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HOMING SORROW: BHARATI MUKHERJEE'S "THE MANAGEMENT OF GRIEF" AS METADIASPORIC NARRATIVE AND INSCRIPTION OF POLITICAL EMPOWERMENT

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Abstract

This paper reads Bharati Mukherjee's short story "The Management of Grief" as an uncompromised critique of Canadian Multiculturalism at its early stage in the 1980s. Without neglecting the crucially humanist component of Mukherjee's investment in writing this story, the article demonstrates how, through subtle strategies of representation, "The Management of Grief" presents Canada as a country where whiteness-as-power is pervasive, and where ethnic minorities are perceived by mainstream society as exogenous, and made to feel as such. Together with this, the story as an archetypical representation of the predicament of diasporas, understood, pace Vijay Mishra and others, in the sense of the diasporic condition perceived as dominated by melancholia. The story evokes the diaspora experience in several other ways, most notably with its emphasis on the in-between status of such communities in an identitarian, affective and political sense. The analysis eventually focuses on how the story underscores and subtly illuminates the process of a political empowerment, an awareness-raising process which, accompanied by a coming-into-political-agency, marks a turning point in the increasingly relevant political role played by diasporas within the multicultural nation state.

Keywords: diaspora literature, Bharati Mukherjee, Air India 182, diaspora studies.

Isabel Alonso-Breto

Resumen

Este artículo lleva a cabo una lectura del conocido cuento de Bharati Mukherjee "The Management of Grief", entendiéndolo como una severa crítica de las políticas multiculturalistas canadienses de principios de los años ochenta. Sin descuidar el importante elemento humano que impulsa a Mukherjee a escribir esta historia, el artículo demuestra cómo, mediante sutiles estrategias de representación, "The Management of Grief" presenta el Canadá de la época como un país donde la estructura de poder dominante revela una estrecha conexión con la cultura blanca, y donde las minorías étnicas son percibidas por la opinión pública como exógenas, y como tal se les hace sentir. Por otra parte, la historia se ofrece como una representación arquetípica del predicamento de las diásporas, que, según Vijay Mishra y otros críticos del área, sería una condición dominada por la melancolía. El cuento de Mukherjee evoca la experiencia diaspórica en otros sentidos, entre los cuales destaca el énfasis en la situación de *in-betweenness* de estas comunidades en un sentido identitario, afectivo y político. El análisis finalmente muestra el modo en que este cuento enfatiza el proceso de empoderamiento político de las comunidades diaspóricas en Canadá, retratando una paulatina toma de conciencia en que la protagonista se torna agente de su propio destino. Según la lectura que lleva a cabo el artículo, el desenlace se muestra como punto de inflexión de este proceso, a la vez que pone en evidencia el papel cada vez más relevante que juegan las diásporas en el contexto del estado-nación multicultural.

Palabras clave: literaturas diaspóricas, Bharati Mukherjee, Air India 182, estudios de la diáspora.

> *We, who stayed out of politics and came halfway around the world to avoid religious and political feuding, have been the first in the New World to die from it.*
>
> B. Mukherjee, "The Management of Grief"

1. Introduction

Published in 1988, the same year the Canadian Multiculturalism Act was passed by the Canadian Parliament, Bharati Mukherjee's short story "The Management of Grief" (henceforth TMG) dissects the diasporic condition, illustrating it in several ways. The story was inspired by the attack Air India flight 182 suffered on 23 June 1985 when, on its way from Vancouver and Toronto to London, Delhi and Mumbai, it was blown up in the air off the coast of Ireland, shortly before its scheduled arrival at Heathrow Airport. 329 persons died in this tragic event, as it happens, most of them Canadian citizens of Indian origin.

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This paper discusses TMG both in reference to the real event and to the context in which it took place (namely, early Canadian Multiculturalism), and as a metaphor for the condition of diasporas. It is pertinent to mention at this stage that my approach is made with the utmost respect for the victims and for their relatives, and that my theoretical approach does not intend to trivialize such a terrible tragedy.

Mukherjee's story enacts an ontologically diasporic narrative. To begin with, in her tale all the characters except for one, are members of the Indian diaspora in Canada. Together with this, the story portrays a diaspora within a diaspora, in the sense that through the painful process of mourning described in the story, those characters feel they have been "melted down and recast as a new tribe" (Mukherjee 103), as Shaila Bhave, the focus of the story, formulates it. Further, this new tribe crystalizes around the need to mourn those who have died. At a symbolic level if nothing else, all diasporas can be said to coalesce around a feeling of mourning, that is, they are inevitably "haunted by some sense of loss" (Rushdie 1991: 10; Mishra 1996; Cho 2007a and 2007b). Finally, also in terms of its poetics TMG is representative of the in-between condition of diasporas. The story structure reproduces diasporic groups' troubled relationship with space, which also echoes a complicated relationship with any straight, conventional sense of identity. Thus, the narrative plot shifts between the home-land and the host-land, as the meta-diasporic community (that is, the mourners) travels from Canada to India and back to Canada again. Between both territories they visit Ireland, and through the uncanny echoes evoked there they delve into that in-between territory which symbolically operates as the "third space" defined by Homi Bhabha, where the diasporic identity is bound to drift, forever disrupting the poles of the here *vs.* there, the home- and the host-land, the present and the past.

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The story invokes that "homing desire" inevitably at the heart of the diasporic condition. As Avtar Brah has explained, "the concept of diaspora offers a critique of fixed origins, while taking account of a homing desire which is not the same as a desire for a 'homeland'" (Brah 1996: 180). How can we decode this haunting and much quoted statement? In the midst of a plurality of systematizations of diasporic features, Rogers Brubaker suggests a three-feature chart which effectively synthesizes much previous literature on the matter. According to the British sociologist, it is possible to identify three core elements that are constitutive of diasporas, a certain confusion in semantic and conceptual terms notwithstanding. The first one is dispersion, which can be forced or traumatic, to one or to several places, inter- or intra-national; the second one is homeland orientation; and the third is boundary maintenance, that is, the keeping of a sense of difference from mainstream society and a sense of common identity, however vague (Brubaker

2003). In our century, the second of these criteria, homeland orientation, is no longer as strongly emphasized as it was in the past (cf. Safran 1991; Cohen 2008; Esman 2009), but it is still accorded much importance. Indeed, whenever there are problems or fluctuations in the host nation, the sense of homeland orientation tends to increase, as "The Management of Grief" exemplifies in the character of Kusum, who decides to remain in India after losing her husband in the attack. In contrast to the emphasis placed by early Diaspora Studies on the place of origin as identity focus and political marker, James Clifford tempers the strong importance attached to the idea of homeland by emphasizing that a more compound set of extradiasporic relations needs to be considered, thus claiming that "decentered, lateral connections may be as important as those formed around a teleology of return" (Clifford 1994: 306). As to the third feature, boundary maintenance, its function is "to preserve a distinctive identity vis-à-vis the host society" (Brubaker 2003: 6). It is the feature which most clearly accounts for the paradoxically necessary *homing desire* of diasporas: as long as the dividing boundaries exist, the diaspora experiences a homing desire which is, of necessity, always deferred, perpetually unfulfilled. Should this homing desire ever be entirely satisfied, the idea of diaspora would lose its meaning: in the absence of a sense of difference, the distinctiveness of the group would cease to exist.

Mukherjee's short story illuminates two crucial aspects of diasporas: fragility and diversity. On the one hand, it highlights how delicately fragile diasporas are in political terms: how they can precipitate, catalyse or loosen up depending on changes in the political situation either in the home or in the host country. This is the case with the community of mourners, who after the tragedy suddenly see themselves deeply and inextricably bound to one another. Together with this, "The Management of Grief" allows a glimpse of the fragility inherent to any diasporic sense of identity, which, again, is bound to be neither simple nor definitive. On the other hand, the story illustrates the crucial idea that diversity is inherent to diasporas. In any diasporic community coexist a huge variety of backgrounds, experiences, and reactions to both the experience of migration and the everyday reality. In the story, the presence of people of different creeds within the Indo-Canadian community, and also the variety of reactions to the tragedy, is emphasized. Thus, both from the point of view of politics and of identity, TMG shows that boundaries within and around diasporas are constantly shifting; they lie in a very unstable terrain, always drifting (to use the same word again), always in the making, and hardly contained by their "moveable margins" (Kanaganayakam 2005). All in all, as Stuart Hall has suggested, TMG foregrounds the crucial fact that "the diaspora experience […] is defined, not by essence or purity, but by the recognition of a necessary heterogeneity and diversity; by a conception of 'identity' which lives with and through, not despite, difference" (Hall 1992: 235).

2. Extradiegetic Factors: the Background and Aftermath of the Attack

Sikhism was founded in Punjab in the 16th century as a response to the coexistence in the region of the Hindu and Muslim faiths, allegedly selecting and combining the best of both religions. Through the 17th century it gained practitioners, until in the 18th century it attained maturity and had its principles systematized by the revered Guru Gobind Singh, the tenth guru (Taylor and Pontsioen 2014). It was also in this century that allegedly a Sikh Empire emerged, taking advantage of the weakening and final dismemberment of the Mughal Empire (Singh 2007: 556-557). After supporting the British in the construction of the Raj, with Sikh soldiers serving in both World Wars, on the eve of Indian independence Sikh communities suffered greatly with the partition of the Subcontinent. The Punjab was ruthlessly severed and millions of people were forced to leave their homes and cross the newly-drawn border amidst havoc and mass murder (Khan 2016: 81-83; Hansen 2002). To make things worse, they had been led to believe in the possibility of an independent state, a promise later endorsed by Prime Minister Jawarhalal Nehru which was never to be fulfilled. The resulting disillusion, with added social problems, would translate into militant nationalism, which kept claiming the creation of a legitimate Sikh state in the Punjab that would go by the name of Khalistan. When in 1975 Prime Minister Indira Gandhi declared a state of Emergency, severely curtailing civil liberties, again the Sikh community suffered. The radicalised Bhabhar Khalsa Brotherhood, responsible for the Air India 182 attack, was created in 1978 in the midst of these tensions. Violence between the community and government reached a climax in June 1984, when the most sacred shrine of Sikh culture, Harmandir Sahib or the Golden Temple in Amritsar, was destroyed by the Indian army, in a pre-emptive attack carried out under the pretext that the temple had stored weaponry intended to be used in attacking the Indian government and institutions (Tully and Jacob 2005). Besides being massacred, the community was deeply humiliated, and the action "created martyrs and completely disaffected the Sikh population, including the diaspora" (Van Dyke 2009: 986). Sikh retaliation came in the form of magnicide, as Indira Gandhi was assassinated by her Sikh bodyguards in October that year, and riots ensued again, Sikh citizens being targeted. Such was the political situation in India when the Airbus carrying Flight 182 was sabotaged in June 1985. The attack, orchestrated by radicalized "long-distance nationalists" (Anderson 1984), thus responded to a rarefied political situation in the home-country, testifying to the veracity of Vijay Mishra's claim that "when not available in any 'real' sense, homeland exists as an absence that acquires surplus meaning by the fact of diaspora" (Vijay Mishra 2007: 2).

While around 20 million Sikhs live in India, more than seven million live scattered around the world, forming diasporic communities in various countries. In Canada, Sikh migration began in the 19th century. Usually reaching the American continent via the Pacific Ocean, most Sikhs settled in British Columbia, and by the early 20th century there was a small thriving community in the area. However, a dark incident has left an imprint on Canadian history which is simultaneously revealing of the country's national psyche and is recalled every time Canada's racist immigration policies are brought into the limelight: the Komagata Maru incident, which occurred in 1914. Three hundred and sixty-five prospective Sikh immigrants crossed the Pacific in a Japanese freight with the intention of settling in the Federation. Yet neither Canadian public opinion nor the Canadian authorities agreed to this, and after a three-month detention period in the waters of Vancouver harbour, most of them were finally refused permission to disembark and forced to make their way back to India. This is a poignant episode which remains a milestone in the uneasy construction of an Indo-Canadian identity, and it symbolizes the sense of outsiderness of the Indian community in Canada as perceived by the Canadian authorities and mainstream citizenship. As will be discussed shortly, this perceived outsiderness had not changed substantially in the seven decades between the Komagata Maru and the Air India 182 incidents.

In 1985, months and weeks before the attack, heed was not paid to serious hints regarding a possible terrorist attack —at least, not sufficiently, or in an appropriate manner— by the Canadian authorities, something that the victims' relatives would bitterly resent. Then, to make matters worse, after the bombing, the Indo-Canadian community felt abandoned and ignored in their grief (Major 2010). As Fred Ribkoff remarks, they were victims of "literal, political, institutional, and cultural acts of erasure" (Ribkoff 2012: 507). The community of mourners felt excluded from mainstream society, as there was no real sense that this was a truly Canadian tragedy. Indeed, for a very long time the event was disregarded by Canadian public opinion, not being considered a truly relevant Canadian issue. Overall, the tragedy was perceived as an *ethnic* problem and understood as marginal. This indifference could only be produced by a feeling in Canadian mainstream society that this community did not really belong within the nation. As one relative of the victims sadly concludes in the documentary *Air India 182*, "We were never Canadian in the first place". Ribkoff corroborates that the disaster disappeared very soon from Canadian consciousness. As he claims, "not enough Canadians [were] deeply touched" (Ribkoff 2012: 509). In collaboration with her husband, Canadian writer Clark Blaise, Bharati Mukherjee published a book analysing this issue two years after the attack. Blaise and Mukherjee claim:

> When we began our research in January 1986, it seemed as though the Air India disaster (as it has come to be called) was in the process of disappearing from the larger Canadian consciousness. Politically, the tragedy was "unhoused", in that Canada wished to see it as an Indian event sadly visited on these shores by uncontrollable fanatics, and India was happy to treat it as an "overseas incident" with containable financial implications. (Blaise and Mukherjee in Ribkoff 508)

While, as Blaise and Mukherjee state, the Indian authorities considered this affair as something that only remotely concerned them, the Canadian Prime Minister on his part offered the Indian Prime Minister his condolences. Thus, the Air India 182 tragedy was "unhoused" in the same way that, as was mentioned earlier, diasporas are ontologically driven by a necessarily unfulfilled "homing desire".

Twenty years later, in the spring of 2006, a Commission of Inquiry into the Investigation of the Bombing of Air India Flight 182 was created. The intention was to bring closure to the families of the victims as well as to help prevent future terrorist acts. However, even at this point some Canadians still considered this move "an exercise in ethnic politics" (Ribkoff 2012: 508), denying its relevance. This gives a measure of the response of the mainstream Canadian public, and of the difficulty of diasporas in fully belonging. Canadian society appears to perceive itself as persistently white, aloof from the immigrant communities' efforts to integrate in their society. The distant response to the attack responds to the structure Marlene Nourbese Phillip describes in an essay published in 1989, one year after Bill C-18 was passed proclaiming Multiculturalism the official policy of the nation, where she claims: "At its most basic, Multiculturalism describes a configuration of power at the centre of which are the two cultures recognised by the Constitution of Canada —The French and the English— and around which circumnavigate the lesser satellite cultures" (Nourbese Philip 1989: 182). Still in 2006, twenty years after the tragedy and twenty-one after Bill C-18 was passed, a public enquiry revealed that only forty-eight per cent of interviewed Canadians considered the bombing as a Canadian event, while twenty-two per cent considered it an Indian affair. Thus, throughout those years there was a sense in which the South Asian Canadian community did not see their tragedy acknowledged, one consequence being that they could not mourn it as they needed to. The bombing remained an open wound, not properly healed. In a sense, this situation represents what Vijay Mishra, and later Lily Cho and others, consider the defining feature of diaspora: a state of mourning which cannot be healed.

The result of the Commission of Inquiry was finally made public in 2010, and eventually a sense of closure was brought to the victims' relatives twenty-five years after the tragedy. The report acknowledged the shortcomings in the safety measures, first, and then in the management of the situation:

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> A cascading series of errors contributed to the failure of our police and security forces to prevent this atrocity. The level of error, incompetence, and inattention which took place before the flight was sadly mirrored in many ways for many years, in how authorities, governments, and institutions dealt with the aftermath of the murder of so many innocents: in the investigation, the legal proceedings, and in providing information, support and comfort to the families. (Major 2010)

To try and amend so many mistakes, on 23 June 2010 Prime Minister Stephen Harper issued a formal apology to the Indo-Canadian community on behalf of the Canadian nation. An integrated institutional effort was finally made to *home* the sorrow of the victims' relatives, acknowledging the tragedy as fully Canadian: "This atrocity was conceived in Canada, executed in Canada, by Canadian citizens, and its victims were themselves mostly citizens of our country" (Harper in Lu 2010), Harper stated in his apology. After so long, if only in this token gesture, the victims' relatives could at least see their pain symbolically acknowledged by the nation where most of them were born.

3. Intradiegetic Elements: A Diaspora within a Diaspora

In Bharati Mukherjee's story "The Management of Grief", a symbolic meta-diaspora, with its multifarious and chameleonic reality, emerges after the accident. The murdered persons are perceived as members of a diasporic community — Indo-Canadians, but further, a real community, referred to as "the relatives" (96), emerges around those who have died. Altogether they compose a diaspora within the diaspora, with a culture of their own, capitalised on the necessity of mourning. As stated earlier, on a metaphorical level, as in real diasporas, this meta-diaspora crystallizes around a loss, that of those who were murdered, in the same way as literal diasporas crystallize around the loss of the home country. Their foundational event is a loss which cannot be properly mourned, and the community are alone in their sorrow, as diasporic peoples are in their in-between world.

According to Fred Ribkoff, Mukherjee's short story illustrates "inadequacies and dangers of institutional, textbook responses to traumatic losses experienced by people astride different cultures" (Ribkoff 2012: 516). Yet the story also suggests that the management of grief is not only cultural, but also personal. In any event, grief cannot be managed adequately from a merely institutional stance. Both the personal and the institutional levels are culturally ordained, yet whereas the personal reaction often exceeds the boundaries imposed by cultural conventions, the institutional, conversely, falls short of providing a comforting avenue for an appropriate management of grief. Thus the title has a double edge. On the one hand it refers to a situation which is irredeemably managed by grief, and thus

cannot fit neatly into any culturally-specific preordained mould, let alone any institutional one. But it also suggests that grief originating in a tragedy like this needs to be managed institutionally, from the home and host country, through institutions created to serve the citizens in question. In this regard, the story shows that Canadian management after the attack was inappropriate and insufficient (which, as we have seen, was indeed the case). Perhaps the ultimate idea the story wants to suggest is that such grief is simply impossible to manage properly, as it entails unbearable and unspeakable pain. No preordained institutional way of managing it, however complex, would suffice to fully alleviate the array of deeply nuanced feelings of each person that had suffered such a terrible loss.

The story begins in Shaila Bhave's home in Toronto, where members of the Indo-Canadian community have gathered after learning the terrible news. As the story opens, Shaila sits down on a staircase. Her situation evokes Bhabha's remarks on the work of artist Renée Green in his introduction to *The Location of Culture,* where he equates the staircase Green presents in one of her installations with the condition of interstitiality, characteristic of the diasporic subject. At this point in her life, having learned that her husband and two children are in all probability dead, Shaila Bhave's position is necessarily one of transit, where she can either succumb or, as will be the case after long suffering, emerge as a different, necessarily renewed person. This transit is metaphorically embodied in the staircase. But Shaila's interstitial position, between cultures, is further emphasized by her unusual reaction to the news she has received. She has surprised everybody by her coldness and her perceived detachment, which metaphorically reinforce the sense of "being apart", neither fully here nor fully there, which, as "The Management of Grief" illustrates, characterizes diasporic subjectivities. For the members of her community, Shaila is behaving in an odd manner, not disclosing her feelings. A case is made for respect towards each culture, but also which each subject deserves in her or his form of mourning: "We must all grieve in our own way" (95), Shaila will assert later on in the story. With these words, she is claiming not only respect for cultural difference but, more emphatically, for personal reactions and idiosyncrasies.

Although she does not show it, Shaila is corroded by unbearable pain, which she prefers to keep private. She is actually so unsettled that she keeps hearing her family's voices calling her name, and she will go on hearing them until much later. This unusually calm reaction, however, due to the barbiturate dose she has absorbed, makes Shaila feel freakish. Indeed, her sense of identity is in question. Quite literally, her former sense of identity as a mother and wife, who has just lost the persons that gave meaning to the most important roles she has played in her life until the present, has been shattered. Also, in this reading of the story as an archetypal account of the diasporic predicament, her emotional turmoil appears to

be a reflection of her increasingly *unhomed* subjectivity. "Like my husband's spirit", she will feel, "I flutter between worlds" (101).

In her home, Shaila Bhave is surrounded by completely unknown people: "A woman I don't know is preparing tea on my kettle" (91), she observes. On the one hand, this sense of unfamiliarity is again a reminder of the intrinsic sense of disorientation involved in the immigrating experience. In their new environment, immigrants have lost contact with their cultural referents, and therefore their sense of a personal identity is unlikely to be left untouched. Their referential map has been shattered and they need, in all urgency, to build one from scratch, or from the few inferences they have been able to gather before leaving, plus their immediate impressions. With physical displacement, the immigrant's system of cultural referents has been left behind as she or he needs to learn how to decode entirely new semiotic systems (Alonso-Breto 2012: 130). On the other hand, the fact that Shaila Bhave is surrounded by people she does not know, but who, nonetheless, have gathered in her house with the intention of providing some comfort, accounts for the contingent character of diasporas as much as for their solidarity. In diaspora, people who do not know each other but who have a common origin tend to cluster around and support one another in an environment often perceived as hostile or, at best, indifferent. The whole situation has been taken command of by Mr. Sharma, the President of the Indo-Canadian society, a means of pointing to the identity politics of diasporic communities, who see the need to institutionalize their informal and contingent connections in order to defend specific interests, which often differ from those of mainstream society. Due to discriminatory immigration policies, the Indo-Canadian community grew very slowly between the early and the middle decades of the 20th century, but figures started mounting significantly from the late 50s and rose especially in the 1960s with the elimination of racial limitations for immigrants and the introduction of the point system in Canada. Thus, by the mid-1980s, when the story takes place, the Indo-Canadian community had acquired a significant presence in the country, was well organized, and had already had time to nurture a sound feeling of belonging. The fact that Mrs. Sharma is pregnant is no coincidence, but points to the obvious fact that by that time many if not all members of the Indo-Canadian community were not immigrants, but Canadian-born.

Shaila Bhave's counterpart in the story is her neighbour Kusum, like herself a wife and mother, who has lost her husband and daughter in the attack. United in sorrow, these two women will eventually find very different ways to reconstruct their lives. At this point in the story, we read that when Kusum's family arrived in the neighbourhood, only recently, they had organised a housewarming which was attended by members of the Indo-Canadian community, and also by white

neighbours. According to Avtar Brah, "Diaspora space is inhabited not only by those who have migrated and their descendants but equally by those who are constructed and represented as indigenous" (Brah 1996: 16). However, at the time of the attack, the absence of mainstream Canadians in Shaila's house is conspicuous. And we cannot be conclusive about the reasons for this absence, which spans the whole of the story, the only exception being the controversial government envoi Judith Templeton. Is it from a sense of awe for such deep human suffering, or out of respect for cultural difference, or simply a lack of interest, that white Canadian neighbours may conclude that the fate of Indo-Canadians is none of their business? We can only speculate about these possibilities.

The TV is on, yet so far reports about the event are sparse and unclear. The Government acts evasively (92), and is reluctant to admit it has been a terrorist attack, going as far as to suggest that the explosion might have been due to space debris or Russian lasers. Those in the house, however, have guessed right from the beginning: "Sikh bomb. Sikh bomb" (92), they mumble. From the very beginning, the community and relatives are deprived of information appropriate to the situation. To emphasize this, on the TV screen a white-haired priest in a blue robe (attributes that should not go unnoticed) rants about unrelated matters. "Damn! […] How can these preachers carry on like nothing's happened?" (92), a man in Shaila's house exclaims. The feeling of being ignored from an institutional point of view already at this stage lays bare certain flaws in the societal structure denounced by Marlene Nourbese Philip.

Four days after the accident, "the relatives", as the community of mourners comes to be called, have been taken to the south-west of Ireland. The explosion occurred a few miles off the coast, and some corpses and plane debris have been retrieved nearby. The first scene in Ireland is disheartening, the relatives carefully scanning over the surface of an Irish bay in search of the dead bodies of their loved ones. Their state of mind is one of shock and deep sorrow, verging on madness. To add to their despair, the gap between the sparse information provided by the authorities and their need to know has widened, and they are still plagued by doubt: "Knowing, not knowing. Wishing". Not a single representative of the Canadian Government has accompanied the group on this ominous journey. Thus, they feel that their tragedy is not properly acknowledged, which will translate into the impossibility of an appropriate mourning, and their loss will remain an open wound long after it might have been healed. The Canadian authorities' neglect adds to the sad fact that only a few of them will be "lucky" enough to recover their loved ones' bodies. In this double sense, the relatives' plight embodies what Vijay Mishra considers the defining feature of diaspora, that is, a state of perpetual mourning: "I want to suggest that the diasporic imaginary is a condition of an impossible mourning that

transforms mourning into melancholia" (V. Mishra 2007: 9). The transformation of mourning into melancholia occurs, namely, when the lost object of desire is continuously deferred and the mourner cannot rebuild a new relationship with it, then the mourning cannot be completed and the situation becomes pathological. At this point, then, the relatives' situation pointedly parallels the ever marginal, in-between position of diasporic subjectivities. Their stay in the "third space" of Ireland provides a representation of the idea of unhomeliness, defined by Homi Bhabha as the "estranging sense of the relocation of the home and the world […] that is, the condition of extra-territorial and cross-cultural initiations" (Bhabha 1994: 13). For Bhabha, "the unhomely moment relates the traumatic ambivalences of a personal, psychic history to the wider disjunctions of political existence" (Bhabha 1994: 15), which is precisely the point the story tries to make, in its simultaneous exploration of the personal, cultural and institutional reactions.

More pointedly than in the rest of the story, the Irish interlude of this metadiasporic community highlights the complexity of diasporic identities, bringing them closer to what Sudesh Mishra has called the "second scene of exemplification" in understandings of Diaspora, which debunks strict filiations with the idea of nation or home/host-land and instead is characterized by asynchronous migrations, crablike detours and overdetermined identities that defeat all attempts to institute a discrete homeland-hostland dichotomy. In this second scene, subjective filiations are viewed as provisional or occurring at the micro-local and heterotopic levels (kinship identifications, ad hoc associations, attachments to milieu items, institutions, adoption of hybrid cultural forms and practices, etc.) rather than at the customary macrolevel of the homeland or nation-state (S. Mishra 2006: 44).

Paradoxically, the Irish people's response is warmer than that of their fellow Canadians. Over these days the relatives are given flowers and comfort, hugged in the streets by complete strangers. There is a feeling of empathy which Deborah Bowen defines as "the quintessentially 'human' touch" (Bowen 1997: 51), and which seems to be missing in Canadian people: "I cannot imagine recations like that in the streets of Toronto" (99). Several reasons may account for this. Importantly, the Irish people have undergone deep suffering, often enduring tragedy, due to political oppression, terrorism, or natural disaster. Another reason for empathy can be their also being a nation of emigrants. A less optimistic way of reading the Irish people's attitudes would suggest that the Irish do not feel politically implicated in the event, and therefore are not afraid to offer support and care, whereas mainstream Canadians may be reluctant to endorse a moral responsibility towards Indo-Canadians to which they might have to respond someday. In other words, implicating themselves in the pain of the tragedy would mean fully accepting "visible minorities" as full members of the Canadian nation,

something which, apparently, they were not fully ready to do at the time. Another reasonable explanation, however, suggests a purely humanist approach, whereby the Irish peoples' compassion would be rooted in the proximity of the accident and their first-hand witnessing of the tragedy, whereas for both mainstream Canadians and Indians the accident remains geographically, and therefore emotionally, more distant.

In this peculiar reverse journey of the diasporic selves, the following step is India, where Shaila and Kusum fly together, escorting Kusum's husband and daughter's coffins. On arrival, the two women are scolded by a customs officer, underscoring the fact that ethnic filiations do not mean higher empathy with their tragedy, and also that, as in Canada, their sorrow is not going to be universally acknowledged here either. With this episode, the story puts the emphasis on the *unhousedness* factor applying in India too. Shaila speaks back at the officer, showing —and here the coffin image acquires supplementary meaning— that they are no longer the submissive wives that once left the country with veiled heads and voices "shy and sweet" (101). This confrontation announces, as soon as they are entering their original home nation, that change has taken place within these migrant Indian women, again dramatizing the symbolic equation between the trauma of loss and the trauma of migration.

In India, Shaila feels that she is "trapped between two modes of knowledge" (101). Considering her present situation and vital trajectory, one would expect such a division to be drawn between eastern and western values. It is ironic, therefore, that her sense of being a split subject should respond, rather, to the simultaneous influence that her grandmother's traditionalism and her parents' rationalism exert on her. This is a way of discarding understandings of culture as monolithic, and of suggesting that cultures are inherently different from each other —like diasporas, for that matter (Bhabha 1995), as well as the truism that rationalism is not a western prebend. Trying to decide what to do with her life, Shaila travels in India with Kusum, then alone, when Kusum decides to sell her house and enter an ashram, embracing tradition as an Indian widow. But Shaila's fate is different, and one day after months of searching for clues in her new situation, her husband finally conveys a message to her by means of a sadhu: "*You must finish alone what we started together*" (102), his voice whispers to her under the guise of a sadhu, and she decides to return to Toronto.

Judith Templeton reappears in this part of the story. She had already been introduced before "the relatives" left for Ireland, charged with the mission of distributing economic hand-outs to them. Like the TV preacher, she is an embodiment of white Anglo-Saxon Canadianness, as indeed her physical appearance proclaims:

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> Judith Templeton is much younger than she sounded. She wears a blue suit with a white blouse and a polka dot tie. Her blonde hair is cut short, her only jewellery is pearl drop earrings. Her briefcase is new and expensive looking, a gleaming cordovan leather. [...] her contact lenses seem to float in front of her light blue eyes. (94)

For all her good intentions, Judith Templeton is an inadequate government emissary. She acts in a self-centred and tactless manner, using derogative language to refer to matters of cultural difference and human grief. Appealing to the principle that Multiculturalism needs to be administered properly and that this was not always done, she takes on herself the mission of caring for material aspects, a task for which she is obviously not prepared insomuch as she is incapable of empathising in the least with the relatives. Both grief and cultural difference stand in the way, and she cannot find the means to properly communicate with them in most cases. She attempts to solve this by absorbing a manual which explains the stages of *grief management*, a book which, like her, is completely unaware of its own cultural specificity, and which falls definitely short of accounting for the diversity of human (and cultural) reactions to grief. As Fred Ribkoff puts it, "such 'universal' patterns and abstract terms of assessment are removed from the realities of each individual case of grieving" (Ribkoff 2012: 518). Templeton's inadequate treatment of the deep pain experienced by those who have lost their beloved ones reflects the aloofness of mainstream society regarding both cultural difference and individual sorrow, and she sees the old Sikh couple's refusal to accept their children's death as "stubbornness and ignorance" (106), something she is "against" (106), and as a "complication" (95). It is not surprising that Shaila should refuse to help her, choosing to keep silent about her reasons for doing so. "The cultural impasse between this government representative and Shaila is tortuous and seemingly insurmountable, and Shaila can only run away". (Ribkoff 2013: 518)

The story thus illustrates diversity within diasporas as much as their fragility and contingency, that is, their difference, understood in the sense defined by Bhabha in "Diversity vs. Difference", as based "not on the exoticism of multi-culturalism of the *diversity* of cultures, but on the inscription and articulation of culture's *hybridity*" (Bhabha 1995: 209; his italics). Shaila, Kusum, Dr. Ranganathan, Kusum's daughter Pamela… each of "the relatives" needs to make different decisions in order to soothe their sorrow and manage to go on with their lives. Diasporas are by no means homogeneous or stable, but rather they are mutable and, at most, strategic: "As border communities, diasporas [...] create microcosmic alliances by attending to 'cultural forms, kinship relations and business circuits or by attaching themselves to religious institutions and cities'" (S. Mishra 2006: 79 quoting Clifford 1994). The microcosmic alliance of this metadiaspora community is based on a common experience of suffering, but also on the tacit assumption

that their individual ways out of it are to be respected since each of the characters' decision, whether culturally ordained or not, is both "a means of survival [and] a mode of agency" (Bowen 1997: 56).

For Shaila, achieving a new sense of direction after this spine-breaking event consists in finishing what she and her husband started together. And what they started together was a life in Canada. The transit begun with migration and punctuated by the loss of her family continues for Shaila. She had been a traditional Indian wife who did not say her husband's name aloud and, as tradition would also have it, never told him that she loved him. Also, she had been part of a family who did not participate in politics. But in the final impasse this will inevitably change in Shaila's life, and when she returns to Toronto with the mission of finishing what she started with her husband, she takes on an unexpectedly proactive political attitude:

> I write letters to the editors of local papers and to members of Parliament. Now at least they admit it was a bomb. One MP answers back, with sympathy, but with a challenge. You want to make a difference? Work on a campaign. Work on mine. Politicize the Indian voter. (107)

Thus, for Shaila, going on with her life after losing her family means both going on with what they had started together and, necessarily, starting anew. For her starting anew means becoming a full, politically active Canadian citizen. Leaving behind the marginal role played by diasporas in the early days of official Multiculturalism, she will follow her husband's last suggestion, "*Your time has come. Go, be brave*" (108), and inaugurate her own future and that of others like her. Thus, and here lies the originality of my reading, when in the final lines of the story Shaila leaves the package she was carrying on a bench and simply "starts walking", she is not only accepting her new condition as hybrid. Further, and crucially, she is beginning to construct a future where minorities shall have complete representation and protagonism in the nation, and not allow their role to be limited to being Government hand-out recipients anymore, as in her historical moment, the late eighties, had been the case.

Shaila's position is still interstitial, the trauma of her loss has turned her into an *emphatically* hybrid subject, but she refuses to be marginal anymore. Her loss has prompted Mrs Bhave into "the moment of transit where space and time cross to produce complex figures of difference and identity, past and present, inside and outside, inclusion and exclusion" (Bhabha 1994: 1), that moment uniquely capable of creating newness and moving society forward. Unlike her former self once and again, after her journey Shaila consciously embraces the realm of "the beyond", (to once more retrieve Homi Bhabha's terminology), to become the very "articulation of cultural differences" herself, and thus open an infinite space

of social and political possibilities. If her choice is textually ambiguous ("There is no sense of closure", Fred Ribkoff claims, probably rightly), we choose to read this non-definition as Shaila's decision to actively occupy her in-between space so as to be able to elaborate new "strategies of selfhood —singular or communal— that initiate new signs of identity, and innovative sites of collaboration, and contestation, in the act of defining the idea of society itself" (Bhabha 1994:1). Ultimately, Shaila's gesture points to the empowerment of diasporas and their increasingly active role in the life of the nation, since (to quote Bhabha again), "it is in the emergence of the interstices […] that the intersubjective and collective experiences of *nationness* […] are negotiated".

