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Home away from Home: Imageability and Wayfinding in Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's *The Thing around Your Neck*

Hogar lejos del hogar: Imaginabilidad y orientación en *The Thing around Your Neck* de Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie

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Abstract: This essay explores the process of orientation in migratory space in three of the twelve stories that make up Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's collection *The Thing around Your Neck*—"Imitation," "On Monday of Last Week," and "The Thing around Your Neck"—from the perspective of Kevin Lynch's theory of *wayfinding*, developed in his work on urban spaces *The Image of the City*. The analysis of how gender and class affect the female protagonists' conceptualization of home is based on Lynch's notion of *imageability*. The metaphorical extension of the concepts of *imageability* and *wayfinding* aims to grasp migrants' psychological and emotional experiences of orientation. Taking as a point of reference three highly imageable objects—masks, mirrors, and letters—the study of the protagonists' wayfinding in America reveals the tension between reality and imagination in the creation of mental images of home. In her recognition of the potential of female agency, Adichie draws a parallel between the protagonists' reorientation in the exilic space and their reorientation in their intimate relationships.
Keywords: *The Thing around Your Neck*; Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie; home; migration; imageability; wayfinding.
Summary: Introduction. "Imitation": The Wife's Masks. "On Monday of Last Week": The Babysitter's Mirror. "The Thing around Your Neck": The Daughter's Letter. Conclusions.

Resumen: Este artículo explora el proceso de orientación en el espacio exílico en tres de las doce historias que componen la colección de cuentos cortos *The Thing around Your Neck* de

Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie—"Imitation," "On Monday of Last Week" y "The Thing around Your Neck"—desde la perspectiva de la teoría de la orientación de Kevin Lynch, desarrollada en su trabajo sobre los espacios urbanos *The Image of the City*. El análisis de cómo las dimensiones de género y clase afectan la conceptualización del hogar de las protagonistas se basa en la noción de *imaginabilidad* de Lynch. La extensión metafórica de los conceptos de *imaginabilidad* y *orientación* tiene como objetivo captar las experiencias psicológicas y emocionales de orientación de los migrantes. Tomando como punto de referencia tres objetos que se caracterizan por su *imaginabilidad*—máscaras, espejos y cartas—el estudio de la orientación de las protagonistas en América revela la tensión entre la realidad y la imaginación en la creación de imágenes mentales del hogar. En su reconocimiento del potencial de la agencia femenina, Adichie muestra el paralelismo entre la reorientación de las protagonistas en el espacio del exilio y su reorientación en sus relaciones íntimas.
Palabras clave: *The Thing around Your Neck*; Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie; hogar; migración; imaginabilidad; orientación.
Sumario: Introducción. "Imitation": Las máscaras de la esposa. "On Monday of Last Week": El espejo de la niñera. "The Thing around Your Neck": La carta de la hija. Conclusiones.

Home is a place riddled with vexing questions.
—Caryl Phillips[1]

INTRODUCTION

There is no spatial figure more critical to the formation of a diasporic identity than that of home, which is always ambiguous and "never as fixed and permanent as the ideal perception" of a physical location (Georgiou 23). Although contemporary diaspora fiction resonates with stories of a new generation of cosmopolitan émigrés, still, the multiple barriers African migrants face in the West produce "a sense of cultural alienation," which is why they often "end up disenchanted in their new found 'home'" (Fongang 2). For them, the concept of home is not so much ambiguous as impossible, a kind of "symbolic fiction that makes one's actual place of habitation bearable" (Bronfen 73). While it is widely agreed that migrants' identities "incorporate multiple sites of affiliation," situatedness is still of crucial significance, that is why they often experience a heightened sense of dislocation (Hall and Datta 70). Iris Levin believes that so far, the notion of migrant home has focused mostly on emotions and that the "physicality and tangible aspects" of the migrant house have not been adequately explored (3). Hence, I would like to suggest that "physicality" may be

[1] Phillips's oeuvre deserves special attention in diaspora literature for his exploration of the migrant's feeling of not belonging, loneliness, and loss.

helpful in revealing how home is conceptualized and represented in the recognition of issues posed by migrants' orientation in the new environment. In her work *Spatial Politics in the Postcolonial Novel*, Sara Upstone moves away from the opposition between space and place and argues that "without space, any negotiation of place is incomplete" (3). This means that for migrants, who often experience the terrifying feeling of being lost, a spatial marker "provides the point of reference from which [they] can both imagine and navigate space" (Tally 2). Markers can be imaginary or, as Sara Ahmed observes, they can also be "objects we recognize, such that when we face them, we know which way we are facing" ("Orientations" 543). She discusses Kant's example of "walking blindfolded into an unfamiliar room" and argues that "orientation is not so much about the relation between objects that extend into space (say, the relation between the chair and the table); rather, orientation depends on the bodily inhabitance of that space" (*Queer Phenomenology* 6). Despite its importance in the migrant experience, the notion of orientation and related spatial matters remain underexplored within the context of postcolonial studies.

My analysis of Adichie's stories departs from a reading of Kevin Lynch's work on urban spaces *The Image of the City*, in which he develops the concept of *imageability* as a core element of his theory of *wayfinding*. *Wayfinding* takes place in a wide variety of scenarios, among them "finding and settling in a new home environment," and involves making decisions based on a combination of newly acquired environmental knowledge and "recorded representations of environments," such as maps (Golledge 25). It can be broadly defined as "the ability to determine a route, learn it, and retrace or reverse it from memory" (Golledge 25). Focusing on theories of wayfinding in interior environments, Jamshidi and Pati establish four categories, which are theories of perception, theories of spatial knowledge development, theories of mental representation of spatial knowledge, and theories of spatial cognition (299). Lynch's work is discussed within the third category. Following this train of thought, to analyse how the ability to interpret spatial information correctly influences the process of wayfinding, Golledge brings out Lynch's study of legibility of urban environments. According to Lynch, just as we can grasp coherent patterns of recognizable symbols on a printed page, "a legible city would be one whose districts or landmarks or pathways are easily identifiable and are easily grouped into an overall pattern" (3). In the process of wayfinding, a good environmental image provides a sense of emotional

security and helps to avoid the anxiety that comes with disorientation. Lynch's idea that mental images of space are produced by the interaction between immediate sensations and memories of the past is particularly significant to understand how wayfinding works for Adichie's characters. To build an image, the observer "selects, organizes, and endows with meaning what he sees" (Lynch 6). The objects involved in the creation of this image should have some practical and emotional meaning for the observer and the cues can be visual, such as colour and shape, but they can also appeal to other senses. This leads to Lynch's idea of *imageability*, which he defines as "that quality in a physical object which gives it a high probability of evoking a strong image in any given observer" (9). This quality, which can also be called *legibility* or *visibility*, facilitates the creation of mental images of the environment and impacts the process of wayfinding.[2] With this in mind, Lynch notes that the sense of home is "stronger when home is not only familiar but distinctive as well" (5). In this essay, Lynch's terms are meant to go beyond his original idea of how individuals interpret spatial information in urban environments. The concepts of *imageability* and *wayfinding* are extended and remodelled to grasp the symbolic navigation of gendered cultural and social complexities in terms of migrants' psychological and emotional experiences of orientation.

Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's main concerns include colonization, migration, race and identity, as well as dominant societal conceptions of gender roles. Her commitment to women's empowerment, straightforwardly presented in her non-fictional works, established her as one of the celebrity feminists in contemporary popular culture, especially after being famously quoted by Beyoncé in her hit album *Lemonade*. Adichie has published three highly acclaimed novels: *Purple Hibiscus* (2003), *Half of a Yellow Sun* (2006) about the Biafran war, and *Americanah* (2013), and a short story collection, *The Thing around Your Neck* (2009). Most of the critical works that address the concept of home as part of the migrants' feeling of (not)belonging in Adichie's fiction focus

[2] Lynch developed the concept of *imageability* as a theoretical tool for studying spatial behaviour in urban environments. Its applicability in the research of individuals' sense of place and related feelings of anxiety or wellbeing has generated a wide range of interdisciplinary studies in human's navigation in real and virtual environments, including recent interest in navigating in information space.

on *Americanah*.[3] Although the collection of short stories *The Thing around Your Neck* (2009) anticipated themes such as displacement, disorientation, and the yearning for home, it has yet to receive the kind of critical attention it deserves.

My intention, in what follows, is to explore the process of wayfinding as an exilic experience in three of the twelve stories that make up the collection: "Imitation," "On Monday of Last Week," and "The Thing around Your Neck." Bringing the three stories under spotlight reveals a discernible pattern that makes a fertile ground upon which to discuss how gender influences the idea of home in migrants' orientation in new urban and domestic environments determines. In an attempt to avoid one generic story about Nigerians in America, Adichie engages with class and how it "often determines the kind of immigrant that one is" ("A Conversation with James Mustich"). The stories are also noteworthy for the way they explore the category of class and offer more nuanced representation of migrant experience. The protagonists are young Nigerian women, who move to the United States and after the initial discomfort of indeterminacy, gradually begin to distinguish real from fictive home. These three strong-willed women share a determination to not accept the place assigned to them in America. Through the analysis of the process of wayfinding in the selected stories, I argue that in her rejection of predominant gender-role expectations and recognition of the potential of female agency in modern Nigerian diaspora, Adichie draws a parallel between the protagonists' reorientation in the exilic space and their reorientation in their intimate relationships. Home is depicted not as a fixed location, but as a transitional space, an unstable assemblage of mental images of desired and remembered experiences. The three objects that have practical and emotional meaning for the protagonists and illustrate *imageability* as defined by Lynch—masks, mirrors, and letters—mark the reference point in their exilic wayfinding.

1. "IMITATION": THE WIFE'S MASKS

"Imitation" is the story of a young woman called Nkem, married "into the coveted league, [of] the Rich Nigerian Men Who Sent Their Wives to America to Have Their Babies" there (*The Thing* 26). At first, her husband,

[3] See Amonyeze, "Writing a New Reputation"; Berning, "Narrative Ethics and Alterity"; Feldner, *Narrating the New African Diaspora*; Taylor, "Language, Race, and Identity."

Obiora, one of the fifty most influential Nigerian businessmen, visits his family almost every month, but after an important government contract he decides to travel to Philadelphia only for the summer. Adichie explicitly seeks to situate home-space within the realm of imitation. In the opening lines of the story "Nkem is staring at the bulging, slanted eyes of the Benin mask on the living room mantel as she learns about her husband's girlfriend" (*The Thing* 22). The image alerts the reader to the object toward which the protagonist is oriented—a Benin mask. The mask is simultaneously the point from which the narrative unfolds and the spatial reference that allows Nkem to gradually understand and redefine her position in the home-space. Following Lynch's model, the mask, which appears as the material representation of imageability, is endowed with numerous symbolic meanings. Placing it on the living room mantel stresses its central position in relation to the other objects in the house. Time and time again, the mask challenges Nkem to decipher its mystery. In spatial terms, the mask is looking at her no less than she is looking at it, reciprocity that brings forth ambiguity and disquiet. The image is a tangible metaphor for the unreal, in the sense of unauthentic, an imitation, as suggested by the title of the story. Masks are often used for ceremonial purposes as part of a ritual or performance, where they acquire multiple meanings. Their role "is not only to conceal the identity of the wearer. The mask actually creates a new identity" (Finley 13). The masks in Nkem's living room are a disturbing reminder of the ritual nature of her relationship with Obiora, conceived as a performance of two masked actors. They function as the other of the self, a façade that Nkem projects out to her husband, but also to her American neighbours and Nigerian friends. However, she is not the only one hiding behind a mask; her neighbours, her housemaid, and even her friend Ijemamaka seem to be wearing masks. Masks, which are supposed to orient the observer in space, in fact complicate and destabilize Nkem's wayfinding.

Staring at the Benin mask with its abstract features, Nkem is intrigued but uncertain about the nature of the reality behind its appearance. Her neighbours' comments are not of much help; they consider the Benin mask "noble," which ironically hints at the myth of the noble savage, a term used by abolitionists, whose "portrayals of Africans as perhaps noble but also innocent or 'simple' savages were patronizing and unintentionally derogatory" (Brantlinger 170). Reading home as mask and mask as home suggests that it can be quite frustrating for the migrant to cope with the contrast between reality and the desire to call a particular space "home."

In the absence of clear indicators that mark the route in an unfamiliar diasporic context, imagination becomes crucial in wayfinding. Nkem imagines the Benin people who carved the original masks and those who were chosen to be their custodians and then projects upon her home an assemblage of these fictional fragments.

Lynch reminds us that in the process of wayfinding the mental image can be strengthened by providing the viewer with "a symbolic diagram," such as a map or written instructions (11). It is important to note that Nkem conceives images herself only in the absence of indications by her husband. It is no surprise that when Nkem tries to read the mask, it remains lifeless, but "when Obiora talks about it—and all the rest—he makes them seem breathing, warm" (*The Thing* 25). In Lynch's terms, he provides "a symbolic diagram," a set of instructions to guide his wife in her understanding of home. In other words, her husband seems to be the only source of meaning-making for the masks. Significantly, Obiora always ends his stories about the masks by saying that they should appreciate what they have, a comment which is not so much a tribute to the treasures in the National Museum in Lagos as a reminder that Nkem should be grateful for her social position.

It becomes apparent that imitation has always been around in her marriage, but it is when she learns that another woman has moved into her Lagos house, that Nkem decides to stand up for herself. Driven by a mixture of self-doubt about her own reaction to her husband's infidelity, she talks to her housemaid Amaechi, who suspects that Nkem has always been aware that her husband has girlfriends, but has deliberately refused to raise the issue. Does this mean that she is not so much afraid of losing Obiora's love, as of losing control over her domestic territory, the only space she relates to? It might not be an authentic home, but their Lagos house is still *her* house. Considering home both literally and metaphorically, we can say that she defends "both the private spaces of intimate social relations and domestic security" (Silverstone 442). Nkem's defence of domestic security should not surprise us, given the fact that before Obiara, she dated married men to help her pay her father's hospital bill or buy furniture for her parents' home. She even considered being the fourth wife of a Muslim man, "so that he would help her with her younger siblings' education," (*The Thing* 31) although eventually he did not propose. When asked about polygamy, Adichie admits that "in some ways [it] is quite accepted," but explains that the story is "less about the other woman" and more "about a woman who finds the possibility of a voice,

who hasn't had a voice for so long, for whom it hasn't occurred that it's possible to speak" ("Interview with Ramona Koval"). Hearing about her husband's affair gives Nkem "an opportunity to speak, to find that she could in fact have a voice and have a say" ("Interview with Ramona Koval"). Adichie, known as a boldly outspoken feminist, asserts that "many people believe that a woman's feminist response to a husband's infidelity should be to leave. But [she] think[s] staying can also be a feminist choice, depending on the context" ("Dear Ijeawele"). Nkem's decision to not leave her husband can be viewed as a feminist response, not because it fits into a feminist position about confronting infidelity, but because it foregrounds one of the central themes in feminist theories, that of reclaiming female agency. Doubtless to say, context is essential for the understanding of her choice.

Nkem's house is in a lovely suburb near Philadelphia and her white, pale-haired neighbours appear likeable, although somewhat "plastic," as her husband calls them. It is often assumed that when African immigrants come into contact with the white civilization, their self-esteem collapses and they end up emulating white people in an attempt to be accepted on equal terms. Emmanuel Ngwira's reading of "Imitation" and "The Thing around Your Neck" aligns with such argument. Ngwira starts from the premise that "migrants always strive to gather 'signs of approval and acceptance' so as to be allowed access to mainstream cultures," which "often result[s] in the fetishisation of host cultures" (292). He goes on to claim that "Nkem's reverence of the images of the Liberty Bell and Benjamin Franklin" reveals "her othered status and particularly her desire to escape such a status through mimicry of American life" (Ngwira 292). However, we should not forget to take into account the parameter of class in Nigerian diaspora. In this sense, I believe that Nkem does not seek signs of approval and acceptance from her white neighbours; she likes them and feels she belongs in America. She sends pictures of Liberty Bell to her friends in Lagos not because she wants to escape her othered status through mimicry of American life, but because she tries to fit into the league of rich Nigerian men's wives and so acts as such. Her behaviour denotes her unconditional obedience to Nigerian patriarchal customs, rather than to American gleam culture, as suggested by the moment when she deems unnecessary for Obiora to ask her to marry him, "she would have been happy simply to be told" (*The Thing* 32). Following the same line of thought, Heather Hewett rightly points out that the story "directly examine[s] the position of women in formal patriarchal relationships such

as marriage" (81). It is important to notice the interdependence between migration experience and marital/romantic relationship for Adichie's female characters. Actually, the three selected stories present a similar pattern in that migrant experience channelled through wayfinding in the new home-space causes the renegotiation of the female protagonists' relationships with their partners (husband in "Imitation" and "On Monday of Last Week," and boyfriend in "The Thing around Your Neck").

Nkem's use of the word *home* to refer to both their house in Lagos and their house in Philadelphia reveals an understanding of home as simultaneously two places and neither of them:

> And it hardly feels right, referring to the house in Lagos, in the Victoria Garden City neighborhood where mansions skulk behind high gates, as home. *This* is home, this brown house in suburban Philadelphia with sprinkles that make perfect water acts in the summer. (*The Thing* 34)

She sometimes misses Lagos, but her feeling unhomely in Philadelphia and her decision to return to Nigeria are not caused by estrangement from the local community or by being othered by her American neighbours; she is being refused legitimacy and, in a way, "othered" by her own husband. Obiora lives with his girlfriend in their Lagos house and his wife receives an African mask as a gift when he visits instead. Initially, gender relations within the home-space in the new country of residence are a natural extension of the normative structure of social life in the country of origin. While her husband Obiora moves freely between Nigeria and America and feels comfortable in both places, Nkem is trapped in her home in Philadelphia. Her movement is limited to the domestic space. She is described wandering in and out the living room, which together with the kitchen, the bedroom, and the bathroom functions as a spatial zone heavily loaded with signs of supressed female agency. In this apparent domestic microcosm, a certain ritual takes place in each room. The bathroom appears as a space of containment and disciplining, where Nkem is expected to perform two rituals staging her submissiveness to the dominant models of behaviour, i.e., smoothing her hair and soaping Obiora's back in the shower. Women's body norms and beauty ideals have long been regarded as a means of subjection, so a cultural fixation on certain standards has become "an obsession about female obedience" (Wolf 187). In an act of disobedience, transgression and liberation from the constraints of having to wear a mask, Nkem decides to cut her hair

close to the scalp and move back to Lagos.[4] Gaining visibility constitutes an important strategy towards empowerment. By cutting her hair, she creates a representation of herself resistant to monolithic categorizations. Nkem frees herself of the role of being a passive model of a rich man's wife and embraces the active role of identifying her own path and choosing an alternative route in the process of wayfinding.

