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USING A FREE CORPUS TOOL FOR TIME-EFFICIENT FEEDBACK ON ENGLISH AS A FOREIGN LANGUAGE REPORTS

USO DE UNA HERRAMIENTA DE CORPUS LIBRE PARA OFRECER RETROALIMENTACIÓN EFICIENTE EN LA CLASE DE INGLÉS COMO LENGUA EXTRANJERA

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Abstract

English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners often struggle with some of the elements and features of text composition, such as conventions, socio-cultural aspects like hedging, degree of formality or synonyms. This paper aims to provide, by way of exemplification, the application of a corpus-aided technique that helps teachers determine whether general task completion has been achieved in order to identify learners' deficiencies in writing. This method was employed to consider lexical range (i.e. synonyms), cohesive devices and hedging strategies, including modal verbs, in the participants' written outputs, a total of 93, in a higher education EFL classroom. To this end, the tool LexTutor (Cobb n.d.) was used to explore the corpus. The data gathered have been analysed following a quantitative approach. Findings indicate that, on average, learners' productions met the indications in the instructions. Nevertheless, there was a tendency to use lower-level or simpler structures and words rather than opting for language exploration, thus prioritising accuracy. The present study raises the possibility that EFL teachers can offer general class feedback on students' productions promptly and efficiently.

Keywords: corpus-based analysis, English-language classroom, writing skills, text analysis, report-writing.

Resumen

El alumnado de inglés como lengua extranjera (ILE) suele tener dificultades con algunos de los elementos y características de la composición de textos, como las convenciones, los aspectos socioculturales como son las estructuras evasivas, el grado de formalidad o los sinónimos. Este trabajo pretende ofrecer, a modo de ejemplo, la aplicación de una técnica asistida por corpus que ayuda al profesorado a determinar si se ha completado la tarea para localizar las deficiencias de los alumnos en la escritura. Este método se empleó para analizar la variedad léxica (es decir, los sinónimos), la cohesión textual y las estrategias evasivas, incluidos los verbos modales, en las producciones escritas de los participantes, un total de 93, en un aula de ILE de educación superior. Para ello, se utilizó la herramienta LexTutor (Cobb s.f.) para analizar el corpus. Los datos recogidos se han analizado siguiendo un enfoque cuantitativo. Los resultados indican que, generalmente, las producciones de los alumnos cumplían las indicaciones de las instrucciones. No obstante, se observó una tendencia a utilizar estructuras y palabras de nivel inferior al deseado o más sencillas en lugar de optar por la exploración del lenguaje, priorizando así la precisión. El presente estudio plantea la posibilidad de que los profesores de inglés como lengua extranjera puedan ofrecer una retroalimentación general en clase sobre las producciones de los alumnos de forma rápida y eficaz.

Palabras clave: análisis basado en corpus, aula de lengua inglesa, competencia escrita, análisis de textos, redacción de informes.

1. Introduction

Writing is considered one of the basic language skills (Graham 2019; Fitria 2020) that students need to master in order to attain communicative competence successfully (e.g. Cabezuelo Vivo and Pavón 2019; Graham 2019), a skill which is harder for non-native speakers (e.g. Hyland 2008; Furtina et al. 2016; Gomez-Laich et al. 2019). Nevertheless, the Spanish education system often overlooks text composition in language teaching modules despite being part of the national curriculum, leading to undergraduate students being untrained in this respect (Solé et al. 2005). Upon reaching tertiary level education, students are required to produce a host of writing types or genres, namely dissertations, reviews, or reports, among others. As Hyland (2006) and Mauranen (1993) pinpoint in their respective work, writings and, thus, genres can be considered a social construct on the grounds that they follow specific conventions and paradigms in which both the reader and the writer are trained for effective communication. A text genre is a type of text, whether written or oral, with a communicative intent (Bhatia 1993).

When the reader is acquainted with the genre (i.e., text type), certain linguistic patterns are expected. This prepares the reader to anticipate the type of content through the formal features of the text (Hyland 2006, 2008). In this vein, students are required to master the recurring patterns and constructs in genres common at university level, such as reports (Gardner and Nesi 2013; Wirantaka 2016), and to compose written texts in the academic context with a certain level of proficiency (Coffin et al. 2003; Castelló et al. 2012; Gardner and Nesi 2013). In other words, high-quality writings on a variety of topics and following the different conventional forms of text types are expected in a higher education context (Sarani and Talati-Baghsiahi 2017). These, in turn, are needed in the labour market (Whittaker et al. 2011; Graham 2019) which is becoming increasingly demanding and competitive in relation to advanced written communication skills (Walkinshaw et al. 2017; Gomez-Laich et al. 2019; Ferretti and Graham 2019). In addition, English proficiency standards have become pivotal by virtue of globalisation and other social factors (Dickson 2009; Carrió-Pastor 2016; Dearden 2016; Mcdougald 2019; Aguilar et al. 2020; Sun and Lan 2021). Thus, writing has progressively acquired a relevant role in the academic world to prepare students for the professional world (Lasagabaster et al. 2014; Bellés-Fortuño 2016; Wirantaka 2016; King 2018). Therefore, some direct instruction on formal features might be needed in the classroom to attain higher writing proficiency skills (File and Adams 2010; Sarani and Talati-Baghsiahi 2017; Graham 2019).

Higher education institutions require students to demonstrate linguistic proficiency and acquired knowledge generally via written text (Coffin et al. 2003; M. H. Chen et al. 2015; Marulanda and Martínez García 2017). However, even though high-literate contexts, such as universities, demand fluent command as well as sophisticated and accurate use of the written language, learners are rarely offered the chance to practise writing skills (Castelló et al. 2012). Instead, academic writing is, most of the time, part of an assessed assignment (Applebee and Langer 2011). In fact, writing skills have often been relegated to the language classroom and neglected in other branches of knowledge, thus leading to the scarcity of direct instruction to develop writing competences, even in primary and secondary education (Graham 2019). That is to say, the student is expected to learn how to communicate exclusively in the language classroom, where instruction and practice for this is usually carried out, but not elsewhere. In consequence, there are high expectations in the students' written outputs, although little guidance is provided.

In the Spanish general education system, as a study by Solé et al. (2005) shows, complex text-elaboration tasks are scarce —albeit key to ascertaining students' knowledge acquisition (Solé et al. 2005). Therefore, direct instruction might be needed to build students' writing skills, such as the construction of their identities

as writers (Graham 2019), among others. Special attention has traditionally been paid to essays as the academic writing genre par excellence (Coffin et al. 2003) in which learners express their knowledge, becoming at the same time an assessment tool for learners' achievement in the classroom used to measure accuracy, structure, content, and style. Learners' writing skills and their proficiency and fluency in text-writing can only be measured when a certain level of command is demonstrated in composing different genres (Graham 2019), given that the communicative goal of each text-type is different, as are the syntactic structures, vocabulary and degree of formality, among other features.

Report-writing can be challenging for Spanish learners of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) enrolled in a Translation and Interpreting degree course since they are not required to produce this type of writing at lower-level language courses or during the compulsory education stages. Bearing in mind the elements mentioned above, which are key to successful formal and academic writing, this paper focuses on a corpus-based analysis of student report-writing with the purpose of facilitating lecturers' general feedback provision to students regarding task completion and identifying common shortcomings in text composition at B2 level in an EFL formal higher education setting. This type of pedagogical approach has been gaining momentum over the last decade (Poole 2016). This study aims to contribute to the literature in this field by building and employing corpora tools to evaluate task completion in participants' written productions. A corpus has been compiled from students' reports to analyse the quantitative data used to detect shortcomings. The present article does not advocate a focus on grammatical or lexical inconsistencies. Instead, attention is paid to the use of certain lexical items that determine report task completion, such as synonyms, connectors, and hedges. This investigation has focused on these three items for the following reasons. Firstly, students were requested to use their own words as far as possible, avoiding those provided by the task instructions, to show their vocabulary range, namely their ability to resort to synonymy and other paraphrasing techniques. Secondly, a report is a textual genre characterised by clarity and clear organisation; hence, the relevance of using appropriate connectors. Finally, considering that B2 report-writing tasks require students to provide recommendations or suggestions, measuring the use of hedging strategies to tone down proposed courses of action and achieve a more persuasive tone was appropriate. This study was conducted with students attending a language-based module at a Spanish university during the COVID-19 pandemic period during which a hybrid teaching methodology was implemented. For this investigation, 93 students participated submitting their reports for analysis. This study might be of interest to teachers who seek to find less time-consuming alternatives for obtaining an overview of their students' performance in order to provide general feedback.

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2. Literature Review

The literature on the importance of writing skills for EFL undergraduate students has highlighted shortcomings in the education system and deficiencies in the classroom, which directly affect learners' production quality in this competence. Many studies have concluded that work is still needed in this area. According to Maralunda and Martínez García (2017), students are unfamiliar with the use of the conventional features of written language. Furthermore, recent studies have shown that when teaching writing skills in the EFL classroom, the focus has traditionally been placed on the accuracy of students' written output (Hyland 2006; Lahuerta 2018) rather than on text analysis, the process of text production or the organisation of ideas (M. H. Chen et al. 2015). Students' lack of awareness of the ins and outs of text composition, along with the lack of in-classroom practice, results in written productions that are not up to higher-education standards (Solé et al. 2005). Previous studies suggest the need to train students in writing competence as they should be ready to meet given rhetorical demands in tertiary education (Poole 2016).

Writing skills go beyond typing ideas into words on a blank document. In order to successfully master the versatile art of text composition, the writer must acquire specific sub-skills related to text elaboration and master specific features governing the genre before composing a coherent and cohesive written whole (Sarani and Talati-Baghsiahi 2017). Not only does this require a high command of writing conventions and text types, but also a high level of language proficiency (Coffin et al. 2003). In order to achieve an appropriate degree of sophistication in written language, the ability to use synonyms and paraphrasing strategies, on the one hand, is essential. These are indicators of students' high command of language production when used accurately (M. H. Chen et al. 2015). On the other hand, accuracy is key for avoiding miscommunication in the same way that complex syntactic structures are pivotal in student text composition in order to show their grammatical and lexical proficiency. However, these two aspects should not be the only focus of student-written outputs, as errors are a sign of learning and progress taking place (Scrivener 2011). Instead, students should be provided with feedback on producing coherent and cohesive paragraphs that are appropriate to the context (Hyland 2006); that is to say, attention should be paid to content, appropriateness, and organisational aspects, including the use of connectors.

2.1. Synonyms

Attaining writing finesse requires scaffolding techniques, which, as Gomez-Laich et al. (2019) suggest, entails training and guidance. A number of authors have considered synonyms indispensable for successful communication, not least in

second or foreign language learning (Edmonds and Hirst 2002; Liu and Zhong 2016; Soto et al. 2017). Synonyms are not only a way to show one's language knowledge, but they also contribute to the coherence and cohesion of a text (Halliday and Hasan 1976). Using synonyms is of paramount importance for adding "variety" (Bailey 2003: 79) and accuracy to the text. Therefore, considering their value as a communication strategy for learners, their use should be encouraged within the EFL classroom. To put it another way, students need to be encouraged to refrain from using broader terms, advocating specificity instead (Yeh et al. 2007). Nevertheless, learners struggle with the use of synonyms as they are "not fully intersubstitutable" (Edmonds and Hirst 2002: 107) but rather laden with nuances (Edmonds and Hirst 2002). Synonyms in language require precision. Such intricacies of language pose a challenge to B2 learners since their language knowledge is often too limited to find the most accurate word for the context (Soto et al. 2017).

2.2. Connectors

According to the literature on teaching writing to EFL students, another aspect to take into consideration in text composition is cohesive and organisational patterns, in which connectors may have a key role. Previous research findings have proven this to be a problematic area for EFL learners (Hyland 2008; Carrió-Pastor 2013; Özbay et al. 2019) as it is concomitant with socio-cultural aspects (Mauranen 1993; Hyland 2008), i.e. traditions and patterns inherent to a specific culture and therefore susceptible to change across cultures. For instance, comparative literature suggests that connectors (e.g. "nevertheless", "furthermore", "moreover") are abundant in English texts as opposed to other languages (Hyland 2008). One possible explanation behind this might be that English places the onus of getting the message across on the writer rather than the reader and their ability to interpret or decode the message (Hinds 1987 in Hyland 2008). In regard to student text production, previous studies show that the presence of connectors is either insufficient in EFL learners' compositions or inaccurate when an attempt to include them is made. Jiménez Catalán and Ojeda Alba (2014) based their study on the use of connectors in letter writing in order to provide a diagnosis of the difficulties learners encountered using them in this type of text. The task proposed to participants in the study was to write an informal letter to a possible future host family in the UK. They concluded that connectors were either scarce or inexistent, inadequately used or irrelevant (Jiménez Catalán and Ojeda Alba 2014). Furthermore, research by Yang et al. (2012), found that EFL students did not use as many connectors in their essays when compared to native speakers' written outputs, or else overused or underused certain types of connectors.

2.3. Hedging

Several authors have turned their gaze towards modal verbs as hedging strategies in English, a socio-cultural aspect of the written language, with which EFL learners tend to struggle (Hyland 1996a; Hinkel 2005; Fraser 2010; Neary-Sundquist 2013; Yagız and Demir 2014; Demir 2018). The presence of hedges, such as modal verbs (e.g. "would", "could"), is of considerable significance in English writing for mitigating arguments (Hyland 1996a; Hinkel 2005; Ge 2015) or sounding persuasive (Hyland 1996a; 1996b) and, at the same time, establishing a cordial bond with the recipient of the text (Hyland 1996b; Neary-Sundquist 2013; Ge 2015). Ge's (2015) study shows that non-native writers overuse certain modal verbs, such as "should", and do not use "would" and "may" with the same purpose as native English speakers.

Taking into consideration the difficulties that EFL learners face when producing written outputs, namely synonymy, cohesion, and the use of modal verbs as a hedging strategy, this paper aims to answer three research questions (RQ):

1. What use is made of varied lexical items to provide an appropriate answer to the report-writing task?
2. How frequently did learners use cohesive devices in their written outputs?
3. How frequently were modal verbs used as hedging strategies in students' reports?

3. Methodology

3.1. Participants

The corpus-based technique detailed below was applied during the second half of the academic year 2020-2021 to an EFL class of students doing a Translation and Interpreting degree at Universitat Jaume I (Spain). The 93 learners enrolled in this second-term course were first-year undergraduate students who had been exposed to English throughout their primary and secondary education stages as well as during the first semester at the university. Thus, an upper-intermediate level of the language was expected in both their production and comprehension skills. In fact, according to the course plan, students must attain a B2 level in order to pass the module. No language level test was performed, as the results from the previous semester served this purpose. The majority of students were at the expected level, with the exception of seven students who had a lower level and four students who had a higher level. The learner-participant body was mostly of Spanish nationality, except for two international students of French origin.

Over the years in which they had been schooled in the compulsory stages of the Spanish education system, the students had been acquainted with the production of different text genres in English, such as essays (Coffin et al. 2003), articles, notes, or letters. Nevertheless, the learners first encountered report-writing in their first year in higher education. In designing this study, I drew from the premise that learners had an intrinsic motivation towards all aspects of language and in developing their language skills, including their writing competence, considering they had enrolled in a language-based degree of their own volition. Given that this study was conducted towards the end of the academic year, students were already —or were expected to be— familiar with the different types of writing established in the course syllabus, namely essay, article, review, letter, and report writing, as presented in the textbook *Expert First* (Bell et al. 2016), including the style and tone the writer needs to adopt in each of these categories. At this stage of the course, students had already worked with synonymy, hedges, and connectors.

3.2. Task Procedure

Considering students had composed just one report thus far on the amenities their city has to offer, further direct instruction and guidance were of paramount importance to aid them in attaining good-quality written outputs in this genre. Therefore, as a first step towards report-writing, language related to the topic was practised in the course materials. Secondly, participants were furnished with a short instructional video on the institutional virtual classroom on writing a report and aspects to bear in mind, emphasising how this genre differed from articles or essays. They were reminded that a report needs to include collected data, for example, from interviews or surveys, and the information needs to be organised in sections with subheadings. Thirdly, syntactic structures and phrases inherent to this text type were taught and reviewed as part of the course materials, including passive voice structures. Learners were expected to include adverbial clauses of reason, cause and result, and passive structures. Furthermore, a sample report was supplied to the learners for analysis and guidance prior to student report production. Fourthly, participants were encouraged to design a plan and a draft of their writing. Finally, after having studied the layout and structure of reports and common linguistic patterns appropriate for this type of formal writing and having organised their ideas on a separate paper, students were asked to write and submit a report on a different topic and with a different informative objective. In the section below, further details on the task learners had to complete are given.

The task students needed to complete consisted in analysing the benefits and drawbacks of welcoming a group of international students to our college, coupled with a final recommendation statement (Figure 1).

> Your college has been asked to accept a group of students from a different country for a couple of weeks. Your teacher has asked you to write a report. List the advantages and disadvantages of having these visitors at the school and say whether you recommend it.
>
> Write your report in 140-190 words in an appropriate style.

Figure 1. Report instructions

As part of the writing process, and to ensure task completion, students were encouraged to focus on the keywords in the task. Underlining those keywords was deemed necessary so as not to fail to include any of the elements requested; otherwise, they could not attain the highest mark in task completion (see Figure 2), which requires using a "range of vocabulary, including less common lexis". Those keywords or phrases are "group of students from a different country", "report", "advantages", "disadvantages" and "recommend". With these keywords in mind and in sight, brainstorming techniques via the class forum were promoted to furnish learners with possible ideas to include in their written reports, which replaced live interaction in the brick-and-mortar classroom. Moreover, participants were encouraged to include plausible survey results to adopt a factual tone, in line with the textual conventions of this specific genre.

Furthermore, learners were recommended to consider synonyms for those keywords provided by the task to show their "range of vocabulary". With the aim of seeking variety in terms of lexis in learners' written production, students were allowed and invited to use thesaurus and collocations dictionaries. The purpose of this was three-fold. Firstly, as a way to illustrate their understanding of the words given; secondly, to show a wide range of vocabulary; and thirdly, to demonstrate their ability to employ vocabulary-coping strategies in their written productions. These three aims are part of a bigger and broader objective: showing the students' language command and proficiency (Takač 2008; Soto et al. 2017). To that end, synonyms, when used correctly, prove students' ability to produce texts in the target language, as detailed in the introduction of this paper.

3.3. Data Collection

Data were obtained from the participants' reports. Submissions of their respective compositions were to be made in an editable text format, namely a .docx or .odt file, via the virtual classroom for later study and analysis. As a result of the considerably high enrolment rate in the subject, on the grounds that this English

B2	Content	Communicative Achievement	Organisation	Language
5	All content is relevant to the task. Target reader is fully informed.	Uses the conventions of the communicative task effectively to hold the target reader's attention and communicate straightforward and complex ideas, as appropriate.	Text is well organised and coherent, using a variety of cohesive devices and organisational patterns to generally good effect.	Uses a range of vocabulary, including less common lexis, appropriately. Uses a range of simple and complex grammatical forms with control and flexibility. Occasional errors may be present but do not impede communication.
4	*Performance shares features of Bands 3 and 5.*			
3	Minor irrelevances and/or omissions may be present. Target reader is on the whole informed.	Uses the conventions of the communicative task to hold the target reader's attention and communicate straightforward ideas.	Text is generally well organised and coherent, using a variety of linking words and cohesive devices.	Uses a range of everyday vocabulary appropriately, with occasional inappropriate use of less common lexis. Uses a range of simple and some complex grammatical forms with a good degree of control. Errors do not impede communication.
2	*Performance shares features of Bands 1 and 3.*			
1	Irrelevances and misinterpretation of task may be present. Target reader is minimally informed.	Uses the conventions of the communicative task in generally appropriate ways to communicate straightforward ideas.	Text is connected and coherent, using basic linking words and a limited number of cohesive devices.	Uses everyday vocabulary generally appropriately, while occasionally overusing certain lexis. Uses simple grammatical forms with a good degree of control. While errors are noticeable, meaning can still be determined.
0	Content is totally irrelevant. Target reader is not informed.	*Performance below Band 1.*		

Figure 2. Writing rubric. Taken from Cambridge English Assessment (2019)

course is compulsory to obtain the above-mentioned undergraduate degree, 93 reports were submitted. The aim of collecting these samples was to compile a corpus generated from students' texts for later analysis, which is detailed in the paragraph below. This corpus would be used to reveal the degree of task completion and provide general class feedback on the participants' work.

3.4. Corpora Generation

In order to analyse learners' written productions, building a corpus was deemed appropriate. For that reason, all participants' submissions had to be converted into plain text files, i.e. .txt, as this was the only format compatible with the free-access tool used for such purposes, namely LexTutor (Cobb n.d.). Subsequently, all the converted files were uploaded to the aforementioned web-based tool for list

generation. As a result, two lists were generated: one for word frequency and another for word concordance. The former was designed to obtain numerical values, whereas the latter provides examples of the words used in context. The section below focuses on analysing and interpreting the numerical values.

4. Results

This section shows the quantitative analysis of the students' written outcomes concerning content words and lexical variety, connectors, and modal auxiliary verbs used as a hedging strategy. The present study aims to present a less time-consuming alternative to obtain an overview of the students' performance in order for teachers to provide general feedback. This research article intends to do so by providing a general diagnostic on task completion by means of the compilation of a corpus; thus, focusing on a qualitative approach, the analysis of the data collected will provide a way of obtaining a general overview of students' performance that will help teachers to provide general feedback in a time-efficient manner.

Three tables were constructed from the first list created based on word frequency. First, Table 1 summarises the most relevant findings related to synonymy and content achievement in regard to task completion. Second, Table 2 illustrates how frequently connectors were used in the students' reports at this level, which also serves to analyse learners' likely shortcomings regarding organisational patterns. Third, Table 3 summarises the use of hedging modal verbs in the students' writings.

4.1. Synonymy

Table 1 below highlights the most frequent content words present in the participants' written reports, more specifically, the 37 most frequently repeated words related to the topic provided in the task, which is detailed in the methodology section of this paper. The table shows a selection of the words that were deemed relevant for the purpose of this study. The numbers related to frequency reveal that the student reports addressed the task provided in the course materials. For instance, if the task required writing a report on visiting "foreign students", the use of the words "foreign", "country", or "international" in the text would show that students indeed stuck to the task. However, if the teacher's instructions stated that students should use their own words as far as possible, high-frequency indicators of the word "foreign" reveal that most students did not resort to synonymy or paraphrasing, but instead used the word provided by the task. Nevertheless, those who use the word "country" or "international" would have followed the teacher's guidelines.

Frequent content words	Frequency (based on 93 reports)		
	Cumulative	Individual	Times
students	16.18%	2.91%	528
foreign	34.96%	0.94%	171
group	38.35%	0.82%	148
advantages	39.90%	0.76%	138
disadvantages	44.79%	0.66%	119
college	50.21%	0.57%	103
experience	54.21%	0.40%	72
language	54.60%	0.39%	71
country	55.72%	0.37%	67
learn	58.01%	0.30%	55
university	58.28%	0.27%	49
culture	58.79%	0.25%	46
exchange	60.50%	0.24%	43
accept	60.93%	0.21%	38
opportunity	61.56%	0.21%	38
recommendations	61.77%	0.21%	38
aim	62.57%	0.20%	36
main	62.77%	0.20%	36
improve	63.71%	0.18%	33
interviewed	63.89%	0.18%	33
purpose	64.77%	0.17%	31
recommendation	66.10%	0.16%	29
recommend	68.29%	0.14%	26
school	68.43%	0.14%	26
teachers	68.57%	0.14%	26
countries	69.39%	0.13%	24
cultural	69.52%	0.13%	24
student	70.04%	0.13%	24
cultures	70.30%	0.13%	23
local	70.43%	0.13%	23
languages	72.80%	0.10%	19
benefits	73.99%	0.09%	17
drawbacks	74.26%	0.09%	17
positive	74.53%	0.09%	17
beneficial	74.89%	0.09%	16
opinion	75.71%	0.08%	15
international	77.08%	0.07%	13

Table 1. Frequency of content words

The word "students" appears in first position the first table, followed by the word "foreign". Although "foreign" comes in second with 171 appearances, it is far behind the first one, i.e. "student(s)", which is present 528 times. The position of these two could have been predicted, as they take an obvious spot within the list considering the topic. The second one, albeit very common, does not always appear in concordance with the word "students". The adjective "foreign" appears as a modifier accompanying "students" in most cases, 140 times out of 171; however, at other times it collocates with "country", "countries", "culture", "cultures", "group" or "language". Considering that the phrase "group of students from a different country" was provided in the task instructions, students were expected to produce other phrases that fit the context and meet the task requirements such as "visiting students".

Furthermore, the presence of the word "foreign" in the above-mentioned word combinations reveals task achievement as well as the use of synonyms and paraphrasing strategies. In those cases in which the phrase "different country" can be read in the course materials, "foreign" was provided as a synonym. Concerning alternative wording for that phrase, the last word in Table 1 is "international", which also shows learners' ability to rephrase concepts. To put it another way, it demonstrates students' ability to resort to synonymy to show their command of the language and avoid repetition. Nevertheless, the number of times "international" was used is well below "foreign", as the former was only used 13 times and the latter 171.

Other examples worth focusing our attention on are the nouns "college", "experience", "language", "country", "University", "culture", "exchange", "opportunity", or "recommendation" along with some of their respective derivative forms, since they reveal that participants did not deviate from the task. For instance, the word "recommendation", which coupled with its plural or verb forms, shows that learners included their advice in the task, as requested. Nevertheless, a wide range of vocabulary has not been shown in many cases despite the teacher's instructions to avoid repeating the words provided by the task. The high frequency of derivative words from the verb and stem "recommend" is a case in point. Furthermore, learners had been furnished with a variety of structures to express a recommendation, such as "We have no hesitation in recommending" or "It would be advisable for X to", amongst others, which were not as frequently used as had been anticipated. Only four students included the latter in their reports. Instead, participants preferred structures they were confident with, i.e. "recommend + ing/noun/that-clause", thus showing a preference for accuracy rather than variety and complexity (see Appendix 1). Three examples (1-3) are included below by way of illustration:

(1) *I totally* ***recommend*** *accept****ing*** *the group for two weeks.* (item 11174[1])

(2) *I would* ***recommend*** *admitt****ing*** *the 50 students because in spite of the space…* (item 11182)

(3) *I would* ***recommend that*** *you accept this group because it is very unlikely…* (item 11184)

Another notable example of synonymy and wide range of vocabulary is the use of words such as "benefits", "positive [aspect(s)]", or the adjective "beneficial" to refer to those "advantages" that the task required participants to include. By the same token, the word "university" replaces "college" or "school" in the instructions to avoid repetition. Nevertheless, it can be observed in Table 1 that the word "college" was still used more often than "university" or other words that could have been employed in this context, namely "faculty" or "institution", to name a couple.

Closer inspection of the lexical items in the table reveals that those words at the top of the list, which are the most frequently used, such as "students", "foreign", "advantages", "disadvantages" or "college", are all provided by the task. This indicates that most students did not show a wide range of vocabulary by replacing those words with synonyms in their written productions. Only a small number of participants employed alternatives like "benefits", "beneficial", or "drawbacks" to express the same concepts. The words "recommend", "recommendation", "recommendations", or "opinion" show that most students included suggestions as requested by the task. However, few used alternative lexical equivalents.

As for report conventions in relation to structure, the fact that the words "aim" and "purpose" are represented among the words in Table 1 reflects that the learners followed the instructions provided in class regarding report organisation, which requires stating the objective of the writing at the outset. Interestingly, even though "main" and "aim" were used with the same frequency, which to a certain extent indicates the correlation between adjective and noun, the adjective "main" also appears accompanying the words "purpose" and "benefits". This reveals learners' lexical awareness of collocations.

4.2. Connectors

The analysis of the results regarding the use of discourse markers, summarised in Table 2 below, reveals a higher preference for simpler connectors than complex ones.

The overuse of "because" and "also" is one issue worth highlighting. According to the English Vocabulary Profile (Cambridge English Language Assessment et al. 2012), these two cohesive devices are two basic connectors frequently employed in both formal and informal contexts. While this might be a logical explanation for

Frequent connectors	Frequency (based on 93 reports)		
	Cumulative	Individual	Times
verused			
because	56.41%	0.34%	61
also	57.40%	0.32%	58
optimal average			
moreover	64.43%	0.18%	32
according to	65.78%	0.16%	29
on the one / on the other hand	67.73%	0.14%	26
since	69.91%	0.13%	24
furthermore	70.93%	0.12%	22
however	71.05%	0.12%	22
such as	71.17%	0.12%	22
therefore	73.30%	0.10%	19
in addition	75.23%	0.08%	15
due to	76.03%	0.08%	14
besides	79.14%	0.06%	10
underused			
despite	84.18%	0.03%	6
considering	87.45%	0.02%	4
thus	88.75%	0.02%	4
consequently	89.39%	0.02%	3
in spite of	91.43%	0.02%	3
owing to	93.59%	0.01%	2
for example	89.73%	0.02%	3
firstly	89.95%	0.02%	3
although	89.05%	0.02%	3
for instance	90.29%	0.02%	3
then	91.59%	0.02%	3
as a result	99.33%	0.01%	1

Table 2. Frequency of connectors

their overuse, it brings to light the need for in-class instruction and practice to raise awareness of the importance of the variety of cohesive devices in academic discourse. Such overuse raises the question of whether the learners were indeed acquainted with a wide range of linkers. Were that to be the case, this prompts another question: whether their choice lies in their self-confidence or a lack thereof. However, the next group of connectors in the table seems to be far less common

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in contrast to the first, although "moreover" and "according to" are still amongst the most frequent.

Formal addition connectors, such as "moreover" or "furthermore", seem to be two of the preferred linkers for such purposes, whereas "in addition" and "besides" lag behind on the list. Given that the tone in a report should be formal, the use of "besides" should be discouraged. This might be something to point out in general class feedback. In contrast, "moreover" and "furthermore" reveal that the register in the learners' reports was generally appropriate.

Regarding causal clauses, participants were more inclined to use "since" than "due to" or even "owing to". Therein lies another example of an absence of grammatical ambition, as these are the structures that had been presented in the unit. In other words, students showed a propensity for including those cohesive devices seen at lower levels, such as "since", to express reason in B1 (Cambridge English Language Assessment et al. 2012). Therefore, it is not surprising that those connectors in the class materials, namely "despite", "thus", "consequently", "in spite of", "owing to", or "as a result" were not as frequently used in student-written productions as anticipated. Yet, to express contrasting ideas, the participants' favourite structure was "on the one/other hand".

Concerning both task achievement and genre features, the fact that learners chose "according to" shows that they included external sources to expound and back their arguments, for instance via surveys or interviews (see Appendix 2). Sentences 4-6 contain examples of these uses extracted from the corpus:

(4) ***according to*** *most students [,] accepting the foreigners…* (item 479)

(5) ***according to*** *the opinions of our students accepting overseas students …* (item 491)

(6) ***According to*** *studies conducted …* (item 487)

Along the same lines, the fact that "such as", "for example", and "for instance" figure in the list demonstrates that learners resorted to exemplification in some cases. In analysing the use of cohesive devices, a need for genre-based further practice to build on learners' self-confidence in the language comes to light. The evaluation of the results obtained from the compiled lists, as illustrated in Table 2, reveals that students aim for accuracy when making their choices by opting for most familiar words or structures rather than newly learnt ones. In doing so, simpler cohesive devices are used. Lackadaisicalness or half-heartedness in writing might result in the opposite effect since their outputs might not conform to the level of the course syllabus. Learners should be encouraged to use a wider variety of connectors, alerting them to "discourse marker overkill", as Milton and Tsang (1993) put it. Learners should be guided to acquire the ability to express arguments logically, for which connectors are necessary. They are meant to facilitate

communication, but their overuse —or underuse— might hamper this. To ultimately master this skill, students need to find the right balance in the use and choice of cohesive devices (C. W. Chen 2006), which is conditioned by the text type they are writing.

4.3. Hedging: Modal Auxiliary Verbs

Further analysis of the corpus, which was conducted manually, showed the presence of modal auxiliary verbs used as hedging strategies in the participants' written productions. Hedges express uncertainty or inconclusiveness, sometimes deliberately as a means to sound cautious and show politeness (Hyland 1996a). Considering that a report is usually written for a superior, modal verbs to express deliberate tentativeness are expected. Nevertheless, some modal auxiliary verbs convey a high degree of certainty, namely "must" or "cannot/can't", used to express strong opinions or high probability. In Table 3 below, a low-frequency rate is reported for these two, which indicates that students generally meet the genre conventions.

Frequent modal verbs	Frequency (based on 93 reports)		
	Cumulative	Individual	Times
would	31.86%	1.21%	219
could	49.06%	0.58%	106
can	55.35%	0.37%	67
may	58.01%	0.26%	48
should	64.07%	0.18%	33
might	70.56%	0.13%	23
must	75.63%	0.08%	15
cannot / can't	92.17%	0.01%	2

Table 3. Frequency of modal verbs

Along the same lines, a high-frequency rate of "would" and "could" reveals that participants employed a cautious tone to achieve the formal style required (see Appendix 3). Sentence examples 7 and 8 below extracted from students' productions illustrate the use participants made of "would" and "could":

(7) *This report aims to explain all the long term benefits that the university* ***could*** *achieve if a group of fifty students from different countries…* (item 3510)

(8) *the students as it* ***would*** *be a memorable experience for them and* ***would*** *also favor tourism in our city and its surroundings* (item 17398)

Participants seemed to be less confident in the use in their reports of "can", "may" or "might", in that order. The difference in the frequency of use between "can" and "might" is considerable. The reason behind this might lie in the level of familiarity learners have with the language, as occurred in the case of the other elements analysed. "Can" used to express possibility falls within the A1 level contents in the CEFR, as compiled in the English Vocabulary Profile (Cambridge English Language Assessment et al. 2012), while "may" and "might" are labelled as B1.

5. Discussion

In light of the results detailed in the previous section, the findings indicate that, on average, students attained successful task completion in line with the guidelines and assessment rubrics provided, as they generally followed the instructions provided by the teacher and included relevant keywords related to the topic. Yet, even though the participants occasionally resorted to synonyms to show a wide range of language, synonymy was not as evident as expected or instructed (RQ1). Therefore, additional guidance is needed in this respect. Furthermore, whilst the students' written works did include connectors to link and arrange their ideas in a logical manner, the range was limited in so far as simple linking words were preferred (RQ2); thus, the variety of connectors seen in the course materials were not included, which would have been more in line with the proficiency level expected and with this type of formal report-writing. This might be due to the limited length of the task or the text type students were expected to compose. It can be observed that these findings in relation to the use of cohesive devices tally with previous studies, which reveal learners' difficulty in employing them in EFL contexts (C. W. Chen 2006; Lahuerta 2018), namely in formal writings such as essays (Hamed 2014). In line with results reported by Milton and Tsang (1993), our findings conclude that emphasis needs to be placed on the role of connectors in writing. The importance of connectors goes beyond the language classroom. Attention to this aspect of learners' communicative competence should be paid in all fields of knowledge to enhance learners' argumentation ability (C. W. Chen 2006) and to meet the requirements of high-literacy contexts (Mauranen 1993; Solé et al. 2005; M. H. Chen et al. 2015; Marulanda and Martínez García 2017; Hyland and Jiang 2017). To answer RQ3, the fact that the participants' written outputs contained modal verbs and hedging strategies indicates that the degree of formality and the use of tentativeness was generally correct.

All in all, these results seem to be consistent with those obtained in other research studies, which found that writing in the EFL classroom tends to be an area that

requires special attention (Hyland 2008; Gomez-Laich et al. 2019), especially in regard to (a) the relevance of lexical richness (Edmonds and Hirst 2002; Liu and Zhong 2016; Soto et al. 2017; Yeh et al. 2007) and (b) cohesive argumentation and presentation of ideas (Hyland 2008; Carrió-Pastor 2013; Jiménez Catalán and Ojeda Alba 2014). Contrary to expectations and the findings of other studies in the field indicating that non-native speakers of English find hedging structures harder (Hyland 1996a; 1996b; Hinkel 2005; Neary-Sundquist 2013; Demir 2018), this study found that many students attempted to use them (see Appendix 3). Nevertheless, further analysis of the lists compiled should be conducted to determine whether more modal verbs could have been used and whether they were used to good effect. Another finding that should be reported, as a preliminary hypothesis stemming from this study, is that learners underperform in their writings in their search for accuracy at the expense of greater sophistication.

6. Conclusion

This paper set out to evaluate task completion taking into consideration the participants' ability to use synonyms, connectors and hedging strategies. The study contributes to the field of corpus linguistics applied to pedagogical practices by applying a corpus-based method to verify task completion and achievement by first-year undergraduate students when writing reports at the B2 level.

The methodology employed in this study and its results revealed that by analysing instances of students' performances in a report-writing corpus, lecturers could improve their provision of general feedback, and students' writing skills could be enhanced. The corpus-assisted technique detailed in this paper endows teachers with a labour-saving and efficient method, which is a time-saver as it offers a general view of students' performance. This, in turn, would benefit learners, as teachers' feedback and guidelines to improve their students' writings would be furnished in a timely manner. Taken together, the results of this research support the idea that instruction on writing techniques is necessary in the EFL classroom at all levels, not least in higher education, in order to meet the particular lexico-grammatical demands of each genre (Carrió-Pastor 2013; Marulanda and Martínez García 2017; Riaz and Akhtar 2019).

This study, however, is not without its limitations. Firstly, the most significant limitation lies in the paucity of written outputs collected. A corpus of 93 writings is not considered sufficient to determine whether the results obtained apply to all B2 EFL learners within the Spanish education context, or whether they are limited to summarising the performance of the specific group of students participating in the study. Further work needs to be done in this respect.

Nevertheless, the study suggests that the methodology described can be relevant for language teachers with a large number of students in class. Secondly, it is unfortunate that the study did not consider students' report production after the teacher's comments and feedback. Future studies should focus on the students' engagement with the feedback and compare the first submission and the second after feedback provision as well as the grades obtained.

Given these findings and limitations, a natural progression of this work would be to analyse the participants' subsequent reports, evaluating to what extent the feedback and guidelines provided by the teacher are followed. Such further research should also explore whether the second written outcomes are of higher rhetorical quality and in line with tertiary education standards. The findings above provide the hypothesis for future research that EFL learners prioritise accuracy over complexity, sophistication, and exploration of a broader linguistic repertoire in their written performances, thus favouring simpler structures and more common words.

Notes

1. All examples provided were taken from the corpus compiled from students' texts.

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Appendix 1: "recommend" and derivatives*

11166. emporally but it would be more expensive in view of this i would RECOMMEND admitting the 50 students because in spite of the space
11167. try to stay and take lessons here for two weeks i would strongly RECOMMEND admitting the group of 50 students because it is a grea
11168. english recommendation conclusion alternatively i would strongly RECOMMEND assigning one spanish person to each international stud
11169. ral diversties and avoid conflict due to a cultural shock i also RECOMMEND bringing closer both students before meeting in person
11170. e of time recommendations all things considered i would strongly RECOMMEND despite the disadvantage that have been mentioned that
11171. ng to fit in with the rest of the students in conclusion i would RECOMMEND for the students to have a week or more where they try
11172. positive opinions furthermore to improve the situation we would RECOMMEND keeping away problem students from both colleges to avo
11173. oreign students and the local ones all things considered i would RECOMMEND living this experience because this oportunities only a
11174. oreign students and the local ones all things considered i would RECOMMEND living this experience because this opportunities only
11175. learning a lot however there are several things that i would not RECOMMEND on the one hand let go to see some advantages firstly t
11176. ace in the class what would i do recommendation i would strongly RECOMMEND paying attention only to the advantages because at the
11177. cially food and rent recommendations to improve the situation we RECOMMEND planning events in advance and try to reduce costs thro
11178. d in tourism than their own studies conclusion i would strongly RECOMMEND reducing the number of students coming to our school so
11179. to make up the lost time recommendations in view of this i would RECOMMEND rescheduling the students' trip to the summer if it is
11180. their culture language gastronomy or even music i would strongly RECOMMEND socialising with people from other countries because th
11181. tation in recommending accepting this company given this i would RECOMMEND students to volunteer and help college staff to cope wi
11182. efore the instructions that may be given in view of this i would RECOMMEND that you accept this group because it is very unlikely
11183. es financially all things considered to improve the situation we RECOMMEND the government to offer scholarships to those students
11184. information about the other country conclusion i would therefore RECOMMEND this initiative due to the great benefits that students

* Due to space restrictions, only the first twenty items have been included for illustration purposes.

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Appendix 2: "according"*

472. endations for a successful travel there are plenty of advantages ACCORDING to a recent article that was commented upon by a
473. e recommendations on how to deal with this initiative advantages ACCORDING to a study carried by the college student council the
474. foreign students advantages of the approval of the new students ACCORDING to a survey carried out by the university of california
475. ould cause major problems such as the lack of academic resources ACCORDING to a survey exceeding the number of limited places
476. dents and what would be gotten out of this experience advantages ACCORDING to a survey recently taken among the pupils of this
477. skills and broke their prejudices about foreign people to sum up ACCORDING to all the research that has been done i would therefor
478. nts both will learn new languages and ways of living in addition ACCORDING to experts pupils tend to open their mind by having peo
479. of them have been asked their opinions on the subject advantages ACCORDING to most students accepting the foreigners opens the
480. ommission which our university could apply for cultural exchange ACCORDING to other students who went abroad what you learn
481. e of 50 foreign students for two weeks in our college advantages ACCORDING to our college students all those students who were
482. some of them are going to miss lessons which is not fair besides ACCORDING to professors foreigners will be more focused on
483. other country for two weeks benefits if we accept these students ACCORDING to recent research it will bring us an amount of
484. antages and disadvantages that implies accepting them advantages ACCORDING to some teachers from the college it is a great
485. ollege students and professors were asked their views advantages ACCORDING to students survey results it is thought that this woul
486. e friendler but also prove to be more open minded and empathetic ACCORDING to studies by reowned scholars the young people
487. it accepted to welcome the 50 foreign students' group advantages ACCORDING to studies conducted by education professionals
488. hat some foreign students could feel displaced on the other hand ACCORDING to teachers opinion this visit would become an
489. abus thanks to this exchanges the disadvantage a racism movement ACCORDING to the department of social inclusion of the
490. e advantages and disadvantages of accepting students from abroad ACCORDING to the information that the university director
491. disadvantages of accepting 50 foreign students our own students ACCORDING to the opinions of our students accepting overseas

* Due to space restrictions, only the first twenty items have been included for illustration purposes.

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Appendix 3: Hedging ("could/would")*

3510. t aims to explain all the long term benefits that the university COULD achieve if a group of fifty students from different countri
3511. try introduction the main purpose of this report is to value how COULD affect that a group of students come to the college for two
3512. because in spite of the space issue it is an experience that we COULD all enjoy and get rich from introduction the purpose of thi
3513. students at a time and making sure everything is done correctly COULD also be a bit of a hard time so to end things in my opinion
3514. would help them improve their second language apart from this it COULD also become a huge opportunity for them to travel abroad
3515. rsities around the country in addition some of them said that it COULD also help many students to meet new people and practise a n
3516. say that it is practiced a language is when speaking it often we COULD also take them to visit tourist places they do not know and
3517. are funds given by the european commission which our university COULD apply for cultural exchange according to other students
3518. nces moreover in the event of a fire the increase of 50 students COULD be a big problem if we take into account the difficulty tha
3519. s may be more distracted and less focused since the new students COULD be a clear distraction conclusion all things considered i w
17392. because of the new level of cultural diversity that the college WOULD achieve a lot of activities and seminars can be done out of
17393. lso we would lose a lot of time from our hours of study and this WOULD affect our grades conclusion it would be advisable that the
17394. report is to give different perspectives on how this submission WOULD affect the college advantages it is thought that foreign pe
17395. ing that language in a more practical way not only this but they WOULD also be exposed to a new culture that way our students
17396. are studying the same grade as us but in a different country it WOULD also be interesting to learn a little bit of their language
17397. tise their target language on a relaxed and intuitive way but it WOULD also educate them on cultural diversity plausible drawbacks
17398. the students as it would be a memorable experience for them and WOULD also favor tourism in our city and its surroundings
17399. cals interest on other ways of life and culture in some cases it WOULD also grow the interest into some students of learning a new
17400. our country because there is a health crisis around the world i WOULD also invite them as soon as possible and let them know that
17401. ts not only would they learn about each other languages but they WOULD also learn cultural aspects disadvantages some people

* Due to space restrictions, only the first ten items of could and would have been included for illustration purposes.

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PERCEPTIONS AND REPORTED USE OF INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY (IT) ANGLICISMS BY SPANISH UNIVERSITY STUDENTS

PERCEPCIONES Y USO AUTODECLARADO DE ANGLICISMOS DEL CAMPO DE LAS TIC POR PARTE DE ESTUDIANTES UNIVERSITARIOS ESPAÑOLES

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Abstract

This paper presents a twofold analysis that, on the one hand, is intended to examine the presence of IT Anglicisms in the contemporary Spanish digital press; on the other hand, it aims to reveal the degree of knowledge and use of these English lexical items by a sample of Spanish speaking university students and to explore what their perceptions and attitudes are towards Anglicisms and their use –not only in specialised contexts such as the IT field, but also when dealing with current and more general topics. The administration of a questionnaire to 232 students at various degrees in two Spanish universities provided reliable data of the high level of knowledge and reported use of a sample of IT terms extracted from an Anglicisms search tool, 'Observatorio Lázaro'. In addition, the findings have shown open and positive perceptions by Spanish students towards the usage of Anglicisms. Various pragmatic functions (expressive and referential) seem to motivate these uses. Finally, some pedagogical implications of this study are discussed in the sphere of ESP teaching/learning.

Keywords: Anglicisms, Information Technology (IT), borrowings, perceptions by Spanish students, pragmatic functions, pedagogical implications.

Resumen

Este trabajo presenta un doble análisis que, por un lado, pretende examinar la presencia de anglicismos informáticos en la prensa digital española contemporánea, y por otro, propone descubrir el grado de conocimiento y uso de estas unidades léxicas inglesas por parte de una muestra de estudiantes universitarios nativos de español y además explorar cuáles son sus percepciones y actitudes hacia los anglicismos y su uso, no solo en contextos especializados como el campo de las TIC, sino también cuando se trata de temas actuales y más generales. La administración de un cuestionario a 232 estudiantes de diversos Grados de dos universidades españolas proporcionó datos fiables del alto nivel de conocimiento y uso autodeclarado de una muestra de términos informáticos extraídos de una herramienta de búsqueda de anglicismos, el 'Observatorio Lázaro'. Además, los resultados obtenidos demuestran las percepciones abiertas y positivas de los participantes hacia el uso de anglicismos. Diferentes funciones pragmáticas (expresiva y referencial) parecen motivar estos usos. Finalmente, se discuten algunas implicaciones pedagógicas de este estudio en el ámbito de la enseñanza/aprendizaje del Inglés para Fines Específicos.

