogether, and he does that by means of repetition of the verse "You are no friend of mine" (Rampersad 1995: 43).

To illustrate the complexity of post-trauma reactions, the poems published at this first stage also offer paths for healing and means of positive adaptation. Resistance is a frequent attitude that allows him and his people to overcome adversity. In "Red Roses", first published in *Poetry* in 1926, he affirms "I'm waitin' for de springtime" (Rampersad 1995: 83-84), and in "Hey!, Hey!", published in *FCTTJ,* he hints at a change of attitude beyond resignation in the following verses:

> I could be blue but
> I been blue all night long. (112)

In general terms, the use of the pronoun "You" tends to be accompanied by the imperative form of the verb to indicate ways to overcome adversity. In "Dreams", first published in *World Tomorrow* in 1923, Hughes calls for hope: "Hold fast to dreams" (Rampersad 1995: 32), and a similar tone is detected again in "Mother to Son" with the line: "Don't you fall now" (30). In "The Dream Keeper", first published in *Survey Graphic* in 1925, the author urges those who actively believe in change, the ones he calls "the dreamers", to pursue their hopes while he offers himself as the keeper of their aspirations. In this poem, Hughes sets forth his mission as the guardian of those precious but still weak dreams that need protection, symbolized in the following metaphor-filled stanza:

> Bring me all of your dreams,
> You dreamers,
> Bring me all your
> Heart melodies
> That I may wrap them
> In a blue cloud-cloth. (Rampersad 1995: 45)

There is a noticeable scarcity in the use of the collective pronoun "we", that can be found in poems such as "Justice", first published in *Amsterdam News* in 1923, and in "Shadows", "Afraid", "Youth" first published in *Crisis*, in 1923, 1924 and 1924 respectively.

Langston Hughes is also the poet of ordinary situations for his aim is to reach the black masses, as Rampersad affirms: "He was prepared to write 'down' to them" (1995: 5). This might have been the reason why his particular poetic representation of daily existence has not always been well received. His style has been defined as "far too simple and unlearned" (3), a matter much contested and more accurately typified later as "the illusion of simplicity" (Harper and Hughes 1996: 1). In any case, Langston Hughes's aesthetics of simplicity typifies his writing (Ford 1992) by means of clarity in language and down-to-earth topics. The poem "Red Roses"

(Rampersad 1995: 83) is an appropriate example of where these two devices converge. With a profusion of metaphors, the poet awaits the "Sweet, sweet springtime", a future full of blooming flowers such as "de tulips" and "de roses red" that will make the present-day suffering worth living. These are the hopes that sustain his resilience against "de winter" and "de snow". Despite the metaphorical nature of "Red Roses", or maybe to soften it, this simple but encouraging message is accompanied by the use of very colloquial language that mirrors the oral culture of the African American community. Suppression of letters, as in "I'm waitin'", and shortening of words, as in "Un'neath", are also frequently used in other poems where oral speech is purposely reproduced, as in the following verses of the poem "Hey! Hey!":

> Sun's a risin',
> This is gonna be ma song. (112)

In the poem "Mother to Son", Hughes reclaims "the use of dialect by black poets" (Rampersad 1995: 30) replicating the oral speech so well known to the poet. Particularly striking are the following verses:

> I'se been a-climbin'on,
> And reachin' landin's,
> And turnin' corners,
> And sometimes goin' in the dark
> Where there ain't been no light. (30)

Through these lines the author seeks to naturalize a message so that it is openly received by his target audience. At the same time, this device helps to underpin Hughes as a "folk poet" (Rampersad 1995: 4). In sum, the familiarity infused in the tone of speech adds credibility and trust, two coping mechanisms that ally with tradition and contribute to resilience.

The distinctive use of language found in the selected poems also contributes to fix resilience as a means of overcoming difficulties. Linguistically, the author concentrates on two main semantic fields that oppose each other, one related to serious risk experiences, and another related to a relatively positive psychological outcome. These two opposites can be organized under the concepts 'shadows' and 'light', the former referring to negative experiences and the latter expressing the poet's hopes and means of coping. Examples of the first group might include expressions such as "heavy shade" and "stifling air" (in "Shadows"), "the too rough fingers" (in "The Dream Keeper"), "my fist is clenched" (in "Militant"), "winter winds" and "strip their body bare" (in "Stars"), "I'm weary, weary,/ Weary as I can be" (in "Lonesome Place"), "Because we are alone" and "And we're afraid" (in "Afraid"), "broken-winged bird" and "barren field" (in

"Dreams"). They serve to identify the multiple forms that adversity can take on and how the poet's people have endured them.

But the poet's positive nature and his firm conviction that his role is that of the recipient of his people's dreams are also present in the form of expressions such as: "tomorrow bright before us" (in "Youth"), "heart melodies" (in "The Dream Keeper"), "Sweet, sweet springtime" (in "Red Roses"), "a thousand lights of sun" (in "As I Grew Older"), "a bonze vase" and "a round fountain" (in "Dreamer"), together with positive and active verbs such as "we march" (in "Youth"), "I laugh" (in "I, Too"), "we must find the sun" (in "Shadows"). In light of this, the reader finds comfort and hope, and his resilient nature is attested to by "his capacity to endure and prevail over ill" (Miller 2015: 4). Moreover, Langston Hughes is apt to use some linguistic features that serve to reinforce the mentioned imagery so particular to the poet. He uses repetition of lines to stress some key messages, such as "You are no friend of mine" (in "To Certain Intellectuals") and "Life for me ain't been no crystal stair" (in "Mother to Son"), as well as personifications, as in "the too rough fingers of the world" (in "The Dream Keeper"), and similes, and metaphors as in "Bright like a sun— My dream" (in "As I Grew Older") or "life is a broken-winged bird" (in "Dreams").

Through a masterful use of African American speech and life experience, Hughes's ultimate purpose is to voice the different forms of oppression suffered by his people. At this early stage of his career, adversity can only be healed by holding on to the dreams of a better future, as the poem "Dreams" typifies. The resilient attitude shown by Langston Hughes takes the form of repetition in the following lines of the poem "Mother to Son":

> For I'se still goin', honey,
> I'se still climbin'. (Rampersad 1995: 30)

These words epitomize the tireless spirit of the African American community.

6. Conclusion

According to the evidence detected in his early poetry and the sociohistorical and cultural circumstances that surrounded it, Langston Hughes can be taken as an example of resilience in the face of adversity. His representation of resilience comprises both adversity in the form of the hardship experienced by the author and his people, and positive adaptation, in the form of the social competence he displays to overcome those adverse circumstances. Through the use of assorted linguistic mechanisms, such as the use of the metaphors, the assertiveness of the tone of his speech, his use of opposites to exemplify change, and the repetition of

lines, among other devices, Hughes succeeds at portraying a true and vivid testimony of the struggle of the African American in the Unites States of the 1920s with a spirit of endurance, strength, hope and resilience.

The poems selected witness and contest the problem of racial segregation. The concepts of adversity and positive adaptation gain special importance as they furnish evidence of the injustice and oppression experienced by the author and his peers. A combined analysis of the poetic devices used by the author illustrates how adversity and positive adaptation are reflected in the tone of speech of his poems, his use of voice and the semantic fields that characterize his lines. Equally, the emergence of resilience springs from both the protective factors linked to the African American culture, racial socialization and social support networks, and the author's innate optimism and energy. The merging of the two diminishes the gravity of problems and develops coping mechanisms that respond to stressful events. Thus, in Langston Hughes's early poetry, resilience becomes the poet's tool to overcome those challenges. As a result, realism and idealism merge as a means of setting the hardship and injustice endured by the Negro in America against the recurring and long-lasting dream of a better future. In fact, it is this realism that makes the poet reach the hearts of the common people by firmly planting an idea of a better tomorrow in their minds that would make them cling to hopes and save them from going to pieces. This proves the rich and thought-provoking correlation between literature and psychological resilience in Hughes's poetry and helps us understand particular parts of the whole human experience and the way they are related (Moghaddam 2004). Furthermore, in the light of this work, the relationship between these two bodies of independent research, literature and psychology, is very close, as both constitute the foundations of the human psyche and shed some light on why humans behave the way they do. Adopting this approach in the study of Hughes's art in the period 1920-1930 clears up some of his concerns about racial discrimination, and guides us deeper into his motivations and his whys and wherefores as a writer. This new optic substantiates Langston Hughes as the poet of resilience amid the adversities and dreams that the African American community experienced at the dawn of the New Negro Renaissance.

Notas

[1] It is interesting to clarify the difference between resilience and coping because too often these two concepts have been misused. Resilience refers to the way an issue is assessed, whereas coping alludes to the mechanisms employed after a stressful event, resilience tending to bring a positive response while coping can bring both positive and negative reactions. For further clarification, read Fletcher and Sarkar (2013).

[2] It should be noted that this resilient attitude was not only present in Hughes's works. Other leading voices of the Harlem Renaissance such as Zora Neale Hurston and Countee Cullen also explored this human dynamic in their production. The deep understanding of the black folklore that Zora Neale Hurston developed as an anthropologist led her to understand the souls of the black individuals in different environments. From her observations, she inferred a resilient attitude which in combination with humor, imagination and wisdom among others was "what inspired the being-ness of black people" (Plant 2007: 53). As evidenced in her essay "How It Feels to Be Colored Me", Hurston's commitment not to feel "tragically colored" (1928: 215) emerges in the face of hardship and takes shape in a resilient frame of mind. Countee Cullen, however, resorted to his African heritage to empower the black individual. Highly influenced by Garvey, he "proceeded to create for himself and his scorned black brethren a royal and even imperial African ancestry" (Wagner 1973: 316) as shown in "The Ballad of the Brown Girl" (1927). There is much in the history of the Harlem Renaissance yet to be analysed that deserves further scholarly attention.

[3] Although slavery and its appalling impact even after its abolition are recurring topics in Hughes's work, his early poetry does not exploit these issues to their fullest extent. It will be later, in poems such as "The Negro Mother" (1931), "Let America be America Again" (1943), "Freedom's Plow" (1943) or "Slave Song" (1949), among many others, that Hughes explores the enduring imprint of slavery, a phenomenon more recently conceptualized by Saidiya Hartman, the effects of which are "skewed life chances, limited access to health and education, premature death, incarceration, and impoverishment" (2007: 6).

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THE LIMITS OF REASON IN J.M. COETZEE'S *THE SCHOOLDAYS OF JESUS*

LOS LÍMITES DE LA RAZÓN EN *THE SCHOOLDAYS OF JESUS,* DE J.M. COETZEE

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Abstract

This paper explores J.M. Coetzee's latest novel, *The Schooldays of Jesus* (2016), and focuses on its intense dialogue with ancient philosophical ideas such as Plato's Theory of Forms and some of the author's literary precursors, such as Cervantes' *Don Quixote* (1605) and Musil's *The Confusions of Young Törless* (1906). It is also a tribute to Johann Sebastian Bach's brilliant mind and music, which Coetzee has already commented upon on different occasions. *The Schooldays* is an intertextual story about the magic of numbers, dance and music and tells the story of Davíd, a rebellious child who is sent to Juan Sebastián Arroyo's Academy of Dance (Arroyo is Bach's name translated into Spanish), where he learns that music and dance can help us communicate with the universe and discover our true selves. It is the first time Coetzee incorporates magical elements and constant spiritual allusions in one of his plots, and I will argue that these, together with the intertextuality with other novels and texts and the characterization of the main characters, are used to show (once again) his ambivalence towards rationalism, but in a different style. This represents a turning point in his literary career.

Keywords: Coetzee, Don Quixote, intertextuality, irrationality, music.

Resumen

Este artículo analiza la última novela de J.M. Coetzee, *The Schooldays of Jesus* (2016), y se concentra en el intenso diálogo que establece con ideas filosóficas antiguas, como la teoría de las ideas de Platón, y con algunos de sus precursores literarios, como *Don Quijote* (1605) de Miguel de Cervantes y *The Confusions of Young Törless* (1906) de Musil. *The Schooldays of Jesus* es también un tributo a la mente brillante y a la música de Johann Sebastian Bach, a quien Coetzee admira, como ha comentado en diferentes ocasiones. La novela, un ejemplo de intertextualidad que combina la magia de los números, la danza y la música, narra la historia de Davíd, un niño rebelde que cursa estudios de danza en la academia de baile de Juan Sebastián Arroyo (Johann Sebastian Bach traducido al español). Allí Davíd aprende que la música y el baile nos pueden ayudar a comunicarnos con el universo y a descubrirnos a nosotros mismos. Esta es la primera vez que Coetzee incorpora elementos mágicos y alusiones del mundo espiritual a uno de sus argumentos. En nuestra interpretación, argumentamos que estos elementos, la intertextualidad con otras obras literarias y la caracterización de los personajes principales son la forma que tiene Coetzee de mostrar su ambivalencia hacia el racionalismo, tal y como ha venido haciendo en todas sus novelas, pero que en esta ocasión representa un cambio significativo, ya que lo hace con un estilo nuevo.

Palabras clave: Coetzee, Don Quijote, intertextualidad, irracionalidad, música.

1. Introduction

Coetzee's novels are well known as illustrations of the excesses and consequences of the abuse of power and human suffering in many different ways. In them, the author portrays the psychological mechanisms which the characters develop in order to survive in the most extreme social circumstances of civil war, racism and complete isolation. These mechanisms often seem illogical and are linked to a moment of revelation that exposes the limited capacity of our reason to govern our lives. For instance, one of Coetzee's most powerful figures of Otherness, Michael K in *Life & Times of Michael K* (1983), refuses to participate in a civil war and isolates himself on a farm, where he hides in a hole and cultivates pumpkins. Thus, he finds a niche on the margins of society and refuses to eat for weeks, becoming undernourished and putting his life in danger. Another example is Mrs Curren in *Age of Iron* (1990). While she narrates the last months of her life in a letter to be sent to her daughter after her death, she witnesses the destruction of a township in front of her very eyes. We might conclude that it is precisely her perseverance and the writing of that letter that keep her alive: "Death may indeed be the last great

foe of writing, but writing is also the foe of death" (Coetzee 1990: 115-116). Mrs Curren makes the most irrational decision when she decides to trust a homeless man, Mr Vercueil, to post the letter for her. Moreover, Coetzee's probably most controversial novel *Disgrace* (1999) begins with the tribulations of David Lurie, a professor of Romantic poetry at Cape Technical University. Characterised as a "servant of Eros" (1999: 52), he forces one of his students into a sexual relationship, and gets dismissed from the university. Lurie retreats to his daughter's smallholding where she is gang raped. The protagonist, who justifies his actions by arguing that his temperament is fixed without alteration, learns to accept his disgraceful existence when he becomes aware of the suffering of the animals he begins to take care of and in connection with the opera on Byron he is trying to write; therefore, the novel seems to hold out hope that human beings "can awake from their moral immaturity" (Woessner 2010: 238). These are examples of how many of Coetzee's protagonists are brought to the limits of reason by unexpected events. In his two latest novels, *The Childhood of Jesus* (2013) and *The Schooldays of Jesus* (2016), he again approaches this idea but from an entirely different perspective, creating a place where there is, at least apparently, no power and no hierarchy of any kind.

When J.M. Coetzee moved from South Africa to Australia in 2002, the content and emphasis of his work also shifted. His novels continue to encourage readers to engage with difficult ethical questions, but the difference is that from *Elizabeth Costello* (2003) onwards, a new and more intense philosophical tone has emerged.[1] Indeed, *Elizabeth Costello* contains philosophical lectures, and deals with the utmost importance of human attitudes towards animals, *Slow Man* (2005) focuses on the nature of care and emotions, and Coetzee's recently published collection of short stories *Siete Cuentos Morales* (2018)[2] features the character of Elizabeth Costello, who is an old woman facing death, and reveals different moral didactic purposes and the primacy of ethics in life.

Moreover, in spite of Plato's idea that literature cannot contribute to philosophical discussions, Coetzee's latest novels illustrate how philosophy and literature can find artistic expression in different narrative forms and constellations. As one of the most important founders of Western philosophy, Plato, who was influenced by Heraclitus, Pythagoras and Socrates, established the epistemological base for later philosophers and Christian theology; he also insisted that the world of intellect is separated from the world of senses. In fact, the traditional opposition of the rational and the mystical can be traced back to him, as he believed that reason was linked to theology and the divine. Before him, Pythagoras may have been the first philosopher to stress rationalist insight, as an enthusiast for the promotion of mathematical philosophy and the founder of mathematics; but he was also on the side of mysticism, believed in reincarnation and attributed to himself a semi-divine

character. He was indeed a very influential person in Ancient Greece and his opinions "were taken by his followers as sacred revelations" (Hermann 2004: 17). It is generally agreed that Pythagoras established the foundations of number theory, discovered the importance of numbers in music and believed that numbers were the key to all knowledge and that they may raise one's soul to a higher level of immortality (Ferguson 2011: 67). This is important in my interpretation of *The Schooldays* for the novel is an intense intertextual dialogue with some of Plato's and Pythagoras' philosophical ideas.

Pythagoras was Plato's main source of inspiration and Platonism is indeed in essence a version of Pythagoreanism (Russell 1972: 37). One of the most important contributions of Plato's philosophy is his Theory of Forms, which distinguishes between two levels of reality.[3] Plato was also interested in numbers and believed that there are three stages in education, which correspond to the three virtues the soul should achieve: temperance, courage and wisdom. First, music serves to temper the desires of the heart; second, gymnastics should rationalise the passionate part of the soul; and third, mathematics trains the rational element of the soul to realise itself in the universal and eternal reality (Marshall 2016: 281). Having said that, it is important to remember that mathematics is one of Coetzee's specialisations and a subject he consciously pays a lot of attention to in *The Schooldays of Jesus*. While we tend to believe that it is a science which has links to reason, especially since the Enlightenment, a movement that emphasized the use of reason for obtaining knowledge and scrutinising ideas, Coetzee shows that even mathematics can go beyond reason, but as Woessner reminds us: "if we have forgotten that the Enlightenment rests on sentimental foundations as much as rational ones, it is because the scientific rationalism of the Enlightenment has had a much more lasting impact on the Western tradition" (2010: 236).

Having said that, Coetzee is well-known as one of the most cultured living writers and prominent literary critics, and his writings are so complex and significant that they have been discussed as an example of postmodernism, sometimes even late modernism or neomodernism.[4] The distinction is a slippery one, obviously because there are various possible readings of his works. However, his two latest novels, *The Childhood of Jesus* and especially *The Schooldays of Jesus* incorporate, probably for the first time, mythical and fantastic elements and this is worthy of our attention insofar as it constitutes a new practice and innovation in his literary career, revitalising, again, the literary genre, as he has been doing since he published his first novel in 1974.[5]

The Schooldays of Jesus is the sequel of *The Childhood of Jesus*. It is possible to read one without the other, but the plots of the two novels obviously complement each other. They are written in a historical present and narrated with the misleading

simplicity of a fable. They imagine a society with no discernible past, a community governed by apparent goodwill, where three characters try to learn how to behave as an unconventional family, although they never really become one. In *The Childhood of Jesus* Davíd and Simón have come from far away on a boat they disembark from together. They have been "immersed in the waters of forgetting" (Coetzee 2013: 206) and all their memories have been washed away; Simón has no recollection of what his own life was before arriving in this new place and even his own mother tongue is forgotten. Davíd, a timid child at first, apparently became separated from his mother during the voyage and Simón takes him under his wing; he decides to become his guardian for the time being, find his mother and reunite the child with her.