2. "ON MONDAY OF LAST WEEK": THE BABYSITTER'S MIRROR

Like "Imitation," "On Monday of Last Week" is set in America and mostly within the limits of the domestic space and, like in "Imitation," home, where gender, migration, and class intersect, appears as fictional and fictive. A young Nigerian woman called Kamara travels to Philadelphia to reunite with her husband Tobechi. They had met in their final years at university, but had lived apart from each other for some years—Kamara teaching in a secondary school and doing a master's degree and Tobechi working as a taxi-driver and a manager at a Burger King. In Philadelphia, Kamara babysits for a young family—wife Tracy, an African-American and her husband Neil—white Jewish. The opening scene shows Kamara standing in front of the bathroom mirror in Neil and Tracy's house, imagining Tracy caressing her body with her paint-stained fingers (*The Thing* 74). The highly imageable point of departure in Kamara's wayfinding story is the mirror, signifying both self and "other" and producing a mental image of home out of an assemblage of complex symmetries. The mirror often stands for the motif of the double, bringing forward the opposites authentic/unauthentic and real/fictional. The author forges a mode of representation of Kamara's experience through the mirror as a way of interrogating the boundary between real and idealized home in gender terms.

In Lynch's theory, an environmental image can be analysed in three components: identity, structure and meaning (8). The mirror is clearly identified in the narrative and, as it comes, has emotional meaning for the protagonist. It is also visible at a structural level, albeit through a more sophisticated three-axis model. Adichie constructs the idea of home at the intersection of three spaces: Kamara's home in Nigeria, her home in

[4] Heba Sharobeem interprets Nkem's act differently. She does not see it as a revolutionary act and holds that it actually "shows that how the female body has to somehow pay a price" (30).

Philadelphia, and Tracy's home, where Kamara works as a babysitter. Kamara's mirror is invested with the tension produced by constantly negotiating the notion of home as a borderscape between desire and reality, self-perception and the world of reference. Tracy's house presents a model of the desired space, a mirror image of Kamara's idea of ideal home. The kitchen is comfortable and cosy and its description—overwhelmingly positive. It is the place where Neil first interviews Kamara with what strikes her as an excess of positive thinking and political correctness when he insists on her using the word "biracial" instead of "half-caste" to refer to his son reveals his anxieties and fragility. She is surprised to learn that while in Nigeria "half-caste" means "cool, light-skinned good looks," in America it is "a bad word" (*The Thing* 76). Mirroring here reverses the meaning of the word "half-caste" and urges the reader to consider the pressure of dislocation in both space and language. The story shows how, as Daria Tunca notes, the "sense of (un)belonging" in African-American experiences relates to migrants' lack of first-hand knowledge of America (293). If the mental image of "we" is based on what is common, then misleading readings and generalizations can lead to perpetuating barriers of ethnicity, place of birth, or gender.

Following Adichie's attention to the class dimension in migration, I would say that it actually affects the protagonists' self-perception and their mode of wayfinding. Although it is difficult to categorize the female protagonists of the selected stories as belonging to a clear-cut social class, Nkem, Kamara, and Akunna (from the story "The Thing around Your Neck") come across as being rich, middle class, and poor, respectively. Kamara's position would fit into the findings of recent studies which show that "it is not unusual to find middle-class, college-educated women working in other nations as private domestic workers," particularly women coming from countries which colonialism made poorer (Hondagneu-Sotelo 19). At first sight, social inequality appears to be of no account as Kamara does not feel uneasy with her job as a babysitter. What annoys her is Neil's "assumption that English [is] somehow his personal property" and although Tobechi had warned her against mentioning her education, she tells Neil about her master's degree (*The Thing* 76). It is interesting to note that the remark that annoys Kamara most in the interview is the same remark that Adichie was shocked to hear when she went to university in the United States and her roommate asked her where she had learned to speak English so well ("The Danger of a Single Story"). Adichie exemplifies her idea of "a single story of Africa" with her roommate's

patronizing attitude. In this single story, there is "no possibility of a connection as human equals" ("Single Story" 13:22). Kamara's reaction to Neil's question is a reaction to this single story. By pointing out that she has a master's degree, Kamara attempts to speak to Neil on equal terms; meanwhile, what really intrigues her is Neil's wife.

At the end of the interview Kamara asks Neil about Josh's mother and it turns out that she is only "partially" absent from home. The absence of the child's mother leaves a trace in the real and imaginary domestic space and functions as a contextual clue to Kamara's wayfinding in the home-space. Tracy is an artist and spends most of the time working on an important project in the basement of the house. A place or space can be gendered in different ways and "we can observe patterns of spatial behavior associated with gender significance, perhaps conveying adherence to conventional gender norms, or perhaps transgressing these norms" (Richardson 9). In *Space, Place, and Gender*, Doreen Massey writes that the "place called home is frequently personified by, and partakes of the same characteristics as those assigned to, Woman/Mother/lover" (10). This interpretation is tied to those cultural expectations of mothers that require them to demonstrate self-sacrifice, placing their child's and husband's well-being before their own needs. Such representation of space draws our attention to Tracy's absence, which clearly transgresses the norms that assume the mother's physical and emotional availability at any time as the main care-giver in the household.

Adichie draws a complex map of the home-space imageability, employing the mirror motif to distinguish the two levels in Tracy's house: above ground and below ground. The above-ground level is open, legible, and ordered; it is a peaceful place of family life run day-to-day by a caring father. The basement is exclusively Tracy's space. After three months of babysitting Josh and listening to Neil's worries, Kamara is curious if and when Tracy leaves the basement. Sometimes she hears sounds coming from the basement, "a door slamming shut or faint strains of classical music" (*The Thing* 79) and when she asks Josh about his mother, the boy only repeats that they should not bother her. We might be tempted to interpret a mysterious woman confined to a space inaccessible to the family and the babysitter in the light of a long tradition of keeping women locked up, concealing their presence in the house, in its extreme form represented in literature by Rochester's first wife Bertha Mason, the "invisible woman." If we assume that Tracy's house mirrors Kamara's ideal home, then how can the basement space be interpreted and how does

its existence affect the home-space? Lynch argues that in wayfinding the mental image should be "open-ended, adaptable to change, allowing the individual to continue to investigate and organize reality: there should be blank spaces where he can extend the drawing for himself" (9). The basement is this blank space where Kamara extends the drawing for herself.

For months Tracy's existence is like "a background reality" (*The Thing* 79) until one Monday afternoon a strange thing happens that causes an unexpected twist in the story. Adichie's argument that we would be much happier and "much freer to be our true individual selves, if we didn't have the weight of gender expectations" (*We Should All Be Feminists* 34) is particularly apposite here. On that Monday "Tracy appear[s], curvy in leggings and a tight sweater, smiling, squinting, pushing away the dreadlocks from her face with paint-stained fingers" (*The Thing* 80) and the basement space suddenly acquires a new dimension. The narrative challenges gender expectations and the basement emerges as a space of independence, a space where Tracy can maintain her privacy and forge a professional career as an artist, in Virginia Woolf's words, "a room of her own" (6). Kamara is wrong to assume that Tracy would not be familiar with the kitchen. In fact, she is, which subverts the belief that women cannot be successful in both their career and child care. Such awareness demonstrates how migratory experiences trouble stable identities, "redefining woman's role as wife, daughter, or mother" as well as her sense of home (Ryan 1231). Kamara shows interest in Tracy's work, but in fact she is more curious about the basement and the strange objects it might hide—the coach, the cluttered tables, and coffee-stained mugs (*The Thing* 88). Tracy's basement acts as a magnet in Kamara's wayfinding. However, the process is undermined by incomprehensible signs, considering that Kamara traces her path in accordance with the logic of preconceived notions of gender. Not sure how to interpret these signs, including Tracy's unexpected offer to paint her nude, Kamara feels disoriented. She literally begins "to bump into things too often" (*The Thing* 80) since the day Tracy unveils the riddle of the basement. Thus, the basement as a physical space is perceived by Kamara as a mode of corporeal awareness of her disorientation and the need for an active interpretation of all imageable details. It also makes her aware of the different gender roles she and Tracy are expected to perform in their intimate relationships.

Mysterious Tracy reflects the idea of desired or fictional home. It is this mirror reality or "background reality," as Kamara calls it, that makes the domestic space she shares with Tobechi bearable. Recognizing the mirror as a significant marker also helps the reader navigate the text and create mental images of how the characters transform and are transformed by space and place. In the context of almost complete absence of the female figure from the perfect family-space, Kamara's perception of herself as a child caregiver blends with expectations about life in America and memories about her home town. The inhospitable flat she shares with her husband seems to be produced by inverting the positive image of Tracy's house. Parenting, which is most natural to Neil, is something Tobechi decides to avoid. Kamara's marriage and her home in America are juxtaposed with her vision of ideal family-home and her happy memories of their first encounter at university. She finds Tobechi, with his false American accent, theatrical and somehow vulgar against pleasant memories of hope, of how "they took bucket baths together in the bathroom with slimy walls" and "cooked on his little stove outside," or how "they had eaten the soggy grilled meat with raw onions that made their eyes water" in the storm (*The Thing* 83–85). In *Belonging: A Culture of Place*, bell hooks admits that when she was living away from home, she used her "early life experience in Kentucky as the standard against which [she] judged the substantive quality of [her] life" and adds that it is "easier to look back at the places we left and view them in a more positive light when we were far away" (60). Undeniably, Kamara's happy memories shape her expectations about her married life in America in crucial ways, but a shared past is not enough for her to abandon her dreams and accept the role of a grateful wife. The transformation of home as a place of hope in Nigeria into a place of failure in America may be seen as a result of Kamara's personal growth and reorientation. In the process of wayfinding, she has gained control over the space she inhabits and the path she follows. Sara Ahmed argues that for the migrant subject, "home becomes the impossibility and necessity" of their future, "rather than the past that binds the subject to a given place," (*Strange Encounters* 78). The house Kamara shares with Tobechi in America lacks this orientation towards the future. In their different ways, Nkem and Kamara perceived home image mirrors the reshaping of their intimate relationships. In this sense, migration experiences become a medium, a magnifying glass through which the two women observe, interpret, and reimagine home.

3. "THE THING AROUND YOUR NECK": THE DAUGHTER'S LETTER

"The Thing around Your Neck" revolves around the story of a young woman, Akunna, who moves to America after winning the American visa lottery. Akunna belongs to the group of immigrants coming from a poor and extremely vulnerable background. Central to Adichie's engagement with gendered orientation in the migratory space in the selected stories is the class dimension. Hence, the analysis of "The Thing around Your Neck" prompts us to consider in what way, due to her vulnerability, Akunna's exilic wayfinding differs from the spatial situatedness of the other two protagonists. The narrative starts with a generic "you" that relates the protagonist to a sense of shared migrant identity of false expectations and broken dreams: "You thought everybody in America had a car and a gun; your uncles and aunts and cousins thought so, too. Right after you won the American visa lottery, they told you: In a month, you will have a big car. Soon, a big house." (*The Thing* 115). The use of the second-person "you" throughout the story has profound ethical implications. In terms of Adichie's linguistic choice, the stylistic effect of an anonymous narrator addressing Akunna involves the reader, as the actual addressee of the narrative, more closely in the protagonist's experiences. "You" involves "me" as a reader in the young woman's experience. The role of the invisible interlocuter can be interpreted in a number of ways; it can be the author orienting the character in the migratory space, or Akunna's mother, who is not given a voice until the end of the story, when she answers her daughter's letter, or Akunna's own consciousness, reflecting upon her perception of reality from a privileged vantage point. The strategy of obscuring the deictic coordinates enables the author to create an intense dialogue with the protagonist and the reader to perform their own wayfinding in the narrative space.

Adichie addresses the complexity of what Lynch identifies as "the fear that comes with disorientation" (5) in the description of Akunna's mixed feelings about writing home. Every month she puts half of her earnings in a brown envelope and sends it to her parents, but never writes a letter, for she feels that there is "nothing to write about" (*The Thing* 118). After living for some time in America, she is eventually in the mood to write to her family and friends. Adichie builds a paragraph in which every sentence starts with the words "you wanted to write about/that," (*The Thing* 118) which emphasizes both the necessity to tell the story about a Nigerian immigrant in America from her own perspective and Akunna's own

uncertainty as to what and how she should write about her experience, afraid that her story might be misinterpreted under the magnifying glass of her family's painful story of hardship and hope. Within the shifting parameters of her story of home-space, what appears unstable is the position from which Akunna views stories on both sides of the Atlantic, i.e., the place from which she is writing. The letter, real or imagined, an object evoking immediate sensations and memories, serves as "broad frame of reference" (Lynch 4) in terms of imageability in the course of Akunna's wayfinding in America. At a structural level, the letter marks the stages of the wayfinding process. At first, Akunna stays for a while with her relatives in a small town in Main, but is forced to flee and after taking the Greyhound bus to the last stop, ends up in Connecticut, completely lost and alone. In the initial stage of disorientation, she is afraid to write a letter to her parents. In the second stage, a romantic relationship with a young American man from a well-off family helps her in her reading of the material signs that connect her to the outside world. This newly acquired sense of safety empowers her to write home, only to receive a letter from her mother announcing her father's death. The letter she receives marks the last stage, which in the three stories is that of reorientation. Unable to hold to her certainties and reconcile the ghosts of home with her reality in America, Akunna chooses to return to Nigeria. Despite the wide variations in the background story and the motivation behind the decision to move back to Nigeria, the motif of the return in "Imitation" and "The Thing around Your Neck" connect the two stories to another return story, that of *Americanah*'s protagonist, Ifemelu. Ifemelu, who navigates through cityscapes, offering a unique mixture of a love story and the discovery of her black identity on the background of America's tribalism, at the end returns to Nigeria.[5] Golledge argues that one of the processes involved in successful wayfinding is "path integration" or "homing." Homing is a "procedure whereby the traveler constantly updates position with respect to a home base" so that they can "be able to turn and point in the direction of home base and to estimate the straight-line distance that must be traveled to get there" (Golledge 28). Although homing is common among migrants and essential for their orientation, the process is highly underexplored in postcolonial literature. The letter with its imageability is of particular significance in Akunna's performance of homing.

[5] Other notable works about return migration to Africa include Teju Cole's *Every Day Is for the Thief* (2007) or Sefi Atta's *A Bit of Difference* (2012).

To understand how spatial updating works in relation to home, it is necessary to trace Akunna's pathway analyzing the landmarks. The story opens with the juxtaposition of three home-spaces experienced as: fiction, memory, and disillusionment, in the first, second, and third paragraph, respectively. They form a series of images involved in the protagonist's orientation in her understanding of home. The first paragraph ends with a migrant's stereotyped expectations of a "big house" in America, as a symbol of success, a dream Nkem's husband is proud to have achieved and Kamara's husband is eager to achieve. The second paragraph contains a description of Akunna's home in Lagos, where she lived with her parents and her three siblings in a room with unpainted walls and not enough chairs for the visitors. The third paragraph sketches the spatial coordinates to her uncle's faked hospitality in America. He lives in "a thirty-year-old house by a lake" in a small town in Maine (*The Thing* 115). His hospitality looks too idyllic and it is hardly surprising that soon she has to deal with his sexually aggressive behaviour in the basement of his house.

The sequence of spatial images suggests an underlying tension between illusion and reality, placing the class parameter in the immigrant's experience at the focal point of the notion of home. It is interesting to note that some critics have examined Adichie's works from Afropolitan perspective,[6] among them Patrycja Koziel, who claims that stories such as "Imitation" and "The Thing around Your Neck" "portray the problems faced by first-generation Nigerian migrants, who soon come to be called Afropolitans" (27). However, Akunna does not really fit into the definition of Afropolitan, a term coined by Taiye Selasi in her article "Bye Bye Babar," unless we understand the term as Miriam Pahl sees it. For Pahl, Afropolitanism "expresses a certain disposition *towards* the world" of authors like Adichie, whose critical perspective "does not merely praise the possibilities of globalization but more importantly examines persisting power differentials and injustices" (74, italics in original).[7] Adichie's interest in how class influences the experience of migration means that understanding of migrant wayfinding in "The Thing around Your Neck" has more in common with Pahl's interpretation of Afropolitanism as an ethical attitude than with Selasi's original definition of the concept.

[6] The term Afropolitan itself is not unproblematic and has been contested by a number of writers and scholars. See, for instance, Emma Dabiri's "Why I Am Not an Afropolitan."
[7] Tope Folarin offers a different view of Adichie's immigrant stories. He reads them as an example of "accessible contemporary African fiction," accessible meaning expected. See Tope Folarin, "Against Accessibility."