4. Conclusion

"The Management of Grief" entails an uncompromised critique of Canadian Multiculturalism at its early stage in the 1980s. Through subtle strategies of representation, it presents Canada as a country where whiteness-as-power is pervasive, and where ethnic minorities are perceived by mainstream society as exogenous, and made to feel as such. I have argued that this idea is presented in Mukherjee's "The Management of Grief" in a number of very effective textual strokes mostly concentrated in the figure of Judith Templeton. Thus the text chooses to echo and replay the particularities of the politics surrounding the tragic event which inspired the story, especially its aftermath.

Together with the previous one, this paper has suggested a reading of "The Management of Grief" as an archetypical representation of the predicament of diasporas, understood, pace Vijay Mishra and Lily Cho, in the sense of the diasporic condition perceived as one dominated by melancholia. The story evokes the diaspora experience in several other ways, most notably with its emphasis on the in-between status of such communities in an identitarian, affective and political sense. As expounded, the story underscores and productively illustrates several elements paramount in the diaspora experience: to begin with, the need of diasporic peoples to reconstruct themselves anew in the situation of displacement (or, in the case of second or later generations, the awakening of a similar need when made fully aware of the complexity of their in-between cultural, affective and often political situation). Further, the story highlights the frequent contention, especially popularized by Hall and Bhabha but elaborated in various ways, that cultural identities are fluid and movable, constantly in the making, which emphatically applies to migrant and diasporic identities. Diasporas are not dependable on more or less immutable points of reference such as homeland, location, religion, etc., or, importantly, on historical

experience —in this case the tragedy— which, pace Hall and others, eventually marks the distinctiveness of a group.

Bharati Mukherjee, further, tells the story of a political empowerment, a coming-into-consciousness process which is accompanied by a coming-into-agency one. Sheila Bhave leaves Canada in an unsuccessful quest for the recovery of her lost family only to return as a different person, ready to unsettle both culturally and, importantly, politically, the very foundations of white, bicultural Canada. And such an intervention cannot be overlooked. As Trinh Min-ha beautifully puts it,

> The moment the insider steps out from the inside she's no longer a mere insider. She necessarily looks in from the outside while also looking out from the inside. Not quite the same, not quite the other, she stands in that underdetermined threshold place where she constantly drifts in and out. Undercutting the inside/outside opposition, her intervention is necessarily that of both not quite an insider and not quite an outsider. She is, in other words, this inappropriate other or same who moves about with always at least two gestures: that of affirming 'I am like you' while persisting in her difference and that of reminding 'I am different' while unsettling every definition of otherness arrived at. (Minh-ha 1990: 374-5 in S. Mishra 2006: 76)

With a dexterous literary manoeuvre which becomes a respectful homage paid to the victims of the Air India 182 tragedy, both the bereaved and their relatives, Bharati Mukherjee succeeds in inscribing in the national archives an event which had been virtually ignored by the mass of Canadian mainstream citizens. And she does so from a non-institutional perspective which can be aptly and appropriately described as *affective*, much like the event itself and what its protagonists had deserved —a necessary gesture of compassion which was inexplicably denied to them by their nation. Together with this, in writing her story Mukherjee manages to symbolically reorganize the socio-political texture of the Canadian nation, bearing witness to the specific moment in history when Canadian diasporic communities took political control of themselves.

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Notes

[2]. Quotes from this story will only be referenced through page numbers.

[3]. Sikh-Canadian and Indo-Canadian identities are her conflated given the dimension of the attack and its treatment in Mukherjee's short story. An exploration of the connections and divergences of both

labels falls beyond the scope of this article; however, we should remark that both ethnic communities, while connected, obviously retain certain idiosyncrasies.

[4]. On April 11 2016, the current Prime Minister of Canada, Justin Trudeau, announced he would offer an apology in the Parliament for the Komagata Maru incident on May 18 of the same year (<http://pm.gc.ca/eng/news/2016/04/11/prime-minister-canada-announces-komagata-maru-apology>, accessed April 29, 2016).

[5]. Lily Cho elaborates on this idea in several articles, generally proposing the thesis that diaspora is not so much a sociological category as a condition of subjectivity: "Diaspora, at its best, is not about membership, but about a raced and gendered condition of melancholia and loss which is intimately related to the traumas of dislocation and the perpetual intrusion of the past of this trauma into the present" (2007b). See also Cho 2007a.

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31

THE ART OF LIFE, THE DANCE OF POETRY: GENDER, EXPERIMENT AND EXPERIENCE IN MINA LOY AND DIANE DI PRIMA

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Abstract

Mina Loy and Diane di Prima's experimental poetic contributions to their early "situational avant-gardes" (the 1910s Modernists and late 1950s Beats in New York) vindicated the relation of gender and experiment within their countercultural movements, redefining these groups' poetic and ideological tenets. Firstly, I will connect and contextualize these two poets as part of American feminist avant-garde tradition. Then, I will study their early poetry's specificities and their common particularity: a gendered approach to the interconnectivity between experiment and experience. The article develops the idea that Loy and di Prima's "motional" poetics of alternate forces of expression and linguistic experimentation is a dynamic materialization of the ambivalence involved in their bodily and spatial experiences of inclusion and exclusion as bohemian women poets in their urban environment and their artistic communities. The last section theorizes the way these embodied positionalities, and the continuum formed by environment, space, body and language, interrelate with Loy and di Prima's feminist motional avant-garde poetics based on material feminist philosophies and postmodern and experimental literary critics' views.

Keywords: Mina Loy, Diane di Prima, American women's poetry, feminist avant-garde poetics.

Isabel Castelao-Góme

Resumen

Las contribuciones poéticas experimentales de Mina Loy y Diane di Prima a sus "vanguardias situacionales" (Modernismo de principios del veinte y finales de los cincuenta en Nueva York) reivindican la relación entre género y experimentación dentro de estos movimientos contraculturales, redefiniendo así los principios ideológicos y poéticos de tales grupos. En primer lugar, el artículo conectará y contextualizará a estas dos autoras como parte de la tradición vanguardista feminista estadounidense. Seguidamente, se analizarán las especificidades de sus poesías tempranas y la particularidad que comparten: la aproximación desde el género a la interconectividad entre experimento y experiencia. Este artículo desarrolla la idea de una poética de "moción" o en movimiento que alterna fuerzas expresivas y de experimentación lingüística y que supone la materialización dinámica de la ambivalencia espacial y corporal, de inclusión y exclusión, que Loy y di Prima experimentaron como mujeres poetas bohemias dentro de sus entornos urbanos y artísticos. La última sección teoriza cómo estas posicionalidades, y el continuo formado entre entorno, espacio, cuerpo y lenguaje, se interrelacionan dando lugar a una poética vanguardista feminista "en movimiento", basándonos en la reciente filosofía de los feminismos materiales y en críticas literarias postmodernas experimentales.

Palabras clave: Mina Loy, Diane di Prima, poesía de mujeres estadounidenses, poética feminista experimental o vanguardista.

1. Connecting Women's Avant-Garde Poetries: Early Bohemian Reinventions in Loy and di Prima

Although Mina Loy's poetic oeuvre, since Roger Conover's edition of her poems in the mid-nineties, has achieved a deserved acknowledgment as representative of female Modernism, this has not been the case for di Prima or other Beat women poets in relation to contemporary American experimental poetics and Beat literature. Critical works on Loy assigned her the place she deserved as one of the main avant-garde women poets of the Modernist period (Kouidis, Burke, Shreiber and Tuma). On the other hand, several anthologies and works since the late nineties (Knight, Peabody, Johnson and Grace) have tried to place Beat women poets and writers as relevant figures in the predominantly male Beat canon. In spite of the critical and editorial effort, we are still worryingly short of studies of Beat poetics (Charter, Elkholy) and in feminist works on American women's poetry.[1]

Diane di Prima has become the most popular of the Beat women writers and poets, partly due to her prolific and still active writing career, but she lacks a scholarly

published work devoted solely to her writing (Quinn 2003: 175). On the other hand, Beat women's literature has hardly been studied in relation to previous and posterior American women's experimental poetics. In the same way, Mina Loy's poetry has not been seriously analyzed through a comparative lens in relation to other experimental women poets beyond the Modernist period.

Throughout this section I would like to support the possible dialogue and connections between Mina Loy and Diane di Prima's early poetries taking as common denominator their gendered stand as women poets within their different avant-garde movements and positioning them theoretically within feminist literary critical studies of American women's avant-garde poetics. The influence of Modernist women writers on Beat female poets has been acknowledged (Johnson and Grace 2002: 15), but there is still no critical study connecting Modernist with Beat women poets. My intention here is not so much to prove a generational dialogue between Mina Loy and Diane di Prima as to show how two avant-garde women poets embedded in different countercultural groups in US literary and cultural history (i.e. the New York Modernists of the first decade of the twentieth-century and the New York Beats of the late fifties and decade of the sixties) develop similar creative strategies of poetic reinvention in order to generate their own alternative feminist experimental poetries.

I would like to contextualize Loy and di Prima within the lineage of American feminist avant-garde poetics providing a comparative perspective and taking Elisabeth Frost's *The Feminist Avant-Garde in American Poetry* (2003) as a theoretical framework for this undertaking. Frost considers that a feminist theory of women's avant-garde writing has been thwarted until recently not only due to the "patriarchal quality of much of avant-garde rhetoric" (2003: xxi), but also because an incompatibility has been assumed to exist between a feminist consciousness and an experimental aesthetics within literary scholarship since the second-wave American feminist movement. Experimental women poets and critics since the 1980s have challenged the feminist critical model that considered women's poetry should express an authentic personal voice through accessible poetic language in order to celebrate and reflect real and universal female experiences (Frost, Wills, Tarlo, Heijinian, Armantrout). This article shares these avant-garde feminist critics' emphasis on breaking up the artificial poetic dichotomy between experience and experiment in women's poetry and on considering that experimental poetics can reflect gendered experiences and feminist political agency.

An avant-garde work, Frost suggests, is an artistic practice that combines formal innovation with political engagement, implying an intrinsic relation between ideas and form (Frost 2003: xv). Another defining characteristic of the avant-gardes is

that they become art communities or movements where individuals identify with each other and share same beliefs and practices (ibid.). Regarding this last point, avant-garde American women poets alter this characteristic since they seemed to "resist a notion of affiliation" (Frost 2003: xiv) not only with their avant-garde groups, but also with the feminist movements of their period, highlighting the isolation and singularity of their gendered avant-garde poetics. According to Frost, the most important trait women of the historical avant-gardes share is an ambivalent and contradictory relation to the aesthetic and political principles of the "male-dominated avant-garde groups'" they belonged to (Frost 2003: i, xii). Susan Suleiman, in her well-known thesis on the female avant-garde, suggested that these women writers lived a "double margin", since they were at the edge of mainstream culture as a dissenting voluntary choice and also became involuntarily outsiders from their groups due to gender (in Frost 2003: xviii). This ambivalence relates to the sexist marginalization they found within their bohemias, which has been well documented and acknowledged by feminist critics: feminist issues were neglected in avant-garde circles, women were excluded from publication processes, and the marked gendered characteristics of their poetics were ignored in definitions of avant-garde literary principles. As Frost asserts, it is a fact that women "have rarely been the spokespeople, theorists, or anthologized representatives in their avant-garde groups" (2003: xviii).[2]

Avant-garde women poets' creative responses to this conflicting ambivalence entail a poetic fluctuation of "alliance and divergences" from their groups' philosophies and innovative practices (Frost 2003: xiii). This tensional movement emerges not from a wish to write in opposition, but from a desire to articulate an alternative poetics of their own and "to create a language for a new feminist consciousness" (Frost 2003: xiii). The approach to avant-garde creativity as syncretic resolutions challenges the tendencies to "destroy past traditions" (Frost 2003: xii) that we see in the case of Modernism in relation to a Romantic ethos and aesthetics, and in the Beats in relation to previous Modernist precepts towards poetry and the modern world.

The perspective of the avant-garde scholars Noland and Watten exemplifies the recent emphasis of situated modernist studies during the last decades. They consider that traditional avant-garde studies have privileged abstract "historical" and "conceptual" categories in detriment of an emphasis on location and the "very specific set of circumstances" in avant-garde communities that make them "locally and contingently" produced groups.[3] Approaching these charged moments of cultural exchange or renovation as "situational avant-gardes", these critics consider that identitary elements such gender, ethnicity, relation to the environment or displacement can diversify and open definitions of avant-garde practices.

In this light we should take into consideration the differences between Loy's and Di Prima's milieus: two countercultural urban niches that fostered very different approaches to their historical moments. Both Modernist and Beat poets believed in the medium of experimental poetics as a political means towards a change of consciousness within culture, but did not share the same conception of the roles of language and the subject in relation to the world. The crucial changes modernity in Western culture brought at the beginning of the twentieth-century developed what Michael Davidson calls "the question of solipsism" (2005: 234-235). The restlessness about "the dissolution of individual consciousness" (ibid.) and the condition of alienation found expression in aesthetic experiment and in what Eliot theorized as the "extinction of personality" and Pound as the "disavowal of the Romantic ego" (Frost 2003: xx, Davidson 2005: 235). On the other hand, the post-World War II new American poetry, where Beat poetics is framed, based itself on the flourishing of the individual against political repression and on a reaction to elitist formalism and New Critical paradigms. This brought about a recovery of a Romantic aesthetics of spontaneity, authenticity and confession and a search for a lost humanity and expressivism in poetics that was reflected in Beat manifestos and poetic performative practices (Davidson 2005: 241).

Regarding the differences on gender politics, the Modernist New York of the beginning of the twentieth century enjoyed a much more progressive spirit than the Beat marginal community of post-war America, which grew surrounded by very rigid gender stereotypes that relegated women to the domestic suburban space. The Modernist Village of 1910s, where Loy was immersed, encouraged gender equality in society and in the artistic scene more explicitly than the Beat Lower East Side and Village of the late 1950s, where di Prima lived (Stansell 2009: xi, Keller and Miller 2005: 76, 84).

Being aware, then, of the differences between Loy and di Prima's "situational avant-gardes", I would like to connect them as feminist avant-garde poets following the main elements that define this tradition as set out in Frost's study. The first one is that they believed in experimental poetics as a political and aesthetic strategy to transgress rigid gender divisions in the social and creative spheres. Secondly, their lack of alliance with their male-centered groups because of gender concerns generated a "novel exploration and a singularity of approach" to feminist consciousness and poetry (Frost 2003: xvi), which was further deepened by a lack of affiliation with a feminist collective. Loy's feminist ideas connected more with the feminist wave that started in the 1930 and developed in the 1960s that centred on the cultural and psychological differences between men and women.[4] Di Prima's early poetry's feminist consciousness was a first isolated stage of awareness in the later collective voice of American second-wave

feminism, which gathered strength at the end of the sixties and she would represent in her later poetry.

Frost's main defining element of women avant-garde poets: their ambivalence in relation to their own movements' aesthetic and ideological paradigms, was also shared by Loy and di Prima (2003: xi-xiii). Their feminist avant-garde poetries conjoined and filtered the categories of experiment and experience as understood by Modernist and Beat philosophies of poetry through the inscription of gender issues. They also challenged the "double marginalization" of women avant-gardists through a positive creative impulse that responded to their own socio-historical contexts. This gendered creativity was captured in the interconnection between their own experimental bohemian lives and a motional poetic force in their poetry that joined the expression of female experiences and poetic innovation.

Loy and di Prima's feminist motional poetics (which will be textually analyzed in the following sections and theoretically studied in the last) involves expressive and technical movement (based on lexis, syntax, aural and visual qualities of words and poetic units) between placelessness and locatedness, between expansion and contraction: a motional tendency that feeds and diverts from the countercultural stands and poetic practices of solipsism and impersonal experiment in Modernists, and expressivism and openness in Beats (Davidson 2005: 235, 241).

I will focus on Loy's and di Prima's poetic contributions within very specific temporal and spatial coordinates: the Modernist avant-garde artistic period of the 1910s in New York, in which Mina Loy participated from 1916 to 1919 (Burke 1996: 3, 211); and the period from 1953 to 1965, which corresponds to Diane di Prima's arrival in the midst of New York's Beat bohemia (di Prima 1990: 198).[5] The reason for this choice is that it is in this early poetic work when their "alliances and divergences" as women poets within their groups was lived and transferred most intensely into their work, locating the incipient pulse of their creative resolutions and feminist avant-garde poetics.

What mostly intensified their ambivalence in this period was that Loy and di Prima regarded their gender as potentially enriching for their poetry and lives as bohemian women. Both these poets wrote consciously inserting female experience and an assertive (but not essentialist) female voice. Female experiences such as sexuality, heterosexual romance, and maternity were rarely treated openly by Modernist and Beat women poets, because feminist perspectives of gender difference were considered an obstacle for intellectual inclusion in their movements. Loy and di Prima claimed poetic space for these issues just as they claimed a position as gendered subject within their avant-garde male-centered groups. We can also perceive stylistic echoes in their treatment of female experiences: a straightforward tone in their exposition of sexuality, writing

against feminine stereotypes on sex and romance and foregrounding the materiality of sexual bodies in order to emphasize femaleness; a direct treatment of the complex relationship between creativity and motherhood; or the use of cynicism and irony toward discourses of heterosexual love, leading to a mock revision of the love lyric. The next two sections will be devoted to these aspects and the interconnection of experiment and female experience in the early poetry of Loy and di Prima.

2. The Outward Motion of Female Experience: Modern Masks and Mina Loy's Poetic Experiments

Mina Loy was a multifaceted British-American artist who also wrote experimental and openly sexual love poetry and introduced her cosmopolitan European spirit and avant-gardism to the intellectual and artistic circles of New York in the mid-1910s. As Carolyn Burke let us know in her famous biography of the author, Loy left London early in her life to study art in Munich and Paris, where she became a popular painter, later moving to Florence where she joined the expatriate artistic community. There she met Mabel Dodge and Gertrude Stein, who greatly influenced her feminist and experimental views about life and poetry. When Loy arrived in New York in 1916 she had already published "Love Songs" in the avant-garde magazine *Others* (1915), soon achieving the reputation of an immoral writer of sex. The same magazine dedicated a whole issue to Loy's thirty-four poem sequence "Songs to Joannes" two years later. Mina Loy met Marcel Duchamp, W. C. Williams, and Man Ray in New York, among other artists and intellectuals, and she was also a regular of the Arensberg circle's eccentric bohemian parties. When interviewed by the *Evening Sun* as typifying the modern New Woman, Loy asserted that you had to "fling yourself at life in order to discover new forms of self-expression" (Burke 1985: 37), relating the need for experience with experimental creativity.

Mina Loy's poetry was rediscovered academically in the late nineties and recovered as part of the Anglo-American Modernist female experimental tradition together with Marianne Moore, Gertrude Stein and H.D. It has been suggested that these women poets used different strategies of concealment through poetic formal innovation to mask their speaking subjects and talk about women's new awareness of the self and desire in the modern world. Avant-garde women poets that wanted to express genuine subjective experiences felt restricted by elitist Modernist standards of literary quality. Those who focused on an intense expression of emotion through more traditional forms (e.g. Edna St. Vincent Millay, Amy Lowell, and Elinor Wylie, among others) critically remained within the tradition of

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sentimental "poetesses". Modernist manifestos repudiated a Romantic ethos and claimed a detachment of the poetic self from personality, autobiography and feeling, as proposed by Pound's "direct treatment of the thing" and Eliot's escape from emotion in his theory of impersonality in "Tradition and the Individual Talent". Loy's peculiar combination of avant-garde formal experimentation and her political treatment of women's experiences such as love and sexuality places her work at a unique frontier between the two modernist female tendencies: the experimental and the experiential ones.

Margaret Dickie suggests that Modernist experimental women poets struggled "to conceal their [female] subject in a hermetic style [through] a restrained rather than released expression" (1993: 235). As she explains: "these women shared [the anti-Victorian] antipathy to sentimentality, [but their conflict lay in] both the boldness of their experimentation and their hesitant search for a way to express their own way of seeing" (1993: 235). Loy seems to deal successfully with this by incorporating subjective experience and emotional expression in her experimental poetic speakers; thus, transgressing the anti-sentimental precepts of masculinist Modernism and recreating a poetic space for female experience and experiment in her writing.

I will focus on some poems from the thirty-four poem sequence "Songs to Joannes" because they appropriately represent Loy's poetic subject's oscillation between the two categories of experiment and experience. These frequently analyzed poems consciously alternate experimental form detached from emotion and an experiential poetic "I" that expresses female experience, conveying within their limits an ironically smooth motion between the two approaches to the representation of love. Loy's avant-garde love poetry is a parody of the tradition of the love lyric and the cultural stereotypes of heterosexual romance assigned to men and women. The poetic "I" is experimental not only because it becomes an unusual female agent of sexual desire, but also because more than a pre-existent observer it constructs itself performatively throughout the process of linguistic experiment and through the expression of the amorous/sexual experience. The chameleonic speaker becomes an experiential entity in a process of becoming through poetic experiment.

In poem I, the "spawn of fantasies" represents the relation among the following poems as creative offspring made of hybrid moods on love that move from satire to romantic enthrallment. The image of the "spawn", very much related to the experience of maternity in conflict with creativity in Loy's case, marries the possibility of intellectual and imaginary fantasies brought to life in experimental avant-garde poetic fragments.

I

Spawn of Fantasies
Silting the appraisable
Pig Cupid   his rosy snout
Rooting erotic garbage
"Once upon a time"
Pulls a weed   white star-topped
Among wild oats sown in mucous-membrane

        I would   an   eye in a Bengal light
Eternity in a sky-rocket
Constellations in an ocean
Whose rivers run no fresher
Than a trickle of saliva

        These   are suspect places

I must live in my lantern
Trimming subliminal flicker
Virginal   to the bellows
Of Experience

                              Coloured   glass. (Loy 1999: 53)

We find a parodic reformulation of what Loy intends to do through the sequence in the figure of "Pig Cupid", who stirs and pools out fairy tales and cultural cliches on romance, and who becomes a mutation and experiment itself sharing the experience of a filthy body and a romantic soul. This satirical figure is a poetic image that reflects Loy's own creativity, which experiments with the expression of the amorous experience. The pulled "white star-topped weed/ sown in mucous-membrane" reveals the sexual truth behind romantic discourses of "eternity and constellations". The play with the words "I/eye" at the beginning of the second stanza conveys the poetic speaker's nature as double: seer and object of gaze, whole and torn in the sentence and the sequence, and whose identity is constructed through motion and alternate positioning. The physicality of the last two lines ("running no fresher/ Than a trickle of saliva") transforms Pig Cupid's garden of love in a "suspect place" which must be cautiously approached by women. The poetic "I" prefers, therefore, to remain within the light of intelligent irony, knowledge, and experience protected from the effects of romantic love and its hidden face: sex.

The prominent features of Poem I are poetic experimentation and the shocking accounts of sexual processes. The feminist political message of Loy's poetic discourse lies in this physicalization of love and romance. The linguistically focused experiment of her poetry originates in her relation with the visual arts, Gertrude

Stein and the Italian Futurist movement. She learned about the materiality of language and the potential of meaning in the disruption of grammar, sentence structure and punctuation from Stein. Futurism taught her to despise tradition and search for daring innovation expressing dynamism and multi-perspectivism in poetic form.

I would like to argue here that beyond modern masks of experimentation intending to annul the emotion of subjective experience common through different strategies in Modernist women authors, Loy is able to counteract the inhibition of the expression of female experiences in her avant-garde love poetry by placing her brief poems between reality and language, the intimate and the social. The sequence has been reiteratively interpreted also as autobiographical, representing Loy's love affair with the Futurist intellectual Giovanni Papini in order to justify the changes of mood between satire and elegiac expressivity. My interpretation suggests that this dancing quality between irony and sentimentality, linguistic experiment and feminine expression, does not relate so much to a past disillusion as to a creative negotiation and willingness to experiment and experience life and poetry from an avant-garde feminist and gendered perspective.

From poem II to poem III we perceive a motion from anti-sentimental experiment to a melancholic emotion of loss, not only in relation to her lover but to the poetic speaker's failed maternal desire. In poem II the voice impersonates a hyperbolic sexual gaze, taking over a masculine role as agent of desire in traditional love lyric and transgendering scopophilic discourses in romance.

<div style="text-align:center">

II

The skin-sack
</div>

In which a wanton duality
Packed
All the completion of my infructuous impulses
Something the shape of a man
To the casual vulgarity of the merely observant
More of a clock-work mechanism
Running down against time
To which I am not paced
    My finger-tips are numb from fretting your hair
A God's door-mat

    On the threshold of your mind. (Loy 1999: 53)

The "masculine" discursive position of the female poetic subject, avid for sexual pleasure, is undermined by a "feminine" wish for procreation. The "skin-sack"

encapsulates an ironic duality, it contains the potential culmination of the poetic speaker's maternal desire but it also represents the failure of a pathetic anti-hero who is unable to suit her fruitless impulses, thus demystifying the unattainable male lover figure in traditional romance.

The theme of procreation runs through the sequence in close relation to an overt expression of sexuality and a sense of unrequited love, as in poem III where the lovers "might have given birth to a butterfly":

> III
>
> We might have coupled
> In the bed-ridden monopoly of a moment
> Or broken flesh with one another
> At the profane communal table
> Where wine is spill't on promiscuous lips
> We might have given birth to a butterfly
> With the daily news
>
> Printed in blood on its wings. (Loy 1999: 54)

The inclusive "we" and the lyric intimacy cancels the cold emotional distance suggested in the other poems. The experience of the irrevocable moment lost in the past and the unconsummated sexual desire position romantic longing as the key sentiment in this fragment. The poem projects again the image of a childless woman in search of maternity: the butterfly as allusion to "Joy", the love child of Psyche and Cupid, is stained by the reality of the war of nations (World-War I) and the sexes (heterosexual confrontations and gender divisions). The melancholic mood of the following poems in relation to lost babies sometimes achieves surrealistic impact: "The starry ceiling/ Vaulted an unimaginable family/ Bird-like abortions […]/ One bore a baby/ In a padded porte-enfant/ tied with a sarsenet ribbon/ To her goose's wings" (poem IV) (Loy 1999: 55). We find here the idea of a failed maternity in the shocking aborted characters and in the image of the wing caught by the baby (winged creatures are recurrent symbols of freedom throughout the sequence). Loy's poems are an instance of an open and public consideration of the relation between romance, sexuality and maternity from the point of view of female experience. As Rachel DuPlessis suggests, the sequence places Loy ahead of the sexual agenda of the Greenwich Village feminist bohemians (1998: 51), who advocated free love and men and women's equal partnership in romance. Not only does she unveil the dangers for women (physical and psychological) of this ideology of freedom and equality, but she also foresees much of the psychological implications of gender power dynamics that a second-wave of feminism will analyze in detail half a century later.

It is well known that Ezra Pound invented the term *logopoeia* to describe Mina Loy and Marianne Moore's experimental style: "depending upon language itself, it is the dance of the intelligence among words and ideas […], a language commenting upon its own possibilities and limitations as language" (Kouidis 1980: 99). I consider Loy's "dance of words and ideas" (i.e. discursive abstraction, formal innovation and intellectual play) intrinsically connected to a gendered experiential poetic subject. Poetic voices in "Songs to Joannes" dance and fluctuate between a Modernist mask of impersonality and a sentimental lyrical stance. The poetic "I" that irreverently profaned love in the first poems becomes the abandoned woman longing for the absent lover from poem V to VII and in further poetic fragments.

Mina Loy's poetry resembles her life as a bohemian woman artist: her oscillating moods, her identity in flux, her transatlantic journeys and her creative zigzags throughout her career. These movements are also reflected in the impulsive dance of her poems, back and forth from cold to warmth, from intellectual parody to elegy, from unemotional experiment towards the inclusion of female experience. This motional dance is accurately represented in the thermometer earring that Man Ray photographed in his famous portrait of Loy.[6]

3. Contained Beats of Feminist Experiment: the Naked "I" and Diane di Prima's Embodied Experiences

After the Second World War, United States poetry reacted to the Modernist evasion of personality emphasizing a return to a Romantic approach to the self. The expression of the poet's voice became central in the new avant-garde poetry, which advocated an "open" poetics (as suggested in the well-known poetic manifestos of the time: Charles Olson's "Projective Verse", Frank O'Hara's "Personism", or Kerouac's "Essentials of Spontaneous Prose") that asserted a critical individualism within the post-war American conservative society.

The term "Beat" broadened towards the late fifties to represent American post-war countercultural hipsters. Beat poets, writers and artists were defined by a particular historical period and by bicoastal community bonding (New York and San Francisco). Their bohemia shared a way of life and a new vision of art and poetry through experimental aesthetics: "spontaneous composition, direct expression of mind, jazz-based improvisation; factualism, […] following breath line, prophetic utterance" (Johnson and Grace 2002: 2). In this scene, women Beats were regarded as peripheral figures within the movement due to the fact that their intellect and artistic productions were not given the attention they deserved by their male-centered group, who was deeply influenced by the society's sexism of the post-war period and believed in Romantic ideals of masculine individual

heroism which were anti-feminine in essence. Luckily, late nineties groundbreaking anthologies (Peabody, Knight) intended to recover Beat women writers' stranded or unpublished work and positioned them as central authors in the canon.

Kerouac's "Essentials of Spontaneous Prose" (Charter 1992: 57) and Ginsberg's performative poetics, made public in the reading of "Howl" in 1955, established Beat aesthetics as an outwards movement of expression for the modern self through the visionary assertiveness of the bardic song. However, many Beat women poets were more influenced by the "armored women", as Diggory calls them, of the modernist poetic tradition writing after Dickinson, than by the "naked men" followers of Whitman (Johnson and Grace 2002: 15). An early generation of women Beats did not share a cosmic universality or a transcendental vision beyond embodied limitations, which for a masculine heroic search implied a rejection of romantic attachment, domesticity, family and heterosexual ties. Their poetry focused on the physical reality of interrelations, intimacy and female sexuality, since their struggling poetic voices had to resolve the integration of certain issues such as their relation with men, maternity, or the conflict between femininity and creativity within their bohemian lives.

My interest lies in di Prima's early poetic work, published in the late 1950s and beginning of the 1960s, because it presents an intense experimentation with lyrical tone, mood, and the expression of experience from a gendered perspective.[7] Her gendered poetics reflected bohemian female experience as intimately located and situated in time and space, advancing contemporary women's poetry's political telling of the private. Di Prima represents poetic selves that do not share an approach to experience from the perspective of a detached observer of the world (a Cartesian notion of experience), but as decentered "Is" that build themselves through experiential events of interrelation with others and lyrical "Yous". Her speakers become (as in the case of Loy) an experiential poetic experiment in process.

This postmodern reconfiguration of experience relates also to di Prima's experimentation with tone, mode and linguistic approach to the poem. A tendency towards enclosure and crafted containment in relation to form and the expression of emotion hinders her participation in the experiment of "openness" in poetry that was being practiced by Beats. The experiential poetic "I" in di Prima's early poems does not observe landscapes of the world or utters breathed rhythms, but interacts in private terrains of social gendered experiences through short and intellectually arranged lines, leaning on silences and blanks and on the control of syntax and emotion, moving from the Romantic exultation of experience that defines Beat poetics, towards experimentation with a naked gendered "I" and with forms of contained expression in poetry.

Her alternative avant-garde articulations are a result of the innovative aesthetics of the movement together with her own feminist ethics of life as a bohemian woman. In this sense di Prima joined life and art by practicing an experimental approach to poetry and femaleness. Of Italian-American descent, Diane di Prima soon searched for an independent life in the bohemian Lower East Side "to raise her rebellion into art" (Butterick in Charters 1992: 359) and published her first books of poetry and fiction —*This Kind of Bird Flies Backwards* (1958) and *Dinners and Nightmares* (1960). In the 1950s she was seen "as a writer-bohemian, Manhattanite bad girl, renter, and a center of commune living" (Lee 2010: 48). Many of her early poems reflect on the conflicts of the bohemian woman as female artist, on social encounters in the community, on maternity and on heterosexual relations. In what follows I will analyze some of di Prima's early poems about these issues.

A rearticulation of creativity and femininity within Beatness is reflected in "Three Laments". These are three short and incisive poems whose directness, unsentimental and sharp humorous tone can be read as exposing the reality of the material and physical limitations found in the search for artistic genius, as a way to mock Beat masculine dreams of creative greatness from the more realistic and marginal point of view of a Beat woman.

> 1
>
> Alas
> I believe
> I might have become
> a great writer
> but
> the chairs
> in the library
> were too hard
> 2
>
> I have
> the upper hand
> but if I keep it
> I'll lose the circulation
> in one arm. (Di Prima 1990: 15)

The whole poem transgresses Beat literary precepts of impulsive spontaneity, expressive ego-centered abstraction and disembodied self-awareness. At a formal level, street language is countered by contained and broken lines, breath in diction is stopped by line-end choice; the expected grandeur of the poetic experiential "I" is hindered by the petite size of the poems themselves.

Her early love poetry also illustrates a situated, intimate and bodily approach to experience and the experiment with the lyric "I/you" within contained poetic forms and images. In "More or Less Love Poems" di Prima continues using ironic distance in order now to parody the genre of the love lyric through fifteen fragments that suggest the realities of power dynamics and the lies of romantic exultation in actual heterosexual relationships:

> *
> In your arms baby
> I don't feel no
> spring in winter
> but I guess I can do
> without galoshes.
>
> In your arms baby
> I don't hear no
> angels sing
> but maybe I forget
> to turn on
> the phonograph.
>
> *
> In case you put me down I put you down
> already, doll
> I know the games you play
>
> In case you put me down I got it figured
> how there are better mouths that yours
> more swinging bodies
> wilder scenes that this.
> In case you put me down it won't help much. (Di Prima
> 1990: 8)

As in Loy's "Songs to Joannes", di Prima's love lyric positions the female speaker in a discursive place traditionally reserved for male lovers. Active in love and desire, the naked "I" in these poems refuses to assume the role of a narcissistic lover that projects idealization on the beloved and instead chooses to represent the more common experience of the problems of intimacy, the recognition of the other as individual, and the complexities of real love. Decentering the lyric energy through an anti-visionary poetic voice that rises from an embodied knowledge, di Prima represents women's experimentation with new roles as Beat lovers and poets.