Their destiny, a Spanish-speaking city named Novilla, provides food, shelter, employment and even affordable entertainment for all new arrivals. They also get new names, since Simón and Davíd cannot remember their previous ones, and an approximate age is written down in their documents. Both have been learning Spanish and still have to improve their command of what is for them a new language. *The Childhood of Jesus* plunges us into a mysterious dreamlike territory. The setting is a limbo where people have been expunged of their desires; they need no meat and no sexual intercourse, nor are passions ever described. The place evokes the Christian idea of Heaven and, to a certain extent, the city Plato describes in *The Republic*; in fact, "philosophical disputes take up space in nearly every chapter, and almost word-for-word references to a number of Socratic dialogues are easily detected through the book" (Mosca 2016: 128). Besides, Simón enrols in a philosophical course where they discuss the "*sillicidad*" (Coetzee 2013: 122) of a chair,[6] and this reminds us of Plato's Theory of Forms, where he explains that a chair is only a physical object, an imperfect variation of the ideal chair that exists in the World of Forms. Simón, who constantly tries to explain the world to Davíd in a rational way, tells him at some point: "We are like Ideas. Ideas never die" (133).[7] Surprisingly, Novilla, notwithstanding its heavenly features, becomes some sort of purgatory for Simón, who craves for passion and is unable to find it:

> Everyone I meet is so decent, so kindly, so well intentioned. No one swears or gets angry. No one gets drunk. No one even raises his voice. You live on a diet of bread and water and bean paste and you claim to be filled. How can that be, humanly speaking? Are you lying, even to yourselves? (30)

As Dimitriu points out, "an untrammelled rationality of goodwill and kindness, instead of invoking our admiration, points to an almost surreal split between mind and body, or reason and emotion" (2014: 71). Despite the promise of peace and tranquillity, Simón has difficulties adapting to this new place. While he understands what this new life has to offer, he is concerned about the consequences of such a

choice, for "it involves stilling the 'hunger' of passion, or closeness of physical intimacy" (Dimitriu 2014: 71).

The main intertexts, as in previous novels, refer to Goethe, Kafka and the ubiquitous Cervantes.[8] This tribute to the Spanish writer is more than evident in *The Childhood*, where Davíd carries around an abridged copy of *Don Quixote* and learns to read from it, but also in *The Schooldays*, which begins with an epigraph from the Spanish novel: "Algunos dicen, nunca segundas partes fueron buenas" (my translation: "some people say: Second parts were never good"). Coetzee's story also engages in a literary dialogue with *The Bible*,[9] which is obvious in some of the passages and in the names of most characters. Although the title refers to Jesus, the novel is about Davíd, a gifted and self-confident child, but the biblical connection is still obvious.[10] Indeed Simón, the main character, is (like Joseph) not the real father of the child, but a guardian figure who has symbolically adopted him and cares for him. When Simón locates a woman he believes to be Davíd's mother, she, mysteriously, agrees to become (or act like) his mother. Inés, however, never recognizes the child nor does she show a particular attachment to it. She is described as a self-indulgent and whimsical woman who later becomes an unprepared and overprotective mother. Davíd grows insecure under her protection.[11] Moreover, she is not fully developed as a character in the novel, and she seems to be a character of secondary importance in the story.

Davíd and his so-called surrogate family, Simón and Inés, flee Novilla because of a census and the possibility that the non-compliant Davíd, the child who becomes rebellious and disruptive at school, may be sent to a reformatory. The reason is that he is not adapting to school; instead of reading children's books, he prefers to recite fragments from *Don Quixote*; in mathematics he is unable to do additions because he somehow uses abstractions of numbers, but not real ones. While, significantly, Simón is pursuing rational questions, and this is significant in my interpretation, Davíd grows obsessed with the idea that numbers are magical and have secret meanings.[12] His teacher does not know how to deal with a child who does not conform to his dictates and teaching methodology. This is somehow a paradox because the setting is a place where everyone seems to be happy and lives, although austerely, in a sort of ideal socialist society where no one exerts power over anyone else.

2. The Limits of Reason in *The Schooldays of Jesus*

At the beginning of the sequel, *The Schooldays of Jesus*, the three protagonists are on their way to a different city called Estrella (star in English). While both *The Childhood* and *The Schooldays* tell the story from the perspective of Simón in a place

where all characters experience a different reality to what we would consider objective, *The Schooldays* incorporates many magical elements and it is anchored in "an almost surreal milieu" (Dimitriu 2018: 55) without a recognisable historical past, but one which possibly also reads as a pre-story to *The Bible*, the most famous religious myth in some of our Western societies. The story of *The Schooldays* is full of symbolism and spirituality, and its plot acknowledges that magic, as a symbol for irrationality, is part of our lives and includes telepathy, a woman of unearthly beauty, and a beast-man whose impulsive behaviour is foreshadowed by a rainstorm.

In *The Schooldays*, Inés and Simón initially become labourers on a fruit farm, where all their needs are fulfilled and the child seems to blossom. The farm is owned by three elderly sisters who develop a deep affection for Davíd and decide to support the family financially. When Inés and Simón start to worry about Davíd's education, Señor Robles, a private tutor, offers to reveal the basics of mathematics to the boy, but right after their first brief encounter, he insists that Davíd should learn in a rational way. As the child cannot learn as he is expected, the teacher comes to the conclusion that he has a cognitive problem, upon which they all become disappointed and decide to stop the tutoring. Education becomes an obstacle for the family not because the intelligent child does not want to learn, but because he does not adapt to the teacher's expectations. From among the many other novels that relate to this subject, it is tempting to single out Robert Musil's *The Confusions of Young Törless* (1906), since the Austrian author is one of Coetzee's main literary influences, one whom he has included in his *Biblioteca personal*,[13] a collection of the works that have influenced him most. In this book, the young Törless is sent to a military academy where he, together with two other boys, sodomises a fellow student. The novel illustrates the devastating consequences of authoritarian education systems and their contribution to the rise of Fascism. Several passages are dedicated to mathematics, thus providing an interesting subtext to *The Schooldays*. Indeed Musil's *Bildungsroman* develops the idea that mathematics is duplicitous. On the one hand, viewed through the eyes of reason, mathematics appears to be accurate and sure; its results indicate something solid. It is, however, capable of going beyond reason, revealing its wild and unsettling nature, as when the young man is confused by his contemplation of the height of the sky and he becomes aware of his inability to capture its enormity. On a different occasion, Törless has a conversation with his maths teacher because he is interested in understanding imaginary numbers. His questions reveal his doubts as to whether numbers are human inventions or if they exist on their own. Coetzee's dialogue with Musil's reflection serves to highlight the more irrational aspect of mathematics, a discipline that we, from the Enlightenment onwards, have usually understood as solid and rational. In *The Schooldays*, it is evident that the maths tutor's disappointment is motivated by the child's interest in understanding mathematics in an irrational way.

The small family later moves to a town called Estrella, where Inés and Simón get a job and decide to send the child to a dancing school, run by Señor Juan Sebastián Arroyo (Johann Sebastian Bach's name translated into Spanish) and the enigmatic Ana Magdalena, a woman Simón feels immediately captivated by. This attraction is probably based on the mystery she represents. Ana Magdalena is described as a graceful spirit with clairvoyant powers. Simón says that her skin is as pure as alabaster and he is astonished when he realises twice that she actually sees through him. Ana Magdalena was in fact Johannes Sebastian Bach's second wife in real life as well as in the novel. Another similarity is that she raised the children her husband had with his first wife. Their marriage had, again as in the novel, music at its heart. At the end of her classes the fictional Ana Magdalena makes an "arc sound" (Coetzee 2016: 60) and the children have to get in harmony with it; what she is actually using is a tuning fork, a musical instrument which produces a single note and which is believed by some to facilitate balancing, by bringing a positive shift in energy patterns and dissolving negative energy. Coetzee seems to have been influenced by Schiller's Romantic idea of beauty when he depicted Ana Magdalena, who is the reincarnation of both beauty and moral values. When she first meets Simón, she explains to him that she and her husband train the soul in the direction of the good. For Schiller beauty can be achieved only in the combined embrace of duty with a recognition of moral values. Ana Magdalena represents this and is described several times as a woman of unearthly beauty; in Simón's words she is "strikingly beautiful […], the beauty, as if a statue had come to life and wandered in from the museum" (Coetzee 2016: 43). He also says that he "could spend hours gazing at her, rapt in admiration at the perfection she represents" (93), for she is a combination that results in a genuinely beautiful soul.

Coetzee has expressed his recognition and admiration for Johann Sebastian Bach several times. In an interview with Peter Sacks, he compares Beethoven with Bach, mentioning the former as the epitome of the artistic genius and the latter as an example of perseverance, to which he himself feels more related (Coetzee 2001). But he also declares that there is always a mysterious moment in the improvisation of Bach's musical compositions and portrays Arroyo in *The Schooldays* as a virtuoso with "his head in the clouds" (Coetzee 2016: 55), probably connecting this with Bach's religiosity. Coetzee explains the impact Bach's music had on him when, back in 1955, he first listened to his *Well-Tempered Clavier* from a neighbour's house:

> Is there some non-vacuous sense in which I can say that the spirit of Bach was speaking to me across the ages, across the seas, putting before me certain ideals; or was what was really going on at that moment that I was symbolically electing high European culture, and command of the codes of that culture, as a route that would take me out of my class position in white South African society and ultimately out of what I must have felt, in terms however obscure and mystified, as a historical dead end […]? (Coetzee 2002: 10-11)

This passion is also evident in *Diary of a Bad Year* (2007),[14] where Señor C, a distinguished writer, airs his opinions on different matters, including this beautiful thought:

> The best proof that life is good, and therefore that there may be perhaps a God after all, who has our welfare at heart, is that to each of us, on the day we are born, comes the music of Johann Sebastian Bach. It comes as a gift, unearned, unmerited, for free. (Coetzee 2007: 221)

In the character of Juan Sebastián Arroyo, Coetzee incorporates a passion for spirituality; the musician is, as it happens, an expert in numerology, a discipline he and Ana Magdalena teach the children at their school. Numerology is associated with astrology and similar divinatory arts. It is the belief in the divine and mystical relationship between numbers (also names) and coinciding events. The relationship between names and numbers had already been established in *The Childhood*: "You know how the system works. The names we use are the names we were given there, but we might just as well have been given numbers. Numbers, names— they are equally arbitrary, equally unimportant" (2013: 274). Again, the importance of names and naming is obvious in all Coetzee's novels. In fact, in one of his letters to Paul Auster, Coetzee expresses a sense that: "your name is your destiny" (Auster and Coetzee 2013: 79). Bach is known to have been a devout Lutheran and to have tried to give God's word a previously unknown profundity. He believed that the reason for music should be the glory of God; his compositions are probably the most performed music in religious rituals in Western culture. He is also supposed to have been a follower of numerology and to have believed in the mystical values of numbers; he, among other Baroque composers, used numbers instead of letters and incorporated them as well to convey hidden messages in his musical works.[15] In *The Schooldays*, Arroyo and Ana Magdalena make a distinction between what they call "ant numbers" (Coetzee 2016: 69) and a different kind of numbers, those which may bring us closer to our true self, which is, again, a nod to Plato's World of Forms.

The Academy of Dance where Davíd is enrolled suits the child perfectly because he likes being taught in an unconventional way; indeed the children learn through dancing; for example, in order to learn the numbers, they dance to call them down from the sky. This is, to say the least, a very alternative teaching methodology, but in fact, the connection between numbers, stars and music is an old one. It takes us back to Pythagoras who believed that the spheres of the universe produce music based on their orbit (Hermann 2004: 101), though unfortunately it is one that remains imperceptible for human beings. This idea that the planets, as they travel through space, generate a celestial harmony of profound beauty, known as the Harmony of the Spheres, was also mentioned in Plato's *Republic* and later endorsed by many humanists of the Renaissance.[16]

In *The Schooldays*, Coetzee presents the reader, through the character of Davíd, with some of the ideas of Pythagoras, who is considered the founder of numerology (Hermann 2004: 107). Many scientific discoveries are attributed to him, including advances in the fields of music and astronomy. It is probably not a coincidence that Davíd, like Pythagoras, believes in reincarnation. The child repeatedly insists that there are different worlds: "I can remember the time before I was on the boat" (Coetzee 2016: 17). He even comes up with an idea for moving back and forth between them that evokes the myth of Theseus and the Minotaur:

> I found a way of coming back from the new life. Shall I tell you? It's brilliant. You tie a rope to a tree, a long, long rope, then when you get to the next life you tie the other end of the rope to a tree, another tree. Then when you want to come back from the next life you just hold on to the rope. Like the man in the *larebinto*. (206, emphasis in original)

Pythagoras was supposed to know not only who he was himself, but also who exactly he had been in his past lives (Ferguson 2011: 51). Davíd incarnates this idea when Arroyo tells Simón: "What he remembers I cannot say but it includes what he believes to be his name" (Coetzee 2016: 215). Pythagoreans elaborated on a theory of numbers, the exact meaning of which is still debated among scholars. Pythagoras also set up a philosophical school in Croton, where he became reputable and was credited with miracles. According to Russell, this school represents the main current of a mystical tradition we have set in contrast with the scientific tendency (1972: 32). This educational centre promoted ascetic practices (many of which had a symbolic meaning), various religious theories and vegetarianism (De Vogel 1966: 177). Songs were produced and sung at this school, and these were believed to have the ability to make the soul evolve towards positive passions and even to heal them: "It was Pythagoras' opinion that certain rhythms and melodies had a healing effect on the human character and emotions: it restores the soul's strength to its original balance […]. Dancing was also used as a therapy" (De Vogel 1966: 164-65).

The Pythagoreans exercised an important influence on the work of Plato and other philosophers; for example, Socrates, Plato's teacher, believed that music was a gift that brings harmony to our souls and that a true musician is someone who harmonises his own personality and his own life (Pelosi 2010: 185). The Platonic Republic might be related to the idea of an organised community of like-minded thinkers,[17] like the one established by Pythagoras in Croton. There is evidence that Plato possibly took from Pythagoras the idea that mathematics and, generally speaking, abstract thinking, is a secure basis for the philosophical cosmos. Plato and Pythagoras shared a spiritual approach to the soul and its place in the material world. In *The Laws*, Plato's longest dialogue, the Greek philosopher exalts the

merits of a musical education as it represents an expressive exercise in which one may learn to love beautiful things. It also deals with what Plato calls "the 'magical' power of *mousike*" (Pelosi 2010: 26), meaning that music influences our character. Moreover, music is supposed to reach out equally towards the rational and non-rational components of the human soul.

The idea at Arroyo's Academy of Dance is that children are part of the universe and can be taught to communicate with it, rather than just memorise ideas from books. This is probably a nod to Socrates, who argued that education should not be understood in terms of forcing knowledge into another person but rather as turning the *whole* soul around (in Lear 2010: 70, emphasis in original). This scheme of leaving rationality behind has, to a certain extent, mystical implications. The use of vocabulary in *The Schooldays* is traditionally associated with the spiritual world: the concepts of soul —one of the sisters' names is Alma (soul in Spanish)— but also beauty, goodness and goodwill, grace and gratitude, magic, the stars and the universe belong to this lexeme. Señor Arroyo makes this explicit when, trying to explain his teaching philosophy, he quotes some lines from one of Rafael Alberti's poems: "*Las estrellas errantes, niños que ignoran la aritmética*" (Coetzee 2016: 97; my translation: "wandering stars are children ignorant of arithmetic").[18] Arithmetic, thus, symbolises rational thought, in what again comes across as a critique on authoritarian education systems. Indeed, as a young child, the Spanish poet attended a Jesuit school where he became rebellious and played truant until he was expelled in 1917.

Simón (like Inés, although she never really attempts to understand this) is quite sceptical about the teaching methods and contents offered at the *Academia*. He reflects: "Dancing to the stars as a substitute for learning one's multiplication tables— is not different in nature from what is offered by the lotion that miraculously brings hair follicles back to life" (Coetzee 2016: 66). He thinks of himself as a rational and logical person who offers the child a sane, rational explanation of the world, but he is also a sceptic who includes his own certainties in his questioning so that he finally wonders: "Are the needs of a child's soul better served by his dry little homilies than by the fantastic fare offered at the Academy?" (207).

Dimitriu points out that Plato presented his ideal of human harmony as a balanced synthesis of the three aspects of the soul: reason, spirit and appetite, and that in *The Schooldays* they exist as separate entities (2018: 56). While Simón represents reason and Davíd spirit, there is a third character that can be interpreted as appetite, desire and passion. Indeed, passion and its consequences also play a crucial role in the novel. The passionless Estrella seems, like Novilla, to be governed by goodwill. The crime report page in the local newspaper tells the story of a lawnmower being stolen from an unlocked shed, but there is a new element that disturbs the peace

of the town, a despicable character called Dmitri. He is a worker for the art museum next to the Academy and a man who is obviously infatuated —one could say obsessed— with Ana Magdalena. Depicted as an anti-hero, from Simón's perspective, he is always untidy, smells of cigarettes and has yellowed teeth. Simón considers him to be a bad role model for children: "This man doesn't shave, doesn't wash, he doesn't wear clean clothes. He is not a good example to children" (Coetzee 2016: 47). He believes that he has no inner noble qualities, the kind that one would find and are exalted in Don Quixote, who is honest, capable of sincere gratitude and epitomises courtesy. Moreover, it is no coincidence that Dmitri has a Russian name. He is a nod to Dostoyevsky's definition of guilt and a very similar character with the same name appears in *The Brothers Karamazov* (1880), a philosophical novel concerning faith, doubt and reason, which is replete with ethical debates about free will, morality and the existence of God.

One possible interpretation is that the triangle (Davíd, Dmitri and Simón) "displays a conglomerate of traits that could constitute a perfect human being: a mix of reason, imagination and daring" (Dimitriu 2018: 56). But it is also worth pointing out that Dmitri can be interpreted as Simón's *doppelganger* (they represent opposite views of the world) and the influence they exercise on the boy is an important theme in the novel. The characterisation of Simón gives pride of place to his intelligence and capacity for rational judgement. He takes philosophy classes and elaborates complex theories about how the world works. By contrast, Dmitri says of himself: "When it comes to life's great choices, I follow my heart" (Coetzee 2016: 119). Similarly, the Dmitri Dostoyevsky portrayed in his novel represents the principle of feeling, sensuality and the inspiration of Eros (Mochulsky 1981: 16). However, to his own discontent, the sceptical and rational Simón recognises in Dmitri a model for passion which he also somehow finds himself unwillingly attracted to. Dmitri is the source of dramatic energy in the novel, and the harbinger of bad luck. Davíd, who has become blissfully happy at the Academy, forms a particular bond to the beautiful Ana Magdalena, but also becomes mesmerised by the grandiloquent Dmitri. At some point in the novel, Ana Magdalena disappears and Dmitri confesses to the authorities that he has raped and strangled her. Unfortunately, it is the boy who finds her bruised dead body in the museum where Dmitri works. Estrella suddenly becomes a sinister place.