Living in her uncle's house feels like home at the beginning, home understood as "a familiar, if not comfortable space," (Mallett 63) because the language her relatives speak and the food they eat make the place seem familiar. However, everyday familiarity of the space proves insufficient. Unlike the basement in Tracy's house, which functions as a private space of freedom, the basement in Akunna's story is articulated as a space of vulnerability, confinement, and humiliation. The house "was like home. Until [her] uncle came into the cramped basement where [she] slept with all boxes and cartons and pulled [her] forcefully to him, squeezing [her] buttocks, moaning" (*The Thing* 116). Akunna escapes from her uncle and ends up in a little town in Connecticut, where she meets a young man and they become close. Memories of family and friends in Nigeria blend with surprising discoveries about the openness of people in America. For Elena Rodríguez, in *The Thing around Your Neck*, "the reader can appreciate a tension between the global and the local" (99). It might be true for Kamara, but not for Akunna, whose relationship with a white man only accentuates her constant, often failed attempts to negotiate her Nigerian reality with Americans' "single story" about Africa. Adichie shows how the "single story" works both ways: Akunna's Nigerian relatives and friends' perception of America and Americans' perception of Africa. While strangers' comments on Africa and African immigrants perfectly fit into the "single story," her boyfriend's knowledge of African culture is most mystifying and his parents' warm reception "almost" make Akunna think all is normal. Symbolically, her relationship with her boyfriend maps the disruptive nature of her experience in the United States. From her initial surprise when at mentioning Nigeria, she expected him to say "he had donated money to fight AIDS in Botswana" (*The Thing* 119), but he asked her if she was Yoruba or Igbo instead, to calling him "self-righteous" for considering "real Indians" only the poor Indians in Bombay, her undoing of the "single story" threatens to destabilize her own sense of self. Akunna's categorization of Americans as rich/thin and poor/fat (*The Thing* 119) and her attempt to connect the reference poor/rich to real/unreal is another external sign of the class dimension in her mental imagery of the migratory space. Her reaction to the ambiguous stimuli she receives is a disturbing reminder of the troubled relationship between home-space and host-spaces and the fragile link between the protagonist and the migratory space she inhabits.

CONCLUSIONS

The analysis of the three selected stories reveals the significance of physicality in the migrants' conceptualization of home. It brings to light a notable feature of Adichie's narrative strategy, which is the use of spatial references impregnated with symbolic meanings to mediate between her protagonists and the unfamiliar urban environments they have to navigate in America. By reading the stories from a perspective informed by Lynch's notion of imageability we can better understand the complexity of both literal and symbolic orientation in narratives of migration. Here, I join Sara Ahmed, who notes that for the migrant who struggles to draw "the contours of a space of belonging," there appear to be "too many homes to allow place to secure the roots or routes of one's destination" (*Strange Encounters* 77). Similarly, in the process of wayfinding, Nkem, Kamara, and Akunna's immediate sensations interact with memories and hopes, creating multiple mental images of home. To explain how these images are formed and influenced by gender and class, I have explored the imageability of three anchor points—masks, mirrors, and letters—and their role in distinguishing real from imagined home and defining one's route in the migratory space. In comparing the stories, we can locate some differences in terms of class, which clearly condition the self-awareness and situatedness of the protagonists. Just the same, the thematic similarities between the texts facilitate the identification of a common denominator in that Nkem, Kamara, and Akunna's unsatisfactory and somewhat theatrical relationships with their partners affect and are affected by their wayfinding in America. As a consequence, they undergo a three-stage transformation—disorientation, orientation, and reorientation—and gain agency and control over their domestic space and decision-making.

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"The Sin Eaters" by Sherman Alexie: A Dystopian Island in a Mostly Auspicious Archipelago

"The Sin Eaters" de Sherman Alexie: Una isla distópica en un archipiélago más prometedor

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Abstract: The belated publication of Sherman Alexie's story "The Sin Eaters" as part of the collection *The Toughest Indian in the World* (2000) is worthy of the interest of biographic-textual scholars for its singularity. Not only did the author delay its appearance due to the very sinister tone of the story, but he decided to include it at the very heart of a collection, which is very different both stylistically and thematically. Paradoxically, however, the dystopian vision of the United States in the late 1950s offered by "The Sin Eaters" is an effective "counterweight" to the rest of the materials compiled in the collection. Assisted by the ideas of experts in the field of dystopian fiction, the article analyzes the story as an adequate counterpart and complement to the other, more promising, pictures offered in the volume.
Keywords: dystopian fiction; "termination" policies; Native American fiction; biographic-textual analysis; narratorial voice.
Summary: Introduction: Genesis of the Story. "The Sin Eaters": History and/or Allegory? Main Dystopian Elements in the Story. The Key Role of the Protagonist: Jonah Lot. Closing Remarks.

Resumen: La demorada publicación del relato "The Sin Eaters" de Sherman Alexie en su libro *The Toughest Indian in the World* (2000) es un interesante caso de estudio para los especialistas en crítica biográfico-textual. El autor no solo retrasó su publicación debido a su tono especialmente siniestro, sino que al final decidió incluirlo en una colección de relatos muy distintos tanto en aspectos estilísticos como temáticos. Sin embargo, la visión distópica que "The Sin Eaters" ofrece de los Estados Unidos a finales de los 50 del siglo pasado resulta un "contrapeso" muy efectivo al resto de los materiales recogidos en el libro. Con la ayuda de las ideas propuestas por expertos en

literatura distópica, el artículo analiza este relato como un complemento idóneo a los demás contenidos—que son más esperanzadores—de la colección.
Palabras clave: literatura distópica; políticas de "terminación"; literatura nativo-americana; análisis biográfico-textual; voz narrativa.
Sumario: Introducción: Génesis del relato. "The Sin Eaters": ¿Historia y/o alegoría? Elementos distópicos principales del relato. El papel fundamental del protagonista: Jonah Lot. Conclusiones.

INTRODUCTION: GENESIS OF THE STORY

In his riveting and enlightening book, *The Fluid Text* (2002), John Bryant argues that variations in the text of a literary work often generate valuable records of the interactions taking place between the artist and the social milieu in which he is working. According to Bryant, the literary work is not a fixed object that can be approached without bearing in mind the protean transformations it undergoes before its final publication. Indeed, besides being "the means by which fixed texts are established," textual scholarship also "reflects the judgments of the makers of texts, both the originating writer and subsequent editors; it is, therefore, inescapably critical" (Bryant 17). Relying on the seminal work of scholars such as Walter W. Greg ("Rational"), Fredson Bowers (*Textual*), and G. Thomas Tanselle (*Guide*), Bryant comes to the conclusion that, like most other cultural artifacts, literary works are a locus of private and public energies, since "through the processes of authorial, editorial, and cultural revision [they] evolve from one version to the next and emerge from time to time as documents to be read by readers" (112). Thus, as Tanselle has noted in his books and lectures, there is no way of separating the analysis of a literary work from the questions regarding its genesis and constitution, for the latter are integral to how they are finally reconstructed by readers and critics alike (*Rationale* 16).

The story under scrutiny in this article, Sherman Alexie's "The Sin Eaters" (2000), seems like an apropos instance of a literary piece whose vicissitudes before publication lead us to read it as the kind of "fluid text" that Bryant so cogently discussed in his volume. As the author himself has declared in several interviews (see Purdy 38), the story had been conceived several years prior to its appearance in the collection *The Toughest Indian in the World*. Not only that, but Alexie had originally intended to develop the short narrative into a full-fledged novel exposing the conditions faced by Native Americans in the 1950s—albeit "an alternate 1950s" (Purdy 38). In fact, the story presents an acid critique of the assimilative policies of the

US government during the so-called "Termination" period. However, as Alexie explained to Jessica Chapel, the tone of the story turned "literally too dark and ominous to be sustained for the length of a book," and so it sadly became a "failed novel" (Chapel 97). The short excerpt below provides ample evidence of the darkness and sinister atmosphere that prevail throughout the whole narrative:

> 'There was so much blood,' I said. 'A whole river of blood. And the Indians were trying to swim through it. Trying to swim for home. But the soldiers kept pulling us out of the water. They skinned us and hung us up to dry. Then they ate us up. They ate every one of us. And they ate every part of us. Except our skins. They fed our skins to the dogs. And the dogs were fighting over our skins. Just growling and fighting. It's true.' ("Sin Eaters" 80)

It therefore comes as no surprise that, after writing the main body of the story, the author should decide to put the manuscript to rest for some time while he completed other projects that proved less emotionally onerous. At the time, Alexie was also writing *Reservation Blues* (1995), which, despite also referring to the trials of some young Native characters on a Spokane Indian reservation (see Andrews 225–26), does not present the extremely grim and dystopian picture of "The Sin Eaters."

In the opening chapter of his book *Flawed Texts and Verbal Icons* (1984), renowned textual critic Hershel Parker maintains that although "all authority in literature comes from the author, . . . that authority can be blurred or wholly lost and, paradoxically, it can persist even when the author thinks it has been removed" (16). Parker's point is basically that different kinds of "accidents" may happen between the moment the text was first written and when it finally sees the public light that will somehow transform the intended meanings in the original work (Parker 3). These so-called "accidents" may typically be due to the type of expurgations or revisions that authors and editors are likely to incorporate to the original manuscripts; however, as this specialist admits, these changes may also happen because of format, generic or contextual transformations that will inevitably affect the relation of readers to texts. In this regard, it is fairly evident that "The Sin Eaters" shifting position from being the skeleton of a longer work of fiction to becoming a chapter in a short story collection has had important consequences for how the readership of the work has experienced and interpreted the text. Tanselle explains that, although we tend to think of literary works as "ineluctable entities," in fact each new

reproduction of it is "an approximation, forever open to question and always tempting one to remedial action" (*Rationale* 14).

Despite the remarkably gloomy and foreboding elements in the story that prevented him from expanding it into a fully developed novel, Alexie still liked the topic very much, as well as the perspective of the innocent boy in the narrative. He realized that "The Sin Eaters" could act "as a very nice counterweight" to the rest of the stories in *The Toughest* (Chapel 97), so he decided to place it right in the middle of the collection, as some sort of caesura between the two halves—four stories in each—of the volume. It is important to clarify that two important events took place in the life of the author during those last few years of the twentieth century that somehow explain his final decision to include the short story in the collection. On the one hand, Alexie was making then the move between the reservation of his childhood and young manhood to the more urban context of Seattle, a fact that clearly had an impact on the contents of *The Toughest* (see Campbell 117; Doenges). As most critics have remarked, in this collection "Alexie primarily investigates Indians living in urban areas, a departure from his typical focus on the reservation" (Grassian 151). On the other hand, due to his short-lived adventures in the movie industry, he suffered from "a crippling case of writer's block" for the first time in his career and was not able to write for almost two complete years (Sonneborn 49). Paradoxically, this sad occurrence gave him the opportunity to revisit some of his earlier work both as a source of inspiration and to figure out what new direction he wanted to give to his fiction. Although his production underwent a significant change with the turn of the century—involving the emergence of themes such as sexuality or class issues—, experts also agree that there is a degree of continuity with his earlier literary works, since his "extensions and reworkings" of topics and characters are evident in many of his narratives down the line (see Berglund xxiv). It is in light of this observation that the incorporation of "The Sin Eaters" to the 2000 collection of short stories makes complete sense, for it does function as a counterpoint or a reminder of where the origins of the identity problems of many of the characters lie. It could also be argued that those identity problems became already apparent in Alexie's earlier novel *Indian Killer* (1996), in which the protagonist, John Smith, is also a victim of the transit many Native American underwent into urban contexts (see Krupat 98–122)

The body of this article is divided into three different sections that try to answer the following research questions: 1) What induced Alexie to

write "The Sin Eaters" to begin with?; 2) What are the main dystopian elements in the story?; 3) How important is the main character in the story? The key aim of the contribution is to demonstrate that, despite its apparent inconsistency with the other stories included in the collection, "The Sin Eaters," with its heavily historical and allegorical undercurrents, provides a suitable anchor for many of the issues tackled in the book: from identity crises and isolation, through loss and trauma, to family relations and morality. Although the story is plagued with much of the anger and outrage present in Alexie's earlier works—most notably in the aforementioned *Indian Killer* (1996)—, it also includes elements of hope and resilience that resonate with the other stories. Even if the dystopian character of "The Sin Eaters" is difficult to deny, one could also read the story as an inhospitable island in a mostly congenial enclave.

1. "THE SIN EATERS": HISTORY AND/OR ALLEGORY?

Although "The Sin Eaters" opens in a rather surrealist tone, with the young narrator waking up from a terrifying nightmare about war: "I dreamed about war on the night before the war began" ("Sin Eaters" 76), it is clear from the outset that the author decided to set the story at a very precise historical crossroads, one which was to determine the future of many Native Americans. By the third paragraph of the story, it is evident that we are being transported to the late 1950s, a time of great economic prosperity for mainstream U.S. society, but which did not have the same kind of impact on most of the ethnic minorities in the country:

> Those were the days before the first color televisions were smuggled onto the reservation, but after a man with blue eyes had dropped two symmetrical slices of the sun on Japan. All of it happened before a handsome Catholic was assassinated in Dallas, but after the men with blue eyes had carried dark-eyed children into the ovens and made them ash. (76–77)

Indeed, since the early 1950s the U.S. government had begun to implement legislation and policies geared towards the "Termination" of federal relations with Indian tribes. As Vine Deloria, Jr. has explained, "The Congressional policy of termination, advanced in 1954 and pushed vigorously for nearly a decade, was a combination of the old systematic hunt and the deprivation of services" (54). Under the pretense of offering the tribes more freedom and self-determination, laws such as House

Concurrent Resolution 108 were in fact utilized to take away the sovereignty over their lands and to try to assimilate Indians into the lifestyle of WASP U.S. society. Deloria rightly concludes his discussion of the heated debates over the effectiveness of the policy by stating that termination was "used as a weapon against the Indian people in a modern war of conquest" (76). In "The Sin Eaters," Alexie allegorically reimagines what that "modern war of conquest" could have looked like for some of the members of the Interior Salish Native tribes. The protagonist of the story, Jonah Lot, is swallowed by the whale of an opprobrious system and forced to live in the belly of that system that deprives him of everything he had—a home, a family, his body, and even his memories.

From the beginning of the story, it becomes clear that the narrative will be taken over by imagery related to warfare. One should also remember that these were the years when U.S. imperialism became particularly blatant in other parts of the globe—especially, in Southeast Asia. In fact, the arrival of the armed forces to the reservation does not differ substantially from what was happening at the time in countries such as Korea, the Philippines or Vietnam:

> Together, my parents and I stepped into our front yard and stared up into the sky. We saw the big planes roar noisily through the rough air above the reservation. We saw the soldiers step from the bellies of those planes and drop toward the earth. We saw a thousand parachutes open in a thousand green blossoms. All over the Spokane Indian Reservation, all over every reservation in the country, those green blossoms fell onto empty fields, onto powwow grounds, and onto the roofs of tribal schools and health clinics. ("Sin Eaters" 82)

It is no surprise that the protagonist of the story should introduce himself as "a dark-eyed Indian boy" ("Sin Eaters" 77) and should refer quite often to the skin color of her people throughout the narrative. By doing so, he is drawing a clear parallel with a recurring theme in Civil Rights speeches and, later on, in those of the American Indian Movement. According to several of the leaders in these social crusades, Black and Native Americans had more in common with the Africans and the Southeastern Asians than they did with the Anglo-Saxon culture of the U.S. (see Carroll and Noble 409). Martin Luther King, Jr, Russell Means, and Cesar Chavez were convinced that they were heading some form of colonial rebellion against a government that was proving unable to deal with the problems that their

peoples faced after World War II. This failure was particularly clamorous in the case of Native Americans who were being displaced from and dispossessed of their lands by the "relocation" programs sponsored by the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) and sent to urban areas where most of them felt completely alienated. Donald Fixico (2000) has written extensively about the awful effects of the termination policies had on Native American populations and their identity (see also Brave Heart and Debruyn 64).

Despite the mostly negative effects of the governmental policies on Native Americans during this period, most experts have underlined that the first stirrings of Pan-Indianism and other forms of tribal confluence found their roots in these difficult times (see Deloria 17–18). Assisted by the National Congress of American Indians (1944) and the newly founded National Indian Youth Council (1961), members of different tribes got together to combat different types of exclusion and discrimination, as well as to strengthen a common consciousness. "The Sin Eaters" includes a few scenes that could be easily read as reflections of these incipient moments in which Indians from various tribes become part of a single "body":

> I recognized none of the other Indian prisoners, or perhaps I recognized all of them. In the haze and heat of the desert, we all looked alike, although I knew intuitively that we could not all look alike, especially given the vast tribal and geographic differences among us. But, ... [w]e could all have been siblings. We could all have been the same person. We could all have been a thousand vestigial reproductions of a single organ, all of us struggling to find a purpose, a space to stand and breathe, enough room to function within the large body of a thing, a person, a crowd called Indian. ("Sin Eaters" 99)

Interestingly, it is at those critical moments when the protagonist and his co-ethnics seem on the verge of losing significant parts of their Native identity and of yielding to the pressures of the "colonial" forces that they build up strength to resist by sticking together. Spicer has referred to these instances of tribal pride and Native convergence as the birth of a pseudo-nationalistic spirit that was to prevail in future generations of American Indians (145). Although these moments mark, of course, some of the few reassuring turns in a mostly gloomy narrative, it will be shown in part three of this article, when the main character takes the centerstage, that there are other elements in the story that provide glimmers of hope in an otherwise preeminently dystopian vision.