The experience of maternity is a particularly recurrent theme in di Prima's early poems. Her treatment of this issue generally reflects a desire to be a mother and the difficulties in integrating this experience within her bohemian circle. Di Prima did not center so much on the incompatibility between creative expression and motherhood, as other women poets have done (e.g. Adrienne Rich or Mina Loy), as on the problematic fit of this reinvented identity as mother-poet within the Beat ethics of life that advocated individualism, anti-domesticity, and lack of intimacy in heterosexual relations. In fact, she had five children (from different partners) while she wrote prolifically and was politically active. Di Prima's double achievement was to position her female voice into avant-garde Beat poetics *and* to create an innovative new experiential and poetic space for herself as Beat mother. As Anthony Libby suggests, single motherhood and biracial children for di Prima may also have symbolized a rebellion against conservative American society (2002: 51), but also a vindication within avant-garde patriarchy, moving beyond the "double marginalization" for avant-garde women with the practice of creative bodily experiences such as giving birth and writing. This affirmative potential challenges Beat masculine code of coolness and distance from emotional attachment (coined "the rule of Cool" in Beat circles [Johnson and Grace 2002:7]), as shown in her early poem "I Get My Period, September 1964". In this poem, di Prima negotiates the experience of unfulfilled maternity with the voice of an angry poetic "I" who reproaches her lover for not making her pregnant (reminding us of Loy's poem II):

> How can I forgive you this blood?
> Which was not to flow again, but to cling joyously to my womb
> To grow, and become a son?
>
> When I turn to you in the night, you sigh, and turn over
> When I turn to you in the afternoon, on our bed,
> Where you lie reading, you put me off, saying only
> It is hot, you are tired.
>
> You picket, you talk violence, *you draw blood*
> But only from me, unseeded & hungry blood
> Which meant to be something else. (Di Prima 1990: 51)

The lyric interrelation between the I/you dyad, situated in the enclosed intimate space of the couples' bedroom and the contained poem, plus the physicality of blood, draws the male revolutionary political message into the material presence of the female body, exposing the consequences of the man's ideological actions (i.e. lack of communication and loss of connection) on that body. Unlike other poems by di Prima on lost babies through abortion, this particular poem plays irony on the love lyric genre because the yearning is not towards the actual beloved but

towards his capacity to give her the real beloved: a baby. If menstruation becomes a symbol in the feminist imaginary, and a physical reality of the female body, of the connection between inside and outside, di Prima experiments in this poem by reflecting on this female experience, which itself embodies avant-garde women's ambivalent position of inclusion and exclusion within their groups. This poetic expressive experiment can be seen as a space where the dialogical dance between outward expression of the social experience of the world and the contracting impulse towards the material use of the body of language and the language of the body can happen.

Di Prima's work represents Beat women poets' negotiations with the precepts of Beat aesthetics. She moves from a Romantic expression of an experiential "I" towards a poetic experimentation regarding the expression of female experiences. Her poems focus on the reality of her life (maternity, love, etc.) and on the motion of subjectivity within oppositional dilemmas: being woman and poet. Her imbricated poetic and real selves move between the experimentation with her experiential subject in the poem and the experience of life experiment as bohemian woman. Poetry writing becomes for di Prima a creative locus of freedom to disentangle and reveal her own contingencies as embodied subject through the use of the experimental play with images, tone and mode, visual line or lexis. Her gendered avant-garde Beat poetics relate to physical or body *beats*: the pulses and rhythms of a motion between life and art. The materiality of the language in her poetry portrays naked subjects as poetic bodies, subject/bodies who move through the experience of writing and who *become* during the process of the experimental poem.

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4. Loy and di Prima's Feminist Motional Poetics: Poetry as Dance, Life as Art

Young Loy and di Prima wrote and lived in the bohemian enclave of lower Manhattan. The importance of urban space for women's identitary processes of public reinvention in Western modernity has been suggested by several feminist critics, since the city provided mobility and visibility to the female subject and to women's bodies (Wilson 1991: 8; Felski 1995: 19). In this section I present the idea that Loy and di Prima's gendered embodied experiences (of simultaneous inclusion and exclusion) as female avant-gardists within their urban locale and bohemian groups played an important part in their early poetry of experiment and experience.

Philosophical, psychological and cultural views on women's experience of embodiment and space are useful to understand the basis of this possible

connection. Both writers moved away from domestic spheres with a bicultural background into the public ground of artistic and revolutionary activism, implying a trajectory of geographical mobility from home towards male communities.[8] Unlike male artists and writers, who generally return to the symbolic mothering place/space of identification through a projection on other objects (e.g. nation, women, lovers), creative women's psychological search becomes more problematic due to their own bodies' mothering potential. From a philosophical view, space (i.e. cultural, physical, conceptual) is a patriarchal site of exclusion for the female subject even though women's bodies symbolize and represent the origin of matter and spatial materiality (Grosz 2000). This paradox is at stake in the female subject's endless negotiation with space, explaining why factors such as location, position and the relation of movement in opposition to stasis are key in women's identitary and creative processes. Phenomenologically, critics have also studied how female embodied perception of space generally expands body contours to include the external surrounding, therefore having a more flexible internal experience of bodily boundaries and material limits (Grosz 1994, Battersby 1999).

These theories may indicate that women's experience of embodiment and space entails a moving positionality and hardly match the principles of a Cartesian separation of an objective detached self with the experience of the environment with which it interrelates. Cartesian philosophy differentiated in the eighteenth century two categories that were until then intrinsically related: experience and experiment (Scott 1992: 27). These two terms share an etymological root: "they are the flora of *experiri*, to try, and related to *periculum*, which includes both the idea of attempt and peril" (Lauterbach 2000: 187). But as postmodern feminist critic Joan Scott has influentially theorized, experience from then on, being this "internal or external, subjective or objective", "established the prior existence of individuals" (1992: 27): a separated self or consciousness that was able to evaluate and react to the world from a detached position generating knowledge through observation. The category of experiment became relegated to the sphere of the scientific objective systematization of this experience; a system that also implied an anterior knowing subject. Scott emphasizes that subjectivity is never prior to experience: "It is not individuals who have experience, but subjects who are constituted through experience" (1992: 26), thus challenging the historical separation of the terms and advocating an understanding of the process of subject formation as a continuous experience of, and experiment with, the environment in which it is embedded.

Language directly partakes in this interconnected experience and experiment of the forming subject with the environment where it grows. Scott further refuses a separation between experience and language, since language is a system of meaning

that constantly establishes situations and positionalities that affect individual agency (1992: 34). Contemporary feminist literary critics have reached similar conclusions regarding the interrelated nature of both terms in the dynamics of women's experimental poetics. Clair Wills and Harriet Tarlo have denounced the artificial separation between experiment and experience in feminist poetry criticism derived from the American women's movement. They argued that an experimental kind of poetry that centers on its own linguistic and poetic processes does not necessarily preclude an expressive subject reflecting female experience (Tarlo 1999: 101) and, on the other hand, that a women's experiential poetics does not always entail a unified subject nor a pristine nature of language as representation of experience (Wills 1994: 41).

Following Scott and these feminist literary critics' views, I would like to suggest that Loy and di Prima's poetries reflect this interconnection between experience and experiment thorough a feminist motional poetics which partly originates in their particular embodied and spatial experiences of urban bohemia. These female experiences should be understood as entailing an anti-Cartesian confluence of self and world where inner subjectivity forms throughout the process of its interrelation to the environment and language. This poetic motion is also a creative materialization, (joining life and poetry, experience and language) of their intellectual and aesthetic ambivalence towards the theories of poetry of their Modernist and Beat groups. Their feminist avant-garde poetics develops from an assertive motional positionality within their bohemian loci (i.e. physical and conceptual) that transferred into their creative vital and poetic projects.

We may argue that Modernist and Beat poetics relied both on linguistic experiment and on the expression of experience through the constructing potential of language, but philosophically and aesthetically each movement valued them differently as ideological and aesthetic answers towards the socio-historical moment they were reacting to. From a post-Cartersian perspective and following material feminist theories, we understand experience as a process in which the world incorporates within us via the interrelation between subject, others, and the environment. It requires an outward motional force on the part of the subject, an opening up in order to receive, but also a tendency towards containment, reflection or inner stasis. In order for this experience to go back into the world we need expression, a letting go that chooses media such as language or other artistic materials. Experimental poetics focus on language as active participant in the expression of experience, but the way we express our experience poetically (e.g. openly, hermetically, intimately, collectively, aurally or visually) depends on the role and material quality we assign to poetic language: from fluid, letting subject and body speak towards others; to a closed system, which contains subject and

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body within language fragmenting experience and interfering expression. These are crucial elements at work in any philosophy and practice of poetry. My view is that women poets may approach them in particular ways due to their gendered identity and condition of ambivalent relation to public space, authorial voice, to being and not being simultaneously as political and creative subjects, and to their connection with the world through embodied knowledge.

Modernist experiment, signaling language as opaque texture that prevented outward motion toward expressivism and others, and Beat's over-emphasis on an expression that authentically represented experience, pouring it through a performative presence, can be interpreted as practices that assume a Cartesian prior subjectivity that observes and reacts to experience, and that chooses the qualities of language guided by ideological and aesthetic parameters to let that experience reach others. The specificities I see in Loy and di Prima's early work is that neither experience nor expression through linguistic experiment are totally disembodied or independent from experiential material conditions of spatial, physical and conceptual simultaneous inclusiveness and exclusiveness. Their poetic speakers do not perceive the experience of the world in a way that permits the subject to open itself up without a sense of the complex materiality of limits, location, and interrelation with others. On the other hand, experimental poetic language becomes in their poetry an imbricated constituent of experience (the matter through which this experience is achieved), in direct contact with the social environment where these poets ambivalently become female subjects.

Poetry for these women avant-gardists reflects a motional force between openness and closedness, outward reach and containment; a duplication of the sensorial and spatial ambiguities their female bodies and subjects experienced in public space and bohemian enclaves, remaining dynamic and permanently negotiating the poetic and linguistic breach between what they want to say and what they can say (Hejinian 1998: 628). Loy and di Prima's early poems present knowledge of the complementariness of experiment and experience through material crashes in language, positioning and moving their voices on alternate planes in the continuum of trying reality and language through fluxes of tone and expression. They let the world in and out through internal rhythms of connection in a poetic motional dance that reflects their understanding of the dynamic interrelation between their female contingencies in art and life.

The material feminist philosopher Elizabeth Grosz, who has recently studied the way art relates to the physical world, encourages feminist thinkers and critics to focus on the implications of the body as biological entity and the material forces between corporeal beings and incorporeal events (such as language) at work in creative processes:

> Artworks could be understood as experimentations with the real, with the material forces found in the world, rather than representations of the real […] Cultural analysis, theories of art, theories of representation could be understood in terms of primarily material forces, the forces they cohere and the forces they enable to be unleashed in the world. (Grosz in Kontturi and Tiainen's interview, 2007: 247)

Grosz's early philosophical work evidenced women's embodied perception of fluid corporeal limits and relation between the inside and outside on spatial, cognitive and symbolic levels (1994). She also argues that life, language (as event and matter) and art share "the material forces that enable and surround every living thing, [vibrating] through the ways in which they must constitute on their inside the forces of materiality that exist outside" (Grosz 2011: 22). Following Grosz's material feminist philosophy we can interpret how women poets or writers' embodied positionality and experience of life, body and their environment, transfer creatively motional forces found in bodily life and language. Living bodies and artworks share, according to Grosz, a tendency towards motional contraction: "the condition of contemplation or self-survey" that organizes the human mind and life systems; and towards motional expansion: the potential of "the opening up of matter to the emergence of life" in permanent contact with others and the world (Grosz 2011: 17, 23).[9]

The importance of motional forces in the creative poetic process was also suggested by experimental poet and critic Lyn Hejinian, who considers that there are opposing desires in the birth of writing, "a conflict between a writer's desire for boundedness, for containment and coherence, and a simultaneous desire for free, unhampered access to the world, along with a corresponding open response to it" (1998: 618). Writing's essence is found in "the impasse that language creates and then cannot resolve", referring to these impulses (ibid.). Hejinian further states that "writing's forms are not merely shapes but forces, too; formal questions are about dynamics —they ask how, where, and why it moves, what are the types, directions, number, and velocities of a work's motion" (ibid.). The experimental poet and critic Rae Armantrout also reflects on these motional forces in women's poetry suggesting that avant-garde female poets usually "deal with polyphonic inner experience and an the unbounded outer world" practicing a poetic clarity that is defined as "not having to do with control but with attention, one in which the sensorium of the world can enter as it presents itself. […] Their poems are dynamic, contrapuntal systems in which conflicting forces and voices (inner and outer) are allowed to work" (1998: 290).

My aim in this study has been to ask about these authors' early works' motions and moves regarding containment vs. expansion (poetic form vs. world experience). My conclusion is that Mina Loy in the 1910s New York bohemia, and Diane di Prima, in the post-World War II Beat bohemia, reached a common understanding

of a gendered poetics that celebrated the inevitable interrelation of experiment and experience in the experiential continuum of female subject, body, environment and language. Their lives were experiments of innovation and exploration beyond the social and cultural conventions of their time regarding femininity. Their poetry shared a motional ethics and aesthetics only possible within their bohemian countercultural loci and through their vindicating and creative willingness to move beyond them. They regarded life as experiment and approached artistic experiment as an experiential process. Their poetics and lives understood poetry and self as motional body in space.

Notes

1. Beat women poets have little or no presence in mainstream American women's poetry anthologies and, more curiously, in contemporary work on women's experimental writing such as Frost's. The European Beat Studies Network's 2016 International Conference only devoted a short panel to women writers.

2. As examples of this marginalization: the magazine *The New Freewoman* lost all political feminist message once Pound transformed it into *The Egoist* (Frost 2003; 169); the anthology *New American Poetry* by Donald Allen included only four contemporary experimental women poets (Keller and Miller 2005; 84); Beat women participated in the edition of many avant-garde magazines but were eclipsed by their male co-editors (Friedman 1998: 231).

3. Historical avant-gardes refer to "a crucial moment in the development of culture" as in Modernism, Futurism, Beats, etc.; conceptual avant-gardes are defined as ahistorical "innovative, experimental and divergent" artistic tendencies in general (Noland and Watten 2009: 2).

4. These ideas are exposed in her "Feminist Manifesto" (1914). The influence on her of her first wave feminism and the way she deviated from it are studied in Du Plessis.

5. My aim, therefore, is not to study their complete poetic oeuvre, which develops throughout the following decades of the twentieth-century.

6. I reflect on this analogy in my introduction to her poems in *Breve Baedeker lunar* where Ray's portrait is included. It can also be found in the cover photo of Conover's edition.

7. According to Ronna C. Johnson, di Prima belongs to a second generation of Beat women writers (2004: 11). Due to her long career her late work overlaps with a third generation's interests and style based on a collective and visionary feminist voice.

8. Loy and di Prima share a bicultural background: the former's had a Hungarian immigrant father and British mother, the latter was second-generation Italian-American; a connection that could be further developed in another study.

9. Material feminisms, as Alaimo and Hekman's volume attests, cover scientific approaches, corporeal feminist theories and environmental ethics, debating philosophy, science and linguistics, but devoting little attention to women's literature. Grosz's and other material feminist theories can also be applied, as I suggest in this article, to the study of women's poetic.

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JENNY OFFILL'S *DEPT. OF SPECULATION* AND THE REVIVAL OF FRAGMENTARY WRITING

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Abstract

The last decade has seen a revival of interest in novels that follow a fragmentary structure. David Mitchell's *Cloud Atlas* (2005), J. M. Coetzee's *Diary of a Bad Year* (2007) and Richard McGuire's graphic novel *Here* (2014) are among the most notable examples of recent works that reject a linear plot narrative and a set of standard "readerly" expectations. This article outlines the scope of the current proliferation of fragmentary writing —a category which rarely features in Anglophone (as opposed to French) literary criticism— and delineates its characteristic ingredients. After introducing the main tenets and examples of the six most common categories of fragmentary texts, the article discusses two theoretical frameworks for analysing such works: Joseph Frank's notion of the spatial form and Sharon Spencer's idea of the architectonic novel. The latter conception is applied to a close analysis of the structural variety and randomised composition of one of the most recent and critically acclaimed fragmentary novels —Jenny Offill's *Dept. of Speculation* (2014), which offers a non-linear and highly intertextual account of a marriage crisis narrated with the use of several hundred loosely connected paragraphs, composed of narrative snippets, multiple quotations, seemingly unrelated anecdotes and scientific curiosities.

Keywords: fragmentary writing, experimental literature, collage, architectonic novel, spatial form.

Wojciech Drąg

Resumen

En las últimas décadas ha habido un renovado interés por las novelas que siguen una estructura fragmentada. *Cloud Atlas* (2005) de David Mitchell, *Diary of a Bad Year* (2007) de J.M. Coetzee y *Here* (2014), la novela gráfica de Richard McGuire están entre los ejemplos más notables de obras recientes que rechazan la narrativa lineal y una serie de expectativas de lectura. Este artículo analiza el alcance de la proliferación actual de escritura fragmentada —una categoría que, al contrario de lo que sucede en la crítica literaria francesa raramente figura en la crítica anglófona— y define sus características. Tras introducir estas características y una serie de ejemplos de las seis categorías de textos fragmentados más comunes, el artículo se centra en dos aproximaciones teóricas usadas en el análisis de dichos textos: la noción de forma espacial de Joseph Frank y la idea de la novela arquitectónica de Sharon Spencer. Este último concepto se aplica a una lectura detallada de la variedad estructural y la composición aleatoria de una de las novelas fragmentadas recientes más aclamadas por la crítica —*Dept. of Speculation* (2014) de Jenny Offill— que ofrece una narración no lineal y bastante intertextual de una crisis matrimonial narrada a través del uso de cientos de párrafos indirectamente conectados, compuestos de fragmentos narrativos, múltiples citas, anécdotas aparentemente no relacionadas y curiosidades científicas.

Palabras clave: escritura fragmentada, literatura experimental, collage, novel arquitectónica, forma espacial.

1. Introduction

"The novel is dead. Long live the antinovel, built from scraps", announces David Shields in his much-quoted artistic manifesto *Reality Hunger* (2011: 115). Although few critics would probably agree with Shields's sweeping (and not entirely original) assertion about the death of the novel, it would be difficult to dismiss the second part of his claim —the observation that literature is becoming increasingly fragmentary. That tendency is noticeable in a number of novels (or antinovels, both terms being notoriously capacious and elusive at the same time) written in Britain and the United States over the last decade. The aim of this article is to examine the properties of contemporary Anglo-American fragmentary writing and to analyse one of its most critically acclaimed examples —Jenny Offill's *Dept. of Speculation* (2014)— with reference to Sharon Spencer's theory of the architectonic novel.

Fragmentary art is often considered to have originated in the previous century. American painter Robert Motherwell argued that "regardless of the medium,

whether it is in Eliot or Picasso or a TV thirty-second advertisement […] collage is the twentieth century's greatest innovation" ("Robert Motherwell"), whereas American short-story writer and novelist Donald Barthelme went so far as to proclaim that "the principle of collage is the central principle of all art in the twentieth century" (in Hoffmann 2005: 203). Among the most notable fragmentary works of the first half of the century were several canonical texts of modernism, both in poetry and prose: T.S. Eliot's *The Waste Land* and Ezra Pound's *Cantos*, as well as James Joyce's *Ulysses*, Virginia Woolf's *The Waves* and Djuna Barnes's *Nightwood*. The late 1960s and 1970s saw another proliferation of disjointed works by such authors as B.S. Johnson, John Barth, Robert Coover and Barthelme. The rise of fragmented forms in that period could be ascribed to a general distrust of totalisation, which is a common attribute of postmodern sensibility.

2. Fragmentation in Contemporary Anglophone Literature

Mark Z. Danielewski's *House of Leaves* (2000), a seven-hundred-page multimodal labyrinthine novel published in the last year of the previous century, could be regarded as a harbinger of a new revival of fragmentary writing, or, in other words, fictional works that renounce a linear plot narrative and a set of conventional reader expectations, favouring non-linearity, lack of chronological order, metatextuality and the frequent use of citations, repetitions and lists. Such texts pose a greater challenge to the reader, who needs to focus maximum attention in order to trace cross-references, find thematic connections and make some sense out of the apparently chaotic wealth of heterogeneous scraps. Fragmentary literature can therefore be described as a "writerly" (*scriptible*) mode of writing —defined by Roland Barthes as a rejection of narrative conventions and an invitation to the reader to participate in the construction of the plural meanings of the text (1974: 5).

Among the examples of fragmentary writing that have been released over the last decade, one can single out six major categories. The first group comprises works composed of disparate elements which have been combined in an aleatory or, at least, a seemingly arbitrary manner. The most radical type of such texts are the so called card-shuffle novels modeled on B.S. Johnson's novel-in-a-box *The Unfortunates* (1969). In 2005 the American veteran of daring postmodernist fiction Robert Coover published his collection of short stories *A Child Again*, which comes with a pack of large-size cards attached to the back cover. The reader is asked to shuffle the cards and construct out of the resulting order a humorous whodunit about the robbery of a tray of the king's tarts. Ali Smith's *How to Be Both*

(2014), likewise, allows for either of its parts to be read first. Although the book is bound, it comes in two versions, the first of which opens with one part set in the Renaissance Ferrara, and the other one —with a story of a precocious young girl living in Cambridge at the beginning of the twenty-first century. David Markson's tetralogy culminating in *The Last Novel* (2007) and Richard McGuire's graphic novel *Here* (2014) are composed of hundreds of fragments —textual and pictorial, respectively— that have been arranged in a non-sequential order, which, for the most part, resembles a haphazard juxtaposition. The second category consists of novels that feature multiple voices which are not mediated by a single narrator. Will Eaves's *The Absent Therapist* (2014) and Max Porter's *Grief Is the Thing with Feathers* (2015), both shortlisted for the Goldsmiths Prize, are the most recent examples of this strategy (earlier practised, most notably, by William Faulkner and Virginia Woolf).

One may also notice authors' interest in blurring the distinction between novels and collections of short stories, which manifests itself in creating meticulously structured novels out of different narratives (containing distinct sets of characters and following disparate generic conventions) which are granted a qualified degree of coherence through common thematic concerns and recurrent motifs. Such is the general design of David Mitchell's *Cloud Atlas* (2005) and Jennifer Egan's Pulitzer-awarded *A Visit from the Goon Squad* (2010). Mitchell's short story "The Right Sort" (2014) could be cited as an example of yet another category —of texts whose fragmentariness is a result of being published, in bite-size chunks, through social media, in this case Twitter. Another group are works constructed, entirely, or almost entirely, out of fragments of other texts. The earlier mentioned *Reality Hunger* is an amalgam of snippets of numerous primarily critical sources focusing on contemporary literature and the arts. Jonathan Safran Foer's *Tree of Codes* (2010), in turn, is a treated novel which obliterates a number of passages in Bruno Schulz's *The Street of Crocodiles* (1934), creating its own oblique narrative out of the surviving fragments of the original. Foer's "Primer for the Punctuation of Heart Disease" (2002), alongside Adam Thirlwell's *Kapow!* (2012), could be included in the last category, which includes multimodal works making use of experimental typography and combining text with geometrical patterns, drawings and photographs.

3. Theorising the Literary Fragment: Joseph Frank and Sharon Spencer

Despite the fair number of notable examples of fragmented works in English and American literature in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, there has been

relatively little interest in theorising fragmentary structures in Anglophone literary criticism. (A far greater academic interest in the issue can be found in French criticism, where the term *l'écriture fragmentaire* is an established critical category, customarily applied to the work of such writers as Barthes, Maurice Blanchot and Pascal Quignard).[1] Among the critics who have written about literary fragmentation as a symptom of postmodern aesthetics are Ihab Hassan and Theo d'Haen. In "Pluralism in Postmodern Perspective", Hassan attributes postmodernism's preference for "montage, collage, the found or cut-up literary object" to its ultimate distrust of "totalization" and "any synthesis whatever, social, epistemic, even poetic". He cites Jean-François Lyotard's call to "wage war on totality" and paraphrases the credo of one Barthelme's narrators, "[f]ragments are the only forms I trust" (1990: 19). D'Haen maintains that the postmodern wariness of unity stems from the conviction that "larger wholes are only figments of metanarratives" and that "explanatory discourses" are "lies" (1990: 220). An interest in the fragmentation of literary works has also been displayed by several scholars associated with phenomenology, narratology and cognitive criticism. In "The Reading Process: A Phenomenological Approach," Wolfgang Iser discusses the mechanics of the construction or realization (*Konkretisation*) of the text by the reader. He is particularly concerned with the ways in which readers respond to narrative gaps and attempt to fill in the blank spots between consecutive fragments. "With 'traditional' texts", Iser argues, "this process was more or less unconscious, but modern texts frequently exploit it quite deliberately. They are often so fragmentary that one's attention is almost exclusively occupied with the search for connections between the fragments" (1974: 285). The concept of narrative gaps has also been an important concern of cognitive narratologist H. Porter Abbot, whose article "How Do We Read What Isn't There to Be Read" is an examination of the notions of shadow stories and permanent narrative gaps in literature and film. Finally, Brian Richardson's *Unnatural Voices: Extreme Narration in Modern and Contemporary Fiction* (2016) should be referenced in the context of fragmentary writing as it examines a number of contemporary novels that replace conventional narrative positions with multiple narrators, which produces a complex and disorienting reading experience.

Arguably, the two critics who devoted most attention to examining the properties of fragmented literary forms in English were two American academics Joseph Frank and Sharon Spencer. Frank's widely discussed article "Spatial Form in Modern Literature" (1945) can be regarded as the first attempt to create a critical framework for analysing texts that resist a temporal development of narrative. Frank's main thesis is that much of modernist literature "is moving in the direction of spatial form" (10). In other words, he argues, such works as *The Waste Land*, *Cantos*, *Ulysses* and *Nightwood* ask their readers to approach them "spatially" —as

a juxtaposition of various images and fragments experienced "in a moment of time, rather than as a sequence" (1945: 10). He asserts that the perception of such texts should ideally be similar to that of a painting, in which different parts of the image are taken in simultaneously. Reading *Ulysses*, according to Frank, involves "continually fitting fragments together and keeping allusions in mind until […] [one] can link them to their complements" (20). Frank considers Eliot's and Pound's poetry as a quintessence of what he refers to as the "anecdotal method", which relies on combining fragments without a discernible framework —temporal or otherwise (14).

Two and a half decades after Frank's essay, Spencer took his ideas as a basis for a more systematic approach to literary fragmentation, which she formulated in *Space, Time and Structure in the Modern Novel* (1971). Spencer coins the term "architectonic novel", which she defines as a text "constructed from prose fragments of diverse types and lengths and arranged by means of the principle of juxtaposition",[2] whose aim is to create "the illusion of a spatial entity". In order to comprehend such a novel, the reader needs to examine "a great many relationships among the fragments that make up the book's totality" (1971: xx-xxi). The critic argues that the architectonic novel renounces omniscient narration, smooth narrative progression, causality and logical connections between consecutive sections. The loss of interest in narrative development is accompanied by the decline in significance of character, which serves the role of a persona —a perspective or a mere "vehicle of expression" (2, 5). Such works also frequently draw on what Spencer calls "visualization" —the use of visual elements such as photographs, illustration and typographical variation (146).

Spencer distinguishes between two kinds of architectonic novels: the closed and the open. The closed type uses a very intense single, first-person perspective, as a result of which the reality constructed is to a great extent subjective and independent of the laws of realism. The often improbable, distorted constructions are —in Hugh Kenner's words— "queer mental worlds", frequently possessed of surrealistic or expressionistic elements (Spencer 1971: 25-26). Closed architectonic novels fuse reality and fantasy, which results in a dreamlike atmosphere, and occasionally incorporate lengthy lyrical passages (28, 32-35). Whereas the closed type is confined to a single point of view, the open is informed by a variety of perspectives and voices. Hence its portrayal of the world is more diverse and nuanced —it conjures up "a vast, diffuse, confusing, complex world", which is constantly in motion (2-3). Another feature of open architectonic novels is their essayism, which manifests itself in their frequent use of lengthy passages of "undisguised philosophical speculation, theoretical discussions on the nature of art", as well as metafictional musings on the creative process and openly

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autobiographical references on the part of the author —with a view to breaking the frame and blurring the distinction between fiction and non-fiction (52-53).[3] Besides the closed-open distinction, Spencer introduces another one —that between mobile and stable constructs. If the fragments that constitute the novel are interchangeable, then the work is a mobile structure (the most radical example of this type are card-shuffle texts); if the individual sections, despite their disjointed character, cannot be rearranged (owing to a certain, however loose, overarching narrative), the text can be classified as a stable construct (181, 189).

4. *Dept. of Speculation* as an Architectonic Novel

In the remaining part of the article, I will argue that Spencer's category of the architectonic novel is an apt theoretical framework to examine the complex fragmentary structure of Jenny Offill's *Dept. of Speculation*. Offill, an American novelist, children's author and creative writing teacher, published her second novel fifteen years after her celebrated debut *Last Things* (1999). The topics of writer's block and the fear of not living up to artistic expectations feature prominently in *Dept. of Speculation* (which is a tangible proof that Offill ultimately overcame them —the novel made the shortlists of the Folio Prize and the PEN/Faulkner Award). Its narrator is —to a considerable degree— an alter ego of the author: a married woman in her thirties, with a child, working as a creative writing instructor in a Brooklyn College and struggling to earn a living and fulfil her literary ambitions. Nonetheless, like the other important characters, she remains nameless. The narrow range of characters includes "the wife", "the husband", "the daughter" and their few acquaintances.

For the first half, *Dept. of Speculation* portrays a reasonably happy couple facing various problems (from sleep deprivation to a plague of lice in their apartment). Near the middle, it turns into an account of a severe marriage crisis, occasioned by the husband's infidelity. The marriage is on the verge of collapse, but by the end that danger seems to have been averted. In the *New York Review of Books*, Elaine Blair calls the book an unusual adultery novel, since it adopts the rare perspective of the "wronged" wife, rather than the betrayed husband (as is the case with Ford Maddox Ford's *The Good Soldier*, Saul Bellow's *Herzog* and Robbe-Grillet's *Jealousy*) or the "adulterous partner".

However, the word "unusual" is much more suited to describing the form rather than the content of *Dept. of Speculation*. This short novel (under 180 pages) is composed of 46 chapters and around 800 separated one-paragraph (often one-sentence) fragments.[4] The narrative of the marriage crisis (with all its accompanying strands restricted to the narrative present) is conveyed through about a third of the

paragraphs. The remaining majority could be subsumed under Boris Tomashevsky's notion of free (as opposed to bound) motifs, which are not relevant to the progression of the plot (and are in that sense unnecessary) but remain important for aesthetic reasons (1965: 74). The "unnecessary" fragments lend the work a poetic quality (according to critics James Wood and Lidija Haas), and moreover offer various insights into the narrator's memories and intellect, her state of mind, her erudite associations and her current reading.

The first two chapters (amounting to eight pages and 28 fragments) may serve as a sample of Offill's method of composition. The book opens with the following passage: "Antelopes have 10x vision, you said. It was the beginning or close to it. That means that on a clear night they can see the rings of Saturn" (Offill 2015: 3). Besides introducing the "you", which in the first half of the novel is used consistently to refer to the husband, the first fragment also prepares the reader for a number of similar entries that present scientific facts and curiosities (mostly about astronomy). The remaining passages in the chapter offer glimpses into the narrator's random memories of travel. The third paragraph of the second chapter takes the form of an italicised sentence, "*Life equals structure plus activity*" (7), which is in no apparent logical relation to the preceding or following passage. Only three paragraphs later a clue is offered —the narrator announces that she has recently happened upon an advice book titled *Thriving Not Surviving*, whose probable excerpt is cited in the next paragraph. Such unacknowledged, implied quotations feature prominently throughout the novel. Two fragments further, a proper quotation appears, preceded by the words, "What Coleridge said" (7). The next page contains an anecdote about Vladimir Nabokov's refusal to waste time on such menial tasks as folding an umbrella or licking stamps, which is interspersed with the narrator's admission that she never planned to get married and her memory of a "beautiful" boy in New Orleans who "made [her] sing along to all the bad songs on the radio" (8-9). Other paragraphs in the chapter focus on art, work and love life; among them are the narrator's questions to self (e.g., "Are animals lonely? Other animals, I mean" [8]), which usually in some way correspond to the neighbouring passages.

As the above sample indicates, *Dept. of Speculation* amply demonstrates the structural variety of the architectonic novel, which is meant to mirror the construction of a physical building out of "different types of materials: bricks, steel and concrete" (Spencer 1971: 174). The most distinctive building blocks of Offill's novel that are not essential to narrative progression are quotations, anecdotes and scientific trivia. The book contains 26 acknowledged quotations and proverbs (which function as self-contained paragraphs) —mostly by writers (from Hesiod and Ovid to T.S. Eliot and John Berryman) and philosophers (such

as Ludwig Wittgenstein and Simone Weil). Moreover, there are at least as many italicised quotations whose source is not provided. There are also numerous fragments which convey anecdotal references to a great variety of writers, religious leaders and thinkers from Thales to Buddha to Nabokov. One of the passages focuses on Anaxagoras, an Athenian philosopher who believed that everything is composed of small particles designed by an eternal intelligence. Although the particle claim is not mentioned, the reference itself may be interpreted as a subtle self-reflexive comment on the novel's own fragmentariness.

Other common components of *Dept. of Speculation* are lists and question-and-answer sequences, often preceded by an organising heading, such as "Personal Questionnaire", "Three things no one has ever said to me" or "Three questions from my daughter" (Offill 2015: 43-44, 68, 74). In a section headed "Student Evaluations", Offill includes —like B.S. Johnson in *Albert Angelo* (1963)— pieces of original feedback on her teaching:

> *She is a good teacher but VERY anecdotal.*
> *No one would call her organized.*
> *She seems to care about her students.*
> *She acts as if writing has no rules.* (45, emphasis in original)

As with the reference to Anaxagoras, the first, second and fourth statements could be interpreted as metafictional, since they may correspond with some readers' impressions of Offill's highly digressive and eclectic writing. Other lists enumerate such incidental elements as the sounds that NASA recorded for the aliens and the narrator's "really American" slogan ideas for fortune cookies (83-84, 52). The ironic slogans that the narrator has composed are reminiscent of the bland and glibly reassuring catchphrases projected on city walls by American visual artist Jenny Holzer (such as "Money creates taste" or "If you have many desires your life will be interesting"):

> *Objects create happiness.*
> *The animals are pleased to be of use.*
> *Your cities will shine forever.*
> *Death will not touch you.* (52, emphasis in original)

Spencer argues that the organisation of the many constituent parts of the architectonic novel needs to retain a degree of haphazardness, because if "such elements are arranged according to a controlling design of some sort, then they actually lose their individual identities as building blocks and become indistinguishable aspects of the total structure" (1971: 143). *Dept. of Speculation* meets the criterion of the qualified degree of structural unity. Its form has been described by James Wood (2014) as informed by "a managed ratio of randomized

coherence". Wood maintains that many of Offill's "paragraphs link with their successors, so that a continuous narrative is not hard to construct; but some are opaque, eccentric, so that we experience deliberate discontinuities and obstructions". Elaine Blair (2014) adds that the novel's "chain of fragments" is comprehensible because it "proceeds by analogy". Roxanne Gay (2014), in turn, notes that the *Dept. of Speculation* poses a challenge to the reader by compelling them to consider "the *why* of each fragment and how it fits with the others". In accordance with Spencer's above-quoted principle, the "why" of each non-narrative passage in Offill has to be determined anew, in default of any overarching key.