Simón and Dmitri also represent two different masculinities and parenting examples. The subject needs more development to give it its due importance in the novel. Simón, who had repeatedly insisted that the child was neither his son, nor his grandson in *The Childhood*, claims his paternity for the first time when he talks to Dmitri about the pornographic magazines he keeps: "I want you to stop inviting Davíd, *my child*, the child for whose welfare I am responsible, into your room and

showing him dirty pictures" (Coetzee 2016: 120, emphasis added). As Dimitriu argues, *The Schooldays* focuses on Simón's role as the father of an unusual child (2018: 56). But at the same time, it also shows several instances of Dmitri pretending to be the boy's father and trying to take control of his life; for example, he constantly tries to convince Davíd that the two of them could live together with Ana Magdalena as a family in the next life. The boy believes in this possibility. When he wants to escape from the psychiatric wing where he has been sent, Dmitri puts on a uniform, takes Davíd's hand (he is there to visit him), claims to be his father and, surprisingly, succeeds in absconding. Later on, when he goes to Simón's apartment, he makes himself at home, sleeps in his bed, wears his clothes and says to the child: "Do you have anything to eat, *my boy*?" (169, emphasis added) and later: "Never mind, *my son*" (169, emphasis added). The relationship between Dmitri and the Davíd becomes so evident that Simón fears that the boy may be attracted to Dmitri, who obviously represents a more attractive and even magnetic paternal figure. The rational Simón explains to Davíd that the passionate Dmitri is, in fact, incapable of true love. The boy becomes, under Dmitri's guidance, restless, insensitive and even tyrannical, at least in Simón's opinion, and this change is indeed acknowledged by the three sisters.

Simón's and Davíd's views of the world are irreconcilable. Simón wishes to untangle the world for Davíd and give an answer to his endless "why" questions, but his explanations never really satisfy the boy. His adult perspective is too philosophical and sometimes contradictory. For example, talking about money, Simón says: "There is no such a thing as a lot of money in itself" (Coetzee 2016: 50). His views of the world are sometimes conservative. When Davíd asks him why he and Inés do not have a child, he answers: "Sexual intercourse is for married people. Inés and I aren't married" (17). On the other hand, Simón does not listen to the child and provides readers with a limited version of the story.[19] Although the reader encounters a third-person narrator, the whole story is focalised through Simón and it is clear that the narrative is presented from his perspective; it is his consciousness and experiences that we have access to. Davíd insists that he knows who he is and that other characters, such as Arroyo, recognise him; Arroyo even tells Simón that Davíd feels the falsity of his new life quite intensely, but Simón constantly denies that such may be the case. He tells the child: "Like everyone else who came on the boats, you can't remember" (18).

Davíd is characterised as an idealist and it is important to note that he always carries a copy of *Don Quixote*, which he uses to teach himself to read, and later carries it to all his classes at the Academy. Davíd's behaviour resembles that of Don Quixote in that he is an idealist and has innate noble qualities. Another parallelism between them is that they both have a real and an imaginary name, as not Don

Quixote, but Alonso Quijano, was this character's original name. Moreover, both characters search and find artistic expression for their restlessness and ambitions; Don Quixote sings well and composes verses, while Davíd becomes the best dancer at the *Academia*. In the Spanish classical novel, and so for Don Quixote, chivalry means defending the weak, as Davíd previously does when he tries to save an injured duck on the farm. There is, however, a tension between those virtues and the eccentricity manifested by their defenders. Davíd becomes impatient and whimsical if he is not given what he wishes to have or told what he wishes to hear. Don Quixote goes mad whenever knight-errantry is questioned. Despite their extravagance, both the Spanish *caballero errante* and Davíd provide examples of how we can set our imagination free and discover new qualities within human beings.

In his relationship with the child, Simón represents the voice of the practical realist. He explains that Davíd "believes he has powers he does not really have" (Coetzee 2016: 73). Davíd considers philosophical questions in relative depth and embodies the exploration of the nature of truth, justice and virtue with the clarity and innocence one can only achieve if looking through the lenses of irrationality and fantasy. For example, when the boy asks why we eat animals, Simón explains that animals are happy to die for us so that we can grow and be healthy; then the child asks why we do not eat other human beings. Simón's answer is that we do not "because it is disgusting" (77), but of course for a vegetarian, such as Coetzee, this is also a good enough reason for not eating animals. Davíd thus represents the struggle to survive in a world of rationality with the assumptions of a child, a world Simón, a supreme realist, feels he understands better.

There is, however, a deeper tension apparent in their discussions. Coetzee's novels have shown a deep ambivalence towards rationalism; to borrow the words from the Swedish Academy when he was awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature, his stories often criticize the cruel rationalism and cosmetic morality of our western civilization. For instance, there is an implicit criticism of modern rationality in the economic and social structures that make possible the killing of millions of animals for human consumption, as Costello argues in her homonymous novel, and several of Coetzee's characters —for example, Eugene Dawn in "The Vietnam Project" (1974), the Magistrate in *Waiting for the Barbarians* (1980) and Paul Rayment in *Slow Man*— offer a critique of the individualist and insensitive Cartesian self and thus show different forms of psychological suffering and disintegration. In *The Schooldays*, Coetzee goes even further and offers us a protagonist, Simón, who is the epitome of rational thought and shows the consequences of his attempts to exert his influence in a world full of symbolism and spirituality; while he tries to explain the world in rational terms, Davíd clings to his fantasy universe and is

unwilling to accept his foster father's answers as universal truths. His explanations about the world fail on a variety of grounds: clearly, they do so because he, as the father figure, is trying to impose his adult language and his imaginary world on the child, but also because the latter is never satisfied with a simple answer, so that each explanation triggers the next more complex question and no answer ever really reveals an hermeneutical truth that may seem complete. Despite Simón's efforts to communicate with the boy, his distress at the development of their relationship becomes obvious in the writing assignments he produces for a composition class, but also in his conversations with Arroyo and the letters he plans to send to him. However, Ana Magdalena had already given Simón a very important idea at a parents' meeting, where she explained that children lack the words to express their former lives, but they can rely on numbers and dance to express themselves:

> Of our former existence certain remnants persist: not memories in the usual sense of the word, but what we call shadows of memories […]. The child however, the young child, still bears deep impresses of a former life, shadow recollections which he lacks words to express. He lacks words because, along with the world we have lost, we have lost a language fit to evoke it. All that is left of that primal language is a handful of words, what I call transcendental words, among which the names of numbers, *uno, dos, tres,* are foremost. (Coetzee 2016: 67-68, emphasis in original)

This idea of music and dance being a powerful universal language already appeared in Coetzee's novel *Foe* (1986) where Susan, the protagonist, tries to make the mute Friday tell his story, but he fails to do so. At the end of the novel Friday starts playing a musical instrument, and she ponders: "As long as I have music in common with Friday, perhaps he and I will need no language" (1986: 97). Another very interesting observation comes from Lurie in *Disgrace* when he says: "His own opinion, which he does not air, is that the origins of speech lie in song, and the origins of song in the need to fill out with sound the overlarge and rather empty human soul" (1999: 4).

According to Simón, whose perspective and story are relayed by the narrator, Davíd has never allowed him to see him dance because the boy feels, metaphorically, that his surrogate father is hostile to the numbers. However, when Simón listens to the music Arroyo plays at the parents' evening, he "falls into a mild trance" (Coetzee 2016: 70). Looking for answers, he visits the *Academia* once more and finds Arroyo composing. He stops to listen and finally abandons himself to the music, so that at this moment he frees himself from rationality and questions the limits of his own self; hence his soul begins to dance:

> He gives himself to the music, allowing it to enter and wash through him. And the music, as if aware of what is up, loses its stop-start character, begins to flow. At the very rim of consciousness the soul, which is indeed like a little bird, emerges and shakes its wings and begins its dance. (194)

Simón has finally experienced the magical power of *mousike*; he has learnt that reason, in its unadulterated form, is not enough to understand the world.

3. Conclusion

This article has striven to show that *The Schooldays* follows a new path in Coetzee's oeuvre. While most of Coetzee's novels are set in societies riven by different forms of institutionalized discrimination (Apartheid or post-Apartheid South Africa, and other allegorical colonial or postcolonial societies), his latest novel incorporates mythical and religious elements in an otherwise apparently realist setting, a place which seems to be governed by goodwill. Moreover, it not only focuses even more on ethical and philosophical questions, it also offers, for the first time, a significant and intense dialogue with classical philosophers. Following them, *The Schooldays* combines constant spiritual allusions with an examination of the character of human existence and an implicit critique of rationalism. Coetzee shows that scepticism towards rationality can help us discover compassion, generosity and, finally, grace. Similarly, the novel explores a sceptical view of uncontrolled passion; neither the logical Simón nor the passionate Dmitri are good models to explain the world in itself and both of them provide inadequate parenting examples. While Simón and Dmitri represent the influence of reason and passion on a human being, Davíd, a singular child, untouched by civilisation and language, and an idealist like Don Quixote who shares many of his inner qualities, stands for a pure soul, one that listens to the music of the spheres and who claims that he can perceive it.

When Davíd dances the last time, the rational Simón is able to see that the child becomes "pure light" (Coetzee 2016: 246), and finally starts to understand the child's language and the magic of music. It is through the irrational influence of music and dance that Simón experiences this final change. In the last chapter, he decides to take dance lessons, buys golden dancing slippers and finally dances to Arroyo's music. While he is balancing, he becomes aware of "the space above his head" (260) and the first star begins to rise over the horizon. In this effort to communicate with Davíd, a pure soul, and through the impact music has on him, he has acknowledged the limits of reason as a tool used to make sense of our lives. Rational Simón has not been able to become a proper father to the child, but the boy, with his vision of the world, has exerted his own influence on Simón, helped his surrogate father, the lost child, and readers as well, learn the most important lesson of all, maybe that we are all part of an immense universe which we cannot control nor completely grasp in rational terms, and that music helps to make it a more beautiful place and comes, unmerited, as a gift to all of us.[20]

Notes

[1]. While Pippin argues that Coetzee's novels are more informed by philosophy, especially by the work of Hegel and Nietzsche, than those of anyone now writing (2010: 22), Leist and Singer concur that Coetzee's oeuvre is deeply philosophical for its unusual degree of reflectivity where a deep-layered intellectual attitude of *paradoxical truth seeking* and an ethics of the social come together (2010: 6-7). Similarly, Dimitriu, who has recently analysed *The Schooldays of Jesus*, suggests that one can approach it as Coetzee's most daring novel of ideas (2018: 65)

[2]. *Siete cuentos morales* (*Moral Tales*) was published in Spanish first.

[3]. The first one is called the divine realm of immutable Forms and it serves as a model for the second one, a realm in which humans live and matter is constantly changing, ruled by passions (Ferguson 2011: 138).

[4]. It is sometimes said that postmodernism arrived in South Africa with the publication of *Dusklands* in 1974 (Head 2009: ix) and most critics consider Coetzee a postmodernist writer because of his use of metafiction and non-realist devices and his engagement with political questions. Moreover, Coetzee has relied on major developments in the European novel since the *nouveau roman* while developing his own ethical and political response to South African institutionalised inequality and oppression. Therefore, Hutcheon considers Coetzee a postmodernist (1989: 51, 76), and Attwell states that Coetzee's *Foe* (1986) typifies postmodernism (1993: 20-23). However, Attridge believes that this term does not fit Coetzee's fiction —as his writings have been influenced by great modernist authors such as Beckett and Kafka (but not Barth or Pynchon)— and argues that Coetzee "extends and revitalises modernist practices" (2004: 6). He prefers the label "late modernism or neomodernism" (2004: 2-3), although he also states that these terms are not completely appropriate either.

[5]. In this sense, it is relevant that Coetzee mentions in one of his letters to Auster: "It is not uncommon for writers, as they age, to get impatient with the so-called poetry of language and go for a more stripped-down style ('late style'). The most notorious instance, I suppose, is Tolstoy […]. A loftier example is provided by Bach, who at the time of his death was working on his Art of Fugue, pure music in the sense that it is not tied to any particular instrument" (Auster and Coetzee 2013: 88).

[6]. The novel uses some Spanish terms to remind us that this is the language which the characters use to communicate. The word *sillicidad* does not exist in Spanish, but it is meant to be the quality that distinguishes a chair from any other object.

[7]. There is also, at least, one reference to another significant philosopher, Heraclitus, when Simón says: "The waters of the ocean flow and in flowing they change. You cannot step twice into the same waters" (Coetzee 2013: 144), as Heraclitus was known for his famous dictum "You cannot step twice into the same river; for fresh waters are ever flowing in upon you" (Russell 1972: 46).

[8]. *Don Quixote* is an important influence in Coetzee's novels as he has acknowledged in his "The Poetics of Reciprocity" where he writes: "Cervantes is the giant on whose shoulders we pigmies of the postmodern novel stand" (1992: 62).

[9]. There are previous references to religiosity in Coetzee's novels. For instance, David Lurie sacrifices his favourite dog at the end of *Disgrace* (1999). The imagery of the sacrifice calls attention to the religious dimension Davíd's development has acquired as a consequence of his connection with animals. Another example is Michael K in *Life & Times,* who grows pumpkins on the same spot where he has buried his mother's ashes. When the first plant grows, he eats it and his words "for what we are about to receive make us truly thankful" (1983: 113), are reminiscent of the ritual of the Eucharist.

[10]. There are also striking parallels between Pythagoras' and Jesus' lives, probably due to the influence of Pythagoreanism in Platonism and later in Christian philosophy.

[11]. There are also several suggestions in the novel that she is a virgin, which would make it impossible for her to be Davíd's mother. The name Inés means holy and chaste, possibly in reference to her virginity. Simón wonders: "May she indeed be […] a virgin or at least the virginal type?" (Coetzee 2013: 103).

[12]. This is not the first time mathematics and numbers are linked to irrationality in Coetzee's fiction. The eponymous protagonist of his 2003 novel, namely Elizabeth Costello, mentions Srinivasa Ramanujan, an Indian mathematician who died prematurely at the age of thirty-three, and who was, according to her, an example of a genius whose mind was probably closer to God because of his mathematical vision.

[13]. His *Biblioteca personal* includes novels and essays by eleven writers and a collection of his favourite poems and it was published in Argentina in Spanish first. Musil's *Tres Mujeres* and *Uniones* (*Three Women* and *Unions*) are part of it.

[14]. Some critics have commented on the layout of the novel that offers three related stories that appear to be visually separated, divided by a continuous line, on every page. For example, Tonkin (2007) refers to the organisation of the text as a "hypertextual polyphony" in his review of the novel and Whatley compares the novel's form to Bach's music: "The ensemble nature of the sections comes to resemble musical parts. Were each section read linearly, across to the end and then beginning again twice, it would be like hearing just the woodwinds, then the strings, and finally the percussion" (2008).

[15]. For example, Bach was obsessed with number 14, which appears throughout his work. The reason for this seems to be that if we change letters to numbers, his name BACH would translate 2+1+3+8=14 (Rogerson 2013).

[16]. It appears for instance in Shakespeare's *The Merchant of Venice* when Lorenzo explains to his wife Jessica that the spheres of the universe are the origin of the heavenly music that only the cherubins can hear.

[17]. In *The Republic* Plato imagines the future Guardians, those who can grasp the Forms and rule, to be exposed to music from a young age so that they may acquire important moral habits. In Coetzee's novel, some of the students who perform at the parents' evening wear a white toga that leaves one shoulder bare and are reminiscent of them.

[18]. Alberti also appears in Coetzee's *Biblioteca personal* selection of poetry.

[19]. In the one lesson Davíd has with Señor Robles, the teacher tries to make him learn what the Arroyos later call the "ant numbers" (Coetzee 2016: 69), numbers that we use to count things in everyday life, but those which do not take individuality into account. Davíd, not wanting to comply with this requirement, shows to Simón that he can add and subtract numbers quite easily for a child of his age though he did not mention this for the following reasons: in Señor Robles' way "you first have to make yourself small. You have to make yourself as small as a pea, and then as small as a pea inside a pea, and then a pea inside a pea inside a pea" (32). However, Simón feels disappointed with him and later gives the teacher a present.

[20]. While I started writing this article, I participated in "Coetzee's Women Conference" hosted by Monash University in Prato. Some of the scholars who met there felt the need to continue discussing Coetzee's fiction, especially his latest novel and thus, "The Prato J.M. Coetzee reading group" was created. I am grateful to this group for the insight and inspiration provided through the common reading of the novel. Its members are: Michael Deckard, Jana Giles, Lucy Graham, Agata Szczeszak-Brewer, Aparna Tarc and myself.

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A SPATIO-EMOTIONAL ANALYSIS OF THE DISGUST DISCOURSE IN CONTEMPORARY AFRODIASPORIC FICTION: ADICHIE'S *AMERICANAH* AND BULAWAYO'S *WE NEED NEW NAMES*

UN ANÁLISIS ESPACIO-EMOCIONAL DEL DISCURSO DEL ASCO EN LA FICCIÓN AFRODIASPÓRICA CONTEMPORÁNEA: *AMERICANAH,* DE ADICHIE Y *WE NEED NEW NAMES,* DE BULAWAYO

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Abstract

The purpose of this paper is to provide a critical comparative analysis of the disgust discourse in Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's *Americanah* (2013) and NoViolet Bulawayo's *We Need New Names* (2013) so as to better understand the current politics of Afrodiasporic subjectivation. Built primarily on Sara Ahmed's reflections on the emotional economies of disgust developed in *The Cultural Politics of Emotion* (2004), the discussion explores the relationship between space, emotions and subjectivity from the perspective of the "emotional turn" which is still under development within Postcolonial and Gender Urban Studies. This approach has enabled the understanding of the geographies of disgust in the two selected novels as an illustration of the exclusion process of racialisation in present urban spaces. Moreover, the interpretation of their protagonists as personifications of Isabel Carrera Suárez's "post-colonial and post-diasporic pedestrian" (2015) has showed how an abject condition in non-western cities is primarily the result of the diverse forms of violence resulting from a failed process of decolonisation, while this corresponds to an ambivalent social positionality in the hegemonic metropolis. Social abjection has been thus revealed as a fundamental negotiation status in the subjectivation process of contemporary Afrodiasporians.

Keywords: geographies of disgust, abject condition, Afrodiasporic subjectivity, Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, NoViolet Bulawayo.

Resumen

El propósito de este artículo es aportar un análisis crítico comparativo del discurso del asco en *Americanah* (2013), de Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, y *We Need New Names* (2013), de NoViolet Bulawayo, para obtener un conocimiento más profundo de las políticas actuales de subjetivación afrodiaspórica. La discusión, fundamentada principalmente en las reflexiones de Sara Ahmed en *The Cultural Politics of Emotion* sobre las economías afectivas del asco (2004), examina la relación entre el espacio, las emociones y la subjetividad desde la perspectiva del "giro emocional" que todavía está desarrollándose dentro de los Estudios Urbanos Postcoloniales y de Género. Este planteamiento ha permitido reconocer las geografías del asco en las dos novelas seleccionadas que ilustran los procesos de racialización de los espacios urbanos contemporáneos. Asimismo, la identificación de sus protagonistas como personificaciones del "peatón" postcolonial y postdiaspórico de Isabel Carrera Suárez (2015) ha revelado que la condición abyecta en las ciudades no occidentales resulta principalmente de las diversas formas de violencia que se derivan de un proceso de descolonización fallido, mientras que este se corresponde con una posicionalidad social ambivalente en la metrópolis hegemónica. En este sentido, la abyección social se revela como una forma de negociación fundamental en el proceso de subjetivación de los sujetos afrodiaspóricos contemporáneos.

Palabras clave: geografías del asco, condición abyecta, subjetividad afrodiaspórica, Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, NoViolet Bulawayo.