In spite of all those explicit and less explicit references to particular historical events and processes, it soon becomes clear that the story should not be read as a piece of historical fiction. On the one hand, there is of course the premature psychology of the twelve-year-old narrator, whose terror at the nightmare he endures early in the story and then at the real invasion and abduction that his people go through later tints the whole atmosphere of the narrative to make it very bleak and suffocating. Besides the gruesome aura that the protagonist's fears cast on most of the scenes, there is also the author's own proclivity to show his characters' "suffering and anguish" by means of inventive metaphors and images (see Berglund xvii). The reader encounters one emblematic example of this proneness to portraying his characters' worst fears in a quasi-lyrical style when the young protagonist realizes early in the story that he is going to be separated from his parents. Rather than simply complaining about the treatment they are receiving and the consequences that this separation is going to have on his future life and identity, the narrator resorts to a line of images that perfectly capture the angst of his current state of mind:

> War is a church. / In my church, my mother and father were frozen in the stained-glass window above the altar. The red glass of my father's bloody face was cradled by the blue glass of my mother's dress. / Memory is a church on fire. . . . The glass darkened with smoke. / The glass melted in the fire. / The glass exploded in the heat. / My parents' faces fell to pieces in my mind only moments after those soldiers landed in our front yard. I began to forget pieces of my parents' faces only moments after I was taken from them. ("Sin Eaters" 85–86)

It is no coincidence that most of the images and metaphors which appear in the story are closely related to the instruments that the colonizing forces used to subjugate and acculturate the indigenous populations—whether it be religion, military aggression or education. What seems unquestionable is that, although these more allegorical parts of the narrative may not speak as directly about the traumas being inflicted on the Native tribes, they usually prove extremely revealing of the type of goals that this "modern war of conquest" was pursuing. Take, for instance, the myth or parable of the "sin eaters" that lends its title to the story and that is interpolated in the narrative once the Natives have been confined in military premises. The reference to this myth seems appropriate for at least two reasons: on the one hand, Native Americans could be easily seen as the scapegoats of a

system that forced them to bear the sins of the settlers; on the other hand, they carried the social stigma that came with the idea that they had to redeem their oppressors' awful deeds. While most of the "prisoners" in the premises have realized by then that both the government and mainstream society are interested in their "blood" ("Sin Eaters" 104–5), a "small Indian man" (105), who appears to be endowed with prophetic qualities, holds a different theory, which is intimately related to the aforementioned myth of the sin eaters:

> 'And do you know what they're doing with all that food?' he asked us. 'They're piling it on every one of those dead bodies. There's a feast on the chest of every of those dead white people out there. And the food is soaking up all of the hate and envy and sloth in those white people. That food is soaking up all the anger and murder and thievery. That food is soaking up all of the adultery and fornication and blasphemy. That food is soaking up all of the lies and greed and hatred.' / . . . 'Children,' he said. 'There is a white body in there for each of us. There's a feast in there for each of us.' ("Sin Eaters" 107)

Be it through fairly specific references to historical events that took place at the time the story covers or by means of allegorical tales that shed light on the harrowing experiences that Native Americans were facing, "The Sin Eaters" presents a dystopian picture of the situation of indigenous peoples in the mid-twentieth century, focusing primarily on their relocation in places very similar to concentration camps. The combination of these different forms and styles of storytelling is not unusual in the works of Alexie since, as he has often explained throughout his career, he is as likely to use forms and materials coming from his own culture as to dig into tropes and genres from other traditions (McNally 30; Berglund xxiv). As several reviewers have pointed out, what seems unique in this particular story is his heavy reliance on elements often found in dystopian fiction and which are not so typical in the rest of his oeuvre (Whittemore).

2. MAIN DYSTOPIAN ELEMENTS IN THE STORY

Before we delve into those aspects of "The Sin Eaters" that turn it into a fairly conventional piece of dystopian fiction, two important observations need to be made. On the one hand, there is a general tendency among scholars to relate this type of literature to "projected futures" in which both

human beings and, sometimes, the environment have been degraded under some form of autocratic rule. Due to this fact, like utopias, dystopias are often discussed as a subgenre of science fiction in which everything has gone as bad as it possibly can, in the case of the latter, or has been perfected, in the case of the former. However, a number of voices have been raised against the idea of thinking of dystopias as purely futuristic and speculative experiments, disconnecting them completely from historical realities. Carl Freedman, for one, has insisted on the critical need to study dystopian fictions in the light of a "concrete continuity" with the past and the present (50). Likewise, Fiona Maurissette warns us in her dissertation on (ethnic) dystopian literature of the dangers of "abstracting the very real lived dystopic experience of marginalized communities" (1) from speculations about the future. In this broader understanding of the dystopian brand of fiction, Alexie's "The Sin Eaters" makes more sense, since the "alternate 1950s" that the author has referred to in interviews show a mixture of the two: an attempt to anchor the story in that historical period, while also enjoying the freedom to move into a longer historical perspective.

On the other hand, although some of the classics in the dystopian tradition—e.g., *Brave New World* or *Nineteen Eighty-Four*—depict the entirety of humankind as victims of disturbing aberrations of socio-political systems "by pointing out their potentially monstrous consequences in the future" (Gottlieb 13), more recent writers of dystopian fiction have preferred to concentrate on particular groups who have already endured the horrors of racial capitalism, patriarchy, imperialism or white settler colonialism firsthand. As Maurissette maintains, these historically rooted narratives "destabilize temporal and spatial specificity" (3) in order to challenge a genre originally dominated by white male authors who mostly disregarded the "historical subjugation" (4) of certain groups. It is little wonder in this sense that the few critical articles so far written on Alexie's "The Sin Eaters" compare it to Margaret Atwood's *The Handmaid's Tale* (1985) rather than to other more canonical works in the tradition. Sabatier calls Alexie's story a "petit frère du *Handmaid's Tale*"[1] (124) because it also describes "des corps déchirés, isolés, manipulés, et des êtres en perdition"[2] (124) of an oppressed group who are enslaved and

[1] A "little brother of *Handmaid's Tale*." (Translation by the author)
[2] "the torn, isolated, and manipulated bodies, and the beings in perdition" (Translation by the author)

utilized by the dominant one. In this regard, "The Sin Eaters" proves to be a special type of dystopian fiction since, rather than as a warning of a dreadful future to come, it should be read as a symptom of the profound psychological wounds that experiences already lived through have left in a particular community (see Brave Heart and Debruyn 61).

In relation to the above-mentioned ideas, one first element in the story that powerfully draws the readers' attention is the number of images that are reminiscent of the Jewish Holocaust and the hideous crimes that the Nazi regime perpetrated during World War II. Besides explicit references to Anne Frank ("Sin Eaters" 80) and racial "contamination" ("Sin Eaters" 93), the way Natives are treated by the federal forces are full of echoes of how Jews were rounded up, imprisoned, and executed by the Third Reich:

> We were forced into cattle chutes and led from station to station. / At the first station, we were shaved bald. / . . . / At the next station, we were stripped of our clothes. Old men and women, young boys and young girls, powerfully built fathers and beautiful mothers, all naked. . . . Sickly people were led away, through another door, and into what I was sure were the ovens. ("Sin Eaters" 96–97)

To some extent, the parallels drawn in the story between the treatment received by the two minorities are not that surprising because by the last decade of the twentieth century numerous scholars were delving into those possible analogies. David E. Stannard (1992) and Ward Churchill (1997), among others, were particularly engrossed in showing those similarities and that, as had happened with the Holocaust, many Americans were still denying the existence of the Native genocide: "All citizens of the United States (and, to a lesser extent, of Canada) are subjected to indoctrination to this perspective through the elementary and secondary school systems" (Churchill 2). As Alexie has declared in several interviews, what is worrying about this denial is that it deprives his people of the possibility of dealing with those collective traumatic memories—of separation and loss of their tribal lands and of honoring their dead. So, he has no problem in writing about the American Indian genocide as a Holocaust: "I realize the term was generated to mean something specific, but I want it to mean more. They had the same ambition, and the end result is the same" (Nygren 154).

A second dystopian element that has a significant presence in the story and that troubles the narrator and his co-ethnics a great deal is the repeated

references to medical experiments and eugenics. The fact that from early in the story the invading forces show a great deal of concern about the "contamination" of Indian blood already partly reveals the intention of the ruling group to subject Natives to a literal form of corporeal exploitation. Although no definite explanation is offered in the story for the white man's interest in Indian blood, the author advanced a possible reason for it in an interview: "I don't want to give too much of it away, basically scientists have discovered the cure for cancer involves the bone marrow of Indians" (Purdy 38). Whether it is to procure the cure for a fatal disease or to use their body parts for other types of purposes—as is hinted at in other passages of the story—, what is important, and what frightens the life out of the narrator, is the realization that their bodies are no longer their own: "Son corps, lui, demeure la propriété de la société. Par l'observation de la destruction produisant un mythe, concrétisant l'imaginaire en passant par la violence, le corps 'étranger' du garçon passe d'object de souffrance à celui de connaissance"[3] (Sabatier 125). Indeed, as Brave Heart and Debruyn have underlined, the Indian Relocation Program, administered by the BIA in the 1950s, pursued the goal of moving large Native populations "into urban areas to live and work as assimilated citizens" (64). Perhaps this process was not as violent and inhuman as the forced displacement and imprisonment that we are privy to in "The Sin Eaters," but the social, material, and spiritual outcomes of both policies were not that dissimilar: full assimilation. What made it worse in both cases was the fact that these displacements were presented under the cloak of a political effort to protect and improve the conditions of Indian tribes:

> 'Citizens,' said large nose, 'you are here to perform a great patriotic service for your country. The sacrifices you have made and are going to make have been and will be greatly appreciated by your fellow Americans. And remember, please, that you're here for your own safety and we plan to take good care of you. Now, I wish you all a good night.' ("Sin Eaters" 106)

This duplicitous and paternalistic use of the language is one of the staple ingredients in some of the classics of dystopia—e.g., Zamyatin's *We* or Orwell's *1984*—and closely related to the third dystopian element in "The

[3] His body, itself, remains the property of society. By observing the destruction that creates a myth, concretizing the imagination in passing through violence, the "foreign" body of the boy transforms itself from an object of suffering into one of knowledge. (Translation by the author)

Sin Eaters" to be discussed here: surveillance and close control of a given population. Most theorists of dystopian fiction have agreed that one of the cornerstones of any state or social system to subdue its people is to have a sway over the language and ideas ingrained in its citizens (Claeys 124–25; Gottlieb 85–90). Historically, in the case of Native Americans and up to the Termination period, this function of control and indoctrination was played by the BIA's boarding school system, which as Brave Heart and Bruyn explain, sent the destructive message that "American Indian families are not capable of raising their own children and that American Indians are culturally and racially inferior" (63). The picture presented in "The Sin Eaters," however, is even darker and more brutal, since Natives of all ages are abducted from their homes and taken to some underground military premises where they are uncertain about how their bodies are going to be used:

> I suddenly wondered if we were going to be slaughtered. I wondered if we were going to be eaten. I wondered if rich white men were going to turn the pages of books that were made with our skins. / . . . / Once we were off the bus, the soldiers divided us into three groups, each destined for a different building. ("Sin Eaters" 94)

The overwhelming presence of the military in the story and the violence they use against their prisoners speak of a system that no longer views them as human beings but merely as "blood slaves" (Doenges) who are being herded and classified like cattle to serve the needs of the ruling group. Although the profusion of references to blood and contamination adds a foreboding twist to the unknown experiments to which the Natives are going to be subjected, what seems most disturbing is that, as the story moves on, it becomes clearer that the kind of enslavement and exploitation they are going to suffer transcends that of their bodies (see Sabatier 125–26):

> I felt a hot pain as a needle slid into my left hip, through the skin, through the muscle and into the hip socket, into the center of the bone. But more than that, I felt the pain deep in my stomach. I felt the needle bite into me, heard the impossibly loud hiss of the hypodermic syringe as it sucked out pieces of my body, sucked out the blood, . . . sucked out pieces of all of my stories, sucked out the marrow, and sucked out pieces of my vocabulary. I knew that certain words were being taken from me. ("Sin Eaters" 115)

Baccolini and Moylan have discussed at some length the "critically voiced fears and anxieties of a range of new and fragmented social and sexual constituencies" who have been oppressed and ill-treated by postcolonial powers (4–7). In the case of "The Sin Eaters," the mechanisms of terror and subjugation used by the dystopic society reach their zenith when the young protagonist-narrator, already deprived of everything he cherished, is forced to have sex with a much older Native woman in order to harvest new Indian blood:

> Beyond the glass, doctors and soldiers watched me. I was afraid. I was without words. I was small and would not grow again. Arrested. The door opened. Two soldiers pushed a naked Indian woman into the room. The door closed. / She stood there, tall and proud. Perfect brown skin. Large breasts. Shaved head. She threw obscene gestures against the mirrors that were really windows. Then she looked at me. She saw me. / 'You're just a boy,' she whispered. . . . 'Please commence,' said the disembodied voice. ("Sin Eaters" 115–16)

3. The Key Role of the Protagonist: Jonah Lot

Most experts in the dystopian brand of fiction have concurred that a critical turn took place when in the mid-1980s it began to incorporate first-person narrators who questioned what was happening to them in the dystopian society (Freedman 76–78, Ferns 377–78). Baccolini and Moylan observe that in this type of narratives "we identify a deeper and more totalizing agenda in the dystopian form insofar as the text is built around the construction of a narrative of hegemonic order and a counter-narrative of resistance" (5). This is precisely the role played by the protagonist-narrator of "The Sin Eaters," Jonah Lot, a twelve-year-old Coeur d'Alene/Spokane Indian boy who from early in the story is depicted as a victim and survivor of the nightmare in which his people are caught:

> 'Jonah,' she said to me and laughed. My mother had named me after a man who'd survived a miracle. Because of that, she seemed to regard every action of mine, no matter how ordinary, as a miracle of its own. . . . She said my name again and laughed, as if I had truly just emerged from the belly of a whale, and not from the belly of a dream where the enemy soldiers wore surgical gloves and white smocks. ("Sin Eaters" 79)

Not unlike Offred in Atwood's dystopian classic, Jonah can scarcely be conceived as a plucky opponent of the ironhanded regime. Nevertheless, it is also clear from the start that, like Atwood's unlikely heroine, Jonah is very critical of the practices of the system, and, in the privacy of his mind, seeks ways to try to undermine those practices (see Ferns 377). Although he is often befuddled by the ruthless events taking place around him and can hardly oppose much of an effective resistance to them, the fact that his perceptions and feelings are highlighted in the narrative has a remarkable effect on how readers interpret the story: "Suddenly, everything looked dangerous [as they were abducted from the Reservation]. Sharp stars ripped through the fabric of the morning sky. Morning dew boiled and cooked green leaves. Sun dogs snarled and snapped at one another. The vanishing point was the tip of a needle" ("Sin Eaters" 87).

One of the few weapons that the protagonist can count on in his unequal battle against the oppressive forces is his storytelling and song-making skills. Jonah is convinced that his power to turn his experiences into songs and stories endows him with the ability to somehow keep control and make the best of those experiences: "Because I was a maker of songs, young men gave me small gifts, ... I taught those young men the love songs that forced horses to bow their heads and kneel in the fields, the love songs that revealed the secrets of fire, the love songs that healed, the love songs that precipitated wars" ("Sin Eaters" 77). As Sabatier has argued, in relating his arduous adventures through the prism of his critical consciousness, the narrator is offering us both a story of conquest, but also one of liberation:

> En créant cette fable pour le moins déstabilisante, le narrateur prône des valeurs essentielles telles que la tolérance, la fraternité, l'égalité et la liberté. . . . La nouvelle devient donc un conte initiatique où l'enfermement de Jonah lui permet de comprendre comment en étant lui-même, avec son passé, ses histoires, ses souvenirs, il peut échapper aux militaires, de façon symbolique, et faire de son intériorité une évasion.[4] (130)

[4] By creating this story to say the least destabilizing, the narrator advocates essential values such as tolerance, fraternity, equality, and liberty. . . . The story thus becomes a journey of initiation in which Jonah's confinement allows him to understand how by being himself, with his past, his stories, his memories, he can escape the military, at least symbolically, and make his own interiority an escape. (Translation by the author)

Truly, despite the distress and anxiety that govern most of his experiences, Jonah always finds a way to color them with those values that, in Sabatier's opinion, are important to him. Of course, this is not always easy because the kind of horrors he comes across are not always easy to digest: "Stories had always kept me safe before. I had always trusted stories. Frightened and tired, I wrapped my arms around myself and tried to tell myself a story. But I could think of nothing but the blood on that dead soldier's face" ("Sin Eaters" 93). Even in cases such as this, where he is confronted with extreme human pain and mortality, he resorts to the rituals and values he has been taught so as to try transform an awful experience into something else:

> With all my strength, I pushed his body [of the dead soldier] to the floor. He was a young man, barely older than me, and I mourned his death as I had been taught to mourn, briefly and powerfully. / 'I'm sorry,' I said to him. I kneeled beside him, touched his face, and closed his blue eyes. / I prayed for him, the enemy, and wondered if he had prayed for me. ("Sin Eaters" 91)

Besides the exceptional capacities that the narrator shows to closely capture his realities and then render them in often amazing images and metaphors, one other feature that stands out in the protagonist's personality is his incredible resilience. No matter how harsh and inhuman the kind of abuse and exploitation to which Jonah is subjected, he is invariably able to reinterpret the situation so that he can make it through the tribulations. For example, when the prisoners are already underground in the eerie military facilities, he finds ways to cope with the sinister circumstances:

> At the mouth of every dark tunnel, more and more Indians were separated from the rest and marched into the darkness beyond. I wondered when it would be my turn to walk into the darkness. I was not afraid of it, the dark. I wanted to give it a name, so I called it Mother. / . . . With our shaved heads, in our red jumpsuits, we looked like we had been in a concentration camp for years, though we had been prisoners for only a matter of hours. . . . We marched through darkness until we could see a bright light in the distance. The light grew larger and larger. I was afraid of it. I wanted to give it a name, so I called it Father. ("Sin Eaters" 100)

Maurissette rightly notes that this capacity on the narrator's part to endure the most traumatic experiences and, still, be able to come out of them more knowledgeable and willing to confront "the enemy" is typical in works of

dystopian fiction by writers of marginalized groups (4–5). It is probably in the closing scenes of the story when, as mentioned above, the narrator is brutally compelled to have sexual intercourse with an Indian woman that his resilient gifts become more evident:

> 'Close your eyes,' she said. 'Pretend we're alone. Pretend I'm not me. Pretend you're somebody else. Don't let them touch you. Don't let me touch you.' / We made love. / I closed my eyes and saw my mother. I saw her bring a cup of water to my lips. / . . . My mother kissed my forehead. Her breath smelled of coffee and peppermint—the scent of forgiveness, of safety and warmth. / . . . Inside of her, I breathed in the dark. I was warm; I was safe. / . . . 'Mother,' I whispered. 'Mother, mother, mother.' ("Sin Eaters" 119–20)

Although it could be argued that Jonah Lot, the Native boy, losses his innocence and dies when he is forced to have sex with a woman much older than him, it is also clear that some sort of rebirth happens in him as those comforting images of his mother take shape in his mind. As pointed out earlier on, despite the harrowing experiences that the protagonist goes through, the reader is still made aware of his resilient capacities and his ability to be reborn into new selfhoods.