Palabras clave: anglicismos, Tecnologías de la Información y la Comunicación (TIC), préstamos, percepciones de estudiantes, funciones pragmáticas, implicaciones pedagógicas.

1. Introduction

The study of the influence that English exerts on other languages has been the focus of scholarly papers for a long period of time (Görlach 2002; Núñez Nogueroles 2017). Since lexical borrowing constitutes the most relevant category from a quantitative point of view, the introduction of English lexical units in different recipient tongues has occupied an outstanding position in loanword studies (García Morales 2009).

On many occasions, Anglicisms belong to specialised thematic fields. In this vein, a long research tradition exists in several donee languages. Indeed, a wide range of publications can be highlighted in the areas of sports (Rodríguez González 2012, 2016; Campos-Pardillos 2015; Ayuso Collantes 2018; Rodríguez González and Castañón Rodríguez 2021; Rodríguez-Medina 2021), cinema (García Morales 2018), tourism (Ciobanu 2015; Lazovic and Vicfic 2015; Giménez Folqués 2015; González-Pastor and Candel-Mora 2018; Errico 2019), economy (Le Poder 2012; Gaudio 2012; Laursen and Mousten 2015; Cece 2016), advertising (Gerritsen et al. 2010; García Morales et al. 2016; Roig Marín and Rodríguez

González 2016), fashion and leisure (Balteiro 2011, 2014, 2018; Díez-Arroyo 2016a, 2016b; Rodríguez Arrizabalaga 2017; Luján-García and Pulcini 2018; Xydopoulos and Papadopoulou 2018; Witalisz 2018), among others.

The present piece of research focuses on the use of Anglicisms in the sphere of Information Technology (IT from now on), a specialised area which is acquiring growing importance in our daily lives. Unsurprisingly, English being the most relevant language in this domain worldwide (Pano Alaman 2007), the original English terms that denote new technological devices or computing programmes enter other languages at the same time as the inventions they name are imported by the societies that speak these recipient tongues (Reyes and Jubilado 2012). Morin (2006) examined the introduction of IT Anglicisms in the Spanish language press –she gathered data from newspapers from eight Latin American countries– and concluded that "technology-fueled borrowing is undeniably entering the Spanish language press across Latin America" (Morin 2006: 173). Given that this field is continuously being updated, it seems necessary to follow the introduction of Anglicisms in this domain.

2. Theoretical Framework

From an international perspective, some studies on the incorporation of English loanwords in the technological arena should be mentioned. A number of publications (Liermann-Zeljak 2013; Czech-Rogoyska and Krawiec 2018a, 2018b; Luján-García and García-Sánchez 2020) have concentrated on a wide range of recipient languages, such as French, German, Dutch, Croatian, Italian, Portuguese, Russian and Greek.

With respect to the introduction of IT-related Anglicisms in Spanish, a recently edited volume (Luján-García 2021) compiles a collection of chapters which reveal the increasing tendency to use English lexical items in new social media. In addition, de la Cruz Cabanillas and Tejedor Martínez (2012) explored the use of English loans in different thematic areas, one of them being technology.

More recently, Muñoz-Basols and Salazar (2019) analysed two technology-related loanwords, namely 'tablet' and 'selfie', to explain how these terms have been adopted and adapted by the recipient tongue in terms of gender assignment.

In the 21st century, the remarkable position of English as a donor of Anglicisms in the IT specialised domain is unquestionable. More than twenty years ago, Crystal (1997) already reported on the prominence of English in the IT field and this author aptly pointed to the fact that most technological advances come from English speaking countries –mostly the USA– and China. Mandarin Chinese is

basically spoken by the Chinese population and this language lacks the international role of English as a *lingua franca*. In other words, technological terms are, in most cases, in English, no matter the country they come from. In fact, Álvarez-Mellado (2020a) examined the usage of English loanwords –from September 2012 to January 2020– in newspaper headlines belonging to six areas: economy, music, TV, technology, lifestyle and opinion. Her results showed that the area with the highest percentage of Anglicisms is technology (15.37%), followed by music (9.25%), TV (8.83%), lifestyle (6.48%), economy (3.70%) and, finally, opinion (2.54%).

It is relevant to highlight the concept of "linguistic obsolescence" studied by authors such as Cáceres-Toledo (2020), who stated that, in lexicographic works, some lexical units are considered to be old-fashioned, or inadequate in terms of trends or the most frequent communicative needs, not to mention that they may have started a process of death and subsequent disappearance. Interestingly, many Anglicisms are subject to these processes. They may cover a linguistic need at a certain time, then they may eventually be adopted and possibly adapted by the recipient language. However, on some occasions, these foreign lexical units are used temporarily and, after a period, they cease to be employed and disappear from the recipient language. This is the case of terms such as *disquete* (also called 'floppy disk' in English), which is no longer used since the object it describes has been replaced by other devices such as pen drives.

In a context like this, it seems reasonable to do some research on what the attitudes and perceptions of the users of these loanwords are. Jódar Sánchez and Tuomainen (2014), in their analysis of the opinions of 15 Finnish speakers towards the use of Anglicisms, found that most interviewed participants considered English not only a useful but also a necessary language in some situations. Another study carried out in Montenegro (Đurčević 2021) involving 377 university students also demonstrated the tendency and positive attitude towards using Anglicisms in general and specialised contexts. This piece of research covered loanwords in different fields, IT being one of the examined areas, and the findings revealed that participants do not consider the use of English borrowings unnecessary.

Rodríguez González (1996) distinguished three main pragmatic functions performed by Anglicisms when used by Spanish speakers, namely the ideational or referential, the expressive or interpersonal, and the textual. This author (Rodríguez González 1996: 125) wisely states that "the diversity of functions found in anglicisms […] are the best testimony of how deeply rooted the process of borrowing is within the total system of language". The use of these loanwords responds to various pragmatic needs of speakers, such as economy of language (textual function), snobbery and the wish to sound professional (expressive function), or to fill a lexical gap with a term that does not exist in the recipient

language (referential function). Thus, pragmatics needs to be considered as a driving force when it comes to the use of Anglicisms in any field.

These findings confirm the pertinence of going deeply into the inclusion of English lexical items in the Spanish IT-related sphere and justify the necessity for a sociolinguistic analysis. Indeed, it is essential to cover not only the purely linguistic area, but also the social one considering the real degree of knowledge and usage of English lexical items by a sample of university students of different degrees as well as the attitudes and perception of these students towards the use of Anglicisms. Thus, this piece of research comprises two different stages. Firstly, a documented analysis of the twenty most frequently used Anglicisms in the IT field is carried out. Secondly, the administration of a questionnaire to a sample of students confirms the real degree of knowledge and use of the aforementioned IT English lexical units as well as the participants' perceptions and attitudes towards these borrowings.

3. Objectives and Research Questions

This study aims to explore the presence of Anglicisms, specifically those related to the specialised field of IT, in present-day Spanish written media and everyday language. A second goal is to examine the knowledge and usage as well as the attitude and perceptions held by university students towards the use of a sample of Anglicisms.

By means of a two-stage process, this paper intends to shed some light on six research questions. For the first phase, the research question was:

— What are the twenty IT-field Anglicisms most frequently used by the Spanish media?

In the second part of this study, the purpose was to know whether there was a correspondence between the use of IT Anglicisms by the media and the real (or, at least, the reported) degree of knowledge and use by university students. Moreover, the attitudes and perceptions held by the students as well as the pragmatic aspect of the use of Anglicisms were also delved into. The research questions posed were:

— What is the *degree of knowledge* L1 Spanish Tertiary Education students have of the twenty most frequently used Anglicisms in the IT field?

— What is the *degree of reported use* by L1 Spanish Tertiary Education students of the twenty most frequently used Anglicisms in the IT field?

— What are the attitudes and perceptions of a sample of Spanish university students towards the use of IT Anglicisms in their daily life discourse?

— What are the pragmatic functions of these Anglicisms?

4. Methodological Framework

4.1 First Part of the Study

In order to obtain the twenty most common IT-field Anglicisms in the Spanish written media, the helpful tool 'Observatorio Lázaro' was used. It consists of an automatic extractor of emergent Anglicisms in the Spanish press. This computational model, developed by Elena Álvarez-Mellado, has considerably enlarged the horizons in the research area of borrowing, since it allows scholars to move away from time-consuming manual inspection of limited corpora. In her 'Lázaro' project, Álvarez-Mellado (2020b) has employed the model to build a pipeline for detecting novel Anglicisms. Seven Spanish newspapers have been included in it –*elDiario.es, El Mundo, El País, ABC, El Confidencial, La Vanguardia,* and *20minutos*– as well as *EFE,* which is a news agency. On a daily basis, the pipeline performs the automatic extraction of unassimilated –also called non-adapted– lexical Anglicisms (i.e. "words from [sic.] English origin that are introduced into Spanish without any morphological or orthographic adaptation", Álvarez Mellado 2020c: 2). 'Observatorio Lázaro', a freely available online resource (https://observatoriolazaro.es/), is updated automatically every day. The identified loanwords are published by the Twitter bot @lazarobot. Since it has been recently launched, 'Lázaro' is still being refined. However, the accuracy already shown by the model to date makes it a suitable tool for research purposes.

To the best of our knowledge, excepting its developer's publications (Álvarez-Mellado 2020a and 2020c), the present piece of research is one of the first in using this innovative instrument. The file corresponding to all the Anglicisms detected by the pipeline in September 2020 was downloaded. Focusing on the thematic classification of loanwords, the field of technology was selected, and the number of occurrences of each term was counted. We are aware of the limitations of the sample compiled, since a wider range of months could have shown a different set of Anglicisms as the twenty most common IT-field Anglicisms in the Spanish written media. However, in this piece of research, the focus centered on the compilation of Anglicisms in one month, given the extensive number of English borrowings in this field.

Considering the frequency of use of IT terms in 'Observatorio Lázaro', the 20 IT-related Anglicisms that proved to be the most widely used by the Spanish press in the month in question were selected. In addition, this piece of research explores whether they are actually known and employed by university students in Spain, as will be explained below.

4.2 Second Part of the Study

By using the app Microsoft Forms, a questionnaire was designed following some fundamental principles in the survey research methodology proposed by Glasow (2005). The sampling plan was intended to cover four main areas of knowledge: Technology, Health and Medicine, Social Studies, and Arts and Humanities. It also conformed to some standards to provide appropriate survey questions, being consistent with the educational level of the respondents and both questions and response options being clear both to the respondent and to the researcher (Glasow 2005: 2-5). To avoid a biased context, participants were informed that the survey was not a test or part of an evaluation, and they were requested to be honest in their responses.

The questionnaire, which was completely anonymous, was administered to students at different degrees (see Table 2) in two Spanish universities (Universidad de Extremadura and Universidad de Las Palmas de Gran Canaria) during the months of November and December 2020. For the administration of the survey, the application *Microsoft Forms* was used by both authors, so the process was online to allow students to respond at any time. The main goal of asking participants enrolled in different academic degrees was to have a wider picture of the degree of knowledge and use of the examined terms by university learners.

This research instrument can be divided into three different sections: the first enquired about personal details of the participants (degree, gender, age, if any participant was an Erasmus student); in the second part, students were asked whether they knew and/or used the sample of twenty IT Anglicisms; the third section included 12 questions intended to find out what the attitudes and perceptions of the respondents were, regarding the use of Anglicisms in their daily life speech. To design the last part of our survey, the study by Matić (2017) was used as a model. However, since the present study covers different degrees of two different Spanish universities, a wider variety and a bigger sample of students than in Matić's study, the findings could probably be considered more accurate and provide a more extensive overview of the spread of the sample of Anglicisms. A total number of 232 informants filled in the questionnaire.

5. Results

First, after having examined the IT-field Anglicisms identified by 'Observatorio Lázaro' in September 2020, and taking into account the frequency of the loanwords, including not only their singular but also their plural form, the following twenty words turned out to be the most commonly employed in the above-mentioned eight media:

	Anglicism	N. of occurrences		Anglicism	N. of occurrences
1.	*app(s)*	312	11.	*malware*	19
2.	*software*	79	12.	*hardware*	18
3.	*online*	77	13.	*hacker(s)*	16
4.	*smartphone(s)*	67	14.	*gaming*	15
5.	*streaming*	35	15.	*remake(s)*	15
6.	*tablet(s)*	29	16.	*router(s)*	15
7.	*Bluetooth*	28	17.	*influencer(s)*	13
8.	*gadget(s)*	24	18.	*smartwatch(es)*	12
9.	*bot(s)*	23	19.	*start(-) up(s)*	11
10.	*gameplay(s)*	20	20.	*stock*	11

Table 1. Most frequent Anglicisms extracted by 'Observatorio Lázaro' in September 2020 (section: Technology)

Second, the survey included in the appendix –completed by 232 students from different degrees and also from different years in Spain– produced the outcomes analysed below.

As mentioned above, the first part of the questionnaire referred to personal data. Students were asked the following questions: Which degree are you studying?; Are you an Erasmus student?; Specify you gender; Specify your age range (for age ranges, see the survey in the appendix).

Academic Degree	N. of participants
Degree in Nursing Studies (1st year)	96
Degree in English Studies (1st, 2nd, 4th years)	73
Degree in Social Work (3rd year)	29
Degree in Industrial Design Engineering and Product Development (3rd year)	20
Master's Degree in Law Studies (post-graduates)	11
Degree in Physiotherapy Studies (1st year)	1
No answer	2
Total	**232**

Table 2. Answers to the question "Which degree are you studying?"

As Table 2 shows, the sample of participants was characterised by the variety of academic areas to which the students belonged. In the sample, there were only four Erasmus students –all of them registered in the Degree in English Studies.

Therefore, since it is a very small percentage (2%) of the total number of informants, it can be assumed that their answers will not greatly distort the results, which can still be considered a reflection of the perceptions and usage of Anglicisms by Spanish university students. A larger number of Erasmus learners could have altered the results, since these students are not native speakers of Spanish and their level of English is frequently quite high.

Gender	N. of participants
Female	178
Male	54
Total	**232**

Table 3. Answers to the instruction "Specify your gender"

The data recorded in Table 3 evidence that an overwhelming majority of female informants (178) answered the questionnaire. They constituted 77% of the overall number of participants, whereas the 54 male students represented the remaining 23%.

Age range	N. of participants
18-23 years old	207
24- 28 years old	10
29-33 years old	4
Over 33 years old	11
Total	**232**

Table 4. Answers to the instruction "Specify your age range"

Table 4 displays that, as can be expected, most of the learners (207) were between 18 and 23 years old (89%). The following group in terms of size, 11 students (5%), was over 33. After that, 10 students belonged to the age range 24 – 28 (4%) and 4 (2%) informants selected the option 29 – 33 years old.

The subsequent section of the survey comprised 20 questions which focused on the most frequently used Anglicisms in the IT field by the Spanish press nowadays (see Table 1). The general instruction for this part was "Specify if you know and/or use the following terms". For each of them, three possible answers were offered:

a) I know it and I use it
b) I know it, but I don't use it
c) I neither know it nor use it

Table 5 shows the results obtained in this part of the questionnaire:

IT Anglicism	I know it and I use it	I know it, but I don't use it	I neither know it nor use it
app	217 (93.5%)	13 (5.6%)	2 (0.8%)
software	191 (82.3%)	38 (16.3%)	3 (1.2%)
online	191 (82.3%)	28 (12%)	13 (5.6%)
smartphone	157 (67.6%)	75 (32.3%)	0
streaming	154 (66.3%)	69 (29.7%)	9 (3.8%)
tablet	203 (87.5%)	29 (11.6%)	0
bluetooth	224 (96.5%)	8 (3.4%)	0
gameplay	101 (43.5%)	110 (47.4%)	21 (9%)
malware	43 (18.6%)	101 (43.7%)	87 (37.6%)
bot/bots	85 (36.6%)	80 (34.4%)	67 (28.8%)
gadget	68 (29.3%)	**114 (49.1%)**	50 (21.5%)
hardware	142 (61.2%)	77 (33.1%)	13 (5.6%)
hacker	170 (73.2%)	57 (24.5%)	5 (2.1%)
gaming	128 (55.1%)	90 (38.7%)	14 (6%)
router	**225 (96.9%)**	4 (1.7%)	3 (1.2%)
remake	101 (43.7%)	90 (38.9%)	40 (17.3%)
smartwatch	145 (62.5%)	84 (36.2%)	3 (1.2%)
influencer	185 (79.7%)	47 (20.2%)	0
start-up / startup	32 (13.7%)	92 (39.6%)	**108 (46.5%)**
stock	148 (63.7%)	56 (24.1%)	28 (12%)

Table 5. IT Anglicisms: Degree of knowledge and usage by university students in Spain

In all cases, the number of students who know the term (columns 1 and 2) exceeds that of those who do not. Considering the answer "I know it and I use it", the most frequently selected Anglicism is *router* (225), followed by *Bluetooth* (224) and *app* (217). These words, related to the Internet and mobile phones, are widely employed at present by Spanish speakers. In addition to these, the term *tablet* (203), naming an extensively used device, is also used by more than 200 university students.

The second option ("I know it, but I don't use it") is predominant for the terms *gadget* (114), *gameplay* (110) and *malware* (101). Although these words refer to elements that are present in the informants' daily life, they are not as crucial as the

ones mentioned in the previous paragraph, so probably the participants do not refer to them so frequently. This may explain the results obtained when it comes to this answer.

The third possibility ("I neither know it nor use it") is, generally speaking, the least common of the three, which also shows the effect that the press and the media have on our use of the language. There are even four cases for which none of the informants selected this option (*smartphone*, *tablet*, *Bluetooth*, *influencer*). The only occasions on which it outweighs at least one of the two other options are with the terms *start-up / startup* (108) and *malware* (87). In the first case, the fact that the word refers to a reality that does not belong to the students' everyday life may explain the unawareness of the Anglicism by a high number of participants. As for *malware*, the semantic similarity it has with the widespread term *virus* presumably lies behind the large quantity of informants who do not know it and therefore its low usage. Finally, it is relevant to highlight that two Anglicisms –*malware* and *remake*– received 231 rather than 232 answers, as shown in Table 5. These two terms are probably not so common as the others, since *malware* has, as commented upon above, an equivalent in Spanish –the semantic anglicism *virus*– which is quite widespread. In the case of *remake* there is an equivalent expression *nueva versión de una película*, and despite the fact that it is longer, it is frequent among Spanish speakers. Additionally, *remake* could be considered a more specific and specialised term, which is associated particularly with the film industry.

In the third section of the survey, several questions were intended to find out about the perceptions and attitudes of the participants towards the use of English vocabulary in the IT field (questions 25 to 30). Furthermore, some findings on a more general use of English lexical items were obtained by means of questions 31 to 36.

Question number 25 was: "Would you add any other technological term to the previous list?" Most students, 179 (77.4%) answered 'no,' while 52 (22.5%) participants said 'yes.' This implies that many respondents are quite familiar with IT terminology. The following question, number 26, was: "If your answer was 'yes' in question 25, please specify which one/ones". Various terms were included. Some examples are: *computer, laptop, streaming, link, set-up, broadcast, podcast, reboot, wi-fi, social network, post/s, hashtag, troll.*

The next question, 27, was in fact a statement: "Most Spanish speakers understand the terminology and vocabulary related to technology in English". The participants had to confirm or deny that statement. As shown in Figure 1, the outcomes reveal that 197 (85.2%) students confirmed the assertion, as opposed to 34 (14.7%) respondents who denied it. It is obvious that most participants consider that Spanish speakers are familiar with English IT vocabulary.

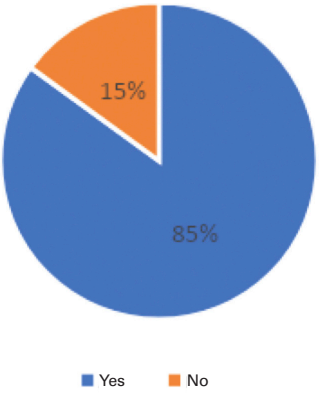

Figure 1. Students' agreement with the statement "Most Spanish speakers understand the terminology and vocabulary related to technology in English"

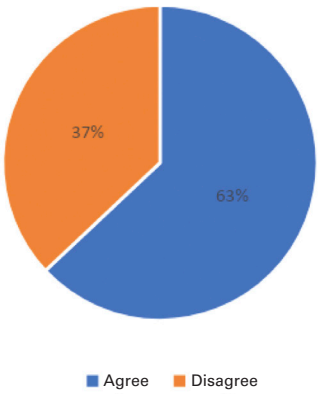

Figure 2. Students' agreement with the statement "Spanish terms do not describe with enough accuracy and clarity the concepts in the field of technology"

Question 28 provided participants with another statement: "Spanish terms do not describe with enough accuracy and clarity the concepts in the field of technology". The findings show that 145 (63%) (see Figure 2) informants expressed their agreement with this assertion. By contrast, 85 (36.9%) respondents showed their disagreement. These students consider Spanish as accurate as English when it comes to technological terms.

In order to dig into the perceived necessity of coining or not Spanish terms in the field of technology, question number 29 stated: "There is no need to create a technological terminology in Spanish if we already have English terms that fulfil that need". The results, displayed in Figure 3, show that 135 (58.1%) students expressed their agreement with the assertion, so for them there is no need to create Spanish terms to refer to technological terms, since they already exist in English. By contrast, 97 (41.8%) respondents believe that the Spanish language should have its own technological terminology. There is a difference between participants' points of view; in fact, more than half of the informants consider English terms to be adequate and enough to express technological issues.

The following questions, 30 to 36, were a bit more general, and were intended to reveal whether the participants tend to use Anglicisms in their daily lives. The statement provided in question 30, "I use terms in English when I speak Spanish",

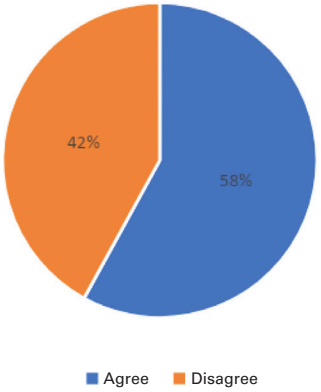

Figure 3. Students' agreement with the statement "There is no need to create a technological terminology in Spanish if we already have English terms that fulfil that need"

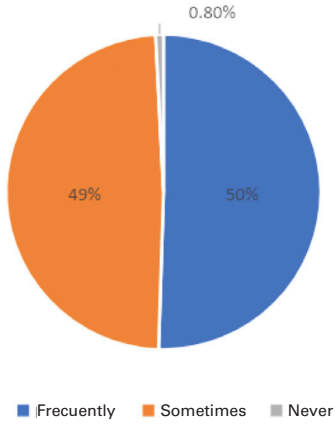

Figure 4. Students' agreement with the statement "I use terms in English when I speak Spanish"

received the following responses: 116 (50.4%) students answered "frequently"; 112 (48.6%) informants replied "sometimes"; and only 2 (0.8%) respondents said "never". These findings reveal the remarkably high frequency with which Spanish youth use Anglicisms in their daily interactions (see Figure 4). This may be because of the strong influence of English among young people produced by mass and social media.

Question number 31 was intended to find out how rich Spanish speakers consider their native language. The statement used in this case was: "It is difficult to translate words from English into Spanish, because English is richer in vocabulary than Spanish". As many as 157 (67.9%) participants rejected this assertion, suggesting that they consider Spanish, generally speaking, to be as rich as English in terms of vocabulary, which implies a certain loyalty towards their native language. By contrast, 74 (32%) students agreed that English has a wider lexical variety than Spanish.

Question 32 enquired: "Which reasons do you have to use English terms?" As Table 6 shows, 227 participants answered this question. The findings reveal that 94 (41.4%) informants stated that they use English terms because they sound better than Spanish terms, whereas 92 (40.5%) respondents chose the option 'Other reasons'. Some of these motivations are: habit, economy of language, lack of Spanish equivalent, influence of social media, and accuracy. Some of their literal responses were: "Because the contents they consume on the Internet are mostly in

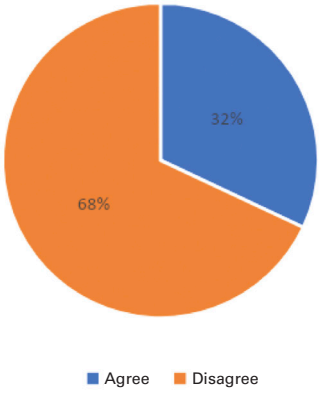

Figure 5. Students' agreement with the statement "It is difficult to translate words from English into Spanish, because English is richer in vocabulary than Spanish"

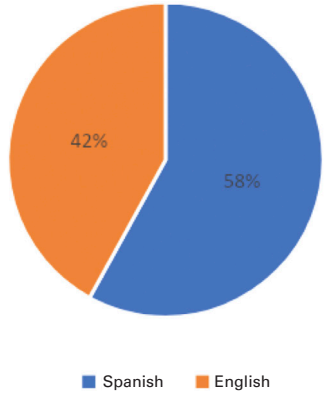

Figure 6. Students' answer to the question "If you had the option of choosing between an English and a Spanish term to refer to a concept, which one would you choose?"

English, so you get used to using those words in English rather than Spanish"; "Because it is easier to say hacker than *pirata informático o computomaníaco*"; "Because there is no equivalent. For example, *router*, what is the Spanish word to refer to this device?"; "Because they are used so frequently in social networks, that you use them unconsciously"; "Because of the influence of TV broadcasts and serials. Social networks are full of terms in English, and that is why young people end up incorporating them to our lexicon"; "Because there are certain fields, such as business and technology, in which using certain terms in English is more accurate than Spanish". A sample of 30 (13.2%) students chose the option of "Because it sounds more professional". Finally, 11 (4.8%) Spanish higher education students claimed that prestige is the reason for them to use Anglicisms.

Reasons to use English terms	Frequency	%
Prestige	11	4.8
Sounds better	94	41.4
Sounds more professional	30	13.2
Others	92	40.5
	227	**99.9**

Table 6. Reasons to use English terms

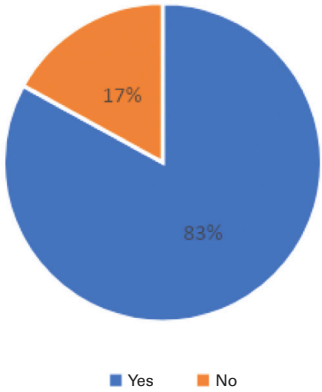

Figure 7. Students' agreement with the statement "The acceptance and use of English terms will lead to a better level of knowledge of English among Spanish speakers"

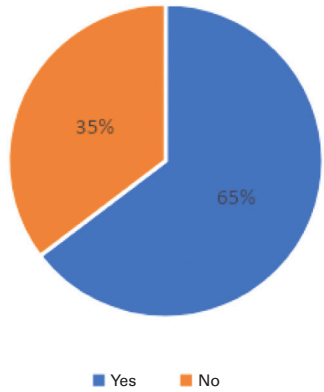

Figure 8. Students' answers to the question "In your daily speech, is there any English word/s that you use frequently?"

The following question, 33 (see Figure 6), asked: "If you had the option of choosing between an English and a Spanish term to refer to a concept, which one would you choose?", and the responses show that 134 (58%) participants prefer the use of Spanish terms, whereas 97 (41.9%) students choose English words. In Figure 6, it may be observed that there is an inclination to employ Spanish vocabulary; nevertheless, the number of respondents who have shown their preference for English is striking.

Question 34 consisted of the statement: "The acceptance and use of English terms will lead to a better level of knowledge of English among Spanish speakers". Figure 7 shows that a majority of respondents, 190 (82.6%), agreed with this assertion, whereas only 40 (17.3%) expressed their disagreement. Most participants consider that using and accepting English terms will result in an improvement in the level of English of these speakers. This is clear evidence of the positive attitudes and perceptions Spanish University students have towards the use of technology-related Anglicisms.

Question 35 was a more general question: "In your daily speech, is there any English word/s that you use frequently?" The findings (see Figure 8) are mostly affirmative with 150 (64.6%) respondents who answered 'Yes,' as opposed to 82 (35.3%) participants who answered 'No.'

The last question, 36, asked for the specific English words they use, and there is a large number of terms they highlighted. Some of the most common ones are: *app, awesome, baby, back up, brother, bullying, chat, cupcake, email, fashion, fake, gaming, hacker, hardware, hater, influencer, love, model, online, outfit, post, party, playlist, perfect, router, remake, running, spoiler, smartphone, software, stories, streaming, selfie, spam, tablet, tweet*, even expressions such as *"in English please", OK, OMG* (for *Oh My God!*); *WTF* (for *What the Fuck!*), *for your information, fifty-fifty, by the way, my friend, of course*.

6. Discussion

This two-stage study was guided by five research questions concerning a) the presence of English loanwords –specifically those related to the specialised field of IT– in the present-day Spanish press, and b) the degree of knowledge and reported use of these loanwords as well as the attitude and perceptions held by Spanish university students towards their use. In this second part, attention is also paid to the pragmatic functions fulfilled by the English lexical items in Spanish. Lastly, the pedagogical implications extracted from the present study are also considered.

The findings of the first phase of this study, which focused on the IT-field Anglicisms most frequently used by the Spanish media, reveal that the twenty most common IT-field Anglicisms were: *app, software, online, smartphone, streaming, tablet, Bluetooth, gameplay, malware, bot, gadget, hardware, hacker, gaming, router, remake, smartwatch, influencer, start-up / startup* and *stock*. A number of reasons may account for the use of these terms; people's current life is so influenced by technology that it is hard to imagine a regular citizen who does not have a smartphone, smartwatch or tablet; who does not use any app, software, hardware, router or gadget; who has never been affected by some malware or hackers; who does not know what an influencer is; who has never played video games or knows someone who does, and who does not know what a start-up and stock are. The Spanish population is not only familiar with these devices and Internet-related services, as they have become part of our lives, but we are also regularly exposed to the use of these terms in the media.

The second research question delved into the *degree of knowledge* of the previous list of the twenty most frequently used Anglicisms in the IT field in the media by Spanish university students, whereas the third research question dug into their degree of reported use of these terms. All the English loanwords analysed show a common pattern: the number of participants who knew the term (that is, those who answered "I know it and I use it" or "I know it, but I don't use it") was higher than the quantity of informants who did not. Although some terms were

unknown to a considerable portion of the respondents (*start-up / startup*: 108; *malware*: 87; *bot*: 67; *gadget*: 50; *remake*: 40), the number of students who selected the option "I neither know it nor use it" was below 25 on most occasions. In some cases, indeed, no one chose this answer (*smartphone*, *tablet*, *Bluetooth*, *influencer*). Therefore, it can be stated that, among university students, there is widespread knowledge of the most common IT Anglicisms used by the Spanish press. Quite surprisingly, though, the loanword *online* was marked as unknown by 13 participants. Despite being a very common Anglicism, particularly in some areas such as education after the COVID-19 outbreak in the spring of 2020, a few students have reported not knowing it. Three plausible reasons could be suggested to explain this outcome. First, since this loanword is variably spelled in three possible forms (*online*, *on-line*, *on line*) indistinctively in Spanish, perhaps the informants are familiar with the other options but not with the one shown in the questionnaire. Second, there may be participants who have acquired the borrowing aurally and have never met the term in its written form. In this case, they might expect the spelling of this loan to be **onlain*, as this is the way in which it is pronounced (notice that, in Spanish, the oral and the written forms of a word coincide to a greater extent than they do in English). Third, maybe the informants who have answered "I neither know it nor use it" employ, for example, the expression "por/en Internet" rather than *online*. A complementary short interview with each of these participants could clarify whether any of these reasons is correct. However, the fact that the questionnaire is anonymous makes it extremely difficult to carry out such interviews.

In most cases, those who answered "I know it and I use it" outnumbered those who selected "I know it, but I don't use it". Exceptions were *gameplay*, *malware*, *gadget* and *start-up / startup*. Therefore, even though many participants knew these terms, they reported that they did not use them. In any case, there was still a very relevant proportion of the informants who declared that the Anglicisms under consideration belonged to their active vocabulary –especially in cases such as *app*, *tablet*, *Bluetooth* and *router*, where the difference between the first and the other two columns was marked.

The findings relating to the fourth research question reveal that there seems to be a generally positive attitude and perception towards the use of English terms in the IT field, and also towards the general use of the English language, among the young Spanish speaking participants. These new generations of students have been raised with considerable exposure to the English language, not only at school and/or private lessons, which have increased the levels of mastery in this language, but also in many areas of our daily life such as social media, sports, beauty, fashion, TV, marketing, and music, which are currently teeming with English terms. In addition,

the use of many of these English borrowings confer on young people an air of sounding "fashionable", "cool" or even "more professional", as some participants admitted. The field of IT uses a technical and semi-technical vocabulary, and the precision provided by English does not seem to be present in any other language, including Spanish. The reason could be partially explained by the fact that many of these terms emerge in English, since a great number of technological advances take place in the USA and the UK.

In relation to the last research question, the answers to question 32 of the survey (see Table 6) demonstrate the importance of the interpersonal or expressive pragmatic function of the Anglicisms. It must be acknowledged that, among the 'Other reasons' stated by several participants, some ideas connected to the referential or ideational function can be found (such as "lack of Spanish equivalent" and "accuracy"). However, the weight attached to the fact that English words sound better or more professional (along with the prestige of this foreign language) points to the relevance borne by the expressive or interpersonal function. Furthermore, some of the examples provided by the respondents when answering question 36, which enquires into the English words they usually employ in their daily speech, confirm the preponderance of this pragmatic function (*in English please, OK, OMG, WTF, for your information, fifty-fifty, by the way, my friend, of course*).

Finally, this study generates some possible pedagogical implications which, in our view, may provide teachers with a better panorama of the IT vocabulary in English that Spanish speaking university students already know, and the terms that they still need to learn. In the particular case of learners who attend English for Specific Purposes (ESP) courses, the sphere of vocabulary is essential. As various studies (Xhaferi 2010; Le Huong and Huy 2021; Al Zahrani and Chaudhary 2022) have explained, teaching specialized vocabulary involves several difficulties, but it is crucial for ESP learners:

> Vocabulary is an inseparable part of any teaching syllabus and vocabulary should be taught in a well-planned and regular basis. Teaching vocabulary especially in ESP courses is becoming a challenge for English Language Teachers. It is essential to carefully decide what vocabulary will be selected for teaching, and what approach or activities will be used to teach it to the students. (Xhaferi, 2010: 230)

The vocabulary taught in the particular area of IT, the focus of this study, is imperative for any student of any branch of Engineering for their professional expertise. Therefore, these findings are intended to shed some light that may be helpful for Spanish ESP practitioners who teach in this field. In addition, this paper also shows that, according to the participants' answers to the questionnaire, IT vocabulary also has a significant presence in the daily speech of learners belonging

to other different areas of expertise. Obviously, some reasons for students to choose terminology in one language rather than another may be closely related to values such as modernity, fashion, and the wish to sound more professional. However, it is true that most of these English terms originate in English speaking countries and are then exported to other languages. Consequently, Spanish equivalents may take too long to emerge or probably do not express the full meaning implied by the English loanword.

7. Conclusions

This study was developed by means of a two-stage process in which each phase had a specific goal. The first part aimed to examine the usage of IT Anglicisms in the present-day Spanish press, identifying those which proved to be the most frequently employed. The second section had the purpose of analysing, with the aid of a questionnaire, the degree of knowledge and reported use of these most common IT loanwords by Spanish university students, and also the attitude and perceptions held by these respondents.

In relation to the degree of knowledge of the twenty English borrowings by Spanish tertiary students, the results point to a widespread familiarity with the terms. The importance that technology enjoys nowadays in society –especially among the youth– makes it easy for the informants to come across these words regularly. Although many respondents declared that they did not use the loanwords, there was still a very relevant number of participants who claimed that these Anglicisms belonged to their active vocabulary. The fact that the technological domain constitutes a key element in the informants' daily lives probably lies behind these results.

The findings commented upon in the previous paragraphs evince a widespread or, at least, quite generalised use of IT English lexical items in several layers of Spanish society. Indeed, it has been proven that they are employed by speakers of different profiles (journalists working in the digital media analysed by 'Observatorio Lázaro' on the one hand, and tertiary students –many of whom probably do not read these online newspapers– on the other).

When it comes to the attitudes and perceptions of Spanish-speaking university students, the findings reveal that respondents take quite a positive view of the entrance and use of IT English terminology in Spanish. This is in line with other studies based on different geographical contexts (Matić 2017, 2018; Bolaños-Medina and Luján-García 2010). There seems to be an open mind towards the English language. The use of more general Anglicisms is also quite widespread

among the participants. Thus, despite being aware of the richness and scope of Spanish across the globe, Spanish youth is also conscious of the need to rely on Anglicisms not only when using IT specialised vocabulary, but also when they write or speak about more general issues.

Regarding the pragmatic functions carried out by English lexical items in Spanish, and following Rodríguez González's (1996) typology, the analysis of the respondents' contributions to the survey shows that the interpersonal or expressive function can be underlined (the wish to sound modern or more professional, for example), although the ideational or referential function (the lack of a Spanish equivalent or economy of language, among others) also turns out to be relevant.

This piece of research has some pedagogical implications that may contribute to improving the vocabulary syllabus design of ESP courses within the IT field. Spanish ESP practitioners working on any of the Engineering branches may find these results useful for selecting specific terminology to teach their learners.

To conclude, the study at hand supports the findings of previous pieces of research involving Spanish and other international languages. English is widespread in the discourse of Spanish university students, and not just to refer to specialised IT vocabulary, but also to talk about current and more general topics. As a lingua franca, English is so ubiquitous in Spanish culture and society that it is impossible to deny its presence in the Spanish-speaking world, especially among Spanish-speaking youth.

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Specific contribution of each author

Luján-García has written the introduction and the second part of the study. Núñez Nogueroles has been in charge of the theoretical framework as well as the first part of the study. Both authors have carried out the analysis and have written the sections concerning the results, discussion, conclusions and the bibliography.

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Appendix

Survey used in this piece of research. It is in Spanish and English to facilitate participants' understanding of all the questions.

Anglicismos en el campo de la tecnología/Anglicisms in the field of technology.

Este es un cuestionario anónimo y no forma parte de la evaluación de ninguna asignatura. Así que, por favor, contesta con sinceridad. This is an Anonymous survey, and it is not any evaluation of any subject. So, please, answer with honesty. Gracias de antemano por tu colaboración. Thank you, in advance, for you collaboration.

1. ¿Qué estudios estás cursando? Which degree are you studying?
   - ❍ Degree in English Studies
   - ❍ Degree in Industrial Design Engineering and Product Development
   - ❍ Degree in Social Work
   - ❍ Master in Lawyer Studies
   - ❍ Degree in Nursing Studies
   - ❍ Physiotherapy Studies

2. ¿Eres un estudiante Erasmus? Are you an Erasmus student?
   - ❍ Sí / yes
   - ❍ No / no

3. Especifica tu género. / Specify you gender.
   - ❍ Hombre / Male
   - ❍ Mujer / Female

4. Especifica tu franja de edad. / Specify your age range.
   - ❍ 18-23 años / years
   - ❍ 24- 28 años / years
   - ❍ 29-33 años / years
   - ❍ Mas de 33 años /years

5. Especifica si conoces y/o usas los siguientes términos. Tick if you know and/or use the following terms:

Anglicismo/ Anglicism	**Lo conozco y lo uso. / I know it and use it.**	**Lo conozco, pero no lo uso. / I know it, but I don't use it.**	**Ni lo conozco, ni lo uso. / Neither I know it, nor I use it.**
app			
software			
online			
smartphone			
streaming			
tablet			
Bluetooth			
gameplay			
malware			
bot/bots			
gadget			
hardware			
hacker			
gaming			
router			
remake			
smartwatch			
influencer			
start-up / startup			
stock			

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6. ¿Añadirías al listado de términos anterior, alguna otra palabra que uses en el terreno de la tecnología? Would you add any other technological term to the previous list?
   - ❍ Sí / yes
   - ❍ No / no

7. Si has respondido que sí en la pregunta anterior. Especifica qué palabras añadirías. / If your answer was "yes" in question 6, please specify which one/ ones.

8. La mayoría de los hablantes del español entienden la terminología y el vocabulario en inglés relacionado con la tecnología. / Most Spanish speakers understand the terminology and vocabulary in English related to technology.
   - ❍ Sí / yes
   - ❍ No / no

9. Los términos del español no describen con suficiente precisión y claridad los conceptos del ámbito de la tecnología. / Spanish terms do not describe with enough accuracy and clarity the concepts in the field of technology.
   - ❍ De acuerdo / Agree
   - ❍ En desacuerdo / Disagree

10. No hay necesidad de crear una terminología tecnológica en español si ya tenemos los términos en inglés que cubren esta necesidad. / There is no need to create a technological terminology in Spanish if we already have English terms that fulfil that need.
    - ❍ De acuerdo / Agree
    - ❍ En desacuerdo / Disagree

11. Uso términos en inglés cuando hablo español. / I use terms in English when I speak Spanish.
    - ❍ Nunca / Never
    - ❍ A veces / Sometines
    - ❍ Con frecuencia / Frequently

12. Resulta difícil traducir palabras del inglés al español porque el inglés es más rico que el español en vocabulario. / It is difficult to translate words

from English into Spanish, because English is richer in vocabulary than Spanish

❍ De acuerdo / Agree

❍ En desacuerdo / Disagree

13. ¿Qué razones tienes para usar términos en inglés? Which reasons do you have to use English terms?

❍ Por prestigio / For prestige

❍ Porque suena mejor / Because it sounds better

❍ Porque suena más profesional / Because it sounds more professional

❍ [ ]

14. Si tuvieras la opción de elegir entre un término inglés y otro español para referirte a un concepto, ¿qué término elegirías? / If you had the option of choosing between an English and a Spanish term to refer to a concept, which one would you choose?

❍ Español / Spanish

❍ Inglés / English

15. La aceptación y uso de términos del inglés hará que aumente el nivel de conocimiento de inglés entre los hablantes del español. / The acceptance and use of English terms will lead to a better level of knowledge of English among Spanish speakers.

❍ Sí / yes

❍ No / no

16. En tu habla cotidiana, ¿hay alguna/s palabra/s del inglés que uses con frecuencia? / In your daily speech, is there any English word/s that you use frequently?

❍ Sí / yes

❍ No / no

17. Si respondiste en la pregunta anterior que "sí", especifica qué palabra/s del inglés usas con frecuencia. / If you answered "yes" in question 35, please specify which English word/s you use frequently.

KIOWA IMAGES, STORIES, AND HUMAN/MORE-THAN-HUMAN RELATIONS IN ALFRED AND N. SCOTT MOMADAY'S *THE WAY TO RAINY MOUNTAIN*

THE WAY TO RAINY MOUNTAIN: IMÁGENES, HISTORIAS Y RELACIONES HUMANAS/MÁS-QUE-HUMANAS EN LA MEMORIA KIOWA DE ALFRED Y N. SCOTT MOMADAY

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Abstract

Drawing from the pictographic traditions and interspecies relations of the Kiowa as well as from N. Scott Momaday's own theories of language, vision, and the creative imagination, this article aims to broaden our understanding of the memoir *The Way to Rainy Mountain* as a verbal/visual collaboration between Kiowa painter Alfred Momaday and his son, N. Scott. The stories and images rendered in the book strongly establish the Kiowa in relation to a particular cultural landscape, to visual/oral forms of memory, and to the animals and more-than-human beings that endow them with meaning. To further understand these two sets of relations, the sacred interdependence between images/words and human/more-than-human beings in the Kiowa tradition, I first situate the revision of history, place, and ceremony carried out by the Momadays within a tribal-specific intellectual framework. To that end, I consider the visual modes and practices that were traditionally engaged by the Kiowa and which are reinserted by the Momadays in their text as a form of anti-colonial resurgence. Such strategies contributed to decolonizing textual spaces and tribal representation in the late 1960s through their blurring of Western disciplines and through the spiritual interconnection of human, more-than-humans and place at a time when Native American religions were banned. Words and images in *The Way to Rainy Mountain* are preeminently relational and place-based; they engage with the land and the multiple beings that

dwell on it at material and spiritual levels that cannot be set apart. Shaped by traditional Kiowa epistemology and social practice, *Rainy Mountain*'s illustrations depict more-than-human beings and interspecies relations which, understood as both material and sacred experience, lead to creative vision and cultural resurgence in this groundbreaking text.

Keywords: native American literature, N. Scott Momaday, Al Momaday, *The Way to Rainy Mountain*, Kiowa art, pictographic history, interspecies relations.

Resumen

Partiendo de las tradiciones pictográficas y de las relaciones entre especies asociadas a la cultura kiowa, así como de las teorías sobre el lenguaje, la visión y la imaginación creativa desarrolladas por N. Scott Momaday, en este trabajo propongo ampliar nuestra comprensión de la autobiografía colectiva *The Way to Rainy Mountain* entendida como colaboración visual y verbal entre el pintor kiowa Alfred Momaday y su hijo N. Scott. Las historias e imágenes plasmadas en esta obra contribuyeron a establecer a los kiowa en relación a un paisaje cultural concreto, a unas formas de memoria visual/oral, así como a los animales y seres más-que-humanos que les dan sentido. Para entender estos dos tipos de relación, la sagrada interdependencia entre las imágenes y las palabras y los seres humanos y más-que-humanos en la tradición kiowa, sitúo la revisión histórica, geográfica y ceremonial practicada por los Momaday en un marco intelectual tribal. Para ello considero los modos y prácticas visuales que caracterizan a la cultura kiowa y que son reinsertados por los Momaday en su obra como estrategia de resurgimiento anti-colonial. Estas estrategias contribuyeron a descolonizar los espacios textuales y la representación tribal a finales de los años 60 al cuestionar la rigidez de los campos de conocimiento occidentales e interconectar telúrica y espiritualmente a seres humanos y más-que-humanos en un momento histórico en el que las prácticas religiosas amerindias estaban prohibidas. Las palabras e imágenes plasmadas en *The Way to Rainy Mountain* son preeminentemente relacionales y están centradas en el territorio; apelan a la tierra y a los múltiples seres que la habitan de un modo material y spiritual que los hace inseparables. Las ilustraciones de *Rainy Mountain* muestran una clara influencia de la epistemología, historiografía visual y prácticas sociales kiowa y presentan relaciones entre especies que, entendidas como experiencia material y sagrada, llevan a la visión creativa y al resurgimiento cultural en esta obra pionera.

Palabras clave: literatura nativo americana, N. Scott Momaday, Al Momaday, *The Way to Rainy Mountain*, arte kiowa, historia pictográfica, relaciones entre especies.