1. Introduction

The main purpose of this paper is to provide a critical comparative analysis of the disgust discourse in Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's *Americanah* (2013) and NoViolet Bulawayo's *We Need New Names* (2013) so as to better understand the process of formation and reconfiguration of current Afrodiasporic subjectivities. Notwithstanding their almost opposite representations of an Afrodiasporic experience of displacement, both novels have been acclaimed as outstanding representatives of contemporary Afrodiasporic literature written in English. The winner of both the National Book Critics Circle Award for Fiction and The Chicago Tribune Heartland Prize for Fiction in the same year of its publication, Adichie's *Americanah* was in addition shortlisted for the Baileys Women's Book Prize for Fiction in 2014 and the International IMPAC Dublin Award in 2015. It tells the story of Ifemelu, a middle-class teenager from Nigeria who moves to the United States in search of a better education and becomes a popular "race

blogger". *We Need New Names*, which won the 2014 PEN/Hemingway Award for Debut Fiction, has led Bulawayo to become the first black African woman and Zimbabwean to be shortlisted for the Man Booker Prize. In contrast to Ifemelu, its protagonist is a ten-year-old girl called Darling, who migrates to the United States to escape her poverty-stricken life in Zimbabwe and faces her adolescence as an illegal immigrant.

This article draws from the idea that the study of the urban spaces depicted in contemporary postcolonial literatures provides a comprehensive basis for understanding the power dynamics which shape present social relations, notably through a consideration of their emotional dimension. The discussion must then be read from the perspective of the "emotional turn" which is still under development within Postcolonial and Gender Urban Studies. Based on these premises, an examination of the relationship between space, emotions and subjectivity within the urban context will constitute the theoretical basis for an analysis of the disgust discourse in the two selected novels. In particular, Sara Ahmed's reflections on the emotional economies of disgust developed in *The Cultural Politics of Emotion* (2004) will be fundamental for the interpretation of the disgust-invoking images in both Adichie's *Americanah* and Bulawayo's *We Need New Names*. This approach will enable the identification of the spatio-emotional textualities representing geographies of disgust as an illustration of the exclusion process of racialisation in present urban spaces. In turn, this will lead to an understanding of their protagonists as personifications of Isabel Carrera Suárez's "postcolonial, post-diasporic pedestrian" (2015: 854), mainly on account of their rendering as sentient subjects of the abjectionality which they both inhabit and embody. Ultimately, this will drive the discussion to evaluate the impact of a social condition of abjection on the subjectivation process of contemporary Afrodiasporians.

2. Space, Emotions and Subjectivity in the Postcolonial City

In their introduction to *The New Blackwell Companion to the City*, Gary Bridge and Sophie Watson paraphrase Joyce Davidson, Mick Smith, Liz Bondi and Elspeth Probyn when they observe that, "while emotions have always been profoundly present in academic studies", in fact, "it is only relatively recently that their import has been widely, or at least openly, felt and discussed as a topic in its own right" (2011: 278). The inauguration in 2008 of the journal coedited by these four scholars, *Emotion, Space and Society*, has been one of the most substantial indications of the new academic interest in emotions within disciplines

such as Urban Studies (Bridge and Watson 2011: 278). Nevertheless, as Sara Ahmed argues in a reference to Anu Koivunen, it is important to acknowledge the longer history of this focus within Gender Studies because of the traditional "conceptual links between woman, body and emotion" (Ahmed 2014: 205). In particular, Guénola Capron has explained that feminist and queer contributions were crucial for the emergence of the so-called "emotional turn" in the Social Sciences due to their questioning of both androcentrism and the patterns of male domination (2014: 161), insisting on the political implications of the personal.

In "Intensities of Feeling: Towards a Spatial Politics of Affect", Nigel Thrift notes that, "given the utter ubiquity of affect as a vital element of cities", logic would suggest "that the affective register" has constituted a large part of the examination of urban spaces (2004: 57). However, as the geographer points out, "[t]hough affect continually figures in many accounts", the reality is that it has been "usually off to the side" in urban studies. It is for this reason that, as he remarks, "to read about affect in cities", it has been usually necessary to resort to the literature of modernist writers as celebrated as Virginia Woolf or James Joyce (2004: 57), for the academic focus on the urban emotional experience in the work of Georg Simmel, Jane Jacobs, Walter Benjamin or Richard Sennet has been an exception to the general rule (Bridge and Watson 2011: 279). Having said this, it is important to note that Simmel was for a long time one of the few scholars to develop an interest in "the emotional dimension of the built environment" (Lupton 1998: 153). Moreover, he was a precursor of the postmodern emphasis on the individual's multiple experiential "narratives", which laid the basis for the shift in perspective within Urban Studies from attention to the economic to a focus on the cultural and the aesthetic dimension of the urban (Lindón 2007: 7). It was in particular the new interest in intangible realities, such as experience and perception (Menéndez Tarrazo 2010: 44), which stressed the importance of considering the urban space from the perspective of the sentient subject (Lindón 2007: 11), thus fostering the turn to emotion in Urban Studies.

Both Simmel and Benjamin's focus on the connection of the physical context of the city, the sensory and imaginative responses to this space, as well as the formation of subjectivities, was later a matter Michel de Certeau resumed through his emphasis on the daily practice of walking in the city (Menéndez Tarrazo 2010: 45). His contribution to Urban Studies is based on the idea of "spatial stories" because, as Alicia Menéndez Tarrazo argues, the imaginative appropriation of the urban space occurs through their creation and is thus paramount for the construction of subjectivity (2010: 46). However, despite the

resistant nature of de Certeau's walker to the "boundaries of an imposed spatial grammar", Isabel Carrera Suárez has noted that one of the main weaknesses of this figure is its disembodied character (2015: 856). Inspired by Marsha Meskimmon's aesthetic pedestrianism, she argues that, in contrast to *flânerie*, pedestrianism involves "physical and emotional engagement with" the urban space which is "shared and inhabited" (857). The most substantial difference from de Certeau's figure is, hence, that "the postcolonial and post-diasporic pedestrian" provides a better representation of "the racialized, gendered and sexualized subjects" in current postcolonial cities (Carrera 2015: 856). Moreover, as in the case of Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie and NoViolet Bulawayo, among other contemporary Afrodiasporic authors, Carrera Suárez adds that her pedestrian is representative of "the street walkers created (and sometimes embodied) by black and immigrant writers in the United States, whose observing and traversing of cities is conducted from the perspectives of alterity" (2015: 855).

The explicit postcolonial approach of Carrera Suárez's proposal points to the importance of reflecting on the essential contribution of postcolonialism to the interpretation of cities, principally its calling into question the Eurocentric focus of traditional urban studies (Menéndez Tarrazo 2010: 103). As Lindón observes, the cultural expressiveness of cities is diverse, but hegemonic urban imaginaries only recognise the cultural expressions of certain social sectors with linkages to power, while the rest of urban cultural images are invisibilised or ignored (2007: 13). It is precisely for this reason that Menéndez Tarrazo notes that modern cities constitute to some extent a landscape where the logic of colonialism still prevails (2010: 111). For her part, Ahmed has also reflected upon the postcolonial status of modern cities through her conception of the figure of the stranger as "the cultural other", in the sense that she sees this individual as constituted through power relations that are embedded in the past as much as in the present (2000: 8). According to her, "colonialism is structural rather than incidental to any understanding of the constitution of both modernity and postmodernity" (10), and therefore "the encounters between embodied others" can only be understood through post-coloniality (14). Indeed, Kirsten Simonsen has noted that "[p]ostcolonial thinking has gained relevance to analyses of the internal conditions in Western cities because of the circumstances under which immigration and settlement of the immigrants have occurred" in these spaces. In particular, Simonsen believes that the failure of hegemonic cities to deal with these everyday strange encounters "has imported (post)colonialism into the cities and produced spatially segregated and racialized geographies" (2008: 147), notably through institutional practices and discourses with a significant emotional burden.

3. Emotional Economies of Disgust and the Abject Condition

Sara Ahmed's seminal theory in *The Cultural Politics of Emotion* draws on the premise that, although usually related to "the presumption of interiority" (Ahmed 2014: 8), "emotions should not be regarded as psychological states, but as social and cultural practices" (2014: 9). For her, as Deborah Lupton had claimed in *The Emotional Self: A Sociocultural Exploration* (1998), emotions need to be understood as resulting from cultural definitions and social interactions with others. In this sense, Ahmed presents an approach to emotions "as a form of cultural politics or world-making" which aligns some bodies with others and, at the same time, marginalises other bodies within communities (2014: 12). More specifically, she bases the principle of her model of "affective economies" on the idea that emotions do not "inhabit *anybody* or *anything*" (2014: 46; emphasis in original), but as "effects of circulation" (2014: 8), they move and "stick" to "create the very surfaces and boundaries that allow all kinds of objects to be delineated" (2014: 10).

In a similar vein, Ben Anderson has more recently observed that emotions "attach to places and bodies and so condition without determining how those places and bodies are and can be related to" (2017: 28). He stresses, moreover, that emotions "are unevenly distributed and imbricated in processes of distribution" which "enact, express and reproduce […] patterns of urban inequalities" (26). In the case of disgust, Ahmed understands that the relation of this emotion to power becomes clear when we consider both the spatialising procedure of its related repulsive reactions "and their role in the hierarchising of spaces as well as bodies" (2014: 88). Because "it involves a relationship of touch and proximity between the surfaces of bodies and" those entities which are perceived as a threat, she sees disgust as fundamentally "dependent upon contact" (2014: 85). To be more precise, Ahmed explains that the spatialisation implied in its functioning is based on an avoidance of contact as a response to the identification of an actual or potential threat of contamination (2014: 85). Therefore, following its perception as "the key to an understanding of exclusion" (Sibley 1995: 11), Ahmed has identified disgust as crucial in the establishment of social segmentation (2014: 88).

Drawing from Julia Kristeva's reflections in her *Powers of Horror: An Essay on Abjection*, where the author describes the abject as that which is "opposed to *I*" (1982: 1; emphasis in original), Ahmed stresses that it is the examination of the relationship between disgust and the alienating condition of abjection that enables the comprehension of the reason why "some forms of contact are felt to

be disgusting (and not others)" (2014: 86). As noted by Ellen Hostetter through a reference to Ian Burkitt, "[e]ach emotion is 'expressive of patterns of relations'", and "disgust […] is an emotion that expresses a particular set of unequal power relations" (2010: 285). Hostetter explains that disgust "leads to a social and spatial hierarchy with those in power defined as pure" opposing "a defiled other, rejected, and excluded by wider society" (285). In this regard, Ahmed has argued that the perception of these "others" as disgusting is the result of an emotional stickiness which "depends on histories of contact that have already impressed upon the surface of the object" (2014: 90)— this being the reason why black bodies are "already seen as dirt, as the carrier of dirt" (82). Indeed, it is along these lines that, as Hostetter has proposed, disgust cannot only be seen as "giv[ing] meaning and force to a racial ideology" (2010: 289), but as fragmenting the landscape along racial lines (283). Disgust, as a spatialising emotion, creates boundaries and establishes a distance from the racialised "other" through a process of social abjectification in contemporary urban spaces.

Imogen Tyler has described social abjection as an exclusionary social force of sovereign power which "strip[s] people of their human dignity and reproduce[s] them as dehumanized waste, the disposable dregs and refuse of social life" (2013: 21). She sees this condition as a prism through which to examine current "states of exclusion from multiple perspectives" (4), and especially from the view of those perceived by Anne McClintock as "obliged to inhabit the impossible edges of modernity" (in Tyler 2013: 4). Ahmed's observation that one of the most important features of disgust is its ambivalent nature provides a valuable insight into this positionality Tyler relates to the paradoxical need for the "surplus" that immigrants represent (2013: 20). For her, in line with Ahmed's consideration that disgust involves "desire for, or an attraction towards, the very objects that are felt to be repellent" (2014: 84), this has to do with the desire "to both constitute the boundaries of the state and […] legitimate the prevailing order of power" (Tyler 2013: 20). In other words, despite important objections to immigration, undocumented migrants are a fundamental tool in the current capitalist global structure, mainly because of the cheapness that their absence "of welfare benefits" implies, but "also because of their vulnerability to deportation and their lack of legal rights" (Hayter 2004: 157). This "inclusive exclusive" logic Tyler has identified thus demonstrates that these socio-spatial processes are not opposite mechanisms in the present neoimperialist world (2013: 20). Furthermore, it seems to be a crucial factor in the renegotiation of the abjectionality which conditions the subjectivation process of contemporary postcolonial migrants.

4. Decoding the Depiction of Disgust and the Abject in Adichie's *Americanah* and Bulawayo's *We Need New Names*

Ifemelu, the protagonist of Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's *Americanah*, is a middle-class teenager from Lagos who moves to the United States in her college years in search of a better education. The novel recounts her romance with Obinze, who decides to settle in Britain, from the beginning of their relationship in secondary school to their reunion back in Nigeria. After more than a decade living in diaspora, Ifemelu decides to return to Nigeria in spite of her success as a popular "race blogger" in the United States. Indeed, the narration opens with Ifemelu on her way to a salon to have her hair braided as part of her preparation for her return to Lagos. The importance of considering the depiction of what could be read as her displacement from the centre to the urban peripheries of the hegemonic metropolis lies in its possible interpretation as an illustration of the racial fragmentation of this urban space. The initial lines of the novel, which refer to some of her similar experiences in the past, demonstrate this possibility:

> During her first year in America, when she took New Jersey Transit to Penn Station and then the subway to visit Aunty Uju in Flatlands, [Ifemelu] was struck by how mostly slim white people got off at the stops in Manhattan and, as the train went further into Brooklyn, the people left were mostly black and fat. (Adichie 2014: 5)

This description of the spatialisation of race in New York City is then emphasised through the clarification that her memories correlate with her experiences at present. Ifemelu reveals that "[i]t still startle[s] her […] what a difference a few minutes of train travel ma[kes]" when she later in this initial chapter reflects on her journey from Princeton to Trenton to have her hair braided (2014: 5). In the same vein, the narration provides details that contrast Princeton Junction Station in New Jersey, where all the people on the platform are "white and lean" (4), and the platform in Trenton, the southernmost stop in the state, which "was crowded with black people, many of them fat, in short, flimsy clothes" (5). Besides a clear contrast between racially marked urban fragments, Ali Madanipour's fundamental consideration that the "socio-spatial phenomenon" of exclusion is "multidimensional" becomes, thus, evident through the representation of a socioeconomic gap (2016: 206), which is especially noticeable in the description of the population's physical construction and way of dressing.

The delimitation of racially marked geographies within the western metropolis becomes even more apparent when the narrator provides details about the neighborhood Ifemelu enters in her search for the braiding salon in Trenton. The image of chaos and dirtiness is explicitly associated with the black population in the

area when the narrator clarifies that this is "the part of the city that had graffiti, dank buildings and no white people" (Adichie 2014: 9). Then the narration narrows even more its spatial focus and describes, in the same vein, the moment Ifemelu enters the salon from which the whole story is articulated through the use of flashbacks. This is situated in "a shabby block", which is limited to a room depicted as "thick with disregard, the paint peeling" (9), and which, after a while, begins "to nauseate her, with its stuffy air and rotting ceiling" (363). In addition to recognising Ifemelu as a sentient subject of the place because of her space-induced nausea, it is worth noticing that this feeling of sickness has been traditionally identified as one of the main results of experiencing revulsion (Rozin and Fallon in Ahmed 2014: 84). Ifemelu's perception of this crucial space in the narrative in terms of disgust is indeed stressed when she wonders why the braiders could not "keep their salon clean and ventilated" (Adichie 2014: 363).

The connection between a disgust discourse and the depiction of the alienation of the racialised "other" in the hegemonic metropolis in *Americanah* is also noticeable when the narrator provides further details on the place where Ifemelu lives upon her arrival in the United States. This is the apartment of her Aunt Uju in Flatlands, who had left Nigeria some years earlier to finish her medical training. The narration highlights Ifemelu's surprise when she realises that "[a] fat cockroach was perched on the wall near the cabinets, moving slightly up and down as though breathing heavily" (Adichie 2014: 106). In Lagos, "she would have found a broom and killed it", but in this black dominant part of Brooklyn "she left the American cockroach alone and went and stood by the living room window" (106). While the presence of this insect, usually seen as a "carrier of dirt" (Ahmed 2014: 54), reveals the abject character of the space inhabited, Ifemelu's distancing from the insect this time could be read as the result of the fear of contamination which characterises a feeling of disgust (Adichie 2014: 83)— that is, as an effort to avoid becoming a despised subject "through 'taking on' the qualities already attached to the roach" (54). Nevertheless, it is important to realise that her abject condition appears to be already determined by her spatial segregation in the alleged land of opportunity.

Just as Adichie's narrative opens with a spatial opposition in the setting of the racially fragmented western metropolis, so NoViolet Bulawayo's *We Need New Names* also begins with a revealing spatial contrast. This differs, however, from the depiction in *Americanah* in that its characters appear to move on this occasion from the margins to the centre of the non-western urban space. Darling, the protagonist, is ten and lives in a poverty-stricken shantytown called Paradise because her house has been demolished. Here she spends her days playing games with her friends and stealing guavas until she moves to the United States to live with her Aunt Fostalina, where she deals with the challenges of being an

undocumented immigrant. The narration opens with the depiction of the children in the middle of their routine trip from Paradise to a place described "not like Paradise" but "like being in a different country altogether" (Bulawayo 2013: 4). This is named Budapest, a location that mostly consists of white people with a higher social status, so that Darling sees it as "a nice country where people who are not like [them] live" (4).

A better visualization of this spatial depiction can be had by following through the correlation between the fictional spatial opposition between Paradise and Budapest and the conception of the Manichean colonial city Frantz Fanon presented in *The Wretched of the Earth* (1961). In her contribution to *The Cambridge Companion to the City in Literature*, Caroline Herbert argues that, in Fanon's view, the colonial city consisted of two distinct parts which represent "the spatial practices of the imperial imaginary" (2014: 201). Budapest would correspond with Fanon's identification of the settler's town as "strongly-built" and "well-fed", whose streets are "clean", whereas Paradise could be illustrative of his conception of "the native town" as "a place of ill fame" (Fanon 1963: 39). As Darling describes:

> Budapest is big, big houses with satellite dishes on the roofs and neat graveled yards on trimmed lawns, and the tall fences and Durawalls and the flowers and the big trees heavy with fruit that's waiting for us since nobody around here seems to know what to do with it. It's fruit that gives us courage, otherwise we wouldn't dare be here. I keep expecting the clean streets to spit and tell us to go back where we came from. (Bulawayo 2013: 4)

The fact that the sole reason why the children move around Budapest is their hunger appears in connection with their discernible fearfulness in the area. It seems a paradox, however, that this emotion is represented as experienced by those subjects who are supposed to be the feared ones in this location, in particular owing to the reference to the presence of forms of protection such as fences and concrete walls. Apart from this, the use of the popular expression "go back to where you came from" deserves a special focus as it significantly conjures up the image of the immigrant who is rejected in a new country of residence. This refers to the children, who are in a place whose name refers precisely to an altogether different country. However, as Darling suggests by saying that the inhabitants of Budapest appear not to know what to do with the fruit in their gardens, the figure of the stranger could be identified both with them and with the native population. To be more precise, while the condition of strangeness of the white population appears to be based on their unfamiliarity with the environment, in the case of the children it seems to be strongly associated with their threatening condition as the abject poor of the area.

The contrast between Paradise and Budapest, besides becoming evident through a distinct depiction of a sharper racial and socioeconomic difference than in the

initial lines of *Americanah*, seems to be above all articulated through "the language and imaginary of disgust" which still characterises racist discourses (Miller 2004: 154). This is manifest through the opposition between cleanliness and dirt that the repeated references to the eschatological establish in this narrative, especially through the repetition of the word "kaka" in allusion to Paradise, as when Darling states that, in comparison with her town, "Budapest is not a kaka toilet for anybody to just walk in" (Bulawayo 2013: 12). The disgust discourse in the narration, as in the case of Adichie's narrative, can thus be read as representing a clear case of sociospatial exclusion— for after all, it designates those spaces in which the racialised "other" is depicted as alienated.