CLOSING REMARKS

In an article published in *The New Yorker* a few years ago, Jill Lepore complained that "Dystopia used to be a fiction of resistance; it's become a fiction of submission, the fiction of an untrusting, lonely, and sullen twenty-first century, the fiction of fake news and info wars, the fiction of helplessness and hopelessness." As this article hopes to have shown, no such thing could be said about Sherman Alexie's "The Sin Eaters," which in spite of including several of the seminal characteristics of the apocalyptic genre, also incorporates a number of features that save it from the "despair-filled" picture that Lepore paints. One first consideration to bear in mind is, of course, that this story is just an inauspicious "island" in a collection where the mood is by no means so sinister. This does not mean that the story is completely out of tune with the other chapters but, rather, that it functions as a complement and counterweight to them. Monika Siebert has written very favorably about these indigenous experiments that require an effort on our part "to experience cultural otherness" (183). "The Sin Eaters" wisely uses the estranging capacity of a dystopian vision of a

particular historical period to make us aware of the kind of legacies and traumas that contemporary Native Americans have inherited from their past (Johnson 225–28).

This article has demonstrated that the driving force of "The Sin Eaters" is deeply rooted in the grievances that Native Americans suffered during the "Termination era." Like the characters in the story, not only were many American Indians displaced from and dispossessed of their lands, but the damage inflicted on their identities was irreparable. Brave Heart and Debruyn have remarked that "Like the transfer of trauma to descendants from Holocaust survivors, the genocide of American Indians reverberates across generations" (66). It is not surprising, therefore, that Alexie should decide to borrow many of the dystopian images in the story from the traumatic experiences of the Jews. Besides those, he also relies heavily on some of the key motifs in the dystopian literary tradition, such as government control and surveillance of the population or the subjection of certain groups to medical experiments and eugenics (see Claeys 111–12). Nevertheless, despite the prominence of these dismal elements, it has also become clear that the story is not without some glimmers of hope—via the protagonist or some of the relationships built among the characters—that endow it with the capacity "to inscribe a space for new forms of socio-political opposition and progress" (Baccolini and Moylan, *Dark Horizons* 8). In short, as Maurissette rightly concludes, while this type of fiction reveals the true horrors of the dystopic realities lived by colonized groups, they also offer potential "visions of liberation" by resorting to several of their cultural values and traditions, "although they always do so with the recognition that achieving change will be an extremely difficult process" (4).

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Revisiting *The Confessions of Nat Turner*: Censorship in its Spanish Translation

Revisitar *The Confessions of Nat Turner*: La Censura en la Traducción Española

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Abstract: This paper studies the Spanish translation of William Styron's *The Confessions of Nat Turner*. It observes the effects that institutional and self-censorship have had in Andrés Bosch's version, first published in 1968 by Lumen as *Las Confesiones de Nat Turner*.
Presented as the fictional autobiography of a historical figure, the novel is based on a failed revolt that took place in a Virginia plantation in 1831. The source context is described and contrasted with the target one, paying attention to the paratexts that have conditioned the novel's reception in Spain. Accessing the General Archive of the Administration shows that Bosch's translation was self-censored in a possible attempt to avoid the institutional intervention that would have delayed the book's publication. Research also shows that this same version is the one being republished in the early twenty-first century.
Keywords: Censorship; literary translation; neo-slave Narratives; paratexts; publishing history; William Styron.
Summary: Introduction. The controversy surrounding *The Confessions of Nat Turner* in the 1960s. Censoring *Las Confesiones de Nat Turner.* Republishing a censored translation. Conclusions.

Resumen: Este artículo estudia la traducción española de *The Confessions of Nat Turner*, de William Styron. Se observa cómo la censura institucional y la autocensura han influido en la versión de Andrés Bosch, que Lumen publicó por primera vez en 1968 con el título *Las Confesiones de Nat Turner*.
Esta novela se presenta en calidad de autobiografía ficticia de una figura histórica, pues se basa en una revuelta fallida que sucedió en una plantación de Virginia en 1831. Se describe el contexto fuente y se contrasta con el meta para prestar atención a los paratextos que han condicionado la

recepción de la novela en España. Al acceder al Archivo General de la Administración, se han descubierto indicios de autocensura en la traducción de Bosch, en un posible intento de evitar la intervención de las instituciones, la cual habría retrasado la publicación del libro. La investigación también muestra que esta misma versión se ha vuelto a publicar a principios del siglo XXI.
Palabras clave: Censura; traducción literaria; novelas de esclavitud; paratextos; historia editorial; William Styron.
Sumario: Introducción. La polémica alrededor de *The Confessions of Nat Turner* en los años sesenta. La censura de *Las Confesiones de Nat Turner*. Republicar una traducción censurada. Conclusiones.

INTRODUCTION

This paper aims to study the Spanish publication history of *The Confessions of Nat Turner*. Originally written by William Styron, a white Southerner, this novel came out in October 1967. It was translated into Spanish by Andrés Bosch and it was first published by Lumen in 1968. Later, this translation was republished in 1980 and in 2000, the latest being an edition commemorating Lumen's fortieth anniversary. In 2016, Bosch's rendering of Styron's text was reprinted once again, this time by Capitán Swing.

The novel is presented as Styron's fictional autobiography of Nat Turner, the enslaved African American preacher who led a failed revolt against white masters in Virginia in 1831. It is the protagonist himself who delves into his personal motivations as the book begins in the rebellion's aftermath, when Turner is held in a prison cell and awaits his execution. Thomas Gray, a white attorney, interrogates Turner, who, in a long flashback, comments on his childhood and describes his experiences as an enslaved boy at Samuel Turner's plantation, where he is taught how to read and write. The narrator describes the physical abuses he endures and how he is eventually bought by Travis, the farmer who lets him become a preacher for his fellow enslaved Black people. As a preacher, Turner experiences several religious visions, meets Margaret Whitehead—a wealthy white lady whom he sexually desires—and starts to plot a rebellion against the white slaveholders. After persuading most Black people in his religious congregation, Turner's revolt begins on August 21st, 1831, but it does not turn out as he expected. The rebels get drunk, Turner hesitates in the ensuing turmoil, and the sadistic Will ends up leading the revolt. He deems the protagonist a coward and forces him to murder Margaret. The white authorities stop the mutiny violently and slaughter all

the rebellious Black people, except for Nat, who is imprisoned and is sentenced to death by hanging.

When this book came out in the United States in 1967, *The Confessions of Nat Turner* became one of the most polemical American novels in the second half of the twentieth century (Manuel 79), due to the fact a white writer appropriated the true story of a nineteenth-century Black man who rebelled against the institution of slavery. Despite the controversy it spurred, it was also a best-selling book and it was awarded the Pulitzer Prize for Fiction the following year. Hence, in Section 1, the first step is to observe the context in which Styron's source text was published, namely, the emergence of African American neo-slave Narratives and the responses it got in *William Styron's Nat Tuner: Ten Black Writers Respond*, edited by John Hendrik Clarke in 1968.

Following the tenets of Descriptive Translation Studies (Toury xi–xiii), this paper does not aim to prescribe how Bosch should have translated Styron's novel into Spanish, underlining the fragments in which some translation errors may be found. On the contrary, Section 2 examines the political and cultural context in which the target text was produced. In order to do so, the paratexts that frame Bosch's *Las Confesiones de Nat Turner* will be observed, as they have the "capacity to explain, contextualize, and justify a product" (Braga Riera 254). Paratexts may be defined broadly as the "elements in a published work that accompany the text" (Braga Riera 249), providing readers with "the possibility of either stepping inside or turning back" and discarding a given text (Genette 2). Specifically, paratexts resort to both linguistic and visual elements to get readers' attention, to explain the text's content, and to guide the reading. They may be divided into two subcategories, peritexts and epitexts. Peritexts are those paratexts which are physically joined to the text, such as "footnotes and endnotes, prefaces and forewords, introductions, epilogues or afterwords, postcripsts, dedications, acknowledgements, indexes, titles, and subtitles, chapter synopsis and headings" (Braga Riera 249), together with visual elements, such as illustrations, covers, and dust jackets. An epitext can be "any paratext not materially appended to the text" (Genette 344) that somehow conditions the text's reception, for instance, reviews, interviews with the author, book signings, tours, book fairs, and censorship reports. For example, peritexts like covers can emphasize certain elements that will draw readers to the book, whereas epitexts such as press reviews may boost the book's sales.

The paratexts accompanying the Spanish translation of *The Confessions of Nat Turner* will be studied in Sections 2 and 3 to try to understand how they have influenced the reception of this novel in Spain. The main reason for this textual analysis is that Styron's novel was first rendered into Spanish during the Francoist dictatorship, so Section 2 delves into the impact both institutional and self-censorship had on this translation. Section 3 observes how the same censored translation was republished decades later, after the Spanish Transition to democracy, with changing peritexts. Particularly, it is interesting to ponder how this kind of paratexts have conditioned the portrayal of Blackness in the target culture,[1] as it had already happened in the case of Margaret Walker's *Jubileo*, the first neo-slave narrative to be translated into Spanish in 1968 (Sanz Jiménez).

1. THE CONTROVERSY SURROUNDING *THE CONFESSIONS OF NAT TURNER* IN THE 1960S

Similarly to *Jubilee*, by Margaret Walker, *The Confessions of Nat Turner* depicts the traumatic experiences that the protagonist endures under the institution of slavery in the antebellum South, so Styron's novel could be labeled as neo-slave narrative. This subgenre of historical fiction may be defined as the "modern narratives of escape from bondage to freedom" (Bell 289) that American writers began to publish in the 1960s. Amidst the social changes demanded by the Civil Rights and the Black Power movements, Black writers and activists suggested that revisiting, from a contemporary perspective, the texts that articulated African American subjectivity for the first time—autobiographies by former slaves like Frederick Douglass and William Wells Brown—could help "discuss the issues concerning contemporary racial identities" (Dubey 333).

Nevertheless, considering *The Confessions of Nat Turner* a neo-slave narrative may be troublesome. Indeed, the novel fits into Bell's definition

[1] In this paper, the concept of Blackness is understood as the cultural expression of the Black experience in the United States, in contrast to the white cultural impositions, in line with Landry's remarks on how "African Americans are bound together by not only the presence of outward physical similarities but also a collective history of American slavery and racial subjecthood, convergent life chances, and shared placement in the US racial structure" (127). For another philosophical approach to the notion of Blackness, refer to Fanon, Frantz. "The Fact of Blackness." *Black Skin, White Masks*. Translated by Charles Lam Markmann, Pluto Press, 2008, pp. 82–108.

described above, since it reimagines Turner's attempt at escaping from his enslavers, though he does not end up free in the North, but captured and executed for his transgression. It even matches Rushdy's description of African American neo-slave narratives (375–76), given that the novel chronicles an enslaved person's life in the South before the Civil War and the hardships that Nat Turner survives, similarly to what can be appreciated in some other books belonging to this subgenre, for example, Alex Haley's *Roots* (1976), Edward P. Jones's *The Known World* (2004), James McBride's *Song Yet Sung* (2008), or Colson Whitehead's *The Underground Railroad* (2016).

Being published in 1967, a time of social unrest in the United States,[2] *The Confessions of Nat Turner* "proved highly offensive to [B]lack scholars" (Inscoe 419), because they were concerned about how a white novelist—particularly a Southerner from Virginia—could have appropriated an enslaved man's voice. As Dubey explains, "the publication of a fictionalized slave narrative by a white writer, William Styron's *The Confessions of Nat Turner* (1967), provoked the most acrimonious debates about authentic representation of slavery" (334). On the one hand, Styron himself claimed that it had been his friend, Black intellectual James Baldwin, who had encouraged him to "overcome his hesitancy to cross the forbidden zone and write from the point of view of someone with a different skin color" (Inscoe 431). The novel became a best-selling title, winning the Pulitzer Prize for Fiction in 1968, the year when it was translated into Spanish.

On the other hand, some early reviews claimed that "the entire story illustrates that learning destroyed Nat Turner" (Turner 184), because the protagonist was taught how to read and write while in bondage and this led to him becoming a preacher, being obsessed with raping a white woman, and eventually turning other enslaved people against the white Southerners with whom they were in close contact at the plantation (Turner 183). Apart from highlighting the risks of letting the enslaved get some basic education, Styron's book also contributed to perpetuate negative stereotypes. For instance, it features promiscuous Black women—such as Nat's mother—as well as disobedient Black men who venture beyond the plantation's limits and try to rape defenseless white maidens. These men's

[2] For instance, 1967 is the year when the Detroit Riots took place. The growing racial tensions leading to these events were recently fictionalized in the movie *Detroit*. Directed by Kathryn Bigelow, Annapurna Pictures, 2017.

behavior seems close to Jim Crow's, who was, as Stordeur Pryor explains (31), the stock character from blackface minstrel shows after whom the segregation policies were named in the Reconstruction era. The way in which Styron introduced such racist stereotypes in a historical novel that reimagines an actual revolt from the 1830s led some reviewers to deem the book "Styron's caricature, drawn from his own and bigoted fancies" (Turner 185). Another critical voice was June Jordan, a Black activist and poet who denounced *The Confessions of Nat Turner* for denying African Americans the opportunity to tell their own account of the Black experience in the United States in a time as crucial for the Civil Rights movement as the 1960s (Manuel 91). When it comes to literary criticism, Rushdy, in his seminal volume on neo-slave narrative, argues that "Styron's decision to cast his novel as a first-person narration, using the conventions and forms of the antebellum slave narrative and in fact basing the book on a piece of slave testimony, raised deeply divisive issues of cultural expertise and appropriation" (54).

Indeed, this instance of cultural appropriation, particularly of taking an actual subversive Black rebel who died in the 1830s, led to the publication, in 1968, of *William Styron's Nat Turner: Ten Black Writers Respond.* Edited by John Henrik Clarke, it was a book of literary criticism that attempted to deal with the issues of historical, cultural, and racial representation in the Civil Rights era that *The Confessions of Nat Turner* had raised. As Rushdy explains when chronicling the controversy and the reasons for publishing this critical volume, some white intellectuals were in favor of Styron's artistic integrity and maintained that "the only person who could write from a slave's point of view in 1967 was a white southerner" (56). On the contrary, Clarke's book purported that Styron's novel, being written from an enslaved Black man's point of view—Nat Turner's—wrongfully appropriated Blackness and African American culture. The way in which the protagonist is portrayed as a religious zealot who lusts for Margaret Whitehead, and how his sexual desire motivates him to ignite a revolt, supports "the circulation of [existing] racist stereotypes" (Rushdy 63) and does not question them, as explained above in the case of Jim Crow.

Reading *The Confessions of Nat Turner*, it seems that, in the antebellum South, Black men may only fit into two simplistic categories: they may be docile and obediently serve the white slaveholders, like Turner does when he is a child; or they can turn into violent wild men who want to sexually assault the Southern belles, as in Will's case, who ends

up overthrowing the protagonist and becoming the rebellion's leader. Additionally, critics have seen this rewriting of a historical figure—at this point in the novel, Nat Turner is portrayed as a hesitant coward—as Styron's attempt to "deny [B]lacks the one militant hero and role model in their American past" (Inscoe 429).

Despite reimagining Black historical events and figures, *The Confessions of Nat Turner* also manages to provide a detailed portrayal of daily life in early nineteenth-century rural Virginia and even tries to recreate, through eye-dialect, regional dialects like Southern American English and social varieties, such as the Black English spoken by the enslaved people. Manuel (82) also censures the book's use of eye-dialect, particularly the first-person narrator's use of language, because Nat Turner's voice seems literary and educated during most of his confessions, yet there are some issues about which he chooses not to talk articulately, for example, his relationship with his wife and children is mostly absent from Styron's work.

This novel may be read as well as the attempt made by a Southerner to come to terms with the South's history of oppressing and abusing its Black population, since, as Manuel argues (80), it revisits a historical event and ponders the impact that one Black leader, Nat Turner, had on Virginia's white society. Over the years, *The Confessions of Nat Turner* has been reassessed as a book that reflects on how American fiction can mirror the social, cultural, and racial crisis that it is undergoing at a certain point in time—as in the 1960s and during the Civil Rights movement—showing readers how racist Southern stereotypes still survive in contemporary literature (Manuel 94). Furthermore, one positive consequence of the controversy surrounding Styron's novel was that it triggered the evolution of African American neo-slave narratives, as some Black writers looked back at folklore and the oral tradition to revisit the complex topic of slavery in literature. Historical novels like those by McBride and Whitehead, which were mentioned above, have asked questions about the links between Southern slavery and the postmodern Black identities, reimagining the so-called peculiar institution from the point of view of the enslaved protagonists, and trying to "establish a dialectic between slave-masters' oppressive literary representations and the slaves' own liberating oral witnessing of slavery" (Rushdy 91). Such a phenomenon of reimagination and memory is still active in the early twenty-first century, thanks to the publication of critically acclaimed neo-

slave narratives, such as Yaa Gyasi's *Homegoing* (2016) and Ta-Nehisi Coates's *The Water Dancer* (2019).

2. CENSORING *LAS CONFESIONES DE NAT TURNER*

The economic success of *The Confessions of Nat Turner* in the American context, in addition to the fact that the book was awarded the prestigious Pulitzer Prize for Fiction, led to its quick publication in the Spanish target context in 1968. The company that was responsible for the Spanish version was Lumen, a publishing house from Barcelona that would be absorbed by the multinational group Penguin Random House in the late 1990s. The translator was Andrés Bosch, a renowned writer from Mallorca who had won the Planeta Award in 1959 for his first novel, *La Noche*. Interestingly, by 1968 Bosch had already translated a key African American novel for Lumen—Ralph Ellison's *Invisible Man*, which was published in 1966.