Introduction

When in March 1968 Kiowa writer N. Scott Momaday decided to turn his collection of vignettes, *The Journey of Tai-Me* (1967), into a historical and family memoir entitled *The Way to Rainy Mountain*, he made the following request to the editors at the University of New Mexico Press: "Just a thought: What would you think of having my dad do the illustrations, making this an all-Kiowa (or at least two-Kiowa) project?" (in Lincoln 1986: 112). One year later Momaday was awarded a Pulitzer Prize for his first novel, *House Made of Dawn* (1968), while *The Way to Rainy Mountain*, featuring eleven illustrations sketched by his father, Kiowa painter Alfred Momaday, was published.[1] In the creation of this dialogical piece, Al Momaday did not merely contribute visual ideas as an illustrator but had a central role as a historical archivist and translator (from Kiowa to English), sharing with his son many of the tribal and family stories featured in *The Way to Rainy Mountain* (hereafter referred to as *Rainy Mountain*). Al Momaday interviewed Kiowa elders, selected and executed the illustrations, and acted as an intermediary between the older and the younger generation, unpacking the cultural and historical traditions of the Kiowa for his son and for the reader. In the documentary *Return to Rainy Mountain*, produced and directed by N. Scott Momaday's daughter Jill, the Kiowa writer fully acknowledges this primordial creative influence: "My father was *my storyteller*. He had a considerable knowledge of Kiowa oral tradition. He used to tell me stories from the time I could first understand language. I made him tell them to me again and again and again *until I had them secured in my mind*" (Momaday 2017: min. 8, emphasis added).

As a painter, Al Momaday also became an early mediator between the visual and the verbal modes in his son's literary works. Drawing from Kiowa storytelling and historical accounts that were image-based as well as from N. Scott Momaday's own theories of language, vision, and the creative imagination as developed in his essay collection *The Man Made of Words*, this article aims to broaden our understanding of *Rainy Mountain* as a creative verbal/visual collaboration between father and son (and other voices) to re-create a tribe. This collaborative project chose to situate the land and interspecies relations at the center of Kiowa identity, thus challenging colonial interpretations that considered more-than-human beings as mere possessions, resources, or creatures from a mythical world. To further understand these two sets of relations, the sacred interdependence between images/words and human/more-than-human beings in the Kiowa tradition, I first delve into the verbal and visual revision of history, place, and ceremony carried out by the Momadays in *The Way to Rainy Mountain*. I then consider visual modes and practices that were traditionally engaged in by the Kiowa and which are consciously reinserted by the Momadays in their text as a form or anti-colonial resurgence.[2]

These visual strategies challenge colonialist frameworks and styles that have misrepresented Native American histories and forms of telling. They also bring to the foreground central relationships of interdependence with the land and with the more-than-human beings that endowed Kiowa cultural and religious practices with further meaning. In doing so, this inaugural text of the Native American Renaissance contributed to decolonizing textual spaces and tribal representation in the late 1960s in two ways: through its anti-colonial blurring of Western disciplines and through the spiritual interconnection of humans, more-than-humans, and place at a time when American Indian religions remained banned.[3] Words and images in *The Way to Rainy Mountain* are preeminently relational and place-based, they engage with the Oklahoma landscape and the multiple beings that dwell on it at material and spiritual levels that cannot be set apart. Al Momaday's illustrations vividly drew from Kiowa epistemology, historiography, spirituality, and social practice; for these images highlight traditional interspecies relations which are understood as sacred experience that must be acknowledged and respected.

In his essay "The Native Voice in American Literature", N. Scott Momaday imagines a prehistoric man bearing a rudimentary object that has been previously soaked in pigment; he seems ready to inscribe his vision on the rock. This is a foundational moment for art and for literary expression since, Momaday argues, "all the stories of all the world proceed from the moment in which [this prehistoric man] makes his mark. All literatures issue from his hand" (1997: 13). The interconnection between image and word in Momaday's literary works is intimate, ever-present, and profound. Considered within a Kiowa epistemological framework, images and words "involve sacred matter"; they are connected to a particular cultural landscape and vision that becomes ceremonial because they have performative power (25). And, just as the traditional Kiowa vision quest was a central meaning-making practice for self and community, the artistic quest also exceeds the individual vision. All art is relational and purposeful, for it necessarily traces a web of connections that trigger transformation, strength, and responsibility for both the individual artist and for the community receiving it, embodying and infusing it with further meaning. The connections triggered by the images and the words are thus intrinsically powerful and sacred in the Kiowa context.

In this respect, Momaday's theories of literary and artistic creation are in line with Native American ecological worldviews that emphasize relationality and connectedness with the world, with the land, and with all living beings that inhabit a territory, human and more-than-human (Coulthardt and Simpson 2016).[4] In his essay "Sacred Images", Momaday recounts his impression of the Altamira caves in the north of Spain, which shelter 14,000-year-old Paleolithic rock paintings. He describes the awe and delight experienced upon seeing the series of red-colored,

black, and ochre drawings featuring non-human animals: bison, horses, deer, goats, and wild boars. The bison on Altamira's ceiling are "grazing in eternity […] seemingly alive, moving in the flickering light" (1997: 128). Looking at the prehistoric animals on the walls, Momaday can sense the love and respect the artist must have felt for the animals he inscribed on the rock. Both artist and bison gain continuous existence and meaning in relation to one another, for these animals, like "the buffalo and the horse to the Plains Indians of the nineteenth century . . . extended his human being to the center of wilderness, of mystery, of deepest life itself" (128). The animals on the cave walls become for Momaday a threshold that provides "sacred access to the world around", "a passage from time into timelessness" (128). Like the rock paintings in the American Southwest, Momaday identifies these engravings of animals and more-than-human beings as "the beginning of art [… and] of literature", "the word made visible" for "imaging, imagining, incising, writing" are core principles in storytelling (129-130).

Momaday reckons that the contemplation of such prehistoric art is a profound, time-bending experience that leads us to recover the awe and delight of childhood while sharing a bit of the eternity held within human existence. Momaday's literary works are also imbued by these same forces and perceptions, and often explore the fundamental relationships forged between humans and more-than-human beings; sacred relationships that sustain creation and survival at the very intersection of identity, territory, image and story. As I argue throughout this essay, the visual, oral, and written modes of language constantly feed off each other in *The Way to Rainy Mountain*. And more than any other, the Momaday's "visual mode" (Rainwater 1995: 377) contributed to establishing a relational framework of interdependence between humans, more-than-human beings, and the landscape that grounded the Native American Renaissance in the coming decades. In the sections that follow I examine this relational web spun with tribal identity, images, words, and interspecies connections in *Rainy Mountain*.

1. *The Way to Rainy Mountain:* Kiowa Identity, Dialogical Structures, and Collective Voice

The Way to Rainy Mountain traces N. Scott Momaday's journey back to his grandmother Aho's house in Rainy Mountain, Oklahoma. This is both a physical journey through specific cultural geographies that have shaped the traditional stories and histories of the Kiowa (and the Momaday's own family history) from Wyoming to Oklahoma, and a memorial journey triggered by specific sites around Rainy Mountain and the family homestead. *Rainy Mountain* focuses primarily on the reconstruction of personal and tribal histories and identities and on debunking

colonial representation and destruction. It is an utterly relational work that aims to destabilize a rather Western understanding of history, literature, and artistic vision as individual and separate enterprises by challenging all literary and historical forms of categorization. It also functions as "a type of map or template for reclaiming worldviews" wherein the oral, in conversation with graphic modes of telling, contributed to the re-emergence of a Native-based critical and literary discourse during the so-called Native American Renaissance (Teuton 2010: 54). As Christopher Teuton poignantly argues, *Rainy Mountain* aimed to activate an emerging, Native-based, critical discourse (2010: 56). This "critical impulse arises out of a context of community consciousness, and it responds to the oral and graphic communicative needs of a community for survivance. Aside from basic material needs, cultural survivance depends on a community's vibrant, active engagement with the worldview its members continually contruct" (Teuton 2010: xviii). The words and images contained in this amazing little book have "remained vital, and immediate, for that is the nature of story" (Momaday 1969: ix), and part of that continuous vitality flows from its relational views, and from the interplay of the visual and verbal modes, throughout the book.

Following a Preface, an Introduction, and a framing poem entitled "Headwaters", Momaday's piece is composed of three overarching sections ("The Setting Out", "The Going On", and "The Closing In"), which are divided into twenty-four shorter episodes (two-page narrative segments), each of which contains three interconnected passages or *voices*, as Momaday refers to them. These three voices are placed next to each other in a relational, dialogical manner on two facing pages, wherein each voice features a mythical story from the oral tradition, another from historical or anthropological documents, and a third one from Momaday's own family history. The stories are all strongly grounded in the cultural landscapes of the Kiowa and in Momaday's family and personal memories, which in the book run parallel to the history of the Kiowa tribe. The voices also refer to many human and more-than-human beings that shape and are shaped by these stories and that interconnect in an intimate, poetic manner.

All in all, these three dimensions, "myth, history, and memoir", spin a "narrative wheel that is as sacred as language itself" (Momaday 1969: ix). They also blend with one another as the sections unfold, with characters that had been associated with one of the voices suddenly appearing in a different dimension, thus constructing "a polyphonic version of Kiowa historiography that questions traditional divisions between fact and fiction, history and myth" (Brígido-Corachán 2011: 114).

The mythical and historical narrative lines begin with the ancestral migration of the Kiowa from Yellowstone to the Southern Plains around the Washita River and

Rainy Mountain in the late 18th century ("The Setting Out"); the book then engages a selection of Kiowa stories at the peak of their so-called "Centaur Culture" in the 18th and early 19th centuries, when they ruled over the Plains ("The Going On"). It finally focuses on the rapid disappearance of their traditional lifestyle as a result of colonialism —a historical period and visual imaginary depicted in many epic tales of the American West ("The Closing In").

Rainy Mountain foregrounds the deep ecological interconnectedness that was established between the self, the Kiowa community, the landscape, and more-than-human beings —a delicate balance that was ultimately brought down by colonialist conquest and the environmental and cultural destruction that ensued.[5] This poetic blend of historical chronicle, traditional knowledge, and memoir also follows N. Scott Momaday's self-reflective, personal journey as he strengthens his own cultural identity as a Kiowa and as an artist. For Donelle Dreese, Momaday's "stories illuminate the intimacy between language and tribal identity, and it is this tribal identity told through myth that Momaday seeks for deeper self-understanding" (2002: 30). *Rainy Mountain* is grounded in the performative and ceremonial power of verbal and visual language, and its multiple images are rendered as illustrations but also evoked through words in an ekphrastic manner.[6] These images were later expanded and accompanied by family photographs in Momaday's memoir *The Names* (1976) and have recently been reenacted in the documentary *Return to Rainy Mountain* (2017), directed and produced by N. Scott's daughter, Jill Momaday.

In the following section I discuss key relational strategies between images and words, and human and more-than-human beings within a Native-based, anticolonial framework that aims to shed further light on the Momaday's crucial role in establishing sovereign intellectual practices at the dawn of the Native American Renaissance.[7]

2. Kiowa Historicity, Pictographic Traditions, and Relational Frameworks

For many Native American tribes, visual expression and written expression are creative practices that are deeply entwined. In *The Common Pot*, Abenaki scholar Lisa Brooks tells us that writing and drawing share the same word in the Ojibwe and Abenaki language. In Abenaki, "the root word *awigha-* means 'to draw', 'to write', 'to map' while the word *awikhigan*, which originally described birchbark messages, maps, and scrolls, came to encompass books and letters" (Brooks 2008: xxi). Anishinaabe novelist Louise Erdrich similarly explains that "the words for *book* and *rock painting* are almost identical" in Anishinaabeg whereas "the root of

both these words, *mazina*, is 'the root for dozens of words all concerned with made images and with the substances upon which the images are put' including those of photographs, movie screens, and television sets" (in Brooks 2008: xx).[8] Lisa Brooks offers other Native and also non-Native examples such as ancient Greek (where the term *graphos* refers to the acts of writing and drawing), and briefly discusses Mayan and Aztec codices and murals, which used pictographic symbols to tell their histories (Brooks 2008: xxi; see also Silko 1997: 21). The European scriptural tradition, with its progressive separation of images from words, has wrongly led Western cultures to believe that such a division was universal when it is actually not. In fact, for many Indigenous communities, "writing and drawing are both forms of image making" and are often combined in a "relational framework" (Brooks 2008: xxi).

In this context, it is important to note that N. Scott Momaday's career as a painter began in the mid-1970s and that, in his numerous paintings and etchings, he has experimented with a variety of visual techniques and styles.[9] In his literary works, N. Scott Momaday frequently engages these textual and visual modes in an interactive manner and identifies them as key components of the same imaginative act. As he points out in an interview, "writing is drawing, and so the image and the word cannot be divided" (Coltelli 1990: 96). On a different occasion, Momaday has also argued that "painting and drawing and writing are in some respects the same thing […] writing is […] a kind of drawing" (in Rainwater 1995: 378).

N. Scott Momaday's "implicitly stated theory of images" is consistent through his literary work and he often ponders critically and aesthetically on the "act of looking" (Rainwater 1995: 376-377). Both Catherine Rainwater and Hertha Wong have identified a distinctively Native American way of perceiving and recording the world in Momaday's visual and literary strategies.[10] Whether as petroglyphs, ledger books, or hide paintings, Native forms of historical and aesthetic expression were often pictographic, where images played a central "role […] in the formation and preservation of Native American thought and history" (Rainwater 1995: 379). Examining a diverse set of Plains Indians' self-narratives from the 18th to the 20th centuries, Hertha Wong also claims that "the symbolic language of pictographs allowed pre-contact Plains Indians to 'read' about one another from painted robes, tipis and shields" (1992: 57). The Kiowa and Kiowa Apache often rendered their individual and tribal histories through pictographic painting on buffalo hides and Momaday himself describes legendary chief Dohasan's *Do-giagya guat* or "tipi with battle pictures", featuring several warrior scenes, in section XII of *Rainy Mountain*.

Arnold Krupat and Hertha Wong have described Native American life-writing as "dialogical" (Krupat 1989: 133), "relational", or "communal" (Wong 1992: 13-

14). Native American identities are relational in the sense that they are understood as dynamic "selves-in-progress" that take into account the community and also the surrounding environments with their spiritual dimension (Wong 1992: 13-14). For Wong, such "relational self reflected deep connections not only to one's people, but to the land and its natural cycles as well without leaving individuality completely aside, especially in the case of Plains Indian men" (38). Pictographic painting on tipis, for example, was often executed as a collective enterprise wherein the chief's "personal vision" was carried out with the help of many other men, who acted as consultants or painters (33). This same collective impulse permeates the complex array of stories, images, and memories in *Rainy Mountain*.

In addition to painted tipis and shields, the most well-known Kiowa documents rendered in pictographic form were the 19th-century historical calendars, which took a circular rather than linear shape. The Kiowa calendar was known as *saiguat*, which literally meant "winter marks" or "winter pictures" (Greene 2009: 1). The Kiowa selected and inscribed two symbolic images, a summer and a winter marker or count, to represent the year that had just ended in their calendars, which were kept by specific members of the community. According to Candance Greene, the Kiowa "word *guat*, which comes from the act of marking or painting, has continued in use to designate writing, and the charts must have served the calendar keepers much like written notes" (2009: 2). In a similar fashion, I believe that Al Momaday's drawings do not have a mere supporting or illustrative function in his son's book but are rather conceived as cues or memory triggers in a context of storytelling that recalls the images drawn in the historical calendars. As such, the images establish a strong sense of continuity with the particular intellectual and artistic tradition of the Kiowa. Each recalls a tribal story or relation and highlights key cultural details that may otherwise pass unnoticed by the reader. Contributing to this effect, the layout of the book is such that it is the stories that seem to emerge from the pictographic markers and not the other way around, as we will see in the next section. Moreover, each of these images features an animal or more-than-human being establishing a meaningful connection with a human character, further strengthening the Kiowa's relational view of interdependence with the more-than-human worlds.

In this regard, we should note that a shorter version of the book, entitled *The Journey of Tai-Me*, had already been published in 1967, two years before *Rainy Mountain*.[11] This earlier version or "archetype" was released in a limited edition of 100 copies that were hand-painted and illustrated by American artist Bruce S. McCurdy, who contributed a series of abstract landscapes and figures in etchings to accompany the text.[12] These abstract landscapes were rather Western in style and did not consider the visual modes of Kiowa historicity and their intellectual

and creative expression. A central political move of the Momadays in *The Way to Rainy Mountain* was therefore to replace McCurdy's abstract etchings with Alfred Momaday's illustrations, which highlight concrete more-than-human beings and sites, and which are clearly reminiscent of the historical calendars and of their Kiowa heritage. As N. Scott Momaday has pointed out, "[m]y father was a traditional Indian artist, and his themes were Indian. He drew and painted peyote figures and buffalo hunters and did various kinds of mystical paintings. I think he comes directly out of the Kiowa artistic traditions which preceded him, and in some ways. […] I follow in his tracks" (in Rainwater 1995: 378).

Although the Kiowa produced beautiful pictorial art in many forms such as paintings on buffalo robes, on 19th-century ledger books and sketchbooks, and through beadwork, the calendar pictures were comparatively "simple" and aimed to function as a "spare mnemonic figure" (Greene 2009: 4) that necessarily had to be expanded and complemented by the accompanying oral narration. *The Way to Rainy Mountain* follows this same stylistic pattern wherein the chosen image functions as a tribal marker, a foundational pillar for the story to build around, so that survivance will depend on the members of the tribe's "active engagement with their worldviews" (Teuton 2010: xviii) as well as on the continuous telling of the story.

N. Scott Momaday's perception of the bison in the Altamira caves in Spain, a place far from the Southern Plains of North America and yet evocative of the same creative act, manifests his commitment with the intellectual legacy of the Kiowa. For Momaday, the Spanish bison had a deeper significance that exceeded its role in human history and the arts; the bison functioned as a fundamental threshold that connected two expressive forms: images and stories. The prehistoric paintings are a reminder of intimate interspecies relations around the world —the human/animal interdependence that was key to human survival. The visual/verbal and animal/human relations in Momaday's work thus understand time as continuous within a Native American circular framework, a historical circle of restoration, relationality, and permanence.

Interestingly, in Momaday's novel *The Ancient Child*, painter Locke Setman (Momaday's alter ego) sketches an imprecise figure on a small canvas which becomes one of his most successful works. It is vaguely described as a man on a horse in a "landscape of swirling colors […] each describing a spatial dimension and all a succession of distances from the viewer's eye" (1989: 159). The watercolor painting is entitled *Venture Beyond Time* and it evokes the same all-encompassing relations we find in *The Way to Rainy Mountain*. The centaur culture of the Kiowa and a circular sense of time within the land are made visible as spatial and emotional planes entwine in the painting and distance becomes relative. The transformative

power of interspecies connection is also conjured up through such human/animal contact. *Venture Beyond Time* is described in the novel as an ineffable experience of utter relationality —dissolving away onto the land and "becom[ing] one with the horse" while riding at fast speed (Momaday 1989: 161). We find a similar transformational experience leading to deeper understandings of place, community, and self through "interspecies communication" (Plumwood 2002: 189) in many of the illustrations featured in *The Way to Rainy Mountain*.

3. Visions, Relations, Resurgence. Al Momaday's More-than-human Drawings in *The Way to Rainy Mountain*

In her book, *Creatures of Empire: How Domestic Animals Transformed Early America*, Virginia De John Anderson examines the effects of colonization and its violent reconfiguration of human/animal relations such as those upheld by the Kiowa. Favoring more-than-human beings over human figures and exploring complex interspecies encounters in all of the illustrations, *The Way to Rainy Mountain* can be considered an anticolonial work that significantly contributed to ground Indigenous resurgence, that is, the restoration of traditional Kiowa worldviews, practices, and relations through stories and images. *Rainy Mountain* uses eleven illustrations drawn by Al Momaday, some of which are also rendered in slightly reconfigured forms in the different book covers issued by The University of New Mexico Press. I will briefly discuss the significance of the book's three cover designs before proceeding to tackle the illustrations within the book.

The first paperback edition, published in 1969, featured the famous "single knoll ris[ing] out of the plain in Oklahoma" (5) —the book's most important site of memory. Overlooking Rainy Mountain, this cover also included a mythical looking buffalo, originally drawn by Al Momaday for section XVI, in the upper right corner. The cover's watercolor landscape in sepia colors was painted by N. Scott Momaday himself. The mighty buffalo appears to be in full motion and we can only see the animal's head and half of his body. We know that for the Kiowa "the buffalo was *the animal representation of the sun*, the essential and sacrificial victim of the Sun Dance" (3, emphasis added) and it is therefore symbolic that the buffalo seems to be rising in the Eastern corner, shinning over the title. Later editions of the book, also issued by the University of New Mexico Press, have continued to display the sacred buffalo on their covers, but as a buffalo skull painted inside a Kiowa warrior's shield. In one of these editions, in fact, we find three Kiowa warrior shields all set under the title in anticipation of the tryptic chapter structure readers will soon find inside.[13]

As Jacki Thompson Rand explains, the spiritual power of the buffalo was central to the Kiowa religion and that was the reason why buffalo were often featured in their shields. These shields were not just sources of protection and power, known amongst the Kiowa as *dwdw*, they connected personal narratives to such "spirit power" and were therefore key in the transmission of cultural and social values to Kiowa youth.

> At the center of nineteenth-century Kiowa belief was the concept of *dwdw*, power or spirit force, which inhabited all things —animate and inanimate. *Dwdw* inhabited animals, the earth, sun, moon, and stars. Natural phenomena possessed varying degrees of *dwdw*, with the sun holding the strongest spirit power. Sun, addressed as "grandfather", nurtured the spirit of the buffalo, making this mainstay of Kiowa materiality and diet one of the most powerful animals in spirit terms.[14] (2008: 65)

The buffalo images featured on these covers reappear later in the book, with an accompanying caption taken from the mythical voice in the adjacent chapter. The alliterative caption "its steel horns flashed once in the sun" (Momaday 1969: 56) highlights the buffalo's power and sacred connection to the sun. Another caption describes "a row of greased buffalo skulls" (69) which, in the accompanying story, are walked upon by a brave Kiowa man to save his brother.[15] Pictographic accounts of the Kiowa, whether on tipis or shields, often depicted individual acts of bravery and were associated with their owners[16]. In *Rainy Mountain*, Momaday conjures up this specific tradition of Plains Indians tales of bravery or warriors' coups when he narrates the feat of this Kiowa warrior keeping his foot over the greased buffalo skulls and saving his brother from the enemy (66). The buffalo "with horns of steel" also renders a warrior's coup, a deadly combat between a Kiowa hunter and a buffalo (54). These images all set the buffalo as a central source of sustenance and spiritual power grounding key features of tribal identity: Kiowa nobility, bravery, and respect.

It should be stressed that these human/animal relations are not idealized by the text; the Kiowa were predominantly meat eaters (Momaday 1969: 25, 44) and both horses and buffalos were often used, sacrificed, and hunted down, but the bonds established with these animals were preeminently respectful and caring. The traditional Kiowa tale "The Passing of the Buffalo" conveys these values as follows:

> When the people killed a buffalo, they did it with reverence. They gave thanks to the buffalo's spirit. They used every part of the buffalo they killed. The meat was their food. The skins were used for clothing and to cover their tipis. The hair stuffed their pillows and saddlebags. The sinews became their bowstrings. From the hooves they made glue. They carried water in the bladders and stomachs. To give the buffalo honor, they painted the skull and placed it facing the rising sun. (Caduto and Bruchach 1991: 223)

The buffalo's sacred, nurturing, and medicinal functions are highlighted in many Kiowa tales. Buffalo laid at the center of the Sun Dance and, as Françoise Besson posits, they were also "the place of the written historical text, of the narrated story —since the history of the people was written on buffalo hides" (2014: 216). Thus, the steel-horned buffalo in *Rainy Mountain*'s book covers and warrior shields reinsert human-animal interdependence as a key element of the Kiowa universe. And these ideas find continuity in the present in the text, for in the familiar voice of section XVI we learn about the unexpected encounter N. Scott and Al Momaday had with a small herd of buffalo and about their energetic escape from an understandably angry and protective mother cow. Of that encounter Momaday remembers, above all, the feeling of being "alive" in this "deep and beautiful" spring morning (Momaday 1969: 55). Like Momaday's vision of the bison in the Altamira cave, this mother buffalo also "extend[s the artist's] human being to the center of wilderness, of mystery, of deepest life itself" (Momaday 1997: 128) through interspecies communication and respect.

In *Rainy Mountain* there are eleven illustrations featuring animals and more-than-human beings such as trees, stars, or a water beast, aside from the book cover (see figure 1). McAllister claims that the first six of these illustrations seem to belong to the "mythical" dimension while the remaining five, starting with the only human figure, a Kiowa warrior on a horse hunting a buffalo, are rather "historical" (1978: 25). For Besson, the animals featured in the story, whether mythical or historical, become "vehicles of collective memory" and symbols of resilience through their relation to the cosmos (2014: 221-222).

Two images reinforce the Introduction's Kiowa framework. The first illustration depicts a foundational story of the tribe: a Kiowa boy transformed into a bear chases his seven sisters up Devil's Tower. The bear's story can be referred to as ekphrastic, as it aims to describe and explain the strange shape of Devil's Tower (Clements 2001) and therefore establishes a powerful and sacred relation between the original form and the story/image that made it legendary amongst the Kiowa.[17] Devil's Tower has a central role in Kiowa stories of origin as a sacred site of memory, but it is also strongly connected to Momaday's own identity. In 1934, when he was six months old, N. Scott visited this sacred site with his parents, Al and Natachee Momaday, and this place-based story prompted his Kiowa name, Tsoai-Talee, which in the Kiowa language means Rock-Tree-Boy (Brígido Corachán 2011: 115-116).

This place-based story highlights survival and transformation, but also relationality and continuance: the sisters are transformed into the seven stars of the Big Dipper and the number seven plays a meaningful role in the narrative, as we will discuss in a moment. The story also features another more-than-human being: a tree stump

Figure 1. Illustrations in The Way to Rainy Mountain

who speaks to the girls, grows, and leads them to protection. As many environmentalist critics have pointed out, our existence has to be understood within relational frameworks of ecological interdependence. The tree demands that a nurturing and moral regard for human and more-than-human lives be established and this is what Whyte and Cuomo have identified as an "ethics of care" (2017: 2). In the story, the tree's conscious action is instrumental to the salvation of the seven sisters and, thus, they all become a site of guidance (the stars) and place-based memory (the tree transformed into a mountain). In return, this ethical framework of interdependence and interspecies care will be transferred to the Kiowa tribe as well. This is the first illustration chosen by the Momadays to ground the book's Introduction. It shapes the Momadays' journey of self-reflection and opens a path to restore Kiowa ecological and cultural worldviews through image and writing. The bear's claws forcefully inscribed in the bark of the tree are

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perhaps a reminder of the visual and textual violence exerted by colonization over Indigenous cultures but also echo the messages written on birch bark by Northern Native cultures in pre-colonial times.

The book's Introduction includes a second relational illustration: a cricket circularly framed by the full moon as contemplated by N. Scott Momaday from his late grandmother's homestead. This circular shape or sacred hoop will be echoed by the last image of the book, which appears in the Epilogue. This closing illustration features the Leonid meteor shower that has been recorded as one of the earliest entries in the Kiowa historical calendars (Momaday 1969: 85). This last image does not depict animals but features seven stars as relational more-than-human beings in transformation, completing the cycle.

As Wong points out, these two "illustrations provide an associational circularity […] both the first and last pictures deal with the relationship of the earth and the sky, and the human desire to ascend from one to the other" (1992: 167). They emphasize our relational, cosmic nature and also depict "a series of marks" indicating the "motion and direction" of the falling stars in the manner of "earlier pictographic coup accounts denot[ing] animal tracks or military movements" (Wong 1992: 167). For McAllister, the seven-star pattern in the last illustration represents the "unpeopling of the sky, the loss of those mythic kinsmen, a loss appropriate to the beginning of historical time" in the Kiowa calendars (1978: 25). But the number seven holds yet another meaning in the narrative. Aho, Momaday's grandmother, "was about seven when the last Kiowa Sun Dance was held in 1887 on the Washita River above Rainy Mountain Creek" when "the buffalo were gone" (Momaday 1969: 10). The seven-star pattern and the cricket framed by the moon in the grandmother's porch are a threshold connecting images and words, history and myth, Momaday and Aho, under the same cosmic worldview. In the documentary, *Return to Rainy Mountain*, Momaday in fact describes the story of the bear and the seven sisters as "a quantum leap of the imagination" that "relates us to the stars" (Momaday 2017: min. 15). Those same stars still shine over the family homestead. The circularity gives the book closure but also purpose and continuance.

The remaining illustrations that are interspersed within the book's three sections feature other sacred animals which are seen as either relatives (the nurturing grandmother spider and a Kiowa brother turned water beast in "The Coming Out") or as vital companions like the horse or the buffalo. These animals all have communicational abilities and guide the Kiowa in the mythical and personal passages of the book. Interestingly, the lines of text that have been chosen as captions to accompany these images are invariably dramatic and seemingly depict these more-than-human beings as menacing or frightening. The spider is described

as "larger than you imagine, dull and dark brown" (Momaday 1969: 28); the water beast creates "some awful commotion beneath the surface" (40), while the horse/fish shaped storm, Man-ka-ih, has tornado-making power with its tail "whipping and thrashing on the air" (50). The captions placed next to the images may remind some readers of pictorial plates in Edwardian novels. But the seemingly dramatic words and menacing-looking creatures relating to them are not scary once you engage with the stories of which they are a part. These more-than-human beings are deeply resignified by the stories themselves, where they are depicted as vital forces of nature or as close relatives of the Kiowa. They are indeed awe-inspiring and their mystery and singular actions have to be honored and remembered.[18]

The six illustrations included in the central and last sections entitled "The Going On" and "The Closing In" focus on two animals sacred to the Kiowa, buffalo and horses, marking the peak and later decline of Kiowa centaur culture (see figure 1). We have already pointed to the centrality of the buffalo for the Kiowa in the Southern Plains as an all-encompassing symbol of sustenance, medicine, and ceremony. In "The Morality of Indian Hating" Momaday elaborates on the significance of horses in Kiowa history and within his own family. Horses enabled the Kiowa to leave the ground, to "prevail against distance […] to move beyond the limits of his human strength, of his vision, even of his former dreams" (1997: 68). On the horse, the Kiowa underwent a psychological change, he was "elevated to a height from which the far world was made a possession of the eye" (1997: 68). Christopher Teuton describes this vantage point as "the ability to see far […] the expression of a worldview" (2010: 61):

> In *The Way to Rainy Mountain* the concept of vision entails movement from alienation to knowledge, from lack of connection to a relationship with place, from a lack of cultural identity to a deeply felt cultural identity. More than an extension of physical sight, vision is a process of mediation that includes both physical sight and emotional insight. (Teuton 2010: 60-61)

Teuton interprets vision as the "critical impulse in a person's relationship with place" —one that is "activated through the person's imaginative engagement with place" (2010: 70). The Momaday's critical vision connects words and images to the single knoll in the Oklahoma plains, to the family homestead, and to the human/more-than-human interactions that shaped the Kiowa tribe and themselves as Kiowa artists. The spirit power or *dwdw* of the Kiowa was often "represented in painted signs on animal bodies" while "the relationship between a man and a horse was grounded in the translation and sharing of power between mutually dependent man and animal" (Rand 2008: 66). These visual signs on the skin of the horse were "more than a mere amulet", they were "materializ[ations] of shared power"

(Rand 66) connecting horse and rider. We see another example of this spiritual connection in a personal experience shared by Momaday in section XXII, anticipating the illustration of a wounded horse. In this fragment Momaday remembers a set of horse bones belonging to his grandfather Mammedaty, those of Little Red. They were kept in a little box in the barn turned shrine at the family homestead. The memorial reverberations triggered by the encounter with these bones become an homage to Little Red's speed and might and also to Mammedaty's love for his horse. But they are also a reminder that the massive killing of the buffalo and the horse by colonial settlers deteriorated the Kiowa value system of kinship and violently "disrupt[ed] their foundations of sustenance" (Dietrich 2016: 14). Little Red's bones activate Momaday's process of *vision* and *mediation* (Teuton 2010: 60-61) and are therefore key in his critical movement from colonial alienation to cultural identity.

For Catherine Rainwater, Momaday's novels often present a "self-reflexive iconography" that reinforces "basic interconnections between the aesthetic structure of his works and the thought, emotion, belief, morality, and even personal identity represented therein" (1995: 376). In *The Way to Rainy Mountain*, these eleven self-reflexive images are both external and internal, rooted in place but also in tribal and personal resurgence. They highlight the reciprocal relationship of respect the Kiowa practiced when engaging more-than-human persons such as animals, water creatures, mountains, and stars, and indeed the land itself. The book is articulated both by the seemingly linear movement of Kiowa history through time but also by the circularity brought in through the tryptic textual structure and by the opening and closing figures, the seven stars. The relational stars conjure up the mythical and narrative origins of the Kiowa and a renewed literary beginning where visual and scriptural modes actively contribute to the resurgence of tribal worldviews and expression. This circularity also echoes the Kiowa calendars which, as we have seen, understood and represented history in a graphic and non-linear manner.

Throughout his texts, N. Scott Momaday highlights the 'act of looking' (Rainwater 1995: 377) through visual terms such as seeing, looking, watching, eye, sight, or point of view. He understands this act of looking or "seeing far" (Teuton 2010: 61) as a conscious action that expands one's vision of the world. It also signals the power and responsibility the artist holds seeing in this way. Animal-based images trigger memories and stories which in turn trigger actions in connection with the cultural landscape that unfolded and continues to unfold around Rainy Mountain. The act of looking becomes an act of remembrance and epistemological revelation and also one of continuance and anticolonial resurgence through "imaging, imagining, incising, writing" (Momaday 1997: 129).

Conclusion: Sacred Images and Words in *Rainy Mountain*

In his essay "Sacred Images", right before his reminiscence of the Altamira bison, Momaday explains the creative and emotional web of images and words in his works as follows:

> As a painter, I am concerned to understand the relationships between the artist and his subject for that relationship is ancient and sacred. To understand that relationship, even imperfectly, gives us a way to find our place in the world, to reckon the course of our journey from birth to death, and from Genesis to the edge of time and beyond. (1997: 127)

Rainy Mountain's subjects are indeed N. Scott Momaday himself and his family in the Oklahoma homestead, but also the oral histories and pictographic traditions of the Kiowa rendered through a variety of complex human and more-than-human relations.

As we have seen throughout this essay, *The Way to Rainy Mountain* is not a mere memoir but a complex collaboration between a father and a son to reimagine a tribe, a dialogical piece that contains many voices and stories that are interrelated and transmitted in a scriptural and visual manner, following the pictographic traditions of the Kiowa. *Rainy Mountain* highlights Kiowa modes of visuality and textuality that are relational and associative, and a circularity that is historical and ceremonial, a "narrative wheel that is as sacred as language itself" (Momaday 1969: ix).

The visual and verbal strategies devised by Alfred and N. Scott Momaday clearly challenged 20th-century colonialist frameworks and textual styles through the blurring of artistic disciplines and through the vindication of a ceremonial context that is rooted in Kiowa history and culture. Their pioneering work is also a groundbreaking example of environmental care ethics in its poetic showcase of ecological interdependence and "interspecies communication" (Plumwood 2002: 189). Words and images in *The Way to Rainy Mountain* are preeminently relational and place-based, they engage the land and the human and more-than-human beings that dwell on it at material and spiritual levels that cannot be set apart. In doing so, *The Way to Rainy Mountain* contributed to establish a relational framework of grounded interdependence and responsibility between human and more-than-human beings and the land —one that continues to flourish in 21st century Native American literature, culture, and thought.

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Notes

1. In 1969 Momaday was also named Outstanding Indian of the Year by the American Indian community and became a member of the Kiowa's Gourd Dance Society. He simultaneously achieved tribal and national recognition.

2. According to Edna Manitowabi and Leanne Simpson, resurgence is conjured up through the telling of stories transformed into collective theory —a theory that "maps away out of colonial thinking by confirming Indigenous lifeways or alternative ways of being in the world" (2013: 279).

3. The American Indian Religious Freedom Act was not passed until 1978. Prior to this, traditional religious ceremonies were prosecuted and banned.

4. Coulthard develops the concept of place-based relationality or grounded normativity in his already classic article "Grounded Normativity /Place-Based Solidarity" co-authored with Leanne Simpson (2016). See also Coulthard's interview with Walia Harsha (2015).

5. On Momaday's work considered within a Native American environmentalist and place-based identity framework, see Lee Schweninger's *Listening to the Land: Native American Literary Responses to the Landscape* (2008) and Donelle Dreese's *Ecocriticism. Creating Self and Place in Environmental and American Indian Literature* (2002). On Momaday's text as biopolitical critique, see also René Dietrich' "Biopolitics and Indigenous Literary Studies" (2016).

6. The relevance of ekphrasis as a key literary strategy in *Rainy Mountain* is developed by William Clements in his article "'Image and word cannot be divided': N. Scott Momaday and Kiowa Ekphrasis" (2001) and by Sandra Lee Kleppe in *Ekphrasis in American Poetry: The Colonial Period to the 21st Century* (2014). On the performative power of language in the Kiowa tradition and in N. Scott Momaday's non-fiction works, see also Anna Brígido-Corachán's "Wordarrows" (2012).

7. On the concept of intellectual sovereignty, see Robert Allen Warrior's books *Tribal Secrets* and *The People and the Word* (1995). On *Rainy Mountain*'s intellectual or "critical impulse", see also Christopher Teuton's *Deep Waters* (2010).

8. See Louise Erdrich's *Books and Islands in Ojibwe Country* (2003).

9. Momaday's visual work is not often exhibited outside the United States but some works can be accessed through the websites of museums and galleries such as the Smithsonian Museum of the American Indian (https://americanart.si.edu/artist/n-scott-momaday-3380), The JRB Art Gallery (https://www.jrbartgallery.com/artist/N. Scott_Momaday/works/680), or the Heard Museum (https://heard.org/exhibits/momaday/). Catherine Rainwater examines some of these paintings in connection with Momaday's novels in her essay "Planes, Lines, Shapes, and Shadows: N. Scott Momaday's Iconological Imagination" (1995).

10. See Rainwater's article (1995) for a more detailed exploration of Momaday's "visual mode" and "language of images" as rendered in his novels *House Made of Dawn* (1968) and *The Ancient Child* (1989). Rainwater also elaborates on Momaday's significant representation of bear figures in both novels, which are connected to Kiowa history and to his own life, as we will see later in this essay.

11. Printed at the University of California, Santa Barbara, this ur-text included a set of stories from the so-called mythical dimension, which later formed the core foundation of *Rainy Mountain*.

12. N. Scott Momaday refers to his original piece as an "archetype" in his "Acknowledgements" section (1969).

13. Arlene Elder examines the 1976 book cover edition featuring the three self-referential Kiowa shields in her analysis of Momaday's poetry collection *In the Presence of the Sun* (1999: 274).

14. It is important to note that power did not limit itself to physical might or force but included key values such as "discipline and balance, social responsibility, and the capacity to combine physical strength with internalized rules of warrior behaviour" (Rand 2008: 67). On the buffalo's nurturing and spiritual power, see also Scott's classic "Notes on the Kado or Sun Dance of the Kiowas" (1911).

15. Momaday uses this same narrative strategy in *The Ancient Child* (1989), where each chapter title is a line that has been excerpted from the text that follows, weaving symbolic associations and anticipating what readers are about to encounter.

16. Hertha Wong examines the depiction of such warrior coups in the mythical voice of *Rainy Mountain* in *Sending My Heart Back across the Years* (1992: 66).

17. Devil's Tower is a striking geological formation in Wyoming that the Kiowa encountered in their migration journey from the Northwest to the Great Plains, sometime in the 17th century. The Kiowa called this formation Tsoai and the traditional story explains its strange shape while acting as a site of memory for the tribe.

18. For alternative readings of some of these images, see Wong (1992) and McAllister (1978).

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"I DID AS OTHERS DID AND AS OTHERS HAD ME DO": POSTCOLONIAL (MIS)REPRESENTATIONS AND PERPETRATOR TRAUMA IN SEASON 1 OF *TABOO* (2017-)

"HICE LO QUE OTROS HICIERON Y LO QUE OTROS ME OBLIGARON A HACER": (FALSAS)REPRESENTACIONES POSCOLONIALES Y EL TRAUMA DEL PERPETRADOR EN LA PRIMERA TEMPORADA DE *TABOO* (2017-)

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Abstract

Neo-Victorian fiction has been concerned with historically oppressed and traumatised characters from the 1990s onwards (Llewellyn 2008). More recently, neo-Victorianism on screen has shifted its attention to the figure of the perpetrator and their unresolved guilt, as in the TV series *Penny Dreadful* (Logan 2014-2016) or *Taboo* (Knight, Hardy and Hardy 2017-present). However, perpetrator trauma is an under-theorised field in the humanities (Morag 2018), neo-Victorian studies included. This article analyses *Taboo* as a neo-Victorian postcolonial text that explores the trauma of its protagonist James Delaney, an imperial perpetrator who transported and sold African slaves in the Middle Passage for the East India Company. Although the series is not set in the Victorian period, neo-Victorianism is here understood as fiction expanding beyond the historical boundaries of the Victorian era and that presents the long nineteenth century as synonymous with the empire (Ho 2012: 4). Thus, I argue that postcolonial texts like *Taboo* should be considered neo-Victorian since they are set in the nineteenth century to respond to and contest (neo-)imperial practices. However, neo-Victorian postcolonialism offers ambivalent representations of the British Empire, as it simultaneously critiques and reproduces its ideologies (Ho

2012; Primorac 2018). This article examines the ways in which *Taboo* follows this contradictory pattern, since it seemingly denounces the imperial atrocity of the slave trade through Delaney's perpetrator trauma, while simultaneously perpetuating it through his future colonizing trip to the Americas. Hence, Delaney is portrayed as an anti-hero in the series, given that he is both the enemy and the very product of the British Empire.

Keywords: neo-Victorianism on screen, perpetrator trauma, imperial Gothic, slavery, Middle Passage.

Resumen

La ficción neovictoriana se ha centrado en personajes históricamente oprimidos y traumatizados de los años noventa en adelante (Llewellyn 2008). Más recientemente, el neovictorianismo audiovisual ha desviado su atención hacia la figura del perpetrador y su culpa no resuelta, como es el caso de las series de televisión *Penny Dreadful* (Logan 2014-2016) o *Taboo* (Knight, Hardy and Hardy 2017-actualidad). Sin embargo, el trauma del perpetrador es un campo poco teorizado en las humanidades (Morag 2018), incluyendo los estudios neovictorianos. En este artículo analizamos *Taboo* como un texto poscolonial neovictoriano que explora el trauma de su protagonista James Delaney, un perpetrador al servicio del imperio que transportó y vendió esclavos africanos en el pasaje del Atlántico medio para la Compañía de las Indias Orientales. Aunque la serie no está ambientada en la época victoriana, entendemos el neovictorianismo como una ficción que se expande más allá de los límites históricos del victorianismo y que presenta el largo siglo XIX como sinónimo del imperio (Ho 2012: 4). Por lo tanto, defendemos que textos poscoloniales como *Taboo* deben considerarse neovictorianos, ya que el largo siglo XIX es utilizado para responder y cuestionar prácticas (neo)imperiales. Sin embargo, el poscolonialismo neovictoriano ofrece representaciones ambivalentes del Imperio Británico, ya que simultáneamente crÍtica y reproduce sus ideologías (Ho 2012; Primorac 2018). En este artículo examinamos las formas en que *Taboo* sigue dicho patrón, ya que aparentemente denuncia la atrocidad imperial del comercio de esclavos a través del trauma del perpetrador Delaney, pero al mismo tiempo lo perpetúa a través de su futuro viaje colonizador a América. Por lo tanto, Delaney es retratado como un antihéroe en la serie, ya que es tanto enemigo como producto del propio Imperio Británico.

Palabras clave: neovictorianismo audiovisual, trauma del perpetrador, gótico imperial, esclavitud, pasaje del medio.

1. Introduction

Trauma Studies in the humanities have traditionally focused on the victim's perspective, so as to contribute to their healing process by bringing to the fore and raising awareness about their traumatic experiences. That way, society can empathise with their suffering and take measures to prevent similar experiences from happening in the future. However, there has been a recent shift in attention from victims to perpetrators "in psychoanalysis and trauma literatures (and in cinema trauma scholarship)" (Morag 2018: 16), to what is known as 'perpetrator trauma'. This trend has also found its way into films and TV series, although it has been almost exclusively discussed in the case of Israeli documentary films (Morag 2012; 2013; 2018) and South African cinema (Karam 2019).[1] Nonetheless, neo-Victorian trauma narratives on screen also bring to the fore historical and postcolonial atrocities against the ethnic Other, including slavery. In fact, Iris Kleinecke-Bates states that neo-Victorian fiction shares "preoccupations with authenticity, fidelity and immediacy" with factual genres, such as documentary films (2014: 11). As a result, perpetrator trauma is now being explored in neo-Victorian postcolonialism on screen, especially in TV series such as *Penny Dreadful* (Logan 2014-2016), *Taboo* (Knight, Hardy and Hardy 2017-present) or *Carnival Row* (Echevarría and Beacham 2019-present). Fiction exploring perpetrator trauma usually depicts perpetrators who have committed atrocious crimes that have left them with a sense of unresolved guilt and willing to take responsibility for their actions (Morag 2012: 95) —although this is not always the case, as the attitude to responsibility may vary. In the case of the male protagonist of *Taboo*, James Delaney, his guilty conscience is reflected through nightmares, flashbacks and his commitment to make amends. However, Delaney's remorse and atonement are depicted in an ambivalent fashion, since Season 1 ends right before he boards the ship that will take him to America, where he plans to replicate the very same colonial atrocities that he was trying to expose.

Taboo (2017-) is a British TV series written by Tom Hardy, Steven Knight and Edward John 'Chips' Hardy, and produced by Scott Free London and Hardy Son & Baker for the BBC. It was first released on BBC One in the UK on 7 January 2017. The main cast includes Tom Hardy as the male protagonist, James Delaney, Oona Chaplin as Zilpha Delaney, his half-sister, and Jonathan Pryce as Sir Stuart Strange, Chairman of the East India Company. A second season of the series was announced during March 2017, but its production was delayed due to the COVID-19 pandemic ("Everything We Know" 2020). *Taboo* follows James Delaney, an English adventurer who, upon learning of his father's death, returns to London after twelve years in Africa. The series is set against the historical backdrop of the 1812 War between the US and the UK, and it explores the

underbelly of nineteenth-century London, particularly the misery of the working class, prostitution and child exploitation, the corruption and violence of street gangs and political intrigues. It also touches upon the concepts of the slave trade and the Middle Passage —or the forced trip of African individuals across the Atlantic Ocean to the Americas, where they became slaves working in US plantations (Wallenfeldt 2020).[2]

Taboo is here analysed as a neo-Victorian TV series, since it is set in the long nineteenth century and replicates typical literary tropes of the late-Victorian period for a screen context (Mousoutzanis 2020: 4). These tropes include elements belonging to the so-called 'imperial Gothic', namely the notion of going native, a potential 'barbaric' invasion and the subsequent decay of Western religion and civilization (Brantlinger 1988: 130). In this article, I first introduce the field of neo-Victorianism on screen, with an especial emphasis on its conflicting postcolonial representations of the British Empire. Then, I explain the newfound interest in perpetrator trauma and its cinematic representations. Against this theoretical backdrop, I examine the concept of perpetrator trauma in neo-Victorian postcolonialism on screen through the character of James Delaney in the TV series *Taboo*. Furthermore, I also explore the concept of the ghost in Trauma Studies (Abraham and Torok 1987; Derrida 1994), and the metaphor of the "unwelcome ghost" (Morag 2013: 5) of the perpetrator in *Taboo*: a revenant that comes back to haunt the society that condoned —or even ordered— his atrocities. I conclude that the ambivalent portrayal of imperial discourse in *Taboo* —particularly when representing the racial Other— both reproduces and challenges Orientalising stereotypes, ultimately presenting Delaney as a complex anti-hero that both benefits from the empire and tries to destroy it.