Bearing in mind Kristeva's identification of abjection with all that is simultaneously loathsome and captivating about our bodies and bodily experiences, such as pregnancy, death, illness, vomiting, defecation, sex or fluids, the explicit reference to the abject in Bulawayo's novel is in addition complemented with the sordid depiction of an eleven-year-old girl who becomes pregnant after being raped by her grandfather (2013: 40). Disgust is mostly stimulated in the reader when Darling refers to her process of urinating in a cup, whose content Chipo swallows in preparation for the rudimentary abortion her friends want to perform on her using a clothes hanger (81). In the same vein, the depiction of Darling's father's return to Paradise includes the hyperbolic reference to human body waste, illustrating the consequences of the man's suffering from AIDS. Considering Paul Rozin and April E. Fallon's clarification that "vomiting involves expelling something that has already been digested, and hence incorporated into the body of the one who feels disgust" (in Ahmed 2014: 94), it is in particular worth focusing on the continuous reference to his unstoppable throwing up so as to deepen the recognition of the significance of this quotation:

> Father comes home after many years of forgetting us, of not sending us money, of not loving us, not visiting us, not anything us, and parks in the shack, unable to move, unable to talk properly, unable to anything, vomiting and vomiting, Jesus, just vomiting and defecating on himself, and it smelling like something dead in there, dead and rotting, his body a black, terrible stick […]. (Bulawayo 2013: 89)

Far from a simple description of the health condition of the man, these lines seem above all to constitute a sharp criticism of the failed process of decolonisation which, as illustrated through the protagonist's displacement to the United States, still obliges Zimbabweans to "leave in droves" to other countries (Bulawayo 2013: 145). Indeed, Darling's father contracts AIDS after moving to South Africa to find work. Accordingly, the reference to the vomiting could be read as revulsion towards a scheme characterised by corruption, disease, conflict and a slow economy the Zimbabwean population in the novel no longer wants to belong to.

The rejection felt by native Zimbabweans towards their own land is depicted in the novel through the explicit illustration of the children's dreams about leaving for what, in their words, are "country-countries", when the narrator explains the basics of one of their games:

> But first we have to fight over the names because everybody wants to be certain countries, like everybody wants to be the U.S.A. and Britain and Canada and Australia and Switzerland and France and Greece and them. These are the country-countries. If you lose the fight, then you just have to settle for countries like Dubai and South Africa and Botswana and Tanzania and them. They are not country-countries, but at least life is better than here. Nobody wants to be rags of countries like Congo, like Somalia, like Iraq, like Sudan, like Haiti, like Sri Lanka, and not even this one we live in— who wants to be a terrible place of hunger and things falling apart? (Bulawayo 2013: 49)

Besides the contrast between the neoimperialist centres and their margins in the current international scene, therefore broadening the scope of earlier spatial oppositions in the narrative, this quotation raises another issue which is central for a consideration of the spatialising role of disgust in the social sphere. The desire to be identified with current hegemonic countries, and the consequent contempt for one's own condition, can be interpreted through Tyler's notion of "social abjection" as a social force which might lead to the perception of oneself as the abject (Tyler 2013: 21). It is not just that the children seem to idolise Budapest in their perception of the area as of a clear higher status than Paradise, but Darling and her friends appear also to be aware of their own positionality as the national waste, notably in their encounter with the NGO people the children "are careful not to touch" (Bulawayo 2013: 54). The narrator clarifies that, "even though they are giving [them] things", it is evident that these people "do not want to touch [them] or for [them] to touch them" (54)— a behaviour which can be better understood through Ahmed's primal assumption that disgust "is dependent upon […] the proximity between the surfaces of bodies" and so involves a "double movement" which is "crucial to the intercorporeality of the disgust encounter" (2014: 85). Indeed, the NGO people move towards the children, only then to pull away from them.

The same recognition of oneself as the abject can be perceived in the episode when the children, who are stealing guavas in a private garden in Budapest (Bulawayo 2013: 120), enter a house the Zimbabwean revolutionaries have shattered. Specifically, this can be seen in the scene when the gang find themselves seeing the reflection of their faces in a bathroom mirror on which the words "Black Power" had been written using feces (130). Following Ahmed's reflections, the sticky sign the words represent and the sticky object the children embody "cannot be separated through any simple distinction between literal and metaphorical", for

"stickiness involves a form of relationality […] in which the [concerned] elements […] get bound together" (Ahmed 2014: 91). For the same reason, neither is it complicated for the reader to compare the children to the revolutionaries who have produced that sign on the mirror and are, thus, in this chain of production and identification with the abject. In fact, apart from their equally inappropriate experience in the house without its owners' consent, there seems to be a further correlation between the act of the revolutionaries in the toilet and the children's earlier threats to spread their dirt around Budapest. Godknows is especially explicit in these terms through his statement "You want us to come at night and defecate all over? Or steal things?" (Bulawayo 2013: 47), addressing one of the Chinese men who are building a shopping centre on the outskirts of Budapest. The connection could even be established between the desire of the revolutionaries to restore a black Africa, as their words "Africa for Africans!" reveal (111), and the children's claim for their place when, in Darling's words: "Going back to Paradise, we do not run. We just walk nicely like Budapest is now our country too, like we built it even, eating guavas along the way and spitting the peels all over to make the place dirty" (11). The description of their attitude as confident pedestrians moving around Budapest is reminiscent of de Certeau's reflection on walking as an everyday practice of spatial appropriation, in particular through their willful act of contaminating the place by spitting. It seems to be, however, the physical embodiment inherent to this action which reveals the children as abject subjects of the space inhabited.

The power of disgust discourse to create abject subjects and objects, and not simply to define them, is also illustrated in Adichie's narrative when Morgan, the oldest daughter of Ifemelu's first boss in the United States, refers to her uncle's relationship with Ifemelu as "disgusting". Her attitude of contempt is in addition emphasised in the same terms through the narrator's comment that the girl is "looking genuinely disgusted" when she states her opinion (Adichie 2014: 194), which demonstrates that the problem of blood mixing still "recurs and attracts disgust in discourses of both race and class" (Miller 2004: 156). However, the importance of the episode under discussion relies above all on its representation of Ahmed's fundamental consideration that "[t]o name something as disgusting […] in the speech act […] 'That's disgusting!' is performative", meaning that "[i]t relies on previous norms and conventions of speech, and it generates the object that it names" (2014: 93). In this sense, the consideration of Ifemelu's relationship with her new American partner as "disgusting" through this same statement positions Ifemelu as the disgust object. It is, nevertheless, the relevance of not "neutralis[ing] the differences between objects", as well as of realising "that some objects become stickier than others given past histories of" association (Ahmed 2014: 92), which explains the reason why Ifemelu's boyfriend is not regarded in

the same terms although he is also one of the "disgusting" partners. Nonetheless, as Ahmed further clarifies, the speech act mentioned above does not only create subjects and objects of disgust as a result of the stickiness of this emotional notion, but it also involves a process of casting off or, in other words, an abjection of those "whose proximity is felt to be threatening and contaminating" (2014: 94)— that is, the racialised "other" from which a distance is created in the hegemonic urban space.

Ifemelu's adoption of a social condition of abjection in the United States seems to be in fact the result of a social mechanism of an "inclusive exclusion" which benefits from the vulnerability of the racialised 'other' to perpetuate hegemonic racial relations. Depicted in the form of a symbolic marginality given by the consideration of the subject as an essential but unrecognised part of the nation, this positionality is represented in both narratives through the depiction of the different jobs their characters either vie for or eventually perform in their status as undocumented immigrants. Specifically, it is the description of their working conditions and workplaces which stimulates an emotion of disgust and illustrates a clear state of social abjection in their narrations. In the case of *We Need New Names*, this is manifest when Darling outlines that her work routine consists of cleaning toilets, bagging groceries and sorting out bottles and cans (Bulawayo 2013: 251). Particularly explicit is her description of a grocery store:

> The beer bottles are the worst. They will come with all sorts of nasty things. Bloodstains. Pieces of trash. Cigarette stubs drowning in stale beer the color of urine, and one time, a used condom. When I started working here, back in tenth grade, I used to vomit on every shift. (253)

In the same vein, the depiction of the workplace of the undocumented immigrant in *Americanah* stimulates disgust in an explicit manner through the graphic description of the apartment in South Philadelphia where Ifemelu goes for an interview:

> At first, Ifemelu forgot she was someone else. In an apartment in South Philadelphia, a tired-faced woman opened the door and led her into a strong stench of urine. The living room was dark, unaired, and she imagined the whole building steeped in months, even years, of accumulated urine, and herself working every day in this urine cloud. From inside the apartment, a man was groaning, deep and eerie sounds; they were the groans of a person for whom groaning was the only choice left, and they frightened her. (Adichie 2014: 130)

The hyperbolic illustration of the abject in the form of body fluids represents an obvious allusion to disgust. Moreover, Ifemelu's later interview "in a cramped home office", which "smelled slightly of damp" and was situated "in the basement of a strange house" in Philadelphia is consistent with this disgust discourse in the

narration (Adichie 2014: 143). Interestingly, Ahmed's perception of the intersection between disgust and the abject through the identification of "that which is below" constitutes a useful prism through which to interpret this episode. In particular, her observation of the connection of this lowness with "other bodies and other spaces" which are below the hegemonic entities in power relations, as well as with the lower corporeal regions associated both with body waste and sexuality (2014: 89), appear to be the most enlightening on this occasion.

The correlation can be, thus, first established between Ifemelu's condition as a black illegal worker —which places her in a position of "belowness" in the hierarchical power structure in the United States— and her identification of "low bodies" in power relations. Second, the fact that the interview is conducted in the part of a building that is below ground level —together with the damp smell of the place stimulating a sense of disgust— seems again to allude to this particular positionality to which her social situation leads. Ahmed's third association with lower corporeal regions is prompted by the fact that the services this man requests from her are comparable to prostitution. This is implicit when he clarifies that he is looking for someone who helps him to "relax", but quite explicit when, in answer to her request for greater precision, he tells her that she "can give [him] a massage" (Adichie 2014: 144).

In a desperate attempt to improve her living condition as a black immigrant woman in the United States, Ifemelu ends up carrying out the services requested by the tennis coach. The narrator describes how, "even after she had washed her hands" after their sexual encounter, "holding the crisp, slender hundred-dollar bill he had given her, her fingers still felt sticky", as if "they no longer belonged to her" (Adichie 2014: 154). Indeed, Ahmed's consideration that the association of emotions with objects or other bodies is dependent on contact and based on a relation of "stickiness" serves once more to illustrate Ifemelu's emotional state (2014: 18). In the same way that Ahmed understands that "emotions can move through the movement or circulation of objects" due to the emotional stickiness of these objects (2014: 11), Ifemelu's feeling of disgust towards the fluids in her fingers appears to translate into a sense of self-disgust when the narration switches from one location to another and places the protagonist back in her flat. In particular, this becomes evident through the resemblance between her reaction towards her clothes and her attitude towards her own self in the following lines:

> Back in her apartment, she washed her hands with water so hot that it scalded her fingers, and a small soft welt flowered on her thumb. She took of all her clothes and squashed them into a rumpled ball that she threw at a corner, staring at it for a while. She would never again wear those clothes, never even touch them. She sat naked on her bed and looked at her life, in this tiny room with the mouldy carpet, the hundred-dollar bill on the table, her body rising with loathing. She should never have gone

> there. She should have walked away. She wanted to shower, to scrub herself, but she could not bear the thought of touching her own body, and so she put on her nightdress, gingerly, to touch as little of herself as possible. (Adichie 2014: 154)

Besides the presence of a "mouldy carpet", Ifemelu's reaction towards her own corporeality accentuates the atmosphere of disgust in her room through the illustration of her desire to create distance from that which is regarded as revolting. The imaged contact with what had made her fingers become sticky leads her to the compulsive washing and emphasised desire to bathe that Christal Badour and Thomas Adams have identified as a response to a traumatic sexual experience such as Ifemelu's (2015: 130). For them, this response can be manifested as either "intended to remove contaminants from the skin" (2015: 135), as when the protagonist is still in his apartment and her fingers are depicted as "sticky" (Adichie 2014: 154), or "to escape unwanted negative emotions" (Badour and Adams 2015: 135), as the description of her state once in her flat illustrates (Adichie 2014: 154). Nevertheless, far from a mere avoidance of either dirt or a temporary undesired emotion, Ifemelu's behaviour could be read as her struggle to escape the abject condition that her acts may have adhered to her person. In line with Ahmed's reflections on "the complexity of the relationship between the [colonial] past and [the imperialism of the] present" (2000: 11), it should not be forgotten, however, that her racialised, gendered and sexualised abjectionality as a black immigrant woman in the hegemonic metropolis is primarily the result of strongly interiorised histories of association.

5. Conclusion

The identification of Ifemelu, in Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's *Americanah*, and Darling, in NoViolet Bulawayo's *We Need New Names* as characters who are involved both physically and emotionally with the urban spaces depicted in their narrations confirms the current trend of black diasporic writers to replace the modern *flânerie* with Isabel Carrera Suárez's "postcolonial, post-diasporic pedestrian" (2015: 854). Furthermore, the recognition of their embodied urban experience has enabled the understanding of the geographies of disgust in these two iconic Afrodiasporic narratives as illustrative of the racialisation processes which condition their subjectivation as Afrodiasporians in contemporary postcolonial cities.

Even though disgust-invoking images proliferate in both novels, their meaning changes in the episodes set in non-western urban spaces and in those dealing with their protagonists' experiences living in diaspora. While disgust is more closely associated with the diverse forms of violence and decay resulting from a failed

process of decolonisation through the depiction of a racially fragmented non-western urban space in the first case, this emotion is mostly related to an ambivalent social status in those situations in the hegemonic metropolis. Specifically, the identification of a disgust discourse in the representation of western urban spaces enables the emergence of a symbolic marginality which defines the liminal condition of migrant abjectionality in this neoimperial urban space. The importance of this social abjection that current disgust discourses impose upon postcolonial migrants such as Ifemelu and Darling relies on its representation of an ambivalent positionality which is based on an inclusive exclusion, hence revealing itself as a critical conditioning factor in their process of subjectivation.

In conclusion, the representation of urban spaces in both Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's *Americanah* and NoViolet Bulawayo's *We Need New Names* has been demonstrated to have significance beyond their mere physical description. Providing a critical look at the racially spatialised global cities of the present, these have also been identified as contributing to the representation of the socio-emotional experiences of their protagonists. Through a specific focus on the disgust discourse embedded in their narrations, emotions have in turn been confirmed central for an accurate interpretation of the spaces in which the action in these narratives occurs. Ultimately, it has been shown that the examination of spatio-emotional textualities in the form of geographies of disgust constitute a suitable basis through which to understand the social condition of abjection and its representation in contemporary Afrodiasporic fiction.[1]

Notes

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COLLAPSING STRUCTURES OF LIFE AND DEATH IN MIKE MCCORMACK'S *SOLAR BONES*

ESTRUCTURAS FRACASADAS DE VIDA Y MUERTE EN *SOLAR BONES,* DE MIKE MCCORMACK

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Abstract

In the present essay I argue that that Mike McCormack's acclaimed latest novel *Solar Bones* (Brit. 2016, USA 2017) thematises two impulses: on the one hand, the narrator, Marcus Conway, is seeking an order and structural coherence to his world, an order that throughout assumes a distinctly religious tint; on the other hand, the novel features various images of collapse of structures, ranging from the economic system all the way to actual buildings, all of which thwart his efforts. It is those twin movements, towards order and chaos, that reveal an association with Heidegger's idea that only by becoming aware of death as one's sole personal mode of life, does one begin to apprehend the essential structure of life, even if the glimpse of that structure is only ever available in its constant deferral.

Keywords: Mike McCormack, *Solar Bones*, Irish contemporary fiction, Martin Heidegger, collapsing structures.

Resumen

Este ensayo pretende demostrar que *Solar Bones*, la aclamada novela de Mike McCormack recientemente publicada (Reino Unido 2016, EEUU 2017), se articula a caballo entre dos impulsos: por un lado, el narrador, Marcus Conway,

trata de encontrar un orden y una coherencia elemental para su mundo, en una búsqueda que adopta un matiz característicamente religioso; por otro lado, la novela muestra numerosas imágenes del fracaso del sistema, desde el orden económico hasta edificios reales, que frustran sus esfuerzos. A través de esos movimientos que simultáneamente tienden hacia el orden y hacia el caos se revela una relación con el postulado de Heidegger según el cual, cuando uno es consciente de la muerte como el único modo de vida puede empezar a percibir la estructura esencial de la ésta, incluso si dicho orden únicamente es perceptible a través de su constante aplazamiento.

Palabras clave: Mike McCormack, *Solar Bones*, ficción irlandesa contemporánea, Martin Heidegger, estructuras fracasadas.

In his acclaimed latest novel *Solar Bones* (Brit. 2016, USA 2017), Mike McCormack ponders such notions as the completion and brevity of life and its purposefulness. Reviewers have been quick to put McCormack's latest novel in the company of modernist avant-gardists James Joyce and Virginia Woolf (Riker 2018). Martin Riker prefaces his review with a brief note that "Modernism was about many things, but largely it was about fragmentation. The world had cracked, and artists had noticed" (Riker 2018). While he goes on to acknowledge that McCormack's novel "is a wonderfully original, distinctly contemporary book, with a debt to modernism but up to something all its own" (Riker 2018), there is a general feeling that *Solar Bones* has taken its rightful place beside Eimer MacBride's *A Girl is a Half-Formed Thing* —the first winner of the Goldsmiths prize for innovative fiction, which *Solar Bones* won in 2016— as another great Irish experimental novel that confirms Ireland's innovative pedigree, which goes all the way back to Joyce. Interestingly enough, McCormack does not cut himself off from what he calls "our [the Irish] Mount Rushmore" (in Boland 2016): Joyce, Flann O'Brien and Samuel Beckett. He does, however, admit that "[m]y generation were a bit wary of picking up the challenge those old fellows had laid down for us", stressing nonetheless: "Now I see it not as a challenge, but a license. Beckett and Joyce and Flann are giving me the quest: go forth and experiment" (in Boland 2016). When asked about his influences, McCormack points out that "stylistically, the book I always refer to is *The Autumn of the Patriarch* by Gabriel García Márquez— it's the best example of how to write long sentences", the point being, of course, that *Solar Bones* is just one long, scattered sentence (in Boland 2016). But more importantly, McCormack says in the same interview, "[t]he things that came to my mind when I was writing were essays by Martin Heidegger. The style of those

essays was influential in that Heidegger created a logical sense out of repetition, a repetition of swirling rhythms. They're the biggest influence on *Solar Bones*" (in Boland 2016).

McCormack had acknowledged his debt to Heidegger in an earlier interview, where he said he had read Heidegger "and his ideas on technology" (O'Malley 2012) but it appears that whereas *The Question Concerning Technology* (1954, Eng. 1977) underpins some of the stories in *Forensic Songs* (2012), *Solar Bones* is more taken with Heidegger's delineation of death as the fundamental structure of *Dasein*. The present essay sets out to show that the latter novel is strung between two impulses: on the one hand, the narrator, Marcus Conway, is seeking to assert an order and structural coherence to his world, with his search assuming a distinctly religious tint; on the other, the novel features numerous images of collapse of structures, from the economic system all the way to actual buildings. It is those twin movements, towards order and chaos all at once, that reveal an association with Heidegger's thesis that only by becoming aware of death as our sole personal mode of life, does one begin to apprehend the essential structure of one's life even if the glimpse of that structure is only ever available in its constant deferral.