An insight into the analogy-driven arrangement of fragments in *Dept. of Speculation* can be afforded by examining the structure of a sample excerpt. One of the most important and most representative parts of the novel is Chapter 22, which marks a turning point both in terms of form and content —it signals the onset of the marriage crisis and represents a shift from a consistent first-person to a third-person narrative (in which the ex-narrator begins to be referred to as "the wife" and her husband as "he" or "the husband", instead of "you"). The chapter opens with the heading "How Are You?" followed by an eighteen-line sequence of "soscaredsoscaredsoscaredsoscaredsoscaredso", which resembles a concrete poem (Offill 2015: 94). This piece of typographical experimentation is an example of a common technique in architectonic novels which Spencer calls "visualization" (146). The litany of fear is followed by a short statement about "the wife praying […] to Rilke" and a longer passage warning the reader against answering unthinkingly the question about their happiest memory: before replying, the reader is advised, they should consider the questioner and be careful not to hurt them by describing a time that did not involve them (95). The next section is a note about Hipparchus' discovery of a new star in 134 BC, which made him realise that stars were impermanent entities capable of appearing and disappearing. The ten consecutive paragraphs describe the consequences of the wife's failure to include the husband in her happiest memory: the look on his face, his absence at home one of the subsequent evenings, their ensuing bitter conversations, whose cryptic fragments function as three distinct paragraphs. The last of them —"*That's not what I asked you*"— is followed by one-sentence paragraphs reporting on Thales' belief that the Earth was flat and Anaxagoras' conviction that there were people living on the moon (97). After a note that the sister is coming from Pennsylvania to help look after the daughter, comes a piece of advice from Ovid on what to do when one has been caught in the wrong. The penultimate section contains what seems a snippet of a conversation between the wife and the husband about the woman with whom he has begun an affair:

Taller?
Thinner?
Quieter?
Easier, he says. (98)

The chapter ends with another scientific fact —the note that in 2159 BC astronomers Hi and Ho were killed for failing to foresee an eclipse.

In the section considered above, as well as in the remaining parts of the novel, Offill skilfully interweaves bound and free motifs —narrative elements that enable the progression of the marriage crisis plot and the meditative, contextual or explanatory titbits of erudition. The latter's function is to comment on the narrative advances, offer insight into their motivation, indicate possible consequences or draw analogies with a wealth of artistic and factual knowledge that the narrator has at her disposal. The free motifs in the chapter analysed exemplify cases of famous thinkers and scientists being wrong about the universe or failing to predict a crisis. Although none of them makes any reference to the narrative situation, the notion of misjudgement clearly corresponds to the wife's inability to assess the effect of the fateful conversation with her husband. The juxtaposition of fragments in *Dept. of Speculation* follows the technique of film-like montage, which Spencer considers particularly suited to architectonic novels. The lack of explicit cross-references between bound and free motifs is a characteristic of montage defined as a combination of "diverse and contrasting elements" which are arranged "without transitions or explanatory passages" (Spencer 1971: 113). The links between the narrative and non-narrative passages are therefore to be supplied by the reader.

The co-existence of the plot-driven paragraphs with erudite analogies in the novel does not come across as contrived or pretentious, as the bookishness of the narrator —a writer and writing teacher herself— justifies her resorting to knowledge at the time of emotional upheaval. The novel's intense intertextuality is reminiscent of Julian Barnes's *Flaubert's Parrot* (1984), whose narrator relies on the author of *Madame Bovary* to explain and make sense of his personal tragedy.[5] Offill's narrator, in turn, chooses to "pray" to Rainer Maria Rilke and seek advice from John Berryman.

The novel's oscillation between narrative progression and intellectual examination is an indication of its partial dependence on spatial (rather than exclusively temporal) form, as understood by Joseph Frank. "When an event in time is […] halted for an exploration or exposure of its elements", Spencer argues, "it has been spatialized" (1971: 156). Whenever the narrator offers a quotation or draws a learned analogy, narrative time freezes and the spatial axis is activated. Despite the profusion of such moments in the text, it has to be conceded that *Dept. of*

Speculation has an unusually robust temporal sequencing for an architectonic novel. The strong narrative framework accounts for the non-interchangeability of its constituent parts, making it an example of what Spencer classifies as a stable —rather than a mobile— construct. The reordering of paragraphs in Offill's novel is not possible either in the case of its loose motifs, which —by thematic analogy— are in a way attached to the bound motifs representing plot development. If certain lines are repeated ("Why would you ruin my best thing?" [Offill 2015: 59, 102]), or repeated with a difference ("I CAN HAS CHEEZBURGER?" [sic, 69] and "I CAN HAS BOYFRIEND?" [111]), their reoccurrence is not aleatory but tied to a specific narrative situation, in the light of which it gains a new significance.

Alongside the relatively heavy dependence on plot, Offill's novel focuses on character more than a textbook example of an architectonic novel would, being —in Spencer's words— marked by "avoidance of character developed for its intrinsic interest" (1971: xx). In *Dept. of Speculation* the narrator-protagonist is more than a mere point of view or a transparent vehicle of expression. The representation of her experience of marriage crisis is filtered through her highly individualised perspective —that of a very well-educated, bookish artist. A number of distinctive features allotted to the narrator (and consistent with what is known about the author) have given rise to speculation about the extent to which the novel is autobiographical. For those reasons, Offill's novel is less an account of a universal response to infidelity than, for instance, Alain Robbe-Grillet's *nouveau-roman* novel *La Jalousie* (1957), which is narrated by a silent, nameless and, in a sense, transparent, husband figure. And yet an element of distancing from character can also be found in *Dept. of Speculation*. The earlier mentioned unexpected shift that occurs in Chapter 22 —the transition from an intense first-person narration to a third-person account focalised by the wife— has been interpreted by Blair as "a kind of dissociation, perhaps brought on by a crisis" and by Wood as putting "some distance between the rawness of the emotion and the reader". However, when the crisis abates, on the last page of the novel, the "I" and "you" return.

The fact that *Dept. of Speculation* has only one overt focalizer —the wife— may seem to undermine its status as an open architectonic novel, which needs to be told from "a great variety of perspectives" (Spencer 1971: xxi). Nonetheless, points of view in the novel are not restricted to specific characters —they can take the form of various intertextual references. Spencer notes that perspectives in architectonic texts are frequently derived from "citation of […] lines, paragraphs, or pages from other books; song lyrics; advertisements; newspaper headlines; letters; poems […] and allusions to well-known myths and works of art" (141). Each quotation from an external source is an act of importing the source text's perspective with a whole set of its associations. Offill's novel can therefore be said

to incorporate as many perspectives as the authors it quotes or references. Hesiod, Martin Luther and Yuri Gagarin thus become observers and advisors or commentators on the personal problems of the narrator-protagonist.

5. Conclusion

Spencer's concept of the architectonic novel is not the only —or the most recent— critical framework through which contemporary examples of fragmentary writing may be interpreted.[6] But it remains useful and relevant, because it accentuates several of the most conspicuous characteristics of fragmentary novels in the twenty-first century (including *Dept. of Speculation*): the use of a wide range of material juxtaposed without a clear cause-and-effect order, the inclusion of a multiplicity of voices and perspectives, typographical variation, metafictional elements and a general distrust of plot and character. Another quality which Spencer does not emphasise but which is essential to most contemporary examples of fragmented novels is a maximum level of condensation. Offill has admitted in an interview that one of her prime concerns as a writer is "trying to figure out how you can say the most with the least" (Haas 2015). The relative brevity of such books —rarely in excess of 200 pages— is a result of retaining intense, information-laden fragments and leaving out connections and transitions. That strategy is particularly noticeable in Renata Adler's *Speedboat* (1976), David Markson's tetralogy inaugurated by *Reader's Block* (1996) and much of Lydia Davis's fiction. Its politics seems partly rooted in a disenchantment with the novel form, forcefully articulated by David Shields in *Reality Hunger*: "This is the case for most novels: you have to read seven hundred pages to get the handful of insights that were the reason the book was written, and the apparatus of the novel is there as a huge, elaborate, overbuilt stage set" (2011: 128).

Offill and the other practitioners of fragmentary writing could be said to construct novels without (to pursue the architectonic metaphor) the conventional scaffolding of the novel. What their fragmented structures need in order not to collapse is the reader's ability and readiness to fuse the building blocks and supply the missing bricks. As one of Offill's passages relates, when the "Zen master Ikkyu was once asked to write a distillation of the highest wisdom[,] he wrote only one word: *Attention*" (76). Pay attention and connect, that curious amalgam of advice from Ikkyu and E.M. Forster, is what the reader of a "writerly" novel like Offill's needs to do in order to tie its loose (and bound) ends.

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Notes

1. Among the most notable examples of French critical works about fragmentary writing are *L'écriture fragmentaire: définitions et enjeux* (1997) by Françoise Susini-Anastopoulos and *L'écriture fragmentaire: théories et pratiques* by Ricard Ripoll (2002).

2. The structure of the architectonic novel could also be described in the way that Roland Barthes characterises the composition of Michel Butor's *Mobile*: "the general organization, or plan, is non-existent and detail has been raised to the level of structure. The ideas are not developed. They are distributed" (in Spencer 1971: 169).

3. Spencer cites *Nightwood* and the works of Gertrude Stein and Alain Robbe-Grillet as examples of closed architectonic novels. The open type is represented by Robert Musil's *Man Without Qualities*, André Gide's *The Counterfeiters*, Julio Cortázar's *Hopscotch* and John Dos Passos' *U.S.A.* (1971: 26, 52).

4. The fragmentary structure of the novel was noted by most of its reviewers, who referred to it as "fragmented", "fractured" (Beth Jones) and "shattered" (John Self). The shortest chunk of text consists of a single word ("Loneliness" [17]), whereas the longest extends to four pages.

5. Geoffrey Braithwaite is aware of the limitations of his strategy: "Books say: She did this because. Life says: She did this. Books are where things are explained to you; life is where things aren't. I'm not surprised some people prefer books" (Barnes 1984: 168).

6. Other theoretical frameworks include the literary collage —as theorised in Thomas P. Brockelman's *The Frame and the Mirror* (2001) and Rona Cran's *Collage in Twentieth-Century Art, Literature, and Culture* (2014)— and the notion of "deejaying" as defined by Nicolas Bourriaud in *Postproduction: Culture as Screenplay* (2002).

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TOURISM AND IDENTITARY CONFLICTS IN MONICA ALI'S *ALENTEJO BLUE*[1]

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Abstract

This paper explores the problematic cross-cultural encounters in Monica Ali's work *Alentejo Blue* (2006) set in Mamarrosa, a fictional place in the Portuguese region of the Alentejo. This collection is a composite of nine stories alternately focalised by different characters, posed in an interstitial position between the polyphonic novel and short story cycle. The narrative's reluctance to fit in genre taxonomies mirrors the heterogeneous nature of the characters' perspectives, ranging from British expatriates and tourists in Portugal to the locals' views of these visitors. Such a conflation at a complex cultural crossroads favours no inspiring encounters, but rather fuels feelings of frustration, a profound sense of displacement and a tantalising incapability of solving conflicts. The paper also examines the second story in the collection, which entails the experience of British writer Harry Stanton in the Alentejo as paradigmatic of a subjective projection of the preconceptions and prejudices which most often intervene in a tourist's construction of place, and which eventually pertain to culturally erected barriers between the self and the Other.

Keywords: Monica Ali, *Alentejo Blue*, short story cycle, tourism, writing practice.

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Resumen

El presente artículo explora la problemática del encuentro cultural en la obra de Monica Ali *Alentejo Blue* (2006), cuya acción se sitúa en Mamarrosa, un lugar ficcional en la región portuguesa del Alentejo. Esta colección la componen nueve relatos focalizados de manera alternativa por diferentes personajes, lo que señala a la posición liminal de la obra, a medio camino entre los géneros de la novela polifónica y el ciclo de relatos. *Alentejo Blue* se resiste a una definición categórica en términos de género literario, lo cual refleja la naturaleza heterogénea de las perspectivas de los personajes, que comprende desde expatriados británicos y turistas hasta la visión que de estos tienen los habitantes del lugar. La disparidad de estas visiones en esta encrucijada cultural no favorece encuentros inspiradores entre los personajes, sino que alimenta la frustración y un sentimiento de dislocación profunda, desvelando la incapacidad de resolver conflictos. El artículo también analiza el segundo relato de la colección, que muestra la experiencia del escritor británico Harry Stanton en el Alentejo, paradigmática en sí misma de una proyección subjetiva de las preconcepciones y prejuicios que a menudo intervienen en la construcción de lugar de los turistas, en estrecha relación con las barreras erigidas culturalmente entre el yo y el Otro.

Palabras clave: Monica Ali, *Alentejo Blue*, ciclo de relatos, turismo, escritura.

1. Introduction

This paper explores the problematics of cross-cultural encounters in Monica Ali's work *Alentejo Blue* (2006), the writer's second work of fiction after her best-selling novel *Brick Lane* (2003). Whereas the latter has been widely discussed by a large number of critics (Kral 2005; Suárez Lafuente 2007; Pérez Fernández 2009; Germanà 2011, among many others), *Alentejo Blue* has received little critical attention (Marino 2008).

Alentejo Blue is a collection of nine vignettes set in fictional Mamarrosa, a village in the Portuguese rural region of Alentejo, a place which functions as a crossroads for expatriates, ex-centric villagers and odd tourists. The characters' lives intersect at this particular spot, where their shared sense of frustration is fuelled by their own feelings of displacement and by their inability to experience any onward movement, or to bring about any productive change to their lives.

Formally speaking, *Alentejo Blue* alternates first and third-person narratives, emphasising the cultural gap between the locals' vision of the village and of their homeland and the way tourists apprehend and assess life in Mamarrosa, whose remote

location mirrors the spiritual isolation of all its inhabitants. The reader's initial impression of the collection as a motley composite of heterogeneous voices, disparate recollections, assessments and materials is in tune with a pervasive sense of dislocation and with a profound feeling of alienation and dissatisfaction, a point where all characters converge despite their many differences. In this paper I will be focusing on the relevance of the tourist's sight and on the nature of his or her gaze, which Rojek defined as "a spatial location which is distinguished from everyday life by virtue of its natural, historical or cultural extraordinariness" (2005: 52). The tourist's gaze, his or her initial attraction to a particular destination and his or her assessment of it springs from a realization of difference, and of its deviance from ordinariness. However, and as will be argued in what follows, such a distinction is culturally constructed, and it brings about an ideological assessment of place, people and culture which ultimately pertain to notions of identity, nationhood and to a sense of belonging.

Departing from this premise, this article will subsequently examine the collection's second narrative, which focuses on the experience in Mamarrosa of English writer Harry Stanton, drawn to what he perceives as a primitively remote and isolated place where to find the necessary inspiration to write his artistic masterpiece. Stanton's exemplifies a particular experience of the tourist's gaze which Urry has defined as a "shrine to nature that individuals wish to enjoy without others being present in solitude", as a "'romantic' form of the tourist gaze, in which the emphasis is upon solitude, privacy and a personal, semi-spiritual relationship with the object of the gaze" (2002: 43).

2. Liminal Positions: Novels and Short Stories

As stated above, *Alentejo Blue* is a composite of nine vignettes posed in a liminal position in terms of genre classification between the polyphonic novel and the short story cycle. I will argue, however, that *Alentejo Blue* sits more comfortably in the short story tradition: unlike Ali's first work, *Brick Lane*, subtitled by the author "*A Novel*", *Alentejo Blue* is given no such a category, being vaguely termed by its author as "a work of fiction" in the postscript to the collection, where the author emphasises the fictional nature of the book, thus divergent from factual or historical approaches to place, as commonly entailed by "history books" or "travel books" (2006: 227).

The pre-eminence that still exists today of the novel over the short story would explain the relatively frequent categorisation of *Alentejo Blue* as a choral novel, as well as the adverse criticism of the work's fragmentary structure which would allegedly make of it a failed novel, "a let down" (Walter 2006) and a "disappointment" (Taylor 2006) after the expectations which Ali's first work had raised:

> *Alentejo Blue* is a frustrating novel, for page by page it is well written and often entertaining. But the book is structurally more akin to the linked short-story collections recently in vogue than a fully-fledged novel. Each set piece on different denizens of Mamarrosa has its merits, and many of these chapters could stand on their own as stories; strung together, they fail to form the arc that makes the form of the novel so rewarding. (Shriver 2006)

But in the general context of the collection, the narratives' apparent lack of cohesion and disparate nature may respond to the characters' sense of loss and dislocation, thus bringing to the fore the idea of failure and entrapment which permeates their lives, all of which eventually addresses the issue of how formal concerns influence interpretation (Ferguson 2003: 166). The interconnectedness of these stories in terms of theme and narrative strategies suggests the pattern of a short story cycle, famously defined by Forrest Ingram in 1971 as a set "of stories linked to each other in such a way as to maintain a balance between the individuality of each of the stories and the necessities of the larger unit" (15). In his influential definition of the genre, Ingram also highlights the author's emphasis on the narratives' interconnectedness, which appear arranged in a larger unit, as well as on the reader's "*successive experience on various levels of the pattern of the whole*", which significantly modifies his or her experience of its "*component parts*" (19; emphasis in original)[2]. Likewise, Robert Luscher also foregrounds the intentionality of the author of a short story cycle in organising the stories in a particular collection in which the reader "successively realises underlying patterns of coherence by continual modifications of his perceptions of pattern and theme". As Luscher sees it, the volume as a whole "becomes an open book, inviting the reader to construct a network of associations that binds the stories together and lends them cumulative thematic impact" (148). Both Ingram and Luscher seem to underline the reader's active participation in the creation of the sequence of cycle, and idea which has more recently informed Suzanne Ferguson's reassessment of the short story cycle, whose nature largely depends on the reader's construction of the narratives' relationship to wholes (2003: 115). Significantly, Ferguson understands the short story cycle as "oxymoronic", since the brevity and concentration of the short story are somehow contravened by the stories' integration in a larger fictional entity (2003: 103), an idea which connects with the heterogeneous and even paradoxical nature of the characters' disparate views of Ali's *Alentejo Blue*.

In this sense, *Alentejo Blue* delicately addresses the balance between the individuality of each character's experience and a shared sense of dislocation enhanced by the lack of communication and moral isolation which defines all characters in the stories, regardless of their individual particularities. In the "typical pattern of recurrent development" (Ingram 1971: 13) which characterises short story cycles, the reader gradually perceives here a rising sense of isolation,

emphasised by the repetition of particular motifs which largely pivot around this theme. In the particular case of *Alentejo Blue*, the short story cycle seems to be especially suited to address the characters' disparate lives and concerns, since the form itself is singularly plural: whereas each story in the cycle is independent in terms of meaning, it also partakes of the plurality of the whole through connections and overarching concerns with the other stories and with the collection as a whole, thus expressing in form as much as in content a view of experience which is "discontinuous, contingent, and incoherent" (Weiss 2009: 88). Furthermore, and as will be discussed, the short story cycle offers the possibility of giving expression to a particular community due to its polyphonic nature and multiplicity of perspectives.

3. The Alentejo: A Sense of Place

The collection's title, *Alentejo Blue*, works as a preliminary signal of the interconnectedness of its nine stories, as Monica Ali herself has explained:

> I'd planned to write a completely different book, set in London and in the north of England [...] [But] when I would sit down at my desk in London, I would still have all these images and thoughts of Portugal, and stories and characters kept inserting themselves into my mind. I resisted for a while. I was a bit annoyed because I'd planned something else. I never really bought the idea that the material chooses you rather than you choosing it, but it turns out that it does. This was presenting itself to me, and the obvious thing was to go ahead and write it. (Mudge 2006)

Ali, who owns a house in the region of the Alentejo, has often explained how the place not only works as an organising strategy to unify disparate experiences, but also emerges as the real protagonist of the book: "The driving impulse of *Alentejo Blue* was the place itself. I soon realized that I would have to develop some kind of choral range in order to give voice to the character of that place" (Mudge 2006). Significantly, one of the most celebrated cultural practices in the Alentejo is a certain type of polyphonic music, *Cante Alentejano*, a two-part singing performed by amateur choral groups which encompasses a strong sense of identity and belonging. Ali playfully recalls this in the choral structure of her collection, as well as in its title, which combines musical expression with an intense feeling of human loneliness, which all characters partake of. The collection's title is actually retrieved from the sixth story, where Teresa, a young Portuguese woman, fantasises with the idea of leaving her homeland to work as an *au pair* in London, disenchanted with her country's state of spiritual and economic stagnation: "Alentejo Blue. There she was, in a picture, in a moment, setting out for the rest of her life" (2006: 131). Teresa's reflection in the mirror echoes the collection's

focus on particular fragments of the narrowness of the characters' lives which are however illustrative of their whole life experience.

The choral range of diverse experiences which make up the collection appears in tune with one of the characteristics which Paul March-Russell has attributed to postmodern short stories: "Undecidability not only dissolves specific meanings within a text but it also throws the text off-balance: it becomes decentred" (223). Ali's characters in *Alentejo Blue* become a token of displacement and alienation and by doing so the writer powerfully challenges the dichotomy centre/periphery, at the heart of her writing impulse, as she has recurrently argued: "For VS Naipaul, 'finding the centre' has been an important part of his journey as a writer. Taking my first steps as a writer, I could argue, has involved the inverse process: seeking out the periphery" (Ali 2003). As such, each story simultaneously offers an independent vision of the characters' world while also composing a continuum of an alternative, peripheral notion of European identities which the locals, tourists and expatriates in Mamarrosa represent, as Bauman explains:

> Integration and fragmentation, globalization and territorialisation are mutually complementary processes; more precisely still, two sides of the same process: that of world-wide redistribution of sovereignty, power, freedom to act. It is for this reason that […] it is advisable to speak of *glocalization* rather than globalization, of a process inside which the coincidence and intertwining of synthesis and dissipation, integration and decomposition are anything but accidental and even less are rectifiable. (Bauman 2001: 304)

The narrative's ex-centric and decentred perspectives eventually tackle what Boehmer has termed "the rise of economic, political and cultural transnationalism" (6), while challenging received assumptions that ultimately pertain to nationhood and subjectivity, as the disquisitions of the protagonist of the sixth story show:

> Anyway, she was going to London […] What was the point, though, really? Why was she going there? Those children with their Indian headdresses and their thoughtless expectation of love. Who would she be in London, and who would be there to see? She would be there and the writer [Harry Stanton] would be there, and the tourists would come or they wouldn't, Marco Afonso Rodrigues went and was coming back, and Telma Ervanaria was in Paris and Vasco was in Provincetown, and Mãe was lost in Brazil and everyone was going around and around and it didn't make one bit of a difference, as far as she could understand. They come here and I go there. Around and around. (2006: 141)

Despite the fact that a large number of characters in the different stories are, or have been in the past, tourists, expatriates or immigrants —the English writer Harry Stanton, the bar tender Vasco, Teresa's mother and her own aunt Telma Ervanaria and the mysterious local businessman Marco Afonso Rodrigues— they are all characterised by a futile effort to move forward, by a feeling of entrapment

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and by an inability to establish empathy and communication with those around. In that sense, the indifference with which Rui's suicide is received in his community (after all his years of suffering and resistance against Salazar's regime) casts a doubt over any real possibilities of successful communication among villagers. As such, Teresa's thoughts unconsciously undo powerfully-erected dichotomies between home and abroad, local and immigrant, centre and periphery by undermining difference through shared experience. In *Alentejo Blue*, both locals and tourists suspiciously gaze at each other, blocking any possible enabling of inspiring cultural encounters: "Being a friend, or being an enemy, are the two modalities in which the *Other* may be recognized as another *subject* construed as a 'subject like the self', admitted into the self's life world, be counted, become and stay relevant" (Bauman 2001: 289).

Locals and tourists in Mamarrosa coexist in what could hardly be called a community, since the characters' moral isolation prevents them from establishing bonds and empathising with others. The disparaging nature of such portions of the characters' experience is suggested in narrative terms by the alternation of narrative voices in the collection —locals and foreigners, first and third-person narrators— who in fact share a large number of similarities, but which all emphasise as unsurmountable differences. All the characters physically gather together in the final section of the narrative, a multifocal story that works as a corollary of previously introduced themes and characters. This event coincides with the celebration of Mamarrosa's *Festa* on 25 November 2003, a disastrous experience which brings to the fore the characters' inability to empathise, tolerate, accept difference and undergo a harmonious experience.

4. Autumn, 2003: A Sense of Time

Ali's fictional portraits in *Alentejo Blue* eventually tackle what Boehmer has termed "the rise of economic, political and cultural transnationalism" (6), while challenging received assumptions that are ultimately related to nationhood, gender and subjectivity. A sense of such cultural transnationalism is also suggested in the collection's deployment of chronological time. The narratives are set in the autumn of 2003 during the invasion of Iraq, which is tangentially referred to by a number of characters in the stories: "What do you think of this war in Iraq?" (2006: 25) is the question that most characters have in mind, but is explicitly formulated only by Vasco, the village bartender, who asks the English writer Stanton his opinion on the issue. Of course the Iraq invasion brings to the fore issues pertaining to colonisation, violence and fear of the racial Other, as Vasco implies: "'Oh, they make the Empire, these Americans'. And I tell them, 'Shut up, what do you know?'

Of course they make the Empire. United States of America will not be threatened. We had a big empire too—' Vasco turned purple and began to wheeze, tears in his eyes. It dawned on Stanton that he was laughing. 'Five hundred years ago'" (2006: 25).

However, in the collection this seemingly casual reference appears subtly entangled in several other passing comments on armed conflicts which have touched, either directly or indirectly, some of the fictional characters, such as Jay's recollection of a shell-shocked soldier in a World War II film in the fourth story: "It was black and white, and it was about World War II and this pilot who'd been shot down over Germany and taken prisoner. He escaped and got back to England, but he kept staggering around the streets thinking everyone was an enemy and talking in this crazy way" (2006: 70-71). Similarly, Stanton unintentionally hums Peter Gabriel's "Biko" ("You can blow the candle but you can't put out the fire") (2006: 48), a song written by Peter Gabriel as homage to Steve Biko, the South African apartheid activist murdered in 1977. In fact, the collection opens with the memories of an old revolutionary, Rui, who recalls these years during Salazar's government:

> VALEU A PENA LUTAR! The struggle was worthwhile! Fifty years ago men died for the right to say so. Even those who remained alive died a little. What did the young ones think? What did they think when they looked at Rui, his squashed nose, his whiskery ears, the humble bend in his back? Of course they never looked; and the struggle belonged to them now, and it was not of a kind that João could understand. João lifted his eyes. "What do you think?" he asked Rui. "Shall we say this, as our last rites, that it was all worthwhile?" (2006: 9)

These seemingly banal comments on war and on different ways of exerting violence also cast a shadow over the characters' conception of place, which radically varies depending on their provenance: for the locals Mamarrosa is a place of economic and spiritual stagnation which exerts a negative influence on its inhabitants and from where they are, however, unable to escape, with one notable exception: Marco Afonso Rodrigues embodies the local myth of success, "a very big name in the tourist industry […] Luxury resorts in Thailand and Singapore. So I have been told. I believe he also has interests in London, Tokyo and Macau […] And he is coming back to Mamarrosa. Imagine that" (45), Vasco explains to Stanton.

Significantly, Vasco's comment on Marco Afonso Rodrigues also introduces into the collection tourism as a cultural practice, backbone of some central narratives in *Alentejo Blue*. Tourists in Mamarrosa fall under the romanticised appeal of the idyllic countryside, warm weather and nice food. Most notably, many of them regard the Alentejo as an example of a primitive, naïve and exotic culture which emphasises a sense of difference: "Tourists revel in the otherness of destinations, peoples and activities because they offer the illusion or fantasy of otherness, of

difference and counterpoint to the everyday. At the same time the advantages, comforts and benefits of home are reinforced through the exposure of difference" (Craik 2005: 114). As an example, the English tourist in the fifth story, Eileen, describes the Portuguese sidewalks as "chunky cobblestones in black and white laid into diamonds and squares and zigzags" to immediately point out the different ways it might be done in her own country: "In England, I expect, there'd be lawsuits" (2005: 79).

To some extent, Mamarrosa represents what Urry and Rojek have designated as "glacial time" (2005: 15), or the tourist's perception that the place is attractive since it has not been ravaged by time, "the feeling that this place has endured and will persist as a distinctive entity even though the world around may change" (2005: 15). This is at odds with the author's insistence on the narrative's particular location in terms of time, and which gives way to an ironic friction between the course of international events and the tourists' perception of time in the rural Alentejo, which signals the Other as primitive, exotic and different.

However, tourists in Mamarrosa find that their expectations and prior constructions of both the country and its inhabitants are rebuffed, especially in what relates to their assessment of the Other as a naïve, unsophisticated, apolitical subject. In fact, the collection opens by offering a bitter reflection on the recent historical past of Portugal during the years of Salazar's dictatorship, which destabilises subsequent romanticised and ideologically biased perceptions of place as held by foreign eyes. In what follows I will be tackling the opposition between "identification" and "difference" by exploring the expectations and preconceptions that tourists invest in the place and in their inhabitants, which ultimately reveal deeply ingrained ideological assumptions. As Urry has explained, "the concept of the gaze highlights that looking is a learned ability, and that the pure and innocent eye is a myth" (2002: 2).

5. The Fact of Difference: The Tourist's Gaze

In the process of looking and examining with one's eyes, the individual is invariably conditioned by particular ideas, expectations and desires, in turn determined by social class, gender, nationality, ethnicity, age and education. More importantly, in seeing a place from a particular perspective, "we establish a relation between things and ourselves" (Berger 1972: 9) and invest such a place with some characteristics which are, in fact, our own construction. On several occasions Ali herself has explained (2011) how *Alentejo Blue* entails a reassessment of place —and of the often romanticised expectations which such a place may convey in prior conceptions of it. My reading of the tourist's gaze in Ali's collection is mostly informed by

Zigmunt Bauman's (1994, 2001), John Urry's (2002) and Chris Rojek and Urry's (2005) thorough examinations of tourism as a major cultural practice.

Generally speaking, the tourist's expectations often involve "the notion of departure, [the] limited breaking with established routines and practices of everyday life […] allowing one's senses to engage with a set of stimuli that contrast with the everyday and mundane" (Urry 2002: 3). However, as Urry further explains, the fact of difference can be enlightening and help discern the elements of the wider society with which that society is constructed (2002: 3). As a result, the construction of the tourist gaze may reveal how the tourist's "normal" society works. In what follows I will be examining the particular perception of place and culture as perceived through the eyes of an outsider, the English writer Harry Stanton in the second story. Not only do his views of the Alentejo reveal a colonial vision which pertains to power relations and superiority, but they also lay bare his own preconceptions and shortcomings, which tellingly also provide a commentary on his position as an outsider in his own society.

In fact, the tourists in Mamarrosa project their own fantasies, desires and concerns in their construction of the place, and actually see what they choose to see, the focus of their gaze thus becoming revealing of their own anxieties, desires and frustrations. Thus, the fifth story of the collection focuses on the first-person narrative of Eileen Mowatt, a prototypical British tourist attracted by Portugal's promise of sun, food and the beauty of rural, unspoiled landscape: "I could be one of those Englishwomen with fat ankles and capillaried cheeks and hair coming down from under a tattered hat who set up in places like this, to keep bees or grow runner beans or save donkeys" (2006: 82). Eileen's construction of place —derived from tourist leaflets and from prejudice in particular constructions of the "exotic" Other— stands at odds with her bleak yet real motives for taking a holiday: the failure of her marriage, the physical and psychological effects of the menopause (2006: 90), her inability to come to terms with her's homosexuality (2006: 84) and her own social inadequacy, which all adds to her feelings of alienation and frustration.

Similar motivations stir Huw and Sophie's imagination in their choice of Portugal as a tourist destination in the book's eighth narrative. As in the previous example, their holiday will soon prove disappointing, since Mamarrosa fails to meet the couple's expectations: "I'm sorry about the weather. It's not what I asked for when I booked" (2006: 173-174), Huw explains in an apologetic manner. As the narrative progresses, the reader learns that the couple have actually travelled to Portugal in order to have a break from the tensions which the organisation of their wedding entailed. Their experience of place, and most notably, the choice of their tourist gaze, will reveal what they dare not tell each other: the certainty that their

decision to marry is a terrible mistake. Looking at an elderly couple of local peasants, Huw realises that he is unable to imagine a whole lifetime with Sophie:

> He thought about the old couple at the side of the road and how their expressions had not changed, unaltered, it seemed, through the centuries. In their sturdy boots and frayed sweaters, they worked side by side, and he imagined the understanding between them ran deeper than the well. He tried to swap places with them, he and Sophie forever in the field and the others passing through, but he could not. (2006: 164)

The passage is enlightening in several ways: firstly, because Huw projects his own feelings for Sophie onto the aged Portuguese couple, which fails to be convincing, since Huw persists in his arrogant sense of superiority over the peasants —whom he defines as "picturesque" (2006: 164)— thus echoing Stanton's romanticised construction of place in the second narrative. If Stanton models his relationship with the surrounding environment according to William Blake's poetics (as will be subsequently explained), Huw's alleged admiration for the old couple, for their rustic lifestyle, and for the nature of the unknown song they are producing ironically mirrors William Wordsworth's aesthetic approach to the Other in "The Solitary Reaper" (1803): "He thought about growing old with Sophie, about being old with Sophie, and that was real, he thought, Yes, we are not so far apart, we are not always passing through, and he felt something for the old couple, gratitude, love, that made him cough and begin to sing tunelessly along with the unknown song" (2006: 164).