2. Neo-Victorianism on Screen

Neo-Victorianism is a cultural field that adapts and appropriates nineteenth-century fiction, plots, characters, history and other socio-historical elements. Ann Heilmann and Mark Llewellyn proposed an exclusivist definition of neo-Victorianism, which would only include texts that are "*self-consciously engaged with the act of (re)interpretation, (re)discovery and (re)vision concerning the Victorians*" (2010: 4, emphasis in original). Marie-Luise Kohlke, on the contrary, has argued that such a limiting definition might contribute to the canonization of the field. Therefore, she offers a more inclusive conceptualisation of neo-Victorianism as an "integrative umbrella term to encompass virtually all historical fiction related to the nineteenth century, irrespective of authors' or characters' nationalities, the plots' geographical settings, the language of composition or, indeed, the extent of

narratives' self-consciousness, postmodernism, adaptivity or otherwise" (2014: 27). In this article, the term 'neo-Victorian' follows Kohlke's definition.

Both neo-Victorian literary and screen texts are adaptations of Victorian literature that recreate the past through a vocabulary and style that can be appealing and understandable for contemporary audiences (Primorac 2018: 1). Consequently, the increasing number of neo-Victorian screen texts are now enjoying a similar academic interest to that of their literary counterparts. Some of the most popular neo-Victorian screen texts include the TV series *Ripper Street* (Warlow 2012-2016), *Penny Dreadful*, or *Carnival Row* and films like Cary Fukunaga's *Jane Eyre* (2011) or Guillermo del Toro's *Crimson Peak* (2015). One of the common points that all these neo-Victorian texts share is that they bring to the fore the previously ignored stories and traumatic experiences of historically marginalised characters.

In fact, the long nineteenth century has come to be regarded as a pivotal area of research on historical trauma, both in terms of the study of its actual catastrophes and their aftermath, but also at a fictional level in their belated "working-through" via neo-Victorianism (Kohlke and Gutleben 2010: 1). One of the main aims of neo-Victorian fiction is to uncover the repressed stories of traditionally marginalised individuals, particularly women, LGBTQ+ and ethnic minorities, as well as working-class or disabled characters (Llewellyn 2008: 165). However, there are also neo-Victorian texts that explore the trauma of seemingly privileged characters, such as white, middle-class heterosexual men in imperial contexts. TV series like *Penny Dreadful*, *Carnival Row* and *Taboo* itself examine the unresolved guilt and PTSD symptoms that white male —or, as in the case of *Taboo*, mixed-race— characters experience after taking part in colonising endeavours.[3]

Even though *Taboo* is not set in the Victorian period, I argue that it should be considered a neo-Victorian text, given that neo-Victorianism expands beyond the historical confines marked by the reign of Queen Victoria (1837-1901). As Elizabeth Ho contends, neo-Victorianism is to be interpreted more as a metaphor where the nineteenth century stands for an "era of colonialism" (2012: 3), rather than as a historical signifier. Moreover, the nineteenth-century colonial past "cannot be thought of as separate from neo-imperial presents and futures" (5), so that neo-Victorian texts like *Taboo* also reflect on Britain's imperial legacy at present. As a result, neo-Victorianism encompasses a time frame spanning three centuries: the nineteenth, the twentieth and the twenty-first centuries. Finally, because the Victorian period "has become a powerful shorthand for empire in the contemporary global imagination" (4), neo-Victorian texts on screen can serve as the perfect stage for contemporary audiences to negotiate their contradictory feelings towards the empire and its legacies in the current —increasingly— neo-imperialist and globalised world. However, neo-Victorian postcolonial texts tend

to represent the empire and its practices in an ambivalent way, simultaneously criticising and reproducing imperial ideologies and stereotypes (9).

Indeed, neo-Victorianism on screen displays a strong celebratory nod to the nineteenth century, which is perceived as an idealised and exoticised era, "emblematic of racial, gender and class certainties" (Primorac 2018: 57), as in the case of *Taboo*. The series attempts to scrutinise the ethical implications that can be found in the unexplored link between the perpetrator's actions and the unacknowledged responsibility of the British imperial power structures. It focuses on its protagonist's experience as a slave trader in the service of the East India Company (henceforth EIC), kidnapping and transporting slaves from Africa to America by ship. *Taboo*'s critical response to imperial politics and ideologies is rather ambivalent, especially with regard to its tendency to exoticise and portray the racial Other in a stereotypical manner that might suggest a possible nostalgic nod to colonialism. This is particularly the case with James Delaney himself, a biracial character with a white English father and a Native American mother, although he is played by a white English actor (Tom Hardy). Delaney is further exoticised on account of the twelve years he spent in Africa, where —as implied by other characters in the show (and himself)— he went native. This is evidenced by his stereotypical Othering traits, such as cannibalism (Knight, Hardy and Hardy 2017: episode 2), his performance of African rituals (episode 4) and the fact that he speaks a tribal language (episode 1). As a consequence, I argue that *Taboo* should be considered a neo-Victorian text, as it presents the main characteristics and ambivalences of the genre, particularly in its contradictory representations of the British Empire.

3. Perpetrator Trauma

As mentioned above, neo-Victorianism is used by contemporary writers and directors as a platform to work through the horrors and traumas of the empire and its legacies in contemporary societies. Cathy Caruth defines trauma as "a response, sometimes delayed, to an overwhelming event or set of events, which takes the form of repeated, intrusive hallucinations, dreams, thoughts or behaviours stemming from the event" (1995: 4). As a result, a great number of neo-Victorian texts are trauma narratives that offer a stage for readers or viewers to confront "subjective endurance in the face of crisis and conflict, representing how defensive responses are created out of many types of wounding" (Vickroy 2015: 3). Likewise, trauma fiction replicates the characteristics and symptoms of trauma experience, such as "fragmented thoughts or dissociated outlook" (3), as well as the coping mechanisms to overcome them.

Trauma scholars have long established the importance of telling one's traumatic experience for trauma survivors. According to Dori Laub, in order to start the healing process, survivors need to share, and thus come to know, their story with an empathic audience (1992: 78). Laub underlines the central role of witnessing in allowing the survivor to come to terms with their traumatic experience, and argues that if they do not have an empathic listener, they might resort to silence so as not to suffer public discredit (79). Building on Laub's theories of bearing witness, Suzette A. Henke coined the term 'scriptotherapy' that entails "the process of writing out or writing through traumatic experience in the mode of therapeutic re-enactment" (1998: xii-xiii). As Aris Mousoutzanis argues, Delaney puts his traumatic experience into writing in the form of a legal document where he relates the sinking of a ship that transported African slaves (2020). This way, he arguably attempts to work through his unresolved guilt and make amends with the victims that he wronged —i.e. the African slaves that he transported and trapped in the hold of the ship under the orders of the EIC (Mousoutzanis 2020: 7).

According to Raya Morag, Trauma Studies have traditionally focused on the identification with the victim/survivor and their experiences (2012: 95). The term "perpetrator trauma" was coined by Rachel M. MacNair in her article "Perpetration-Induced Traumatic Stress: The Psychological Consequences of Killing", which examined subjects that had perpetrated atrocities (2002). The idea behind this concept is that perpetrators can be traumatised by their own crimes against others (Mohamed 2015: 1162). Although perpetrator trauma was already discussed by Caruth at the end of *Unclaimed Experience* (1996), it has not been as thoroughly theorised as the trauma of victims (Morag 2013: 4). Indeed, trauma tends to be more examined in "individuals or communities viewed as legitimate and worthy of attention" —i.e. victims/survivors— and Trauma Studies have usually underlined the link between trauma and the recovery of the victim's voice (Mohamed 2015: 1177). As a result, the trauma of the perpetrator tends to be overlooked at an academic level. In fact, perpetrators are only deemed to be traumatised if they are also viewed as victims, "such as child soldiers and individuals who commit crimes under duress" (1167). Likewise, we have come to accept that most perpetrators suffered a traumatic experience in their past that prompted their violent tendencies, especially during their childhood. These traumas might entail "abuse by a family member, a parent's addiction, extreme deprivation or loss —that contributed to his criminal wrongdoing later in life" (1176).

Some neo-Victorian screen texts portray perpetrators that had previously been traumatised victims, such as Guillermo del Toro's *Crimson Peak* or *Penny Dreadful*. In the case of the former, the patriarchal perpetrators —the siblings Lucille and Thomas Sharpe— had been the victims of child abuse and domestic violence

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before becoming a murderous couple. Likewise, *Penny Dreadful* includes a number of victims-perpetrators, most notably the resurrected radical feminist, Lily Frankenstein, who had been the victim of patriarchal violence and abuse before being reborn, or the mass perpetrator Ethan Chandler, who was raised by a cruel and absent father. However, the representation of perpetrator trauma in neo-Victorian texts involves some ethical complexities, especially in terms of "articulating the confession and re-enacting the yet unacknowledged deed" (Morag 2012: 95). Perpetrators depicted in these trauma narratives have committed extreme atrocities, "which leave them emotionally numbed and with unresolved guilt —gradually willing to take responsibility for their deeds" (Morag 2012: 95). Nonetheless, it is worth stressing that the objective of focusing on the figure of the perpetrator is in no way to undervalue the importance of the victim's trauma and perspective or "society's imperative to bear witness" (Morag 2018: 5). Indeed, the attention on the trauma of the perpetrator does not intend to develop empathy for perpetrators, nor to forgive them. As opposed to the victim's need to share their experiences with an empathic audience to come to terms with their past trauma, perpetrators actually need to empathise with their victims, which will lead them to self-denouncement and to take part in policies that might prevent similar atrocities from happening in the future (Morag 2013: 23). Echoing these ideas, *Taboo* ambivalently explores the concept of perpetrator trauma through its focus on James Delaney, a former EIC official who seemingly wants to atone for his crimes against African slaves and make reparations by denouncing the British imperial institutions that allowed these atrocities in the first place —although he ends up replicating and perpetuating them.

4. Perpetrator Trauma in *Taboo*

As discussed above, fictional perpetrators are usually portrayed as having experienced a traumatic past —especially a traumatic childhood— which triggered their current atrocities. As in the case of Del Toro's neo-Victorian film *Crimson Peak* —where the villains' experiences of parental neglect and domestic violence shaped them as patriarchal perpetrators in adulthood— James Delaney, the protagonist and traumatised perpetrator of *Taboo*, comes from a highly dysfunctional family. His father —a white Englishman— married a Native American woman from the Nootka tribe, named Salish, and the show puts a lot of stress on Delaney's biracial heritage, as a way of marking him as the racial Other. Delaney's portrayal as a biracial character, however, is one of *Taboo*'s noted misrepresentations of colonialism and race, as the series seemingly brings to the fore historically marginalised characters —in this case, a biracial individual— but through a white

actor (Tom Hardy). As Mousoutzanis asserts, Delaney encapsulates two of the main racial anxieties and stereotypes of the long nineteenth century: the cannibal and the mixed-race individual (2020: 12). On the one hand, cannibalism was regarded as "the absolute nadir of human behavior" and was thought to be "practiced by black or brown savages but not by white Christians", who had to save those cannibal 'savages' "from themselves" (Brantlinger 2011: 2-3). On the other hand, miscegenation —especially between white, European, and African individuals— was one of the biggest threats challenging white supremacism "from about 1860 to 1914", as it could bring about "English, racial degeneration" (Brantlinger 2011: 2). Thus, Africa was associated with negative stereotypes "of barbaric practices, bloody human sacrifice, cannibalism, slavery and fetishism" for centuries, and European colonisers thought it was their duty to extinguish such practices, sometimes by enslaving or exterminating African people (MacMaster 2001: 75). However, the whitewashed representation of Delaney's racial Otherness in *Taboo* "makes the associations between cannibalism, miscegenation and whiteness even more problematic" (Mousoutzanis 2020: 12). In any event, the representation of ethnic oppression through a white actor is arguably a cultural appropriation and misrepresentation of the traumas of biracial and Native American characters. In doing so, the series is actually replicating imperial colonising practices that appropriated and exploited the natives' cultural heritage and possessions for the profit of white individuals.

Likewise, Sonia Saraiya underlines *Taboo*'s exoticisation of Africa through Delaney's character, as his time on the continent "is given a kind of hand-waving occult power" (2017). He performs African rituals, such as the chanting of prayers and incantations in a tribal language at his father's funeral (Knight, Hardy and Hardy 2017: episode 1). He can also project himself in his sister's dreams by reciting some words in the flames and painting his body with ashes (Knight, Hardy and Hardy 2017: episode 4, mins. 19-21). He also engages in cannibalism —e.g. he is attacked by an EIC hired assassin and bites the latter's neck and eats his flesh until he bleeds out (Knight, Hardy and Hardy 2017: episode 2, min. 55). However, as Sayaira points out, "without the grounding specifics, these are lazily sketched signifiers about 'dark magic', which either capitalize on Delaney's mixed-race heritage or his time with 'savage' tribes" (2017). Likewise, in adopting these stereotypical traits associated to African tribes, Delaney seems to have "gone native", a concept that Brantlinger lists as one of the main characteristics of imperial Gothic (1988). Delaney also represents the potential collapse of Western civilization as a result of a "barbaric" invasion (Brantlinger 1988: 130), since his refusal to abide by the British laws is interpreted by some characters in the show as his transformation into an African "savage". Nonetheless, part of Delaney's occult power appears to be ascribed to his mother's Native American heritage, as he himself claims that he had

those abilities before arriving in Africa, where he only perfected them: "[w]hen I left England I thought I was mad, but they taught me how to use it. Now it's a gift" (Knight, Hardy and Hardy 2017: episode 4, min. 41). Moreover, Mr Wilton, one of the agents of the EIC that investigates him, claims that when Delaney was young, his "confidence allowed his savage nature and mother's madness to emerge" (Knight, Hardy and Hardy 2017: episode 1, min. 16).

Indeed, Delaney's Native American mother, Salish, is also racially Othered in the show. She only appears in Delaney's flashbacks, covered in Native American body paint, contorting and laughing hysterically in the river. She does not have any lines in the show, and Delaney states that she was silenced by his own father since "she wasn't allowed to walk the streets, nor show her face in public, nor speak in English, nor her savage tongue because she was a madwoman" (Knight, Hardy and Hardy 2017: episode 3, min. 23). Salish was declared mad and sectioned in Bedlam Asylum after she tried to drown Delaney in the river when he was just a baby. Shortly after, she died in the asylum, due to some of the torturous treatments that she was forced to undergo, and Delaney's father then married an Englishwoman with whom he had a daughter, Zilpha. Delaney finds out about these treatments when he sees the room where Salish was confined in Bedlam, which is furnished with chains, ropes and other restraints that were used to keep the inmates strapped to their beds. He also hears the moans and lamentations of the patients that were kept there (episode 6, mins. 4-5). When Delaney learns about his mother's story, he blames his father —a coloniser that had bought a non-white woman and then imposed his culture, language and way of life on her— for causing her alleged madness: "[m]y father cast my mother into madness, then jumped straight after" (episode 6, min. 2).

According to Victorian gender conventions, a white upper-class housewife had to be modest and obedient to her husband and be confined to the domestic sphere. Nonetheless, contrary to the chaste angel of the house, there was the rebellious woman that challenged these Victorian precepts and was branded a "madwoman", a male epithet that was used "to possess them more thoroughly" (Gilbert and Gubar 2000: 17). Hence, the motif of female madness was exploited in Victorian literature to reflect how these women resisted patriarchal domination. Madwomen were usually sectioned in asylums or, as in some cases in (neo-)Victorian literature, confined in the attic of the family home. The term "madwoman in the attic" carries the weight of this literary trope and was famously discussed by Gilbert and Gubar in *The Madwoman in the Attic: The Woman Writer and the Nineteenth-Century Literary Imagination* (2000). Thus, Salish would be considered as a madwoman according to Victorian standards of proper femininity. In the same way as Bertha Mason in *Jane Eyre* (Brontë 1987) —the epitome of the Victorian

madwoman in the attic— Salish was brought to England and stripped of her language, culture and rituals and, later on, was "locked up in the attic of her husband" (Nygren 2016: 117) due to her alleged mental illness and colonial position. Thus, like Bertha, Salish is "a casualty of patriarchal, colonialist, and ableist hegemony" (Nygren 2016: 117). As a result, *Taboo* conflates these two Othering traits —madness and ethnicity— to depict both Delaney and his mother as exotic and dangerous natives. In doing so, the series is replicating —rather than contesting— the abovementioned colonial discourse present in *Jane Eyre*. Moreover, after marrying Delaney's father, Salish was forced to pass as an Italian countess and to change her name to "Anna", so as to conceal her ethnic origin. Salish's passing echoes the harsh representation of miscegenation and interracial relations in Victorian literature, which were "exhibited at their best by sidestepping the racial Otherness of one of the lovers (a mainstream example is Emily Brontë's *Wuthering Heights*) and at their worst by utterly demonizing interracialism" (Martín-González 2016: 195). Hence, in muting the racialized and disabled female character, *Taboo* is reproducing the ideologies of these Victorian novels that demonised, Othered and silenced racialized characters for the benefit of their white counterparts (Primorac 2018: 58).

It is also worth noting that Salish is depicted as a persistent ghost that haunts her son's memories throughout Season 1, particularly when he bathes in the river —the place where she tried to murder him. The figure of the ghost features prominently in trauma research, particularly in two related critical sources: Derrida's *Specters of Marx: The State of the Debt, the Work of Mourning, and the New International* (1994), and Nicolas Abraham and Maria Torok's *The Shell and the Kernel* (1987). In these cases, ghosts are a metaphor for the victim's need to remember and tell their stories "for the restoration of the social order and for the healing of individual victims" (Lewis-Herman 1992: 1). As discussed above, Salish has a very limited presence in the show. We only get to know her through Delaney's fragmented and distorted memories, especially in the one where she is bathing in the river fully clothed and covered in Native American body paint. As a result, Salish could be considered an apparition that haunts Delaney's memories and embodies the patriarchal and colonial violence that her husband inflicted upon her. Ghosts haunt the living in order to share their traumatic stories and seek reparations for the atrocities they endured (Lewis-Herman 1992: 1). Hence, it could be argued that Salish haunts her son, an imperial coloniser like his father, to make him reflect on his past crimes and prevent him from repeating them in the future. However, Delaney's conflicting moral views —those of a former slave trader who, at the same time, criticises and resents his father for buying his Native American mother and imposing his culture on her— obliterate any possible reparation to the racial Other in the series.

Morag suggests that there is also an "unwelcome ghost", that of the perpetrator, "who stands as a profound challenge and hurdle for the society at whose behest s/he was sent" (2013: 5). While he was in Africa, Delaney discovered that his father had bought Salish along with a piece of Native American land called Nootka Sound thirty years prior to the events depicted in the series. After his father dies, Delaney returns to England to inherit and take over that territory, as its strategic location —close to the isle of Vancouver and the American-Canadian border— could benefit him economically. However, both the EIC and the British Crown are also interested in acquiring this territory for the very same reason. The former make Delaney a generous offer and try to appeal to his patriotism as an English subject, but he refuses to sell because he plans to make a deal with the Americans to establish a monopoly on Chinese tea there. When Delaney comes back to England, he is feared and described as a ghost by the rest of society because he was thought to be dead. An example is when Sir Stuart Strange tells him, "[i]n those days, I always chose boys who had the shadow of death on them. I thought they were less likely to return. Of course, they do return… as ghosts" (Knight, Hardy and Hardy 2017: episode 8, min. 3). Following Morag's reasoning, Delaney would represent the unwanted ghost of the perpetrator that the EIC company sent to perform the atrocity of slave trading in the Middle Passage. However, they do not want to take responsibility for the atrocity they committed "by proxy" (Morag 2013: 8) after profiting from it, so they reject the unwelcome ghost of the perpetrator because it is a reminder of their unacknowledged guilt. In portraying both Delaney and his mother —the main ethnic characters in *Taboo* —as ghosts, the series is further alienating them from the rest of the characters— who are depicted as white and alive. As a result, their ghostly nature could be considered as another Othering trait that exoticises these ethnic characters.

The Delaney family is also portrayed as highly dysfunctional due to the half-siblings' incestuous relationship. Incest is a salient trope in neo-Victorian narratives of family trauma (Llewellyn 2010), particularly in neo-Victorianism on screen, as in the case of *Crimson Peak*, *Penny Dreadful* or *Carnival Row*. The main characters in these narratives are usually individuals "whose lives are profoundly affected by dysfunctional parental and sibling ties, and who must negotiate a precarious sense of self against the backdrop of past and present family trauma played out over their bodies" (Heilmann & Llewellyn 2010: 41). Incest was also a prominent literary trope that developed "at the heart of the Romantic movement" during the early nineteenth century (Richardson 1985: 738), when *Taboo* is set. English Romantic poetry particularly focused on brother-sister or sibling relationships, as opposed to the portrayal of incest during the Gothic period, which explored incest between parents and children (Richardson 1985: 738). In *Taboo*, it is implied that the siblings had an illegitimate child, so that their father sent Delaney to the EIC

military seminar in Woolwich, where he became an exceptional cadet. In that seminar, he was trained in the Company's imperialist practices that he would later implement against African slaves in the Middle Passage. As he tells Sir Stuart Strange, chairman of the EIC, "[c]onquest? Rape? Plunder? I studied your methods in your school and I do know the evil that you do because I was once part of it" (Knight, Hardy and Hardy 2017: episode 1, mins. 50-51).

The idea that perpetrators can be traumatised on account of the perpetration itself —rather than by a previous event they experienced as victims— is not yet accepted by either trauma scholars or society at large, since perpetrators are deemed "unworthy" of being heard (Mohamed 2015: 1177). Nonetheless, it seems that performing an atrocity or crime might cause "a psychological injury" to perpetrators, who can, as a result, experience post-traumatic symptoms that are similar to those of the victims, including nightmares, insomnia, flashbacks or paranoia, among others (Karam 2019: 74). Delaney seems to have symptoms related to his traumas as both victim and perpetrator. Throughout Season 1, he has intrusive flashbacks of his mother bathing in the river where she tried to drown him, especially when he finds himself in a marine environment —i.e. a river or the sea. But he also has vivid flashbacks to his time as a slave trader in an EIC ship called the Cornwallis— later renamed the Influence. One of these memories is about a stormy night when the ship was wrecked and he was ordered to trap the slaves in the hold so that they would sink with the ship. In this recurring flashback, there are African men and women crying out, with their hands reaching out through the iron bars of the hold while they are drowning (Steven, Hardy and Hardy 2017: episode 3). As Felipe Espinoza Garrido contends, "[t]he murder of enslaved people serves as a symbolical original sin of Delaney, and, by implication, the EIC and Britain in the nineteenth century" (2020: 218-219).[3] Indeed, Delaney also has paranoid episodes related to this event, where African slaves directly accuse him of their ordeal: "You did this. You will pay for this" (Steven, Hardy and Hardy 2017: episode 1, min. 38). Nevertheless, Morag contends that even if the symptoms experienced by perpetrators resemble those of the victims, the former actually lie "in the profound moral contradictions challenging the perpetrators rather than in their psychological disintegration or disturbing and intrusive memories" (2013: 19). Delaney experiences these moral contradictions, as he struggles between his business plans in America —that would perpetuate his colonial atrocities— and his guilty conscience.

Scholars that mainly focus their studies on the trauma of the victims have traditionally maintained that perpetrators refuse to take responsibility for their crimes by making up excuses to shift the blame on to the victims themselves. According to Judith Lewis-Herman:

> In order to escape accountability for his crimes, the perpetrator does everything in his power to promote forgetting […] After every atrocity one can expect to hear the same predictable apologies: it never happened; the victim lies; the victim exaggerates; the victim brought it on herself; and in any case it is time to forget the past and move on. (1992: 7-8)

Delaney repeatedly returns to the site of his crimes in his mind, where ghosts of African slaves haunt him. However, he confronts them without taking responsibility for his actions: "You are not here. You are not here. You are not here. I have no fear for you and I have no guilt for you. I did as others did and as others had me do, and we are all owned, and we have all owned others… So don't you dare stand there and judge me" (Steven, Hardy and Hardy 2017: episode 1, mins. 39-40). Thus, he blames his superiors and the system that allowed those atrocities to happen in the first place and that, to some degree, even normalised them.

The horrors of slavery and the Middle Passage took place in the context of imperialism and colonialism, which could be considered what Robert Jay Lifton defines as an "atrocity-producing situation". Such situations are so "structured, psychologically and militarily that ordinary people […] can commit atrocities" (in Morag 2018: 15). In these environments, a sense of "sanctioned brutality becomes the norm" so that perpetrators can justify any aberrant action: "dormant sadistic impulses are expressed", and there is a "quest for meaning through the act of atrocity" (Morag 2018: 15). In these cases, Morag contends, the power structures responsible for sending soldiers to atrocity-producing situations need to acknowledge their complicity in those crimes to help society move forward (17). In the case of *Taboo*, the EIC is the imperialist power that has been profiting from the horrors of slavery and that sent men to commit atrocities in their name against African subjects. However, several critics have pointed out *Taboo*'s historical inaccuracy in portraying the EIC as more powerful and cruel than it really was (Singh 2014; Major 2017; Mousoutzanis 2020,), while at the same time ignoring "its most significant sphere of influence" (Major 2017), India, that is largely absent from the series. By 1814, the influence of the EIC was waning. As a result, in depicting it as more influential and sinister than it really was, *Taboo* is "both in tandem with and in reaction against the imperial nostalgia" that characterises neo-Victorian Gothic on screen (Mousoutzanis 2020: 10).

However, the power structures promoting perpetration by placing soldiers —or crew members, such as Delaney in *Taboo*— in atrocity-producing situations are neither interested in acknowledging their responsibility nor in allowing perpetrators to own up to the traumatic crimes they carried out in their name, even though "acknowledgement of perpetrators' trauma will set in motion society's acknowledgment of the perpetrator as its envoy, and its relation to (usually ethnic)

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others" (Morag 2013: 7). This is the case of Sir Stuart Strange, who refuses to admit his active participation in the illegal slave trade and tries to prevent Delaney from confessing his crimes (Steven, Hardy and Hardy 2017: episode 8). Likewise, mass atrocities are usually not processed or "become part of systemic atrocities that have undergone naturalization and are thus difficult to notice even as they are being produced" (Morag 2013: 7). The horrors of slavery and colonialism as depicted in *Taboo* are arguably examples of these naturalised atrocities, since ethnic Others were deemed inferior to white individuals and their ordeal was, therefore, accepted as normal and necessary, or simply ignored. Accepting the trauma of the perpetrator would allow us to translate a seemingly individual experience into a collective one, "thus healing the social order and the (ethnic) other" (Morag 2013: 9).

Most perpetrators experience a "static" or passive guilt, characterised by a sense of self-hatred or a numbed culpability that does not contribute to any positive social change (Morag 2013: 18). Delaney seems to experience this type of guilt, as he attempts to numb his conscience by drinking alcohol and focusing on his new business endeavours, rather than acknowledging his responsibility. However, perpetrators need to transform these passive feelings into an active sense of guilt that will allow them to bring about a meaningful social change. This active guilt should be motivated by the perpetrator's empathy for their victims, a willingness to take responsibility for their atrocities and the need to look forward, rather than backwards. Looking forward would involve "halting policies that lead to atrocity, increasing the impact of international human rights norms […] making reparations, [and] encouraging domestic activism", among others (Morag 2013: 18). As discussed above, traumatised subjects have a need to share their stories with an empathetic audience, as this sets in motion their healing process. As the only survivor of the crew of the Cornwallis, Delaney is asked by Mr. Chichester (Lucian Msmati) —the spokesperson for the Sons of Africa, a political group that promotes the rights of Black people— to write a full statement naming Sir Stuart Strange as the person responsible for the loading of the Cornwallis with slaves and for sending it to a sugar plantation in Antigua that was owned by Strange's own brother. In exchange, Delaney would receive a full pardon for his crimes (Steven, Hardy and Hardy 2017: episode 7). Mousoutzanis contends that Delaney attempts to work through the traumatic experience of the sinking slave ship by verbalising it in this legal document (2020: 7-8), where he writes: "When the Cornwallis left Cabinda and became the Influence, it was I, James Delaney, who stowed the Jack and Company flags. An East India Company ship, renamed, laden with illegal slaves and flying the stars and stripes… At the direct request of Sir Stuart Strange" (Steven, Hardy and Hardy 2017: episode 8, mins. 6-7). Mousoutzanis argues that the fact that Delaney overcomes his trauma by confessing his crimes to Chichester

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is evidenced by how he sees the latter as a double of the ghosts of Black slaves that haunt him (2020: 8). Thus, in acknowledging his guilt to a former African slave and in helping him to make reparations to the African people, Delaney might feel that his former actions can be forgiven.

However, the main aim of the perpetrator's confession is not to be forgiven or understood (Morag 2013). In fact, there is a significant difference between the victim's testimony and the perpetrator's confession. Whilst the victim's cathartic release requires witness identification and empathy, the aggressor's confession is characterised by its "uncathartic nature". Morag offers the term "perpetrator's empathic unsettlement",[4] which could be defined as an empathic response to the victim that will motivate the perpetrator to transform any form of self-pity, guilt or self-hatred into "self-denouncement" (2013: 21). Even though perpetrators might have a concealed longing for forgiveness during the act of confession, this "should not override their sense of guilt and shame" (Morag 2013: 24). Thus, the main objective of the perpetrator's confession should not be to obtain society's forgiveness and a subsequent sense of closure —as Mousoutzanis suggests that Delaney achieves when he embarks on his ship bound for America (2020: 8)— but, rather, to help society move forward. However, Delaney does not really intend to make reparations to the African people or to help British society move beyond the horrors of slavery with his confession, as he is not really a repented criminal. He merely wants to implicate Sir Stuart Strange and the EIC in the illegal slave trade in order to secure the Nootka Sound territory for his own capitalist venture.

Indeed, despite Delaney's post-traumatic symptoms and his numbed guilt throughout Season 1, his main objective ever since he returned from Africa was to acquire a ship that would take him to the North-West coast of America, where he could benefit from the strategic position of the Nootka Sound land for trading purposes. As he himself admits: "I will cede sovereignty of Nootka Sound to whichever nation offers me their monopoly on the trade of furs for tea from Fort George to Canton. That's what I want. All the tea in China" (Steven, Hardy and Hardy 2017: episode 3, min. 6). This business enterprise on the Pacific Coast could be considered as a colonial appropriation of the natural resources of the land that once belonged to the Native American Nootka tribe. As Mousoutzanis points out, "[t]his new beginning […] represents an imperialist project that is not unlike those of the EIC: Delaney embodies both the trauma of colonialism and its very epitome" (2020: 8). As a result, Delaney is both perpetuating and contesting the imperial and colonialist practices of the EIC that he was seemingly trying to expose over the course of Season 1. Moreover, in presenting him as both a mixed-race traumatised perpetrator that has learnt African languages and rituals, but also as a

willing English coloniser that intends to capitalise on a tea monopoly by exploiting the Natives' land, Delaney —and by extension, *Taboo*— encapsulates the very essence of neo-Victorian postcolonial narratives on screen: they first offer a promising critique of imperial ideologies and policies, only to ultimately replicate and perpetuate them with their conservative, clichéd and Othering adaptation of the long nineteenth century.

5. Conclusion

As has been discussed throughout the article, Trauma Studies have traditionally focused on the victim's perspective, but there is currently a growing interest in the perpetrator's trauma and experience, particularly in its representation at a cinematic level. This is the case of some neo-Victorian postcolonial screen texts, such as *Taboo*, which attempt to expose the imperial atrocities of slavery, colonialism and the Middle Passage through the trauma and unresolved guilt of the mass perpetrator. Nevertheless, neo-Victorian postcolonialism on screen is characterised by its ambivalent representations of the empire, including its expansionist policies and Orientalising stereotypes of the ethnic Other.

Taboo follows this contradictory pattern, as it attempts to denounce the imperial crimes of slavery and the transatlantic slave trade through the trauma of the imperial perpetrator, James Delaney —who is also a biracial individual. However, the stereotyped portrayal of non-white communities, both in the case of African and Native American characters, actually reproduces imperial Othering ideologies. This is the case of the mixed-race protagonist, who is ascribed with occult powers on account of his Native American heritage, goes native in Africa and whose return to London threatens the collapse of the EIC —Othering traits that replicate the typical tropes of late Victorian imperial Gothic narratives. Furthermore, in casting a white actor to play the role of a biracial character and his identity struggles, *Taboo* is culturally appropriating the trauma and marginalisation experienced by mixed-race individuals. In doing so, the series is reproducing the colonising practices whereby the empire seized and expropriated the cultural heritage, natural resources and indigenous territories of ethnic communities outside Europe for the profit of white individuals.

Likewise, the trauma of the perpetrator fails to convey a sustained critique of the empire and its colonial atrocities in *Taboo*, given that Delaney is not really a repentant criminal and his confession is not meant to help society move beyond the horrors of slavery, but rather to secure land in the American continent for imperialist and capitalist purposes. Consequently, as an independent agent, Delaney ends up repeating and spreading —rather than denouncing and

preventing— the very same crimes against ethnic subjects that he was once forced to commit by the EIC.

To conclude, both the character of James Delaney and the TV series *Taboo* embody the contradictions of neo-Victorian postcolonial screen texts. The imperial expansionist practices of the former and the stereotypical representations of colonial subjects present in the latter —despite their seemingly progressive and restorative agendas towards the racial Other— reflect the inconsistencies of this neo-Victorian subgenre. Given that Season 1 ends with Delaney's transatlantic trip to the Americas for capitalist and colonising purposes, it seems that *Taboo* is perpetuating and celebrating imperial policies, instead of challenging them.

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Notes

1. These Israeli films include *To See if I'm Smiling* (Yarom 2007), *Waltz with Bashir* (Folman 2008) and *Z32* (Mograbi 2008), whose objective was to focus on the trauma and unresolved guilt of Israeli soldiers in the second intifada, so as to make the —mostly Israeli— audience reflect on their level of complicity and responsibility for the atrocities perpetrated against the ethnic Other (Morag 2013).

2. The horrors of the Middle Passage have also been adapted in other neo-Victorian screen texts, most notably in the TV series *Carnival Row* (2019-present) through the fantasy genre, where a scene of a sinking ship that transported war refugees to a reimagined Victorian-style metropolis called The Burgue shares with *Taboo* "the same spatial semantics of surface and submersion, of visible imperial culture and repressed, even erased, memories of imperial crime" (Espinoza Garrido 2020: 219).

3. PTSD is an umbrella term that comprises the varying responses to personal and collective traumas, such as "rape, child abuse, auto and industrial accidents, and so on" (Caruth 1996: 11). Traumatised patients suffering from PTSD might experience a number of symptoms, most notably "memory gaps, but also repeatedly re-experienced extreme events in flashbacks, nightmares, and hallucinations months or even years afterwards" (Freud and Breuer 2004: 500).

4. The perpetrator's empathic unsettlement is based on LaCapra's theory that witnesses need to develop empathy towards the victim without appropriating or fully identifying with their experience, so as not to become traumatised by it (2001:40).

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EXPANDING CONSCIOUSNESS, INTEGRAL CONSCIOUSNESS, AND CONSCIOUS EVOLUTION IN PAULE MARSHALL'S FICTION

LA EXPANSIÓN DE LA CONSCIENCIA, CONSCIENCIA INTEGRAL Y EVOLUCIÓN CONSCIENTE EN LA FICCIÓN DE PAULE MARSHALL

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Abstract

Paule Marshall's literary concerns cover key issues of the Black Diaspora such as Black consciousness and the search for wholeness. These two issues connect with the research about the different manifestations of consciousness carried out by scientists such as physicist Peter Russell, nurse Margaret Newman, philosopher Ken Wilber and psychologist Paloma Cabadas. In this essay, I contend that Marshall's characters experience different aspects of consciousness that take them into a process known as the search for wholeness. Paule Marshall's writings are also part of the Black Consciousness Movement, inquiring into epistemologies that have their roots in "the workable past", creating emancipatory knowledge for afro-descendants. The methodology employed to read Marshall's novels follows the conscious evolution paradigm put forward by psychologist Paloma Cabadas, and the integral consciousness model proposed by Ken Wilber. Both models offer valid routes for analyzing Marshall's characters in the light of Newman's concept of expanding consciousness.

Keywords: expanding consciousness, integral consciousness, conscious evolution, black consciousness, wholeness.

Resumen

Las preocupaciones literarias de la escritora afro-americana Paule Marshall ponen de relieve dos aspectos importantes de la diáspora africana como son la consciencia de los afro-descendientes y la búsqueda de la integridad por el ser humano. Esta temática enlaza con diversas investigaciones sobre la consciencia humana llevadas a cabo por científicos como el físico Peter Russell, el filósofo Ken Wilber y la psicóloga Paloma Cabadas. Este ensayo defiende que los personajes creados por Marshall experimentan un necesario salto de consciencia en su búsqueda por la integridad y la lucidez. La ficción creada por Marshall forma parte del movimiento por la consciencia afro-descendiente ya que contribuye al desarrollo de epistemologías que entroncan con el pasado, creando conocimiento emancipador para los afro-descendientes. La metodología empleada para analizar la literatura de Marshall se basa en el paradigma de evolución consciente desarrollado por Paloma Cabadas y el modelo de consciencia integral elaborado por Ken Wilber. Ambas teorías ofrecen rutas válidas para explorar los personajes de ficción de Marshall a la luz del concepto de la expansión de la consciencia propuesto por Margaret Newman.

Palabras clave: expansión de la consciencia, consciencia integral, evolución consciente, consciencia negra, unidad.

1. Introduction: The Black Diaspora in Paule Marshall's Fiction

The Black Diaspora has been an inspirational lifetime project for Marshall in all her works of fiction. Her first novel *Brown Girl, Brownstones* (1959) concerned Barbadian immigrants in Brooklyn, New York during the Great Depression and WW2. Short stories such as "Reena" (1970) or the novella "Merle" (1983) sustained a spiritual return to Africa as the land of origins and possibilities. Novels like *Praisesong for the Widow* (1983), *Daughters* (1991) and *The Fisher King* (2000) showed the importance of the theme of the dispersal of black people around the globe. The memoir *Triangular Road* (2009) featured the motif of the journey in stories that stretched across continents: Africa, Europe, the Caribbean and the United States. This involvement with the journey takes a deeper meaning in each character's center, for it reveals an introspective journey back to their true selves. Their inner journey becomes empowering when it focuses on centering, rooting, and finding what Merle Hodge calls "one's true-true name" (Marshall 1999: 31). The empowered self involves personal power, connecting with the larger self of the community. As Marshall points out: "The personal is inseparable

from the political. One's responsibility also is to work to empower the larger world that is part of your definition of self" (31).

Paule Marshall's literature calls for social change within the scope of reconstructing black diasporic identity by focusing on the past. Her writings enlighten Black epistemologies, since blacks' knowledge of their surrounding reality comes mainly through European conceptions. Marshall's literary voice brings to the fore "a strong interpersonal relationship with others, as well as harmony, peace with nature, and spirituality" (in Bakari 1997). In her literary world, Marshall generates both emancipatory and practical knowledge. In order to achieve this, she explores the effect of social forces "on the life chances of people of African descent" by creating characters that participate in action, thus improving their life chances as African-descended people" (Kershaw in Nabudere 2011: 39). Thus, her characters' need to cope with fragmentation issues within themselves is overtly exposed.

According to some critics such as Pettis (1995) and Okolo (1991), Marshall's literature has another major objective: to "reconstruct and appropriate meaning within the parameters of lived inheritances and traditions that have become increasingly estranged and alienated by the implications of the modern scientific outlook" (Okolo in Nabudere 2011: 161). Marshall's literature blends various fully functional black diasporic realities through characters who struggle for self-identity and self-representation. Thus, this literature acknowledges and partakes in the process of repaying a collective debt to "those whose sacrifice and hard struggle actualized [their] freedom" in what Nabudere calls "post-traditionalism" (2011: 160).

My article will explore the manifestations of consciousness in Paule Marshall's literary cosmos. It will approach a selection of Marshall's novels such as *Brown Girl, Brownstones* and *Praisesong for the Widow,* and short fiction such as the novella *Merle*, following influential theories about the nature of consciousness and human evolution such as Ken Wilber's spectrum of consciousness (1975), Margaret Newman's expanding consciousness (1994), and Paloma Cabadas' conscious evolution program (2015). This study will show Marshall's approaches to "conscientization", a term originally coined by Paulo Freire, who defined it as "learning to perceive social, political, and economic contradictions, and to take action against the oppressive elements of reality" (1985: 19).

2. Expanding Consciousness in *Brown Girl, Brownstones*

Black consciousness and the search for wholeness are intrinsic aspects of Paule Marshall's understanding of the Black diaspora. These two preoccupations connect with the pioneer work on human consciousness developed by scientists such as

physicist Peter Russell (2021), philosopher Ken Wilber (1975), nurse Margaret Newman (1994) or psychologist Paloma Cabadas (2015) from an interdisciplinary perspective. In this essay, I contend that Marshall's characters undergo a leap of consciousness that becomes a first step in their necessary search for wholeness. Gaining consciousness implies change, and accessing liberatory moments from past suffering. Consciousness connects with the energy of true feeling and free thinking: "Free thinking is the capacity to think with clarity, and a sort of vaccine against sociocultural brainwash" (Cabadas, 2018: 193, my translation).[1] Marshall's heroines learn to listen to their own thoughts driven by a sense of ethics focused on free will. This provokes an integral transformation through different stages of waking up, growing up, and developing their consciousness.

Consciousness, as Peter Russell contends, is "the quality of being conscious, the knowing of experience" (Russell 2021). Consciousness is the capacity that every human being has to perceive reality and to recognize himself/herself in that reality. Wilber, in his cartography of consciousness known as the integral model, establishes a four quadrant model that accounts for four "dimensions" of consciousness being these "intentional, behavioral, cultural, and social" (Wilber 1997: 71). The four quadrants combine with a dozen major levels or stages. Besides this, Wilber's integral model establishes six structures of consciousness discovered by western psychology through scientific research methods. These structures are called archaic, magic, mythic, rational, pluralistic and integral (in Esbjorn-Hargens 2009: 8). Therefore, Wilber's integral model of consciousness proposes that there are at least two types of conditions of consciousness that are transformed into growth and development. In her research on the nature of consciousness Paloma Cabadas states that

> Consciousness is a singularity composed of thoughts and feelings that flow through energetic fields that do not need space or time. Consciousness is not matter, nor is it associated to the functioning of the brain, but, on the contrary, brain functioning is the result of the existence of consciousness. (Cabadas 2018: 259, my translation).[2]

The theory of expanding consciousness is an intrinsic part of the studies on consciousness. Nurse Margaret Newman contends that expanding consciousness is an "evolving process" in which "we can embrace aging and death […] We are free from all the things we have feared —loss, death, dependency". It concerns "the meaning of life and of health" (Newman 1994: xxiv). In this regard, McIntosh claims that "consciousness can be understood as the inside of human experience, what it is like to be and know ourselves; and this sentient personality, this original identity, is also the unique subjective presence through which others know us" (2022). Through her characters, Marshall aptly explores the dynamic structure of being since she focuses on the *I Am*, the first —person experience of

being, the "true-true self" she commands her characters to find. Marshall urges her characters to look into their memories, collected through introspection in their consciousness.

The search for a true self and remembering may bring up possibilities for self-consciousness in a world that looks at blacks "in contempt and pity" and despises the "soul beauty" of the black race (Washington 1981: 319). Is there the possibility, Marshall questions with her work, for the true black self to emerge guided by agency and lucidity, thus transcending the limitations proposed by double consciousness? A conflicting understanding of memory is revealed in Marshall's work. Selina, the protagonist of her first novel *Brown Girl, Brownstones*, and characters such as Merle Kinbona in the novella *Merle* or Avey Johnson in the novel *Praisesong for the Widow,* confront unresolved issues of slavery and racism in African diasporic communities. Marshall points out the advantages of making the past usable. However, the conscious exercise of remembering may reveal vulnerabilities concerning identity issues. In this context, forgetting may become a useful strategy when the character has not grasped a solid relationship with agency and lucidity.

Selina, the protagonist of *Brown Girl, Brownstones,* is a marginal character, summoned by Marshall to "jump at the sun" (1942: 13).[3] She is a young woman with a conscious, rich interior life. Her visibility emerges without any hue of victimhood, only preceded in African American literature by Gwendolyn Brooks' *Maud Martha*. In fact, Selina's characterization follows what Judylyn Ryan calls a "paradigm of growth"[4] with *Brown Girl*[5] as an optimistic text in this respect, because Selina "makes the conscious political choice" (Washington 1981: 322) of returning to Barbados, embracing a unique journey towards answers and looking for personal wholeness. The heritage of newer generations of African Americans is, as Washington points out, that of conflict and confusion (1981: 318). Gavin, for instance, interprets Selina's quest for wholeness as "incomplete" (1998: 597).

Selina Boyce is the daughter of Barbadian immigrants living in Brooklyn, New York. The novel narrates Selina's stormy coming-of-age because the Barbadian or Bajan community and the African Americans in New York clearly converge in her experience, composing a dual diasporic identity that is not free from tensions. Selina Boyce gives "voice" to both communities in *Brown Girl.* At the time of the publication of the novel, in 1959, it was important for Marshall to represent Selina's sexuality, because sexuality within young women in the immigrant West Indian community was highly repressed. However, Selina decides to take charge of her life, standing up to her mother, taking a lover at the age of seventeen. She represents all that the repressed West Indian American little girls of her generation could not express (Graulich and Sisco 295).