1. Ghostly Structures

Solar Bones begins on November 2, when Conway recalls hearing the Angelus bell: "The bell/ the bell as/ hearing the bell as/ hearing the bell as standing here/ the bell being heard standing here/ hearing it ring out through the grey light of this/ morning, noon or night" (McCormack 2017: 1). This end-stopped opening suggests a prose poem, as Ian Samson notes (2016), an implication not far removed from McCormack's avowed plan; as he suggested in an interview, "Poetry aspires to say the unsayable, and there's a degree of that in *Solar Bones*" (Wallace 2018). The reader is led to assume that Marcus is a ghost, remembering various instances from his life until he reaches the moment of his demise, most likely from a heart attack. Given that the novel is set on All Souls' Day, the inevitable context is Yeats's "All Souls' Night" (1920), a poem that celebrates "mummy truths" (Yeats 1996: 234) that the poet-seer has come to know through his mediumistic wife's automatic writing sessions. In *A Vision* (1937), Yeats delineates some of those "mummy truths", explaining that a soul, which he dubs the *Spirit*, passes through six stages on its way to reincarnation, noting that in the second stage, which is called the *Dreaming Back*, "the Spirit is compelled to live over and over again the events that had most moved it; there can be nothing new, but the old events stand forth in a light which is dim or bright according to the intensity of the passion that accompanied them" (Yeats 1969: 226). This is an apt description of Marcus's

condition in that his narrative seems also to revisit the most passionate, or at least the most intense, moments of his life: the fraught relationship with his father, his wife's illness, his daughter's artistic achievements and his son's departure to Australia, a painful reminder throughout the novel of the abyss that separates Marcus from his loved ones, even if there are also instances when Marcus recalls happy moments of communion with his father and wife. Also, the fact that the narrative trails away without a full stop to mark the end of the sentence may be taken to indicate the recurrence of the narrative, in line with Yeats's insistence that the *Spirit* lives through the passionate moments over and over again.

Yeats's discussion of life after death matters insofar as, for him, death instigates the process of empting of the Spirit that results in utter loss of memory of the past incarnations; only after *Purification* is finished, may it pass on to the final stage of *Foreknowledge*, during which it "must substitute the next incarnation […] for that form of perfection" which is achieved in the completion of *Purification* (Yeats 1969: 234). Despite the undoubtedly esoteric nature of Yeats's writing, it casts light on what appears to be Marcus's aim, as the novel leads us to speculate. He strives to trace his life to an unravelling of loose threads so that it all makes sense to him. However, what distinguishes Conway from Yeats's ghosts in a poem like "All Souls' Night" is the fact that whereas they are believed to possess knowledge denied to the living, the narrator of *Solar Bones* is riddled by confusion, internal tensions and ambiguities, which zero in on the conflict between structure and its collapse.

Reflecting on his job as an engineer, Marcus concludes that there is a part of him that "needs to have faith in things" and so engineering becomes for him "a religious vocation with its own rituals and articles of faith not to mention a reckoning in some vaulted and girdered hereafter where engineer's souls are weighed and evaluated after a lifetime's wear and tear in the friction of this world" (McCormack 2017: 169). This insight is corroborated by his idea of the world as a coherent structure conceived by God, the ultimate engineer; as Marcus muses:

> [T]he whole world [was] built up from first principles, towering and rigid as any structural engineer might wish, each line following necessarily from the previous one to link heaven and earth step by step, from the first grain of the first moment to the last waning scintilla of light in which everything is engulfed in darkness, the engineer's dream of structured ascent and stability bolted into every line of its [the Catechism's] fifty pages, so carefully laid out that any attentive reading of it should enable a man to find his place with some certainty in the broadest reaches of the world, a tower of prayer to span heaven and earth and something which a part of me has never grown out of or developed beyond[.] (76)

Marcus hankers after a vision of eternal completeness and coherence, of which his profession is just an extension. As his son, Darragh, tells him, "it's well known that

engineers picked up where God left off" (McCormack 2017: 169). In light of Marcus's belief in the existence of structures, it is little surprising that he discovers patterns and coherences all about him. The motifs that recur throughout the novel function like the scaffolding by means of which he tries to maintain a grip on reality. Being up to date with news is more than just an everyday activity, for Marcus confides: "I was one of those men who had always structured his days around radio news bulletins right from the moment I got up in the morning and stood with my mug of tea in the kitchen listening to the sea area forecast with its sing-song litany of names from around the coast" (111). The word "structure" scuttles across the narrative with an almost obsessive regularity, as Marcus alludes to "political structures" (34), the "protective structure of a democracy" (33), and credits himself with an "engineer's sense of structure" (67). This is a running theme in McCormack's fiction in general, with a particularly apt evocation in *Notes from a Coma* (2005), in which the main protagonist, J.J. O'Malley is said to see "signs everywhere", which he then weaves "together into a kind of world view" (McCormack 2005: 46).

Like J.J., Marcus also entertains a world view that communicates to him a sense of order and balance; so much so that, for example, he discovers an internal logic in a story his wife tells him of a Mongolian tribe in which there is a woman who "walks backwards and talks backwards and rides her horse backwards, she gets up in the middle of the night to eat her dinner and she goes to bed when everyone around her is beginning their day" because "it's their belief that if everyone is walking and talking and doing things in the same direction then there is real danger that the whole world will tip over, so one person is needed to work the opposite way to keep the world balanced" (McCormack 2017: 67). To that Marcus responds with an immediate judgement: "that makes sense, it's basic engineering, any load bearing structure will topple over if it doesn't have balancing counterweight, cranes will topple over if they are not properly weighted" (67). Although frequently hidden behind the veil of science, Marcus's world view is underlain with the conviction that mechanics only confirms the divine logic that went into the creation of the universe.

There is a distinct echo here of Thomas Aquinas's five proofs of the existence of God, especially the first, the argument from motion. Aquinas argues that since everything in the world is in motion, by which he means change, something must have first propelled it: "For motion is nothing else than the reduction of something from potentiality to actuality. But nothing can be reduced from potentiality to actuality, except by something in a state of actuality" (Aquinas 1990: I.3.2). Marcus literally picks up the same line of thinking when he discusses pouring concrete for the foundations of a building. In a flight of fancy, he says:

> the timing and cooperation needed and the way the rising and spreading tide of concrete itself demarks, as no other stage in the building process can, the actual from the theoretical, makes the whole thing real in a way that site-clearing or the digging out of the foundation itself can never do. (McCormack 2017: 167)

Pouring concrete represents the crucial moment in "any structure's transition" from theoretical, or what Aquinas refers to as potential, to actual. On a wider scale, Aquinas's proof, like the remaining ones and indeed, the entirety of *Summa Theologica* (XIII c.), indicates a grand design of things at the core of which lies the supreme intellect we understand to be God (see Elders 1993: 231-238). It is this belief in the existence of an order beyond the chaos of reality that helps Marcus endure the difficult period when his wife suffers from bacteria poisoning; when after an excruciating bout of sickness she begins to feel markedly better, he comes to "[experience] a shameless, rising joy in my heart as if finally, for the first time in a long while I was hearing something good, something which was not of this world's raucous tumult but which spoke of that harmonic order which underlay everyone and everything" (McCormack 2017: 199). The joy he feels is thus as much a relief at Mairead's improving condition as it is the fruit of his regained intellectual conviction that there is an order to the world.

2. Collapsing Structures

Marcus's search for structures, whether premeditated or randomly discovered, is juxtaposed with images of collapse of order, which threaten to overwhelm him and his family. The novel opens with an evocation of the financial crisis that struck the world following the declaration of insolvency by the Lehman Brothers on 15 September, only a little over a fortnight before the novel takes place. For a man so trusting as Marcus is of the idea that the world follows a prescribed pattern, the 2008 crisis surely was a deadly blow. The post-crisis analyses of the causes for Ireland's dramatic recession invariably stress the dependence on foreign, mainly US, investment that was spurred by favourable corporate tax, the main factor in Ireland's economic boom in the 1990s (see Whelan 2014). In addition, Donovan and Murphy have noted that the financial crisis was preceded by a sequence of downturns, at the beginning of which lay the collapse of the property market (2014: 7). This particular failure wold be an especially stinging fact for an engineer like Marcus, who would have contributed in no small measure to the increase in the asset bubble, as it was triggered by the spike in infrastructure development and overhaul. His first evocation of the crisis stresses its unstable and unpredictable nature: "more abstract indices are rising and falling to their own havoc" (McCormack 2017: 7) while "our prophets deranged/ and coming towards us wild-eyed and smeared with shit, ringing a bell, seer and sinner at once while

speaking some language from the edge of reason whose message would translate into plain words as/ we're fucked" (8). The religious language Marcus employs points to the divine dimension of the economic catastrophe. In his recounting, November 2008 was the year of Ireland's reckoning on a par with an apocalypse: "the indices and magnitudes of a new cosmology, the forces and velocities of some barren, inverse world— a negative realm that, over time, will suck the life out of us" (7). The world that has arrived following the onset of the recession is characterised by the toppling of the order that appeared to be unshakeable, both in the sense of global financial stability and the ontological certitude.

The ripples of the crisis extend far beyond the economy. Even though Marcus recognises the financial threat, noting that it may still have "a domino effect across several linked economies" like Germany and France (McCormack 2017: 13), he remains puzzled by the ease with which the metaphorical layer of the word "collapse" is employed to talk of the volatile situation: "something that never was has finally collapsed/ or revealed itself to be constructed of air before eventually/ falling to ruin in that specific way which proved it never existed even if all around us now there is that feeling of something massive and consequential having come asunder" (13). Marshall Berman's idea of modernity (seen as a historical process that, in some respects, goes back to the Renaissance) as the time when all that is solid melts into air, which for him triggers the necessity that one be "at home in the maelstrom" of social and aesthetic change as well as, sometimes heedless, technological advancement (1988: 345), returns to plague Marcus. He is a man of a scholastic persuasion coupled with a renaissance belief in engineering as the path to the betterment of mankind and so he finds himself alienated from what Berman called the "maelstrom of modernity". For Marcus, the stability of the world as a structure inheres in the tangibility of tools and their products; as a result he is bewildered to realise that "the idea of collapse/ needs some expanding beyond the image of things toppling and falling down" (McCormack 2017: 23). This initial inkling is unpacked in a passage that merits an extended quotation:

> [P]lunging masonry, timber, metal, glass— the engineer's concept of collapse, buildings and bridges staggered before crumbling to the ground and raising up clouds of dust because, from what's written here about the global economic catastrophe, all this talk of virus and contagion, it is now clear to me that there are other types of chaos beyond the material satisfactions of things falling down since, it appears, out there in the ideal realm of finance and currency, economic constructs come apart in a different way or at least
> in ways specific to the things they are, abstract structures succumbing to intensely rarefied viruses which attack worth and values and the confidence which underpin them, swelling them beyond their optimal range to the point where they overbalance and eventually topple the whole thing during the still hours of the night so that we wake the following morning to a world remade in some new way unlikely to be to our benefit[.] (24)

This is the condition of late modernity that was anticipated by numerous writers, most importantly, though, by Don DeLillo in *Cosmopolis* (2003). In the novel, the banking prodigy Eric Packer believes that the global stock exchange "charts" (McCormack 2017: 37), the fluctuations of markets may seem chaotic and unpredictable but out of the chaos a pattern must always emerge; it is just that the pattern does not emerge and Packer loses his fortune right before he loses his life. Packer's hubris leads to his doom, for he fails to appreciate the complexity of the financial markets which no longer respond to analytical patterns. Unlike Packer, Marcus knows that "economic constructs come apart in a different way", always outstripping our models of prediction. Yeats diagnosed the centre failing to hold and Marcus witnesses a similar, albeit less perceptible, collapse of the world-order once considered unchangeable.

While the economy collapses in a metaphorical sense, there are numerous architectural structures in *Solar Bones* that are shown to come apart as well. Of the many dilapidated buildings, it is Marcus's father's house that is consistently evoked as a space of decrepitude after the mother as death: "no fire or heat on in the house anymore so that it got damp and filthy with black mould growing down the walls and nothing but the smell of piss" (McCormack 2017: 145). The world of the novel is rife with such deteriorating structures, including the corroding pipeline, which is the likely cause of the water contamination that results in the city-wide poisoning. Run-down buildings also betoken the aura of general collapse, especially when Marcus appears to be hopeful for the future. Towards the end of the novel, as he rejoices in his wife's recuperation driving to town for some medicines, Marcus passes by a hotel, a place of some renown in the past, which is now ramshackle:

> the Imperial Hotel standing there on the left behind its high, blistered walls, filthy and eyeless in its broken grounds, derelict for two decades now inside those scrolled iron gates, a sorry sight, the more so because no one knows properly how or why it came to such dilapidation at the precise moment when its tennis courts and swimming pool made it the most glamorous spot in the whole region. (209)

For an engineer so keen to see structures prevail over the chaos of reality, the many sights of material deterioration indicate that the abstract collapse, represented by the failure of the banking system, finds its correlate in the thingly world.

This vision of fall is, significantly enough, not only derived from the outside but also is shown to be situated inside Marcus's mind, as his thoughts and the narrative along with them, wander off into byways of reveries and idle musings, neither of which bears any relation to the advancement of the plot:

> if given its head
> the mind in repose, unspooling to infinity, slackening to these ridiculous musings which are too easily passed off as thought, these glib associations, mental echoes which reverb with our anxiety to stay wake and wise to the world or at least attentive to as much of its circumstances as we can grasp[.] (McCormack 2017: 143)

Although it is in these "glib" musings that some of *Solar Bones*'s most strikingly lyrical passages —such as the one just cited— appear, Marcus resents them, as they represent for him a depredation of yet another structure, the structure of thought. In a striking connection of the figurative and literal meanings of the word "structure", he conceives of them as akin to his father's derelict house from which

> all its pulses and rhythms have been swept [...] so that time itself is legless here with all things, myself included, suspended in a kind of stalled duration, an infinitely extended moment spinning like an unmeshed gear, a stillness within which no knife will blunt, no mirror will tarnish, no paint will peel, no hunger will grasp my belly nor will I ever have to shave. (McCormack 2017: 211)

It is in this reverie that Marcus provides us with a most direct suggestion that he lives in the limbo, suspended timeless and still. There is no Aquinasian order to Conway's world, for it is the realm of slow devastation in which structures come apart, "The falcon cannot hear the falconer" (Yeats 1996: 187) and no centre can hold as the dead are floating around knowing little of their own condition or, indeed, of those "mummy truths" with which Yeats vested the spirits in "All Souls' Night" (1996: 230).

The image of the house and Marcus's own mind "suspended in a kind of stalled duration" represents what appears to be the culmination of the overarching tension in the novel. The structures that Marcus has sought to assert in a single breath, in a single sentence, collapse all around him, just as the sentence should better be understood as a series of paratactically juxtaposed clauses that end in suspension marks. The local area, which he has diligently strived to build, is a shambles, with the economic situation remaining precarious and politics being a matter of beguiling people into casting their votes in favour of the candidate who claims the greatest staying power in the popular imagination via the media and public appearances. Finally, even the town's pipelines and the erection of the new school reveal that engineering is no answer to the community's problems. In view of the situation Marcus witnesses, it becomes clear that his essentially religious yearning for an order of things leads him to a false perception of the notion of order and how it applies to his own life. It is in the images of persistent collapse and confusion that thwart Marcus's efforts at unravelling a structure to his life that the novel gives way to what Heidegger has discussed as man's condition of "not-yet".

3. Heidegger's "Not-Yet" and the Fact of Death

Division two of *Being and Time* features the famous exploration of death as the "phenomenon of life" (Heidegger 2001: 284) to be understood as the horizon of

existence: "Death is the possibility of the absolute impossibility of *Dasein*. Thus death reveals itself as that *possibility which is one's ownmost, which is non-relational, and which is not to be outstripped* [*unüberholbare*]. As such, death is something distinctively impending" (294, emphasis in original). This is a fundamental insight into the constitution of *Dasein* as an ontological structure of "care" [*Sorge*]. For Heidegger, "care" represents the crucial mode of being-in-the-world conceived as "ahead-of-itself-Being-already-in-(the-world) as Being-alongside (entities encountered within-the-world)" (237). In this dense and much-discussed passage (for a lucid reading see Macann 1993: 85-96), Heidegger posits that one's existence in the world is always already a foundation of one's future development; this is the condition of "thrownness", whereby *Dasein* "is sucked into the turbulence of the 'they's' inauthenticity" (Heidegger 2001: 223). One is in the world prior to being aware of that fact. Moreover, one exists in the world alongside others (Heidegger's "they"), among whom *Dasein*'s death is concealed: "They say, 'Death is certain'; and in saying so, they implant in *Dasein* the illusion that it is itself certain of its death" (301) while in fact by stripping death of the personal connection, "they" hide from *Dasein* its ownmost potential. By contrast, only if *Dasein* comes to "care" for its death as the concluding phenomenon of life, will it conceive of life as striving after structural completeness.

Thus, Heidegger suggests that *Dasein* is a structure consisting of "thrownness", which is concerned with its past, "ahead-of-itself-Being-already-in-(the-world)", which is forward-looking, and "being-alongside", which is concerned with the present (Pacelli 2017: 246); for this temporal structure of *Dasein* to be coherent, death must be "cared" for all throughout life. However, being a potentiality that *Dasein* cannot fully experience, death also represents a horizon of life that is always apprehended as it is receding: "In *Dasein*, as being towards its death, its own uttermost 'not-yet' has already been included" (Heidegger 2001: 303). The only way *Dasein* can make its own structure of being cohere is by understating its being-towards-death as a "not-yet". Therefore the paradox lies in the fact that structural completion is only possible as a continuous "care" for what remains perpetually elusive. In his essay on Kafka's parable "Before the Law" featured in *The Trial*, Derrida notes that Kafka's guardian who tells the man wanting to enter the palace of law that he cannot enter, at least "not yet", represents the "potency [of] *différance*, an interminable *différance*, since it lasts for days and 'years', indeed, up to the end of (the) man. *Différance* till death, and for death, without end because ended" (Derrida 1991: 204). This aptly captures the paradox that Heidegger implies in paragraph 52 of *Being and Time*, for the deferral of the completion of *Dasein*'s ontological structure is what at the same time endows it with the potential for conceiving of itself as possessing a structure. While for Derrida the deferral, the play of *différance*, marks the condition of writing and thinking as endless pursuits

—what in the same essays he calls "(no) more law and (no) more literature" (Derrida 1991: 215)—, for Heidegger the "not-yet" is a future-oriented potential that both allows Dasein the space for self-creation and endows it with a conception of coherence of whatever it undertakes.

What Heidegger shows is that only by coming to terms with the fact that the ontological structure must collapse, can one begin to perceive life as a structure. Where Derrida lays emphasis on the continuous deconstruction of ontological, metaphysical and epistemological patterns, as exemplified in "Before the Law", Heidegger stresses the paradoxical nature of being-in-the-world that demands destruction in order to imagine a potential coherence. It is this insight that seems to lie behind McCormack's admission that Heidegger's later style, which seeks to overcome the language's inherent barrier to expression, was an influence when he wrote *Solar Bones*. This is evidenced by Marcus's hankering after an order, a structure that would tie together Heaven and Earth, life and death, in a single full sentence. This is where the formal experimentalism of the novel contravenes Marcus's declared aim, as the unfolding sentence comes to represent an instant of blatant forgetting of finality, of forgetting one's own death. Just as Yeats's ghosts in the initial stages of life after death fail to realise that they are dead, so Marcus is oblivious, except for the few moments of premonition, to his being a ghost. Moreover, seeking to trace his life to a coherent formula, he defers the realisation that what he is trying to put off is the fact of his own death. Bearing in mind Heidegger's understanding of death as ownmost potentiality of *Dasein*, it transpires that the collapse of all structures that Marcus witnesses throughout the novel summons him to accept his own demise. In his desire for order, which he infuses with an Aquinasian understanding of God and His manifestations in the world, Marcus occludes the actual structure that underpins his existence.