In turn, Sophie seeks to engage herself in a similarly uplifting spiritual experience which would soothe her present state of mental disturbance, and significantly chooses to visit the *Capela dos Ossos* [Chapel of Bones] in Évora, whose walls and pillars are decorated with bones and skulls reminding the traveller of the transitory quality of life: "*Nos ossos que aqui estamos pelos vossos esperamos*" [We bones that are here, for yours we are waiting] (2006: 169). Revealingly, the character's particular choice of place brings to the fore Sophie's own sense of uncertainty about the future, along with the re-enactment of unpleasant memories from the past, paramount to the emptiness and superficiality of her own life experience. Most notably, and as the narrative unfolds, Sophie's visit to the chapel triggers the revelation of the character's troubled psyche as a result of her severe mental depression:

> There was a hollow cave in her stomach. She wanted to curl around a pillow and never get out of bed. It will pass, she told herself […] When she was twenty-one, after she had graduated, she spent some time in the hospital. There was no reason for it. It was just a chemical imbalance. Nothing happened to make her depressed, no crisis apart from the inability to get out of bed. She spent a lot of time crying. She didn't even feel sad. But crying was something to do, a kind of achievement, and she noticed her mother preferred it to when she sat and stared into space. (2006: 175)

Interestingly, the tourists' gaze and their projections over the Alentejo are counterbalanced by the narrative's editorial design, which alternates the foreigners' perception of place with the more realistic vision of the locals, who had however also undergone a similar process of spatial (mis)recognition, since they had also been, or will be, tourists, expatriates and immigrants in different parts of the world. All these migratory fluxes signal the nature of the increasingly mobile society of postmodern times moved by the horror of being bound and fixed (Bauman 1994: 26), as China, one of the characters in the second narrative, explains to Stanton:

> "When I was really big on control, know what I mean, and I controlled a patch of Yarmouth, ran nearly over to fucking Cromer, know what I mean, and what I said" —he slammed his glass on the table— "went". My muse, thought Stanton, stabbed through with resentment. "What brought you out here, then?" China smiled, loose-lipped, slack-jawed. "Mate", he said slowly, as if to comfort a dying man. "Mate. What brought any of us here? On the run, ain't we? On the fucking run". (40-41)

Most of these issues are dramatized in the second story of the collection, a third-person narrative focalised through the vision of English writer Harry Stanton, recently arrived in the Alentejo seeking the tranquillity, peacefulness and solitude required to write what he expects to be his artistic masterpiece. In fact, Stanton's romanticised attraction for the Portuguese countryside may partly derive from his disappointment with a modern, technologized contemporary society, characterised by urban architecture, rigid social intervention and an impersonal way of life, which eventually responds to the romantic notion that one's authentic self can be discovered in the solitary contemplation of nature while emphasising a close and spiritual relationship with the natural environment (Urry 2002: 43).

However, Stanton is having serious difficulties in finding the required concentration to do so, which makes him sink into a deep state of frustration which he partially relieves by turning to heavy drinking:

> "Another drink?" Stanton looked at his watch. "Why not?" The day was ruined anyway. He would go back, tussle briefly with the computer, develop a fever, prescribe an afternoon of research, spend a listless couple of hours with his books, go for a walk to clear his head, and return in time for sundowners. Each stage would develop inevitably into the next, all with equal futility. (15-16)

Stanton's growing frustration, fuelled by his increasing addiction to alcohol, virtually signals a number of unfulfilled expectations. Stanton has chosen the rural landscape of the Alentejo as his destination in pursuit of an aesthetic parallel to the Romantic sublime, thus expecting to establish a poetic bond between his subjectivity and what he construes as a remote natural spot. Such a state of spiritual and aesthetic communion, Stanton hoped, would allegedly fuel his imagination in

order to produce his work of art. In fact, and revealingly, Stanton is researching on William Blake's life and work, although these books are of little help to his concerns:

> It was possibly the worst book he had ever tried to read. He decided this and instantly felt bloated with research. He was like a sumo wrestler stepping into ballet shoes and hoping to pirouette. What more, in any case, could he learn about Blake? If he knew *less* about him, it would be easier to write the novel. Hell, he might even be able to make some things up. (18)

Stanton's experience of the place and his emulation of a Romantic attitude towards nature as a prospective starting point for spiritual enlightenment is, ironically enough, far removed from an idea of authenticity, since it is a recognisable tourist practice often offered to the upper-middle class in our contemporary consumerist society. In this sense, wild, remote natural spots are often tamed by the tourist industry in order to offer the contemporary consumer an unspoiled and authentic experience of nature and its joys. Stanton's visit to the Alentejo could correspond to what Urry has defined as the "romantic" tourist gaze (2002: 43), as earlier argued, with an emphasis on solitude, privacy and an intensely felt relationship with nature which in itself eventually embodies that quest for authenticity that Urry dubs as a modern version of the sacred (2002: 7). However, and unlike Blake in the Sussex countryside, Stanton is unable to find in the Alentejo the inspiring vision which had triggered the publication of his first novel nearly twenty years ago, *Paradigms in Eight Tongues*: "He had reached the part of Blake's life that he called the country interlude, a three-year stay on the Sussex estate of William Hayley, the poet's patron. Stanton invented a milky-skinned maid with startled eyes and gave her to Blake as an experiment in passion that exceeded all visions" (2006: 27). Furthermore, Stanton's work falters (27), possibly because he fails to establish a successful relationship with his surroundings, which he uses solely as a means to produce, thus completely disregarding its idiosyncrasies and true worth by making the world obedient to his wishes as a tourist, as Bauman explains:

> The tourists want to immerse themselves in the strange and bizarre element (a pleasant feeling, a tickling and rejuvenating feeling, like letting oneself be buffeted by sea waves)— on condition, though, that it will not stick to the skin and thus can be shaken off whenever they wish. They choose the elements to jump into according to how strange, but also how innocuous, they are […] In the tourist's world, the strange is tame, domesticated, and no more frightens; shocks come in a package deal with safety. This makes the world seem infinitely gentle, obedient to the tourists' wishes and whims, ready to oblige; but also a do-it-yourself world, pleasingly pliable, kneaded by the tourists' desire, made and re-made with one purpose in mind: to excite, please and amuse. (Bauman 1994: 29-30)

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Stanton not only misuses the natural scenery which he imagines "obedient" and "kneaded" to his aesthetic desire; he also uses and abuses the people he meets in the Alentejo. He hardly communicates with the locals towards whom he shows an arrogant attitude of superiority: "Portuguese women —Stanton had decided years ago and confirmed it many times since— were not beautiful. Even the best-looking ones had something wrong, some fatal flaw: bad teeth or eyebrows that met or a figure that would be perfect save for the pigeon toes" (25). Shortly after his arrival Stanton meets his compatriots, the Potts, a dysfunctional family who live close to his cottage. China, a former drug-dealer, and his wife Chrissie completely neglect the upbringing of their teenage daughter Ruby —the villagers' major object of gossip due to her sexual promiscuity— and young Jay, who daily misses school and wanders through the village unattended. Stanton starts an affair with Chrissie only because his sexual excitement brings about periods of relative productivity in his writing practice. After having made love to Chrissie, Stanton returns to his cottage and, for the first time in weeks, is able to write: "He went straight to his notebooks and flicked back and forth to find the place where he had listed Blake's quotations, all those he thought he might be able to use. Here it was, on the fourteenth page: *Sooner murder an infant in its cradle than nurse unacted desires.* He poured a drink, turned on his computer, and worked long into the night" (34).

Revealingly, Stanton fails to completely understand the significance of Blake's quote from *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell* (1790), a caveat against those "unacted desires" which Blake often addressed in his poetry, as is the case of "The Sick Rose" in *Songs of Innocence and of Experience* (1794). In this poem Blake deals with the dangers of a "dark secret love" fuelled by sexual desire, which eventually leads to the soul's corruption and to physical destruction. When Chrissie no longer satisfies Stanton's sexual desire and consequently his creative powers, he turns to her daughter Ruby and begins an affair with her.

In this way, Stanton eventually exhausts his relationship with both the environment and human beings. He is, as Bauman suggests, a "systematic seeker" of a particular sort of experience that could entail difference and novelty, yet one which ceases to allure and appeal when it becomes familiar (1994: 29). In so doing, Stanton is unable to develop any real bonds of affection with those he relates to, thus promoting "a distance between the individual and the Other and cast[s] the Other primarily as the object of the aesthetic, not moral evaluation; as a matter of taste, not responsibility" (Bauman 1994: 33). In this way, the tourist's experience often entails a "postmodern" life strategy which tends to "render human relations fragmentary […] and discontinuous", reducing human relations to function and service (Bauman 1994: 33). It is for this reason that Stanton finds no satisfaction either in the physical environment or in his neighbours, and when China discovers

his morally objectionable sexual behaviour Stanton is forced to be "on the run" once more. After failing to become inspired by his particular construction of the Alentejo, or by the sexual relationships he has experienced, Stanton considers leaving Portugal and heading towards "somewhere cold and preferably Teutonic where writers met in cafés with notebooks and grievances and discourse flowed on the meaning of life and death. He rather fancied a road trip. He hoped to make it as far as Prague" (2006: 225). Stanton's pattern of behaviour will prevent him from enjoying satisfactory and fulfilling human relationships, and will compulsively repeat the same moves whereas his addiction to alcohol increases and continues to fuel his intense sense of frustration and emotional alienation set on a one-way route to vagabondage:

> The movements of the vagabond are unpredictable; unlike the pilgrim the vagabond has not set destination. You do not know where he will move to next, because he himself does not know or care much. Vagabondage has no advance itinerary —its trajectory is patched together bit by bit, one bit at a time. Each place is for the vagabond a stop-over, but he never knows how long he will stay in any of them; this will depend on the generosity and patience of the residents, but also on news of other places arousing new hopes. (Bauman 1994: 29)

In his touris endeavour, Stanton "picks and chooses" according to a combination of prejudice and preconceptions. Stanton privileges one particular perception of the Alentejo, namely a romanticised vision of its scenery hoping this might match his mental picture as a correlate of Blake's Sussex landscape. However, his efforts prove futile since his preconceptions signal an arrogant attitude of superiority which prevents him from establishing any fruitful emotional bond, either with the inhabitants of the place or with the natural environment itself, which resists Stanton's objectification. The English writer does not perceive the Alentejo with an open mind, but invests the place with his own fantasies and attempts to commune with a mental projection that turns out to be unsuccessful and fruitless.

6. Conclusion

The proliferation of "global diasporas" has extended the range, extent and significance of all forms of travel which, as happens in the Stanton story, could be open-ended in terms of temporality (Urry 2002: 159), which has led recent commentators to refer to the "nomadic" quality of contemporary social life pertaining to the blurring of boundaries between "home" and "away". In a sense, all characters in *Alentejo Blue* share this nomadic quality: the two old revolutionaries, Stanton, Vasco, the Mowatts, the Potts, Teresa, Huw and Sophie and of course the mysterious Marco Afonso Rodrigues, who is mentioned by all locals in the

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collection either as an example of personal growth and economic success or of corruption. Despite their similarities concerning a nomadic subjectivity, the characters in the collection (both tourists and locals) fail to bridge their cultural gap by providing a discourse to empathise with a gaze different from their own.

As Marino suggests (2008: 52), Ali encourages the reader to consider the same phenomena from different points of view: Stanton's relationship with the Potts child and his family and Jay's and Christine Potts' own perception of it; or Vasco's reflections on his customers and how in turn they consider the bartender. By doing so, Ali displaces the centre and powerfully undermines the concepts of "centre" and "periphery". And Portugal is actually a country where these two notions sit uncomfortably: having been a former colonial empire, now the country's many tourists "bury the dining-room table with maps and leaflets and brochures and books" while planning "the invasion strategy" (2006: 113), succinctly suggested by the various references to the Iraq war in the collection. *Alentejo Blue* presents a collective experience of place structured in terms of identification and difference which is, as a result, conflicting and contradictory. Most notably, the collection emphasises a general sense of displacement and frustration which all characters share and which the heterogeneous quality of the narrative itself mirrors.

In the collection's powerful reflection on the processes which intervene in the construction of subjectivity which inevitably entail an encounter with the Other, Stanton's narrative emerges as paradigmatic of the collection as a whole. Like the rest of the characters in *Alentejo Blue*, Stanton unsuccessfully tries to overcome his spiritual stagnation, as well as his artistic frustrations and shortcomings by establishing a bond with his own particular construction of the place as a remote, unspoiled natural spot which ultimately embodies the tourist's search for authenticity and spirituality. However, Stanton fails to establish a satisfactory relationship either with the Alentejo or with the local community, since the real place and its inhabitants resist and deviate from his own cultural and ideological construction of it. Stanton shares with all characters in the book a biased construction of place, which actually reveals itself as a subjective projection of his own preconceptions and prejudices which could mirror Monica Ali's reflections on her own writing practice. Just as Stanton's plan to write a second novel after his literary début fails, so Ali's project to set her second novel in the North of England was temporarily discontinued, and what she produced instead was a composite of human sketches set in Portugal that pre-empt the unifying novelistic design. Yet, whereas Stanton's attempt becomes eventually sterile, the unexpected result of Ali's creative efforts is a truly original work in which alienated existences and formal fragmentation mirror each other and ultimately invite the reader to reconsider culturally erected barriers between "us" and "them".

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Notes

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[2]. More recently, Susan Garland Mann (1988) and Dunn and Morris have discussed the nature of short story cycles and their relevance in different literary traditions. Dunn and Morris termed these interconnected collections of short fiction as "composite novels", which they understand as literary works "composed of shorter texts that — though individually complete and autonomous— are interrelated in a coherent whole according to one or more organizing principles" (1995: xiii). As Lauro Zavala has explained, the hybrid and fragmentary nature of short story cycles "reveal the gradual relativization of the genre's canonical forms" (2012: 282), including the various ways in which readers may approach the text, either as isolated narratives or as a sequence.

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FASHIONING IDENTITIES AND BUILDING AN EMPIRE: THOMAS GAGE'S *THE ENGLISH-AMERICAN* (1648) AND ENGLISH PURITAN PROTO-COLONIALISM[1]

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Abstract

Thomas Gage, a seventeenth century English priest, traveler, and scholar was the first non-Spanish person to settle in, and travel extensively through, the Spanish Main. After his twelve-year experience as a Dominican in, mostly, Mexico and Guatemala, he returned to England and, after recanting, published his very popular *The English-American, his Travail by Sea and Land, or, A New Survey of the West-India's* (1648).The success of this book (which rapidly went through several editions and translations) was mostly due to its coincidence, both in aim and content, with early seventeenth century English colonial ambitions —especially as devised by Oliver Cromwell in his so-called Western Design of 1655— to which it actively contributed. Gage's successful retrospective construction of himself gained him a relatively influential position in Cromwell's failed project to replace the Spaniards in the New World. In this paper I will examine how Gage's insufficiently studied narrative influenced Cromwell's military project, and will also focus on how this and similar writing produced a number of precarious and self-cancelling identities from which he tried to profit.

Keywords: Thomas Gage, travel narrative, Spanish America, Oliver Cromwell, Protectorate, Western Design, *The English-American*, identity, Anglo-Spanish relations.

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Resumen

Thomas Gage, sacerdote, viajero y estudioso inglés del siglo diecisiete, fue la primera persona de origen no español en establecerse en, y recorrer, la América española. Tras pasar doce años como dominico en, principalmente, México y Guatemala regresó a Inglaterra donde, tras renegar del catolicismo, publicó su muy celebrado *The English-American, his Travail by Sea and Land, or, A New Survey of the West-India's* (1648). El éxito de este libro (que fue rápidamente reeditado y traducido a diversas lenguas) fue consecuencia de su sintonía –tanto en objetivos como en contenido- con las ambiciones coloniales inglesas de principios del siglo diecisiete, y más concretamente con las diseñadas por Oliver Cromwell a través del plan conocido como 'Designio Occidental' de 1655, a cuyo desarrollo contribuyó Gage. La construcción personal, de carácter retrospectivo, que ejecutó con éxito Gage le permitió gozar de una posición relativamente influyente en el fracasado proyecto de Cromwell para reemplazar a los españoles en el Nuevo Mundo. En el presente artículo pretendo examinar cómo el mencionado texto de Gage, hasta la fecha poco estudiado, influyó en el proyecto militar de Cromwell; además, analizaré el modo en el que tanto éste como otro escrito de Gage de naturaleza similar produjeron una serie de identidades mutuamente contradictorias de las que el autor intentó beneficiarse.

Palabras clave: Thomas Gage, narrativa de viajes, América española, Oliver Cromwell, Protectorado, Designio Occidental, *The English-American*, identidad, relaciones anglo-españolas.

1. Introduction

On the front-page of his most important work, *The English-American, his Travail by Sea and Land, or, A New Survey of the West-India's* (1648), Thomas Gage (ca.1600-1656)[2] informed his readership, following the conventions of travelers' narratives, that he had produced a "Journall of Three thousand and Three hundred Miles within the main Land of America", in which he described cities ("in former times, and also at this present") and regions from "St. Iohn de Ulhua" through Mexico and Guatemala to Costa Rica (Gage 1648: front page). Also, he announced that he would explain his "strange and wonderfull Conversion" (from Catholicism to Puritanism) and his return to England, and he promised to provide "a Grammar, or some few Rudiments of the Indian Tongue, called, Poconchi, or Pocoman" (Gage 1648: front page). However, it was a special kind of travel narrative, since there was something extraordinary about Gage's personal story that, as witnessed by the book's success, did not pass unnoticed for most readers: no Englishman had

been allowed, to that day, to settle or travel throughout Spain's colonial possessions in America and, consequently, until Gage's eye-witness account was published all references to the Spanish New World were based, at best, on second-hand references and translations, and frequently on semi-legendary fabrications.

To be sure, Gage's book was not discursively original, as it belongs to a relatively well-known minor genre of first-person writing in the early modern period. It can be best described as an autobiographical and retrospective anti-Spanish travel narrative of a propagandistic nature. The book had the implicit purpose of establishing new links between Gage and Puritan Cromwellian England, and cancelling old (Catholic, pro-Spanish) ones. This subgenre was popularized by Lewis Lewkenor who, still in the late sixteenth century, wrote *A Discourse of the Usage of the English Fugitives, by the Spaniard* (1595).[3] What Gage's *English-American* offered as new was a first-hand account, or an eye-witness narrative, not only of "the Spanish Navigation to those Parts", as he likewise explained, but also, and this was even more remarkable, "of their [Spaniards'] Dominions, Government, Religion, Forts, Castles, Ports, Havens, Commodities, fashions, behavior of Spaniards, Priests and Friers, Blackmores, Mulatto's, Mestiso's, Indians; and of their Feasts and Solemnities" (1648: front page).

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Gage explained that the book, completed in England after having stayed twenty five years away from his native country (twelve of which he spent in Spanish America), was based on the notes he had taken on the spot, either in America or Spain, during those years in which he was a Dominican priest and a subject of the King of Spain and, arguably, still a Catholic (1648: dedicatory epistle). Why a Dominican priest in America should be interested in observations such as the nature and strength of Spanish military fortifications and defenses, possible lines of supply and composition of standing regiments, neither Gage himself nor the book ever explained. As could be expected, when Gage offered this information to the Puritan government it caught the eye of Oliver Cromwell no less, especially after Gage sent in 1654 a memorial, based on his 1648 book, and entitled "Some Briefe and True Observations Concerning the West-Indies, Humbly Presented to his Highnesse, Oliver, Lord Protector of the Commonwealth of England, Scotland, and Ireland, [by mr. Thomas Gage]". This memorial, as we will see, seems to have precipitated Cromwell's plans.

In this article I will examine both texts by Gage, i.e. his *English-American* and "Some Briefe and True Observations", in the context of both Gage's self-historicized and retrospective life-adventure and the social, economic and religious complexities of Cromwell's England. This will allow me to determine the actual relevance of Gage's writings as important pillars of Cromwell's ill-conceived 1655 expedition. Furthermore, I will explore Gage's multiple personas (as Catholic and

Puritan, priest and military informant, Spaniard and English man), the way he constructed himself and his unfailing ability to betray others and self-fashion his various identities in the context of Cromwell's, and England's, complex processes of transformation on the road to building an 'empire somewhere'.[4]

2. English (Proto) Colonial Aspirations, Oliver Cromwell and Thomas Gage

In his *Discourse of Western Planting* (1584), Richard Hakluyt explained to Queen Elizabeth and to the circle of friends among whom this text originally circulated why Spain's claims in relation to America were illegitimate. The reason was, Hakluyt argued, that these claims were based on Columbus being "stirred contrary to honesty to playe on bothe handes, and to deale with the princes of Spaine before he had received the kinge of Englandes resolution" (1993: 91). These lines, which could easily be explained as part of Hakluyt's (and Elizabethan) ideological investment in the questioning of the legal status of Spain's possessions in the New World, depict Columbus as the Machiavellian opposite of the neo-stoic plaindealer. However, Hakluyt's explanation also tries to exonerate Henry VII, and by extension the Tudors, of negligence for their marginal role in the proto colonial race led, so far, by the Spaniards and the Portuguese. It was only Columbus' double dealing, Hakluyt reminds the readers, that had prevented England from becoming, like Spain, a kingdom for which, according to Philip II's motto**,** *Non sufficit orbis* (i.e. the world is not enough).

Hakluyt was an Elizabethan subject and, consequently, he cannot but blame Columbus' deceitfulness, instead of Henry VII's inaction, for what, at the time, was considered a catastrophic historical failure. More than sixty years later, in his dedication of the *English-American* to the Lord General of the Parliamentarian army Sir Thomas Fairfax, Thomas Gage shows that this issue was still present in English political, social, economic and cultural preoccupations. Writing in the midst of a Revolution that would radically transform many English institutions, and being relatively free to criticize the Tudor monarchy, Thomas Gage explains to Fairfax how that "narrow hearted" Tudor (i.e. Henry VII) "living in peace and abounding in riches, did notwithstanding reject the offer of being first discoverer of America, and left it unto Ferdinando of Arragon" (Gage 1648: dedicatory epistle).

Hakluyt's account of the origins of the Spanish empire in fraud and deceit, which we might relate with early forms of the Spanish 'Black Legend',[5] has to be linked to what English propagandists of imperial aspirations were starting to attempt even before England had an actual empire: the promotion of a new world of which the English, still apprentices when compared to the Portuguese or the Spaniards,

wanted a share. Although this empire was still inexistent, and all early attempts to create it had failed (hence Jeffrey Knapp's "empire nowhere", which emphasizes the utopian nature of such a project in the first half of the sixteenth century [Knapp 1992]) several authors, especially after the 1580s, persevered and eventually succeeded in the production of an imaginary realm. This semi-fictional space, according to these authors, was there for the taking, since it was only thinly populated by inefficacious and morally deficient Indians, Spaniards and Portuguese.[6]

The English seventeenth century ideological and discursive (narrative) construction of an empire trying to emulate the Spanish and the Portuguese is, undoubtedly, a complex and sophisticated process. Firstly, as Richard Helgerson has argued, both England and the world had to be reinvented in order to "make them fit for one another" (2000: 153). Then, both Iberians and Indians had to be constructed as "the others against which the English national self could be measured, contrasted, and even created" (Borge 2007: 209). Finally, England had to be discursively produced (through sermons, plays, pamphlets, or travel narratives) as a "different kind of colonial power", one willing, unlike the Spaniards, "to create a new, more virtuous, social order in the New World" (Borge 2007: 209). This concern with producing an English self which functioned as an inverted image of Spanish colonial cruelty -and Gage's narrative is a case in point- mostly responds (but is not limited) to a preoccupation with the proliferation, outside Protestant England, of what was perceived as religious heretical practices, moral depravity and inhuman behavior.

One apparently minor example of an ideological distortion of England's rivals may suffice to show how this process worked: Gage's *English-American* produces a critique of Indian and Spanish eating habits as a metaphor of moral vacuity: although he had acquired a taste for many of these exotic foods (chocolate in particular), Gage claims that Spanish-American food is only apparently nutritious and tasteful. Eventually, it is not what it promises to be, just like Spanish Catholics. To provide his unlikely comparison with additional authority Gage tells a (probably apocryphal) anecdote attributed to Queen Elizabeth in which the Queen emphasizes a metaphorical relation between food and morals:

> Which I have heard reported much among the *Spaniards* to have beene the answer of our Queene *Elizabeth* of *England* to some that presented unto her of the fruits of *America*, that surely where those fruits grew, the women were light, and all the people hollow and false hearted. (1648: 44)

It may be argued that Gage's narrative falls outside early Elizabethan attempts to build an empire and that it cannot, consequently, be examined under a similar light. However, when we approach Cromwell's mid-seventeenth century projects

to overthrow the Spanish in America and compare it to the late Tudor confrontation with Habsburg Spain we find that, first, both political constructs were strongly driven by a similar economic project: although admittedly they were at a different stage of development, both involved a sense of the importance of mercantilism and of the balance of trade, of the accumulation of wealth, and of the development of shipping. Both also shared a strong anti-Catholic (and anti-Spanish) Protestant or Puritan religious zeal (Williamson 2005: 227-231). To be sure, Cromwell's Elizabethan outlook has been the matter of much discussion for the last century and a half. Frank Strong famously claimed as early as 1899 that "Cromwell was Elizabethan. He belongs with Raleigh, Gilbert and Hakluyt. The whole aspect of the West Indian expedition is Elizabethan" (Strong 1899: 233). George Bauer also held the same view: "His [Cromwell's] ideal was an anachronism- a heritage of the Elizabethan era" (1902: 46). More recent authors, like David Armitage, have similarly approached Cromwell's Western Design as a religiously inspired colonial attempt to supplant the Spanish in the West Indies (1992: 542), not unlike post-Armada Elizabethan anti-Spanish thrusts.

On the other hand, historians such as Arthur Williamson have emphatically denied Cromwell's indebtedness (or link of any kind) to Elizabethan proto-colonial endeavors. Instead, he suggests that Cromwellian political projects should be seen as defensive and anti-imperialistic, devised with the sole intention of "open[ing] up trade rather than seeking total hegemony within the region" (2005: 247; see also Kupperman 1998: 90-91; Knoppers 2000: 106-108). For Williamson, Cromwell was a progressive thinker genuinely concerned with liberating and protecting the Amerindians from Iberian (i.e. Portuguese and Spanish) mistreatment; he was —Williamson claims— earnestly committed to freeing the world from Habsburg tyranny in order to replace it not with an alternative empire but with the global expansion of free trade and free thinking (2005: 248-250).

The problem with Williamson's view of Cromwell is that it not only appears to be naïvely one-sided, but it also seems to ignore much criticism and various accounts of Cromwell and of his politics by Oliver's contemporaries (who do not portray him at all as Williamson's champion of anti-imperialism). As has been more recently argued, "Cromwell was universally mistrusted", by foes and friends alike (Worden 2010: 59). On the other hand, today it seems that the unproblematic analyses of Cromwell as a ruler guided by either Protestant zeal or by economic interest (Beer's graphic opposition between those who see Cromwell as a "commercial traveler" and those who portray him as a "Puritan Don Quixote" (1902: 46-47)) miss the point since they ignore the complexities of Oliver's motivations and historical and personal contradictions. As Blair Worden has argued, Cromwell's politics were characterized by a "pervasive and persistent ambiguity" (2010: 63).

This persistent ambiguity and Cromwell's contradictory approach to his (political, religious and economic) mission, plus some vague link with the Elizabethans, would be a fitting description of Thomas Gage, himself a champion of ambiguity, deceit, and self-justification. Frank Strong, unlike contemporary scholars who seem to ignore Gage's involvement in some of Cromwell's plans, has suggested this connection: "[i]t is entirely possible that the connecting link between the Elizabethans and Cromwell was *The English-American* […], by Thomas Gage" (1899: 233).

Whereas Gage, as explained above, originally dedicated the first (1648) edition of his *English-American* to Sir Thomas Fairfax, when Fairfax ceased to be one of the leaders of the English Revolution, Gage prepared his 1654 memorial ("Some Briefe and True Observations"), which he sent to Cromwell. But although based on the *English-American*, the memorial is a very different text. Unlike his travel narrative, this much shorter text mostly concentrates on the reasons why England could and should replace Spain in the New World colonies, highlighting the moral justification for such a move. As it seems, it arrived in the nick of time, since Cromwell was then projecting his Western Design, the military plans to oust the Spaniards from America and replace them there: either as the new colonial power (as Strong or Armitage would have it), or in order to save Amerindians from Iberian tyranny and open up New World trade (Williamson). Whatever the case, John Thurloe's *State Papers* make clear the centrality of Gage's report: his memorial was one of the few documents that Cromwell examined in order to proceed with his failed English expedition jointly led by Venables and Penn (Cromwell [1654] 1742: 15-28; Gage [1654] 1742: 46-63; Strong 1899: 235-240).[7] It is also known that Cromwell had requested another similar report by the Governor of Barbadoes, Colonel Thomas Modyford, which is included in the *Calendar of State Papers* as *A paper of col. Muddiford concerning the West Indies.* Modyford, who had been asked for advice on account of his experience in the Caribbean, devised a different approach (i.e. invade the mainland rather than go for the islands first, as Gage sustained), but —and this is evidence of Cromwell's trust in Gage's information— his alternative plans were discarded in favor of those suggested by the author of the *English-American* (Gage 1742 (1654): 59-63).[8]

Gage's "Some Briefe and True Observations Concerning the West-Indies", although —according to John Thurloe's *State Papers*— presented to Cromwell in December 1654, must have reached the Protector several months earlier according to some internal evidence[9] and was prepared, as explained above, as a summary of some sections of Gage's longer narrative from 1648 (In Birch 1742: 55-59). Luckily enough for Gage, this report happened to emphasize most of Cromwell's economic ideas, which were themselves heavily influenced by the so-called early mercantilists, namely Thomas Mun and, especially, Gerald de Malynes. In very general terms, early mercantilists were bullionists, i.e. economists who held the

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notion that bullion was the major (and only genuine) source of wealth, and that a positive balance of trade was an index of economic success.[10] Most of all, these early mercantilists conceived of foreign trade as a zero-sum activity, that is, one in which a given nation only benefits at the expense of others. Malynes was actually the authority on which Sir Ralph Maddison, Cromwell's main economic advisor, based his celebrated *Great Britain's Remembrancer* of 1640 (reprinted in 1655). Cromwell's economic policy, based on these writings, manifested a clear concern with trading connections and commercial capabilities (Williamson 2005: 252) that went beyond the mere accumulation of bullion. Indeed, Cromwell's policies introduced or promoted the regulation of the money markets, the monopolistic control of trade, the establishment of a high exchange rate, some restraint on foreign imports and, especially, the expansion of markets through the creation and/or consolidation of free ports all over the world (Davies 2002: 223-233).

Cromwell also criticized the activity of unscrupulous merchants and usurers who were believed to have devalued the currency merely for personal gain. However, it must be noted that Cromwell inherited and participated of a general consensus which, after centuries of prohibition against the payment of interest, accepted some forms of interest (not exceeding 8% per annum, after the 1621 Act), which he understood as essential for the growth of the English economy, although "it gave a clear indication of the divorce of ethics from economics under the pressure of an expanding economic system" (Lipson [1931] 1956: xxi). To be sure, this confrontation between ethical concerns and economic ambition also seemed to inform both Cromwell's politics and Gage's *English-American*.

Furthermore, the British Republic developed a project in which the decline of the crown seemed to be linked to the creation of a new global power based on what aspired to be a coherent colonial policy. Cromwell's Britain, unlike the *empire nowhere* of the sixteenth century, seriously challenged the Spanish Habsburgs and, at least to some extent, the Dutch. Whether Oliver aspired to become the Emperor of the West Indies or not, his Western Design certainly was an attempt to build a British Puritan commonwealth (Williamson 2005: 246-254). For all these ambitious projects, ousting protectionist Spaniards from the Indies seemed to be a *conditio sine qua non*.

3. Thomas Gage's Writings and Puritan Self-fashioning

Gage's memorial (unlike his *English-American*, which is subjected to the chronology of a life narrative) is quite aptly structured following a discursive logic that, as it seems, gained Cromwell's trust. After a very revealing preliminary clarification (I will return to this) Gage starts, significantly, by stating what is in this for England: "Your highnesse his humble servant […] hath observed the

Austrian pillar's strength to bee in the American mines; which being taken away with Austria, Rome's triple crowne would soone fall and decay" (1742 (1654): 46-47). In other words: by ousting the Spaniards from America Cromwell would seize Spain's major source of wealth, would damage her trade, and indirectly would damage Rome. Interestingly, no less than the regicide Thomas Chaloner, who was Gage's friend, in his verse introduction to the *English-American* rapturously states the same idea:

> Where English Colours ne'r did fly before.
> Your well-built Ships, companions of the Sunn,
> […]
> Shall plough the Ocean with their gilded Stems,
> And in their hollow bottoms you convay
> To Lands inrich'd with gold, with pearls and gems.
>
> (Gage 1648: Prefatory poem)

However, even Chaloner himself seems to realize that some moral justification is needed: "But above all, where many thousands stay/Of wronged *Indians,* whom you shall set free/From *Spanish* yoke, and *Romes* Idolatry" (Gage 1648: Prefatory poem). Indeed, Gage, both in his report to Cromwell and in his travel narrative, tries to fashion an alternative explanation for this action, basing the moral justification for this unmotivated attack on a, so far, friendly nation. Thus, he argues in the memorial that:

> […] no people more sinfull then the Spaniards in America, both greate and small, viceroyes, judges, and poore pesants, who in general sinne, and hide not their sinne, as the prophet saieth, but sinne publikely, sinne like beasts uncontrowledly. (1742 [1654]: 47-50)

Then Gage goes on to describe how easy it would be for England to take Spanish America due to the inadequacy of Spaniards: their laziness, the weakness and poor quality of Spanish defenses, and the predictable cooperation of "Mullatos, Negros and Indians", who —Gage believed— would support any foreign power who promised to free them from the cruelty of the Spaniards (1648: 52). Finally, Gage gives precise details (a summarized version of his detailed explanations in the *English-American*) of where, when and how to attack the West Indies (52-63).

Cromwell's own rationale behind the Western Design can be best discerned from his *Commission to General Venables*, included in the *Calendar of State Papers*. From that document we can discern that he was aware of Gage's travel narrative, since he reproduces, sometimes in almost exactly the same terms, Gage's reasoning. Arguably, and this seems to be supported by the *Commission*, the central motives

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in Cromwell's West Indian expedition were of an economic nature (Battick 1972: 72-84; Strong 1899: 230; Williamson 2005: 252).[11] The importance that, in this expedition, Cromwell gives to international trade can easily be understood if we remember that in this document he justifies his sudden attack on a friendly nation[12] by complaining, first of all, about how the Spaniards "prohibited all other nations to have any trade, commerce, or correspondence with those parts", i.e. the West Indies, and also how English interests were being damaged since the Spaniards were "threatening the ruin and destruction of all the English plantations in those parts" ([1654] 1742: 15-16). In line with Cromwell's preoccupations, and with his analysis published in the memorial, Gage makes reference in his *English-American* to the importance that trade had acquired in, very specifically, Peru and Mexico, and how the Chinese and the Dutch had surpassed the Spaniards in this activity, from which all of them had obtained much profit (1648: 55-57).