When analyzing a 1968 Spanish translation, careful attention should be paid to the ideological context in which it was produced, since, as Lefevere contends, translators "adapt, manipulate the originals they work with to some extent, usually to make them fit in with the dominant, or one of the dominant ideological and poetological currents of their time" (8). The specific dominant ideology dominating the translation process was the dogmas of the Francoist dictatorship, so the impact that state censorship had on translated books should be considered. Allan and Burridge define censorship as "the suppression or prohibition of speech or writing that is condemned as subversive of the common good" (13), a tool that controls the circulation of those texts which are regarded as not acceptable thanks to the "institutional suppressions of language by powerful governing classes, supposedly acting for the common good by preserving stability and/or moral fiber in the nation" (Allan and Burridge 24). Since literary translation can be a "key vehicle for disseminating, sifting and understanding cultural and social phenomena that come to us from foreign countries and languages" (McLaughlin and Muñoz-Basols 2), translated books were perceived as a menace to the dictatorship in this period.

Nevertheless, scholars like McLaughlin and Muñoz-Basols have pointed out that the 1960s was a "period which, interestingly enough, was characterized by political openness within the Ministry" in charge of censorship (3), especially if it is contrasted with the system of extremely rigid censorship that the 1938 Press Law had established during the Spanish Civil War (*Boletín Oficial del Estado* 23 April 1938). At that time,

censorship was a means to control the flow of information and disseminate propaganda, preventing subversive ideas from reaching a broad audience. The censorship report on *Las Confesiones de Nat Turner*, number 894–69 (Departamento de Información Nacional), shows on the top of its page that subversive ideas were identified by asking a series of six questions about the book under examination:

> Does the book attack the Dogma?
> Does it attack morality?
> Does it attack the [Catholic] Church or its Ministers?
> Does it attack the Regime or its institutions?
> Does it attack the people who collaborate or have collaborated with the Regime?
> Do the passages to be censured mark the whole book?[3]

These ideas may be broadly divided into four categories, as Lobejón et al. explain: "sexual references, use of vulgar language, as well as attacks against the Catholic Church and against the regime, including their representatives" (95). In the 1960s, the Press Law was replaced when Fraga Iribarne's Ministry of Information and Tourism issued a new one regulating state censorship, the "Ley 14/1966 de Prensa e Imprenta, de 18 de marzo" (Gutiérrez Lanza et al. 97; *Boletín Oficial del Estado* 19 March 1966). The 1966 law meant that the previous system of compulsory review was over and that publishers were given the chance of submitting their book for voluntary consultation. In a recent research paper, Lobejón et al. ponder carefully what this new form of censorship meant (95):

> This meant, in principle, that publishers could release new titles without prior administrative approval. Although this period was characterized by a slightly more open cultural climate, in reality, the new law substituted the former preventive system with a repressive one, making government intervention in these matters more visible to society. . . . This halfhearted attempt at liberalization was ultimately, and by design, meant to give the illusion that the regime's cultural policy had changed course for the better. The 1966 law, in fact, outlined a new set of restrictions. Prior censorship was eliminated, but books were still liable to be sequestered based on their contents.

[3] This translation into English has been carried out by the writer of this paper.

Therefore, if Spanish publishers wanted to avoid the economic losses that having a book seized by the Ministry meant, they would better be willing to submit a copy of their books for voluntary consultation. The state censors would review the book, produce a censorship report—an epitext—and decide whether the book was ready for publication or some changes needed to be made in order not to violate the dictatorship's dogmas. Thus, Francoist censorship worked as a key element in patronage, selecting which texts were imported, translated, and published in Spain. Additionally, it is interesting to reflect on how, in the 1960s, American best-selling titles like Styron's started to storm the Spanish publishing industry (Gómez Castro 40–41). As Lobejón et al. explain, it was "during the aforementioned period of relative *apertura* (1962–1969) when the regime felt compelled to authorize problematic foreign films [and books] for both economic and political reasons" (98). Consequently, literary translation acted as an innovative tool, allowing Spanish culture to glimpse beyond its rigid borders and to import some literary models that the target writers would, in turn, imitate.

Since Styron's novel was translated in the late sixties, two years after the new censorship law had been passed. A visit to the General Archive of the Administration—or AGA, for its Spanish initials, as in Archivo General de la Administración—in Alcalá de Henares allowed access to the censorship reports of books published in Spain during the Francoist dictatorship. Created in 1969, the AGA houses different types of records that catalogue the censorship procedures from 1938 up to the Spanish Transition to democracy, specifically, to 1985, when the censorship apparatus was finally dismantled (Lobejón et al. 94). This collection of censorship files has been preserved and is available for researchers to be consulted on site, as it remains to be digitalized and remote access is, therefore, not possible. As Lobejón et al. accurately describe (103), "book censorship files contain two main sets of information: the internal documentation produced by the censors, that is, their reports, as well as that generated through interaction with the publishers (e.g., correspondence, drafts, galley proofs, etc.)."

The censorship report on *Las Confesiones de Nat Turner* has proven to be a valuable epitext for this research paper, because it sheds some light on the predominance of certain translation techniques, namely the omission of three passages that were seen as obscene and menacing for the dictatorship's dogmas. The elements included in these three passages match the first category that was prone to institutional censorship—

explicit sexual references, as explained above. The censorship report 894–69 issued on February 1969 by the Ministry of Information and Tourism (Departamento de Información Nacional) regards Styron's book as a historical novel, goes on to praise the realistic dialogues and the depiction of slavery in the rural South, but it makes the following remarks regarding a few sexual allusions:

> The novel has plenty of erotic descriptions, far from pornographic, though it sometimes includes a few obscene details and swearing. If it had not been presented already printed, it would have been convenient to suppress the underlined passages on pages 33, 42, 92, 101, 137, 139, 147, 152, 153, 192–94, 202, 222–23, 231–32, 232–33, 234–35, 254–55, 260–61, 299, 300, 302, 323–24, 329–30, 377–78, 387, 425–26, 439, 450, 461, 482. It is a pity to be unable to do so, at least partially. Authorized.[4]

As can be seen above, the censor alludes to a series of underlined fragments that contain Spanish swear words that he would like to omit, such as *cabrón, negro hijo-puta,* and *mierda.* These would match the second category of elements that were liable to be censored—the use of vulgar language. Apart from them, those excerpts underlined in red in the manuscript that is annexed to the report feature scenes of Black people being violently punished, descriptions of how enslaved women were raped by the overseers, and Nat Turner's sexual fantasies and visions regarding women. Interestingly, the censorship report includes an unexpected epitext: a letter written by Esther Tusquets, who worked as Lumen's publisher at the time. In this letter, Tusquets addresses the censors respectfully and tells them that *Las Confesions de Nat Turner* is a much-anticipated book—since it has been awarded the Pulitzer Prize—the Spanish edition is ready and soon to be delivered to bookstores, so she urges the censors to be quick when writing the report in order not to delay the publication date and lose her investment in this promising new novel. This could be the reason why the censor lamented, in the report, that he wished he could have suppressed the underlined passages if the book had not been submitted in a hurry, already printed, and ready to be distributed.

Although it may seem that *Las Confesiones de Nat Turner* escaped Francoist censorship, a careful contrast of coupled pairs of fragments from the source and target texts reveals that the Spanish translation was indeed

[4] This translation into English has been carried out by the writer of this paper.

censored. If, as the report states, the censor did not change anything in the translation, then who was responsible for omitting a series of taboo fragments that included explicit sexual allusions? The answer to this question may be found in the concept of self-censorship, which Santaemilia defines as "an individual ethical struggle between self and context . . . translators tend to censor themselves—either voluntarily or involuntarily—in order to produce rewritings which are 'acceptable' from both social and personal perspectives" (221–22). In 1968, when a book could be sequestered and a publishing house could lose its investment in it simply for reproducing sexual references that were excluded from the dictatorship's dominant discourse, it may have been likely that the Bosch, Tusquets, or even both of them agreed to suppress these fragments. That way, the translator and the publisher managed to elude institutional intervention and distributed the novel as soon as possible.

Table 1. Censoring sexual references

Styron 62	Bosch 79
I should add that Putnam had more or less had it in for Hark ever since the preceding year when, out hunting hickory nuts on a balmy afternoon. Hark had innocently but clumsily ambushed Putnam and Joel Westbrook in some tangled carnal union by the swimming pond, both of the boys naked as catfish on the muddy bank, writhing. 'Never seed such foolishness,' Hark had said to me, 'But 'twarn't like I was gwine pay it no never mind. Nigger don' care 'bout no white boys' foolishness. Now dat daggone Putnam he so mad, you'd think it was me **dat dey caught jackin' off de ole bird.'**	Debo añadir que Putnam la había tomado con Hark desde una cálida tarde del año anterior, en la que Hark se dedicaba a buscar nueces y, sin querer, pero también sin saber disimular, sorprendió a Putnam y a Joel Westbrook dedicados a consumar una complicada unión carnal, junto a la balsa en que solíamos nadar, estando los dos muchachos desnudos como lagartos, tumbados en la embarrada orilla, retorciéndose y revolcándose con el mayor abandono. Luego Hark me dijo: 'Nunca había visto cosa más absurda. Pero, bueno, de todos modos, a mí no me importan esas cosas. No, al negro no le importan las insensateces de los muchachos blancos. Pero ahora ese desgraciado de Putnam está tan furioso conmigo que cualquiera diría que ellos fueron los que me descubrieron a mí'.

Table 1 above shows the first self-censored fragment out of the three that have been found in a contrastive analysis of the source and target texts. In it, Hark—Nat Turner's friend at the plantation—mentions he has spotted the young slaveholder, Putnam, engaging in sexual intercourse with Joel, the Black boy in charge of fixing wheels and wagons. The description of what Hark saw the boys doing—masturbating each other—has been completely omitted in Bosch's translation. It makes sense that either the translator or Tusquets decided to erase this, as homosexuality was a taboo concept that violated the Francoist dogmas. The same strategy can be found in the second excerpt that was self-censored. As shown in Table 2 below, Nat Turner ventures into the woods and has sex with Willis, another enslaved Black man at the plantation. The first part of this intimate encounter is reproduced in the Spanish translation, how Turner touches Willis's skin, feels him sigh and murmur. However, Willis's explicit comment about semen resembling butter at the end of the passage is omitted in Bosch's translation, since it was seen as taboo.

Table 2. Censoring homosexual references

Styron 199–201	Bosch 221–22
I reached up to wipe away the blood from his lips, pulling him near with the feel of his shoulders slippery beneath my hand, and then we somehow fell on each other, very close, soft and comfortable in a sprawl like babies; beneath my exploring fingers his hot skin throbbed and pulsed like the throat of a pigeon, and I heard him sigh in a faraway voice, and then for a long moment as if set free into another land we did with our hands together what, before, I had done alone. Never had I known that human flesh could be so sweet. Minutes afterward I heard Willis murmur: 'Man, I sho liked dat. Want to do it again?' . . . Time passed **and Willis said nothing, then I heard him fidget on the**	Alargué la mano para limpiarle la sangre de los labios y lo acerqué a mí, sintiendo en la palma la resbaladiza piel de sus hombros, y entonces, sin que sepa cómo, caímos el uno en brazos del otro y quedamos muy juntos, abrazados como niños, suave y dulcemente. Bajo la piel de mis dedos inquietos la cálida piel de Willis latía como la garganta de una paloma, y le oí lanzar un desolado suspiro, y entonces, durante un largo, largo, instante, como si nos hubieran libertado en otro mundo, hicimos juntos, con las manos, aquello que yo antes hacía solo. Jamás hubiera sospechado que la carne humana pudiera ser tan dulce. Minutos después, oí que Willis murmuraba:

ground next to me, and he said, chuckling: 'You know what jizzom puts me in mind of, Nat? Hit look jes' lak buttermilk. Look dere.'	—Chico, me ha gustado, me ha gustado mucho. ¿Quieres que volvamos a hacerlo? . . . Pasó el tiempo, **y Willis nada dijo.**

Lastly, the translation technique used to self-censor the third sexual allusion may not be considered a straightforward omission as those shown in Tables 1 and 2, but it may be better labeled as a mitigation. Table 3 below shows an event that takes place in the days leading to the slave revolt, when Turner is becoming mentally deranged and planning his mutiny. He cannot find solace in his Bible any longer and a series of visions cloud his judgment. One of them consists of a Black woman that sexually tempts him. She explicitly touches her vagina in front of the protagonist, inviting him to have sex and getting him sexually aroused. This episode—Nat getting an erection due to this vision—may be read as a distraction from his rebellious mission. In the target text, Spanish readers find a ghostly woman who dances in front of the narrator and simply caresses her thighs. Any mention to the characters' genitals has been carefully omitted and the temptation scene has been mitigated, reducing its sexual tones and making it more likely to avoid institutional censorship and be published.

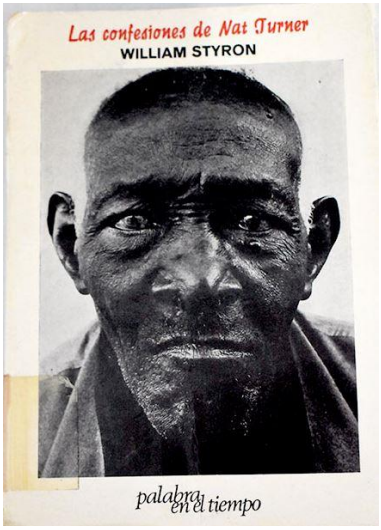
Table 3. Mitigating Nat Turner's sexual fantasies

Styron 337	Bosch 362
Try as I might I could not banish her, keep her away; my Bible availed me nothing. Does you want a l'il bit ob honeycomb, sweet pussy bee? she crooned to me with those words she had wheedled others, and **as she ground her hips in my face, with delicate brown fingers stroking the pink lips of her sex, my own stiffened.**	Por mucho que lo intentara, yo no podía apartarla de mi mente y mantenerla lejos. De nada me servía la Biblia, a este fin. ¿Vamos a pasarlo bien tú y yo, monada?, susurraba dulcemente, empleando las mismas palabras de que se servía para atraer a otros, **mientras imprimía un movimiento rotatorio a sus caderas, ante mi rostro, y con delicados dedos color chocolate se acariciaba los muslos**.

Lastly, when analyzing the 1968 Spanish translation of *The Confessions of Nat Turner*, there is a peritext worth observing: its cover.

The cover of Lumen's first edition features an old Black man staring at readers. Who is this person? If readers base their judgment on the novel's title, they may assume he is the protagonist. He could be about to confess what he has done, as the title suggests. This explanation may be a possibility, except for the fact that Nat Turner was hanged when he was thirty-one, shortly after his failed revolt had ended. The cover manages to somehow hint at Blackness and, therefore, initially conditions the target readers' response to Bosch's rendering. For instance, before reading the text, Spanish readers can have a look at the cover, see the old Black man on it, and guess the book is about some kind of Uncle Tom—an obedient and enslaved African American who is nice and subservient to his white masters. It is also interesting to observe that the cover does not include any blurb emphasizing that the novel had been awarded the Pulitzer Prize for Fiction that same year. It is likely that, given Francoist cultural isolation—the *apertura* period had begun only six years before, in 1962, as stated above—, potential readers were not acquainted with that award and its significance in American Humanities. Despite the self-censored sexual allusions, Lumen printed three thousand copies of the first edition of *Las Confesiones de Nat Turner*. Three years later, in 1971, it was a third party, Círculo de Lectores, the one that printed another eight thousand copies for its subscribers.

Fig. 1. Front cover. Bosch, Andrés, translator. *Las Confesiones de Nat Turner* By William Styron, Lumen, 1968.



3. Republishing a Censored Translation

The story of Bosch's self-censored translation does not end in 1968. In fact, as this section will show, that version is the only one that has been published in Spanish, conditioning the novel's reception in the target culture.

Lumen reprinted that same edition in 1980, during Spain's Transition to democracy. Given that institutional censorship remained active until 1985, it may be understandable why the translation was not reviewed, and the self-censored passages were not rewritten. It was twenty years later, in 2000, when the publishing company celebrated its fortieth anniversary and Esther Tusquets retired, and they decided to publish a special collection of hardcover books to commemorate the occasion. One of the titles chosen to be included in this collection was *Las Confesiones de Nat Turner*. The translation was exactly the same one as that published in 1968, republishing Bosch's text with no further additions or amendments. The only change made was a new peritext—the book's cover. As part of the collection "40 Lumen," the Black man's face was replaced by a picture of William Styron on a pink background.

The story of *The Confessions of Nat Turner* in Spain has one final chapter. In late 2016, it was the independent and Madrid-based publishing house Capitán Swing the one who was responsible for the latest Spanish edition of Styron's book. They tried to match the publication of the novel with the theatrical release of Nate Parker's film *The Birth of a Nation*, a retelling of Turner's revolt that was a forerunner for the Academy Awards before the actor and filmmaker was accused of rape by a former college acquaintance.[5] When it comes to the book itself, Capitán Swing did not commission a new translation. Instead, the company decided to reprint Andrés Bosch's text once again, including the self-censored passages that were described in Tables 1–3. This researcher has tried to ask the publishers about this decision and has emailed them, obtaining no answer at all.[6] The only text that Capitán Swing added to its edition is not the

[5] Since it falls beyond the scope of this research paper, the following article may be checked for more details on the effects these charges have had on the movie itself and on Nate Parker's career: Hornaday, Ann. "What Happened after Nate Parker's Film Career Imploded." *Washington Post*, 9 Nov. 2022, www.washingtonpost.com/arts-entertainment/2022/11/11/nate-parker-film-career-david-oyelowo/.