In view of Heidegger's theorisation of death, Marcus's narrative may best be viewed as expressing final stages of conscious being; and yet in spite of being conscious, Marcus, by prolonging the completion of his last sentence through veering and plunging into reveries, refuses to acknowledge what the dissipating world all about him evokes: that the only structure there is to his world is that of his ownmost existence whose defining point is death. This appears to be the idea behind the sole use of the titular phrase in the novel, which comes after Marcus enters into one of his musing moods following the ended Skype conversation with his son:

> I watched the screen cloud to a fizzy interference as it shut down, leaving the room to dark silence and a burnt feeling behind my eyes as if the light from the monitor had scalded them to the core, the kind of feeling you imagine you would have just before the world goes up in flames, some refined corrosion eating away at the rods and cones, collapsing their internal structure before they slope out of their sockets and run down your cheekbones, leaving you standing hollow-eyed in the middle of some

> desolation with the wind whistling through your skull, just before the world collapses
> mountains, rivers and lakes
> acres, roods and perches
> into oblivion, drawn down into that fissure in creation where everything is consumed in the raging tides and swells of non-being, the physical world gone down in flames
> mountains, rivers and lakes
> and pulling with it also all those human rhythms that bind us together and draw the world into a community, those daily
> rites, rhythms and rituals
> upholding the world like solar bones, that rarefied amalgam of time and light whose extension through every minute of the day is visible from the moment I get up in the morning and stand at the kitchen window with a mug of tea in my
> hand [.] (McCormack 2017: 69-70)

McCormack's brilliantly evocative prose reaches here a crescendo of imaginary flourish, as Marcus invokes a vision of the combustion of the world punctuated by the serene refrain of "mountains, rivers and lakes". The passage, which comes a third into the novel, represents an acute imagining of Heidegger's delineation of death, as Marcus suggests that the "solar bones", those "rites, rhythms and rituals", submerge him in "that rarefied amalgam" of everydayness, which Heidegger denotes by the term "falleness", whereby "*Dasein* has […] fallen away [*abgefallen*] from itself as an authentic potentiality for Being its Self, and has fallen into the 'world'" (Heidegger 2001: 220). Marcus drowns in the inauthenticity of "non-being" as he also entertains inklings of those "solar bones" "collapsing their internal structure". As the vision crumbles, the essential structure of death, founded on the "not-yet", shines through the debris, reminding Marcus that it is solely on the condition he face up to his own end that he can discover what he yearns for: the order of the world of which he is now a fading part.

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Reviews

WOMEN ON THE MOVE: BODY, MEMORY AND FEMININITY IN PRESENT-DAY TRANSNATIONAL DIASPORIC WRITING

Silvia Pellicer-Ortín and Julia Tofantšuk, eds.
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The publication of *The Age of Migration* by Stephen Castles and Mark J. Miller in 1993 confirmed what scholars, sociologists and journalists had been discussing for some time: international migration was affecting all regions of the world and the new culturally diverse panorama was challenging physical frontiers and questioning national identity. This volume updated theories of migration and reflected on the turn of the century's globalization and appearance of new identities. The attention to people in transit's identity led to a serious consideration of gender as an essential variable in these transnational movements (Boyd and Grieco 2003). Though women's migration had always been an important component of international migration, the United Nations Population Division estimated that in the year 2000, 49 per cent of all international migrants were women, the numbers reaching 51 per cent in more developed regions (2006: III). These numbers reinforced the need of analysing migration from a gender perspective and exploring how gender inequalities affect female migrants around the world. *Women on the Move: Body, Memory and Femininity in Present-Day Transnational Diasporic Writing* by Silvia Pellicer-Ortín and Julia Tofantšuk examines the role of migrant women in the twenty-first century globalized world. This collection of critical essays compiles articles written by European feminist scholars who analyse the literary works of diverse diasporic female authors that bring into focus female experiences of migration and globalization. From a gender perspective, these researchers address topics such as trauma, displacement, memory, identity, violence and empowerment,

which they identify as representative of contemporary literature and the current social paradigm.

In a detailed introduction, Pellicer-Ortín and Tofantšuk provide the reader with a general overview of the current situation in terms of migratory movements and globalization, pointing out the assets and liabilities of "a new global consciousness" (1-2) —a concept they adopt from Susan Friedman— of our contemporary multicultural society, which unquestionably can no longer think in other terms. Taking into account the increasing number of women in migration flows, the authors of the volume wonder whether migratory processes can contribute to reinforcing women's inferior position (when women migrate in categories such as domestic work) or, by contrast, whether the journey and new location may offer an opportunity for women to develop autonomy and independence. Pellicer-Ortín and Tofantšuk finally manifest their belief in diasporic literature as a space to recover the memories and stories of silenced women. Interestingly, they show awareness of the controversy of the relationship between identity and voice and, by discussing Spivak's groundbreaking "Can the Subaltern Speak?" (1988), among other related works, the authors express the commitment of the volume and its contributors to reflect on their privileged European position to speak and be heard. This promising introduction ends with the latest trends of feminism, those of transnational feminism or ecofeminism, and theories such as Baumann's 'liquid modernity' (2000) and Rushdie's 'imaginary homelands' (1992) as methodological tools to carry out an inclusive analysis of the experiences of diasporic women in the suggested stories.

The first section of the collection, entitled "Unbelonginess and Displacement in the Diaspora: Finding a Voice through Narrative", aligns with the collection's main aim of recuperating a lost voice through narration and explores whether traumatized migrants can truly accomplish this. By exploring the notions of "travelling bodies" (28) and "silenced minorities" (38), Cédric Courtois addresses the vulnerability of African females in Europe, where patriarchal systems attempt to consume their bodies and voices. The author concludes that female characters in Chris Abani's *Becoming Abigail* (2006) and Chika Unigwe's *On Black Sisters' Street* (2009) take advantage of displacement to finally turn their bodies into a place of resistance, reappropriate them and make themselves heard. However, the fact that it is by experiencing violence and death that these female protagonists are able to make their statements makes oneself wonder if this is the only way in which these displaced female subjects can reclaim their voice. Merve Sarikaya-Şen discusses Zimbabweans' "(un)belonginess" (48) in the diaspora in NoViolet Bulawayo's *We Need New Names* (2013), examining the loss of identity the protagonist suffers when she leaves her homeland and her inability to define herself

in the host land. By employing the anti-linear nature of romance writing, Sarikaya-Şen analyses the repetitive structure of traumatic experiences for Zimbabwean migrants and completes her analysis by making a call for international attention to the status of traumatized migrants who cannot leave their past behind. This dystopian view of contemporary migration makes the reader cast doubt on the likelihood that minorities can regain their voice in a globalized world.

The second section of the volume, titled "Globality, Locality and Cosmopolitanism", addresses the diaspora as a disorienting space where the notion of home is complicated by different movements and locations. In the first chapter of the section, Beatriz Pérez Zapata analyses Zadie Smith's *Swing Time* (2016), where a female protagonist with the background of the transatlantic slave trade tries to find her identity by travelling to different locations: London, Gambia and New York. Alluding to the dancing profession of the protagonist and her movement as migrant, Pérez Zapata finally states that 'home' does not necessarily mean a place where we are grounded. Pérez Zapata's analysis looks beyond diasporic displacement and sees in Smith's novel a promising possibility of finding identification in migrants' journeys and transnational movements. In this line, María Rocío Cobo-Piñero explores cosmopolitanism and more specifically Taiye Selasi's concept of "Afropolitanism" (78) to discuss the complexity of African diasporic subjects in Selasi's *Ghana Must Go* (2013). Cobo-Piñero's analysis ends by addressing the controversy of the umbrella term Afropolitanism as a name for a new generation of diasporic Africans and, more reasonably, she suggests considering locality and unique experiences as identificatory characteristics of people in transit.

"Defining Feminine Spaces: Home, Self, Identity and Food" is the title of the third section of the volume. Corinne Bigot as well as Chiara Battisti and Sidia Fiorato explore the limiting 'feminine' space of home and, more particularly, the kitchen as a place to acquire belonginess for displaced diasporic female subjects. By using the tropes of home and traditional food, Bigot analyses the short stories of Edwidge Danticat, Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni and Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie to conclude that diasporic women can make sense of their complex diasporic identities by making connections with their homeland. Similarly, Battisti and Fiorato study Monica Ali's *In the Kitchen* (2009) as an innovative approach to contemporary cultural identity and globalization. Food and female agency through cooking are presented in this analysis as empowering alternatives to traditional gendered and national identification for diasporic women. The fact that this section turns feminized places into empowering spaces reminds the reader of the permeability of labels and the opportunity for women to take advantage of it.

The two chapters in the fourth section of the volume, entitled "Femininity, Spatiality and Liminality", present an in-depth analysis of what constitutes a

diasporic female, focusing on the female body and its connection to the land. Maria Amor Barros-del Río addresses contemporary Irish female migration in her analysis of Edna O'Brien's *The Light of Evening* (2006) and Colm Tóibín's *Brooklyn* (2009), which, according to her, challenge the representation of 'Mother Ireland' and the role of Irish women as protectors of Irish values. Barros-del Río ends her chapter by pointing to the need of a plurality of migratory experiences of women to transform traditional female identification. Selen Aktari-Sevgi studies how the intersection of liminality and mobility can contest traditional aspects of female subjectivity in Anne Enright's *The Green Road* (2015). Affective mobility is finally suggested as an alternative for Irish women to go beyond dislocation and in-betweenness. In the same vein, Julia Tofantšuk uses different notions related to history and memory, such as Julia Kristeva's notion of "women's time" (179), to examine the different and complex "skins" of female diasporic subjects in Charlotte Mendelson's *Almost English* (2013). The various (dis)locations and the absence of memory are eventually analysed as distinguishing features of the protagonist's identity, therefore revealing displacement as a positive element for the self-awareness process of diasporic subjects. This section optimistically suggests a favourable outcome of transnational movements through inclusion and self-recognition of female migrants, or at least European migrants.

"Crossing Borders: Female Bodies and Identities in Transit" is the last section of the volume and, as suggested by the title, the three chapters study the relationship between borders and identity with a greater focus on the temporal and spatial dimensions of the latter. In the first chapter, Paul Rüsse and Maialen Antxustegi-Etxarte Aranaga employ Anzaldúa's concept of 'la Frontera' as an in-between space of interaction to examine Ito Romo's short story collection *El Puente/The Bridge* (2000). By way of conclusion, the authors find the crossing of physical frontiers, as well as the conceptual borders that diasporic subjects must face in the US, as representative of Chicanas/os' identity, something that can become a powerful instrument to subvert their discriminated position. Britain as a globalized but racialized place is the topic of Carolina Sánchez-Palencia's analysis of Andrea Levy's *Small Island* (2004). The notion of "bodies in transit" (233) serves Sánchez-Palencia to come to the conclusion that multicultural societies still struggle to acknowledge diasporic subjects whose permeable identities attempt to break with hegemonic and patriarchal systems. Lastly, Silvia Pellicer-Ortín chooses Michelene Wandor's *False Relations* (2004) to prove that transnational links can help Jewish women to comprehend and make the most of their dislocated history, memory and identity. By employing transnational feminism (and borrowing a term by Nelson), Pellicer-Ortín analyses these Jewish retellings as "counterstories" (239) capable of destroying patriarchal and racist borders, finally offering diasporic writings as decolonizing tools to achieve equality. Although the notion of border

crossing is not a new one, this section reminds us of the importance for and responsibility of women, regardless of their class, ethnicity and origin, to cross borders and approach one another.

In conclusion, *Women on the Move: Body, Memory and Femininity in Present-Day Transnational Diasporic Writing* is an illuminating feminist volume which draws our attention to the important implications of gender in contemporary transnational movements. Though the corpus of analysis is varied and points to the plurality of female experiences of migration, the reader is left wondering what other theories and different voices coming from non-European authors would make of these experiences. Nevertheless, this collection of essays stresses the importance of listening to the narratives of women's experiences 'in transit' and the need to question biased social constructions. For this reason, the volume succeeds in making the reader continuously reflect on their position in the world. Moreover, Pellicer-Ortín and Tofantšuk put forward diasporic literature as a space for recognition and a powerful means to accomplish the decolonization of hegemonic systems and unequal hierarchies in our contemporary globalized world. Unquestionably, this thorough analysis is an exceptional contribution to the fields of gender and transnational studies, which attempt to make sense of today's interconnected, global and ever-changing society.

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THE PLAYS OF MARGARET DRABBLE: A CRITICAL EDITION

José Francisco Fernández, ed.
Syracuse, N.Y.: Syracuse U.P., 2018

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José Francisco Fernández's edited volume is a critical edition of Margaret Drabble's two plays: *Laura* (1964) and *Bird of Paradise* (1969). The book is divided into two parts: the first presents the full, unabridged plays, while the second comprises six critical essays offering a broad historical and cultural contextualisation of Drabble's plays, as well as a discussion of the main thematic and ideological connections between the plays and her early novels. The importance of this project lies in its exploration of how Drabble presents her views on the socio-economic situation of middle-class British women in the 1960s in two creative media that were completely new for her: television and the stage. Moreover, the essays stress the relevance of these two plays in that they might offer insights into the intellectual and social concerns of British post-war theatre and television.

The critical commentary opens with a biographical essay, "The Presence of Theater in the Life of the Novelist", by José Francisco Fernández, editor of the volume. Fernández stresses the importance of theatre in both Drabble's personal life and the contribution it made to her writing from a very early age. At university, she did some acting, and after she graduated, she joined her husband in the Royal Shakespeare Company at Stratford-upon-Avon to pursue an acting career. However, after she got pregnant, she abandoned her theatrical aspirations and focused on writing novels, as she felt that a career as a writer was easier to combine with being a mother and a wife. Fernández further argues that, when she was asked

to write the two plays, Drabble was already a successful novelist, and her theatrical incursions were only a temporary deviation. However, her plays received neither critical nor popular acclaim, and Drabble felt that they had not been understood by the audience. Fernández concludes this chapter by stating that the significance of Drabble's plays resides in her critical analysis of the situation of British women in the 1960s, as well as her demands for social advancement.

The next two chapters, "*Laura*: Historical Context", also written by Fernández, and "*Bird of Paradise*: Historical Context", by Betsabé Navarro, concentrate on the historical context in which both plays were written and performed as well as on the ideological debates they created. In the case of the former, Fernández asserts that *Laura* —a play made for television— reflected the anxieties of middle-class, educated women in the 1960s. The play criticises the situation of married women as second-class citizens, dependent on their husbands and considered to be caregivers and housekeepers. The protagonist, Laura, becomes the voice of rebellion, as she does not conform to the stereotypical role of women as happy housewives. Furthermore, Fernández argues that Drabble denounces the state of the nation and the country's economic situation in terms of class barriers, challenging pre-conceived views on the newly implemented Welfare State.

Complementarily, Navarro states in her chapter that Drabble tackled various social concerns of the 1960s in a very straightforward manner. Navarro further argues that Drabble chose an internationally reputed female designer as the protagonist in order to place a successful woman at the forefront as the symbol of modernity and professional achievement, but also as an individual facing gender oppression both in the public and private spheres. Moreover, the contradictory depiction of the female protagonist in Drabble's play —as a beautiful and professional entrepreneur, but also a victim of gender violence— seems to point to Drabble's acknowledgement that women had a long way to go until they could actually reach gender equality. Navarro closes this chapter by pointing to the protagonist's ambiguous sexuality in her ambivalent relationship with her homosexual assistant. Navarro considers that, by introducing this sub-plot, Drabble was contributing to the normalisation of homosexual practices.

Chapter 4, "The Plays and Early Novels: Intersections", written by Ángela Rivera Izquierdo, establishes a link between Drabble's plays and her early novels. Rivera Izquierdo claims that Drabble's early fictions aimed to portray the daily life of women of her generation, and that they had the same thematic concerns as her two plays. They revolved around the life of complex, contradictory middle-class women caught up in between conflicting expectations: having a family and succeeding in the professional world. Rivera Izquierdo stresses the fact that Drabble has been labelled "the novelist of maternity" (122), due to her frequent —albeit contradictory—

depiction of motherhood. On the one hand, maternity is a positive aspect of female sexuality, and, on the other, a patriarchal imposition that holds intellectual women back. Drabble's plays also coincide with her early novels in their narrative strategies. They all are reality-centred, have simple plots and share linear chronologies. Moreover, Rivera Izquierdo states that they all explore women's experiences, contributing to the generation of "Angry Young Women" (125), represented by Shelagh Delaney and Ann Jellicoe. Rivera Izquierdo concludes by emphasising Drabble's experimental capacity in the representation of silenced women.

Finally, Chapters 5 and 6 focus on the connection between Drabble's plays and post-war theatre, and the emergence of television in the 1960s, respectively. "Margaret Drabble and British Drama of the Late 1950s and the 1960s", written by Germán Asensio Peral, explores the theatrical context of post-war England and its influence on Drabble's play for the stage, *Bird of Paradise*. Asensio Peral asserts that the late 1950s and the 1960s were a fruitful period for contemporary British drama, as the atmosphere of depression and desolation after the war triggered a profound change in the theatrical audiences and themes. This revolutionary theatre was aimed at a working-class audience and was conceived as a vehicle for social change. Asensio Peral argues that *Bird of Paradise* follows in the footsteps of this innovative line, whose aim was to break away from static, conventional drama. Moreover, he claims that Drabble was influenced by authors such as Shelagh Delaney and Arnold Wesker in portraying the reality of women and queer themes, although what differentiates her from these 1950s social realist playwrights is that she portrays middle-class women, rather than working-class families.

Chapter 6, "Margaret Drabble's *Laura* and Television in Britain in the 1960s", by Verónica Membrive Pérez explores how the social transformations brought about by the Welfare State shaped the development of British television in the 1960s, a period marked by modernity. At first, television was regarded as a second-rate cultural product, but its innovative character attracted young playwrights who wanted to explore the lives of working-class people, as in the case of Margaret Drabble. Even though Drabble's *Laura* was not well received, Membrive Pérez states that the play was highly underrated on the grounds that it portrayed the reality of intellectual, middle-class women who had to reconcile their professional aspirations with a life as wives and mothers. She further suggests that the great significance of this play lies in Drabble's ability to voice her opinion as an intellectual female writer, expressing her concerns regarding the State's intrusion in women's private lives, as well as denouncing the banality of the media and the social contradictions that women were subject to.

The Plays of Margaret Drabble is a thought-provoking, edifying volume, rich in historical and literary sources. Academic research on Drabble's oeuvre has mainly

concentrated on her novels and short fiction, whereas her plays have received little critical attention. Some of this academic research includes *Margaret Drabble: A Reader's Guide* (1991) by Valerie Grosvenor Myer, *The Novels of Margaret Drabble: This Freudian Family Nexus* (1998) by Nicole Suzanne Bokat or *Margaret Drabble* (1985) by Joanne V. Creighton, among many others. Fernández's appears to be the first academic volume that centres on Drabble's theatrical production, bringing to the fore its literary quality, as well as its role as a vehicle for social change in its criticism of the oppressive situation of middle-class women in the 1960s. The contributors offer a historical and cultural background that allows readers to understand the socio-economic motivations that drove Drabble to write her plays. Interestingly, this volume compares Drabble's plays with her earlier novels and demonstrates that they share the same literary quality and social concerns. Furthermore, it proves that Drabble's plays have been highly underrated by both critics and the audience, and demands that they receive the attention they deserve. Therefore, the relevance of this book resides in its capacity to give Drabble's plays the visibility they did not have at their time, as well as in offering new approaches for the interpretation of her prose.