But, like Gage and Chaloner, Cromwell himself also seems to need some form of moral or ethical dressing for this expedition: namely, a religiously inspired urge to confront Spanish cruelty and to protect the natives. The Spaniards, Cromwell explains in his *Commission to Venables*,

> hath not only exercised inhuman cruelties upon the natives [...] [Spaniards] hath, contrary to the laws of all nations, by force of arms, expelled the people of these islands from several places in America, whereof they were the rightful possessors, destroying, and murdering many of their men, and leading others into captivity; and doth still continue all manner of acts of hostility upon us, and the people aforesaid in those parts, as against open and professed enemies. ([1654] 1742: 15-16)

'The cruelty of the Spaniards' is one of the more common phrases in Gage's travel narrative, and in the early modern period, it certainly figured largely in criticism of Habsburg Spain made by English writers and eventually became part of its Black Legend. Yet, Gage translates moral and ethical concerns into political and military expediency: Spanish cruelty to Indians, he argues, may become England's best ally: "Some Indians choose rather to die by pining away willingly, then to be subject to the Spaniards oppression and cruelty" (Gage 1648: 139). Apparently Gage convinced Cromwell that there was a real possibility that Indians and *Criollos* (the "natives of the Countrey", born of Spanish parents, as Gage explains [1648: 9]) would start a rebellion against the Spaniards on account of their cruelty. It is difficult to know whether Gage actually believed this himself, but —whatever the case— it seems he was mostly interested in fashioning a consistent narrative that would convince Cromwell (Thompson 1958: xvi-xx). Gage, as could be expected, often alludes to this idea (1648: 25-26, 62-67, 74-77), which Cromwell seems to have introduced in his plans, according to his *Commission to General Venables*, as more than a working hypothesis.

But Gage's narrative does more than just provide the framework for Cromwell's military design. For Gage, the *English-American* is his best chance to make a name for himself as the best-informed man in England on Spanish America. Consequently, he introduces a number of reflections (warnings, simple descriptions, or criticism) on a diversity of topics ranging from the serious and deep: from how the Church of England should avoid making the same mistakes he had seen in Roman Catholicism (Gage 1648: 67-68), to the salacious (Spaniards "disdaining their wives for the *Mulattas*" [1648: 57], or the "love of Nuns too powerfull over Fryers" [1648: 14]), and the exotic (the sixteenth chapter is entirely devoted to "Chocolatte and Atolle" [1648: 106-111]). Then there is inevitably the atrocious behavior (the 'cruelty') of the Spaniards (1648: 138, 167) and, as already explained, the military situation of Spanish America: especially Mexico, Guatemala, Nicaragua, and Portobello (1648: 104-106; 118-138; 185-187; 196).

Close observation of military and strategic features was a (quantitatively speaking) surprising activity of Gage's. This is not sustained by the text alone: there is a record of one Thomas Gage who was arrested in London in 1617, brought before the Privy Council and soon released. The Thomas Gage who would later write the *English-American* was in London at the time (as a matter of fact, just arrived from St Omer and about to leave for Valladolid), and this makes Norman Newton conclude that this was 'our' Thomas Gage, who would have been released in return for serving as a spy (some early modern version of a counter-intelligence agent) (1969: 199-203).[13] This was not uncommon at the time, and would account for much of the unorthodox nature of his writings. It seems that his behavior did not pass unnoticed: the author of the *English-American*, in this travel narrative, tells of a Spanish priest at Chimaltenango who "feared rather that I might come as a spie, to view the riches of that their Country, and betray them hereafter to England" (Gage 1648: 117). Interestingly, Gage does not comment on this assumption, which he glosses over. On the other hand, one of the few editors of Gage's book, J. Eric Thompson, dismisses the idea as far-fetched (1958: xxvii). It may also be that Gage had become a self-employed spy once in Guatemala: disenchanted by what he saw, he would have decided to take detailed notes of everything he considered of potential value, and these were the kind of notes a spy would take: data concerning rivers, ports, fortresses, military defenses, the allegiance of Indians, Creoles, etc. (Newton 1969: 202-203).

However, although Gage's *English-American* may be interpreted as primarily an attempt to move Cromwell and Gage's English readership against Spain and Rome and, secondarily, as an uncommon travel narrative full of economic, military and strategic observations, it also works on a different level. This additional discursive and rhetorical dimension involves mixing claims of moral duty, geo-political and

military aims and economic efficacy with the author's own retrospective justification with his Puritan readership in mind. In this sense the text, which finishes with Gage's renunciation of Roman Catholicism in 1642, operates firstly as a narrative attempt to justify his various betrayals: of the Jesuits when he abandoned them for the Dominicans; of the Dominicans when he decided to stay in Mexico rather than go on the Philippines (as he had committed himself to do); of Catholicism, which he renounced after two decades as a priest; and of Spain when he decided to encourage and assist Cromwell's unmotivated attack on Spain.[14]

As a matter of fact, the uncertainty surrounding Thomas Gage's life and writings (mostly exemplified by his betrayals and retrospective justifications) and the ambiguous nature of much of what he wrote (as a traveler, priest, or spy, or a combination of all these roles), as well as the semantically loaded statements of Chaloner or Cromwell, all suggest —at the very least— a remarkable complexity and a fluid personality. Gage artfully fashioned a personal narrative (notably through his *English-American*) in order to justify to an English and Puritan readership an unacceptable past as a Catholic priest that he all the same managed to turn to his own advantage. That he was able to turn to his advantage the very factors that —as he knew well— could destroy him qualifies Gage as one of those early modern self-fashioning characters who, in Stephen Greenblatt's well-known description, prove able to "drive themselves toward the most sensitive regions of their culture, to express and even, by design, to embody its dominant satisfaction and anxieties" (1980: 6-7). As Greenblatt concludes: "They all embody, in one form or another, a profound mobility" (7), a description which clearly fits Thomas Gage.

Gage and his adventures is thus a representative of what might be called ideological and geographical mobility. Like one of Greenblatt's celebrated examples, namely the Protestant preacher William Tyndale, Gage also experienced "a passage from Catholic priest to Protestant, […] from obscurity to the dangerous fame of a leading [former, in Gage's case] heretic" (Greenblatt 1980: 7), and from England through Spain to the New World and back again. Gage's pseudo-detached narrative, also in a manner resembling Greenblatt's description of self-fashioning processes, suggests a certain continuity between literature and the objective description of reality, crossing the boundaries between "the shaping of one's own identity, the experience of being molded by forces outside one's control, the attempt to fashion other selves" (1980: 3). Gage, who had already re-fashioned his own life narrative in order to accommodate it to various personal peripeteias, produced a text which was intended to work as an ultimate confessional testimony in which his Catholicism was presented as a past mistake already atoned for. But, whether he wanted it or not, Gage always retained some markers of his past allegiances. Paradoxically enough, the more he tried to make a name within Cromwellian Puritan England,

the more he had to rely on his Catholic and Spanish past. Hence, the title of his narrative and also his self-styled identity as the 'English-American', which in seventeenth century England actually meant the 'Anglo-Spaniard'. According to Edmund Campos, Gage's American identity "speaks to the difficulty of asserting stable identities both in Europe and abroad" (2009: 188).

Gage's conversion is a case in point. When narrating his conversion to Puritanism, Gage admits how his past life had always been based on some form of self-fashioning, which he metaphorically links to the Dominican habit. It is ironical, as Campos has argued, that Gage should eventually identify himself as a Protestant by his Dominican alb. "It's a move —Campos writes— that by its very poetics casts doubt on the possibility of a definitive conversion" (2009: 191), it problematizes the reliability of his new allegiances and upsets his careful construction of what was intended to be his last, stable, identity. Gage explains:

> But I applying the Allegory of this black and white habit otherwise unto my selfe, and in the outward black part of it seeing the foulenesse and filthinesse of my life and Idolatrous Preisthood […]; and in the white inward habit considering yet the purity, and integrity of those intentions and thoughts of my inward heart, in pursuance whereof I had left what formerly I have noted, yea all *America,* which, had I continued in it, might have been to mee a Mine of wealth, riches and treasure; I resolved here therefore to cast off that hypocriticall cloak and habit, and to put on such Apparell whereby I might no more appeare a Wolfe in sheepskin, but might goe boldly to my Country of *England*. (1648: 203)[15]

Gage's conversion narrative disturbingly oscillates between the abstract moral lesson to be learned through the "Allegory of this black and white habit", and the most convincing practical terms emphasizing the difference existing between the covetousness he attributes to Catholic priests and the restraint predicated upon Puritans. Gage recants Catholicism and leaves America, he claims, despite the Catholic promise of immense wealth should he stay in the New World. Since Gage's text has been produced retrospectively, we can find a similar characterization of the immoderate Catholic love of riches from the very first pages, when he explains how "the Indians wealth […] hath corrupted the hearts of begging Fryers" (1648: 4). To be sure, negative references to the accumulation and the use of money, and more specifically to greed as a typically Catholic sin, frame the *English-American*. Gage opens his text with a condemnation of the Pope's power and his granting of plenary indulgencies, which he links to the abundance of "money and rich bribes" (1648: 3). This is immediately followed by a reminder of the "many thousand pounds" spent by cities like Barcelona or Valencia, and Spain as a whole, to ensure the canonization of characters such as "Raimundus de Pennafort, […] Ignatius Loiola, and Franciscus Xavier" (1648: 3). Furthermore, Gage denounces "the Popes policy [that] sucks out of England our gold and

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silver" (1648: 3), presenting what originally appeared to be an ethical dilemma as a geo-political problem. From here, it follows logically that he closes his narrative with a reference to the economic balance obtained, i.e. the money he was able to amass during his twelve years as a missionary. Hence, Gage provides a detailed explanation of how he employed his money —"nine thousand peeces of eight" (1648: 181)— which he partially turned "into pearls and some pretious stones", hiding some in his bags, and sowing the rest into his quilt (181).

Ironically enough, in one final twist of fortune, his loot is stolen from him by Dutch pirates on the way to Spain, and so Gage loses "within one halfe houre" everything "I had got in twelve yeers space" (1648: 189). But Gage's project involves emphasizing his new allegiances, and he is ready to do this even accepting his misfortune as a deserved punishment for past sins as a Catholic priest:

> […] it was the will of my heavenly Father to take from me what so unlawfully by superstitious and idolatrous Masses, by Offerings unto Idols and Statues of Saints I had got amongst the *Indians*. I offered in lieu of those former offerings my will unto my Lord Gods will, desiring him to grant mee patience to bear that great losse. (Gage 1648: 190)

For the reader, Gage offers this final metaphorical cleansing of his past sins: in order to launch out on his new life after his Catholic past Gage needed a fresh starting point. Without it he could not be born again to his new faith stemming given the material evidence of his Catholic perversion. That he is robbed by Dutch pirates, themselves runaways from Spanish oppression, conveniently closes Gage's process of regeneration, part of which had to do with aiding Cromwell to dislodge the wicked Spaniards from the New World.

4. Conclusion

What we learn from a close examination of Gage's writings is that his life-adventure involves an interplay of moral, religious, economic, political and personal concerns, some of which are emphatically displayed while others are carefully hidden. In other words, all throughout his narrative, self-fashioning processes have to be combined with constant self-cancellation, and both acts constitute the bulk of his fictional character. This character, which we can only partially retrieve from a historical point of view, cannot be understood outside the urge to build a succession of various public identities, and the subsequent need to escape from them.

This is one of the reasons why the intellectual encounter between Gage and Cromwell, through Oliver's Western Design and Gage's writings, cannot surprise us: Gage's constant self-fashioning, his betrayals, conversions and recantations,

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shared some of the political expediency of the man for whom "ambiguity approached an art form", and who consistently showed "a face of power", "of […] pervasive and persistent ambiguity" (Worden 2010: 64, 63). Cromwell's was a national project to build an empire, or at least to dislodge one, in order to find England's place in the context of proto-colonial endeavors within an emergent global seventeenth century, whereas Gage's was a personal attempt to find his own place in the world, be it as Jesuit, Dominican, Anglican or Puritan. Gage's *English-American* and "Some Briefe and True Observations" (his memorial), as we have shown, provided Cromwell with the necessary information and encouragement from, he believed, someone who stood as close as you could get to a Spaniard without being one. Cromwell's projects, like Gage's, ended in failure, but both shared an aspiration for change: his country's history (Cromwell) and his own identity (Gage). This is why the *English-American* has this hybrid, confusing look of travel narrative, spiritual autobiography, and politico-military report. Just like, Gage explains, the *tiburón*, which some mistake for the *caiman*, or —more appropriately given Gage's confessed passion for it— *chocolata*, the New World and Hispanic marker which, like Gage's allegiances, nobody knew for sure whether it was drink or food.

Notes

2. The Gages were an old family of committed Catholics from Surrey and Sussex. Sir John Gage (1479-1556), Thomas Gage's great-grandfather, was very close to Henry VIII, and although he never questioned royal supremacy he always remained an adherent to the Old Faith and opposed the Protestant party that came into power with Edward VI. With the accession of Mary Sir John returned to the court, and supported her marriage to Philip II of Spain. His son, Robert Gage, was an MP for Lewes, and one of his grandsons, also called Robert, was implicated in Anthony Babington's plot for the assassination of Elizabeth and the release of Mary Queen of Scots, for which he was tried and hanged in 1586. His other grandson, John (Thomas Gage's father), married Margaret Copley, Sir Thomas Copley's daughter (the Copleys were another notorious recusant Surrey family). Both John Gage and his wife suffered several imprisonments and came close to being executed on account of their committed Catholicism, but were always saved by their influential friends, the Howards (although they and their family quite literally paid a high price for this protection, losing most of their estate to the Howards). All the Gage sons were militant Catholics: most notably, Sir Henry Gage fought for Spain in the Netherlands and later became

one of the leading Royalist Generals. Our Thomas Gage, the second son, was educated to be a priest and, following the tradition of many English Catholic families, he was sent first to the Jesuit school of St Omer (near Calais, then part of the Spanish Netherlands), and later to Spain, to Father Parson's English Jesuit School at Valladolid (where he arrived not later than 1617). For reasons unclear, he eventually abandoned the Jesuits and joined the Dominicans, a decision for which his father disowned him. In 1625 he left Valladolid and was accepted in the Dominican house in Jerez de la Frontera, where he joined a Dominican mission to the Philippines. Once he had landed in Veracruz, he decided to stay in Oaxaca, Chiapas and Guatemala, where he settled for twelve years. When he returned to England in 1637, and again for unclear reasons, he turned to Protestantism, preaching his sermon of recantation in 1642 (Aguilar 1946: v-xxii; Stephen 1889: 20, 349, 355; Bindoff 1982: 150-172).

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3. Like Gage, Lewis Lewkenor was a Catholic from Sussex who eventually became a Protestant in exchange for information about Catholic exiles (Whitfield 1964: 123-133).

4. I borrow, conveniently adapted, this concept from Francisco Borge, who had taken it from Jeffrey Knapp's 'empire nowhere' (Borge 2007: 45-46; Knapp 1992).

5. As several authors have argued in the past decades, the Black Legend is —roughly speaking— the careful distortion of early modern Spain, in order to justify her alleged moral disqualification and better fight her political, military and —for a few decades— economic supremacy. See Edelmayer (2011), see also the seminal Juderías ([1914] 2013).

6. Francisco Borge has brilliantly explained this process in his insightful *A New World for a New Nation* (2007). See also Knapp (1992), and Jones (1952).

7. Gage, who had been given a Rectory at Deal in 1651 as a reward for his recantation and services to the Puritans, was sent as Chaplain to the expedition. After English defeats at La Hispaniola, Gage died in 1656 in Santiago (Jamaica), the only island

the English managed to take (Tejera 1988; Aguilar 1946).

8. Frank Strong has already argued that there were two other major influences brought to bear on Cromwell's Western Design: the New England clergyman and minister of the Massachusetts Bay Colony John Cotton, and Roger Williams, the Reformed theologian. Both shared with Cromwell a strong belief that the Spaniards had to be driven from America for political and religious reasons (Strong 1899: 238-240).

9. This internal evidence involves, mostly, the fact that Gage, referring to the attack on Spanish possessions, writes that "[n]othing can be acted upon the maine land untill October" (60), which would make no sense if Gage had sent the report in December. Also, the abrupt beginning of the memorial suggests that it was intended as a reply to Cromwell's government. Finally (although this is indirect evidence) if we accept that Cromwell's expedition was heavily influenced by Gage, the memorial cannot have been sent in December, when most arrangements had already been made.

10. The first time that the term 'balance of trade' appeared in print was, according to Glynn Davies, in Edward Misselden's *The Circle of Commerce or the Balance of Trade* (London, 1623), and it was borrowed from Italian book-keeping terminology (Davies 2002: 228).

11. Even Williamson, who insists that Cromwell's major (and almost exclusive) aim was to put an end to all kinds of imperialism, eventually concedes that "imperialism [represented by Habsburg Spain] and anti-imperialism [Cromwell's England] would necessarily be cast in terms of commerce" (2005: 252).

12. It must be emphasized that the attacks on La Hispaniola first, and Santiago later, were launched "without declaration of war or notice of any kind" on Spain, a country that not only was at peace with Britain but had been the first nation to recognize the new Republic (Strong 1899: 232).

13. Newton also notes that Gage claimed to have met Portuguese Jews, and these were actively disseminating Protestantism as a way to weaken Roman Catholicism;

Cromwell in fact employed some Jews as informants, Carvajal, de Cáceres and Dormido, for example (1969: 199-203).

[14] . It must be noted that, in order to make a name for himself within the Reformed Church, once he had recanted, he also betrayed his previous Catholic friends, sending at least Father Bell and Father Wright to their deaths, and contributing to the death sentence of Archbishop Laud (Ross 1946: xx-xxv; Aguilar 1946: xxii-xxvi).

[15]. The metaphorical comparison between the friars' cloaks and the wolves "cloathed with sheeps skins" is repeatedly employed throughout the narrative: see for example Gage 1648: 82.

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GEOGRAPHIES OF FEAR IN THE DOMESTIC NOIR: PAULA HAWKINS'S *THE GIRL ON THE TRAIN*

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Abstract

The aim of this article is to analyse the revision of social constructions of spaces of safety and danger in urban environments as represented in Paula Hawkins's 2015 domestic noir novel *The Girl on the Train*. As such, it draws from affect and space theory in order to study the interaction of emotions and space —both public and private— in relation to its three first-person female narrative voices and their affective attachments. Special attention is paid to the representation of geographies of fear and security, so as to explore the construction and performance of hierarchical relations based on emotions —fundamentally love and fear— as well as the performance and spatial embodiment of these affects. This work argues that the construction of alternative emotional patterns, namely, alternative embodied displacements and emotional attachments to spaces and relationships, serves to unveil patterns of domination that would otherwise remain hidden in the realm of the home.

Keywords: domestic noir, emotions, geographies of fear, Paula Hawkins, *The Girl on the Train*.

Resumen

El propósito de este artículo es analizar la revisión de la construcción social de los espacios de seguridad y peligro en los ambientes urbanos según aparecen represen-

tados en la novela de 2015 de Paula Hawkins *The Girl on the Train*, enmarcada en el subgénero del *domestic noir*. Con este fin, este artículo utiliza las teorías sobre el afecto y el espacio —tanto público como privado— en relación con las tres voces en primera persona que narran la novela y sus vínculos afectivos. Presta especial atención a la representación de las geografías del miedo y la seguridad para explorar la construcción de la representación (*performance*) de las relaciones jerárquicas basadas en las emociones —fundamentalmente el amor y el miedo— así como la representación y la incorporación espacial de estos afectos. Analiza cómo la construcción de patrones emocionales alternativos, es decir, los desplazamientos incorporados alternativos y los vínculos emocionales que se establecen con los espacios y las relaciones permiten poner al descubierto patrones de dominación que, de otro modo, permanecerían ocultos en el ámbito del hogar.

Palabras clave: *domestic noir*, emociones, geografías del miedo, Paula Hawkins, *The Girl on the Train*.

1. Crime Fiction, Gender and Space

Crime fiction has long been considered an incontrovertibly popular genre, but in the twenty-first century it has entered the realm of high culture, due in part to the malleability of its boundaries, which, according to Gill Plain, make it "a uniquely adaptable formula, capable of carrying a complex social and political agenda while still attracting a mass audience" (2014: 5). Crime fiction has served to channel social criticism of various kinds, be it against ethnic bigotry, homophobia, or gender asymmetries. Indeed, given the fact that the vast majority of readers of crime fiction are women, it is not surprising that this, together with the progressive incorporation of more women writers into this tradition, has contributed to the regeneration of the genre by making use of conventions already familiar to the public to explore issues ranging from sexism, in general, to more specific forms of discrimination against women, such as employment discrimination or gender-based violence (see Álvarez López 2013). This genre provides particularly fertile ground for analysing one of the most decisive elements that determine women's socializing patterns, that is, their practice, as well as their imagination of and engagement in the construction of gendered geographies. These geographies in the contemporary world are principally urban, a fact that again connects crime fiction with the social realities of the environment in which it is produced. The portrayal of these gendered urban spaces often focuses on the so-called geographies of fear, which are particularly relevant given the structural role that cities have played in the development of the genre, whose storylines, according to Eddie Muller, frequently "resemble the city itself" (in Smith 2011: 3).

Gender is an essential element in the social construction and experience of the city, and crime fiction has been especially prone to reproduce, and even amplify, the gender roles associated with these spaces, as well as the risks they represent. Paradoxically, other spaces constructed as "safe" for women, chiefly homes, have not been so commonly identified as spaces of danger or fear, in spite of the large numbers of victims of gender-based violence living within their walls. In this respect, one of the most significant subgenres of crime fiction is what has been termed the "domestic noir", an emergent corpus that has become especially popular in the past five years, and is mostly written by women authors. Given the principal categorization of space in the city into private and public, as well as the importance of the geographies of fear in women's lives, it is particularly interesting to analyse the focus provided in domestic noir novels such as Emma Chapman's *How to Be a Good Wife* (2013), Gillian Flynn's *Gone Girl* (2012), A.S.A. Harrison's *The Silent Wife* (2013), and Renee Knight's *Disclaimer* (2015), to mention but a few. Julia Crouch, coiner of the term, describes the domestic noir as follows:

> [it] takes place primarily in homes and workplaces, concerns itself largely (but not exclusively) with the female experience, is based around relationships and takes as its base a broadly feminist view that the domestic sphere is a challenging and sometimes dangerous prospect for its inhabitants. (2013)

These novels reverse traditional representations of violence in domestic spaces, which, according to Laura Goldsack (1999), is a threat that tends to be considered only if caused by external forces affecting the stability of women's microspaces. On the other hand, there are authors who contend, like Gill Plain, that crime fiction "is about confronting and taming the monstrous. It is a literature of containment, a narrative that 'makes safe'" (2014: 3), to which it must be added that such safety is typically projected on the preservation of traditional domestic structures and, for women, on the precautions they must take to avoid urban geographies of fear. The "monstrous" becomes an integral part of the relationships developed in these spaces of power. It is made visible and penalized when the final act of violence occurs, yet not during the process of progressive accumulation of violent actions leading to the tragic ending, which always involves an embodied experience of the spaces where the action takes place. The aim of this article, then, is to analyse the revision of social constructions of spatial safety and danger in urban spaces, as represented in one of domestic noir's best-sellers, Paula Hawkins's 2015 *The Girl on the Train*. As such, it draws from affect and space theory in order to study the interaction of emotions and space —both public and private— in relation to the three female narrative voices in the novel and their affective attachments. Special attention is paid to the representation of geographies of fear and security, so as to explore the construction and performance of hierarchical relations based on

emotions —fundamentally love and fear— as well as the performance and spatial embodiment of these affects. This article argues that the construction of alternative emotional patterns, namely alternative embodied movements within and emotional attachments to spaces and relationships, become the only strategy for survival available for subjectivities living on the edge of gender normativity.

2. Movement and Embodied Cityscapes.

The social production of space (Lefebvre 1991), its everyday practice (de Certeau 1984), the spatial regulation of women in modern and postmodern cities (Bowlby 1993, Wilson 1991), as well as the possibilities of transformation inherent in the existence of 'third spaces' in the fabric of urban social relations (Soja 1996), have been analysed recently from angles that prioritize the influence of affect in the performances of urban identities. The body and its emotions occupy a central position in these analyses, which have displaced the Cartesian body/mind hierarchy to focus instead on the joint production of social and individual meanings created through affective embodiments of space (see Mehta and Bondi 1999). Additionally, this hierarchy, which is based on gendered constructions, has been transcended in order to underline the relationality of emotions, as well as their mobility (Ahmed 2004). In contemporary societies, where cities congregate most of the world's population and, therefore, constitute the nuclear spaces where social relations are produced, it is particularly important to consider the role played by bodies and their emotions in the perpetuation, alteration or disruption of social relations. Indeed, as Elizabeth Grosz explains, the body has come to be perceived as a "sociocultural artefact", and its spatial dimension is now determinant in understanding, above all, wider gender-based constructions. Thus, as Grosz contends, the body and its environment

> produce each other as forms of the hyperreal, as modes of simulation which have overtaken and transformed whatever reality each may have had into the image of the other: the city is made and made over in the simulacrum of the body, and the body, in its turn, is transformed, 'citified,' urbanized as a distinctively metropolitan body. (2002: 297)

In this vein, authors like Brian Massumi have situated the body in its emotional facet at the centre of their analyses of human socialisation, highlighting the importance of movement and emotions in their approach:

> When I think of my body and ask what it does to earn that name, two things stand out. It *moves*. It *feels*. In fact, it does both at the same time. It moves as it feels, and it feels itself moving. Can we think of a body without this: an intrinsic connection between movement and sensation whereby each immediately summons the other? (2002: 1, emphasis in original)

Such connectedness is particularly important in the case of women citizens given the centrality occupied by the emotion of fear, associated with space, which not only restricts their movements in the city, but most importantly the scope of their socializing patterns. Cities are often represented as spaces of freedom, but, in terms of the public spaces they encompass, also as exposed to male violence (Bondi 2005). This causes a recurrent displacement of the actual object of fear —male aggression— to urban space (Tonkiss 2005: 95), which in turn prohibits women's access to some parts of the city. In this context, where the majority of the social relations that are created and recreated, performed and enacted in the contemporary world have an urban twist, recent works of fiction have reproduced such embodiments of urban spaces, often portraying them as inflected by their characters' emotions.

In the case of twenty-first century feminist crime fiction, these emotions often revolve around three elements, according to Adrienne E. Gavin: "ensemble characters, issues surrounding motherhood, and violence against women" (2010: 267). These three characteristics are central to Paula Hawkins's *The Girl on the Train*, where we find three complementary and interwoven narrative voices which guide the reader in the reconstruction of the events leading to the solving of the mystery concerning the disappearance and subsequent murder of a young white middle-class woman called Megan. These three voices correspond to three women who are indirectly interconnected by their relationships with the killer, Tom, in their roles of his lover (Megan), his wife and former mistress (Anna), and ex-wife (Rachel), the latter becoming the novel's unexpected and highly unreliable "detective". Information is dispensed gradually from their three perspectives, so that the initial portrayal of Rachel as an alcoholic harassing her ex-husband and his new family is weakened little by little, and instead we begin to understand that her distorted vision of the events is marked by her extended exposure to Tom's violence. The blackouts she has are in part a psychological mechanism developed to protect her from the violence she was exposed to, but they also constitute an obstacle, for her and the reader alike, to finding coherence in the story. Jamaluddin Aziz contends that:

> The noir genre […] is always about the audience's reaction, as demonstrated by, among others, its complicated narrative that creates a sense of complicity in the audiences, especially because of its brooding mood and atmosphere, cynicism, and critical edge. (2012: 3)

As in most domestic noir novels, this critical standpoint is central to *The Girl on the Train*, thereby situating the genre, given the excellent reception these novels have, in an optimal position for the simultaneous subversion of gender hierarchies and the widespread dissemination of this critique. Yet, it must be highlighted that in the case of *The Girl on the Train*, the reader's complicity with Rachel is not immediate.

In this same vein, it must be noted that the novel is constructed on the paradox that, in spite of her unreliability, Rachel's perspective is the only one capable of unmasking the killer. This is due to her exclusion from the domestic spaces of false security that Tom dominates by means of the emotions that attach the three women to him. Despite her physical exclusion from the space she shared with Tom, Rachel recreates her life with him obsessively, imagining alternative realities that she projects on the houses she sees as the train moves through the neighbourhood where her former home is located.[1] She is now alien to the emotional relations developed in these spaces because of her forced "migration", which has displaced her from the geographies of normative affect that used to provide her with an accepted social role and a dignified identity.[2] Rachel's urge to embody the homes she sees from the train represents the internalization of her need to belong to a heteronormative family structure now that she has lost her status as wife and been expelled from the domestic space that defined her as such. Ironically, it is precisely this outsider position that will allow Rachel to help the other two women in the novel: by eventually, and with Anna's collaboration, confronting and killing Tom, which saves Anna and her child from his increasing abuse, and ultimately avenges Megan's death.

Homes, though, cannot be isolated from the embracing net of social relations surrounding them, and which, in turn, they contribute to sustaining (Grosz 2002; Tyner 2012). Linda McDowell argues that even if "the house and the home is one of the most strongly gendered spatial locations, it is important not to take the associations for granted, nor to see them as permanent and unchanging" (1999: 93). Such possibility for change lies fundamentally in the embodied practices carried out in the domains of the house and the home, which always have a strong affective dimension. Indeed, authors like Margaret Whetherell interpret this process of "*embodied meaning-making*" as "*human emotion*" (2012: 4, emphasis in original), which in the novel implies the capacity of escaping social and spatial constructions of affect —love and fear— in order to identify who is the actual perpetrator of the violence and who are his victims. In this sense, Elizabeth Grosz argues that:

> The city orients and organizes family, sexual, and social relations insofar as the city divides cultural life into public and private domains, geographically dividing and defining the particular social positions and locations occupied by individuals and groups […]. The city must be seen as the most immediate concrete locus for the production and circulation of power. (2002: 32)

Such power is intrinsically connected to the hierarchies created through the emotions that the novel explores.

Furthermore, the possibilities enabled by alternative embodiments of urban spaces

must be understood in their relational dimension. As Sara Ahmed argues, they need to be explained in terms of the relations of power they create by attributing meaning and value to the "others". She explains that:

> Emotions shape the very surfaces of bodies, which take shape through the repetition of actions over time, as well as through orientations towards and away from others. Indeed, attending to emotions should show us how all actions are reactions, in the sense that what we do is shaped by the contact we have with others. (2004: 4)

Such emphasis on "orientations" helps delve into the mobile character of emotions, into their social dimension, caused by the dissociation of the unique correspondence between the subject and the object of the emotion: "emotions are not 'in' either the individual or the social, but produce the very surfaces and boundaries that allow the individual and the social to be delineated as if they are objects" (2004: 10). This, on the one hand, explains the social construction of patterns of emotion, while simultaneously allowing for their transformation in each individual act of spatial embodiment. Movement in Ahmed's model of emotions is, then, essential, although, as she highlights, its relationship with attachment is crucial to understanding how the body is connected to other bodies:

> What moves us, what makes us feel, is also that which holds us in place, or gives us a dwelling place. Hence, movement does not cut the body off from the "where" of its inhabitance, but connects bodies to other bodies: attachment takes place through movement, through being moved by the proximity of others. (2014: 11)

Attachment is particularly important in terms of the relationships of affect developed within homes, given the latter's symbolic value as the basic unit which grants stability to whole communities, and ultimately, to the state. Attachment to a partner and the foundation of a home inevitably involve a spatial transposition of emotions, which are experienced by the subjects, but which also have a marked social component.

The Girl on the Train is articulated on precisely such an axis by means of the embodiment of urban and domestic spaces, as well as on the emotions experienced by its accidental "detective", Rachel Watson. Her portrayal relies on the use of a leitmotif, the rhythm of the train on which she commutes every day from Ashbury, which she defines as a "tumour at the heart of Buckinghamshire" (2015: 17), to Euston, central London, in spite of having lost her job. It marks the normative pattern for the social relations that are interrogated in the course of the novel as a space of contact for people of diverse backgrounds, crossing the city —moving together— in the same direction at the same speed. As Tim Edensor contends, "urban space is increasingly organized to facilitate directional movement by both pedestrians and vehicles by reducing points of entry and exit, and minimizing idiosyncratic distractions" (2000: 127). These "realms of transit" identified by

Edensor simplify the performance of unconscious collective choreographies —which David Seamon conceptualized as "place ballets" (1979)— and serve to homogenise everyday movement, since "peer pressure to follow a co-ordinated choreography may oblige participants to conform to group norms" (Edensor 2000: 123). In this sense, *The Girl on the Train* provides a counterpoint to the order the train represents through its incorporating to its impersonal rhythm Rachel's own interfering emotional rhythms. These are triggered by the spaces that are first observed and described from the train, and which later on are revealed to the reader as the embodied spaces in Rachel's process of gradual destruction. Her emotions are the product of the conjunction of the complex set of social and individual elements, which, according to Phil Cohen, determine our movement in cities, steering

> […] a course between the nonintuitive space of modern physics, the immediate sensory spaces which our bodies navigate, the private mental spaces of our dreams, memories, and fantasies and the public geographical space that locates our journey within certain shared coordinates of social and cultural meaning. (2000: 325)

Additionally, Rachel's behaviour can be classified according to the rhythmic parameters pinpointed by Henry Lefebvre in his seminal study *Rhythmanalysis*, where he differentiates: secret rhythms, which are both physiological and psychological; public or social rhythms; fictional rhythms, related to the realm of the imaginary; and finally dominating-dominated rhythms (2013: 27). In this vein, Rachel's mental instability and obsessions, that is, her secret and fictional rhythms, interfere with normative social patterns, creating states of arrhythmia for the rest of the characters. Yet, as the plot unfolds, her rhythmic and affective transformations will alter preconceived notions of the legitimacy of dominating rhythms, which are social, but mostly grounded in the gendered microgeopolitics of the home.