[6] Working as a literary translator, this researcher is aware of how hard it is to contact Spanish publishers and to have them answer your emails.

previously self-censored fragments, but another peritext—the epilogue that Styron wrote in 1992 to commemorate *The Confessions of Nat Turner*'s twenty-fifth anniversary. In it, the novelist talks about the controversy described in Section 1, assuring the readers that he never thought his book was going to be condemned by Black scholars and deemed racist, since he just wanted to rewrite a historical episode that had taken place in the Virginia county where he had grown up (Bosch, Capitán Swing 449–70). Interestingly, the name of the person who translated this epitext is nowhere to be found in the epilogue itself and in the credits page.[7]

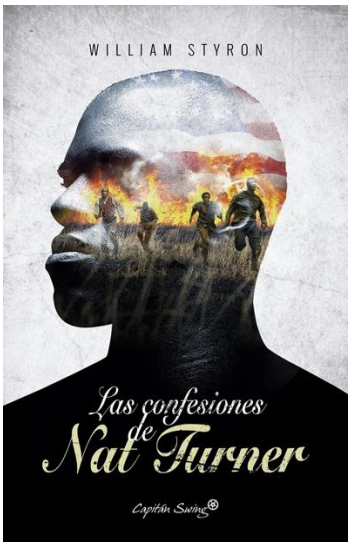
The fact that the products of self-censorship are present in the 2016 edition was not pointed out in the reviews that were written in early 2017, when *The Birth of a Nation* was about to be released. Instead, reviewers like Benítez praised *Las Confesiones de Nat Turner* for portraying the "Black Spartacus," a complex hero who was featured in a true story, and for being a retelling that deviated from the simplistic view of enslaved people that can be found in other popular best-selling titles, such as Harriet Beecher Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin* and Margaret Mitchell's *Gone with the Wind*. In fact, the translator's name was not even mentioned in this newspaper review.

In contrast to Lumen's 2000 cover, Capitán Swing's hinted at certain elements of Blackness that may draw readers' attention to the novel. This peritext does highlight Blackness, as it displays the looming silhouette of a Black man, presumably Nat Turner himself. Within this silhouette, there are a few Black men running across a field and, behind them, a huge American flag is burning. These people may be the rebels who join Turner's revolt against the slaveholders. The burning flag is a powerful image that could represent the collapse of the institution of Southern plantations, an oppressive system that would be regarded as one of the main causes for the American Civil War. The imagery in Capitán Swing's cover mirrors the one used in the poster for Parker's *The Birth of a Nation*, in which the mutinous Black people make up the red stripes in the American flag and follow their rebellious leader, Nat Turner—see Fig. 2 below. This cover strongly contrasts with the peaceful Black man featured in Lumen's. Perhaps that one was more suitable for the censorship of the sixties, whereas Capitán Swing's peritext and its use of revolutionary

[7] Andrés Bosch died in 1983, so it remains a mystery who translated this epilogue for Capitán Swing. My hypothesis is that it was the publishers themselves.

images could appeal to readers who are looking for a historical novel that criticizes institutional power.

Fig. 2. Front cover. Bosch, Andrés, translator. *Las Confesiones de Nat Turner* By William Styron, Capitán Swing, 2016.



CONCLUSIONS

The publication history of William Styron's *The Confessions of Nat Turner* has been marked by several hurdles. Although it was awarded the meritorious Pulitzer Prize for Fiction in 1968, the novel was heavily criticized by African American scholars for perpetuating simplistic and racist stereotypes, applying them to a historical figure who rebelled against the institution of Southern slavery in 1831.

As the novel was translated into Spanish in 1968, during the Francoist dictatorship, the context of "censorship measures, such as pre-publication or editorial censorship" (Santaemilia 222) needed to be studied carefully, particularly after the 1966 Press Law had been passed. Visiting the AGA has allowed this researcher to access rather revealing epitexts concerning the publication of *Las Confesiones de Nat Turner*. The first one was the censorship report, which lamented that some passages containing swearing and violent scenes could not be redacted because the book was about to be distributed, as Tusquets's letter assured. The contrastive analysis of

Bosch's translation and the source text has shown that there are three fragments in which sexual allusions—two of them to homosexuality—were self-censored. The discovery of the translator's self-censorship, together with the publisher's letter to the censors, are revealing evidence of "the negotiation processes" (Lobejón et al. 106) that were used in the 1960s as a way of avoiding institutional censorship and the economic losses that having a book sequestered would entail. Finding self-censorship in Bosch's translation contrasts with a previous study on *Jubileo*, another neo-slave narrative translated in Spain in the 1960s (Sanz Jiménez). In that case, the censorship report compared the novel to *Uncle Tom's Cabin* and *Gone with the Wind*, claiming there was nothing to change in a work that was "not very evocative and many details are predictable in comparison with the two novels just mentioned" (Sanz Jiménez). After *Las Confesiones de Nat Turner* and *Jubileo* were published, there was another neo-slave narrative that came out ten years later, during Spain's Transition to democracy—Alex Haley's *Raíces*. Nevertheless, the censorship report 9660–78 issued on September 16, 1978, by the Ministry of Information and Tourism (Departamento de Información Nacional) simply states that the novel is "very interesting and well written. It has all the American vicissitudes, such as slave auctions, harvests, the Civil War, etc." [8]

It has been intriguing to find out that Bosch's self-censored translation was not reviewed or fixed once Francoist censorship was officially over. This mutilated version continued to be reprinted well into the twenty-first century, as the study of Capitán Swing's 2016 edition has proven. The book contains no editors' preface or footnotes stating why the publishers decided to reprint an existing and self-censored translation instead of having a new one. Given the silence this researcher had found when trying to contact the publishers on this issue, the hypothesis formulated by Rodríguez Espinosa (235) and Calvo (162) seems likely: Sometimes, the Spanish publishing industry can find it more profitable to reprint a previously published translation than to hire a new translator. Instances of this phenomenon may be found in the catalogs of both independent companies, like Capitán Swing, and big ones that belong to multinational groups, such as Lumen. In a market that is saturated with new titles coming out every week, releasing a book as soon as possible may reduce

[8] This translation into English has been carried out by the writer of this paper.

production costs, even if that means reusing a formerly censored translation.

This practice might be more common than the average readers may think and, even in the early twenty-first century, there are quite a few censored books that may be sold in Spanish bookstores. For example, a recent master's dissertation proved that a popular book, the paperback edition of Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World*, features a censored translation that first came out in the 1960s (Sánchez Padilla 69–71). Hopefully, future studies could follow this research line, use the AGA's resources, and expose how many censored books are sold as unabridged versions today, arguing the need for new translations into Spanish.

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An Analysis of Animal Metaphors in Episodes of Gender-Based Violence Reported in Spanish and Canadian Newspapers

Un Análisis de las Metáforas Animales en Episodios de Violencia de Género Publicados en la Prensa Española y Canadiense

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Abstract: This article explores animal metaphors in episodes of gender-based violence reported in Spanish and Canadian newspapers. It analyzes the most common zoomorphic representations of female victims in real cases of gender-based violence documented in the news in Spain and Canada from 2006 to 2022. The research shows how the bestial iconography articulates discourses of gender-based violence and how the male perpetrator sees the abused woman through an animal lens to dehumanize, sexualize, exert, and even justify his violent actions.
Keywords: gender violence; abused woman; male perpetrator; animal metaphors; Spanish and Canadian newspapers.
Summary: Introduction. Animal Metaphors in Discourses of (Gender) Violence. Method: Procedure and Analysis. Findings and Discussion. Conclusions.

Resumen: Este artículo explora metáforas animales en episodios de violencia de género publicados en la prensa española y canadiense. Se analizan las metáforas zoomórficas más frecuentes empleadas en la representación de las víctimas femeninas en casos reales documentados en la prensa de España y Canadá desde el año 2006 al 2022. Los resultados de esta investigación muestran cómo el lenguaje de las especies articula discursos de violencia de género y cómo el maltratador masculino ve a su víctima femenina a través de una óptica animal para deshumanizar, sexualizar, ejercer e incluso justificar sus actos violentos.

Palabras clave: violencia de género; mujer maltratada; hombre maltratador; metáforas animales; periódicos españoles y canadienses.
Sumario: Introducción. Metáforas animales en discursos de violencia (de género). Metodología: Procedimiento y Análisis. Resultados y Exposición. Conclusiones.

INTRODUCTION

The gang rape of an 18-year-old woman during the running of the bull celebrations of San Fermín in 2016 became publicly known as "*la Manada*" ('the Wolf pack') case after the name of the WhatsApp group that the men used to chat, film, and boast about their sexual exploits. In addition to the perpetrators' moniker framing (sexual) relationships in terms of a male animal hunting his female prey, their on-line conversations, behaviors, and even physiques displayed animal imagery too (Romano 636; Molpeceres and Filardo-Llamas 59). In their chat, the youngest friend was explicitly told to use drugs and even weapons to have sex with women if he wanted to become a wolf: "*la prueba de fuego para ser un lobo*" ('the manhood test to become a wolf') (Cedeira 1). The leader of the group also had a substantial tattoo of a wolf's pawprint on his back, which he had publicly shown on his social media along with sexist remarks (Requeijo and Montero 1–6).[1]

In like manner, in 2002 Canada solved the mystery of the disappearance and killing of 33 women in what the police called the "pig girl" case owing to the job of their serial killer, the pig farmer Robert Pickton (Butts 2; Cameron). Pickton's view of female drug addicts, prostitutes, and indigenous women in terms of dirty pigs polluting society led him to treat his victims as this animal. In fact, after kidnapping and sexually assaulting them, Pickton forced most of these women to stay in a pigsty. He went on to kill them with a butcher knife, sometimes burying their corpses in his pig farm, feeding their remains to his real pigs, and even taking them to a slaughterhouse, where they could be transformed into meat for human consumption (Butts 3–9). Despite taking place in two distant countries and in different years, these two real stories show the (ab)use of zoomorphic metaphors in episodes of violence against women.

[1] This article is dedicated to my daughter, Helena. Thanks for being in my life.

1. Animal Metaphors in Discourses of (Gender) Violence

Animal metaphors have been documented in discourses of violence (Cikara et al.; Haslam et al.; Prazmo). Zoomorphic symbols are frequently used to degrade particular social groups based on their race, ethnicity, origin, profession, religion, sexual orientation, and gender (López-Rodríguez, "Of Women"; López Maestre). Black people have traditionally been likened to apes, and Jews, to mice and rats; immigrants are often perceived as vermin; police officers are imagined as pigs, just like Muslims. Homosexual males are compared to all sorts of birds, whereas women are often described as chicks, kittens, and cougars. Far from being mere figurative usages, these—and other—animal names, when labeling people have important, real-life consequences that may affect an individual's integrity and life, for, as Lakoff points out, "metaphors can kill" (1).

According to research in human cognition, culture, and communication, metaphors are cognitive mechanisms that influence people's thoughts and actions (Lakoff and Johnson; Lakoff and Turner; Kövecses). Value-laden, ideologically charged, and culturally motivated (Deignan; Goatly), metaphors provide conceptual frameworks to understand people's selves and experiences. As iconographic references, metaphors may force individuals to see something through a specific lens, ofte, n leading to a distorted vision of reality which may encourage people to believe in and commit to certain actions, for, as Fairclough states: "[w]hen we see the world with a particular metaphor, it then forms the basis of our action, our perception of the world and behaviour will change according to the use of a particular metaphor" (67).

Seeing people as animals deprives the former of their human condition and rational capacity. The PEOPLE AS ANIMALS metaphor (Kövecses, *Metaphor*) is generally embedded in the context of humans as evolved animals able to refrain from their innate impulses thanks to their superior mental faculties. Underpinning most faunistic metaphors is the notion of (lack of) control that presupposes that the animal side of a person must be kept at bay as part of civilized behavior. The identification of people with beasts tends to highlight their inability to control emotions and drives—such as sexual desire (i.e., *cougar*), anger (i.e., *unbridled* rage), hunger (i.e., *pig out*), or physical strength (i.e., *bull*). Falling within the so-called "control metaphors" (Pérez 180), thus, faunistic metaphors have become powerful mechanisms to exert power over certain groups.

Research on animal symbols in metaphoric war-like scenarios (Steuter and Wills), anti-immigrant (Santa Ana; Mujagić and Berberović), racist (Goff et al.; Haslam et al.), criminal (Thibodeau and Boroditsky), political (Arcimaviciene; Pinchin; Schoor), and gender (Rudman and Mescher; Bock and Burkley; Tranchese and Sugiura) discourses has shown how the bestial iconography usually goes hand in hand with the promotion of negative attitudes and violent behaviors towards the target group.[2] Certainly, along with dehumanization (Haslam et al.), faunistic tropes often entail notions of danger (López-Rodríguez), for animals, unless domesticated or tamed, pose a threat to people. Hence, the identification of people with animals calls for the subjugation of the animalized subject. To illustrate, the projection of wild beasts onto enemies frequently leads to their annihilation. The representation of migrants as pests and beasts of burden serves to justify their marginalization and labor exploitation. The activation of ape imagery to refer to black people contributes to the condonation of physical violence against them. The depiction of criminals as beasts preying upon citizens often results in tougher court sentences, including the death penalty. The identification of political opponents with fierce or contagious fauna is conducive to the sabotage of their meetings. The reduction of women to kittens and chicks helps to perpetuate sexist beliefs and a culture of sexual violence towards them.

In the realm of gender-based violence, studies have brought to the forefront the fatal consequences of envisioning women and men as animals (Luke; Bock and Burkley; Gutmann; Rudman and Mescher).[3] Certainly, although both males and females are prone to animalization, the former are usually compared to fierce, large, predatory beasts (e.g., *tiger*, *wolf*, *bear*) whereas the latter to docile, small, domestic creatures (e.g., *chick*, *kitten*, *bunny*) (Nilsen; López-Rodríguez, "Of Women"). Apart from reinforcing

[2] This concept of "scenario" is taken from Mussolf: "we can characterise a 'scenario' as a set of assumptions made by competent members of a discourse community about 'typical' aspects of a source-situation, for example, its participants and their roles, the 'dramatic' storylines and outcomes, and conventional evaluations of whether they count as successful or unsuccessful, normal or abnormal, permissible or illegitimate, etc." ("Metaphor Scenarios" 28).

[3] Also, in the field of metaphor and gender studies, Lakoff and Johnson's article "The Metaphorical Logic of Rape" provides a good insight into how metaphors shape the perception and representation of rape in American culture. After arguing that metaphors are not harmless exercises in naming, the authors reflect on the legitimization of rape through metaphor.

sexist assumptions about the social role of men and women, this imbalance in the codification of zoomorphic metaphors also fosters ideas of male's (sexual) dominance and female's (sexual) submission. In fact, men appear as dominant initiators of sexual advances and women as submissive recipients (Glick and Fiske; Kang) or, to put it in animalesque talk, men are the predators chasing their female prey (López Maestre). This faunistic discourse, which often informs and negatively affects individuals' understanding of heterosexual relationships and dating scenarios (Rudman and Mescher; Bock and Burkley), appears in episodes of abuse against women reported in Canadian and Spanish newspapers.

This article aims to explore metaphorical fauna in real cases of gender-based violence reported in Spanish and Canadian newspapers, a comparative study of two different cultures that has not yet been addressed in the literature. Note that in this paper gender-based violence is understood as distinct kinds of violent acts against women, whether verbal, physical, psychological, sexual, or socioeconomic (Casique and Ferreira 951). The main research questions are as follows:

a) What are the main animal metaphors deployed by male abusers to refer to their female victims in episodes of gender violence reported in Spanish and Canadian newspapers?

b) What are the common metaphors, and which of those are the specific ones for each cultural landscape?

c) What are the ideological implications of these animal metaphors in discourses of gender-based violence?

d) How are these animal metaphors used by the male abuser to legitimize gender-based violence?

2. METHOD: PROCEDURE AND ANALYSIS

Data for this study were collected from forty-two (42) newspapers, namely: *ABC*, *El Mundo*, *El País*, *La Razón*, *La Vanguardia*, *El Español*, *Libertad Digital*, *El Confidencial*, *El Periódico de Aragón*, *Diario de Cádiz*, *El Nacional*, *Nius Diario*, *El Correo*, *Diario de Sevilla*, *Diario de Córdoba*, *La Gaceta*, *Diario de Mallorca*, *Faro de Vigo*, *Voz Pópuli*, *El HuffPost*, *El Comercio*, *Diario de Asturias*, *El Periódico Mediterráneo*, *El*

Periódico Extremadura, *La Tribuna de Albacete*, *El Plural* and *La Voz de Galicia*, for the Spanish news articles, and *The National Post*, *The Globe and Mail*, *Calgary Herald*, *Calgary Sun*, *Edmonton Journal*, *Edmonton Sun*, *The Daily Courier*, *The National Post*, *The Vancouver Sun*, *Ottawa Citizen*, *Ottawa Sun*, *Montreal Gazette*, *Telegram*, *Toronto Sun*, and *Toronto Star*, for the Canadian news articles. These publications were chosen because of their availability and wide circulation in both countries.

Data collection and sampling were purposive, guided by the objectives to explore the research questions stated above. The study conducted a qualitative analysis of the animal symbols used in newspaper articles tackling violence against women. Note that only the animal metaphors used by the male abuser—whether in direct or reported speech—were considered since one of the main goals of this project was to hear the aggressor's voice when exerting violence towards women.

Due to time and financial constraints to access these journals, a total of four (4) newspapers (whether in print or on-line) were consulted each month over the course of sixteen (16) years (2006–2022). This selection was made randomly, but always with the aim to encompass a wider variety of newspapers to enrich data. A total of 768 newspapers were consulted (an average of 48 newspapers annually) with an average of one (1) article dealing with gender violence per issue. This yielded a final corpus of 768 articles. All these articles were recorded in a word document to facilitate the coding process. Furthermore, although the dates were selected arbitrarily (2006–2022) and only reflect the beginning and end of this research project, these 16 years offer a panoramic view of animal metaphors in discourses of the male batterer in Spain and Canada. Besides, they provide information regarding an upward trend in the use of these animal metaphors reported in the Spanish and Canadian press.