For instance, Selina becomes conscious of her need to express herself when she becomes part of the dance group of the Barbadian Association in Brooklyn. Selina's consciousness recalls ancestry through memory when she realizes that she can be a successful dancer: "the huge eyes in her dark face absorbed, yet passionate, old as they had been old even when she was a child, suggesting always that she had lived before and had retained, deep within her, the memory and scar of that other life" (Marshall 1981: 281). However, this agentive path suffers a severe test when Selina "truly saw the full meaning of her black skin" (289) reflected in the eyes of the mother of her dancing mate, who was white, feeling that the true self recently gained is stolen by her own hate of that part of herself that was "strong enough to sweep the world" (289). This hate had been in the way of her being proud of her successes and was "the part of her which had long hated her for her blackness and thus begrudged her each small success like the one tonight …" (289). After Selina performs the dance called "the birth-to-death cycle" (275), Selina's "own dark depth", her blackness, (291) feels like death. Her self-hate hurts because it limits her life's options and takes her on a spinning wheel of guilt since whiteness "sought to rob her of her substance and herself" (289).

Through Selina's "shadow"[6] Marshall enters "the heart of darkness"[7] of American society, which is racism. Selina's dark face appears as a "symbol of their ancient fears, which seethed with sin and harbored violence, which spawned the beast in its fen" (291). Blackness is the beast that chases Selina in her dream in which strangers are after a beast and are chasing her away from home as the beast runs after Selina. Surprisingly, she wants to surrender to the beast but suddenly she makes a last minute escape. The dream leaves her with "the memory of disaster, a dulling anguish and desolation" (299), for the beast had "caught her leg, slashing a deep furrow in [her] calf" (298). After waking up from the dream, Selina feels real pain in her leg, just like Avey Johnson, the protagonist of Marshall's third novel, feels sore in her arm after the dream she has with her great-aunt Cuney. The beast in the dream is Selina's shadow, which makes Selina dis-identify with those aspects of her psyche that are "too painful, 'evil' or undesirable" and that she alienates herself from, leaving her with an "impoverished and inaccurate self-image" (Wilber 1975: 110).

After escaping the beast, Selina is ready to see her true self, coming into conscious realization that her options are available only if she is strong enough to reach for them. Selina rejects the scholarship that the Barbadian Association gives her, embracing instead, "the loneliness [coiling] fast around her freedom" (Marshall 1981: 303). Challenging the Bajan community, she is also confronting her mother, who, much to Selina's surprise, recognizes herself in Selina: "G'long! You was always too much a woman for me anyway, soul" (307). After she sees herself

mirrored in her own daughter, Silla admits her daughter's own right to look for her own place in the world, and remembers her own arrival in Brooklyn some thirty years ago: "she somehow glimpsed in Selina the girl she had once been […] she became the girl who had stood, alone and innocent, at the ship's rail, watching the city rise glittering with promise from the sea" (307).

Selina decides to abandon Fulton Street and its brownstone houses and heads for the Caribbean. She decides to explore those values rooted in the place where her family comes from, that carry dreams that have become twisted and almost destroyed by the American dream of capitalism and racism. The last scene of the novel depicts Selina as "a survivor amid the wreckage" (Marshall 1981: 310). She takes a walk alone, through a wasted area of Brooklyn, where brownstone houses have been torn down. Selina remembers and imagines the people who had lived in them and that she knew well —especially those, like her father, whose bodies had been broken, and whose voices had been shuttered by "material values, identity blurring, displacement, alienation and the obscuring or loss of self in the effort to survive" (Pettis 14). In a sublime act of generosity and appreciation for their sacrifice, strength, and endurance, Selina decides to leave them a testimonial gift: she gets rid of one of her silver bangles, hurling it "high over her shoulder" (Marshall 1981: 310). This is the very bangle that had tied her to the Bajan community: she takes it off her wrist in a symbolic final act of personal liberation. In this way, Selina frees herself from their influence. However, she retains the other bangle on her wrist because she wants to take with her the very strength of the Bajan people, since she will need it on her journey towards wholeness. The Caribbean is deeply rooted in Selina, who at the end of the novel chooses to travel there, working as a dancer on a cruise. Selina's double consciousness as an African American and as a Barbadian progresses into a triple consciousness that integrates an acute gender consciousness led by womanism,[8] since black and female stand not as contradictory opposites, but as complementarywholes in the novel.

3. Integrating the Opposites in *Merle*

Paule Marshall seems to understand the world that both the writer and her characters inhabit as one of duality. As she asserts in her essay entitled "From the Poets in the Kitchen" (1983), this dual nature feeds from an emerging world view that expects synthesis as well as generative contradictions. These ideas reach back to the principle of polarity, featured in *The Kybalion*. The fourth hermetic principle states that opposites are not perceived as conflictive but, on the contrary, they make up the whole in life. According to the principle of polarity, "all manifested things have two sides, two aspects, two poles or a pair of opposites with manifold

degrees between the two extremes" (2004), arguing that opposites are only opposite to a degree. In this view, the tensions between opposites appear as generative. Carl Gustav Jung refers to the principle of polarity as *coniunctio oppositorum* or the concept of opposites, referring to the idea that "opposites attract and combine to make up wholes greater than the sum of in the opposing parts […] any given entity contains, within itself its own opposite" (Garry 482). Thus, the conjunction of the opposites transcends duality on its way towards wholeness, going beyond that permanent tension that provokes lots of unnecessary suffering in human beings.

The idea that opposites, or contradictions, make up the whole is reflected in Paule Marshall's work and life. For instance, her mother and a group of West Indian women who Marshall claims were her mentors and teachers, and that she called "the Poets in the Kitchen", addressed each other as "soully-gal —soul referring to the spirit; gal, to the body, the flesh, the visible self" (Marshall 1983: 28). Those women at the kitchen table did not conceive there was any split between the body and the mind (the soul). Marshall understood this unity of the spirit and the body through a process that takes on dimensions of reconciling the past and the present, the mythic and the real, the spiritual and the physical. This ability to bring into relation opposites rather than writing characters fragmented in opposite directions is illustrated by the fact that Marshall's most powerful characters are always reconcilers. Although they seem imperfect, misfits, exiles, women with large flaws going through rough times, they contend with injustice, and when they become paralyzed with grief or guilt, they take sides with those who have even less: *The Wretched of the Earth* —recalling Frantz Fanon's famous ideas, revealed in his seminal book of the same title.

Marshall addresses the complexities of womanhood in her second novel *The Chosen Place, the Timeless People* (1969), and in the novella *Merle,* published in 1983. Merle, the main protagonist in both texts, is "a whole research project in herself" (Marshall 1983: 139), "a perfect cultural broker" (138) and "a good obeah woman" (163) who is "trying to come to terms with her life and history as a black woman, still seeking to reconcile all the conflicting elements to form a viable self" (109). Merle's parameters of perception of reality are polarized aspects of experience, thus Marshall builds this character on patterns of doubleness. For instance, Merle exhibits a severe imbalance between silence and talk. She falls into long periods of silence and paralysis, when her mind cannot reconcile her fragmented self. As she confesses: "I am like someone bewitched, turned foolish. It's like my very will's gone. And nothing short of a miracle will bring it back" (159). In Merle's tension between speech and silence, there is an implicit polarity between public and private speech. She uses her strong public

voice when she has to denounce the inequalities and oppression that people in Bournehillssuffer. In this way, Merle's individual consciousness projects itself towards the collective. In fact, Marshall describes Merle's face as mirroring "not only the faces of the children but the men and the women […] She appeared to contain them all […] She was "some larger figure in whose person was summed up both Bournehills and its people" (160). Her public voice is loud and clear. However, with regard to private matters, she always remains silent. Merle only breaks this inner silence when she allows herself some intimacy with Saul Amron who, besides her friend and lover, becomes her confidant. As a Jew and as a widower, Saul is familiar with personal and collective suffering. This intimate, revelatory talk indicates Merle's tendency to identify with her own suffering, "to accept the meaning of the emptiness […] the paralysis, grief and collapse that had left her […] like someone dead" (171). Merle continuously recalls that moment when time stopped eight years ago, when her husband left her, taking their daughter with him to Uganda, his birthplace. She was "still standing in the middle of that two room flat in Leeds waiting for them to come back …." (170). Marshall uses time in a rather peculiar way, describing the past as being a continuous present that traps Merle in an uncertain future, just as uncertain as the future of the Bournehills people in that part of the island where she lives, and which continues

> To exist intact beneath the present reality […] its shabby woebegone hills and spent land might have been selected as the repository of the history that included the hemisphere […] rooted in that other time […] as a reminder […] that it was not yet over, only the forms had changed, and the real work was still to be done. (Marshall 1983: 191-92)

Bournehills remains rooted in the wounding past, waiting for "an act of the most sweeping proportions" (Marshall 1983: 192) to redeem the place and its people from the injury inflicted by slavery whose effects remain visible throughout the island. Saul clearly perceives this "in another, deeper way" (192). In Merle's bedroom he enters into a deeper reality, endowed with a double vision that allows him to see both the old and the timeless. In a similar manner, Merle also needs redemption, accepting her own responsibility for her past actions: her relationship of dependence on a white British woman, and the abandonment of her husband and subsequent loss of her daughter. Merle realizes that she needs to stop "feeling sorry for [her]self and blaming everyone and everything for the botch [she has] made of things. And talking. Oh, God, going on like some mad woman all the time but doing nothing. Finish with that!" (203) This expanding of consciousness allows her to integrate those experiences and to see, beyond the opposites, the possibilities of life as parameters of wholeness.

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Symbolically, just like Selina in *Brown Girl,* Merle will begin her redemptive journey by discarding the jewelry —earrings and heavy bracelets— which trap her in a mentality that limits her human potential. Without them, she looked "younger, less scarred," feeling "unburdened, restored to herself" (Marshall 1983: 202). Freeing herself is the first step before travelling to Africa to look for her daughter. Reaching an understanding of her own personal history and inserting it in the collective history of the island will give her the courage to pursue her own future: "sometimes a person has to go back, really back —to have a sense, an understanding of all that's gone into making them— before they can go forward" (206). She will travel to Uganda, to meet her daughter, to reach some kind of understanding with her former husband, to gain, she hopes, a whole life. However, she will not travel there on the usual route, "North to London and then down", but for her return to be fully meaningful, she will travel south and then east:

> She was going south to Trinidad, then on to Recife in Brazil. And from Recife, where the great arm of the hemisphere reaches out toward the massive shoulder of Africa as though yearning to be joined to it again, as it had been in the beginning, she would fly to Dakar and, from there across the continent to Kampala. (Marshall 1983: 210)

The change of route triggers diaspora consciousness, since Merle identifies with a cultural and historical past that needs to be reaffirmed, and connected to the homeland, Africa, through a reenactment of the Middle Passage.

The trip to Uganda is Merle's first step towards her active search for wholeness. She is ready to reconcile the opposites, moving out of guilt and shame towards her future. This quest will reconcile her fragmented cultural past(s) into one whole present that will launch her towards a meaningful future that recognizes her full identity, regardless of how hybrid it might be.

4. Conscious Evolution in *Praisesong for the Widow*

Marshall's significant contribution to the concept of diaspora relates to her understanding of a psychological and spiritual return to Africa in what she has called the "Triangular Road," which interestingly is the name given to her *Memoir,* published in 2008. The triangular road refers to the Middle Passage, the transatlantic voyage that Africans undertook on board slave ships, stopping over in Europe and having the Caribbean as its destination. In the Caribbean islands the slaves were inspected, seasoned and directed towards the slave markets of the South of the United States. The idea of return implicit in Marshall's work calls for

reenacting the Middle Passage but in reverse. The journey starts in the South of the US, and it goes through the Caribbean, where the themes of return and historical and spiritual continuity are inscribed in the collective memories of the people. This reconnection takes Marshall's characters back to the motherland: Africa, as we have seen with Merle. The idea of spiritual return to a historical self is an important trope in *Praisesong for the Widow*, because the inner fragmentation and cultural disconnection of characters such as Avey Johnson are transformed by the diasporic process: "she had made up her mind to fix [the house her great-aunt had left her] up" and "sell the house in North White Plains as Marion had been urging her to do for years" (Marshall 1983: 256).

Diaspora literacy enters Avey's consciousness as she recognizes and reads the cultural signs left scattered along the road of progress. While at the Beg Pardon dance, she hears the note of the drum as "a lamentation that could hardly have come from the rum keg of a drum. Its source had to be the heart, the bruised still-bleeding innermost chamber of the collective heart" (Marshall 1983: 245). The achievement of material acquisition along with cultural dispossession is a strong metaphor for the history of the African in America. The decline of the spirit of Avey's marriage followed the abandonment of "the little private rituals and pleasures, the playfulness and the wit of those early years, the host of feelings and passions that had defined them in a special way" (136). However, the powerful message implicit in Marshall's fiction is that material acquisition should not exclude cultural dispossession . As Paule Marshall points out in an interview with Maryse Condé: "A spiritual return to Africa is absolutely necessary for the reintegration of that which was lost in our collective historical past and the many national pasts which comprise it" (1986: 52-3). She emphasizes the role that Africa plays in determining African American historical identity, an aspect of their personality that she feels has been "systematically de-emphasized" (Williams 53). Therefore Marshall states that as African Americans, as people of African descent, they can "reinvent" their own image.

In this respect, Marshall's concept of return imbricates with Toni Morrison's concept of re-memory, since both writers engage in the necessity to build patterns of collective historical and spiritual memory within their writing. They both contribute by informing about the need to implant a new paradigm of lucid living on planet earth. This paradigm has consciousness at its heart, driving towards the conscious evolution of humanity. Concerned with personal liberation and reaching out to all human capacities, this evolving actualization implies good doses of agency and proactivity. As Cabadas contends, conscious evolution aims at "erradicar las memorias de miedo y sufrimiento del pasado para poder estar en el presente, en lo mejor que cada uno ha sido y en la expresión de la propia grandeza"(2018: 16).[9] In *Praisesong for the Widow,* Avey undergoes a personal odyssey remembering her

past life, recounting what has been lost throughout time, and recovering and reconnecting with her cultural roots, beginning with her childhood in Tatem (South Carolina).

Conscious evolution is core to understanding that lucid living is a process, not an end in itself. Lucid living implies the awakening of consciousness that in the literary work of Paule Marshall is linked to the search for a true self, away from external influences. Marshall's novel *Praisesong for the Widow* is a representative text of the value of the dissociative states of consciousness in reconstructing a lost sense of identity. Marshall, through Avey's experience, reminds us of the necessity to evolve as human beings on this planet earth. Through Avey we learn that we, as humans, are at risk of forgetting who we are. Thus, Avey appears with a slanted identity, someone who cannot remember anything from her past: "there was a hole the size of a crater where her life of the past three decades had been" (Marshall 1983: 196). The novel undertakes the task of reconstructing Avey's identity, so that she recovers enough lucidity to recognize her true self.

Researchers such as Paloma Cabadas have realized that one of the sources that allow the study of human consciousness is that of the dissociative states. They show the transcendent aspect of consciousness and its manifestations beyond matter, time, and space. Dissociate states open up a creative and rich research field that provides evidence about the nature of consciousness. During a dissociate state of consciousness, the person enters a state beyond habitual perception within a mental and sensorial human context. The accessing and processing of information widens, going beyond the physical senses and normal brain capacities. This state is also known as altered, modified, or opened to sensitive and immaterial realities (Cabadas 2018: 40). Among the most common dissociations are: dreams, clairvoyance, progression, regression, premonition, déjà vu, telepathy, intuition, synchronicity, expanding consciousness and near death experiences.

Dissociative states are interesting because they show that consciousness exists separately from the body, and that it might not be in contact with the human brain because it survives the physical body. Consciousness uses the brain through layers of energy. This specificity and its relationship with the human brain has been widely studied by scientists such as Raymond Moody, Peter Russell, Sam Parnia, Pim Van Lomel, and Peter Fenwick. The evidence that consciousness might be independent from the physical brain has also been studied by Dr. Kübler Ross. She affirms dying people can see others that have passed away, usually family members, and she shows evidence of near death experiences in her research (1999: 83-4). Dr. Michael Newton has studied contacts with close family members already dead through dreams, in near sleep states or in deep trance states (2010: xviii-xix). Also, both spontaneous and hypnotic regressions to both childhood and past lifetimes are effective methods of healing mind, body and soul, according to Dr. Brian Weiss (1993: 29, 38).

The repetitive cycle of amnesia that traps Avey thwarts her realization about the true meaning of her existence. When she is still on board the luxurious cruise, she experiences a progression[10] towards the near future, when "her mind had left to go and stand down at the embarkation door near the waterline five decks below […] her mind had leaped ahead of time, later that morning, when the ship would have arrived at the next port of call" (Marshall 1983: 10). Avey undergoes several spontaneous regressions to both her childhood and her past life as a slave on a slave boat across the Atlantic Ocean. Remembering will bring Avey the lucidity required to understand her present. The exploration of Avey's interior life through consciousness allows the recovery of her identity as a black diasporic woman.

Marshall begins her novel with Avey going through the dissociative state produced by a dream. The protagonist of the dream, Avey, literally sees her great-aunt Cuney in a dream that she perceives as vivid as reality. Aunt Cuney, who had died decades ago, wants Avey to return to Ibo Landing, the place they visited every summer in Tatem Island. However, at present, Avey has forgotten her old aunt's stories, and many years ago she had rid herself of the notion of what they had meant: that Avey might have had a mission in life.

The day after the dream, Avey enters into an altered state of consciousness. She fails to recognize the surrounding reality that she perceives through her senses. For instance, she experiences an overpowering feeling of estrangement whenever she is reflected in a mirror or a window glass. While dining on the cruise with her two friends and watching her reflection in a distant mirror, she recalls: "for a long confused moment Avey Johnson could not place the woman in beige crepe de Chine and pearls seated with them" (Marshall 1983: 48). This was not the first time "it had happened" (48), such as when she was at her favorite department store or travelling by train. When Avey is awake she enters a dissociative state of consciousness that, according to scientists and psychologists, is a natural state in which perception modifies the reality that the subject perceives through her senses. Thus, her energetic field is amplified, and this enhances Avey's vision. Avey's consciousness goes beyond her physical plane of reality while her body remains in the physical realm. Her immediate world, that of the boat she is travelling on and everything that happens on it, is altered, giving her glimpses of a hidden reality that looks dangerous because she does not understand it. For instance, each round table assembled in the Versailles room seemed "an island separated from the others on the sea of Persian carpeting that covered the room" (47) echoing the dividing up of "India, the West Indies, the World" that her daughter Marion had mentioned when she heard the name of the room. Then, she became aware of her invisibility with respect to those people seated at nearby tables: "their eyes which seemed to pass clearly through them whenever they glanced across, and even, ironically, with the quick strained smiles some of them occasionally flashed their way" (47).

Avey's awareness of herself then shifts towards her surroundings outside the boat. On the sports deck, she sees "padded Neanderthal men clubbing each other with the murderous sticks" (Marshall 1983: 56). She associates long forgotten memories with the vision: an act of police brutality on a black man right outside her apartment on Halsey Street. She vividly hears the "thud and crack of the billy and the man's screams […] Her ears, her memory seemed to be playing the same frightening tricks as her eyes" (57).

After this an old lady aims at her with a shotgun. Later, in the swimming pool area, an old man speaking to her turns into a "skeleton in a pair of skimpy red-and white striped trunks and a blue visored cap" (59). Once she arrives at the safe emptiness of the deserted library, she feels that she is under "something that had dramatically expanded her vision, offering her a glimpse of things that were beyond her comprehension, and therefore, frightening" (Marshall 1983: 59). That "something" is none other than a dissociate state of consciousness that enhances her vision, taking her mind to a deeper level of understanding that she fears because she cannot offer a valid interpretation for her visions of death and violence on the boat. This dissociation exposes Avey to the polarity between *The Bianca Pride*'s deck, and the boat dock in Grenada, where her perceptions will be of "familiarity, almost an intimacy, to their gestures of greeting and the unintelligible words they called out" (69).

When aunt Cuney contacts Avey in her dream, she makes her remember what "had taken her years to rid herself of" (42), the "far-fetched story of people walking on water which she in her childish faith had believed till the age of ten" (42). What Marshall is indicating is that, through remembering, Avey's consciousness can reach the roots of self and identify the trauma that needs healing, the trauma of forgetting. This hidden trauma fits within the scope of the evolution of consciousness and corresponds to the nuclear trauma (Cabadas 2015*:* 13). This type of trauma condenses the unsolved suffering of humans that calls for resolution. The trauma for Avey is that she has forgotten, or rather, has made herself forget the history of the Africans that arrived in the western hemisphere as slaves. For Marshall this is the drama of contemporary African Americans and black diasporic people, and the re-creation of Avey's experience in fiction "constitutes an artful, original and sustained presentation of the causes and effects of a fractured psyche" (Pettis 1995: 11). Moreover, Marshall's "fiction demonstrates how self-healing may be generated within the black cultural matrix" (Pettis 1995: 11).

Great aunt Cuney's project is that Avey must remember the Ibos, her ancestors, and must re-enter black consciousness in a process of healing consciousness. In order to do this, Avey undergoes a spontaneous regression while she is resting inside the deckhouse of the *Emanuel C,* when

> She became dimly conscious […] she had the impression as her mind flickered on briefly of other bodies lying crowded in with her in the hot, airless dark. A multitude it felt like lay packed around her in the filth and stench of themselves, just as she was. Their moans, rising and falling with each rise and plunge of the schooner, enlarged upon the one filling her head. Their suffering —the depth of it, the weight of it in the cramped space— made hers of no consequence. (Marshall 1983: 209)

As a result of this regression, Avey is brought to a better understanding of the special talents of her consciousness that rely on centeredness, peace and calm. Remembering brings sincerity and healing to her consciousness which takes a leap towards evolution. After her trip to Carriacou island, Avey opens up to feeling, to listening to herself, to meaningfully connecting with her ancestry, trusting herself through hearing the voice of her now healed consciousness.

5. *Conclusion: The True-True Self is Consciousness in Evolution*

The methodology employed to examine Marshall's novels has followed current research into the nature of consciousness. Marshall considers all sides of her main characters' lives, including those covered with fear and insecurity, to procure a conscious vision of reality and life. Conscious living means trusting with strength and confidence those good values the characters carry inside themselves to integrate their polarities, the light and the shadow. Characters such as Selina, Merle or Avey are able to extract learning from both sides to learn, evolve, and blend in knowledge generated by thought, following ethical parameters of goodness. The sense of wholeness they achieve is neither static nor strictly individual, but it is for everyone. It does not generate harm, since everyone can learn from it and grow according to their own level of consciousness. Knowledge about themselves takes these characters to a deeper level of lucidity about their surrounding reality and to understanding that what they know is what they have inherited from their ancestors. Lucid living implies that they have reached consciousness not only of themselves and their difficulties, but also of their gifts. This can help them fuse both sides of themselves, opening the door towards transcendence. They can discard their fears, above all the fear of not knowing their true identity. Conscious evolution brings lucidity about the true-true self, as the characters continue with their work of healing, discarding the sickness provoked by the assimilation of values imposed on them by white society.

Notes

1. "El pensamiento libre es la capacidad de pensar con claridad y la vacuna contra el lavado de cerebro sociocultural" (Cabadas 2018: 193).

2. "La conciencia es una singularidad constituida por pensamientos y sentimientos que transmite a través de campos energéticos que no necesitan del espacio-tiempo. No es materia, ni está asociada al funcionamiento cerebral, sino que, al contrario, el cerebro es el resultado de la existencia de la conciencia" (Cabadas 2018: 259).

3. This is what Zora Neale Hurston's mother said to her so that she might gather the courage to step out in the world, facing all its contradictions and appreciating the beauty of life (1991: 13).

4. Judylyn S. Ryan inserts black women's writings in "a paradigm of growth" that views black women as "powerful, independent subjects" and that is proactive, reacting in this way against the "paradigm of resistance" used in most theoretical approaches to African diaspora cultural studies (2005: 17).

5. For the purposes of this paper, the novel *Brown Girl, Brownstones* will be referred to as *Brown Girl.*

6. The "shadow" is a concept first coined by Swiss psychologist and psychiatrist Dr. Carl Jung. It refers to those dark aspects of our personality that humans carry inside the brain. The act of realizing this moral problem becomes a necessary condition for self-knowledge. As Jung points out, becoming conscious of the shadow involves a considerable moral effort (2014: 14).

7. Reference to the title of the novella written in 1899 by Joseph Conrad depicting the horrors of western colonialism.

8. As Paule Marshall states in an interview with Daryl Cumber, her work has a womanist perspective "from very early on" (1992: 31).

9. Both progression and regression can be spontaneous states or induced through therapy. In the case of Avey they are spontaneous. According to Dr. Weiss "not everyone needs to remember prior lifetimes through regression under hypnosis. Not every individual bears the weight of past life traumas or scars that are significant in the current lifetime. Often, what a patient needs is to concentrate on the present, not the past. However, I teach most of my patients self-hypnotic and meditative techniques, since these skills are enormously valuable in day-to-day life" (1993: 38).

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BORDER POETICS: GENDER, ESSAYISM AND BORDER CROSSING IN SINÉAD GLEESON'S *CONSTELLATIONS: REFLECTIONS FROM LIFE*

LA POÉTICA DE LA FRONTERA: GÉNERO, ENSAYISMO Y CRUCE DE LA FRONTERA EN *CONSTELLATIONS: REFLECTIONS FROM LIFE DE SINÉAD GLEESON*

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Abstract

As Julie Bates claims, "the most exciting new writing in Ireland is happening in the field of nonfiction" (2020: 228-229) and, more particularly, in the form of the essay. Sinéad Gleeson uses the confessional mode in her essay collection *Constellations*: *Reflections from Life* (2019) to recount her experiences of two deadly illnesses and to challenge ideas that readers might have about themselves or the world. She contemplates her body and life as an Irishwoman in her roles as daughter and patient, and in a variety of social and familial roles. Gleeson also explores the female body in pain, in sexuality, and in the struggle for recovery and change both in the Irish context and universally. This courageous example of essayism crosses many borders: the geographical and social, theory and practice, and thinking and creating.

Border Poetics De-limited, edited by Johan Schimanski and Stephen Wolfe (2007), examines the role of art and culture in constructing and tracing borders, focusing on narratives and other symbolic forms, and on the important subjective dimension which cultural forms mediate in the public sphere. This article explores how and to what effect the devices proposed by the authors of this collection can be used to relate Gleeson's essayism to several concepts of border crossing, such as how the border crosser and border-crossing narrative work from a feminist perspective.

Keywords: Sinéad Gleeson, border poetics, non-fiction, illness, gender and politics.

Resumen

Como argumenta Julie Bates, "the most exciting new writing in Ireland is happening in the field of nonfiction" (2020: 228-229) y, más concretamente, en la forma del ensayo breve. Sinéad Gleeson usa el modo confesional en su colección de ensayos *Constellations*: *Reflections from Life* (2019) para contar sus experiencias sobre dos enfermedades mortales y para desafiar ideas que los lectores podrían tener sobre sí mismos o sobre el mundo. La autora reflexiona acerca de su cuerpo y su vida como mujer irlandesa en sus roles de hija y paciente, y en una variedad de funciones sociales y familiares. Gleeson también explora el dolor en el cuerpo femenino, en la sexualidad, y en la lucha por la recuperación y el cambio en el contexto irlandés y universal. Esta colección valiente de ensayos cruza muchas fronteras: las geográficas y las sociales, las fronteras entre la teoría y la práctica, y entre el pensamiento y la creación.

Border Poetics De-limited editada por Johan Schimanski and Stephen Wolfe (2007) examina el papel del arte y la cultura en la construcción y trazado de fronteras, centrándose en narraciones y otras formas simbólicas, y en la importante dimensión subjetiva que las formas culturales median en la esfera pública. Este artículo examina cómo y con qué consecuencias Gleeson utiliza las estrategias propuestas por estos autores para relacionar el ensayo como género con diversos conceptos del cruce de frontera, por ejemplo, cómo la persona que cruza la frontera y la narración del cruce de fronteras funcionan desde la perspectiva feminista.

Palabras clave: Sinéad Gleeson, poética de la frontera, no-ficción, enfermedad, género y política.

1. Introduction

In a recent investigation, Julie Bates claims that "the most exciting new writing in Ireland is happening in the field of nonfiction", which can "in part be ascribed to a number of literary magazines, successors to the twentieth-century little magazines that also fostered short-form writing, and, then as now, exerted a considerable influence on Irish writing" (2020: 228-229).[1] Several important little magazines in Great Britain, such as *Blast* (1914-1915) and *The Egoist* (1914-1919), and in Ireland, *The Klaxon* (1923-1924) and *The Bell* (1940-1954), were created in the first half of the twentieth century to promote new ideas and art forms, to take risks and to challenge public taste in order "to provide an outlet for work that would not appear otherwise" (Bishop 1996: 287). Much of the Irish non-fiction emerging today also comes in the form of short pieces, such as the essay, with writers like Emilie Pine,[2] Ian Maleney[3] and Sinéad Gleeson, who use the confessional mode to

challenge ideas that readers might have about themselves or the world, and to support contemporary social change, securing the continuity of their impact on the youngest generations.

The essay is defined by Brian Dillon as "[a] form that would instruct, seduce and mystify in equal measure" (2017: 13) and "[n]ot the practice merely of the form, but an attitude to the form —to its spirit of adventure and its unfinished nature" (20). As Bates argues, essayism in Ireland,

> As an elastic, mongrel type of writing […], is alert and hospitable to contemporary ideas, voices and settings. In its orientation away from the past, the conventional, and the insular, it is an apt and corrective mode for a country that has tended to endorse narratives of collective victimhood that disavow responsibility and blame, even while that country is undertaking the current intense and belated scrutiny of institutional and social abuse and neglect. (2020: 228)

In this context, *Constellations*: *Reflections from Life* (2019), the first book of personal essays by Gleeson, and winner of the Irish Non-Fiction Book Award, recounts her experiences of two deadly illnesses (monoarticular arthritis and acute promyelocytic leukaemia, APML), the first as a teenager, and the latter before her first pregnancy. The collection revolves around these two significant diseases and their impact on her body, offering the reader some insight into Gleeson's reworking of her material as her life story unfolds. In fourteen essays, each unusually, but aptly, named after a different constellation, Gleeson pulls off the feat of turning long-term pain, shock, fear, anxiety, frustration, despair, rage, shame, and profound gratitude for medical care and the support of loved ones into a unique essay collection. Yet *Constellations* is not just a retrospective exercise in self-reflection about two periods of serious illness; it also contemplates at length Gleeson's body and her life as an Irishwoman in her roles as daughter and patient, and in a variety of social and familial roles. The tone is humorous and ironic. More particularly, this is a thought-provoking book about the female body in pain, sexuality, the struggle for recovery and change —not only hers and not only in the Irish context, but universally.[4] In sum, *Constellations* constitutes a brave, determined and coherent representation of Gleeson's mediating role as a social writer who, in holding a mirror up to politics, presents an original view of social transformation, suggesting what the future will or could be like for women in society. In doing so, the collection is a courageous example of essayism on the vulnerable and disabled body, sex, politics, irony, and anger that crosses many borders: between the geographical and social, theory and practice, and thinking and creating, just as the little magazines did at the start of the twentieth century.[5]

However, the next question would be: what is a border? As Bill Ashcroft argues,

> We tend to think of borders as geographical […]. But boundaries are profoundly ideological. A border is not a thing but a practice […] that produces power

> relationships, and establishes inequalities between those who are in and those who are not […]. Bordering practices, whether carried out by the hegemonic activities of the state, or the cultural bordering that sets up borders of ethnicity, sexuality, class, satisfy the myriad ways in which subjects might determine their 'others'. (2021: 10-11)

The concept of border poetics can thus be considered an inspiring challenge to explore the other in terms of sex, race, class, ideology, religious belief and nation, all of which lie beyond the widely accepted definitions of and theories on the border. The perspective of this study helps to establish the significance of the border and its location at the centre of human life. The scope and variety of bordering practices suggested by Ashcroft are the object of analysis in this essay on Gleeson's *Constellations*, approached within a border poetics framework.

2. Border Poetics

The arguments in this article respond to Johan Schimanski and Stephen Wolfe's claim for a need for "more analytical work around the structure of border narratives, both those of border crossings and of the processes of border formation: the creation, maintenance, change and erasure of borders, involving both state institutions and individuals" (2007: 25). The poetics of encounters provides a set of strategies for analysing and identifying meaning and the processes of border-making and border permeability in contemporary societies through aesthetic forms. 'Border poetics',[6] a term coined by Schimanski and Wolfe, is a framework for working with borders, border processes, representation, aesthetics and literature. It examines the role of art and culture in constructing and tracing borders, focusing on narratives and other symbolic forms, and on the important subjective dimension which cultural forms mediate in the public sphere. As Liv Lundberg asserts:

> We have no other experience of living than through encounters, and in these meeting-places language has evolved through a natural necessity of communication, probably the reason for language development in the first place […]. A poetics of encounters offers a way of acknowledging the world and other people without seeking to reduce them to objects […] art and science must co-operate to create epistemological and ecological models of the human condition on planet Earth. The realities we encounter in human life must include both the material and mental aspects of existence. (2014: 171-172)

Gleeson particularly acknowledges the world and shows her understanding of the human condition and illness, including "both the material and mental aspects of existence" in the sixth essay of her collection, titled "Panopticon: Hospital Visions". There she argues:

> Hospitals are not unlike galleries. Interactive spaces; a large-scale installation of sound and colour, evoking emotion and working on the senses. The art on the walls here mixes modernity and old votives […]. On the longest corridor, the hospital's spine, black paintings hang at clockwork intervals. Abstract, inked, their form and meaning unclear. I look down whenever I pass them. *Bit depressing, aren't they?* says the porter pushing my wheelchair. (Gleeson 2019: 109)

Gleeson's mental energy and new forms of thought are shaped in beautifully anarchic ways in the passage above, uncovering the aforementioned concerns of border poetics in this way. Moreover, just as Irish modernist authors like James Joyce, for example, incorporated an aesthetics of embodiment and disability into their short fiction published in little magazines a century earlier, so does Gleeson in this non-fiction passage.[7] Border poetics is an appropriate framework to examine Gleeson's purpose in her essays because it "might establish relationships expressing proximity rather than contemplative or legislative distance" (Lundberg 2014: 172).

The next sections will show that border poetics can help to explore how and to what effect the devices proposed by Schimanski and Wolfe can be used to relate Gleeson's essayism to several concepts of border crossing, such as how the border crosser and border-crossing narratives work from a feminist perspective in *Constellations*. The concept of border poetics proposed will illuminate Gleeson's developments in research on the use of non-fiction in public debates regarding the narratives of migrants and tourists.

3. Crossing Borders in Sinéad Gleeson's *Constellations*

In this section, I discuss the crossing of the border in an attempt to illuminate its purpose for the production of a narrative, by which Gleeson's individual experiences of the border are connected to larger historical narratives of border formation from other contexts. According to Heidi Isaksen,

> The crossing of the border involves the passage of the border crosser from one territory to another […]. The border crossed by the border crosser may be a physically marked border, or it may be an intangible line, often invisible in space […]. The territories involved may likewise be politically defined, but also be symbolic spheres or periods in time. All borders must have a spatial dimension, imaginary or otherwise, or else one cannot cross them. ("Border Crossing")

In chapter five, "On the Atomic Nature of Trimesters", Gleeson explores various cultural constructions relating to gender issues in Ireland. Her argument revolves around her female self, motherhood and pregnancy:

> I did not pine for a child when I was younger […] but I back-pocketed the feeling, tucked it away for later. Even with studied carefulness, most women will have a pregnancy scare. Days of checking and waiting. Our biological lives are numerically driven; twenty-eight-day cycles (a rarity) and a two-week wait before peeing on a stick. Then […] twelve weeks before announcing the news. Or the other option: an unplanned crisis with horror-struck calculations: tallying of dates, totting up the cost and realising its incompatibilities with one's financial situation; the decision —until very recently in Irish history— to travel to another country that offered reproductive rights. (Gleeson 2019: 91-92)

The essay form encourages an open discussion about sexuality and reproductive rights in the Irish public arena. Its discourse has the capacity to question, expose and attack the language of power. The authority of the Catholic Church over the private lives of Irish men and women, which began to be openly challenged before the 1960s, finds its continuity in Gleeson's excerpt above. In this perspective, the writer can be seen as a border crosser regarding cultural constructions about desired pregnancy and motherhood and abortion rights in Ireland. Her essays can also be considered as examples of crossings of the border, that is, as sites for individual intentionality to change society as well as social history.

In addition to this, *Constellations* puts emphasis on language as a medium, which is acquired before an individual reaches adolescence, and is shared by all its speakers. Language is recreated in the collection as a tool for the sending of thoughts, interaction, exchanging ideas and understanding feelings of others over time. As the text reads,

> The word 'stillness' also contains 'illness'. My bedbound years formed in me a constant reader. Books made being indoors and unable to move more bearable. In the months after her accident, Kahlo took refuge in painting […]. Her paintings are a lesson in corporeal panic, body-in-peril, a way of communicating pain to those unversed in it […]. When I look at her work, I am struck by the way the language of the body […]. For Frida, no words were enough […]. In illness, it is hard to find the right words […]. Words can fail us, and they failed Frida. They could not harness what she wanted to say. For her, art —not language— was the medium of her agony. (Gleeson 2019: 180-181)

Apart from the language and art questions as means to express artists' illnesses and pain, Gleeson's essays also cover a significant historical time span, from 1987, a few months after she turned thirteen, up to the year of publication, 2019, a year for reflection. As Gleeson argues in essay twelve, "Twelve Stories of Bodily Autonomy (*for the twelve women a day who leave*)":

> Reproductive health is about autonomy, agency, choice and being heard. It is also about money, class, access and privilege. Ireland's history —for women— is the history of our bodies. The goal for the future, at its most basic and unprepossessing,

> is equality, respect, reproductive control and equal pay. Change has been hard won. It has been set in motion because of women who speak up, protest, march, lobby and put themselves out there. Shifting their stories from private places to public spotlights. On polling day, I think of all those women as I walk to cast my vote with my children. (Gleeson 2019: 219)

This year is marked in part through the repeal of the Eighth Amendment of the Irish Constitution on 25 May the year before, when Ireland paved the way for legalized abortion. Here Gleeson crosses the border between reproductive and abortion rights and her essays become more political.[8] Although published nearly two decades after Linda Connolly's 2003 book[9] on the Irish women's movement, Connolly being another border crosser, Gleeson's *Constellations* constitutes one more starting point of an analysis that spawns wider questions about feminism as an agent of political and social change in Ireland. Her borders not only have a spatial dimension, but also an imaginary one. She writes:

> Outside I take a photograph of my daughter beside the polling station sign, her body showing its own traces of change. I want to record this moment in the hope that this is the last day that her reproductive rights will be out of her control […]. I see all the ways her life will be different. She takes my hand, and we walk into the cool air of the hall, to change the future. (Gleeson 2019: 219)

In this passage, Gleeson refers to the moment in which she and her daughter are about to vote in Ireland's historic referendum to repeal the Eighth Amendment of the Constitution. In doing so, she crosses both spatial and imaginary borders regarding this matter, and this is aimed at generating continuity and an impact on younger generations, including her daughter and other writers.

Apart from crossing the border in gender issues, the non-fiction writer also does so in another field, the language of medicine. Gleeson narrates her life experiences and the culture of the female body in pain with such dexterity that she produces a reading experience possessing multiple layers, provoking both discomfort and pleasure. She reflects on an early experience of doctors and female patients' appointments: "The orthopaedic doctor […] does that thing I'm used to male doctors doing: he tells me I'm overreacting. A rotating blade is slicing into my flesh, but I need to calm down. The room fills up with screaming. Me, a ventriloquist throwing pain across the room" (Gleeson 2019: 16). Later, she has a different experience in another encounter: "My consultant, a kind, smart man who has all the warmth lacking in many doctors I've encountered, listened with concern […] and prescribed a morning-after pill for my predicament" (218). Gleeson regrets experiencing the lack of empathy and sensitivity among male doctors while she was ill and in treatment. *Constellations* thereby facilitates the learning of better ways for doctors to proceed with patients in pain and Gleeson's narrative of past

traumatic experiences can be used as a means to promote the growth of doctors' emotional intelligence. The theoretical framework of border poetics by Schimanski and Wolfe used here shows that writing about the female body in pain can help to give further sense to patients' language of physical and emotional suffering in society. By hinting at many other meanings, Gleeson allows the reader to link ideas and cross all the necessary borders themselves. In other words, border poetics here facilitates meditation upon the socio-political implications of the border between hospitals and patients. Gleeson offers another example of this where she makes the reader reflect upon ethics, which helps them assess the quality of decisions and shape their choices involving the issue of blood donation, for example, as shown in the following quotation:

> Blood donation is that rare and uncomplicated incident of a selfless good deed. The taking of time to attend a clinic, the ritualistic act of allowing a nurse to drain blood. The Irish Blood Transfusion Service collectively describes blood, platelets and plasma as 'blood products': strangely consumerist language for an act that is devoid of the politics of transaction. There is no monetary benefit to the donor-recipient relationship, and despite this, I have remained curious about all the blood I've received. Post-surgery, post-childbirth and in chemotherapy I've received around 150 units. A unit is one bag; it contains 470 millilitres, so almost 70,500 millilitres of other people's blood have been inserted into my body. An altruistic army, none of whom will ever know who received their blood; that a part of them is now part of me. (Gleeson 2019: 38)

In this passage the border between hospitals and patients is crossed because Gleeson dwells upon blood donors' altruistic choice to help patients with serious illnesses like hers. Gleeson understands the ethical drive in the same way that Judith Butler and Rosi Braidiotti do in some of their philosophical writings; that is, respectively, as the acknowledgement of/and loyalty to the vulnerability of the other, and as the transformation of the negative into the affirmative.[10] This sense of the ethical is embodied in her motivation after traversing two serious illnesses and in the border crossing narrative. Thus, Gleeson seems to have developed a social consciousness and believes in the visual arts and their relevance in other contexts of practice. As the following quotation reveals, it is in this artistic world that she seems to have developed a political consciousness without being much aware of it. It is in this complex and problematic terrain between culture and social politics where Gleeson acknowledges that politics are inevitable:

> A couple of years ago I attended a literary festival […] during the Q&A, another writer … tells me that I'm a political writer. I am? I never knew this, […] she asks if I reject this idea (I honestly don't) […] No matter what or how you write about the female body —from reproduction to sexuality, illness to motherhood— it is politicised. (2019: 210)

Constellations is closely connected to Gleeson's physical body, which is situated in a specific time and place, contemporary Ireland. Her book is an act of living the border, because her essays represent the embodiment of the language of inquiry. Her essays have the capacity to enter those zones known as borderlands where the reader meets strange things and unknown people. The language of her essays enables the reader to understand new experiences. *Constellations* represents the condition of doubt and the uncertainties provoked by being foreign to a situation (Gleeson's two potentially deadly illnesses); a condition which is simultaneously an impasse and a passage, which provides the reader with awareness of the limits of the border.

4. Sinéad Gleeson's *Constellations* as a Border-Crossing Narrative

The theoretical basis of border poetics is to see the border from the processual and embodied perspective of the border-crossing narrative.[11] Narratives of border crossing connect individual experiences of the border to larger historical narratives of border formation. Every narrative of this type can thus be apprehended as a performative renegotiation of the border. Traditional understandings of borders as constituting physical and visible lines of separation between political, social and economic spaces are thus replaced within the social sciences[12] by an understanding of the border as a process. According to David Newman,

> The process through which borders are demarcated and managed are central to the notion of border as process and border as institution […]. Demarcation is not simply the drawing of a line on a map or the construction of a fence in the physical landscape. It is the process through which borders are constructed and the categories of difference or separation created. (2007: 35)

Border poetics helps us not only to generate critical thinking about the world as it changes around us, but also to engage with the challenges presented by such changes.[13] Gleeson's innovative collection not only aims at integrating questions of gender, cultural and other forms of identity and politics, but also conveys the literariness of many types of text through essayism. This integration is central to border poetics as a field of cultural analysis; to reflect on literariness is to keep before us, as resources for analysing Gleeson's narrative discourse, "reading practices elicited by literature: the suspension of the demand for immediate intelligibility, reflection on the implications of means of expression and attention to how meaning is made and pleasure produced" (Culler 1997: 41). *Constellations*, thus, generates critical discourse regarding, first, the urgent need for the erasure of borderlines, and second, the reasons behind some critics' and theorists' promotion

of certain literary forms and dismissal of others, like the essay and various other cultural products referred to within the collection. Patrick Freyne comments on why Gleeson wrote in essays rather than in any other form,

> [s]he [Gleeson] wrote five or six chapters. "It started pouring out of me". But she realised that she didn't want to write a straightforward memoir and certainly didn't want to write a book all about illness and death. So she put it aside. A few more years passed and through her work she learned more about writing and began to see all the possibilities of the essay form. "Essays are a good way of describing what's happening", she says. "They're not straightforward linear chunks of prose. Some [of my essays] look like poems. I wasn't interested in writing 14 pieces that all look the same". (2019)

As to the first critical discourse regarding the immediate necessity for the deletion of borderlines, *Constellations* touches upon the lives of a large number of public and historical figures, such as Frida Kahlo, Roald Dahl and the Maggies of the Magdalene Laundries in multiple fields and countries, their deeds, emotions, illnesses and the impact of their work on culture and society over time. The cultural practices around the fe/male body in pain by various artists of different sexes recreated in the book convert it into a border-crossing narrative. Gleeson's essays also reveal the synergy of women's writings in conversation with one another, for example, Lucy Grealy's *Autobiography of a Face* (1994) and Abi Andrews's novel *The Word for Woman is Wilderness* (2018). Her feminist approach, conveyed by her articulation of feminist concerns, such as the removal of legal and bureaucratic obstacles to equality or the legalization of abortion, and by her selection of a diverse range of documents, from both high- and popular culture, canonical and understudied, redefines the female self and body, yet also culture. Moreover, Gleeson's critical acumen and broad knowledge of music and art point to new avenues of inquiry about women's selves, bodies and culture.

Constellations has an encyclopaedic nature because of the enormous amount of medical, artistic, cultural, historical and critical reflections on the female body narrated within it. References to Karl Landsteiner to Frida Kahlo, Roald Dahl, Dervla Murphy and the Magdalene Laundries, Gleeson's collection is allusive and intertextual and hints at many other cultural issues but leaves it to the reader to link such ideas and create different meanings. As Gleeson argues,

> Kahlo died in 1954 aged forty-seven, a year after her leg was finally amputated; [Jo] Spence in 1992 from leukaemia (was it the same kind as mine?), and [Lucy] Grealy, who became reliant on painkillers, a decade later at thirty-nine from heroin overdose. Representing a diagnosis —in art, words or photos— is an attempt to explain to ourselves what has happened, to deconstruct the world and rebuild it in our own way. Perhaps articulating a life-changing illness is part of recovery. But so is finding the kind of articulation that is specific to you. Kahlo, Grealy and Spence were lights

> in the dark for me, a form of guidance. A triangular constellation […] making wounds the source of inspiration, not the end of it. (2019: 189)

If one adds to these characteristics the large number of themes, such as blood, contraception, dementia, and life experiences around the female body in pain, the scope of the collection expands exponentially. In sum, her non-fictional narration of the (female) body recreates the power and limitations of narrative.