The train provides Rachel with a routine, a meaningful movement in the eyes of others, and to herself, in her own chaotic life, but more importantly, as is gradually revealed to the reader, it allows her to gaze into the two twin domestic spaces she longs for: "Victorian semi, two storeys high, overlooking a narrow, well-tended garden which runs around twenty feet down towards some fencing, beyond which lie a few metres of no man's land before you get to the railway track" (2015: 13-14). One of which is her former home, where she lived with her husband, now married to another woman, who has taken up her space, and also her role of submission to Tom. And the other space is inhabited by a young couple, Megan and her husband Scott, whom she has never met, but whose relationship she has constructed by projecting her fantasies of conjugal happiness onto the fragmentary scenes she can see from the train. Her observations make her an exceptional

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witness, who is, nevertheless, extremely unreliable, given the combination of her heavy drinking habits and her idealization of heteronormative domesticity: "I see [the houses] as others do not; even their owners probably don't see them from this perspective. Twice a day I am offered a view into their lives, just for a moment. There's something comforting about the sight of strangers safe at home" (2015: 12). Her watching takes place from the space of what for other people is the transition between home and work as represented by the train, but which, for her, is a routine movement which implies moving from nothingness into nothingness: from a tiny room in a shared house on the outskirts to the meaninglessness of arriving in London without a defined purpose or the will to be there. That is, she has not given up the possibility of regaining a dignified position within the net of power relations favoured by urban structures, and this urges her to keep on moving. Her observation is possible because, significantly, the train always slows down at a signal close to these houses, changing the rhythmical pattern of the journey. She must negotiate her presence in spaces of disempowerment and alienation, which contributes to her recurring obsession with watching other people's lives and fantasising about a distorted reconstruction of her own past. Indeed, the movement facilitated by the train adopts a different turn in Rachel's case, given the emotional transition and self-discovery she undergoes in the course of the story. As Massumi explains, "when a body is in motion, it does not coincide with itself. It coincides with its own transition: its own variation […]. In motion, a body is in an immediate, unfolding relation to its own nonpresent potential to vary" (2002: 4). Rachel's "variation", her progressive movement towards self-recovery and her realisation of the long-term abuse she has suffered, depends on her emotional appropriation of the spaces she contemplates from the train.

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3. Fear and Spaces of Security in the City

Rachel's distant, passing observation is insufficient to solve the crime, not only because of the physical distance towards her desired objects, but most importantly because of her unrestrained urge to embody these "familiar" spaces, of returning to them: "the familiarity isn't just in my head, it's in my bones; it's muscle memory" (2015: 72).

In fact, this affective spatiality is the principal means by which the mystery of Megan's disappearance will be discovered, once Rachel can reconstruct the story by recovering her memories through an emotional exploration of the spaces of the crime(s): both Megan's assassination and the psychological and physical abuse exerted by her ex-husband on the three narrators of the novel: Rachel, Anna, and Megan herself, the woman he has killed. Embodied spaces are central to the

development of the story, as is the social construction of these female bodies and their emotions. Gill Plain maintains that in crime fiction

> […] murder literally is "written on the body" and bodies are never neutral. They inevitably bear the inscriptions of their cultural production —socially determined markers of gender, race, sexuality and class that profoundly influence the ways in which they are read by witnesses, police, detectives and readers. (2014: 13)

This of course affects the victims of the murder, but also the rest of the characters, including those in charge of investigating the crime, even if that be accidentally, as in Rachel's case. She is an unreliable narrator, not only because of her obsessions and because her intoxicated recollections are incomplete, but most importantly because her body is "misread" —both by the rest of the characters and by herself— and is prejudged. In order to compensate for this lack of confidence, her body retains a physical and emotional memory of what she has erased from her conscious memories, which emerges in the uncanny spatial experiences that will help her reconstruct the missing elements in the story.

The novel is mostly articulated on the emotion of fear, which in the gendered configuration of cities is connected to violence exerted on women. In his study of aggression and embodied spaces, James A. Tyner reflects on the paradoxical circumstance that violence is "both ordinary and extraordinary", namely, that it is made invisible while being an integral part of our lives, shaping "our perceptions and conceptions of particular places" (2012: 3). Other authors, like Jon Bannister and Nick Fyfe, have analysed fear from a similar perspective, emphasizing its effect on spatial socialisation. They argue in their analysis, "fear, just like crime, can be portrayed as having damaged the fabric of cities, to have adversely affected the quality of urban life" (2001: 808). This standpoint clarifies to an extent Rachel's quest for meaning and her adoption of the detective role in *The Girl on the Train*. Her exploration of the geographies of fear makes her traverse spaces traditionally considered dangerous for women, most notably the dark underpass where she has a revelation which finally allows her to realize the mechanisms of the abuse she has been suffering, which had been invisible to her until that moment. Initially depicted as one of the most likely scenes of the crime, and the place where Rachel was attacked by a man, although she does not actually remember it, the night of Megan's disappearance, the underpass eventually becomes the counterpoint to the supposed spaces of security represented by the two homes that Rachel idealizes. This dark passage reveals how the actual location of danger remains unidentified as it is hidden behind a veil of emotions; the social construction of domestic love prevents the identification of homes as potential sites of violence, and rather points to the public as a source of danger. Once more, Rachel's embodiment of space is essential to her realization, which takes place by means of an embodied encounter with the urban *umheimlich*:

> […] instead of going home I've come to Witney, and instead of scurrying past the underpass, I walk slowly and deliberately right up to its mouth. I place my hands against the cold, rough brick at the entrance and close my eyes, running my fingers over it. Nothing comes. I open my eyes and look around. […] The sun slides behind a cloud and I feel cold, immobilized on the threshold of the tunnel, unable to go any further. I turn to leave.
>
> The woman I saw walking towards me a moment ago is just turning the corner […]. She glances up at me as she passes and it's then that it comes to me. A woman… blue… the quantity of light. I remember: Anna. […] Only I can't be remembering right, because that doesn't make sense. Tom came to look for me in the car. Anna wasn't in the car with him – she was at home. That's what the police told me. (2015: 228)

At this stage, Rachel has only been capable of remembering being witness to Tom's threatening company in the underpass, and the presence of a woman in a car, who, as she suspects, cannot have been Anna. In fact, as she finds out later, the woman in the car is missing Megan, and the immobility Rachel experiences at the mouth of the underpass in the excerpt above is a consequence of the fear provoked by Tom's attack on her. Thus, such conscious enactment of an affective practice —her intentional embodiment of the repressed memories from that night— serves to disentangle the web of emotional associations which up to that point had impeded her identification of the real menace. The text therefore questions conceptions of public spaces as dangerous for women and, instead, points to domestic environments as the real location of potential violence, where patriarchal hierarchies can more easily remain intact. Indeed, it concentrates on the effects that the production of the "home", as the pillar of heteronormativity, has on the three narrators of the novel, all of them women and each connected both emotionally and spatially to the man that abuses them. Rather than obscure the violence produced in the realm of domestic affection, the novel delves into what Joshua M. Price regards as the internalization of guilt and failure in the production of normative homes, which often leads to the justification of the violence inflicted on victimized women: "building a successful peaceful home is tied for some to their sense of self, to their sense of accomplishment in this life. […] If a woman desires the safety of home and accepts her role as producer of it, then being battered confronts her fiercely, blatantly, with failure" (2002: 40).

4. Fetishized Emotions in the Domestic Realm

Failure and success, for each of the three women narrators, are intrinsically dependent on the capacity to perform maternal roles. It is the basis of a hierarchy among them, as well as a feeling of rivalry that is always related to the domestic

spaces they inhabit and the control that Tom exerts over them. The houses are located in a middle-class neighbourhood, in a "sleepy little street, tidy and affluent, with lots of young families; they're all having their dinner around seven o'clock, or sitting on the sofa, mum and dad with the little ones squeezed between them, watching *X-factor*" (2015: 116). This image of perfect family happiness is juxtaposed with the traumatic experiences of the three women, whose fragmented narrations destabilize this social construct. Each of them represents a traditional female role that is directly associated with the social construction of their bodies: Rachel stands for the barren hag, Megan is the femme fatale that has been punished for her transgression, and Anna is the angel in the house. Yet their portrayal as such is never fully achieved and, instead, as the story unfolds, their differences are diluted, as are the reasons for the animosity between them, creating changes in the hierarchy which lead to the final act of cooperation between Anna and Rachel that saves them. This cooperation is reinforced by the structure of the novel, which is made up of fragments narrated in the first person voice. The women are the only narrators of their common story, and their three complementary points of view allow for the reconstruction of an alternative solution to a crime that otherwise would have never been discovered. Rachel and Anna are rivals, because the latter is seen as a "cuckoo" by the former, "laying eggs in [her] nest" (2015: 41). She is dispossessed of her space, of the home she had constructed and the house she had chosen, in part, due to the proximity of the train, "I liked being down there on the tracks, I liked watching the trains go by, I enjoyed the sound of them, not the scream of an inter-city express but the old-fashioned trundling of ancient rolling stock" (2015: 42). Similarly, Anna also has a complex relationship with the house: she has appropriated it, but is aware of Rachel's imprint on the space, to the extent that she establishes a correlation between her predecessor and the house: "We need to get away from here. We need to get away from *her*" (2015: 143; emphasis in original). Yet, the reasons for her wanting to escape are not merely connected to the fact that Rachel keeps returning to the house, interfering with their everyday rhythms, but also to Anna's awareness that she has started to incarnate Rachel herself, to reproduce some of her affective spatial relations within the home that she loathed when she observed them in Rachel.

Megan's case, on the other hand, is different. She lives in another house with her husband Scott, therefore she does not partake in the other women's spatial confrontation, even though in fact she is also alienated in her own home. As the femme fatale in the novel, she is the temptress who has (apparently) been redeemed by marriage and is adjusting to gender normativity. Her home represents a different form of reclusion, it is the space for the embodiment of her fears, past and present. Her relationship with domesticity is affected by the spatial association of the death of her daughter, which was due to her own and her then boyfriend's negligence,

as well as by her subsequent feelings of shame, pain and terror when she was abandoned and left alone in the house: "At night I can still feel it. It's the thing I dread, the thing that keeps me awake: the feeling of being alone in that house. I was so frightened —too frightened to go to sleep. I'd just walk around those dark rooms and I'd hear her crying, I'd smell her skin. I saw things" (2015: 210). She feels asphyxiated in her marriage and so she resorts to what she believes is her source of empowerment, the sexual attraction she provokes in men, but which in reality only ever serves to further denigrate her. As a result, she gets involved in an adulterous relationship with Tom, who manipulates her just as much as he manipulates the other two women, to the extent that he asks her to work as a babysitter for his and Anna's child, that is, she is incorporated into the domestic space that Tom controls, albeit with an even lower status than his wife. Although she accepts it at first, the physical closeness of the baby becomes unbearable to her, and she soon quits the job, thus isolating herself further in the house she shares with Scott. After discovering that Megan is pregnant with his child, Tom rejects her, but she becomes obsessed with him, another invitation to the reader to acknowledge the similarities between the three women, under Tom's affective manipulation.

In fact, all the female characters who have had a relationship with Tom end up incarnating to a certain extent the devastated version of Rachel that appears at the beginning of the novel. Tom manipulates them, creating states of constant anxiety by threatening to deprive them of his love and the added associations that this emotion has for each of the women. Love —and rejection— becomes an instrument for the exertion of power in the hands of Tom, for whom, as Margaret Wetherell would put it, "power works through affect, and affect emerges in power" (2012: 16). From his initial subtle coercive control to the more evident forms of violence, including physical abuse, Tom goes through women until he finds a substitute for the one he has just destroyed, and then the cycle starts again. As Sara Ahmed has put it in her description of wider forms of "affective economies", there is an erasure of the process of accumulation of the emotion, of the history that has led to the "affective value" attached to the object of the emotion, such that "'feelings' become 'fetishes', qualities that seem to reside in objects" (2004: 11). Tom's relationships are constructed on the fetishisation of emotions experienced by the three women, but their different expectations will determine their different endings. Little by little, Anna starts to see her similarities with the object of her fear, Rachel, who represents a threat to her newly-acquired family life, but whom in fact she is misidentifying, by means of a transposition of the emotion of fear from the actual perpetrator —Tom— to her. Megan's reaction differs, though, because she does not need Tom in the same way as the other women do. Rather than seeing him as the means to adjust to normative domesticity, she merely tries

to obtain attention and a feeling of control over him, through her sex appeal. When he rejects her, she feels dismissed and stands up to him: "*I'm not going away. I'm going to make you pay for this. For the rest of your bloody life you're going to be paying for this*" (2015: 299; emphasis in original). Unlike Anna and Rachel, who have wrongly internalized their responsibility in Tom's outbursts, Megan dares to face up to him, to question his emotional authority over her. Incapable of coping with such resistance, Tom loses his nerve and attacks her, blaming her for creating the situation: "*Now look. Now look what you made me do*" (2015: 299, emphasis in original).[3]

From the point of view of space analysis, it is extremely interesting that his attack should take place in a park, an area that is immediately identified as part of the urban geographies of fear for women citizens, where, as Ahmed contends, feelings of vulnerability "shape women's bodies as well as how those bodies inhabit space", securing "femininity as a delimitation of movement in the public, and over-inhabitance in the private" (2004: 70). Indeed, this might seem to reinforce the gendered spatialization of women's fear in public spaces, yet the fact that the perpetrator is not a stranger but Megan's lover, reverts such associations and makes the reader focus instead on the dangers of the private. As Price argues, "spaces are generated intersubjectively", particularly when attending to the roles played in the private sphere, and to the spatial practice carried out in these highly affective spaces, and so, "how one understands the space one is in […] depends a lot on who you are, what you do, *on whom you are focused*" (2002: 41; emphasis added). The three women in the novel focus primarily on Tom and his emotions, which fluctuate and cause them constant anxiety and fear, which destabilizes them emotionally. The effect of this long-term pattern of prolonged anxiety and intermittent relief are especially patent in Rachel, whose emotions are so altered that she even confuses fear and guilt, incapable of discerning who the victimizer is and how he has manipulated her affects in order to make her feel responsible for his attacks on her. Paradoxically, her anxiety (not knowing what to fear) is in fact what will gradually empower her, and encourage her to keep investigating into the fabric of urban emotions until she puts the pieces of the puzzle together correctly.

As Ahmed explains, the difference between fear and anxiety lies in the emotional dimension of affect, in its relationality. Fear becomes a strong bodily experience occurring in the present, but it also has a projection into the future, since it "involves an anticipation of hurt or injury" (2004: 65). On the other hand, anxiety is characterised by a relentless and fast movement from one object of the emotion to the next, and so more and more objects become the source of anxiety, the subject of the emotion accumulating foci incessantly. In this vein, Ahmed concludes that "anxiety becomes *an approach to objects* rather than, as with fear, *being*

produced by an object's approach" (2004: 66, emphasis in original). Therefore, it may be argued that there is an implicit change in agency regarding who or what "approaches". In the case of Rachel, *who* moves, as well as the characteristics of the movement are central to the development of the story. Rachel's various objects of anxiety always end up converging on the domestic spaces she approaches through the mediation of the train, either simply watching or being transported to the station, which grants her physical access to the neighbourhood. The object of fear is unidentifiable, she literally cannot see it —him— approaching because of the lacunae left by her alcoholism. She moves erratically, arrhythmically —to use Lefebvre's terminology— throughout the city, interfering with rhythms of domesticity in what seem to be actions of harassment. However, it is precisely her alienation, her position as an "arrhythmic" subject which allows her to reveal the patterns of gender-based abuse occurring in the lives of the women. In addition, her eccentricity grants her access to parts of the city restricted to women. Her intoxication becomes, in effect, the means to transcend social norms and gender spatiality. She lets her emotions circulate, to move according to alternative, discontinuous rhythms, and this proves to be the only available strategy to uncover the patterns of domination that would otherwise remain hidden in the realm of the home.

The novel reverses to some extent the convention that extra-marital affairs have consequences for women but not for men. Megan is killed, punished for her transgression, but so is Tom, the murderer, even if for different reasons. Instead of resorting to jealousy as the motive for Rachel and Anna's joint action against him, Hawkins situates her female characters, the two wives, together in the house under Tom's control. This is the space where the final act of empowerment takes place, when he attacks Rachel and she kills him in self-defence, with Anna's help. Once again, emotions, movement and attachment become essential and appear associated with the house and the two women's bodies, but more importantly with the train, which passes at the very instant of Tom's death, as explained in the highly sensorial description of the scene provided by Rachel: tracks vibrating behind her back, the train sounding "like a scream" (2015: 311). Her appropriation and embodiment of the space is accompanied by a revelation of the change she has undergone. She has been able not only to defend herself from Tom, but also to reach an understanding of the now halted process of emotional destruction leading to her present situation. At this point, from the backyard she watches the passengers on the train, reversing her gaze and her situation as it was presented at the opening of the story: "travellers warm and safe on their way home" (2015: 311). She has reshaped the affective value given to domesticity and focuses on the train as the real space of safety before reaching home. It is the movement, the public space, that guarantees more security than the private.

5. Conclusion

What is at stake in the novel is not the individual physical and psychological experience of abuse, but the existence of a whole set of structures that both allow for its persistence and make gender-based violence invisible to the eyes of the public. These structures are social and based on the repetition of patterns of affect, which again connects them with the corporeal. As Margaret Wetherell states, such practices are "very densely knotted in with connected social practices where the degree of knotting reinforces the affect and can make it resistant and durable, sometimes unbearably so" (2012: 14). Consequently, gender-based violence is not a private issue but an extended pattern of domination, constructed on the hierarchical affections that are projected on domestic spaces. Following Anna Mehta and Liz Bondi's claim that "emotions can be viewed as cultural products that are reproduced in the form of embodied experience and that can be interrogated for their role in social relations" (1999: 70), it can be argued, then, that by choosing to focus on the emotional dimension of structures of domestic abuse, *The Girl on the Train* manages to focalize on the root of the problem, which is both interpersonal and social. It concentrates on the "affective orientation" of these power relations in order to interrogate women's spatial and bodily performances in relation to the emotion of fear.

Sparks et al. contend that "people's responses to crime […] inform not only their *sense of place* (where place refers to the immediate settings and conditions of their daily life) but also their *sense of its place* in a larger societal set of stories, conflicts, troubles and insecurities" (2001: 889, emphasis in original). In this regard, it is highly significant that the final portrayal of the houses in the novel shows them empty, for sale. In the eyes of the rest of the population they are labelled with violence, and this prevents their purchase: "I'm not the only one who looks now. I don't suppose I ever was. I suppose that everyone does it —looks out at the houses they pass— only we all see them differently. All *saw* them differently. Now, everyone is seeing the same thing" (2015: 311, emphasis in original). Even if it is suggested that they will eventually be bought and embodied by new inhabitants, at this stage, all the passengers on the train perceive these spaces in a similar way, aware of the violent acts performed within their walls and horrified by the cruelty revealed. Thus, the passengers approach these houses emotionally from the train, which becomes a crucial agent in providing the city with what Elizabeth Grosz identifies as "the order and organization that automatically links otherwise unrelated bodies" (2002: 298), forcing them to revisit these spaces, as Rachel did in the past. It seems that there is unanimous consensus to condemn Tom's actions, but in spite of this, there is no guarantee that such awareness will persist, that the *sense of the crime's place* within larger structures of violence will continue to be

perceived in the future, given the private spatiality of these patterns of physical and psychological domination. By focusing on the corporeal experience of the novel's female characters, Hawkins highlights the existence of macro structures that regulate spatial practice, but more importantly the micro-geographies of the body, which inevitably have an emotional, relational and gendered dimension. In the framework of the narrative, these women's spatial embodiments become public only because Megan's disappearance has attracted the attention of the media. It is the specific details of the crime that are interesting to the public, rather than general, larger-scale, mechanisms of control. The repetitive movement of the train generates *e-motions* that are necessary for Rachel to discover, through her spatial embodiments, the imbrication of the three women's experiences, although its constant rhythm also suggests a progressive transformation, even the eventual erasure, of the actual implications of the crime, which will be produced by the repetitive spatial performances of its passengers in their everyday collective routines.

Notes

[1]. By choosing to situate the train as a central element in the story, *The Girl on the Train* appears indebted to Agatha Christie's 1957 classic *4.50 from Paddington*. In Hawkins's novel, though, the confrontation of space and emotions that is triggered by experiencing movement on this means of transport become intrinsic to the psychological development of its protagonist, as well as crucial to disentangling the web of social constructs protecting the killer.

[2]. Authors like Molly Warrington analyse the forced displacement of women and children because of gender-based violence as a form of hidden internal migration: "In England, over 50 000 people are forced to leave their homes to move to a place they may not even have heard of. Often the outcome of a sudden decision, they abandon material possessions and social networks and flee to a place of safety. Given its small scale, it is perhaps unsurprising that this type of migration has failed to attract much attention, but there are other reasons for the apparent lack of interest. The people fleeing are women and children, and the circumstances involve the still taboo subject of domestic violence which, by its very nature, takes place within the confines of private space, and is therefore generally seen as outside the concerns of wider society" (2001: 365).

[3]. In this sense, Jamaluddin Aziz provides an explanation of the reasons why femme fatales, like Megan, are punished in crime fiction: "while the male protagonist's inescapable fatality is often the reflection of his own greed and dubious morality, the annihilation of the femme fatale is rooted in her failure to absorb these ideological contradictions (as opposed to the good woman's willingness to assume patriarchal gender roles), which is rather expected as femmes fatales constitute the embodiment of a male fantasy, serving unconscious male anxieties; hence creating a noir sense of ambivalence" (2012: 2).

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Reviews

A HORROR AND A BEAUTY, THE WORLD OF PETER ACKROYD'S LONDON NOVELS

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> Unreal City,
> Under the brown fog of a winter dawn,
> A crowd flowed over London Bridge.
>
> T.S. Eliot, *The Waste Land*

The terms "country" and "city" are more than just a simple opposition. At the very beginning of his seminal study, Raymond Williams points out what these two words "stand for in the experience of human communities" (1975: 1). The city, the capital, Williams argues, is one of the achievements of human society, an achievement issuing from the long and complicated relationships between a people and the land it inhabits.

The romantic outlook on human affairs has traditionally preferred the country. It is seen as a place of refuge from the "din of the cities" (Wordsworth) or, more generally, as the preserver of true national values and authenticity, whatever these terms may mean. Country is a place of the pastoral, which has a surprisingly firm grip on our imagination. It represents cosiness and safety of childhood, while the city is often grim, alienated and hostile.

In an opposite perspective, the one that has come to the fore only recently, the city is cosmopolitan –open, liberal and prejudice-free– while the country is backward,

narrow-minded, stuck in prejudices and stereotypes. Novels such as Philip Hensher's *King of the Badgers* show contemporary Britain deeply divided between cosmopolitan London and xenophobic country.

Peter Ackroyd's vision of London, however, is yet different. A self-professed hater of the country, Ackroyd sees London as a place that predates the country in the construction of the national identity. Ackroyd seems to share Iain Sinclair's vision that there is something mythical about London. While Sinclair believes that the city is –on the mythical level– related to ancient Egypt and the element of fire, Ackroyd links it to England's past –historical, pre-historical but also a-historical.

Petr Chalupský's fine new book *A Horror and a Beauty: The World of Peter Ackroyd's London Novels* does a fine job indeed in providing a comprehensive picture of Ackroyd's vision of London, as the author's novels are analysed and interpreted in the context of his other texts, namely biographies of major London luminaries and essays on the character of London and English national identity.

Crucially, Chalupský opens his discussion of Ackroyd with the writer's conception of history. Chalupský points out that for Ackroyd "history is not an academic discipline" but "a living presence", the task of which is to "dramatize and reinvent". Ackroyd's approach is one of a storyteller, Chalupský argues: it is precisely the often impalpable nature of the patterns behind the city's life in time, "the invisible agencies and the unseen powers that are not detectable by conventional history" that interest him far more than the concrete events; and happenings which may be useful in terms of creating an attractive gripping story, but which prove insufficient in terms of understanding the larger course of historical development. The result is a fictitious construct of alternative, or "heightened" as he prefers to call it, reality "in which the sacred forces of the world are as plain as any more familiar element" (30).

Ackroyd's concept of history (and of historiography) is of essential importance, as in his view the past is intrinsically woven into the present. In order to describe such present, however, he needs a kind of historical writing that defies a clear distinction between fiction and fact. Chalupský aptly suggests that Ackroyd seems to have found such a conception in English literary history. Robert Mayer (2004) has shown that for a long time in English history, the border between fiction and fact was rather blurred. For nearly two centuries the criterion was not an "objective" truth or a fact confirmed by evidence and sources, but rather the power of narrative. The first scholars who examined written evidence were even ridiculed as mere antiquarians, while the real history was driven by other aspects and goals, be it usefulness (Bacon), national interest (Churchill and other defenders of Geoffrey of Monmouth) or maintenance of the *status quo* in the community (as an example of this Mayer quotes Richard Gough's *History of Myddle*).

It is this concept of history that opens up limitless possibilities for Ackroyd. He sees history as something alive, something that is being kept alive by new and new interpretations. It needs to be admitted that as far as fiction is concerned, this approach to history is rather inspiring. Ackroyd combines this conception of history with the use of the term *genius loci* –a rather vague term which, however, suits his purpose perfectly. As Christian Norberg-Schulz noted in his *Genius Loci,* a man dwells in the world once he/she is able to concretise the world in the buildings and things. Concretisation is a function of a work of art and as such is the opposite of scientific abstraction.

For Ackroyd, *genius loci* plays a different, but equally important role, that of participation in the past. His characters participate in London's past through rituals. Murders are never just murders, they are also in part sacrifices. Chalupský provides readers with a comprehensive map that offers an insight into Ackroyd's world: the key points on this map are "energy and darkness" in Uncanny London, serial killings in Felonious London, psychogeography in Antiquarian London, pathos and pantomime in Theatrical London and counterfeiting and metafiction in Literary London.

Chalupský's view of Ackroyd's novels seems to have been inspired by the writer's dictum that London is theatrical at heart. And it is not only the legacy of the great Elizabethans; there is much theatre in Dickens, there are the fascinating music halls at the turn of the nineteenth and twentieth century, there is the contemporary theatre. It is no accident that Ackroyd emphasises precisely this feature of London, as it is this feature that makes it possible for him to intertwine his visions with rituals and esotericism. Consequently, his vision of English culture is magical. For him, the English tradition is inherently imaginative with a hint of mysticism.

However inspiring Ackroyd's vision of London's past and of English culture may be, there is a price to be paid. While in novels readers tend to be forgiving, it is in non-fiction that Ackroyd is often led astray by his excessive use of imagination (the factual blunders in his book on Blake are notorious). *Genius loci* and psychogeography can work very well in fiction; outside its realm they feel quite uncomfortable.

But non-fiction is not the focus of Petr Chalupský's book. He focuses solely on Ackroyd's novels and does a fine job indeed. Not only are his analyses apt and insightful but also the overall structure of the book does justice to Ackroyd's multi-layered fictional world. It is a book that deserves serious attention and should not be omitted in future discussions on Peter Ackroyd's fiction.

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ABRAHAM FRAUNCE, *THE SHEPHERDS' LOGIC* AND OTHER DIALECTICAL WRITINGS

Zenón Luis-Martínez, ed.
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Many are the reasons why Zenón Luis-Martínez's critical edition of Abraham Fraunce's *The Shepherds' Logic* is a highly valuable contribution to early modern scholarship. On the one hand, Fraunce's *The Shepherds' Logic* was a relevant reflection on the arts of discourse in early modern England, and one that bears witness to the history of Ramism in that country, inseparable as well from the output of authors such as Roland MacIlmaine and Dudley Fenner. An adaptation of Ramus's *Dialecticae libri duo* (1556), *The Shepherds' Logic* revolves around the essential Ramist principle that logic ought to be separated from rhetoric, argues in favour of an idea of *method* that operates from general definitions towards particular precepts, and follows the Ramist practice of employing poetic examples to illustrate the principles of logic. Still, as Luis-Martínez shows, Fraunce is far from following Ramus blindly, and his thought diverges at times from that of Ramus. On the other hand, as the editor claims, "Fraunce's critical neglect after his death makes him a literary figure in need of reassessment", for even if his status may appear to be "that of a second-rate poet, the champion of a cause for the quantitative renovation of English metre that was born dead", he nonetheless "enjoyed a considerable notoriety during his lifetime" (18).

The edition of *The Shepherds' Logic* is a worthy philological endeavour also because the extant text has remained unpublished, is possibly unfinished, and relates in complex ways to Fraunce's published work *The Lawyer's Logic* (1588) and to

Edmund Spenser's *The Shepherd's Calendar* (1579). Indeed, it raises numerous questions in regard to Fraunce's literary milieu, while clarifying his understanding of poetry. In fact, the claim is made that *The Shepherds' Logic* is nothing short of "an independent and almost unique work for its distinct and exclusive focus on the relations between logic and poetry" (2), to the extent that it "is chiefly a book for poets and about poetry, a first-hand document showing how scholarly training in the arts of discourse could enlighten the composition and interpretation of poetic texts" (3). After all, we ought not to forget that Fraunce was a poet too: he translated in English hexameters Thomas Watson's *Amyntas* (1585), a collection of pastoral elegies in Latin, proving thus his commitment to the cause of quantitative verse. Also in hexameters was a series of mythological narratives after the manner of Ovid's *Metamorphoses* which he published in 1592; this became Fraunce's last book.

The only other attempt at an edition of this work was by Walter Ong's pupil Sister Mary M. McCormick, who in 1968 produced an old-spelling transcription of the text with a critical apparatus for her doctoral dissertation at St. Louis University (see Works Cited section for full reference). Ironically, her work has remained, as the text she edited, unpublished. Luis-Martínez has "newly transcribed the text using the manuscript and the facsimile edition, and compared the results with McCormick's text" (49). The 36 leaves in folio size of the manuscript, preserved in the British Library (Add MS 34361), additionally contain two companion essays also by Fraunce which have been likewise now edited: the six-page "On the Nature and Use of Logic", and the nine-page "A Brief and General Comparison of Ramus his Logic with That of Aristotle". These function as "theoretical supplements to the handbook-like exposition in *The Shepherds' Logic*" (3). The spelling and punctuation have been consistently modernised in the edition of all three texts contained in the manuscript.

Divided into eight sections, Luis-Martínez's 51-page introduction to his edition does much more than provide context to Fraunce's work: on its own it behaves as an abridged introduction to the disciplines of logic and rhetoric in the sixteenth century, the reform thereof launched by Ramus, its impact on the curriculum of English universities, and the ties between Ramism and Protestantism. It explains the ambivalence of Ramus towards Aristotle's dialectical works, his reform of the *Organon*, and his borrowings from the *Posterior Analytics*, which particularly shaped the development of his theory of method. It carefully studies the use of the abundant sources of *The Shepherds' Logic*, which include "Aristotle, Porphyry and Cicero among the classics; Peter of Spain and Duns Scotus among the scholastics; Philipp Melanchton, Johann Sturm, and Jacques Charpentier among the contemporary traditionalists; and Ramus, Omer Talon, Johann Piscator and

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Friedrich Beurhaus among the contemporary reformers" (2). In this regard, Piscator's *Animardversiones* (1581) becomes a major influence: on the one hand, Fraunce seems to have employed it "as a direct source for the text of Ramus's manual" (25); on the other, Fraunce's reliance on it accounts for some of his "conceptual discrepancies with Ramus" (26). Fraunce's "Picastorian perspective" essentially results in his following the *via media* propounded by Picastor between Ramus and Melanchton's thought (28).

The enthusiastic reception of Ramist logic at Cambridge becomes a focus of interest as well, and the circle of pupils among whom Laurence Chaderton was particularly inspiring is discussed. Not only is Fraunce among them, but also Gabriel Harvey, Spenser, and William Temple, all of whom affect or influence, in one way or another, Fraunce's production. Given the scant biographical information we possess about both Fraunce and Spenser, educated guesses suggest that "if Fraunce did not meet Spenser in Cambridge, then his acquaintance with the *Calendar* and his determination to use it so extensively may have been encouraged by Harvey or more probably Sidney" (11). The origins of the project of *The Shepherds' Logic* could thus be traceable to "Fraunce's alleged first personal encounter with Sidney in 1581" (15), which makes the dedication of the extant version of the text to Edward Dyer somewhat puzzling, especially because the manuscript would appear to have been completed prior to Sidney's death, and because the rest of Fraunce's production was entirely dedicated either to Sidney or to a member of the Sidney family. Luis-Martínez's sound explanation for Fraunce's turn to Dyer looks at William Temple, Sidney's personal secretary, and makes him wonder whether "despite his lifelong attachment to the Sidneys, the extant evidence about Fraunce might suggest that his personal expectations from the Sidney family were higher than his rewards" (19).

The exceptional fact that Spenser's *The Shepherd's Calendar* is the unrivalled source of Fraunce's examples for his work on logic naturally becomes one of the main topics addressed in the introduction. Fraunce's connection with Spenser and the reasons behind such a choice are explored in great detail: certainly, the unprecedented focus on a single author and a single work (and in the vernacular), and the acknowledgement in the title of the work itself of such a connection is a rarity worth examining. Even if many of the exemplars offered by Ramus were poetic, "Fraunce's attention to poetry in a logic manual" is "unique", and by means of his extensive use of the *Calendar*, Fraunce made "Spenser's shepherds his titular characters and his sole authorities of logical wisdom", and consequently "placed the relations between poetry and logic at the centre of his project" (36). For this reason Luis-Martínez understands *The Shepherds' Logic* as "a poetic logic" (36) that perfectly illustrates the *natura*, *doctrina* and *usus* trinity: "In terms of

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nature, poetry supplies the universal matrix of logical reasoning. In terms of doctrine, it helps illustrate theoretical principles. In terms of use, it becomes an object for analytical praxis and a model for the composition of new texts" (40).

The footnotes to the edited text include information about the use that Fraunce made of his Latin sources, and in addition offer information about the connection between Fraunce's work and other contemporaneous material in the vernacular. For instance, Luis-Martínez presents telling parallels between Fraunce's text and Dudley Fenner's *The Artes of Logicke and Rethorike* (1584), which had gone unnoticed so far. This certainly sheds light on Fraunce's "plagiarizing habits" (22). The footnotes also underscore "the scope of Fraunce's indebtedness to Picastor" and his *Animardversiones* (27). Moreover, passages from *The Lawyers' Logic* are included either in bracketed additions to the body of the text, or in the footnotes and the appendixes: "These additions speculate on the possibility that Fraunce could have incorporated them into a final or ideal version of *The Shepherd's Logic*" (49). In addition, Appendix III displays a comparative table of contents of *The Shepherd's Logic*, Picastor's edition of Ramus's *Dialecticae libri duo*, and *The Lawyers' Logic*. The other two appendixes provide excerpts and tables from *The Lawyers' Logic* (Appendix I), and a series of highly helpful tables which catalogue, arranging them by month, the quotations from *The Shepherd's Calendar* included in both *The Shepherd's Logic* and *The Lawyers' Logic* (Appendix II). These facilitate a comparison of the use of Spenser's text in the two treatises. As customary with editions published by the MHRA, there is a "Textual Notes" section at the end of the work to supplement the rich comments of the footnotes that run throughout the text, a final glossary of rare and archaic words, and an updated bibliography.