Nonetheless, since the volume's aim is to stress the importance of the plays in the historical context of the 1960s, and to establish thematic connections with Drabble's earlier novels, the critical commentaries are, at times, too theoretical and repetitive. Perhaps it would have been beneficial to include a more thorough analysis of the plays, or an essay comparing the two, exploring the contradictory portrayals of the female protagonists from a feminist approach. Despite these minor details, the essays included in this collection are a valuable and original contribution to the field of theatre studies, as well as to the study of Margaret Drabble's production.

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TRAUMATIC MEMORY AND THE ETHICAL, POLITICAL AND TRANSHISTORICAL FUNCTIONS OF LITERATURE

Susana Onega, Constanza del Río and Maite Escudero-Alías, eds.
Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017

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Interest in trauma has increased substantially since PTSD was included in the American Psychological Association's diagnostic manual in 1980, partly as a result of years of work from US veterans' associations (Whitehead 2004: 4). Trauma theory, especially literary trauma theory, can be traced to the Yale school and the landmark volume *Trauma: Explorations in Memory* (1995) edited by Cathy Caruth, though later scholars have been sceptical about Caruth's particular reading of psychoanalysis (Leys 2000) and the Eurocentric focus of much early trauma theory. In terms of literary theory, the editors of the present volume note parallels between postmodern scepticism as regards grand narratives and the stylistic and rhetorical experimentation frequently found in both postmodern and trauma literature. It borrows theoretical frameworks from the likes of Jacques Derrida, Judith Butler, Nicolas Abraham and Maria Torok, and Caruth, in addition to cultural studies and theories of affect —according to the back cover description. With some justification, much is also made of the interdisciplinarity of the collection. Caruth and the "school of Deconstructive Trauma Studies" (2), however, do come in for some criticism in the introduction, with suggestions that Caruth's focus on the "unrepresentable" and "unspeakable" (3) seems to lack a basis for political action and risks placing a block against the potential of narrative for healing trauma, as suggested by some psychotherapists (2-3). The introduction also echoes Dominick LaCapra's warning against conflating "generalised

structural transhistorical trauma" and "specific historical traumas that may affect specific people in different ways" (3), which LaCapra identifies as a problematic tendency in Shoshana Felman and Dori Laub's book on testimony (LaCapra 2014: 76).

Anne Whitehead has noted that there is an intertwining between trauma theory and fiction (2004: 161), and, as the title of the volume being reviewed makes clear, the stakes of a collection such as this are therefore considerable. Trauma, and the way it may be (re)presented or worked through in literature, is a difficult enough question on its own without the addition of questions of history, transgenerational trauma and the ethical and political functions of literature — though these are undoubtedly inextricably linked. Inevitably, we meet competing political demands: the potential to represent individual trauma or "generalised structural transhistorical trauma" (3) or indeed to "be witnesses to the unpresentable", as Jean-François Lyotard claims we have an ethical imperative to do (1984: 82), may indeed contrast with the therapeutic needs of specific individuals or groups.

The first of the collection's four sections includes two essays focused on ideology and aesthetics in 20th-century literature and their relation to the "(Re)construction of Cultural Memory" (19). The first contribution from Martin Elsky provides an interesting case study of the importance of literary history for the construction of imagined communities and narratives of national identities (Anderson 1991). Elsky gives an impressively detailed account of the competing attempts to co-opt Dante Alighieri, by Protestant Germany and Catholicism in Germany, around the sexcentenary of Dante's death. David Lloyd then gives us an intriguing Walter Benjamin-inflected close reading of César Vallejo's "Vusco volvvver de golpe el golpe" (1922) and investigates some parallels with "policing violence" (48) and how this relates to poetic or lyric violence. Lloyd's essay on (post)colonial trauma (2000) is much cited in trauma theory; here, however, he focuses on how the "pure language" (51) —in the sense Benjamin gave it in "The Task of the Translator", which includes both the extinguishing and renewal of language— potentially found in Vallejo's poetry offers an unusual and politically-loaded reading of the unexpected parallels between Vallejo and Keats.

In the first chapter of Part 2, which focuses on the ethical and aesthetic challenges related to representing and teaching the Holocaust, Larissa Allwork provides one of the most practical and nuanced chapters of the book, heavily influenced by her work as a historian and highlighting how trauma literature has gone "beyond" analysing Holocaust survivors' emotional damage (78) and the ways in which this literature has reshaped the writing of Holocaust historiography. Allwork analyses a number of cultural examples, including Daniel Libeskind's architecture and

Marcelo Brodsky's photography, and provides a sophisticated critique of the weaknesses of some strands of trauma theory. She also revisits Felman's chapter in the Caruth collection on the question of teaching the Holocaust, and links this to very practical questions about how teaching trauma literature can potentially bring up unrelated trauma for the students.

Silvia Pellicer-Ortín's contribution deals with Jewish memory, especially for the second and third generations following the Holocaust, and therefore transhistorical trauma, in British-Jewish author Linda Grant's fiction. Pellicer-Ortín provides a nuanced analysis of three of Grant's novels and how their generic hybridity relates to the construction of (Jewish) memory; however, drawing on other major thinkers on Jewish identity, such as Derrida or Yosef Yerushalmi could perhaps have helped Pellicer-Ortín develop her argument even further.

Rudolf Freiburg then provides a fascinating account of Alan Scott Haft's transcription of his father's life. Harry Haft was an illiterate Holocaust survivor whose boxing ability kept him alive, at the cost of killing others. In contrast to Primo Levi or Paul Celan, Haft had only an everyday language that was not his own —English— when he finally told his story to his son. The usual association of trauma fiction with fragmentation and rhetorical excess is consequently inverted. Freiburg makes the interesting proposal that the bareness of the narrative and Haft's murder of others in the boxing ring in order to survive "destroys the *grand narrative* of the exceptionally virtuous and heroic Holocaust survivor" (147).

Part 3 focuses on "Romance Strategies and Spectrality" (153) in fictionalised traumatic memories. Justin Paul Brumit analyses Dennis Cooper's *My Loose Thread* (2002) in terms of romance and "postmodernist aesthetics" (159). Brumit's attribution of "nihilistic playfulness" and the "abandonment of affect and authenticity" (161) to the postmodern might fit with some of Frederic Jameson's more critical moments, but does not really accord with Jean-François Lyotard's reading of the postmodern —as Brumit seems to suggest. Lyotard contrasts his conception of the postmodern sublime to the nostalgia and demand for (false) reality of the modern (Lyotard 1984: 80-82), effectively arguing against such a loss of affect. In the end, Brumit provides a detailed reading that convincingly claims that (arguably postmodern) reformulations of medieval romance are an important response to the changes AIDS wrought on gay subjectivity (178) —a reading that Lyotard might well have agreed with.

Jean-Michel Ganteau analyses Anne Enright's *The Gathering* (2007) in terms of Constanza del Río's adaptation of Toni Morrison's "re-memoring" —"the continued presence of that which has disappeared or been forgotten"— and *Nachträglichkeit* (181-82). It features some sophisticated analysis of the stylistic features of Enright's novel in relation to the narration of memory, and some

rather more provocative statements about testimony and fiction. He cites Whitehead's question, "if trauma comprises an event […] which overwhelms the individual and resists language or representation, how can it then be narrativised […]"? (187) as being particularly applicable to *The Gathering* as "precarious testimony". Arguably, Ganteau slightly misrepresents Felman's position on testimony, claiming it appears when "accuracy is in doubt" (187-88) when the context was actually testimony and *historical* accuracy in trials (Felman 1995: 17). A very interesting meditation on what Ganteau calls "fictional testimony" (188) and its interrelation with the characters' memories and questions of inter-generational transmission of memory follows —essentially asking in what ways fiction can be said to bear witness.

Susana Onega's contribution is one of the strongest in the volume. She analyses Sarah Waters's *The Little Stranger* (2009), a neo-gothic novel that plays with the ghost story genre to ask questions about class and inherited trauma. Partly as a contrast to Derrida's spectres, Onega takes her starting point from Colin Davis's reading of Abraham and Torok's transgenerational phantoms, in which they "are not the spirits of the dead, but 'lacunae left inside us by the secrets of others'" (207). She analyses how the vengeful phantoms, in Abraham and Torok's sense, of Waters's novel have apparently been generated by the past trauma of the menial classes in a country house. Onega's deft hand with the theoretical framework in this chapter is also a good model for researchers —both those in their early careers and the more experienced ones— to follow.

The fourth and final section focuses on postcolonial manifestations of traumatic memory. Anna Maria Tomczak gives us a sophisticated analysis of Yasmin Alibhai-Brown's *The Settler's Cookbook* (2010), which tells the oft-excluded story of British "twice migrant" (231) East African Asians through the prism of a recipe book. Bárbara Arizti analyses Jamaica Kincaid's "ongoing self-representational project" (253) and provides an interesting account of the ways in which Kincaid's narrative strategies push the conventions of life writing to their limits.

In their investigation of Toni Morrison's *Home* (2012), Katrina Harack and Aitor Ibarrola-Armendariz provide some of the most theoretically sophisticated analysis in the volume. Judith Butler's and Sam Durrant's interpretations of ethical mourning are used to interpret Morrison's novel, in an attempt to go some way towards unpicking the complex relationship between individual and collective trauma —as well as how Morrison's work might disrupt some of the Eurocentrism found in earlier trauma theory. In their conclusion they flag up Felman and Laub's important observation that the "critical demand for contextualisation" also necessitates "textualization of the context" (306-307).

In the conclusion to the volume the editors cite deconstructivist and Yale school critic J. Hillis Miller's *The Ethics of Reading*, saying that "the rhetorical study of literature has crucial practical implications for our moral, social and political lives" (315). Clearly this is never truer than when dealing with questions of trauma both in its individual forms and as societal phantoms in Abraham and Torok's sense. This volume manages to find a good range of examples to continue attempts to decolonize trauma theory and to show the reader how literature may illuminate transhistorical trauma and traumatic memory. Indeed, one of the book's strengths is the focus on close reading. As a result, sections 3 and 4 do actually go a fair way towards making good on the ambitious promise of the title.

However, the ethical imperative for a volume like this is evidently greater than for a less politically and ethically fraught area of literary theory; hence Ruth Leys's fairly vituperative criticism of Caruth's *Unclaimed Experience*, echoed by the editors. The introduction talks of affect theory as an antidote to "the obsessive and paranoid theorising of deconstructive approaches" to trauma theory (5-6), in this context meaning Caruth —and potentially some other Yale scholars, though which is not clear— rather than Derrida or indeed Paul de Man. However, only two of the chapters actually make use of affect theory. This is not really a problem with the contributions *per se* given the (fairly) interdisciplinary approach, rather that the interactions with affect theory, memory studies, Derrida, Butler, and Abraham and Torok promised in the blurb and introduction appear in a more limited fashion than one might have expected.

Overall, while the volume is indeed interdisciplinary, perspectives from further outside the bounds of literary theory might have provided added insight. The fourth section in particular does some important work towards decolonizing trauma theory, a necessary task given its beginnings in Vietnam veterans' PTSD and the trauma of the Holocaust (Rothberg 2008; Visser 2015). However, it is noticeable that some of the most successful contributions make use of reformulations of trauma theory with Derridean deconstructive heritage rather than via Yale, or of alternative reconfigurations of psychoanalysis like Abraham and Torok. Borrowing from Deleuzian theories of affect, neuropsychoanalysis, medical humanities or indeed clinical psychology might well have given the volume an extra push to take literary trauma theory yet further in its quest for a nuanced and effective postcolonial approach. That said, the volume makes a very welcome contribution to the growing field of postcolonial trauma theory with a number of excellent individual contributions, well-supported by a focus on detailed close reading.

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FRASIER: A CULTURAL HISTORY

Joseph J. Darowski and Kate Darowski
Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2017

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Part of independent publisher Rowman & Littlefield's "Cultural History of Television" series that (according to their website) "will focus on iconic television shows" from the 1950s to the present that have had a lasting impact on world culture, *Frasier: A Cultural History* joins a collection of extant publications on defining sitcoms such as *Mad Men*, *Breaking Bad* and *Star Trek*. The authors of the text in question, Joseph J. Darowski and Kate Darowski, are self-confessed *Frasier* fans with a background in different ambits of cultural study (the former as editor of the "Ages of Superheroes" essay series and author of *X-Men and the Mutant Metaphor: Race and Gender in the Comic Books* and the latter having researched the history of decorative arts and design). Above all, they share a mutual appreciation for all things Crane.

From a structural perspective, the book is divided into two parts: "Part I: Making A Classic" and "Part II: Under Analysis". Each section is further subdivided into four separate topics. The first deals with: the evolution of *Cheers* to the emergence of Frasier Crane; the story behind the eclectic cast; character profiles of Frasier, Niles, Martin and Eddy; and finally, a discussion of Daphne and Roz. The second part, as the name suggests, is more academically inclined with chapters examining ongoing character development in the Crane household; an in-depth look at Frasier's apartment from structural and aesthetic perspectives, as well as in contrast to Niles's home at the Montana; an analysis of set decoration, particularly chairs; and lastly, the representation of women, gender and race.

Furthermore, the book features a brief introduction and conclusion (subtitled "'Goodnight, Seattle!'") that bookend the aforementioned parts. Finally, before the chapter endnotes and index, the book would not be complete without an episode guide. Here the authors provide, in their own words, a "subjective opinion about all 264 episodes of *Frasier* on a 4-star scale" (153) in a section aptly named "The Episodes: An Opinionated Compendium".

As the authors rightly point out, several books were published on *Frasier* during the show's run that include an official companion book (Graham 1996), an unauthorized guide to the series (Bailey and Martyn 1998), a trivia book, entitled *What's Your "Frasier" IQ: 501 Questions and Answers for Fans* (Bly 1996), a cookbook called *Café Nervosa: The Connoisseur's Cookbook* (Fisher 1996), and even an autobiography 'written' by Moose, the dog who played Eddie on the show (xiii): *My life As a Dog* (Hargrove 2000) —coincidentally a project that was brought to fruition by David Hyde Pierce's husband. That said, there still exists a critical dearth when it comes to detailed analysis of the hit comedy series beyond mere trivia. Graham's official companion is the only serious contender (and indeed a worthwhile read for Frasierphiles, but as it was published in 1996 and covers only the first three seasons, it is no real competition). To Darowski and Darowski's credit then, *Frasier: A Cultural History* is unique in that it addresses this oversight in an analysis that draws on an admirable amount of secondary sources from Kelsey Grammer's autobiography *So Far ...* (1995) to scriptwriter Ken Levine's blogpost and much more further afield.

In spite of all its originality and promise, however, the book not only fails to adequately contextualize Rowman & Littlefield's "Cultural History of Television" series (a customary acknowledgement and brief explanatory note on the part of the publisher would have sufficed) but the authors' introduction also prefaces the book with little to guide the reader as to its aims and objectives save the unelaborated question "So what made *Frasier* great?" (xi). As a consequence, the book seems to lack a clear focus. By extension, it is not surprising that the tone of the book is equally ambiguous. While presented throughout as objective academic research (with detailed referencing that includes a total of 37 pages for the book's end notes, bibliography and index, as well as two academic bios), there is so much subjective adoration that it is impossible to exclusively render the book as one or the other. The book's overuse of the adjective 'perfect', for instance, sits uncomfortably with classification as impartial scholarship. Nor, on the other hand, is the book ever expressly classified as fan study. It does not necessarily follow that fans of the erudite psychiatrist will be disappointed by this inconsistency —indeed, many may well approach the book with the same confluence of interests in mind— it nevertheless limits its critical potential as we shall see and might unsettle the

more academically minded readers. What is more, there is a notable glossing over of a number of inconsistencies that complicate an otherwise 'perfect' sitcom. The ambivalence surrounding Frasier's having studied at Oxford for instance, or the appearance as if from nowhere (at least to fans who are not familiar with *Cheers*) of another ex-wife, Nanette, also referred to as Nanny G. On the other hand, while the authors do make a passing reference to continuity errors, or as they call them "hiccups in the storytelling" (33), they seem intent on nit-picking moments that are clearly comedy-driven and appeal to the audience's willing suspension of disbelief. Indeed, the commentary all too often tends to impose a critical standard (particularly in "Gender … and Race?") that forgets that Frasier was a fictional television character in a comedy show whose principal aim was surely not to champion racial inclusivity or gender equality, but to make people laugh.

Unfortunately, the text is more about *how Frasier* is great rather than *why*; as a consequence, it is mostly descriptive rather than analytical. Consider the use of David Isaacs's method for screenwriting students as cited in the book to define a character by asking for ten words to describe it (39), which is used for every character descriptor in Part I and offers little exegetical value to our understanding of either the characters or the show as a whole. Even at its best moments in Part II of the book (such as the discussion of class conflicts in chapter 5), the analysis proves truncated and does not follow a logical structure that would allow for extended elaboration on the original question the book attempts to answer. In "Curating the Spaces" for example, there is considerable weight given to the history and evolution of chairs in society which divagates to a point that many will most likely find tedious.

That said, there are moments of great insight that are worth noting. A cursory glance through the episode compendium reveals little more than a subjective opinion of every *Frasier* episode across its 11 seasons. However, Darowski and Darowski's *modus operandi* for arriving at each star rating (on a scale of 1-4) is particularly interesting. Thus, there is a clear criterion for high quality: "A 4-star episode provides genuine laughs but also has thematic unity and substance" (153). Taking the episode "The Innkeepers" (where Frasier and Niles buy a restaurant) as an example, the critics establish the organic alignment of random comedy around a particular theme —in this case, the question "What do we do with old things?" (154)— as the defining characteristic. From Niles's rare book to Orsini's dilapidated restaurant and the octogenarian waiter Otto to 'old man Crane' (Martin), each in their own way present a meditation on the theme in question.

For such a convincing system however, it is regrettable that the episode guide that follows does not always adhere to the same procedure of quality assessment. Often, there is no way of knowing why or how it assesses a certain episode, given such

terse synopses. Granted both one- and four-star rated episodes are given an extra line or two about their rationale, most assessments remain a far cry from the guide's ambitious underpinnings. Consider the episode "Daphne Hates Sherry" being rated four stars because "The chemistry shared by Jane Leeves and David Hyde Pierce shines" (171) and "Ask Me No Questions" from the same season being given one star on the basis that "Montages are not a strong stylistic choice on *Frasier*" (171). There is no mention of thematic unity anywhere, and these are not unique instances. One need not highlight the irony of the book's lack of thematic unity itself in this regard. This further illustrates the detrimental consequences of the book being torn between fandom and criticism.

Nevertheless, *Frasier* aficionados will no doubt revel in this analysis of the show despite its flaws for it is the only complete source on the hit comedy series. From an explanation of the closing credit sequence music to the meaning of the letters in KACL and the extra who appeared in the first and last episode to the one and only object Kelsey Grammer took with him after the show ended, there are tidbits that even the most diehard of fans will be surprised to learn. Much more than trivia, however, *Frasier: A Cultural History* encourages us to reflect upon our cultural icons both past and present and to ask ourselves what makes them great. If it achieves that alone, it is a worthy read.

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* Generally speaking, punctuation and orthography should be coherent (British or American style) all through the article. For example: "emphasise/ recognise" rather than "emphasize/ recognise"; "colour/ colour" rather than "colour/ color".
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