As far as the second critical discourse is concerned, that is, the reasons behind some critics' and theorists' promotion of certain literary forms and dismissal of others, or the standing of different cultural forms, Gleeson's *Constellations* explores differences in literary sensibility, aesthetic preferences, varieties of style and diction, and diverse cultural practices and themes. These naturally result from a creative clash of literary traditions and artistic choices formed and fostered in different environments but coming into a creative confrontation in movements across real and imagined frontiers within global Irish studies. Her essays explore forms like poems, letters or constellations, her own modernist drawings, and confirm her interest in a wide range of cultural practices. As a result, she uncovers various ways in which the Irish literary tradition is part of a broader constellation of influences in which border poetics marks an inspiring challenge for creative trespass.

In a long line of modernist Irish writers who deliberately looked outside of Ireland for artistic inspiration and recognition, James Joyce, Thomas MacGreevy, Kate O'Brien, Maeve Brennan and Samuel Beckett among them, Gleeson is a conspicuous example of an artist whose imagination has been shaped by the experience of crossing and re-crossing the imaginary frontier. This concept of productive translation between cultures and literary traditions phrased in various inflections of language and art forms remains part of Irish peoples' ability to reimagine themselves and travel between cultures.

Constellations is also a unique non-fiction example of synaesthesia. When reading about pain, the reader not only experiences a concurrent subjective physical feeling other than the one being discussed, but also perceives the written material with more than one sense at once. For instance, at the point where the text reads: "The synovial fluid in my left hip began to evaporate like rain. The bones ground together, literally turning to dust. It happened quickly, an inverse magician's trick. Now you *don't* see it, now you do" (Gleeson 2019: 1). Just as sensory responses converge when reading *Constellations*, so are mental reflections combined with such sensorial reflections. Gleeson's collection crosses borders because of its multiplicity of sensitivities, the same ones that informed modernist art at the beginning of the twentieth century.[14] These borders not only show the role of culture in generating social change, but also the literariness of texts of all types.

Constellations is a border-crossing narrative because it explores themes which focus on social and cultural divisions, such as those that pertain to politics, religion, gender, class, (dis)ability, race, and ethnicity. Finally, the collection is also a product of imagination inspired and nurtured by global traditions connected with the European artistic avant-gardes. In a multicultural, postcolonial and diasporic context, Irish cultural heritage and artistic inventiveness, such as the reader finds in Gleeson's collection of essays, positively engages with local traditions from the rest of the world and proves the literariness of non-fiction.[15]

5. Sinéad Gleeson's Imagined Developments: The Use of Non-Fiction in Public Debates on the Female Redefinition of Borders

So far, this discussion has been mainly concerned with the aesthetics of Gleeson's work. According to Schimanski and Wolfe, however, "there is much room for transferring lessons learnt in this context to ways of dealing with all kinds of border narrative and figuration" (2007: 25). The last section of this discussion will deal with Gleeson's "imagined developments in research on the use of non-fiction in public debates on the narratives of migrants […] and tourists" (2019: 25) as recreated in the eleventh essay in *Constellations,* "The Adventure Narrative". Here, Gleeson sets out to write about adventure tales, "timeless accounts of valour and daring", claiming that "for centuries, these stories did not belong to women" (192-193). Her essay creates points of discussion and draws attention to gaps in research on the stories of these female migrants and tourists, making them more visible to the reader. If the reader looks backwards, she argues,

> Magellan and Amundsen, Captain Cook and Francis Drake, 'Dr. Livingstone, I presume?' Accounts of derring-do dominated by men […] the adventure narrative has always been built on stories of masculinity. Men are its central subject; more worthy of defining it and experiencing it […]. Women stayed home, maintaining the equilibrium of domesticity.
>
> Leaving on a whim to go travelling was traditionally the preserve of one gender, and those of means: money, and being male, helped. The demands at home anchored women there and it was men who got to leave […] or to encounter the possibility of adventure […] a license to drop all responsibility —of making a wage, or helping to raise a family. No wonder it seemed so inviting, this complete divesting of domestic expectation and workaday commitments. (Gleeson 2019: 193)

Gleeson's essay opens up a public debate on the narratives of these adventurers and tourists, claiming that "circumnavigation, one of the greatest possible adventures

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[was] a male preserve-at least until Nelly Bly decided otherwise" (Gleeson 2019: 193) in the nineteenth century, when she decided to recreate Phileas Fogg's around the world trip, from Jules Verne's novel *Around the World in Eighty Days* (1873), and do it solo. The Irish writer not only dwells upon Bly's taking off her female clothes, but also completing the trip in just seventy-two days, facing much opposition because she dared not to ask for permission from a male relative. Like countless other women who were determined to see the world on their own terms, women like Bly neither appeared in history books, nor were they taught in schools and immortalised in paintings. Gleeson's essay aims at transferring lessons learnt in the nineteenth century context to ways of dealing with all kinds of border narrative and figuration that she recreates in this essay. Accordingly, she remarks critically that "The female adventurer was regarded with suspicion" rather than comprehension, and was judged for her spirited characteristics and her capacity to thrill (Gleeson 2019: 196).

Further, she discusses the Madgalene Laundries in Ireland, a country which "has been adept in judging its young girls for these characteristics", that is, for being "too independent, full of sharp and big ideas, or just too full of babies" (Gleeson 2019: 196). Gleeson's border narrative opens up a debate on the lives of the women who were sequestered in these laundries, "pregnant and unmarried", and who "were expected to exude gratitude for being 'saved'" (196). Gleeson's essay not only addresses these institutions as prisons by another name, but also revisits the debate around "remote farmhouses to nursing homes or to the attics of relatives in the city; journeys to England to start a new life, replacing the old" (197). In other words, journeys that Irish women took to access abortion services.

Gleeson's interest in women and gender issues coincides with a time in which Ireland is becoming more culturally liberal in many respects.[16] On 25 May 2018, the referendum to repeal the Eighth Amendment of the Constitution was joyfully celebrated around Ireland and the world, placing the country at the leading edge of a social revolution.[17] Without any doubt, it was a historic day for Ireland.[18] However, as Gleeson argues in ironic terms, "in the twenty-first century —when it's perfectly acceptable to go almost anywhere— a woman bound for the mountains or forests or the open sea will still be asked, so casually: Aren't you nervous?" (Gleeson 2019: 197). In this regard, Gleeson uses the essay form to challenge literary and gender conventions through the contents of this essay and these women's lives, contributing to the critical debate on crossing gender borders in non-fiction terms.

To this challenging end, Gleeson dwells upon women alpinists Junko Tabei and Ann Bancroft, qualified pilots and talented writers Beryl Markham and Lilian

Bland, adventurer Mary Heath, mountaineer Annie Smith Peck, and explorer Fanny Bullock Workman. They were all "women full of curiosity and allergic to compromise […], but also took charge and wrote their own narratives. They ignored the prevailing admonition to stay put and stay quiet" (Gleeson 2019: 199). However, as she further argues, for millions of "poor girls, women with illness or reduced ability, those whose role in the world has been decided, immovable as stone", there were "no grand adventures or aerial views" (199). Gleeson aims at breaking borders by telling, not just the narratives of these migrants and tourists,[19] but also the stories told by female public storytellers[20] that also featured wanderers, "but they themselves were discouraged from wandering far from home" (202). In doing so, Gleeson contests assumptions about "the content of women's writing" (203) as being necessarily connected to women as compared to men's writing, assumptions which were at the centre of storytelling. Gleeson's imagined developments on subjects supposedly connected to women storytellers are conveyed through rhetorical questions: "Don't we all fall in love? Have families? Die? Fuck? Why is the distinction in reverence based on who the teller is?" (203). In sum, Gleeson's essay "The Adventure Narrative" transfers lessons learnt in gender matters to ways of tackling all types of border narrative and figures of her imagination. She imagines a different narrative of female independent travellers, wanderers, migrants and tourists as well as of the stories of those Irish women who were "kept" in rural areas or incarcerated behind the walls of various institutions. As a woman, Gleeson reclaims a distinct orientation and the breaking of social and institutional borders regarding these gender issues, concluding her essay this way:

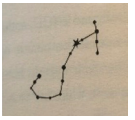
> Each footstep on a journey moves the traveller away from a life and into another, and perhaps the memory of the piece left behind sustains even the weariest nomad. Untethered to us, that part of ourselves that stayed back might have changed. There is always the option of reclaiming it, certainly, but new paths and red hills may have already been displaced by something newer […] I am a complicated traveller […] Adventure operates in the realm of unpredictability […] But we orient ourselves towards it, bending to the horizon, with all that it offers and conceals (2019: 204-206).

Therefore, Gleeson's essays uncover the structure of border narratives, involving both individuals and state institutions. Her individual experiences of the border are mediated in their most marked form through narrative texts and works having a distinct aesthetic element. *Constellations* suggests that a focus on borders in non-fiction texts and other aesthetic works can offer an exemplary impetus for the examination of the intricacy of narrative and figuration existing in other types of discourse within a wider cultural and political field.

6. Conclusion

The border poetics framework has proved to be a suitable tool to examine Gleeson's book of essays as a constellation of potentiality containing a healing and empowering form of writing, for it is an extremely allusive and intertextual collection. The weight of inquiry in it does not lead the reader into the comfort of pitying the writer, but into an interrogation of themselves and the way societies are often fixated on the body rather than valuing the fact that there are many disabled bodies. Gleeson paradoxically celebrates the body as the most obvious indicator of disability and vulnerability. The reader has much to address, too, because, as part of the population receiving her text, they are implicated.

Constellations is written in the essay form, a form associated with women's history, and uses both the body narrative and the stars in its structure. As the text reads:



The Moons of Motherhood
I

> They arrive at night, my children. Pulsing into the dark, entering the world when the moon is up: a new moon on the day my son is born, a waxing crescent for my daughter. After that first night my daughter and I were apart, the second night is spent attempting to feed her. The US election results roll in […]. Across the ocean, there is hope. States declare themselves blue and Barak Obama is about to be elected. In our small room, all I can do is to stare at my new daughter. There is possibility in every molecule of her and tonight, in the world too. (Gleeson 2019: 119)

Gleeson draws from an existing form and constructs a new one with poems of her own more suited to her needs —a form that compels the audience to read differently, to enter into a unique experience. And like modernist authors, Gleeson's voice is distinctly her own. The essay form reveals a spirit of adventure and of unfinishedness, because it aspires towards much else: crossing borders. The end of the same essay mentioned above reads:

> The American writer Barry Hannah said that there's a ghost in every story: a place, a memory, a feeling long forgotten. Experiences that never fully recede, people who leave an imprint […]. For a long time, my grandmother was a ghost in her own story,

> living outside of herself as a result of fear and grief. Her mother was haunted too […]. Alongside the women who preceded them, those armies of mothers and Magdalenes, women who wanted so much from the world; women who never asked for anything; […] disappeared women, ground down by fate; but women, too, who left for something better, or those who found a sense of self —either peace or wildness within; women who found whatever it was they wanted; and all the women who walked into the fire of the future without a backward glance. (Gleeson 2019: 151)

The application of border poetics to this study allows us to uncover new perspectives about the female self and the body when it is in pain and struggling for recovery; yet it also demands social and cultural change both in the Irish context and internationally. The end of Gleeson's book poses a question for us all: what constitutes a self-determined life, a life well lived? For her, it is a life that is lived in a vital and real way, and that engages with exactly how we are. Her resilience is active and precedes transformation. This is how Gleeson understands transformation as expressed in poetic terms in her final essay "A Non-Letter to My Daughter (named for a warrior queen)":

> Don't change if you don't want to
> But change is a leap into the light
> Chrysalis, hit and miss
> I realise that *don't* is not a word
> we should direct at girls. (Gleeson 2019: 238)

Constellations is a metaphor for change, a renewed way of seeing the literary space as a meeting point where the representation of various types of knowledge is a question of acknowledging that the borders are invisible. Gleeson is a real border crosser and her book of essays a border-crossing narrative. Its performative renegotiation of the border constitutes a process that calls on us to value difference, and not just by celebrating difference, but also by not allowing ourselves to reinforce systematic borders through institutional policies and procedures.

Notes

1. See volume 135 of *Granta* on new Irish writing, edited by Sigrid Rausing.

2. For essays on mental and physical health, see Pine (2018).

3. For essays on the effects of Alzheimer's disease on a family and loss, see Maleney (2019).

4. Gleeson's *Constellations* would be an example of the use of the body as a narratological object (Punday 2003) in her twelve essays.

5. Gleeson's individual experiences of the border are mediated in their most

marked form through *Constellations* as an aesthetic work and a narrative text. However, because of its non-fiction nature, this discussion differs from previous research on border poetics or liminality such as Irene Gilsenan Nordin and Elin Holmsten's *Liminal Borderlands in Irish Literature and Culture* (2009), where the critics examine the theme of liminality in contemporary Irish literature, art and film in a variety of contexts.

6. For more on border poetics, see Sarkar and Munshi (2021) and the entry "Border Poetics" on Heidi Isaksen's website at http://borderpoetics.wikidot.com/border-poetics.

7. James Joyce's *The Dubliners* was published on 15 June 1914 in *The Little Review*. For more on the disabled body in modernist texts, see Davidson (2019).

8. Just as when she condemns the denial of Savita Halappanavar's request for an abortion in 2012, then illegal under Irish law, resulting in her death from septic miscarriage.

9. See Connolly (2003).

10. See Valdés (2016).

11. See Isaksen's website at http://borderpoetics.wikidot.com/about-border-poetics-key-terms.

12. According to Adam Roberts, the value of crossing disciplinary boundaries, such as the Humanities and Social Sciences, is very significant for what it means to be human: "the words, ideas, narratives and the art and artefacts that help us make sense of our lives and the world we live in; how we have created it and are created by it. The social sciences seek to explore through observation and reflection the processes that govern the behaviour of individuals and groups. Together they help us to understand ourselves, our society and our place in the world" (2010: 2).

13. Take as examples pandemics, climate change, geopolitical inequalities triggered by emerging economies, or the introduction of new technologies in our lives and culture.

14. As Wendy J. Truran argues, "In 'Love and the Art Object', Joanne Winning focuses on the dissident desires of the lesbian artist via a discussion of Virginia Woolf, the portraitist Gluck (Hannah Gluckstein) and designer and architect Eileen Gray. Winning claims that lesbian modernists' hyper-sensitivity to materiality renders their objects saturated with affect" (2017: 843).

15. This idea is backed up by Paige Reynolds, who claims that the contemporary Irish essay has not only opened up the form "to European influences but also to a range of affects from desire to bathos" (2020: 17).

16. For further discussion of these gender issues, see Terrazas (2018: 1-5).

17. Ireland also elected a gay, mixed-race prime minister in 2017. His election was historic given his characteristics.

18. Another recent example of historic day for Ireland and Irish women was January 2021. The final report of the Mother and Baby Homes Commission of Investigation detailed that around 9,000 children had died in these institutions between 1922 and 1998. A few days later, Taoiseach Micheál Martin made a formal apology to survivors on behalf of the state.

19. Gleeson tells the stories of further Irish female migrants, such as Dervla Murphy, who set out to cycle to India in 1963 and said "goodbye to a country that viewed solo, curious women as dangerous" (201), and demonstrated "in actions and deeds that women could do anything, and that independence and solitude were to be prized" (2019: 202).

20. This is the Irish tradition of the *seanachaí* with renowned female storytellers, such as Peig Sayers and Bab Feirtéar.

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DON DELILLO'S ADAPTED NOVELS: THE TREATMENT OF LANGUAGE, SPACE, AND TIME ON SCREEN

LAS NOVELAS ADAPTADAS DE DON DELILLO: EL TRATAMIENTO EN LA PANTALLA DEL LENGUAJE, EL ESPACIO Y EL TIEMPO

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Abstract

Don DeLillo is an author who pays special attention to language, time, and space when constructing characters' identity as well as their milieu. Considering this aspect of his fiction, the present article looks at how cinematic adaptations of his novels translate time, space, and the use of language onto the screen. Two of DeLillo's novels have been adapted so far: *Cosmopolis* (DeLillo 2003) by David Cronenberg in a 2012 movie of the same name, and *The Body Artist* (DeLillo 2001) by Benoît Jacquot under the title *À Jamais* (2016). In light of the importance that the aforementioned elements play in the author's works, this article delves into how they are represented in the two adaptations and analyzes the role that they play in the movies compared to the novels.

Keywords: Don DeLillo, film adaptation, time, space, language.

Resumen

Don DeLillo es un autor que pone mucho peso en el lenguaje, el tiempo y el espacio a la hora de construir la identidad de los personajes y su entorno. Considerando este aspecto de su ficción, el presente artículo analiza cómo las adaptaciones cinematográficas de sus novelas trasladan el tiempo, el espacio y el

uso del lenguaje a la pantalla. Dos de las novelas de DeLillo han sido adaptadas hasta el momento: *Cosmopolis* (DeLillo 2003) por David Cronenberg en 2012 a una película con el mismo título, y *The Body Artist* (DeLillo 2001) de Benoît Jacquot bajo el título *À Jamais* (2016). Dada la importancia que los elementos aquí señalados tienen en la obra del autor, este artículo ofrece un análisis de cómo se representan en las dos adaptaciones, explorando el papel que juegan en el cine en comparación con las novelas.

Palabras clave: Don DeLillo, adaptación cinematográfica, tiempo, espacio, lenguaje**.**

1. Introduction

There has been a notable increase in the acquisition of the film rights to Don DeLillo's novels since the publication of his latest one, *The Silence*, in October 2020. Some months earlier, in June of the same year, Emma Cline published a short story in *The New Yorker* which takes its title, "White Noise", from one of DeLillo's most famous novels. In this story, a fictional Harvey Weinstein thinks that his neighbor is none other than Don DeLillo and, having a cordial relationship with him, Weinstein imagines acquiring the rights to produce a movie based on the piece's namesake novel. In January 2021, it was announced that director Noah Baumbach would be adapting *White Noise* and that the film would be starring actors Adam Driver and Greta Gerwig (Barajas 2021). A limited series adaptation of *Libra* was announced very shortly afterwards and Uri Singer, who acquired the rights to *White Noise*, also did so for *The Silence* and *Underworld* (Sheehan 2021). It has been disclosed that the latter will be made into a Netflix series by director Ted Melfi (Fleming 2021). Some years before this set of acquisitions, in 2015 director Alex Ross Perry was revealed to have optioned the rights to an adaptation of *The Names* (Jagernauth 2015). However, so far only two out of the eighteen novels published by Don DeLillo have been adapted for the screen: his 2003 novel *Cosmopolis*, directed by David Cronenberg in 2012 to a movie of the same name; and *The Body Artist*, published in 2001, adapted by French director Benoît Jacquot under the title *À Jamais* in 2016. This article explores why film adaptations are particularly relevant to the study of DeLillo's work when focusing on the literary versus cinematic representations of language, time, and space, and notes how the two adaptations offer quite different approaches to these elements. The analysis also considers whether the presentation of these three elements in the movies can establish a dialogue with the original work that furthers the field of Don DeLillo studies.

DeLillo is an author who has repeatedly remarked on the influence that cinema and media have had on his work, so how his novels are adapted for the screen

might open up a dialogue with his literary work is an interesting line of inquiry. The importance that this author places on communication media is highlighted in various ways, from his acknowledgment of the influence of some movie directors on his writing to explicit references to movies and movie characters. The author has recognized the influence of director Jean-Luc Godard (LeClair 1982) and in many of his novels other film directors such as Michelangelo Antonioni and Akira Kurosawa are explicitly mentioned. DeLillo has been praised for being a writer "whose tireless effort to frame the excess of media and technology has guaranteed the survival of the novel in a hyper-kinetic culture" (Philipp 2003). It can be seen that cinematic allusions do not merely work as a mere wink to readers in the know but rather they help us realize that DeLillo's narratives are often built upon a common mediascape shared by characters, narrator, and readers. Movie references appear as a manifestation of the narrative interest in featuring concepts, names, and language that originate in the media, highlighting the industry's central role in the milieu of the novel. Although this might not be specific to Don DeLillo, this inclusion of communication media references showcases the intended connection between his literary production and the world of cinema. The author devises a playful game of intertextual layers that can put the films in conversation with the novels as well as between themselves. Across DeLillo's entire oeuvre, the cinematic atmosphere that the author purposefully creates serves to set up an inviting framework in which to approach the movie adaptations that this article explores.

When considering film adaptations, there is a well-known tendency to rank and compare the novel and the film, establishing which one is superior to the other. This type of hierarchical analysis often leads to "a suppression of potentially more rewarding approaches to the phenomenon of adaptations", missing the chance to see them as "an example of convergence among the arts" (McFarlane 1996: 10). This article, rather than focusing on fidelity, offers a comparison of how some of the two novels' central elements are represented. Hence, the key interest of this analysis is to consider how these two adaptations engage with language, time, and space as key aspects in the narrative. The article explores the use of cinematic and visual resources in the representation of these key aspects and whether the result is in any way akin to how they appear in DeLillo's novels, whether the movies rely solely on content taken from the literary works or whether, on the contrary, they refocus the interest of the text altogether leaving behind all or some of these interests.

2. Framing the Study of Adaptations

An important theoretical framework concerning the position of a film relative to the original text is that of Karen E. Kline's four critical paradigms of film adaptation:

translation, pluralist, transformation, and materialist. Kline herself recognizes the value in considering all paradigms as equally valuable, for not doing so "would ignore a complexity of factors that mitigate in the individual case, including the linguistic qualities of the specific novel and the socio-historical circumstances of the film's creation" (1996: 70). In this vein, let us begin by noting how the different paradigms can serve as useful approaches for looking at the adaptations here analyzed. The translation paradigm focuses on remaining as close as possible to the original text, especially "towards the narrative elements, such as character, setting and theme" (70), attaching more value to the literary tradition over film-making. The present article does not privilege the literary over the cinematic work. However, it does recognize the novel as the starting point that establishes the elements to be explored in the adaptations. The pluralist paradigm considers that adaptation "exists in its own right" (72) but helps convey what Dudley Andrew refers to as the "spirit" of the novel (in Kline 1996: 72). While the key elements selected for this study do not necessarily convey the whole "spirit" of these novels, they do notably contribute to its construction. Kline's third paradigm is transformation. This approach "consider[s] the novel raw material which the film alters significantly, so that the film becomes an artistic work in its own right" (72). Following this paradigm, some traces of the original text should be maintained but some privilege is given to the adaptation over the novel. The last paradigm is the materialist. It considers the film as "a product of cultural-historical processes" valuing the adaptation over the original text (74). It understands the cultural-historical context as the most important aspect, almost disregarding the original text. Nevertheless, according to Kline "the film's literary source is not [completely] overlooked" (74). When looking at adaptations, it is worth keeping in mind the possibility of looking at the film separately from the novel, especially in those cases in which the central themes are reworked so much that, when analyzing the film, one needs to leave behind the limitations imposed by the thematic interests of the novel in favor of other important highlights.

Don DeLillo's preoccupation with the use of language and its complexities is evidenced in his rhetoric and stylistic elements. Ubiquitous consumption of media and a lack of interpersonal connections are often present his works, and they are most easily appreciated in the type of language and grammar that his narrative and dialogues showcase. Characters' perception of their own consciousness and their attempts at attaining some form of human connection are profoundly affected by the media-saturated society they inhabit. Numerous scholars have already extensively discussed these characteristics, most notably David Cowart in his seminal work *Don DeLillo and the Physics of Language* (2002). DeLillo's novels offer an exploration of individuals' ability to communicate through detached and almost disconnected interactions, which are highly influenced by their mass media

consumption. The author's work often revolves around characters trying and failing to communicate amongst themselves while surrounded by mass media productions —from terrorist violence on the news to advertising in supermarkets and compulsive re-watching of an autobiographical documentary. In this context, interpersonal communication fails where media messages succeed, setting the grounds for a critique of American society. The form that dialogues take, built upon seemingly unnatural and disconnected utterances, is one of the ways in which the author's preoccupation with language is manifested. Some critics have singled out the style of his dialogues as an example of poor craftsmanship on the part of the author, arguing that "the sounds they produce are so monotonous that it's not only hard to tell who's speaking, it's a mystery why they're even bothering" (Kirn 2003). While it is true that oftentimes conversations do not seem to have a specific purpose, as other scholars such as Mark Osteen and David Cowart have observed, this apparent contrarian construction of dialogue is not only purposeful but also ensures a particular reading of the characters and their environment (Osteen 2000; Cowart 2022).

As for the significance of places in DeLillo's works, the settings and descriptions of spaces are highly influenced by post-industrialism, depicting big city streets filled with high skyscrapers. Such a representation of the importance of the city environment helps the author construct the archetypical urbanite character who often figures as the protagonist in his work. Despite the overwhelming environment that populated cities are associated with, those characters who live in the city usually find themselves in a position of privilege that tends to be connected to their capacity to watch and control others. This is the case in *Cosmopolis*, where the view of the city space is presented through the detached vantage point of Eric, the powerful rich young protagonist of the novel who is driven around the city in his limousine. Not only can he see the entire city, as it were at his feet, but he can also see the future on the vehicle's screens. The position of observer surpasses the act of inhabiting the space. DeLillo's fiction presents two main types of places: the overpopulated cities described above and isolated deserts where the protagonists have their retreats (e.g. *Love-Lies-Bleeding*, *Point Omega*, among others). These uncolonized spaces open up the possibility of inhabiting a place that would allow for a different type of self and often also for artistic creation. This type of enclave is found in *The Body Artist*, in which Lauren stays in Rey's house after his passing. The potential of visual language to represent these two kinds of spaces that Don DeLillo portrays in these two works justifies space as the second element of interest in this analysis.

Finally, the passage of time is closely intertwined with the aforementioned two opposing spaces. They, respectively, cause a sense of fast-paced meaningless existence (the overpopulated city) and a loss of awareness of the passage of time

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itself (the isolated house). Both situations tend to cause DeLillo's characters to feel as if they were trapped in time. This is sometimes explored in his fiction through experimentation with the literary form and a desire to overcome the limitations of present, past, and future. The kind of stasis that DeLillo portrays in his fiction is of great interest when analyzing the kind of cinematic resources employed to represent time in the adaptations. The connection between space and time has led DeLillo scholars to explore the chronotope in his works, that is, the representation of time and space through language and discourse (for an example of this, see Falconer). When considering the visual representation of space, one cannot forget how it is in fact associated with the representation of time in both adaptations. Ultimately, language, space, and time are distinct key elements in DeLillo's fiction that provide insight into the postmodern environment portrayed in the narratives while, at the same time, they highlight the underlying concerns that the novels are dealing with. This article aims to elucidate whether these elements point toward the same concerns in the cinematic adaptations of DeLillo's work.

3. *Cosmopolis*

DeLillo's *Cosmopolis* follows a day in the life of Eric Packer, a young millionaire who is crossing the city in his limousine to get a haircut while he worries about global financial markets. This novel "serves as a cultural artifact participating in the reconceptualization of time and space" (Noble 2008: 61), due to the protagonist's capacity to see the future combined with both the very short timeframe of the novel and the city space being seen from the confined space of the limousine. The novel has been widely read as a metaphor and critique of postmodern society and the struggles caused by the abusive capitalist system. For instance, David Harvey has defined *Cosmopolis* as an illustration of the "time-space compression" of the postmodern experience in a global, post-industrial world (in Philipp 2003). Eric Packer reflects on death, money, and technology while moving around a postmodern cityscape in his limousine surrounded by technological advances that embody what seems to be a confusing integration of changes in communication and space. In the imagery of the film, some of these key elements are reinforced through the visual language, including art, signs of wealth, and the almost constant presence of screens. Technological advances represent the integration of changes in communication and space that is not lost in the cinematic adaptation. The only key difference in terms of plot between movie and novel is that, in the latter, Eric is able to see his own dead body in the future on the screen of his watch while in the movie his death is neither seen nor heard; only anticipated before the final fade to black and the rolling of the credits.

Dialogues in the movie, almost invariably, follow the translation paradigm. Hence, they are for the most part reproduced verbatim from the novel. The careful word choice and phrasing found in the novel are emphasized in Cronenberg's work thanks to the intonation and non-naturalistic performances of the actors. Consider, for instance, the first conversation between Eric and Elise, the young millionaire woman he has recently married:

> "Your eyes are blue", she said. […]
> "Eat breakfast yet?"
> "No", she said.
> "Good. I'm hungry for something thick and chewy".
> "You never told me you were blue-eyed". (DeLillo 2003: 16-17)

The same conversation is exactly reproduced in the movie (Cronenberg 2012: min. 6). This dialogue takes place when Eric, while being driven across the city in his limousine, notices his wife in the taxi driving next to him. The couple has been married for twenty-two days and they are portrayed as having a very distant, almost stranger-like, relationship. The detachment they treat each other with, along with the abrupt changes in topic mid-conversation, are there every time they meet. In terms of the narrative, there are moments of observation between different conversations (and sometimes in the middle of them) in which novel-Eric takes the time to observe people on the streets and contemplate their situation. These passages, in free indirect speech, allow DeLillo to dig deeper into his protagonist. Some of the information about what Eric observes is translated into the movie through scenes that the audience can see through the windows of the limo, mostly behind Eric. The passage of time is perceived as less contemplative in the movie. First, thanks to the quick cuts that jump from Eric's encounter with one person to the next inside his limousine and, second, as the audience needs to pay attention to what Eric is discussing inside the limo with his employees and/or lovers at the same time that they need to observe what is happening around Eric on the streets. For instance, while Eric discusses the importance of time with Vija Kinski, his "Chief of Theory", a protest unfolds around them. As Eric pours two glasses of transparent vodka shown against the bluish glow of the screen, a crowd moves rapidly around them, fighting with his security guard, spray-painting the limo, jumping on cars, and brandishing a giant rat dummy.

The issue of time in *Cosmopolis* is highly conditioned by the fast-moving pace of the post-industrial era. Such concern is explicitly discussed in the narrative, for instance, when Eric is thinking about automated teller machines and considers that it "was anti-futuristic, so cumbrous and mechanical that even the acronym seemed dated" (DeLillo 2003: 54). Interestingly enough, this brings about once again the connection between time and language, as language in itself is becoming outdated

according to the discussions that Eric has with his employees, as the times are moving way too fast for everyone and everything. Another way in which the novel plays with the linearity of time is through the two sections of the novel entitled "*The Confessions of Benno Levi*" (italics in the original). These passages are transcriptions of Benno Levi's diary, reminiscent of Oswald's historic diaries reproduced in DeLillo's *Libra* (1988). These are not included in the movie, but the conversation that Benno and Eric have at the end is retained almost in its entirety. These passages in the novel not only interrupt the linear narration of Eric's day but are also presented in inverse order, as the diary's first entry is "NIGHT" (DeLillo 2003: 55), hence after Benno has killed Eric, and the second, "MORNING" (149). Ultimately, these passages directly affect the perception of time by interrupting the rhythm of the narrative, which does not occur in the adaptation.

The postmodern era that concerns DeLillo is a "society [that] experiences not only an altered temporal/spatial consciousness but also increasingly accelerated rates of change" (Noble 2008: 58). The fact that people have not caught up with the times they are living in is embodied in the narrative quite nicely in the prophetic power of the screens Eric watches inside his limousine. In his review of the novel, John Updike discusses the subject of time in relation to Eric's perception of events being conditioned by his screens, arguing that this "temporal dislocation recurs, indicating an underlying shift in the past-future paradigm" (Updike 2003). Cronenberg's *Cosmopolis* offers a very particular take where the importance of screens in the narrative appears to be emphasized by how unnatural both the background and the limousine look thanks to the movie's cinematography. Screens are in fact a central element in the protagonist's journey and are closely linked to the construction of chronotope in the narrative. First of all, they are the medium that allows him to transcend time. They provide the narrative with "a paradoxical insight into the mediated nature of human time" (Anker 2017). The screens are where Eric sees "things that haven't happened yet" (DeLillo 2003: 22; Cronenberg 2012: mins. 10-11). In the novel, there are also spycams installed recording both the inside and the outside of the limo. Eric witnesses himself doing things on screen that he does "a second or two after" (22) and also often checks them to see what is happening on the outside. The city space is much less prominent in the movie than in the novel. The novel notes different streets and famous New York locations such as Times Square while the movie does not focus on showing specific locations. In the novel, Eric often stops between conversations, or mid-conversation sometimes, to stare at the city and the buildings. At some point, he even puts his head out of the sunroof of the car to look at the towers, "so common and monotonic, tall, sheer, abstract […]", buildings that "were in the future, a time beyond geography" (36), a scene that is absent from the movie.

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Cronenberg's visual narrative relies on the windows of the limo to show the audience what is happening on the street but, at the same time, it reinforces Eric's detachment and disengagement with the world by having him not show as much interest as novel-Eric in what is going on in the streets around him. The spectral glow of the screens that provides the scene with a sort of futuristic cyber quality, "the glow of cybercapital" (DeLillo 2003: 78), as Vija Kinski calls it, is kept in the movie. These glowing lights are mostly a bright light blue, playing with both the quality of space and time and, most notably, emphasizing the coldness that permeates human interaction inside the limousine. The fact that Eric perceives time differently from the rest of the world is also seen in the comparison between the inside and the outside of the limo. The capacity to control time through "enormous wealth" and to see the future emphasizes what Eric has been discussing with Vija and her assertion that "money makes time" (DeLillo 2003: 79; Cronenberg 2012: mins. 34-35). In the movie, as the images of frantic and violent happenings outside the safe space of the vehicle are shown, it is highlighted that Eric and Vija are perceiving time as if it were much slower given how contemplative they act. As opposed to the protesters outside the limousine, they have time to discuss theoretical approaches instead of having to take action. The space where Eric and Vija are sitting inside the vehicle is soundproof and, in the film, accompanied by slow music and a muffled rhythmic thumping caused by the crowd pushing the limousine from the outside, which rocks both of them quite violently, although they remain impassive.

The spatial background works to construct a highly mechanized and materialistic world. Both the novel and the movie paint an image of the city saturated with wealth and skyscrapers. Time then functions as a "mimetic element that is repeatedly invaded and deformed by the false nervous systems of markets and their surrogate machines, against any willful resistance" (Veggian 93). Overall, this helps establish a critique of late capitalism, particularly of the fast-paced environment of the global markets in which Eric speculates and has been trying to control. Besides the limousine and the market, wealth finds another signifier in the novel in art, which turns out to be intertwined with space. Eric discusses in the following conversation with Didi, one of his lovers, the possibility of buying the Rothko Chapel:

> "I thought you'd be thrilled about the painting. One painting. You don't have an important Rothko. You've always wanted one. We've talked about this".
> "How many paintings in his chapel?"
> "I don't know. Fourteen, fifteen".
> "If they sell me the chapel, I'll keep it intact. Tell them".
> […]
> "Forgive the pissy way I say this. But the Rothko Chapel belongs to the world".
> "It's mine if I buy it". (DeLillo 2003: 27-28)

From this conversation, it can be seen that Eric's desire to acquire the Rothko Chapel originates mostly in his desire to show power and wealth. He argues that he can have it just because he can afford it. The Rothko Chapel is a very particular space. Both a religious building and a museum of sorts, the Chapel represents a sense of non-time. Most importantly, by approaching it with the logic of the market (i.e. "It's mine if I buy it" [2003: 28]), it evokes how a "non-place church normalizes the banality of consumer capitalism" (Sanders 2016: 71). Eric desires this type of symbolic space that helps him approach some form of non-time and non-place. This is exemplified in many of the spaces he comfortably occupies throughout the novel, from the limousine where he spends most of his day to the barbershop and the hotel room where he has sex with one of his security guards. Employing the resource of the screen in a very interesting way, the movie shows the Rothko Chapel on Eric's screen as he has the above-quoted conversation with Didi. The role that art (especially painting) plays in emphasizing the significance of space is not lost in the screen adaptation. The opening credits of Cronenberg's *Cosmopolis* show strips of white, gray, and blue paint falling on a parchment-like background, forming shapes that are reminiscent of a Jackson Pollock painting. These scenes reinforce the importance of art in the high-class space Eric inhabits and, moreover, it adds a new layer to the construction of his character. Rothko's paintings will later appear in the end credits, a more direct reference to the novel, but also heightening the signification of the ending as death.

As mentioned at the beginning of this section, Cronenberg's adaptation remains quite faithful to the source material except for the removal of Eric's vision at the end. Through the acting, the movie has its characters behave in an extremely contrived manner, maintaining in most cases the unnatural dialogues verbatim from the novel. The false-looking scenes along with contrived and measured performances reinforce the whole environment signified in the novel. The closing line of the novel deals with time. Eric sees his dead body on his watch's screen but is still alive, "waiting for the shot to sound" (DeLillo 2003: 209). The certitude that he is going to die is not so plausible in the movie as it is in the novel although, I would contend, it can be intuited through Pattison's acting. The murder that has not yet occurred in the present time is translated into the movie with a cut to black before Benno fires his gun. The gunshot, just as in the novel, never actually comes and it is neither seen nor heard. This last moment of stasis is relevant to the understanding of time as, following Lacan, Eric is left to a "symbolic death and real death" (Garrigós 2015: 527). While DeLillo's Eric's end "implies a concept of time as simultaneous" Cronenberg's "is left stuck in time" (527). The movie's position toward the malleability of time is left unclear but can perhaps be inferred from the dialogue through which the narrative suggests that Eric can see things that others can't and when Jane Melman, his chief of finance, tells him he is "the

seer" (DeLillo 2003: 46, Cronenberg 2012: min. 24). In the novel, it is most clearly implied that this refers to things that have not happened yet. However, this is expressed in the movie in a more symbolic way through audiovisual language. Despite the explicitly magical element being left out of the movie, the complete surrealism of Eric's behavior (along with the way they are acted) can cause a sense of the uncanny in the narrative as if everything we are watching is staged, where coincidences are too much. The director's choice to keep those lines of dialogue that reference Eric's seer abilities cannot be thought of as incidental.

Cosmopolis follows closely DeLillo's style of conversation as the script takes most of the original dialogue verbatim from the novel. The author creates a disturbing feeling of alienation in the novella through dialogues that seem either rehearsed or uninterested exchanges between people who do not care too much about what the other has to say. Meanwhile, in Cronenberg's movie, the mystification of time stems from a very different construction of non-linearity. While in the novel the unusual sense of time is due to the actual witnessing of future events in the movie, it is connected to the subjective perception of time as the characters are entrapped in the sphere of late-capitalism. This can be appreciated, for instance, in the way characters keep entering the limousine to hold meetings, and even for a medical exam. This speaks of the fact that Eric cannot allow himself to waste any of his time, and needs to have all sorts of meetings during his drive to the hairdressers'. Hence, time is associated with capitalism and the way that the capitalist mentality frames our conceptualization of time. The visuals, offering a combined representation of the wealth and privilege inside the limo in contrast with the messy protests outside that can be seen through the windows of the vehicle, draw the audience's attention to the negative aspects of extreme wealth much more explicitly than the novel does. In terms of the use of color, cold tonalities are very prominent inside the limousine created by the screens and the LED lights that surround them. The bright whites and blues are traditionally associated with death and technology, both themes that permeate DeLillo's novel. By making a film so similar to the source material through the literal reproduction of dialogues, characters, and plot, the acting also helps punctuate scenes that in the novel might not feel so violent, direct, and/or fast-paced. To help achieve this, the actors often speak very fast and with a somewhat unnatural prosody that, once again, highlights the interest in time.

4. *À Jamais* (The Body Artist)

Don DeLillo's *The Body Artist* has been widely discussed in terms of the use of language, as it is one of its most evident themes. Careful attention to language is most noticeable in how the author "consistently deploys nouns *en masse* and at the

occasional expense, if not exclusion, of verbs" (Jelfs 2011: 146). Constructing sentences in this way creates a gap between what is expected of dialogue and what is found in the narrative. The importance that each individual word has for the narrative is reinforced by the novel being one of DeLillo's shorter works. Some (mostly American) critics saw its brevity as a disappointment, especially because it was published right after his most lengthy work. For instance, Tom Deignan complained about DeLillo following *Underworld* "with a slim novella that conceivably could be used as a bookmark for its hefty, much acclaimed predecessor" (2001: 28). *The Body Artist* follows a period in the life of Lauren Hartke, a performance artist who has married a much older film director named Rey. After Rey commits suicide by gunshot in his first wife's apartment, Lauren begins to encounter a man who looks like her late husband but seems unable to communicate properly. The novella explores her grieving process through this man whom Lauren nicknames Mr. Tuttle and whose nature and existence remain unexplained. Toward the end, the narrative includes a review of Lauren's performance piece, *Body Time*, which explores trauma, time, and loss.

The Body Artist helps us understand how DeLillo's preoccupation with language has expanded throughout his career. In this work, the narrative tackles the subject of language through a character that operates outside both language and time. Confusion and overlapping of time are manifested in conversations between Lauren and Mr. Tuttle, for example: "'It rained very much.' 'It will rain. It's going to rain'" (DeLillo 2001: 44). This strange man who appears unexpectedly in Lauren's house is capable of producing speech by repeating sentences (or variations of sentences) that he has heard from Lauren and, sometimes, conversations that Lauren had previously had with her late husband. Communication between Lauren and Rey was not easy while they were together and this seems to be reflected in her grieving process through the unproductive conversations she has with Mr. Tuttle:

> "Say some words".
> "Say some words. Doesn't matter if I can't understand".
> "Say some words to say some words". (DeLillo 2001: 57)

The dialogue does not operate as a mere process of communication and the experimentation with language is a way of exploring the characters, "a way of channeling his heroine's inner life" (Kakutani 2003). *À Jamais* retains the uncanny feeling of entrapment and miscommunication evoked in the novel and Laura (Lauren from the novella) also asks Mr. Tuttle to speak to her. However, it does so differently, by presenting a thriller-like reading of the strange man's presence in the house. The conversations between the two of them are much fewer and tend to be replaced by scenes of Laura listening to the recordings of their conversations on

her own. Mr. Tuttle's inability for understandable communication apparent in the novel is reinforced in the movie through the use of silences and tension rather than by dialogues taken verbatim from the source material. Instead of a reflection of Lauren's insecurities about her and Rey's ability to communicate in the past, in Jacquot's version Laura appears to be attempting to communicate with a ghostly presence that may or may not be her late husband.

Sentence repetition is also present in Jacquot's adaptation. For instance, one of Rey's ex-wives, Isabelle, tells Rey: "Elle te quittera un jour. Un jour, elle te quittera" (Jacquot 2016: min. 27). Another example is when Laura repeats to herself that Rey has left: "Il a parti. C'est tout", increasing the speed of the sentence with each repetition (Jacquot 2016: min. 45). These word and sentence repetitions in the film are almost invariably expressed in whispers and at moments of intense emotion —grief in the case of Laura and love in the case of Isabelle— as the film narrative implies that there are still quite strong feelings between her and Rey. Hence, the importance that individual words hold for the narrative is still there in the adaptation, but it becomes meaningful in a different way. While for DeLillo the repetition emphasizes the hollowness of human interaction between people who do not necessarily care about what the other person is saying, Jacquot uses the weight that the language carries to accentuate emotion-heavy scenes. One way in which Jacquot's adaptation highlights the gravitas in the speech is through whispering and reverberated sound. While the feeling of uncanniness due to Lauren's inability to communicate (with Mr. Tuttle and with Rey, by proxy) is built very differently in the novel, the use of sound and voice helps to partially preserve the "spirit" of the source material by emphasizing each word as it is heard, time and time again, with the unexpected sound quality of a whisper, even if the words used are not as carefully selected as DeLillo's.

In *The Body Artist*, Rey is found dead in his first wife's apartment after having committed suicide. In Jacquot's adaptation, Rey is seen carelessly driving a motorbike in a highway tunnel. Even though his intentions to do something quite dangerous are made pretty clear by a scene including a close-up of the back of a truck and a reverse shot of Rey lowering his helmet visor, the scene cuts to black and his death is never shown. Lauren and Laura's grief are therefore quite different. While Lauren in the novella is plagued with sadness and remorse thinking about Rey's depression and his evident connection to his first wife given that he decides to die in her apartment, Laura in the movie is engulfed in a greater mystery, left to wonder if her husband committed suicide and with less evident ties to his former wife. After Rey's passing, the issue of time becomes much more visceral, as it comes to be entangled with Lauren's process of grieving and the effects of trauma

in her perception of time. This is, once again, expressed through Mr. Tuttle who not only confuses verb tenses and seems to exist outside of time, but "remembers the future" and "violates the limits of the human" because he is unable to "locate his existence" (DeLillo 2001: 107, 108). The novel presents Lauren's perception of time in terms of past, present, and future as unimportant. Such a dismissal of a seemingly objective understanding of time can be elucidated in the conversations that Lauren has with her husband early in the novel. They discuss time with a certain detachment, even in circular conversations that anticipate the repetitions that Lauren will experience with Mr. Tuttle:

> "All day yesterday I thought it was Friday". He said,
> "What?" (18)
> And then again:
> "All day yesterday I thought it was Friday".
> He said, "Was it?"
> She remembered to smile.
> He said, "What does it matter anyway?" (19)

These interactions build characters that are highly mediated by their own sense of time. They relate to their perception of time through intertwined subjectivities as they "live in a perennial present that is both past and future at the same time" (Kitis and Kontoulis 2011: 223). However, Lauren's performance art, which is also closely connected to her grieving process, is what brings to the forefront how the character deals with time. The act is entitled *Body Time* and as the review in the narrative puts it: the artist "clearly wanted her audience to feel time go by, viscerally, even painfully" (DeLillo 2001: 110). During the performance piece in the film, Laura's appearance is very different from that of Lauren as described in DeLillo's novel. However, the key aspect of the performance (which, as the title suggests, is the connection between body and time) prevails in both. Laura's performance is one of the scenes with the greatest visual impact in Jacquot's movie. It places the emphasis of its message on the workings of silence and sound as well as lighting. Laura is wearing black clothes against a background of the same color, with direct yellow light focusing on her face and body. This type of illumination and color help establish an uncanny and even scary ambiance characteristic of the mystery and thriller genres. Although it is particularly notable during Laura's performance, a dark color palette and shadows are used throughout the movie except when she is looking at the ocean and the sunny scenery. In moments of introspection, for instance, when Laura finds herself alone in the house after Rey's suicide, the rooms and stairs seem to turn darker and the lights dim as she searches the shadows.