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FAMILY AND DYSFUNCTION IN CONTEMPORARY IRISH NARRATIVE AND FILM

Marisol Morales-Ladrón, ed.
Oxford, Bern, Berlin, Brussels, Frankfurt, New York and Vienna: Peter Lang, 2016.
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Family and Dysfunction in Contemporary Irish Narrative and Film explores how the family in Irish culture has functioned, and continues functioning, as an essential icon of Irishness by analysing a selection of key literary and filmic texts of the last four decades. Interestingly, the rapid and drastic changes that the family has undergone, especially as the result of the Celtic Tiger years, do not necessarily entail that the institution has lost importance –quite the opposite, and this is reflected in the artistic output of the nation overall.

As Robert G. Lee points out, the importance of exploring the evolution of the family –as a metaphor and cultural reflection of a nation– is intrinsically linked to the fact that it is "the primary ideological apparatus, the central system of symbols, through which the state contains and manages contradictions in the social structure" (7). That is, individuals are primarily socialised by the family –the basic unity by which one becomes a member of a community. Consequently, the state's intervention by regulating marriage, parenting, or adoption, for example, is a means of formulating identity and one's membership within a given community according to certain discourses.

The contributors, therefore, particularly underline the representation of the Irish family as having oscillated between "idealization and denouncement" (2), often giving place to dysfunctional family portrayals. The contributors also emphasise

that the image/ideal of the family is further undermined by the strict regulation in matters affecting marriage and hence the family, as a result of the 1937 Constitution to the Marriage Bar, legislation on divorce or contraception, which gave rise to what has been qualified as "the heterosexual and patriarchal caged family" (6-7). The constraining effects of such regulation made of the family a dysfunctional entity as reflected in Ireland's literary and cinematic output throughout the 20th century to the present. In fact, a number of scholars, such as Rebecca Wilson, have emphasised that the deconstruction of the idealised –even mythologised– Irish family "promulgated in a rustic utopia by Eamon de Valera" (40) lies behind much cultural output, especially since the 1990s.

Despite the importance and the omni-presence of families in Irish culture, the volume's significance is its focus on how changes brought by the Celtic Tiger have had their effects *on the family*, since such studies have not proliferated. Among the few exceptions is the edited volume by Yovenne O'Keeffe and Claudia Reese *Voices, Inherited Lives: Literary and Cultural Representations of the Irish Family* (7).

Family and Dysfunction in Contemporary Irish Narrative and Film opens with Marisol Morales-Ladrón's chapter "Portraits of Dysfunction in Contemporary Irish Women's Narratives: Confined to the Cell, Lost to Memory". As the title indicates, the author focuses on how dysfunctional families have been portrayed in texts written by women from the 1980s to the present. Morales-Ladrón highlights the importance of Irish women writing, bearing in mind how they were confined not only by the national imagery within the family as mothers and wives, but also by law. Women's writing, thus, is particularly important for dismantling the official discourse(s) on the family and consequently on the nation and notions of Irishness. This is particularly achieved by stories based on traumatic experiences within the family. Morales-Ladrón draws attention to the number of texts with absent and/or violent fathers and silenced, abjected mothers. In this way, the author highlights how the demystification of the nuclear Catholic family has been a constant in Irish letters.

The next chapter, "Home Revisited: Family (Re)Construction in Contemporary Irish Autobiographical Writing" by Inés Praga, opens with an introduction on life writing, memoir and autobiographical novels –offering an analysis of their characteristics and how to differentiate them. Praga also explores the relationship of these genres with memory, providing thus the necessary theoretical background for a better understanding of the texts discussed. In this chapter, Praga highlights that in recent years there has been a growing number of texts reconstructing part of an author's family life –mostly during their childhood in the mid-twentieth century– that is, during the hard core de Valera years. As in the volume's first chapter, a wide range of texts has been selected from what Praga defines as (semi) autographical novels, from Patrick McCabe's *The Butcher Boy* (1992) to Hugo

Hamilton's *Every Single Minute* (2014). Praga's contribution revolves around the issue of remembrance and its importance in the reconstruction of certain patterns –including those of family (dys)functionality. The texts chosen highlight how the traditional family model, even in the de Valera years, was actually transgressed as seen in the portrayal of absent fathers and even absent mothers, incapable of fulfilling the roles assigned by mainstream family discourse. The aim, obviously, is to deconstruct the official grand narrative of the Irish family as an Arcadia –as well as that of the nation when reconstructed through nostalgic memory by the diaspora.

The third chapter, "Family and Dysfunction in Ireland Represented in Fiction Through the Multicultural and Intercultural Prism", by Asier Altuna-García de Salazar, is one of the most extensive in the volume. As the title points out, the chapter focuses on the recent phenomenon of immigration to Ireland and how newcomers, with their own traditions and cultural mores, inevitably challenge notions of Irishness, offering new perspectives on family dysfunctions as a result of their interaction with and penetration in 'native' Irish families. This issue is intrinsically linked to that of globalisation, the commodification of Irish culture and its effects upon identity politics. As with all the chapters in the volume, the author offers an insightful theoretical framework from which to provide a critique of the family from multicultural and transcultural perspectives. One of its assets is that it includes texts from the 1980s, before the Celtic Tiger years, as well as non-Irish authors who offer a first-hand view on immigration and its effects not only upon themselves but also on Irish society at large.

Despite the fact that immigration to Ireland is a relatively new phenomenon, the chapter explores a wide range of texts and provides an overwhelming amount of information, from short stories by established writers such as Roddy Doyle and Colm Tóibin, to the successful novel *Paddy Indian* (2001), by the immigrant writer Cauvery Madhavan. It also includes a section on the significance of the 2004 Citizenship Referendum and how this has been alluded to in fiction, particularly in Emer Martin's novel *Baby Zero* (2007).

Altuna-García offers an insightful transcultural analysis of Emer Martin's short story "The Pooka at Five Happiness" (1999) and Margaret McCarthy's *My Eyes Only Look Out* (2001), a collection of biographical texts about Irish of mixed race origin. These texts "advocate the need to negotiate, imagine and accept new (re) configurations of the institution of the Irish family and its members that have to comply with new discourses. Only then can the Irish nation, and even the State, be regarded as global" (193).

The following chapter, "Familiar Dysfunctionalities in Contemporary Irish Satirical Literature", authored by Juan F. Elices, draws from the strong tradition of satire

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in Irish literature –focusing on how satire is used in certain contemporary texts to reflect upon dysfunctionality in the family which, in turn, reflects that of mainstream discourses on the nation and identity. In these texts, as Elices points out, satire is used "to offer more critical and biting views through the construction of very peculiar familiar realms" (202). Elices firstly offers a theoretical-critical introduction on satire, underlining that, despite being a slippery term, its main objective is "to display the most despicable aspects of the objects [it] aim[s] at criticizing" (204-205), in this case, that of the conventional representation of the Irish, nuclear, patriarchal, Catholic family. For this reason Elices highlights the difficulty of finding texts that directly satirise the family due to the fact that the objects of satire are usually issues of a socio-political nature. Nonetheless the chosen texts, Anne Harverty's *One Day as a Tiger* (1998), Mark Macauley's *The House of Slamming Doors* (2010) and Justin Quinn's *Merrion* (2013), by providing satirical representations of dysfunctional families, criticise the excesses of the Celtic Tiger period.

Finally, Rosa González-Casademont's contribution, "Representation of Family Tropes and Discourses in Contemporary Irish-Themed Cinema" explores family tropes in Irish and Irish-themed films (films with an Irish theme and setting though produced with foreign investment) from the 1980s to the 2010s. The opening of the chapter offers a thorough overview of the characteristics of the Irish film industry and how these inevitably influence both the ideological and thematic paradigms of its production. The general trend is that mainstream film –due to the influence and processes of globalisation whereby the local characteristics are stereotyped or even effaced so that they may be identified as either "typically Irish" or universal, usually do not offer critical approaches on issues revolving around family dysfunction. Critical engagement is more frequently found in low-budget films with very limited distribution. From this perspective, González-Casademont's analysis of Margaret Cokery's 2009 film *Eamon,* dealing with young, incompetent parenting, provides stimulating insights. Nonetheless, González-Casademont also offers insightful readings of filmic productions by well-known Irish filmmakers such as Jim Sheridan, or of Celtic Tiger comedies, which pinpoint socio-economic changes which, in turn, affect family relations as well as the concept of the family itself.

The volume closes with three interviews, one with writer Emer Martin, conducted by Altuna-García de Salzar, and the last two with filmmakers Jim Sheridan and his daughter, Kirsten Sheridan, conducted by González-Casademont. These interviews offer first-hand impressions on how family dysfunctionality feature in Irish contemporary literature and film, complementing thus the readings of these artists' works explored in the volume.

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All in all, *Family and Dysfunction in Contemporary Irish Narrative and Film* provides a thorough overview of how the family –as an institution and metaphor for the Irish Republic and Irishness– has more often than not been portrayed as dysfunctional –thus revealing how, in fact, the discourse sustaining the ideal Irish family as a construct was a constraining force and therefore contested, at least artistically, in various ways. Due to the scope of the literary and filmic texts explored, the volume offers an overwhelming amount of information on the narrative and films produced in the last four decades. From this perspective, it could even be considered as a critical anthology of the literary and filmic production in Ireland from the 1980s to the present.

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EVA FIGES' WRITINGS: A JOURNEY THROUGH TRAUMA

Silvia Pellicer-Ortín
Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2015.
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What is most controversial about contemporary trauma fiction is the paradoxical nature of trauma representation and presentation. Dori Laub and Daniel Podell argue that "only a special kind of art, which we shall designate 'the art of trauma' can begin to achieve a representation of that which defies representation in both inner and outer experience" (1995: 992). Similarly, Shoshana Felman and Dori Laub cogently argue that, in accessing trauma, art and literature play a primary role "as a precocious mode of witnessing —of accessing reality— when all other modes of knowledge are precluded" (1991: xx). Silvia Pellicer-Ortín's *Eva Figes' Writings: A Journey through Trauma* (2015) is a book among many of the last few years that give much-needed attention to the representation of trauma and ways of coping with trauma. The book mainly focuses on the traumatic experiences of the Holocaust and ways of coping with trauma in Eva Figes' writings, especially in *Winter Journey* (1967), *Konek Landing* (1972), *Little Eden: A Child at War* (1978), *Tales of Innocence and Experience: An Exploration* (2004), and *Journey to Nowhere: One Woman Looks for the Promised Land* (2008). Pellicer-Ortín's distinct study has three main arguments. The first is that trauma studies are the perfect means to analyse the representation of individual and collective traumatic affects not only in fictional but also autobiographical works in which particular narrative techniques are used. The second is that the representation of the Holocaust and of Jewish identity in Figes' works address ethical and historical questions. Finally, the

study argues that Figes' writings present us with the evolution of the forms of coping with trauma, which is germane to the alteration in the forms of representation. Pellicer-Ortín's book analyses Figes' writings in terms of the evolution of narrative techniques which resonate with different stages of traumatic affects; from acting out or repetition compulsion towards healing or working through. It is this approach of the book that makes it thought provoking and different from earlies studies of Figes' writings. Also, the wider grouping and inclusiveness of the book is indicative of how comprehensive and illustrative it is not only for literature but also for trauma studies scholars.

The book is distinctive for how it reads the evolution of narrative techniques in Figes' writings as mirroring the developmental stages of the trauma of the Holocaust from acting out towards working through. Pellicer-Ortín argues that there is a relationship between "the Modernist techniques and the fragmented aesthetics informing Figes' narratives of the 1960s with the process of acting out" (5). Further, she draws a correlation between the autobiographical and historical turn in Figes' oeuvre from the 1970s onwards with attempts at working through trauma. Also, she argues that Figes moves from stream-of-consciousness technique towards political memoirs, which demonstrates that Figes manages to verbalize her individual traumatic experiences of the Holocaust inextricably connected with collective wounds.

Chapter One provides us with the theoretical aspects of trauma studies in their relation to the analysis of literary works. In this regard, the book adopts trauma theory based on a psychological understanding of trauma proposed by its forerunners such as Sigmund Freud, Josef Breuer and Pierre Janet and carries the research over into literary trauma theory which has been developing since the 1990s. Pellicer-Ortín draws attention to the fact that although interest in trauma studies started with the after-effects of traumatic events such as the Holocaust, the Vietnam War, and the Gulf War, it has now extended to more individual forms of trauma (13). More importantly, she underlines the belief in the agency of literature in healing trauma (53).

Chapters Two and Three are devoted to Figes as a child survivor of the Holocaust and a writer articulating her wounds. Chapter Two provides us with Figes' biographical account, career, the literary context she was writing in and the writers who influenced her work. Chapter Three presents us with an overview of Figes' literary production inclusive of non-fictional and fictional texts in order to provide a picture of her literary world which comprises various styles ranging from nouveau-romanesque to historiographic metafictions. The remaining sections of Pellicer-Ortín's study are an inquiry into Figes' five novels which portray a journey from acting out towards working through trauma.

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In Chapter Four, the initial phase of the journey takes the reader to the acting out phase of trauma as represented in the self-fragmentedness of the male characters in two nouveau-romanesque novels, *Winter Journey*, the story of Janus Stobbs, a veteran suffering from PTSD, and *Konek Landing*, the story of Stefan Konek, suffering from traumatic memories. Outlining two main approaches to the representation of the Holocaust —the realist and anti-realist traditions—, Pellicer-Ortín argues that Figes' *Winter Journey* and *Konek Landing* reject the realistic representations of trauma and employ the experimental language of the Modernists instead (104). In Pellicer-Ortín's words, the pivotal element of *Winter Journey* is the duality between story time and narrative time: "the 'action' that takes place in *Winter Journey* develops along one single day, while the narration is full of digressions and analepses or flashbacks, connecting an ordinary day in the present of Janus and his past experiences" (107). In this way, the novel is divorced from conventional time sequence. Pellicer-Ortín also states that the novel has recourse to narrative techniques ranging from free association of ideas to direct and indirect interior monologues, ellipses, anachronisms, anaphora, anacoluthon, and the figurative use of images (111-120). Similar to *Winter Journey*, *Konek Landing* revolves around the acting out phase through its employment of fragmentation, dislocation, intertextual allusions, and the blurring of spatio-temporal boundaries. Thus, Pellicer-Ortín brilliantly outlines the common points of both novels: information gaps, disrupted temporality, contradictory discourses, stream-of-consciousness technique, and failure to work through trauma (153-154).

Chapter Five focuses on Figes' *Little Eden* and *Tales of Innocence and Experience* which are more concerned with healing trauma by encountering and transmitting the past. Pellicer-Ortín argues that, in both of these autobiographical texts, the author-narrator remembers her childhood and adolescence characterized by the traumatic impact of the Holocaust. With the publication of *Little Eden*, Figes verbalizes her pain while in *Tales of Innocence and Experience*, she goes one step further and presents the transmission of her traumatic past to her granddaughter under the guise of story-telling. As Pellicer-Ortín states, *Little Eden* "interweaves the local history of Cirencester, the town Figes' family moved to when they arrived in England, with the ever-present experience of war and childhood, focalized from the perspective of the adult Figes" (169) while *Tales of Innocence and Experience* revolves around "a grandmother telling her granddaughter stories combined with her memories of the Holocaust, her migration, and the tense relationship with her mother, amongst other traumatic experiences" (185). Although different, Pellicer-Ortín underlines her argument that both of these novels are salient examples of "scriptotherapy", a way of healing through the act of writing (201). *Tales of Innocence and Experience* is different from *Little Eden* in that the author-narrator's familial bonds are strengthened whereby she gains the power to heal her wounds (201).

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Chapter Six reads Figes' *Journey to Nowhere* as the last step of the journey in which Figes presents us with the healing of the trauma of the Holocaust. The novel achieves this by covering a wide range of events and countries such as England, Germany, the US, and Israel, and by blending various genres such as history, testimony, memoir, biography, and political essay (238). By using the story of Edith, her family maid, Figes represents the Jews surviving the Holocaust and moving to Israel because of the Zionist cause (203). Pellicer-Ortín describes the novel as "a limit-case autobiography", a blending of autobiography, biography, memoir, history, and testimony whereby not only individual traumatic memories are transformed into narrative memories but also collective and national traumatic stories are verbalized and dealt with (225).

In conclusion, Pellicer-Ortín's study is of considerable scholarly value showing as it does the evolution in Figes' literary representation of trauma, which is in accordance with the different stages of trauma from acting out towards working through. There are some typographical errors in the book which do not interrupt the flow of reading. Although students new to trauma studies may find some of the chapters difficult to understand, Pellicer-Ortín's study enhances our understanding of literary representations of traumatic experiences and ways of coping with them, especially the Holocaust and its after-effects as represented in Figes' works.

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VICTORIANOMANIA: REIMAGINING, REFASHIONING, AND REWRITING VICTORIAN LITERATURE AND CULTURE

Simonetta Falchi, Greta Perletti, Maria Isabel Romero Ruiz, eds.
Milan: FrancoAngeli, 2015.
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As stated in the introduction, this volume aims to gain insight into the manifold ways in which Victorian culture can be revisited and reimagined from a contemporary perspective. While the focus of attention is necessarily the Victorian period, one of the main characteristics of this collection is that it regards the term Victorian in a broad sense, encompassing all the literature and culture of the nineteenth-century, as well as moving beyond the geographic boundaries of England. Bearing in mind the postmodern origins of Neo-Victorianism, this volume thus defends an inclusive rather than an exclusive approach to the phenomenon, as long as Neo-Victorian manifestations present a self-conscious engagement with the act of revising and reinterpreting the past. Given the current proliferation of texts of diverse natures adapting the Victorian past and the increasing interest in the academic discipline of Neo-Victorian Studies since the publication of novels like Jean Rhys' *Wide Sargasso Sea* (1966) and John Fowles' *The French Lieutenant's Woman* (1967), which sanctioned the beginning of Neo-Victorian discourses, this book acknowledges the importance of some ground-breaking critical volumes previously published in the field of Neo-Victorianism, such as Robin Gilmour's *Rereading Victorian Fiction* (2000), Cora Kaplan's *Victoriana: Histories, Fictions, Criticism* (2007), Rosario Arias and Patricia Pulham's *Haunting and Spectrality in Neo-Victorian Fiction: Possessing the Past* (2009), Ann Heilmann and Mark Llewellyn's *Neo-Victorianism: The Victorians in*

the Twenty-First Century (2010), Nadine Boehm-Schnitker and Susanne Gruss' *Neo-Victorian Literature and Culture: Immersions and Revisitations* (2014), and the monothematic volumes within the Neo-Victorian Series edited by Marie-Luise Kohlke and Christian Gutleben, which have been published regularly since 2010.

All the articles collected in this volume comprise analyses of contemporary texts of different genres, ranging from novels and films to digital rewritings, which share a self-conscious engagement with diverse aspects of Victorian discourses, but which also reflect upon how processes of repossession can shed light on how to make sense of our contemporary reality. In this respect, as a result of the emphasis placed on metafiction, the fragmentation of truth, and the politics of representation in Neo-Victorian fiction, the critical theory of postmodernism is often regarded as the theoretical framework in which Neo-Victorian discourses are grounded, especially as the earliest studies focused on contemporary reappropriations of the Victorian tradition —like John Kucich and Dianne F. Sadoff's *Victorian Afterlife: Postmodern Culture Rewrites the Nineteenth-Century* (2000) and Christian Gutleben's *Nostalgic Postmodernism: The Victorian Tradition and the Contemporary British Novel* (2001)— followed a postmodern approach. In tune with the concern about the incomplete quality of truth that characterises postmodernism, this volume underscores how Neo-Victorian texts often bring to the fore those marginalised or deviant voices that were silenced in Victorian times, but also underpins how Neo-Victorian adaptations present a dualistic approach, as these textual reinterpretations of the past look back in time either through subversive criticism or through nostalgic compliance.

Some of the articles included in this collection highlight the critical approach towards the ethical and social discourses pertaining to the Victorian period that Neo-Victorian textualities often present. As a case in point, Andrzej Diniejko's article focuses on John Fowles' *The French Lieutenant's Woman* as an early representative of Neo-Victorian fiction and as a postmodern metahistorical novel, which disrupts stereotypical notions about the period and criticises its limitations, while it also emphasises the existentialist message that individuals should struggle against determinism, and instead, advance to freedom through self-awareness. In her interpretation of Sarah Waters' novels *Affinity* and *Fingersmith*, Maria Isabel Romero analyses how the author resorts to the Victorian past as suggestive of the silent discourse that has determined same-sex relationships in order to reconstruct a new sexual and gender identity for lesbian women based on multiplicity and diversity, which also serves the purpose of questioning the sexual politics of the postmodern era. Within the context of the movement of steampunk —which reinterprets the Victorian era through the incorporation of contemporary elements, such as equality of gender roles and cross-dressing— Marta Alonso provides a

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comparative analysis of the character of Mina Harker in Bram Stoker's *Dracula* and Stephen Norrington's film *The League of Extraordinary Gentlemen*. Noticing how the steampunk movement reproduces Victorian values, but also adapts them to contemporary ideals, Marta Alonso plausibly argues that, if Mina is characterised as the emerging epitome of the New Woman in Stoker's novel, in Norrington's film she is physically portrayed through cross-dressing in order to suggest her eminently masculine features. Francesca Di Blasio focuses on Emma Tenant's novel *Two Women of London: The Strange Case of Ms Jekyll and Mrs Hyde*, which involves a reinterpretation of the male fictional world of Stevenson's classic, rewriting it from a female perspective and endowing it with a female protagonist, but also transforming the Victorian dichotomy between good and evil in Stevenson's text into the postmodern obsession with beauty and physical decadence. Pilar Somacarrera analyses Margaret Atwood's *Alias Grace* as a historical novel whereby Atwood explores Victorian Canada through its Scottish literary and political legacy, taking Walter Scott's novels as a model to follow, with the ultimate purpose of amalgamating different texts and documents in order to give voice to hidden historical testimonies of individuals, in particular within the private sphere of women. In her study of the Egyptian writer Ahdaf Soueif's novel *The Map of Love*, Silvia Lutzoni identifies the ambivalent attitude of postcolonial writers regarding Western Victorian canons. Being educated in Victorian literature, Soueif does not intend to undermine the Western literary canon, but to bring to light those texts that remain silent, thus supplying an alternative version of history and creating a fusion between Eastern and Western traditions. According to Silvia Lutzoni, in *The Map of Love*, the aesthetic values of Victorian literature are confirmed, but its imperialistic discourse is necessarily subverted. Through the study of Neo-Victorian films such as Christopher Nolan's *The Prestige* and Neil Burger's *The Illusionist*, Alessandra Violi focuses on the metaphors of fakery and magic explored in these films to bring attention to the inherently deceptive quality of Neo-Victorianism, owing to its necessary distortion of the Victorian past through contemporary preoccupations, and to place emphasis on the processes of reflection and reconfiguration of our present in the light of a Victorian past which was left unexpressed but which still inhabits our time as an anachronism.

By contrast, the rest of articles collected in this volume focus on texts that revisit the Victorian era through unquestioning reinterpretations, placing a strong emphasis on nostalgia and the aesthetic portrayal of the Victorian past. Anna Stevenson examines the depiction of Victorian women in film musicals, such as Baz Lurhmann's *Moulin Rouge*, Tim Burton's *Sweeney Todd*, and Tom Hooper's *Les Misérables*, through the recurrent use that directors make of the metaphor of the caged bird, which underlines the constraints placed on women at the time, but leaves Victorian gender roles unquestioned. In her article about Andrew Davies'

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film adaptation of Charles Dickens' *Little Dorrit*, Simonetta Falchi underscores the simplified attitude towards gender issues that this film mostly presents —regardless of a veiled reference to Miss Wade's possible homosexuality— together with its neglect of the social discourses tackled in Dickens' novel, since, according to Falchi, this adaptation mostly seeks to reproduce the glorious aura of the Victorian past. Claudia Cao focuses on *Great Expectations* as the most frequently adapted of Dickens' novels, and emphasises how fan communities rewrite literary classics, as in the case of the Twitter version of *Great Expectations.* In Claudia Cao's view, in these communities, the reader becomes a consumer as well as a producer, bringing attention to secondary characters or subplots, rewriting the novel through colloquial language, and underlining aspects such as the comic, sensational, and gothic elements of the original novel. Nonetheless, Cao also emphasises the superficial quality characterising these Neo-Victorian adaptations of *Great Expectations* emerging in the web, which, in her view, disregard the social criticism pervading the original text. In her article on Susanna White's and Cary Fukunaga's recent film adaptations of Charlotte Brontë's novel *Jane Eyre*, Sarah R. Wakefield notices how these Neo-Victorian texts regard the affair between Jane Eyre and Edward Rochester as their main focus of attention, and even though they portray the character of Bertha Mason in a pitiful way in comparison with Brontë's original text, they still tend to silence her, thus paying no heed to the centrality that early Neo-Victorian adaptations, such as Jean Rhys' *Wide Sargasso Sea*, had attached to Rochester's first wife.

This collection of articles is a significant contribution to the field of Neo-Victorianism, particularly because, instead of favouring a theoretical approach, like many previous compilations in this area, this volume presents a series of case studies and interpretations of Neo-Victorian texts of an eminently practical nature that put to the test the tenets of Neo-Victorianism. Likewise, this book favours a broad concept of the term Neo-Victorian, comprising all sorts of textualities set in the nineteenth-century, bridging the gaps between high and low culture, and drawing attention to processes of appropriation and self-reflexivity through a postmodern approach. However, in spite of envisioning Neo-Victorianism as encompassing any works set in the nineteenth-century, this collection overlooks prolific contemporary adaptations of the works of indispensable nineteenth-century authors, such as Jane Austen, Emily Brontë, Arthur Conan Doyle, H.G. Wells or Oscar Wilde, to name a few; it does not bestow much attention on some literary genres, such as science fiction and the detective novel, which arose precisely at the time, while it also omits the study of contemporary writers that have published works with significant Neo-Victorian traits, such as A.S. Byatt and Peter Ackroyd, or even Anne Perry and Susan Hill. And yet, this collection can be regarded as a representative compilation addressing different kinds of Neo-

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Victorian textualities, and should be welcomed for hinting at the significant dualistic assumption that Neo-Victorian texts look back to the Victorian past either through a critical approach giving voice to silenced discourses at the time or with the mere aim of recreating the appealing aesthetics of the period to suit contemporary audiences.

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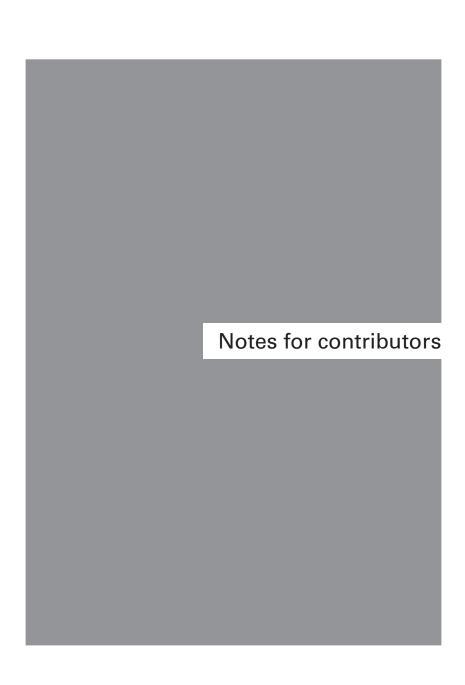
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Notes for contributors

NOTES FOR CONTRIBUTORS

Miscelánea: A Journal of English and American Studies is a double-blind peer-reviewed journal published twice a year by the Department of English and German Philology, University of Zaragoza, Spain. In addition to the printed version of the journal, current and back issues of the journal are available online at the following web site:

Miscelánea publishes articles on English language and linguistics, on literatures written in English, on thought, cinema and cultural studies from the English-speaking world.

How to contribute

Unsolicited contributions, in English or Spanish, should be unpublished (and not being considered for publication elsewhere).

The recommended length for articles is of **6,000** to **8,000** words.

Authors are expected to upload their anonymous contributions on the journal webpage.

An abstract of no more than 200 words should also be provided, together with five key words and a translation into Spanish when possible.

Reviews are also accepted of books that are of general interest in the field of English studies and that have been published within the last four years (recommended length: **1,500** words). They should not only be a mere description of the contents of the book, but should also provide an explanation

of its contribution to the field within which it belongs. Reviews will also be refereed.

Notes (brief reports on language, literature, history and lexicography) are also accepted.

Invited (non-refereed) contributions from leading scholars will be acknowledged as such.

There will be no restrictions placed on authors' use of their material for reprints or other publications as long as their first publication is acknowledged.

Reviewing process

Papers may be published if they receive favourable reports from readers who are specialists in the area. Every article is evaluated anonymously by a minimum of two referees, one at least belonging to a university other than that of Zaragoza. Readers will not be apprised of the authorship of these articles. The authorship of the reports will also be confidential, though their purport may be communicated to the contributors concerned if so desired.

Readers will be required to weigh up the articles that are sent to them and make out as soon as possible a written report describing the article in terms of the points itemized in an evaluation form. In the case of articles that have not been accepted or need revision, an additional report will be made out indicating the reasons for non-acceptance, or the changes to be made as the case may be.

Selection of contributions

The criteria for selecting unsolicited contributions will be basically: their global interest and originality, their theoretical and methodological rigour, the development of a well defined thesis, the quality of their style and the general observance of the norms required of work of an academic nature. The papers submitted should evince serious academic work contributing new knowledge or innovative critical perspectives on the subject in question. Articles that are of a merely popularising nature will not be accepted.

Although every effort will be made to publish contributions that have received favourable reports, the Editors reserve the right to make a further and final selection when the number of contributions with favourable reports is in excess of the number of articles that can be conveniently published in one issue of the Journal. In the case of partially negative reports as well as positive ones on the same article, the final decision will lie with the discretion of the Editors, who will weigh up the reports and the general interest of the subject matter of the article. Additional reports may also be sought.

The articles submitted should stick to the Publication Guidelines included in this volume (see below). Manuscripts not conforming to these guidelines will be returned to the authors for revision. The Editors may correct clerical or factual errors and introduce stylistic corrections without further notice. No off-prints are supplied. The authors will receive a copy of the journal.

For additional information, contact the Editors, Sonia Baelo Allué and María José Luzón Marco, at the following address or via e-mail:

Sonia Baelo Allué (literature, film and cultural studies)
María José Luzón Marco (language and linguistics)

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PUBLICATION GUIDELINES FOR CONTRIBUTORS

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Double quotation marks should be used for citations. Single quotes may be used to draw attention to a particular item in the text. Italics are used for foreign words, or for emphasis. References in the text to publications should include the author's surname, the year of publication, and, if necessary, page numbers, as in the following examples:

"…narrative to their function" (Labov and Waletzky 1967: 12).

…following Blakemore (1987: 35),…

…perform a distinctive function in discourse (Blakemore 1987).

…this issue has received a lot of attention by relevance theorists (Blakemore 1987, 1992; Wilson and Sperber 1993).

Should part of the original text be omitted, this will be made clear by inserting […], NOT (…).

Bibliographical references

Bibliographical references should be included in alphabetical order at the end of the manuscript and under the heading WORKS CITED. Authors' full first names should be used unless the authors themselves customarily use only initials. Set the author's last name(s) in small caps. References to two or more works by the same author in a single year should be accompanied by a lower-case a, b, etc. after the year of publication, both in the reference list and in citations in the text. References to books should include the place of publication and the publisher's name, and references to articles in journals should include volume, issue number (if necessary) and page numbers. Titles of books and journals will be written in italics. Titles of articles and of book chapters will be placed in double inverted commas.

Examples:

Monographs:

Author's Surnames(s), Author's first name(s). Year. *Title in italics*. Place: Publisher.

Author's Surnames(s), Author's first name(s). (Year of 1st edition) Year of edition actually used. *Title in italics*. Place: Publisher.

Editor's Surnames(s), Editor's first name(s). (ed.) Year. *Title in italics*. Place: Publisher.

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Author's Surname(s), Author's first name(s). Year. *Title in italics*. Trans. Translator's initials. Translator's surname(s). Place: Publisher.

Chapter or article in a monograph:

If only one chapter or article has been used:

Author's Surname(s), Author's first name(s). Year. "Title in double inverted commas". In Editor's surname(s), Editor's first name(s) (ed.) *Title of monograph in italics*. Place: Publisher: 00-00.

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Article in a periodical or journal:

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Examples:

Gerlach, John. 1989. "The Margins of Narrative: The Very Short Story. The Prose Poem and the Lyric". In Lohafer, Susan and Jo Ellyn Clarey (eds.) *Short Story Theory at a Crossroads.* Baton Rouge: Louisiana U.P.: 74-84.

Neale, Steve. 1992. "The Big Romance or Something Wild? Romantic Comedy Today". *Screen* 33 (3): 284-299.

Safran, Steve. 2007. "E&P: VT paper should be considered for Pulitzer". <http://www.lostremote.com/index.php?tag=virginia-tech>. Accessed July 25, 2008.

"Stars Slate Bush at Relief Event". 2005. BBC News. (September 19). <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/entertainment/4260182.stm>. Accessed February 21, 2010.

Turbide, Diane. 1993. "A Literary Trickster: Thomas King Conjures up Comic Worlds". *Maclean's* (May 3): 43-44.

Williams, Tennessee. 1983. *La gata sobre el tejado de zinc caliente.* Trans. A. Diosdado. Madrid: Ediciones MK.

The following norms should also be taken into account:

• Notes, which should appear before the Works Cited list, should be as few and short as possible, and their corresponding numbers in the main text should be typed as superscripts.

- Additional comments should appear in between long dashes: (—) rather than (-); —this is an example—, leaving no spaces in between the dashes and the text within them.
- There should be no full stops after interrogation and exclamation marks.
- Inverted commas should never appear after punctuation marks (eg. "this is correct", but "this isn't.").
- Current (CG Times or Times New Roman) typefaces should be used, and special symbols should be avoided as much as possible.
- "&" should be avoided whenever possible.
- 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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- ISOC Revistas de Ciencias Sociales y Humanidades del CSIC
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