Lauren remains isolated from the rest of the world in the house she had rented

with her late husband and uses the space to work on her artistic performance. In the novel, they rent an isolated house outside of New York on the New England coast while in the movie they go to a house on the Portuguese coast. The meaning given to space in the movie turns out to be quite similar to that of the novel. *The Body Artist* "sought the intimacy of single moments in a domestic landscape" (Philipp 2003) and mostly takes place in the aforementioned house. It is presented as an enclave where Lauren/Laura is able to separate herself from the outside world. And, once again, the feeling of isolation is mostly reinforced here by how the film uses silence and sound. The weight of the isolation is accentuated in the movie through the visual narrative. It is reinforced through scenes where Laura looks up the big staircases searching for glimpses of Rey's lookalike/ghost and finds big empty spaces made ominous by shadows and darkness, and when she sits alone in the near dark listening to conversations and her own monologues that she has recorded. The space within the house when Rey (Mr. Tuttle) appears is dark, almost black with few lines of illumination reminiscent of Laura's performance as she dresses in black against a black background. In contrast to this gloominess but with the same effect of overwhelming loneliness, the house has ceiling-high glass window-doors that face the sea. In several scenes, Laura's back is toward the audience, as she looks at the ocean and is framed by semi-transparent white curtains that blow inwards with the wind.

In *À Jamais,* the color and lighting palette play a key role in the perception of space. And, in turn, the perception of time is highly influenced by a sense of entrapment in the main spaces that appear in the film. Moreover, the soundtrack notably contributes to the creation of an eerie environment that, by evoking anxiety, works in combination with the feeling of entrapment. Time still remains a central concern in *À Jamais.* The aesthetic choices of the movie slow time down, from the prolonged silences to the slow-paced panning scenes of dark spaces. Instead of a detached sense of disconnection and the almost nihilist helplessness that the novel might evoke, time becomes a much more anxiety-inducing element, sometimes even scary. The very title of the film is a compelling reference to time, playing here with both time and language. "À jamais", meaning "forever", most evidently refers to Rey and Laura's marriage and her love for him. The words are famously uttered in marriage ceremonies: "let them speak or forever hold their peace" ("qu'il parle à present ou se taise à jamais"). But it is also an interesting wordplay given that "jamais" means "never".

The dialogue in *À Jamais* is even scarcer than in the novella and the plot of the movie is framed as a different genre, being closer to a thriller or even a horror film (in the style of a haunted house narrative). Following the last of Kline's paradigms,

the materialist, taking a step back and looking at the film aside from the source material adds to the analysis of an adaptation. A review in *The Hollywood Reporter* described *À Jamais* as a failed attempt at a "romantic ghost story with psychological thriller undertones" (Young 2016). Indeed, the audiovisual elements used to emphasize the role of language, time, and space in the movie (such as whispers, noises, eerie music, and dark lighting and shadows) are characteristic of the psychological thriller genre. These devices frame the experience of loneliness and grief as frightening and anxiety-inducing. The apprehension connected with the passing of time is mediated by the use of lighting and color, not by language as in the novel. To the novel's explorations of time and language, the adaptation adds an interesting interpretation through the use of linearity, cuts, sound, and silence. Overall, the use of silence is central to how the movie has taken one aspect of the novel (i.e. the uncanny feeling transmitted by the unnatural dialogues) and has managed to transfer it to the signifiers most commonly used in film to communicate such a feeling of unrest. According to Kline's pluralist paradigm, an adaptation should maintain the "spirit" of the novel to a certain extent in terms of the representation of time and language (1996). Space in this case is more similar to the source material thanks to the preserved elements of the isolated house, the sea, and the performance piece. The aspect that remains furthest from its treatment in DeLillo's novel is language, here dominated by the aural resources of silence and sound effects.

5. Conclusion

Film adaptations always bring something new to the plot, the characterization, and the milieu of the novel. As David Cronenberg puts it: "once there is an adaptation, you get a fusion between the sensibility of two authors" (in Garrigós 2015: 520). Complications of language, time, and space remain in the two adaptations analyzed above. However, as the different perspectives of the directors influence the narrative, they do so with some diverging end results.

The eerie narrative of *Á Jamais* adds an interesting layer of fear to the detached understanding of time, grief, and loneliness —all closely linked with space and language— that DeLillo offers in his narrative. It brings a different kind of humanity to the stagnant, disjointed, and aloof dialogues that the author offers in his works. In À Jamais, the use of lighting and color evoke, as previously seen, a thriller, and even bring some gothic modes into the narrative —with elements such as grief, trauma, loneliness, and even the castle ruins that have become a fancy house on the coast that threatens to metaphorically collapse on

top of Laura— that can be used as a new point of departure for considering DeLillo's narrative. For instance, it might inspire a different approach to grief and loss in the novel, emphasizing the sense of fear that surrounds these feelings. It is interesting to note that *The Body Artist* was published in 2001, some months before the terrorist attack on the World Trade Center. Jacquot, being a French director, cannot be so easily connected (as Don DeLillo is) with post-9/11 narratives, especially considering that the narrative does not take place in the United States. However, thinking about how important cultural-historical processes can be, as Kline notes in her materialist paradigm (1996), it is a compelling fact to consider when thinking about this new fear-infused experience of grief that the film focuses on. In *Cosmopolis,* one fascinating detail that the movie evokes is a result of the historical context, as per Kline's materialist paradigm. Space and time, specifically when it comes to their connection with the economic critique that the author presents in his fiction, are heightened in the movie which was made after the financial crisis of 2007-2008. The protests that Eric sees on the street are more reminiscent of *Occupy Wall Street* (which Garrigós [2015] also mentions in her analysis of the movie) than other protests that might have inspired DeLillo before 2003 when the novel was first published.

Ultimately, by looking at the treatment of specific elements in the narrative, one can put novels and their adaptations in conversation with each other in a thought-provoking way. Most importantly, through their analysis, one can look beyond a direct comparison between source material and film adaptation in terms of fidelity and consider instead the influence that the cultural-historical processes might have had on the films, and then bring this contemporary reading to bear on an author who has been previously read and discussed as prophetic. The comparisons of these novels with their respective adaptations is not an attempt to argue in favor of one over the other. It is, on the contrary, an attempt to explore the possibilities that the use of a different medium can add to a narrative by taking advantage of the resources available to it. And, from there, to look at whether, on the one hand, this new medium uses the said resources to highlight the same thematic concerns or, on the other hand, opts to tell a different story altogether. It has been shown in this analysis that the way in which language, time, and space are presented in these fictions is clearly influenced by the medium. These two films unquestionably add a new layer to Don DeLillo's work that can be seen within the context of his profound interest in media and cinema. There is no doubt that exploring the audiovisual elements and references is key for the study of this author, and that continuing to put the novels and their likely upcoming adaptations in conversation with each other helps us find a new lens through which DeLillo's work can be studied.

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READING ILLNESS FROM THE "THE DEAD COLD LIGHT OF TOMORROW": KATHERINE ANNE PORTER'S *PALE HORSE, PALE RIDER* IN THE TIMES OF COVID-19

LEYENDO LA ENFERMEDAD DESDE "LA LUZ MUERTA Y FRÍA DEL MAÑANA": *PALE HORSE, PALE RIDER* DE KATHERINE ANNE PORTER EN LOS TIEMPOS DE LA COVID-19

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Abstract

The aim of this study is to suggest a new assessment of Katherine Anne Porter's semi-autobiographical account of her near-death experience with the 1918 flu, *Pale Horse, Pale Rider* (1939), considered by many as the paradigmatic American narrative of that pandemic. Following the trend set by most critics of Porter, this article explores the intersections of memory and fiction in the novella, but shifting attention to our present-day response, assessed as a critical tool that provides renewed insight into the mysteries of Porter's late-modernist text. Revisited in a context in which cultural memories of the 1918 influenza have been awakened by our own traumatic experience with COVID-19, this article seeks to probe the uncertainties in Porter's aestheticized trauma narrative. The aim is to investigate the hypothesis that our contemporary reading of *Pale Horse, Pale Rider* illuminates the modernist obscurities in the text and, in consequence, raises the possibility of transcending the limitations of language and myth exhibited in the text, providing new meanings through connection and remembrance.

Keywords: Katherine Anne Porter, *Pale Horse, Pale Rider*, COVID-19, 1918 influenza, medical humanities.

Resumen

Este trabajo sugiere una revisión de *Pale Horse, Pale Rider* (1939), el texto semiautobiográfico de Katherine Anne Porter en el que la autora relata su experiencia próxima a la muerte cuando fue víctima de la pandemia de gripe de 1918. La obra está considerada como la más relevante entre las que se ocupan de dicha pandemia en la tradición estadounidense, y este trabajo se sirve de esa historia crítica del texto, centrada en gran parte en explorar las intersecciones entre ficción y memoria, para trasladar no obstante el foco crítico hacia la experiencia de lectura en el momento presente, con el objetivo de ofrecer una nueva perspectiva que aclare algunos de los misterios del texto original. En un contexto en el que nuestra propia experiencia traumática durante la pandemia de la COVID-19 ha desenterrado la memoria cultural de la gripe de 1918, este estudio examina las incertidumbres y ambigüedades de la narración de Porter, investigando la hipótesis de que la lectura contemporánea de *Pale Horse, Pale Rider* sirve para decodificar parte de la indeterminación modernista de la obra, ofreciendo así la posibilidad de trascender las limitaciones en torno al uso del lenguaje y del mito en el texto para construir nuevos significados a partir de la memoria compartida.

Palabras clave: Katherine Anne Porter, *Pale Horse, Pale Rider*, COVID-19, gripe de 1918, humanidades médicas.

1. Introduction

In the year 2020, as our world trembled under the devastating effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, scientists and media outlets turned their gaze back to the deadliest pandemic of the 20th century, the 1918 influenza pandemic, in search of answers and elusive certainties. As scientists quickly noted, these two cases of viral infection followed a different pattern of disease (Javelle and Raoult 2020), but they seemed to share certain epidemiological characteristics in terms of how the viruses were believed to be transmitted and how fast they spread (He et al. 2020: 67). Perhaps more interestingly for this study, however, it was found that accounts of influenza patients from a hundred years ago seemed to echo in the stories of respiratory failure of COVID-19 sufferers today (Weber and Culler Freeman 2020). These coincidences led to the assumption that there might be some lessons to be learned from past epidemics, specifically those related to the application of common policies of public closure and social distancing, measures followed in a desperate attempt to contain the spread of the virus. Of course, to determine whether this looking at the past for guidance in a time of fear and loss is a wise decision when making scientific or political decisions is far beyond the scope of this article. The

aim of this study is to explore how the contemporary revisiting of an illness narrative of the flu pandemic of 1918 contributes to shaping the meaning of such a tale, while simultaneously helping to soothe our own pandemic anxiety. For, as will be argued, such a revisitation renders the experiences of reading and remembering inextricable, which in turn allows the contemporary reader to envision and understand the experience of a collective trauma that was mostly forgotten, in fact almost unknown, but which has so recently become uncannily familiar.

This paper suggests a new assessment of Katherine Anne Porter's semi-autobiographical account of her near-death experience with the 1918 flu, *Pale Horse, Pale Rider*, published in 1939. Considered to be "the most significant American literary work set during the pandemic" (Davis 2011: 56), Porter's short novel fictionalizes the author's personal trauma as an influenza survivor. It is a "work of memory" (59), but it manages to bridge the personal and the collective to create "a memory that connects her personal experience to the experience of millions of other victims, that connects the survivors to the dead, and that connects the past to the present" (59). The aim of this article is precisely to critically probe those connections and to relate Porter's fictionalized, aestheticized trauma to our contemporary reading experience in a context in which dormant memories of the 1918 influenza pandemic were awakened by our own fear of getting sick and our hopes of finding in the past the answers to the questions of our own traumatic survival. As this study will attempt to demonstrate, our contemporary response to Porter's novella intersects with the modernist uncertainties of the text, raising the possibility of finding meaning and recovery in a personal reconstruction of an almost lost cultural memory.

2. Unearthing Memories of a Pandemic

As the First World War was coming to an end in 1918, Katherine Anne Porter was working in Denver as a reporter for the *Rocky Mountain News*. At this time, she came very close to dying of influenza (Platizky 2014: 1), to the point that, as she herself wrote, "they gave me up. The paper had my obit set in type. I've seen the correspondence between my father and sister on plans for my funeral" (in Hendrick 1965: 76). Her novella *Pale Horse, Pale Rider*, published over twenty years later, tells the story of Miranda, a reviewer for a Denver newspaper who, like Porter, falls terribly sick with the virus. Miranda narrowly escapes death at the end of the story, but the man she loves —Adam, a young soldier waiting to be deployed once the sanitary emergency allows it— tragically dies after nursing her, having most probably been infected while taking care of her. The narrative, as criticism has long established, dexterously combines memory and fiction as it mixes separate events

apparently related to Porter's own illness. As Laurel Bollinger notes, Porter's biographers' assumptions about the historicity of the text have shifted gradually (2013: 368). She makes a good claim about how the text presents "a carefully fictionalized version of [the author's] experience" (366) —which this article will examine in order to explore the text as a specifically modernist response to trauma. However, it is no less true that critics such as Catherine Belling (2009), David Davis (2011) and Caroline Hovanec (2011) have advanced quite insightful studies focused on reading the story as a record of personal trauma, motivated by biographical accounts such as Givner's, which Davis summarizes as follows:

> Katherine Anne Porter survived the influenza pandemic of 1918. She worked for *The Rocky Mountain News* during the outbreak, and she contracted influenza as the epidemic reached its peak in Denver. By that time, all of the hospitals in the city were filled beyond capacity. Her landlady, fearing infection, threatened to have her evicted from her rooming house, so the newspaper's city editor finagled her admission to an overcrowded hospital. She ran a 105° fever while lying on a gurney in a hallway for nine days. Her doctors expected her to die, the newspaper drafted her obituary, and her family made arrangements for the burial, but an experimental injection of strychnine helped her to recover from the virus. When she fell ill, Porter had been seeing a young soldier, Lieutenant Alexander Barclay. While she was hospitalized, he contracted influenza and died. (2011: 57)

Davis's conclusion after reading Givner's biography is that *Pale Horse, Pale Rider* "testifies to Porter's own personal trauma narrative" (2011: 57). Not published until 1939, the text constitutes in this view an attempt at recovery after trauma, achieved through the creation of "an identity that incorporates the pre-traumatic identity with the traumatic experience" (58). In this process, as Davis notes, "memory plays a critical role in the recovery process as a connection between the original identity and the post-traumatic identity" (58). This critical view of post-traumatic writing is certainly insightful when analyzing Porter's novella on its own, but it becomes indispensable when exploring our contemporary response to the text, as Porter's personal memory offers a vibrant, mysterious testimony of our own lost cultural memory of the influenza pandemic at a time when we are searching for our own path to recovery.

The biographical events traceable in Porter's novella —epidemic outbreaks and peaks, hospitals filled beyond capacity, fear of infection, threats of eviction, patients lying in gurneys in a hallway, experimental treatments, etc.— may certainly be the subject of a critical debate around the veracity of Porter's autobiographical narrative. Bollinger, for instance, claims that biographical approaches to the text should not be taken at face value since the author was, in her words, "notoriously unreliable" when discussing her life (2013: 366). However, whether or not these plot details correspond squarely to Porter's life events, it is undeniably true that

they all resounded loudly in the immediate experience of readers in the year 2020, as they struggled to overcome the fear and pain of the COVID-19 pandemic. The interplay of fiction and memory thus shifts slightly, while the value of Porter's tale as a "witness narrative" becomes clear, as the novella "amplifies the testimonial abilities of self-representation to bear witness" (Gilmore 2011: 83). Through the prism of contemporary readers' potential response to the text, the point is no longer just a matter of aestheticized personal trauma as a possible path to individual recovery; the issue broadens to encompass the reconstruction of a lost cultural memory that offers a connection between a collective traumatic past and a shared present trauma, offering thus the chance of communal restoration. In her seminal work on limit-case autobiographies —that is, texts that combine, among others, elements of autobiography, fiction, or history— Leigh Gilmore writes that "remembering trauma entails contextualizing it within history", because "trauma is never exclusively personal" (2001: 31). The relevance of *Pale Horse, Pale Rider* as a witness narrative is thus undeniable, as Porter's fictional alter ego functions as the literary witness of a historical phenomenon in a self-representational dynamic that "conjoins the one whose experience propels the telling, the one who brings the story out by receiving it, and the mode of carrying the narrative to other witnesses" (Gilmore 2011: 79). Porter's witnessing of the pandemic becomes a shared experience in the process of reading because, as Davis argues, "in a work of literature, unlike a history text, the reader can partially share the traumatic experience" (2011: 62). In the context of COVID-19, then, once established that Porter's text functions as "a narrative that empathetically communicates the pandemic's trauma to the reader" (62), it seems reasonable to argue that such an empathetic energy is only exacerbated in our current reading experience, as we deliberately look at the past to make sense of a very similar traumatic present.

As this paper is being written, in the first half of 2022, after two years of living through the COVID-19 global pandemic, the specificities of Porter's personal illness narrative —even if partly fictionalized in what Bollinger describes as a "fusion of observation and mythos" (2013: 387)— have become extraordinarily familiar. The similarities between Porter's autobiographical account of surviving the influenza pandemic of 1918 and our very recent experience with COVID-19 may seem obvious now, but the immediate connection between the two epidemics is highly paradoxical, since, as scholars have underlined in recent years, the 1918 influenza pandemic had virtually disappeared from our collective memory until the threat of an infectious epidemic began to rise at the beginning of the twenty-first century. It was during the threat of the swine flu in 2009 when, as Davis writes, "scientists, epidemiologists, and government officials worldwide [looked] to the 1918 pandemic as a worst-case scenario as they developed contingency response plans" to mitigate a potential public health disaster (2011: 55-56).

The worst-case scenario was confirmed in the spring of 2020 when, on March 11, the World Health Organization declared the new coronavirus disease outbreak a global pandemic. Once again, almost immediately, scientists and government officials turned their gaze to the 1918 flu pandemic in search of answers and strategies of containment. Very soon afterwards, in May 2020, scientists had already noticed, in comparing our social and political response to the new coronavirus with historical records of the 1918 flu, "coincidences both in the general unpreparedness, in the attitudes of the population and the authorities, and in the different strategies between central and peripheral authorities" (Franchini et al. 2020: 249). Only two months after the outbreak was declared a pandemic, it was clear then that our immediate response had been shaped by our looking back over a hundred years to a deadly influenza pandemic we had almost completely forgotten. We knew, however, that the striving to contain infection in 1918 entailed public recommendations such as wearing a mask, increasing personal hygiene, disinfecting public spaces, closing the schools, or preventing overcrowding. Those recommendations became our guidelines, and it was soon noted that "all measures adopted in 2020 were the same in 1918-1919, with the same sequence of progression, uncertainties, early loosening and hasty reversals" (249). Beyond the scope of social measures to contain the virus, however, scientists also looked back to the flu pandemic in search of medical information for, as Antonia Franchini and others explain, "even from a scientific point of view all the elements had already been understood" (249).

In this regard, for example, it is particularly illustrative to consider how Bollinger, in 2013, analyzes the description of Miranda's sickness and Adam's death in Porter's novella as the consequence of an immune system response (2013: 380), the 'cytokine storm' that unfortunately has become so well known among the general public in the light of the COVID-19 pandemic, as it has for a time dominated scientific discourse and scientific journalism.[1] According to historian John Barry, cytokine storms were responsible for over half of the secondary-infection deaths that occurred during the flu pandemic (2004: 251-252). Once again, the interplay of meanings between Porter's fictionalized memoir and our contemporary reading experience is bidirectional: Porter's narrative offers a clear imaginative reconstruction for this invisible, life-threatening enemy of today; and today's scientific knowledge contributes to closing the meanings in Porter's enigmatic narration. Because, in fact, the uncertainties in Porter's novella —which will be discussed further on— eloquently express the terrifying confusion caused by the 1918 flu, which was unusually virulent, killing young, previously healthy people in a matter of days or hours, something that medical science at the time could not quite explain, as medics were less knowledgeable of the workings of the immune system (Bollinger 2013: 380). Today we know,

as Barry explains, that "in 1918 the immune system of young adults mounted massive responses to the virus. That immune response filled the lungs with fluid and debris, making it impossible for the exchange of oxygen to take place. The immune response killed" (2004: 250). Bollinger traces the symptoms of this cytokine storm in Porter's text through an examination of Miranda's headaches and fever dreams. The effect is that Miranda's sickness resonates in the immediate experience and imagination of contemporary readers. It offers a familiar and visible illustration of a medical explanation for which we know the technical term, but that remains an enigma in terms of its bodily effects for so many who survived the devastating first wave of the COVID-19 pandemic without suffering the sickness in their own flesh.

3. Narrating Illness in a Pandemic

Porter's novella, then, offers an imaginative response for our contemporary uncertainties. It provides a literary reconstruction of a pandemic that was almost forgotten, a hidden collective trauma that was only unearthed when the threat of a new catastrophe began to be suspected in the early 2000s, after the concatenation of several epidemic threats. The seemingly imminent danger of various widespread viral outbreaks caused first by the SARS virus (2002), then by avian influenza (2005) and, finally, by the swine flu (2009), led to what Rachel Bracken has defined as "the early-2000s flu boom", which triggered a "pandemic turn in literary studies" (2021: 110). It was in this moment, as collective fear pushed us to remember the lost memories of the 1918 influenza and we decided, "suddenly, and probably selfishly", that we wanted to know more (Belling 2009: 57), when critics started pondering why an event as deadly as that pandemic had fallen so easily into oblivion until a health emergency of catastrophic dimensions forced us to look back.

Elizabeth Outka, in her extremely timely 2020 book *Viral Modernism*, attempts to investigate the literary silence around an event that "killed between 50 and 100 million people" (2020: 1). She hypothesizes that the flu was "drowned out by its overwhelming scope, by the broader ways outbreaks of disease are often muted, and by the way the human-inflicted violence of the time consumed cultural and literary attention" (2). A few years earlier, Belling had argued something similar, that "narration falters when multitudes of subjects are affected at once by painful events that disrupt the secure frameworks of normality against which individual suffering is usually measured" (2009: 57). In this regard, she claimed, the flu "overwhelmed language" (57) —an argument similar to Gilmore's hypothesis that "cultural memory, like individual memory, develops characteristic and defensive

amnesia with which those who have experienced trauma must contend" (2001: 31). For others, such as Davis, collective memory is subject to political agendas, which would explain why the war's political significance dwarfed the flu's social significance (2011: 63). Also, on quite a different note, the historian Alfred Crosby argued that the pandemic was "so thoroughly forgotten" because in 1918 lethal epidemics were not unexpected and therefore "not as impressive […] as they would be today, at least in the technologically advanced nations" (2003: 319). At a time when epidemics of typhoid, yellow fever, diphtheria, or cholera were common, the 1918 flu simply had a larger impact, so "the contrast was one of degree, not of kind" (319).

This last hypothesis may not be absolutely right but, while arguments such as Belling's shed light upon the modernist context that shaped Porter's narration, Crosby's explanation offers a very eloquent insight into our present response to Porter's text. In 2020, the shock we were facing was one of both degree and kind. Some of the most technologically advanced nations in the world were suddenly brought to a stop and hundreds of millions were forced into lockdowns as they, isolated in their homes, tried to come to terms with the devastating experience of living through a viral catastrophe that, as of now, has caused almost five hundred and thirty million registered cases and over six million confirmed casualties (Dong, Du and Gardner 2020).[2] As Mark Honigsbaum wrote as early as spring 2020, while recording COVID-19 data as the outbreak was quickly spreading worldwide, the impact of the pandemic was especially forceful in the United States and in Europe, where the speed and severity of contagion shattered the complacency and punctured the hubris of scientists and politicians alike, who had initially claimed that the virus was no worse than a common flu, only to discover, when it was too late, that the new coronavirus spread more rapidly than seasonal flu and was twenty times more lethal, killing at the time around two per cent of confirmed cases — approximately the same mortality rate as the 1918 influenza (2020: Chapter 10). We were confronted with that shock while locked down at home, anguished and confused, terrified of contagion, keeping away from friends and relatives, and mourning the deaths of thousands who passed away in extreme loneliness and fear. At a time like this, turning our gaze to Porter's illness narrative of suffering and surviving a similar tragedy may open for the reader an invaluable source of meaning, because it allows access to an empathetic memory of a shared trauma. As Davis argues, Porter's fictionalized autopathography[3] —"essentially the urtext of 1918-1919 influenza pandemic" (Bracken 2021: 109)— "bridges the separation between memory and history, acting both as a personal document recording the event and as an imaginative proxy for the reader" (Davis 2011: 66). As a result, Porter's novella solves the problem explained by Belling (2009: 57) of narration faltering when a multitude of subjects are affected by a tragedy that disrupts their

framework of normalcy and leaves them with no alternative but silence as a response to collective trauma. We as readers are facing that silence now, and *Pale Horse, Pale Rider* fills it by constructing a narration that demarcates the experience of illness so that we can imagine it against our old framework of normalcy.

In practical terms, to properly understand how illness is re-imagined in Porter's semi-autobiographical narrative, Outka's very recent study is particularly useful, as she guides the process of reading by clearly dividing the novella in four distinguishable parts that facilitate critical examination. As delineated by Outka,

> Porter divides her story into four parts: a hallucinatory opening that suggests how the pandemic disrupted temporal and spatial realities and the sense of a coherent self; a realist section that depicts life at a city newspaper and the relationship of one of the young reporters —Miranda— and her soldier boyfriend, Adam, who is about to go off to the war; a delirium-infused section describing Miranda's battle with the virus; and a grim return to realism as the Armistice arrives and the plague persists. (2020: 52-53)

It is clearly observable that these four parts oscillate between the conventions of realist fiction, which are generally used to depict the conditions of health, and an anti-realist style —more easily identifiable with the experimental narrative techniques of modernist prose— that Outka describes as "hallucinatory" and "delirium-infused", and which seems to better express the experience of this illness (2020: 52-53). This circumstance seems to corroborate Belling's statement that "modernism gave the disease […] its language" (2009: 64). Yet, it is no less true that revisiting Porter's short novel from our own pandemic reality entails an interest in both narrative outlooks. Confronting disease from the outside perspective of the healthy allows a clearer view of the social, political, and cultural impact of the pandemic, which might allow us to better confront our own fear of infection and to process the overwhelming shock of such a worldwide catastrophe. On the other hand, the immersive reading process of a first-person narration of bodily suffering —Miranda's delirious monologues, despite their nightmarish nature, are also "recognizably embedded in the corporeal experiences of fever and infection" (65)— might also contribute to an empathetic understanding of pandemic bodies. It allows a more profound imaginative involvement with the victims, which itself connects the survivors and the dead, the sick and the well, and the individual suffering to the collective distress experienced by the whole community. Of course, the delimitations between narrating the experience of the sick and the experience of the well are not —perhaps cannot be— completely clear-cut in a living witness narrative about surviving a pandemic, which makes the hallucinatory dream that opens Porter's narrative particularly interesting from the point of view of understanding this shared experience of living through a plague.

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According to Outka, this "disorienting dream sequence" (2020: 53) unsettles the demarcations of place and time (52), which, for us, beyond illustrating the debilitating bodily experience of suffering fever dreams, also provides imaginative insight into the unfamiliar and overwhelming reality of enduring months of lockdowns and quarantines. But also, the episode in Porter's text reconstructs both personal and collective trauma. It introduces a female sleeper lying on a bed that is both her own and a different bed from the one on which she had lain down a few hours before. With her heart turned to stone and "lying upon her breast outside of her" (Porter 2011: 314), this third-person character —"she knew that something strange was going to happen" (314)— quickly adopts the position of a first-person narrator: "Now I must get up and go while they are all quiet" (314). This confusion of personhood, of being simultaneously inside and outside one's own consciousness, mirrors the coalescence of life and death that characterizes the woman's alertness, on the one hand, and the stony heart lying lifeless atop her chest, on the other. This discontinuation forces an awkward but inextricable attachment between the delirious mind and the seriously ill body, as the sleeper dreams of outrunning "that lank greenish stranger" that was welcomed by "my grandfather, my great-aunt, my five times removed cousin, my decrepit hound and my silver kitten" (314). He is the pale rider of the title, who has killed many before; a mythical construction of the pandemic that, as well-established by Porter's critics, alludes to the fourth horse of the Apocalypse, ridden by Death, and described in the Book of Revelation (Bollinger 2013: 370). The sleeper valiantly confronts the rider, shouting: "I'm not going with you this time —ride on" (Porter 2011: 315). The stranger obeys and, as the sleeper approaches wakefulness, she struggles to reconnect her unbridled consciousness and her ailing body, the hallucinatory dream evaporating slowly as it merges with the first physical symptoms of her disease: "[Her horse's] ribs heaved under her, her own ribs rose and fell, Oh, why am I so tired, I must wake up" (315).

In Outka's analysis, this opening scene expresses "the sense of dislocation and body estrangement the virus caused", at the same time as it encapsulates "some of the iconic features of pandemic deathbed scenes […]: the hallucinatory experience of delirium, the disruption of place and time, the domestic space as the arena for death, and a twilight atmosphere where life and death blur together" (2020: 53-54). Such an iconic representation of a near-death experience allows us to comprehend the imagined experience of an individual's sickness. Like the myth of the pale rider, it connects personal experience with our collective imagination, which makes it familiar and relatable. Yet, the dreamlike passage also illustrates the collective experience of living through a pandemic and connects us to the whole of the affected community. As she is lying in bed, the sleeper reflects that "too many have died in this bed already, there are far too many ancestral bones propped up on

the mantelpieces" (Porter 2011: 314). Too many have died, and the sleeper is connected to all of them. Outka notices that the emphasis on how death stalks the domestic space and the sweeping feeling of grief that assaults the character in this moment express how loss, in the context of a pandemic, is experienced through grief and fear (2020: 54). Porter's illness narrative, then, permits a sympathetic understanding of the individual experience of sickness for the healthy, but it also enables a connection with a shared experience of collective trauma that transcends the reader's individuality. The character's individual suffering is described through references that are charged with meaning through a contemporary experience of communal loss and collective fear. For Davis, Porter's story functions as what Alison Landsberg has termed "prosthetic memory", that is, a form of memory that "emerges at the interface between a person and a historical narrative about the past" (2004: 2). Davis argues that a prosthetic memory can only simulate the experience of an event in a limited way, yet is very effective to transmit an experience between subjects (2011: 66). In 2020, Porter's prosthetic memory, that is, her simulation of the pandemic event, became increasingly real as readers were living through an equally traumatizing situation. The transmission of the experience between subjects inevitably reached then a point of high intensity that was optimal for assigning and completing meanings in Porter's narration.

4. Finding Meaning for a Pandemic

One of the reasons why reading Porter's novella feels uncanny —in the sense of "a peculiar commingling of the familiar and unfamiliar" (Royle 2003: 1)— has to do with how the text carefully observes the nature of the flu, as Porter "traces with all-but-scientific precision the flu's impact on the human body" (Bollinger 2013: 379). The narrative traces the course of Miranda's sickness from the fever dreams that open the story to the suffering of headaches, pains and shortness of breath that carry Miranda to the ominous realization that "something terrible is going to happen to me" (Porter 2011: 335). Soon after Miranda accepts that she has contracted influenza, the text descends into the illusive depiction of Miranda's delirious suffering, but once again Porter's fictionalized recollection of her experience with the flu does not allow a clear demarcation that separates individual disease and collective trauma. Run-on sentences express a confusion between memory and delirium as Miranda remembers a landscape of warmth from her past, when suddenly a sailing ship and a jungle materialize at the foot of her bed:

> […] her memory turned and roved after another place she had known first and loved best, that now she could see only in drifting fragments of palm and cedar, dark shadows and a sky that warmed without dazzling […] The walls shelved away in one

> deliberate silent movement on either side, and a tall sailing ship was moored nearby […] Back of the ship was jungle, and even as it appeared before her, she knew it was all she had ever read or had been told or felt or thought about jungles; a writhing terribly alive and secret place of death, creeping with tangles of spotted serpents, rainbow-colored birds with malign eyes, leopards with humanly wise faces and extravagantly crested lions; screaming long-armed monkeys tumbling among broad fleshy leaves that glowed with sulphur-colored light and exuded the ichor of death, and rotting trunks of unfamiliar trees sprawled in crawling slime. (Porter 2011: 344)

Miranda's feverish delirium transforms conscious memory —"Oh, no, I must have warmth" (Porter 2011: 344)— into an unconscious nightmare not shaped, as memory, from fragments of her experience, but from pieces of knowledge acquired through a linguistic, that is, symbolic construction of reality: she dreams up the jungle as she has read it, or been told about it. Her feelings and thoughts of what this mythological jungle looks like come from learned information, from collective imagination, which transforms Miranda's personal experience of being sick into an easily identifiable cultural icon, a myth, a cultural fabrication shared by character and readers. As Belling notes, we assume that Porter's account of surviving the flu is autobiographical because we know she suffered the disease, but "this cannot mean that she has simply recorded, as a self-witness, her own unmediated experience" because "we all learn our discourses, even down to the voice in which we offer our most private testimonies" (2009: 67). The passage of the mythological jungle clearly demonstrates Belling's point that, in a biocultural dialectic, "texts and illness construct each other" and thus the layers of memory that construct *Pale Horse, Pale Rider* are memories not only of being ill but also "of reading about being ill" (67). As she elaborates, narrative can never "reproduce the subjective habitation of the past —and especially the perpetually deflected habitation of trauma— as factual material", so instead "it works by displacing the inexpressible into the texture of writing" (67). Hence language, in shaping a textual, mythical configuration of the jungle, constructs the bridge between Porter's autobiographical narrative and the readers' empathetic understanding of the story. It offers a familiar text, a relatable construction of meaning, which demonstrates Gilmore's point about the importance of fiction to autobiography (2001: 24). As she argues, invention and imagination make self-representation possible, while "the assertion of creativity" overcomes the silence imposed by trauma (24). An autobiographical narrative such as Porter's, modelled against the structures and references of myth, constitutes then a "limit-case" autobiographical account where "the constitutive vagaries of memory and trauma are asserted" (43). However, the familiar meanings that shape Porter's memoir ultimately collapse because, if modernism provides a kind of language that may better express the conditions of illness, it is undeniable that *Pale Horse, Pale Rider* also expresses

inevitable concerns of modernism: indeterminacy and suspicion with regards to the reliability of language as a tool to know and understand reality. As will be addressed, this circumstance becomes especially relevant when Miranda imagines the mythological jungle, because that mythical space configures "a secret place of death" (Porter 2011: 344).

In relation to this, it is crucial to consider the title of the novella, which comes from an old spiritual that Miranda and Adam sing as she lies sick in bed, and he nurses her. She begins to sing, "Pale horse, pale rider, done taken my lover away […]" (Porter 2011: 349), and asks Adam if he knows the next line. He replies that there is much more to it, about forty verses, in which "the rider done taken away mammy, pappy, brother, sister, the whole family besides the lover—" (349). Adam's words recall Miranda's first dream, when she reflected that too many had died already in the bed where she lay, in a house full of ancestral bones. In this moment, individual suffering is once again inextricable from the collective trauma of a pandemic, and Miranda's much considered reflection that the rider has not yet taken the singer, because "Death always leaves one singer to mourn" (349), conveys with great eloquence the functionality —and limitations— of Porter's illness story as a tool for communal remembrance and healing. As the sole survivor, the singer/Miranda will become the mourner of those who perished; her purpose will be to complete the song that will serve as a memento for the tragedy. But as Gary Ciuba notes, Miranda —and Porter— cannot replicate in their own terms the old spiritual once heard in the Texas cotton fields, because such a mourning song "is founded on a transcendent view of language and death that no longer seems possible in the waste land of 1918" (1996: 57). This means to say that Miranda —and Porter— cannot easily create a meaningful song of mourning and memory, because they inhabit "the immanence that defines the modernist understanding of mortality and rhetoric" (57). Miranda, by surviving, embodies the singer of the spiritual that provides a frame of reference for Porter's narrative, and insofar as Miranda stands in as Porter's fictional alter ego, the novella itself stands as a mourner's song, as evidence that, as Gilmore argues, "autobiographical and literary texts can and do constitute public mourning, expand the limits of what it means to acknowledge and grieve the losses of history, and offer a traumatic witness capable not only of injury but also of speech" (2011: 83). Yet the overarching mythical paradigm that offers a solid meaning for the old spiritual, that is, the Book of Revelation, biblical allusion, and, finally, the possibility of accessing sacred meaning through language, inevitably collapses in Porter's post-traumatic speech. It happens precisely through what Bollinger defines as a "fusion of the personal and the mythic" that "cannot offer a reconciliation that creates meaning", opening instead a gap of significance that reveals "the inability of the mythic to offer meaning in the modern world" (2013: 386).

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For Bollinger, the fusion of autobiography and fiction in *Pale Horse, Pale Rider* creates a gap of meaning precisely because of how the personal experience of illness replaces (and cannot adopt) the preset structures of meaning contained in myth, which are, instead, contradicted. As she argues, Porter's careful observation of the flu, its symptoms, and its social impact "precludes the comfort and certainty her apocalyptic vision might otherwise have offered, bringing into tension the meaning-making function of narrative and the more accidental quality of lived experience" (Bollinger 2013: 379). After Miranda's near-death experience, she is left feeling numb and depressed. Her thoughts are captured in the words that close the novella: "no more war, no more plague, only the dazed silence that follows the ceasing of the heavy guns; noiseless houses with the shades drawn, empty streets, the dead cold light of tomorrow" (Porter 2011: 363). The expectations of transcendence derived from the religious configuration of her fever dreams is here thwarted, which is explained by the evidence that, as Barry demonstrates, the influenza virus affected the brain, causing serious mental disturbances and psychoses, as was immediately noted by contemporary observers (2004: 378). As Crosby points out, the story of Miranda's illness and survival ends "with an expression of the emptiness of victory over the Germans and over disease", which is "an evocation of the crushing depression that so often followed Spanish influenza" (2003: 318). Apocalyptic revelation, expected after the set of mythical allusions that give shape to Porter's text, dissolves into a clinical representation of one more flu symptom: one more example in which the personal experience of disease tears down the mythical architecture of the text. But also, as is worth exploring, the textual shape of reference and allusion in the novella contributes itself to the dismantling of such mythical certainty.

As argued so far, Porter turns to the mythic to encase her fictionalized, limit-case autopathography within the framework of biblical allusion, shaping the central imagery of her story as a counterpart to the old spiritual that Adam and Miranda recall. This circumstance should provide for the survivor's tale a source of meaning and structure, which in turn would serve the author (and the protagonist) as a tool for processing trauma, operating in consequence for the reader as a mechanism that, through familiarity, facilitates empathy and understanding. However, as discussed, myth as a stable source of meaning fails when confronted with the protagonist's first-person experience of illness. But it also collapses through a complex system of crossed references that, as typically found in the modernist zeitgeist, challenge straightforward representation. The pale rider of the title, the fourth horse of the Apocalypse, described as ridden by Death in the Book of Revelation, refers to the rider that appears in Miranda's dream at the beginning of the novella, but he is also alluded to, in a double-layered —or tripled-layered— system of references, through the old hymn that Miranda and Adam sing and

through the title of the story, which offers a set framework for the novella itself as Porter's own song of mourning. Mythical allusion thus multiplies. It is intradiegetic, extradiegetic, structural, symbolic, and even paratextual. Successive references to the biblical source are superimposed, which separates the sacred meaning of the scriptures from the narrative, drawing attention to the crossed references themselves, that is, to the textual matter of Porter's text. Words are disconnected from a sacred meaning they can no longer incarnate. They are tangled in a closed network of interrelated references that conveys, in Bollinger's terms, "the resistance to […] meaning implicit in the world view of the modern era [Porter] commemorates" (2013: 379).

Ciuba notes that, as Miranda attempts to remember the lyrics of the spiritual, she does not do so as an expression of religious faith, but as an exercise of memory, as she tries to keep herself from falling unconscious (1996: 61). She clings to the words for their familiarity, not for their sacred significance, which, for Ciuba, certifies that, in the story, "words only matter as matter" (61). This becomes obvious as Miranda faces death, a moment of (un)consciousness that is presented, precisely, as an awareness of the "emptiness of language" (64). In what Ciuba defines as "a vision of language as solidly representational", Miranda imagines death in spatial terms, defining words as 'oblivion' and 'eternity' through "sensate images" (64). 'Oblivion' is described as a "whirlpool of gray water" and 'eternity' as "more than the distance to the farthest star" (Porter 2011: 356). Miranda envisions herself "on a narrow ledge over a pit that she knew to be bottomless", as "she strained back against a reassuring wall of granite at her shoulders" (356). In that moment, as she comprehends that "soft carefully shaped words like oblivion and eternity are curtains hung before nothing at all" (356), she understands that "that is death" (356). Ciuba explains this understanding of death as "an image for the end of the images that verify her words, for language emptied of transcendence significance" (1996: 64-65). If, as Belling observes, narrative necessarily displaces memory into the "texture of writing" (2009: 67), that is, into the words as matter, Miranda's moment of revelation exposes an emptiness of transcendence that removes the possibility of finding a solid and unified meaning in Porter's song of mourning.

Revelation results then, in a lack of meaning, which exacerbates the traumatic experience and coheres with Miranda's pathological depression at the end of the story. For the imagined reader, confronted with the familiar indeterminacy of modernist prose, meaning remains open and incomplete. In the times of COVID-19, however, the contemporary reader partakes in the collective trauma that amplifies and confounds Miranda's individual experience, which offers a new path for revelation. In Miranda's fever dreams, as memories of warmth turn to myth to imagine an archetypical jungle as a "secret place of death", her unconscious

cannot escape the collective nature of her own trauma: "the air trembled with the shattering scream and the hoarse bellow of voices all crying together, rolling and colliding above her like ragged stormclouds, and the words became two words only rising and falling and clamoring about her head Danger, danger, danger, the voices said, and War, war, war" (Porter 2011: 344-345). Once again, the significance of Miranda's experience of illness relies on self-referential words that offer no certain meaning. But for the present reader, the closeness of Miranda's experience presents an alternative. She is "both present and elsewhere" (Belling 2009: 66) as her feverish dreams coalesce with the conscious apprehension of her surroundings, and the social impact of the pandemic interferes with her delirium as Miranda's landlady threatens to evict her: "I tell you, they must come for her *now*, or I'll put her on the sidewalk… I tell you, this is a plague" (Porter 2011: 345). The reader of today has no trouble empathizing in this moment and can fully participate in Porter's exercise of remembrance, as Adam promises that help will come for Miranda the following day, explaining that at the time "they can't get an ambulance […] and there aren't any beds. And we can't find a doctor or a nurse. They're all busy" (345). In our pandemic times, the familiarity of Porter's tale brings a chill to the bone, quite evidently when, soon afterwards, Adam informs Miranda that "it's as bad as anything can be […] all the theatres and nearly all the shops and restaurants are closed, and the streets have been full of funerals all day and ambulances all night" (345). Our very recent fears echo loudly when Miranda replies: "But not one for me" (345).

5. Conclusion

As argued so far, reading *Pale Horse, Pale Rider* today brings the strangeness of Miranda's feverish, mysterious narrative to uncannily familiar territory. In general terms, literary testimony about surviving disease during a pandemic encourages readers' empathetic response to trauma narratives by enabling them to participate, imaginatively, in the experience (Davis 2011: 71). But, specifically, in the current pandemic context, a sympathetic understanding of the overwhelming deterioration of body, mind and morale caused by a widespread viral infection offers not simply a connection with the dead, or with the sick of the past. It holds up a mirror that offers hopes of survival and connection through remembrance. The last words of the novel famously claim that "now there [will] be time for everything", but only in "the dead cold light of tomorrow" (Porter 2011: 362). Such a numb emotional state, which reproduces the clinical "crushing depression" that often followed the flu (Crosby 2003: 319), expressively denotes that Porter's structural turn to the mythic in the novella cannot offer a reassuring meaning for trauma (Bollinger

2013: 386). Despite the mystical imagery of her near-death visions, Porter's song concludes with a sense of loss and emptiness (2011: 383). In Bollinger's words, the narrative turns to biblical allusion and apocalyptic archetypes "to give shape and presumably meaning to [Porter's] experiences" (2013: 370). This statement replicates the author's own expression in an interview in which she argued that the work of the artist was to take the "handfuls of confusion" that shape human life and "put them together in a frame to give them some kind of shape and meaning" (in Bollinger 2013: 371). These words by Porter, resounding in the echo chamber of modernism, recall T.S. Eliot's formulation of his famous mythical method, which argued that the use of myth in modernism was "simply a way of controlling, of ordering, of giving a shape and a significance to the immense panorama of futility and anarchy which is contemporary history […] a step toward making the modern world possible for art" (1952: 426).

Pale Horse, Pale Rider partakes in modernist mythopoeia, which turns to myth as a frame of reference for order and significance, but which ultimately expresses an inescapable suspicion of those comforting certainties traditionally found in mythical narratives. As Michael Bell has claimed, myth was once "foundational, holistic and inarguable" (2009: 12), but in modernism, after this had been revealed as objectively untrue, it made "simultaneous reference to belief and to falsehood" (3). Mythopoeia became then a useful vehicle to encapsulate the paradoxes and indeterminacies of the modern world view, refuting the possibility of monolithic, transcendental meanings. In the case of Porter's narrative, the expectation of a mythical revelation is confronted with the aestheticization of an individual's pathological distress. However, even when the certainties of apocalyptic narratives —that is, the unveiling of a transcendental meaning, of a divine power that can ultimately explain human suffering (Bollinger 2013: 386)— are lost in Porter's acute recollection of personal and collective trauma, the tale allows, for the reader of today, the possibility of sharing and accepting uncertainty. It offers through recognition and imaginative sympathy a new chance for meaning and recovery. Because, as Davis notes, aestheticizing the experience of the pandemic means ensuring that the pandemic will not be forgotten (2011: 71), and recuperating that almost lost cultural memory of the 1918 influenza means recovering the survivors' group identity and in consequence restoring a collective memory that connects survivors to one another (60). Porter's novella may not offer a solid, archetypal meaning for trauma or illness, but it does offer, in the present experience of reading, an opportunity for collective healing. It presents a chance for rebuilding our recently disturbed communal identity through self-recognition in the memories of others. This circumstance, in turn, opens a newfound path towards healing, towards a physical, mental, and social recuperation achieved through connection and understanding in a terrible time of distance and isolation.

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Notes

1. See, for example, Fajgenbaum and June (2020), Hojyo et al. (2020), or Mahmudpour et al. (2021). Fajgenbaum and June, as they review the history of the term 'cytokine storm', note that this "life-threatening systemic inflammatory syndrome involving elevated levels of circulating cytokines and immune-cell hyperactivation" was historically referred to "as an influenza-like syndrome" and was "suspected to contribute to the lethality of the 1918-1919 influenza pandemic" after a "reconstructed H1N1 virus isolated from the 1918 pandemic, as compared with common reference strains of the virus that causes influenza A, triggered marked pulmonary inflammation in mice" (2020: 2255).

2. Data collection for this study was carried out throughout the years 2021 and 2022. Last update of COVID-19 data was June 2022, a few months after the Omicron surge peaked in Europe and the United States, changing the shape of the pandemic. The Omicron variant of SARs-CoV-2, first reported by the World Health Organization on 24 November 2021, raised expectations of a transition from pandemic to endemic SARs-CoV-2 (Powell 2022). Omicron's high infectivity, its tendency for mild illness, generalized vaccination and increasing immunity due to past infection were from the beginning of 2022 believed to hopefully result in "some immunity to the virus becoming common around the world" (2022).

3. I use the term 'autopathography' here in its most general sense, as originally defined by Thomas Couser as an "autobiographical narrative of illness or disability" (1991: 65).

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Reviews

NEW FORMS OF SELF-NARRATION: YOUNG WOMEN, LIFE WRITING AND HUMAN RIGHTS

Ana Belén Martínez García
Cham: Palgrave MacMillan, 2020

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Throughout the last decade, a new consciousness has emerged as a result of the successive and contingent crises that affect us both on a local and a global scale. Producing an empathetic response that sets the ground for political action is a challenge worth taking in the pursuit of an ethics of solidarity and responsibility. In this context, a new generation of activist writers has emerged from the Global South, aiming to give an account of life under a regime of human rights violation. While this proliferation of non-hegemonic voices has contributed to creating a sense of global consciousness, it is relevant to look into the mechanisms and discourses that these authors employ to reach a Western audience, as well as into the ethical possibilities and risks of their assimilation into a dominant culture. As Gillian Whitlock has discussed, first-person accounts by non-hegemonic subjects, when circulating in the public sphere after having acquired a certain cultural capital, can sometimes be co-opted by paternalistic Eurocentric readings and interpretations (2006: 3). For this reason, critics should be attentive to how these narratives engage with and potentially contest discourses of survival that echo neoliberal narratives of success and heroism (Gilmore 2017: 86).

In her monograph, *New Forms of Self-Narration: Young Women, Life Writing and Human Rights* (2020), Ana Belén Martínez García explores the complexities of this narrative phenomenon through six cases of young women activists writing from the Global South. All these testimonies have managed to reach mainstream

audiences, mostly through the authors' command of digital and social media and an emerging discourse of human rights that aims to appeal directly to the audience's emotions, empathy, and ethical engagement. Each one of these testimonies is comprised of multiple texts, including memoirs, public speeches, TED talks, or tweets, circulating across what Leigh Gilmore has called "testimonial networks", which she defines as "circulatory systems that connect the discourses and sites through and across which persons and testimony flow" (2017: 3).

The monograph's circular structure is achieved through the parallelism between the opening and closing chapters, on Malala Yousufzai and Nadia Murad respectively. Martínez García reads the two women's testimonies of sexual or gender-based oppression, violence, migration, activism, and worldwide recognition, as parallel stories of survival mobilized both for the authors' empowerment and for the vindication of the rights of their communities. She analyzes the varying impact of each activist in relation to the communities from which they speak. On the one hand, Malala's testimonial project, which includes her memoir *I Am Malala* (2013), seeks to appeal to a global consciousness beyond the Arab world. The book argues that in responding to the contradictions involved in being a feminist woman raised in a Pashtun community, Malala manages to renegotiate her cultural identity. On the other hand, Murad's testimony, partly conveyed through her memoir *The Last Girl* (2017), emphasizes the specificity of her community, and in particular of the experience of sex trafficking by the Islamic State, speaking both for the survivors and the ones who died. In sum, this circular section invites us to balance the epistemic and ethical challenges of giving an account of the self as a survivor and advocate, against the bonds and legacies —sometimes compromised— with one's community and background, starting with those who will never be able to speak.

The book continues in the second and third chapters to explore the trope of the survivor as an exceptional, heroic individual standing for a community, dealing with the testimonies of two North Korean defectors and activists, Hyeonseo Lee and Yeonmi Park. Martínez García places particular emphasis on the way these writers developed a particularly popular "activist persona" through platforms like TED, where they first presented themselves to the West, and later social media platforms like Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram. She is careful to notice the ethical problems that these close moves toward mainstream Western audiences convey. In the case of Lee, she looks at how she attempts to tell her own story through a memoir, *The Girl with Seven Names* (2015), that fits into a rags-to-riches narrative which, for all its formulaic patterns, reflects the psychological turmoil and struggle of a subject who has had to change her identity several times to survive. By contrast, Park's testimony, also delivered in her memoir *In Order to Live* (2016) constructs the "narrating 'I'" (Smith and Watson 2010: 73) based not only on her own experience but also on

those of her fellow North Koreans who have suffered or perished under the regime. As Martínez García observes, in contrast to Lee's autonomy in her account of how she "made herself" throughout multiple identities, Park's memoir taps into the ethical dimension of writing about a traumatic experience as a path towards awareness, self-recovery, and mutual connection. In sum, throughout these two chapters, the author seems to argue the inevitability of ethical dilemmas around the question of collective representation vs. self-(re)invention, particularly when speaking to a Western audience in a media-driven, neoliberal economy.

The final section looks more closely into the trope of childhood as an asset in the contemporary affective economy (Ahmed 2004: 119), in the context of the refugee crisis in Syria, through the testimonies of Bana Alabed and Nujeen Mustafa, respectively addressed in the fourth and fifth chapters. In her discussion of these cases, Martínez García is particularly attentive to the capitalization of childhood as both the epitome of vulnerability and innocence and an intersectional site for selfhood and identity. The case of Alabed, a seven-year-old Syrian child whose Twitter-based serial testimony agitated Western audiences, is interesting for the author in the way it articulates individual and collective notions of ethnic identity and geopolitical vulnerability. Her testimony is carefully situated at a particular time and place from which she claims international involvement and collaboration. Similarly, Mustafa's testimony exemplifies a negotiation between the (Western) universal meanings of childhood and her situated identity as a disabled, Kurdish-Syrian teenager forced to flee her country with the help of her older sister. The intersectional nature of Mustafa's character, in her two-fold vindication of the rights of refugees and disabled people, as well as the deployment of humor and young-adult-styled political critique, is for Martínez García key in the construction of a complex, authentic and expansive 'I'. As the author suggests, these activists have managed to repoliticize themselves in their narratives by staying open to intersecting voices and experiences through their search for an authentic and collective voice and skillful use of multiple media.

This book constitutes an ambitious, pioneering project not only in its subject of study but also in its interdisciplinary framework and its interest in assessing the political potential of multi-platform expression in life-writing. Its theoretical framework articulates a well-developed synthesis of canonical texts on the (geo)politics of life-writing with an updated selection of texts on (digital) media studies and political theory. Further, the book's multi-genre corpus not only makes it methodologically richer, but also more accurate as to the realities of contemporary political culture, and the logic of narrative circulation across diverse media platforms. Martínez García is insightful in her analysis and pays close attention to all the possible continuities across the chapters. Her interest in the active tensions between the individualizing effect of

the Western discourse and the will for honesty and inclusivity in the representation of the ethnic, defector, migrant, and/or refugee experience, reverberates throughout the volume, along with her reluctance to conclude on which one eventually "wins", or —even less— to propose ultimate answers.

Martínez García seems to actively seek these important dialogues between the authors and their audiences across multiple power lines, even when they are destined to be flawed or partially co-opted by the economies of mainstream media. As Butler has suggested, there is an ethics of self-narration that involves recognizing one's vulnerability to others and to the power structures that organize one's identity and subjectivity, this way acknowledging "the way in which we are constituted in relationality: implicated, beholden, derived, sustained by a social world that is beyond us and before us" (2005: 64). I consider that the book would have benefitted from an exploration into the politics of vulnerability throughout these texts, to look into how the writers express their consciousness of themselves as existing in a network of personal, geopolitical, and cultural relations. Looking at the ways these young women activists reflect on their condition as disempowered and vulnerable subjects, particularly in relation to their Western audiences, could have enhanced the author's argument on the need for testimonial networks to remain open to as many discourses and experiences as possible in a time of intersectional conflicts. In sum, the monograph serves as a useful introduction to the emerging panorama of life-writing in the context of human rights advocacy and new media. Although it could benefit from a greater engagement with an intersectional reading of the relations between vulnerability, bodies, and political institutions, the book vindicates a dialectic approach to the life writing projects by these young women that ethically recognizes their causes and experiences.

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REJECTION OF VICTIMHOOD IN LITERATURE: BY ABDULRAZAK GURNAH, VIET THANH NGUYEN, AND LUIS ALBERTO URREA

Sean James Bosman
Leiden: Brill, 2021

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In recent years, both the UK and the US have been conceptualized as hostile spaces for migrants and racialized communities, with nationalist and right-wing discourses ever-present in the context of Brexit, Donald Trump's inauguration and the brutal murder of George Floyd in 2020 (Bosman 2021: 2). Preoccupations with racist and hegemonic violence are also reflected in literature and its narrative treatment of marginalized migrants, with authors such as Abdulrazak Gurnah, Viet Thanh Nguyen and Luis Alberto Urrea exploring memory, belonging and institutional violence in relation to diasporic spaces. In his book, *Rejection of Victimhood in Literature: By Abdulrazak Gurnah, Viet Thanh Nguyen, and Luis Alberto Urrea*, Bosman discusses the representations of transnational individuals and communities in the work of these three authors, paying particular attention to their rejection of essentialist conceptualizations of migrants as helpless victims, and as unable to enact agency. Throughout the book, Bosman focuses on and establishes numerous comparisons between the works of Gurnah, Nguyen and Urrea in order to critically examine how hegemonic discourses affect transitional subjects and stories.

Chapter 1 is centered around Gurnah's fictional work, particularly the two "immigrant novels" (Lewis 2011: 59) *By the Sea* (2001) and *Gravel Heart* (2017). Both novels center on the economic precarity and social instability suffered by transnational individuals, while exploring the construction of Zanzibar as a

diasporic space. Bosman also elaborates on how Gurnah's characters rely on strategies of hybridity, performativity and mimicry to navigate vertical and hostile systems of power —which allows for the reflection of "vastly different transnational experiences" that nonetheless have a certain "shared sense of homelessness" (Lewis 2011: 60) in common. There is also a strong emphasis on the role played by storytelling and the "entanglement of stories" (Gurnah 2006: 120) in these two novels, as Bosman argues that Gurnah relies on circular and non-linear narrative structures to highlight the critical role of language in negotiating the colonial past and present and in questioning the "links between history, memories and identities" (2021: 72). Again, the centrality of these elements allows for a diverse and complex representation of migrants and racialized communities that rejects both essentialist binaries and nationalist discourses. In this way, Bosman is able to offer a critical account of Gurnah's work, as this chapter's concern with the connections between power, memory and discourse allows for a rereading and reexamination of transnational identity and agency, as well as the figure of the 'helpless victim'.

Chapter 2 revolves around the work of Viet Thanh Nguyen, specifically the treatment of Vietnamese migrants in the novel *The Sympathizer* (2015) and the short stories "Black-Eyed Women" (2018) and "The Transplant" (2018). Bosman describes these texts as "explor[ing] Vietnamese transnationals' potential to inflict harm on others as well as themselves" (2021: 73), emphasizing the centrality of trust, betrayal and remembering in the construction of "fully ethical subjects" (109). The chapter also comments on the "industrialization of memory" (Nguyen 2016: 13) and its impact on the fictional representations of Vietnamese communities and the Vietnam war. Here Bosman draws from Grice (2012) to explain that "representations of the war have largely been one-dimensional, depicting it as an American conflict, with American casualties" (96), resulting in the deliberate erasure of Vietnamese suffering. Again, many of Nguyen's characters occupy liminal spaces, and are seen as subhuman, unwelcomed and undesired due to their transnational status. The author often relies on the supernatural to develop these issues further in the stories, using speculative elements to thematize and focus on how identity, harm and memory are intertwined and interconnected. It is in this context that Bosman points out the centrality of 'just memory' in the construction of migrant and transnational subjects as in order to recognize one's agency we must also acknowledge the possibility of causing harm —here we may allude to Nguyen's idea that "to frame oneself only as a victim is to oversimplify power" (2006: 10). The chapter ends with Bosman drawing attention to the fact that, despite Nguyen's concern with just memory, his depiction of Vietnamese women draws from gendered stereotypes and that "[f]or his authorial project to remain ethical according to his own model, Nguyen needs to acknowledge the potential harm that could result from the representation presented in his own writing" (106).

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The third chapter deals with the work of Luis Alberto Urrea, particularly his 2018 novel *The House of the Broken Angels* and his 2015 short story "Mountains Without Number". Urrea's fiction seems to explore the US-Mexico border as a diasporic space, and its connection with the figure of the "illegal alien" (Ibarraran-Bigandolo 2016: 20). Here, Bosman is interested in studying the ways in which the colonial legacy of the US shapes ideas of belonging and citizenship, as well as how these same ideas are destabilized by the presence of transnationals and Latino communities. Bosman also emphasizes that, "Urrea's works depict the border as a porous site of multiple crossings" (2021: 123) and that, despite Urrea's rejection of the term 'border writer', his relationship with the term is not only a complex one, but one that is (re)shaped by gender (113). In particular, Bosman examines the questioning of racial stereotyping in Urrea's fiction and how it intersects with both the "Latino threat narrative" (Chavez 2008: 2) and the representation of gendered identities and familiar structures —arguing that the precarity that pierces Gurnah's stories is also present in Urrea's, and that it is, in both cases, directly linked to racial and colonial violence. All of these factors, Bosman argues, contribute to the creation of narratives that reject the idea of migrants as helpless victims, as their experiences are shown to be not only heterogeneous and diverse, but also directly influenced by their sociopolitical context.

The last chapter is a comparative analysis of the work of the three authors. Rather than focusing on the plots of the different novels and short stories, Bosman tries to highlight the fact that Gurnah, Nguyen and Urrea share similar concerns. All of them explicitly reject essentialist and nationalist discourses that depict migrants as powerless and agentless, portraying transnational individuals instead as people with complex relationships with both their identities and their host countries. Their characters are often unwelcomed, and their narrative evolution is linked to ideas of guilt, shame and harm —as well as to the ways these accounts of harm are remembered, discussed and told. Again, Bosman sees the "ethical agency and responsibility of individuals" as "a concern central to the authorial projects of each of these authors" (2021: 162), and argues that that preoccupation shapes the diaspora space and its depiction in the works of Gurnah, Nguyen and Urrea. There is also an emphasis on memory, particularly the ideas of 'just memory' and 'the industrialization of memory', as Bosman explains that the (re)telling of immigrant stories is directly influenced by racist and essentialist discourses. Overall, this chapter highlights how Gurnah, Nguyen and Urrea "are all interested in the entanglements of families, histories, just memories, and full ethical agency" (177).

In short, Bosman is able to critically examine the narrative representations of migrants and transnational individuals while integrating issues of agency, guilt and identity into his analysis. Again, I would argue that, because of its multifaceted

nature, Bosman's work is not only of interest to those concerned with Gurnah, Nguyen and Urrea's literary production, but it can also be beneficial for those whose work falls within the scope of hospitality, memory and diasporic studies.

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QUEER WHISPERS: GAY AND LESBIAN VOICES OF IRISH FICTION

José Carregal
Dublin: University College Dublin Press, 2021

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In recent years, Ireland has experienced a notable transformation. Having decriminalised homosexuality less than thirty years ago, in 1993, it appears that the country, in the last few decades, has moved from being a strongly homophobic nation to being the first country to pass same-sex marriage legislation through a public referendum in 2015. Within this current context of progressive change, *Queer Whispers: Gay and Lesbian Voices of Irish Fiction*, authored by José Carregal, becomes a crucial work. This volume looks at the representation of gay and lesbian lives in Irish literature in the last four decades, from the 1970s up to the present, thus constituting the first exhaustive study of gay and lesbian Irish fiction within this time frame. In his thorough analysis of more than thirty different works —including both novels and short stories— written by twenty-one different authors, Carregal illustrates how Irish writers have been challenging the heteronormative and homophobic ideals of a Catholic society in the past and the ongoing discrimination that has persisted in more recent years.

The book opens with a foreword written by well-known Irish author Mary Dorcey. Here, Dorcey recalls growing up in the Ireland of the 1950s and 1960s, which she describes as "a period of profound social conservatism; silence, repression, guilt and fear" (2021: xi). She speaks of how, on discovering in adolescence that she was attracted to her own sex, she turned to literature and to those writers who bravely wrote about same-sex love. This brief foreword closes with Dorcey's praise of the

work of the authors analysed in the volume as well as of Carregal's successful effort in gathering all these different voices together.

In the introduction, Carregal provides an overview of gay and lesbian activism in Ireland between the 1970s and the 2010s and sets out some of the aims and hopes of this volume: "to valorise the richness and diversity of the writings and writers of gay and lesbian lives in Ireland" (2021: 13) and to "lay the foundations for future expanded work on the ever-evolving story of queer Ireland" (16). Furthermore, this chapter emphasises how Ireland's 'cultures of silence' have impacted Irish gay and lesbian lives, as well as how "the languages of Irish Catholicism and national identity by no means facilitated the recognition and dignification of gay sexuality and lesbianism in twentieth century Ireland" (3). It is precisely language and silence that become the dominant focus for the analyses that follow in the coming chapters, in connection with diverse socio-cultural contexts.

Chapter 1 focuses on four novels that deal with the secrecy and silence that surrounded lesbian identity and the confinement of lesbian relationships to the private sphere at the time of writing. In exploring Maura Richards's *Interlude* (1982), Linda Cullen's *The Kiss* (1990), Edna O'Brien's *The High Road* (1988) and Pádraig Standún's *A Woman's Love* (1994), Carregal offers an analysis of how these works address vulnerability and isolation in 1980s and 1990s lesbian lives, a period during which lesbianism was characterised by its invisibility.

The second chapter of the volume is centered on some of the works by "[t]he first high profile Irish woman to be publicly and proudly a lesbian, Mary Dorcey" (Carregal 2021: 34). Examining three short stories from her collection *A Noise from the Woodshed* (1989) and her novel *Biography of Desire* (1997), Carregal looks at how Dorcey's characters both identify and embrace their lesbian identities. Here, Dorcey's fiction appears in contrast to those works explored in the previous chapter, as the protagonists of these stories seem to accept their same-sex attraction and are able to find a place for themselves within the feminist and lesbian community, thus transcending victimisation and vulnerability. Relying on theories such as Raewyn Connell's notion of the 'patriarchal dividend' (1995) and on Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick's work *Epistemology of the Closet* (2008), Carregal's exploration of Dorcey's texts concludes that the author "promotes a deeper understanding of lesbian lives and relationships" (48).

Chapter 3 looks at the depiction of cruising in four short stories: Micheál Ó Conghaile's "At the Station" (2012), Eamon Somers's "Nataí Bocht" (1994), Keith Ridgway's "Graffiti" (1994), and Joseph O'Connor's "The Hills Are Alive" (1992). These short stories provide an understanding of the reality of cruising, and through this chapter Carregal offers an analysis that illustrates how these four

works "defy a public language of cruising as morally degrading and an expression of sexual degeneracy" (2021: 60).

The fourth chapter deals with the following novels: Desmond Hogan's *The Ikon Maker* (2013), Damian McNicholl's *A Son Called Gabriel* (2004), Tom Lennon's *When Love Comes to Town* (1993), and Jarlath Gregory's *Snapshots* (2001) and *G.A.A.Y.: One Hundred Ways to Love a Beautiful Loser* (2005). Drawing on Michael G. Cronin's (2012) commentary on the Bildungsroman, Carregal looks into how these works examine cultural and personal crises, generational gaps, and the protagonists' urgency to defy "the toxic languages of heterosexual masculinity" (2021: 62). His analysis illustrates how the novels, in their depiction of Ireland and Northern Ireland's changing sexual morality from the seventies until the early 2000s, encourage a language of resilience, as the main characters depart from conventional concepts of masculinity and develop their own truths and relationships outside the expectations of their families and society.

Chapter 5 centers on both novels and short stories that address the issue of AIDS within the Irish gay male community. Carregal takes into account those cultural narratives of AIDS that associated the virus to gay sex and helped to reinforce Catholic sexual morality and Cormac O'Brien's (2020) literary tropes of 'punishment paradox' and 'positively Irish' —that he identified in his study of HIV and AIDS in Irish theatre— to explore five texts: Micheál Ó Conghaile's "Lost in Connemara" (2012), Keith Ridgway's "Andy Warhol" (2018), Anne Enright's *The Green Road* (2015), Desmond Hogan's *A Farewell to Prague* (1995) and Colm Tóibín's *The Blackwater Lightship* (1999). Even though these short stories and novels are set in the eighties and nineties, Carregal's work evidences how they are still relevant today as the HIV/AIDS stigma remains and how they encourage an understanding of those conditions, both personal and social, that affect those who are HIV-positive.

The sixth chapter looks at three works by author Emma Donoghue: *Stir-fry* (1994), *Hood* (1995), and *Landing* (2007). Carregal focuses his analysis on how the novels address the female body and sexuality, the conflict between liberal and feminist ideologies in lesbian subculture, the disenfranchised grief confronted by lesbian widows, sheer exclusions that exist within the lesbian community, and the complex position of non-heterosexual teachers in Ireland; thus succeeding in his attempt to emphasise how Donoghue's contemporary-set novels break many of the social silences that conditioned lesbian experience in 1990s and 2000s Ireland.

In Chapter 7, a total of seven different works set during the Celtic Tiger years are analysed: Tom Lennon's *Crazy Love* (1999), Belinda McKeon's *Tender* (2015), Colm Tóibín's "The Pearl Fishers" (2010), Keith Ridgway's *The Long Falling* (1998), "Angelo" (2001) and *The Parts* (2003), and Frank McGuiness's "Chocolate and Oranges" (2018). As these texts approach different themes such

as gay fatherhood, the church scandals, rent boy prostitution, domestic violence and the invisibility of illegal workers and poor immigrants —to mention a few— Carregal effectively explores how these gay narratives "transcend social silences and articulate a cultural critique of the modern icon of gay life" (2021: 141) as they provide alternative stories than those promoted by Celtic Tiger discourses that built a division between Ireland's modern present and its conservative past.

The eighth and closing chapter focuses on four historical novels that in their examination of past repressions around same-sex attraction offer a significant commentary on the current situation for homosexuals: Emma Donoghue's *Life Mask* (2004), Sebastian Barry's *Days Without End* (2016), Jamie O'Neill's *At Swim, Two Boys* (2001), and John Boyne's *The Heart's Invisible Furie*s (2017). Relying on Norman W. Jonas's (2007) study of gay and lesbian historical fiction in Anglo-American writing, Carregal explores how these authors re-examine the genre's traditional themes of 'identification', 'transformation', and 'chosen community', and he skillfully depicts how these four works "open up a space for the recovery and revaluation of queer histories, traditions and identities, subverting the historical silencing of homosexual lives" (2021: 161).

To conclude, *Queer Whispers: Gay and Lesbian Voices of Irish Fiction* constitutes a well-researched volume that becomes relevant not only within the field of Irish Studies, but also within other disciplines that it touches upon, such as cultural studies, literature, history, and LGBTQ+ studies. Carregal has carefully brought together a wide range of works by many different Irish authors —both queer and straight— that through the past decades have given a voice to lesbian and gay lives in Ireland, addressing a variety of social issues. Focusing on the themes that these fiction texts engage with, such as lesbian (in)visibility, coming-out, Ireland's changing sexual morality, HIV/AIDS stigma, lesbian/gay subcultures, and same-sex parenthood —among others— Carregal offers an all-encompassing analysis of those short stories and novels that since the seventies have contributed to exposing the silencing and repression of gays and lesbians in Ireland. Indeed, this is the first work to fully engage with lesbian and gay voices in Irish literature, providing an analysis of literary texts covering four key decades regarding social, cultural and legal transformations that have become essential for raising awareness of these issues. Furthermore, in its exploration of the limitations enforced by this silence, the volume strengthens the recognition of this community and their struggles, past and present. In short, thanks to Carregal's elaborate weaving together of these stories and their consequent study, *Queer Whispers: Gay and Lesbian Voices of Irish Fiction* is a definitive must-read for any researchers and readers that are interested in Ireland's LGBTQ+ literature and how this is significantly breaking with social silences by providing a place for dissenting voices to be articulated.

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SCIENCE COMMUNICATION ON THE INTERNET: OLD GENRES MEET NEW GENRES

María José Luzón, Carmen Pérez-Llantada, eds.
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Science Communication on the Internet is an edited volume consisting of 11 chapters addressing the latest trends in English for Academic Purposes and Applied Linguistics: professional and academic genres in the digital age. Drawing on numerous theoretical and methodological perspectives, the book comprises 10 case studies exploring the affordances and constraints of digital genres for science communication. Mirroring the book's sub-heading, this volume sets the foundations for new developments in genre studies, moving from 'old' genres such as the research article to the 'latest' innovations in science communication with citizen science projects. According to current European Union policies and funding agencies' requirements, scientists ought to engage in policies of Open Science, accessibility, and dissemination of science to diversified audiences (OECD 2015). This is a common concern in all the contributions, which examine topics related to academic communities, as well as health, engineering, chemistry, and other scientific disciplines.

The volume opens with a chapter by the editors, Luzón and Pérez-Llantada, who offer a comprehensive overview of genre theory, genre evolution, and remediation processes in the digital sphere. They illustrate the main theoretical concepts with examples of digital genres such as open science notebooks, enhanced publications, and scientific blogs. They close the chapter by recalling the main challenge of digital scientific genres: the need to address diversified audiences with different levels of expertise, leading to the context collapse of scientific genres (Marwick and Boyd 2011).

In Chapter 2, Harmon offers a detailed overview of the evolution of the research article since its origins in 1665 and wonders what its future might hold. After summarising the genre's formal evolution, Harmon reviews some of the main features and effects of the digital scientific research article, including the creation of new reading trajectories, enhanced interactivity, and the emergence of add-on genres. This chapter will appeal to any scientist curious about the most prominent genre in academic discourse.

Chapter 3 also uses the scientific research article as the object of inquiry. Mehlenbacher and Mehlenbacher examine the process of stabilisation and change in the research article. The authors point out that since the primary rhetorical exigence of the research article, i.e. sharing research findings with experts, has not changed over time there is a lack of rhetorical innovation in this genre. However, new rhetorical situations demand new genres, a reason why new genres such as the registered report have emerged. Although similar to the research article, this new genre answers a different rhetorical purpose: promoting replicable science. In this way, this genre emerges from the social demand for Open Science and Open Access, responding to macro-level policies of science.

Hendges and Florek focus on the graphical abstract as the genre under analysis. The chapter starts by displaying a critical stance toward the context in which digital genres emerge, mainly discussing the marketisation and commodification of universities, knowledge, and genres. Consequently, the authors collect a sample of chemistry and engineering graphical abstracts to analyse their form, communicative purposes, contextual editorial policies, and interrelations with the traditional abstract and article visuals. Their findings are only exploratory, but it is possible to conclude that this genre is still under construction and that variability is found when dealing with how to create visual summaries and how to attract more readers for promotional purposes.

Chapter 5 is the only one dealing with spoken genres in the volume. Rowley-Jolivet and Carter-Thomas inquire about the similarities and differences between 3 Minute Thesis presentations, podcasts, and author videos. All the datasets have in common researchers talking about their projects in a short time span. Firstly, the authors identify the recurrent rhetorical structure of the genres (move analysis) and later they carry out an analysis of expert-lay communication recontextualisation strategies. The implications of their findings include similarities and differences between datasets which point at the marketisation of science, the need for brevity in the Internet era, and the recurrent use of linguistic strategies promoting simplification and a personal style. The authors conclude that these genres mix information with entertainment as if they were news.

A different genre is discussed by Breeze in chapter 6, whose work focuses on the open peer-review report and response, a new genre promoted by some biomedical

and life science journals seeking transparency and fairness. Employing corpus-assisted discourse analysis, Breeze compares two corpora of confidential and open peer-review reports to identify the advantages and disadvantages of the genre. Drawing on the concepts of relational work and stance, the author reports subtle changes in author response that empower them in relation to the referees. Moreover, she identifies more elaborate, complex, and interpersonal features in the genre due to its open nature. Despite the small-scale nature of the study, it offers a representative insight into a genre essential for all academics.

Maier and Engberg, relying on the multifaceted conceptual framework of knowledge construction, carry out an analysis of the Harvard Business Review website, which offers articles for both academics and practitioners. The authors apply knowledge mediation processes and explanatory depth to a textual and multimodal analysis of such articles. They find that hyperlinks play a crucial role in those processes in addition to add-on genres such as interview videos to address diverse audiences. Another important finding in this chapter is that while articles are mainly addressed to the academic community, the interviews included on the website focus on the practical skills relevant to practitioners. Hence, the complementarity of these two genres responds to the diversity of audiences.

The next chapter by Mirović, Bogdanović and Bulatović draws on Maier and Engberg's conceptual framework to analyse the hypermodal article, a genre traditionally found in popular science magazines. The authors define this genre as hybrid, multimodal, and hypertextual aimed at recontextualising scientific knowledge for expert and non-expert audiences. Using close reading, the authors examine the embedded and hyperlinked genres of the articles as well as the combination of semiotic resources. They conclude that the combination of these elements contributes to the idea of context collapse by harnessing the Internet affordances for the benefit of the digital genre and online communication.

Moving on to the effects of social networks, Orpin analyses the recontextualisation of content in health-related tweets and reports. The thorough analysis carried out in chapter 9 rests on well-known approaches such as Hyland's proximity (2010), multimodality, corpus linguistics techniques, and macro textual structures. Orpin highlights the important role played by the intended audience in shaping the use of visual resources, text organisation, and phraseology of both genres, which leads to more professional writing strategies in reports and popularisation techniques in tweets.

Chapter 10 departs from previous topics since it focuses on the relationship between science/technology and religion. Smart and Falconer choose two genre sets with Vatican encyclicals at their core. After a short introduction to the genre, the authors draw on rhetoric, recontextualisation, and representation

work to understand the discursive changes suffered by this genre over a century and the effect of its digital transformation. Although their account is well-illustrated regarding the evolving relationship of the papacy with science/technology, a more critical stance towards the findings would have been valuable, going further into the challenges these genre sets may face or implications for future trends.

The volume ends with Reid and Anson's ethnographic study of a citizen science project. The authors provide a rich narrative of encounters, digital tools, and key moments in the development of science communication with the public. Interestingly, this study highlights the significance of contextual factors when writing texts, anticipating epistemic challenges, and how context collapse can be regarded as an asset in science-making practices. It recalls the importance of individuals in the stabilisation or change of genres, depending on how they engage in communicating science.

This volume provides a far-reaching overview of digital genres that illustrates the changes traditional (print) genres are suffering due to digital affordances. The breadth of theoretical and methodological perspectives is one of the strengths of this book. The case study format is useful for those interested in learning about digital genres or those who would like to explore less well-known research genres. However, the analysis of the genres in this volume shows innovation taking place only in the social and hard sciences. Given that the gap between the humanities and sciences needs to be further examined, perhaps this could be an aspect to address in future research. There are several possible questions that need answers. For example, are soft disciplines less interested in Open Science and genre evolution? Why are there fewer instances of digital genres in these fields? If all disciplines are to be considered equal, this is something worth investigating. Furthermore, even though the chapters can be read independently, and there are internal references between chapters that identify common points of inquiry, as a reader I felt the need for a concluding chapter summarising the main advances analysed in the volume. It would have offered valuable insights into the field of digital genres and science communication with comments on future directions for research.

Overall, this is a thought-provoking volume that will be enjoyed by experts but also curious readers and novice researchers entering the digital genre sphere. The detailed account of digital tools and resources will be useful for academics who should embark on non-traditional research practices. After all, researchers need to learn how to communicate science effectively by accommodating expert-lay audiences, harnessing the potential of the Internet, and maintaining informed and participatory citizenship.

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POSTCOLONIAL YOUTH IN CONTEMPORARY BRITISH FICTION

Laura María Lojo-Rodríguez, Jorge Sacido-Romero
and Noemí Pereira-Ares, eds.
Leiden: Brill, 2021

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Conveniently divided into four parts, *Postcolonial Youth in Contemporary British Fiction* (2021) deals with an often neglected yet much needed area of study in postcolonial literature: the representations of the young with a postcolonial background in British contemporary literature. Innovative in its content and its form, this collection of essays, edited by Laura María Lojo-Rodríguez, Jorge Sacido-Romero and Noemí Pereira-Ares, breathes fresh air into the fields of postcolonial literature and the short story genre simultaneously. Approaching these fields from an array of perspectives, this collection is a must for both neophytes and experienced academics, who will benefit from its reading and the inspirational, thorough and well-wrought research it contains.

Part one, "Youth, Home and Belonging", comprises three chapters whose common aim is to (re)consider the meaning of home and belonging, of the community as seen through the prism of adolescence. The three chapters in Part two, "Youth, Nation and Narration", focus on how narrative techniques are used to reassess issues such as national identity and citizenship, still pertinent to postcolonial youths nowadays. Liminality as a link between the short story and postcolonial subjectivity is the common ground upon which the three chapters in Part three, "Youth, Dislocation and Transformation", explore the evolution of contemporary diasporic writing from an ethnic to a post-ethnic aesthetics. Bringing the collection to a close, the three chapters in Part four, "Youth, Religion and

Global Politics", target such recent challenges to postcolonial youths as the idea of Muslimness or post-9/11 events.

The opening chapter in the collection, "Evil Children of the Diaspora: Andrea Levy's 'Deborah'", written by Laura María Lojo-Rodríguez, considers Levy's story "Deborah" as "pivoting on the ideological and cultural implications of interstices, liminal places and hybrid identities" (2021: 28) inspired by the 1960s North London childhood of the author. Not only does Levy's narrative portray childhood as a rite of passage into adulthood, Lojo-Rodríguez contends, but it also engages with contemporary debates "addressing children's welfare and adult responsibility in their upbringing and actions" (38) against the writer's background as a Jamaican descendant growing up in North London.

Gérald Préher's "The World was a Strange Place to Be Caught Living in" focuses on Jamaica Kincaid's short novel *Annie John* (1985) and the diverse liminal aspects present in it. Unlike much research carried out on Kincaid and exploring the mother-daughter relationship, Préher's focuses on the relationship of the eponymous protagonist with other girls in the story as a representation of her country's history. Analysing the narrative through its sequential formal structure as well as the protagonist's relationship with her girlfriends, Préher asserts that *Annie John* can be read in postcolonial terms as a representation of the dichotomous colonised-coloniser relationship, where the latter "can describe the mother, and […] Annie herself, while the powerless may evoke the colonised, Annie's weakest friends and also Annie whenever she presents herself as the victim" (2021: 55-56).

Closing Part one, Carmen Lara-Rallo's "The Postcolonial Adolescent in Roshi Fernando's *Homesick*" examines three short stories from Fernando's collection to ascertain the postcolonial experience of adolescence as a liminal transition stage. By comparing the adolescent protagonists with their adult counterparts featured in other stories in the collection, Lara-Rallo attests to the potential for exploration of the adolescent phase in identity terms, both individual and collective, thus showing postcolonial youth's "ambiguous condition of being neither children nor adults, while finding themselves split between here and there, inside and outside, as postcolonial subjects" (2021: 76).

Opening Part two, Isabel Carrera-Suárez and Carla Rodríguez-González's "Growing Up Multiply: British Women Write the Ampersand Experience" tackles the construction of multiple mixed-race subjectivities in Britain by considering published life stories. By examining the data provided by censuses against the fictionalised life narratives in such works as *Tangled Roots: The True Life Stories about Mixed Race Britain* (Massey 2015), the authors conclude that these narratives provide a new vision of present-day Britain, portraying "individuals who

add a transnational, cosmopolitan component to Britishness compatible with avowed locality" (2021: 98).

"Multiethinicity, Liminality and Fantasy in Jamila Gavin's Stories for Young Learners", written by Laura Torres-Zúñiga, provides a refreshing reassessment of Gavin's *The Magic Orange Tree and Blackberry Blue*, by considering both their literary and social worth as tools to question established social dichotomies. As the author remarks, by deploying multiethnic protagonists and a diverse array of cultural and folkloric references, Gavin's stories "pave the way for the development of an inclusive multicultural canon based on a new shared heritage" (2021: 119), thus aiding children and adolescents of diverse cultural backgrounds in their process of "identification, cultural awareness and self-definition" (119).

Bringing Part two to a close, Isabel M. Andrés-Cuevas's "A Right Little Good Little Indian Girl, Are You" considers the potential of coming-of-age stories to problematise the social and biological dimensions central to the construction of adolescent female characters belonging to an ethnic minority in the United Kingdom. Focusing on her stories "India" and "Time Traveller" included in her collection *Dynamite* (2014), Andrés-Cuevas analyses the work of Ravinder Randhawa, asserting that her narratives call for a recognition of an "all-encompassing, multifarious and hybrid world in which received ideas of nationalism, ethnicity or cultural identity" (2021: 142) need to be gauged anew.

Jorge Sacido-Romero's "Multicultural Adolescence and Its Identitary Vicissitudes in Contemporary British Short Stories" inaugurates Part three by analysing the specific identitary changes of the multicultural protagonists in Hanif Kureishi's "Touched" (2002), Leila Abouela's "The Boy from the Kebab Shop" (2001) and Diriye Osman's "Shoga" (2013). By considering both the formal aspects of these short narratives as well as their rendition of the liminality of adolescence, Sacido-Romero contends that these stories exemplify the complex and variable experience of "acculturation, adaptation and identity formation of multicultural youngsters who are influenced by more than one culture and set of values and models" (2021: 167).

"From 'Partial Presence' to 'Disruptive Impurity': The Diasporic Adolescent in Leila Abouela's Short Fiction", by Karima Thomas, considers Abouela's "Tuesday Lunch", "Make your Own Way Home" (*Coloured Lights* 2001) and "Summer Maze" (*Elsewhere Home* 2018) as short story cycles with the potential to portray embattled and provisional identities, emphasising the liminality of its protagonists. Reading them as a story cycle, Thomas asserts, allows for the three stories to show how Nadia (the protagonist) inhabits a space in between her two cultures. This heterotopia, a "transnational dynamic set in motion, where each culture is impacted by the other" (2021: 191), showcases the concept of liminality as home.

Bettina Jansen's "I'm the Only One: Transgressing Notions of Postcolonial Adolescence in the Contemporary Black British Short Story", brings a sense of closure to Part three. Jansen's objective, to explore the ways in which short fiction offers alternative notions of postcolonial adolescence, is brought to fruition by a careful consideration of Zadie Smith's short story "I'm the Only One" (2000). After considering the concepts of adolescence and its links to the postcolonial and to the short story genre, Jansen analyses Smith's story, concluding that the figure of the adolescent is used to "challenge the easy binaries between self and other, white and black, Anglo-British and postcolonial, man and woman" (2021: 211).

Claire Chambers and Indrani Karmakar's "The Virgin's Consent: British Muslim Identity, Cultural Heritage and Gender in Young Adult Fiction" is the opening chapter of the last part of this collection. A careful selection of two short stories (Sufiya Ahmed's "Tears and Tantrums" and Nazneen Ahmed's "Ghazal") and two novels (Sufiya Ahmed's *Secrets of the Henna Girl*, published in 2002, and Muhammad Khan's *I am Thunder*, published in 2018) written by Muslim-heritage authors in Britain and focusing on young women protagonists allows Chambers and Karmakar to dissect some of the most contentious and urgent topics in multicultural Britain, such as the triangulation between culture, gender and identity. These narratives, the authors argue, show that in South Asian Muslim society, "culture and religion often intersect in such a way that it becomes difficult to separate them from each other" (2021: 232), profoundly impacting women.

"Reading for Resilience", written by Blanka Grzegorczyk, explores the formal aspects of twenty-first-century postcolonial children's fiction about terror. By analysing a wide range of children's novelists and considering how different modes of terror can transmit the experience of trauma and reliance, Grzegorczyk asserts that these narratives refashion the ties binding "young readers to their cultural environments, opening their critical understanding and moral imagination to new possibilities of cross-cultural connection and interpretation" (2021: 250).

Noemí Pereira-Ares's "'Growing Up with Anxiety(ies)': from Islamophobia to Brexit in *A Change is Gonna Come*" brings Part four —and thus this collection— to a close. Basing her analysis on socio- and psychological research on young identities as well as on liminal approaches to the short story, Pereira-Ares examines Nikesh Shukla's "We Who?" and Yasmin Rahman's "Fortune Favours the Bold" to ascertain the different social, psychological and identitary anxieties which affect the young protagonists. Her insightful consideration of these stories allows Pereira-Ares to conclude that, despite their differences in terms of themes and structural elements, these narratives show "the irresolutedness and openendedness characteristic of the short story genre to adumbrate change and transformation" (2021: 274), simultaneously interrogating the past and reassessing the present.

Postcolonial Youth in Contemporary British Fiction (2021) is a formidable scholarly achievement. Combining the academic expertise of the various contributors with an elegance in format, presentation and style, this collection of essays manages to bring new, ground-breaking research to the fields of postcolonialism and the short story. By contributing insightful explorations, such as that of the construction of the adolescent female from a minority background, *Postcolonial Youth in Contemporary British Fiction* (2021) opens up a relatively novel and unexplored area for other researchers to follow suit. This collection is definitely an exemplary masterpiece of academic performance.

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HARRISON FORD: MASCULINITY AND STARDOM IN HOLLYWOOD

Virginia Luzón-Aguado
London: Bloomsbury, 2020

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In *Harrison Ford: Masculinity and Stardom in Hollywood*, Virgina Luzón-Aguado presents a thorough analysis of Ford's representation of masculinity during his career that extends from the 1980s until nowadays. From the beginning of her study, the author states her intention to analyse Ford's representation of masculinity within Richard Dyer's (1979, 1986, 1997) contribution to the field of star studies without forgetting the influence of the industry as well as the more contemporary focus on media celebrity. Luzón-Aguado actually starts her book stating that Ford's success both as an actor and as a public persona can be attributed to "an evolving set of attributes that generally stand for successful white masculinity in Western culture" (2020: 4). The relevance of the media in establishing accepted models of masculinity (and, by extension, femininity) was already noted by Lynne Segal in her seminal work *Slow Motion* (2007). As she states in an article published a few years later, "the power and meaning of masculinity derive not just from autonomy, or familial interaction, nor indeed from any fixed set of attributes that all men share, but from wider social relations" (1993: 62). Luzón-Aguado's focus on one of the best-known Hollywood actors represents a significant piece of work in which the evolving meaning of Ford's masculinity within each specific period of his career provides information on the overtones of this masculinity within wider social and cultural periods.

Despite the considerable length of the book, it is divided into just five chapters. Chapter 1 sets the actor within the theoretical frameworks of masculinity and stardom and the following four chapters discuss specific professional and personal periods of Ford's representation of masculinity and stardom which, at the same time, coincide with evolving notions of masculinity within the American cultural, social and political background. In Chapter 1, Luzón-Aguado highlights the fact that masculinity studies applied to cinema cannot be separated from the social and political background in which specific masculinity models became prominent. For instance, the author, referring to Susan Jeffords' study of hard boiled Hollywood heroes, states that these heroes stood for the "hard-line politics" (2020: 19) of the Reagan administration, whereas the Bush administration seemed to bring with it a balance between the paternal and the action figure. Luzón-Aguado states that "some representations of masculinity and fatherhood, such as those in *Independence Day*, *Mystic River*, *300*, and *Taken* seem to point towards a nostalgic retreat to more traditional images of manhood that evince a desire for certainty in respect to what it means to be masculine" (21). For the author, the models of masculinity that were prominent until the end of the 1980s and beginning of the 1990s, mainly based on physical strength and power, may be the reason why Ford was not featured in masculinity studies until after this period. With the proliferation of star studies as well as with the appearance of what the author calls "post-feminist masculinity" (28), the actor became "the powerful, heroic yet average family guy, or an everyman, as it is often put; he is strong and tough yet also tender, loving and not afraid of displaying his vulnerability" (28) mainly in the 1990s. However, as Ford's career and star persona lengthened in time, this image evolved until reaching his stage of ageing masculinity.

Chapter 2 focuses on Harrison Ford's construction of his star persona as a "self-made man" (2020: 30). From the time he becomes well-known for his role as Hans Solo, Ford is mainly presented as a "self-taught carpenter/performer in control of his own career" (40) which contrasts with the artificiality that may have accompanied other Hollywood stars. Moreover, in the *Star Wars* series, Ford portrays an apparently rogue character who not only ends up displaying his nobility but also treats his female counterpart, Leia, as an equal. For Luzón-Aguado, these traits together with his role as Indiana Jones created a down-to-earth star persona with whom the American audience could easily identify.

Chapter 3 starts by focusing on Ford's role as Indiana Jones, a hero considered the second most popular in the history of US film. With Ford's association with Indiana Jones, and partly due to the big success of the Indiana Jones saga, the actor became, as the author states, "an individualistic icon of US interventionism, self-reliant, combative, and tough" but also "paternal, tender, and vulnerable" (2020: 56).

According to Luzón-Aguado, the fact that Ford's physical appearance was not threatening or sexualized contributed to Ford's masculinity as seeming less forced and "almost invisible" (58). The author refers to Helen Mirren's description of Ford's masculinity as quite graphic of the kind of masculinity that Ford represented during the 1980s and 1990s. For Mirren, "there is no face testosterone about Harrison. It's just pure, natural maleness. And it's very attractive" (58). Indiana Jones also related Ford to significant values within US culture such as hard work and a simple way of life; what Eimer calls "all American maleness" (1999: 109). It is for this sustained masculine image that the author contends that Harrison Ford's move "from independent national hero to responsible father" (110) was smoother than for other action heroes.

Chapter 4 precisely focuses on Harrison Ford as "Hollywood's favourite father", as the chapter's title states. Here Luzón-Aguado analyses Ford's filmography during the 1990s until his sixtieth birthday, during which prominent roles in films such as *Patriot Games* (1992) and *Air Force One* (1997) solidified his career as an action hero at the same time as "melodramatic concerns" (2020: 183) were integrated into his heroic and star persona such as competence, toughness and self-reliance.

In Chapter 5, Luzón-Aguado focuses on the latest years of Harrison Ford's career and on ageing masculinity in Hollywood. According to the author, despite the fact that Ford has been open about his ageing process and admitted that part of what brought him Hollywood fame was related to his youth and early adulthood, Ford has had more difficulty in keeping the heroic traits which some of his previous Hollywood characters had succeeded in reflecting. For Luzón-Aguado, in his later years, Ford has been placed in more urban settings and played self-conscious characters with "a closer focus on the unavoidable effects that aging has had on his persona" (2020: 260).

All in all, *Harrison Ford: Masculinity and Stardom in Hollywood* offers a comprehensive look into Ford's career as an action hero whose "guy-next-door" personality and appearance did not directly relate him to muscular, violent heroes; instead, this image turned him into one of the best-known and best-liked action heroes of the 1990s, keeping him on the big screen until today. Moreover, the study shows how the evolution of Ford's heroic characters went hand in hand with evolving notions of masculinity in the social, cultural and political American context until his ageing masculinity stage. This last chapter is the shortest one and, in some ways, it would have been interesting if the study had dived deeper into the ageing masculinity that Ford represents in Hollywood and the ways in which this can be related to the social climate of an ageing population in the United States. The book is indeed an essential contribution to masculinity and star studies.

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