Once collected, the animal-based metaphors of this corpus were then manually coded applying the Metaphor Identification Procedure (MIP) (Pragglejaz Group 3), which consists of the application of the following three steps: 1) read the text to get a global understanding of the meaning, b) determine if each lexical unit has a more concrete, more precise, or historically older meaning in other contexts different than the one in the given text, and c) if so, mark the lexical unit as metaphorical.

Having identified and coded all the animal metaphors applied to women in episodes of gender violence in the above corpus according to MIP, the next step involved their organization into meaningful clusters. The formulation of the conceptual structures underlying the tokens

labelled as metaphorical was carried out considering that the main function of metaphor is the understanding of abstract ideas in terms of more concrete, bodily, or familiar ones (Lakoff and Johnson, *Metaphors*; Semino). Based on this premise of Conceptual Metaphor Theory, the study thoroughly examined the main zoomorphic scenarios to which male abusers recurred when exerting violence towards women. The resulting corpus was comprised of three hundred and fifty-seven (357) metaphorical items (129 belonging to the English corpus and 228 to the Spanish corpus). Note that all these linguistic metaphors were considered as the surface manifestation in language of conceptual metaphors. Hence, once retrieved and noted, the former were grouped thematically, so that conceptual metaphors could be put forward to explain them. Also, note that no reliability tests were performed in the analysis of the corpus given that the main goal of the research project was to compile a vast number of animal metaphors used in the speech of the male abuser in both Spain and Canada.

Furthermore, the qualitative analysis of the animal metaphors used in episodes of gender violence as reported in Canadian and Spanish newspapers was framed within a discourse analytic approach, as described by Fairclough, Charteris-Black, and Mussolf ("The Study of Metaphor"). Implementing cognitive semantics, this view considers the social influence of ideology, culture, and history to provide a more reliable account of why particular metaphors are selected in specific discourse contexts. In fact, the preference of one metaphor over others not only reflects different ways of representing reality, but it is also ancillary in constructing a particular view of reality (Koller 11). In this sense, metaphors can become vehicles for the transmission of ideological values and power relations; even serving to legitimize particular world views (Chateris-Black 90–112). These functions of metaphor, thus, are relevant in this study, which focuses on how the male abuser animalizes his female victim when exerting violence against her.

The present paper discusses the use(s) and function(s) of the animalesque talk found in the language of the male abuser in episodes of violence against women reported in Spanish and Canadian newspapers. Special attention will be paid to the wider psychological, cultural, and social discourses from which these metaphors are drawn. In the analysis of the corpus, translations of the Spanish examples are provided.

3. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

This section reports on the research findings and discusses their significance to delve into the real implications of the animal metaphors employed in real cases of violence against women.

Table 1. Metaphoric conceptualization of female victims of gender violence in the Canadian corpus

No.	Animal metaphors	Frequency	Percentage
1.	bitch	83	64.34%
2.	cow	23	17.82%
3.	dog	12	8.52%
4.	pig	11	9.30%
	Total	129	100%

Table 2. Metaphoric conceptualization of female victims of gender violence in the Spanish corpus

No.	Animal metaphors	Frequency	Percentage
1.	zorra (vixen)	174	76.31%
2.	perra (bitch)	41	17.92%
3.	cerda (pig)	11	4.82%
4.	loba (she-wolf)	1	0.43%
5.	coneja (bunny)	1	0.43%
	Total	228	100%

Table 3. Animal metaphors organized according to their year of publication in the Canadian corpus

Year	Bitch	Cow	Pig	Dog
2006	2	1	0	0
2007	2	0	0	0
2008	4	0	0	0
2009	2	1	0	1
2010	3	0	0	0
2011	3	2	0	0
2012	4	1	1	0
2013	3	3	0	1
2014	2	1	1	1
2015	4	1	1	1

2016	6	1	1	1
2017	7	1	1	1
2018	6	1	1	1
2019	8	2	1	1
2020	8	2	1	1
2021	8	3	1	1
2022	11	3	2	2
Total	83	23	11	12

Table 4. Animal metaphors organized according to their year of publication in the Spanish corpus

Year	*Zorra*	*Perra*	*Cerda*	*Loba*	*Coneja*
2006	6	1	0	0	0
2007	5	1	0	0	0
2008	3	2	0	0	0
2009	6	1	0	0	0
2010	5	2	0	0	0
2011	7	3	0	0	0
2012	6	2	0	0	0
2013	8	2	1	0	0
2014	9	2	0	0	0
2015	8	2	1	0	0
2016	4	2	1	0	0
2017	9	2	1	0	0
2018	12	2	1	0	0
2019	18	2	1	0	0
2020	17	5	1	0	0
2021	18	4	2	1	0
2022	33	6	2	0	1
Total	174	41	11	1	1

The woman is a bitch

The most frequent animal metaphor aimed at women in episodes of gender-based violence is "bitch." It accounts for 64.34% of all the animal-based metaphors of the English corpus. Like with most figurative fauna, "bitch" conveys notions of (mental) inferiority and unrestrained behavior.

These senses appear to be in the mind of the male batterer that addresses his partner as "bitch" to belittle her intellect and physically harm her:

(1) The man responds by yelling at the woman, calling her a "**stupid bitch**" and an "ignorant cow" before grabbing her by the hair and repeatedly slamming her head on a tabletop. (Yourk 2)

(2) Her husband called her "fucking idiot" and "**stupid bitch**" and kicked her several times. (Cheap 12)

(3) Her boyfriend called her "**dumb bitch**" and punched her repeatedly. (Patrick 29)

Data analysis revealed that, in incidents of domestic violence, the largely taboo "bitch" tends to collocate with words that reinforce notions of ignorance and foolishness, such as "stupid" (24%) and "dumb" (13%). In fact, as seen in the excerpts above, in (1), "bitch" appears with another image of an unintelligent animal, namely, the cow, which, in turn, is modified by the adjective "ignorant." The co-text is similar in (2), where the swear word expression "fucking idiot" precedes "stupid bitch."

The corpus also showed "bitch" in scenarios of verbal abuse that target female politicians and feminist activists. In fact, studies have drawn attention to the common use of this slur to refer to women who have powerful and influential roles, particularly in politics and economics (Kassam; Kleinman et al. 530–40). In these cases, this term of opprobrium transmits the senses of belligerent, malicious and domineering; in other words, negative traits traditionally associated to female power (Hughes).

(4) Sandra Jansen, a female Alberta politician, faced offensive online comments such as "dumb broad" or 'traitorous "**bitch**" after leaving the Tories and joining the governing NDP party. (Bennett 2)

(5) Former Liberal cabinet minister Belinda Stronach gets called, variously, a dog, a whore, a **bitch** and a prostitute. (Kinsella 4)

(6) The long-time president of the Windsor Minor Hockey Association called Canadian women who participated in the Women's March in Washington "dumb **bitches**" on his social media. ("Dumb Bitches" 3)

As can be inferred from the previous examples, the corpus also showed the co-occurrence of "bitch" with other animal metaphors (37%) equally demeaning women, such as "cow," and "dog." Besides reinforcing the dehumanization of the female subject, such faunistic metaphors further contribute to the humiliation of women, since they connote ugliness (cow, dog), stupidity (cow), and even sexual promiscuity (dog) (Eble 89). This co-existence of fauna also sheds some light onto the metaphorical workings of the mind. Far from being isolated instances, all these animal metaphors are activated simultaneously in the mind of the male abuser to dehumanize and hurt females.

The study of the corpus also revealed that most male abusers exploit the strong sexual charge of "bitch" (Hughes 91) to label women as promiscuous and even sex workers, particularly while harassing and assaulting them. This idea of "loose woman" is further reinforced by the appearance of terms such as "slut," "whore" or "prostitute" in their speeches:

(7) Greene described Rumbolt telling her she would "never have a life in this town," calling her degrading names in repeated attempts at contact. On one occasion, he followed her in his police car as she walked to a friend's house, she wrote, calling her a "slut" and a "f[uc]king **bitch**." (Mullin 4)

(8) Her boyfriend called her whore, prostitute, and **bitch** before raping her. (Suarez 3)

This use of "bitch" also appears in those news articles reporting on cases of sexual violence in Canadian schools and universities, as seen below:

(9) Ontario Christian school tells court it was unaware abuse . . . That abuse included repeated references to girls in their care as "sluts, whores, Jezebels [and] **bitches** in heat." (Sawa 3)

(10) 5 female students sexually abused during the **bitches** and drinks parties at Western University. (Luci 7)

The woman is a cow

Applied to a stupid, annoying, and even fat woman, the derogatory "cow" represents 17.82% of the animal metaphors registered in the English

corpus. This term, which resonates in the obesity discourse that stigmatizes females with weight issues (Hardy 11), is usually employed by male abusers to fat-shame their female victims:

(11) Her husband was physically abusive and called his wife a "bitch," a "big fat **cow**." (May 23)

(12) He was so angry he started yelling, "You fat **cow**! Thanks a lot, you fat **cow**!" ("Insults" 19)

The corpus showed that "cow" tends to be modified by the adjective "fat" (11%) to intensify the idea of heavy weight. It also appears with other offensive animal names, such as "bitch" (11) and in one instance with the cow's sound "moo":

(13) A woman was mortified at being **mooed** at like a **cow** on way to sister's wedding. (Collinson 4)

The woman is a pig

Classified as one of the most offensive animal names applied to people according to psychological studies (Haslam et al. 322), the metaphoric pig carries the negative implications of fatness, dirtiness, shame, and even promiscuity (López-Rodríguez, "Of Women" 91). The corpus registers this symbol 11 times (8.52%). It frequently appears in episodes of extreme sexual violence, particularly involving sex workers (5.92%):

(14) The woman testified Hoggard raped her repeatedly, choked her, called her a "dirty little **pig**" while he made animal noises and dragged her to the bathroom where he asked her to urinate on him and she said no. ("Hedley´s Jacob" 3)

(15) he called me "fucking **pig**" and raped me. ("Night Rape" 32)

(16) The prostitute was called "dirty **pig**," raped and killed. ("Sex Crimes" 11)

As can be seen, "pig" is often modified by "dirty" to intensify notions of uncleanliness, especially connected with sex.

The woman is a dog

The metaphorical dog accounts for 9.30% of the total English corpus. This term, when applied to women, implies ugliness, promiscuity, and even prostitution (Eble 43). It usually appears in articles reporting on cyberbullying against influential women and in sexual assault reports:

(17) Former politician Belinda Stronach called a **dog**. ("Stonach" 11)

(18) What he'd done wasn't rape, he said—so don't tell anybody that it was. When I pleaded with him to stop, he called me a **dog**, a bitch and a slut. (Peterson 32)

(19) After calling her **dog** and bitch, he raped his partner and killed her. (Malone 41)

Like with most metaphoric fauna in the corpus analysed, "dog" often appears with other animal metaphors, mainly its female counterpart "bitch" (4.5%). It also collocates frequently with "slut." This might be so to reinforce the carnal overtones of "dog," especially considering episodes of sexual violence.

The woman is a vixen

As far as the Spanish corpus is concerned, the most common metaphor found was "*zorra*" (literally 'vixen'), which accounts for 76.31% of the total. This negative word, which denotes a cunning woman, a promiscuous woman, and even a sex worker (Fernández and Jiménez 782), often appears in articles that tackle the verbal abuse that many female politicians and feminist activists face. As its English counterpart "bitch," "*zorra*" appears to deride strong, independent, and powerful women since, within patriarchal societies, these are undesirable characteristics.

(20) *No son pocos los insultos que recibe Rita Maestre a través de sus redes sociales. La portavoz de Más Madrid en el Ayuntamiento de la capital ha leído en una intervención en el Consistorio una serie de 'tuits' dirigidos hacia su persona . . . como* ***zorra*** *sinvergüenza*. (Rita Maestre is the target of countless of insults on her social networks. During her speech in the council meeting, the spokesperson of Más Madrid has

read a series of tweets insulting her, such as shameless **vixen**.) ("La respuesta" 2)

(21) *El coordinador de Vox en Sevilla llama "**zorras** machorras" a las feministas*. (The coordinator of VOX in Seville calls feminists 'butch **vixen**.') ("VOX" 3)

(22) *Bernal recuerda que dos de sus miembros, entre ellos Zugasti, fueron absueltos por "colgar pancartas machistas" en los juzgados de violencia sobre la mujer de Madrid. A pesar de los mensajes que portaban—"in dubio, pro **zorra**" o "llama y te desplumamos el pollo" [sobre el 016]—la Audiencia Provincial de Madrid no lo consideró delito de odio, sino una falta de injurias, figura despenalizada en la reforma del Código Penal de 2015*. (Bernal remembers that two of the party members, among them Zugasti, were absolved from "displaying male chauvinist signs" in the court houses of gender violence in Madrid. Despite the messages— "in case of doubt, you are a **vixen**" or "call and we will pluck the chick" [gender violence line 016]—the provincial courtroom of Madrid did not consider these messages as hate crime, but mere injuries, which is decriminalized in the reform of the Penal Code of 2015.) (Marrón 1–4)

Most newspaper articles of the corpus, however, register the word "*zorra*" in episodes of gender-based violence where verbal abuse goes hand in hand with physical harm and even sexual aggression. Furthermore, the corpus showed the strong sexual load attached to this animal metaphor, since it usually collocates with "*puta*" ('whore') (62%) and the animal term "*guarra*" ('pig') (12%).

(23) *Los hechos sucedieron el 27 de enero de 2014. J.C llegó a la casa de Susana Flores, que compartía con otros compañeros de piso. La declaración y el atestado recogen que ambos bebieron y que, en un momento dado, él, en presencia de los dos menores (de 4 y 13 años entonces), comenzó a ponerse violento. "Eres una **zorra**, una puta, seguro que en Zaragoza has estado en un prostíbulo", recoge el informe policial. A pesar de que Susana le pidió que se marchara de la vivienda, el hombre no lo hizo, sino que le quitó y rompió su teléfono, así como el de su hijo*. (The events took place on January 27, 2014. J.C. arrived at Susana Flores' house, which she shared with other people. Her testimony and the police report state that both drank and, at one point, he, in front of two minors (4 and 13 years old), became violent.

"You are a **vixen**, a whore, I am sure that you have worked in a brothel in Zaragoza," reads the police report. Although Susana asked him to leave, the man refused to do this and, instead, he snatched and broke her cell phone and her son's.) (Requena 9)

(24) *Ocho meses de cárcel por llamar "**zorra**, puta" y dar varios puñetazos en un taxi a su pareja. La sentencia considera que queda probado que el 14 de septiembre de 2019 el acusado llamó "**zorra**, puta" y golpeó con el puño varias veces a su pareja, en la parada de taxis de la plaza de Luis Braille.* (Sentenced to eight months in prison for calling his partner "**vixen**, whore" and punched her in a taxi. The sentence considers that on September 14, 2019, the accused called his partner "**vixen**, whore" and punched her several times at the taxi stop in the Luis Braille square.) ("Ocho meses" 3)

(25) *La Audiencia de Palma ha acogido este miércoles el juicio contra un acusado de quebrantar una orden de alejamiento y maltratar a su expareja, a quien también acosó y agredió sexualmente en Manacor. "Me amenazaba cada día. Me dijo que era una puta, una **zorra**, una guarra. Me pegó dos bofetadas y me dijo que me iba a matar allí, que me tiraría al agua y nadie me encontraría", ha contado la víctima*. (This Wednesday, the court of Palma has held the trial against the man accused of violating a restraining order and mistreating his former partner, whom he also harassed and assaulted sexually in Manacor. "He threatened me every day. He said that I was a whore, a **vixen**, a pig. He slapped me and said that he was going to kill me there, he was going to throw my corpse into the water and nobody would find me," the victim recalled.) ("Mujer víctima" 1)

(26) *Afirmó que desde el primer día la relación fue tóxica y perjudicial para ella, encontrándose sometida a un control exhaustivo de su móvil y redes sociales por parte de Ionut Ciprian A. M., recibiendo un trato degradante, discutiendo y recibiendo insultos del tipo "hija de puta o **zorra**"*. (She affirmed that from the very first day their relationship was toxic and detrimental to her. She was subject to an exhaustive control of her cell phone and social networks by her partner, Ionut Ciprian A. M., who debased her with insults such as "son of a bitch or **vixen**.") ("Solicita salir" 4)

The woman is a bitch

Denoting a despicable woman and even a prostitute (López-Rodríguez, "Of Women" 85), the metaphorical "perra" appears 41 times in the Spanish corpus (17.92%). Apart from verbally insulting women, this slur is often embedded in hate speech involving physical abuse:

(27) *Condenado por dirigirse a su pareja como "**perra** o payasa" y controlarle sus relaciones. El procesado fue sentenciado a tres años y nueve meses de cárcel por tratar a la víctima de forma "vejatoria y despectiva". Deberá indemnizarla con 3.280 euros*. (Sentenced for calling his partner '**bitch** or clown' and controlling her relationships. The accused man was sentenced to three years and nine months in prison for treating the victim in a "degrading and derogatory way." He will have to indemnify her with 3,280 euros.) ("Condenado" 1)

(28) *Un hombre ha sido condenado a quince días de trabajos comunitarios por llamar "**perra**" a su ex-pareja, sin citarla expresamente, en su perfil privado de la red social Facebook, al tiempo que criticaba la legislación contra la violencia de género*. (A man has been sentenced to fifteen days of community work for calling his ex-girlfriend "**bitch**" in his personal Facebook profile, while criticizing the legislation on gender-based violence.) ("Condenado a trabajos" 1)

(29) *El caso es que la fiel escudera de Cospedal y diputada regional del PP de Castilla-La Mancha, Cesárea Arnedo, ha clamado al cielo "por el silencio" del Partido Socialista y del presidente del Gobierno autonómico, Emiliano García-Page, ante los insultos que ha recibido la concejala (ya exconcejala) socialista en la localidad toledana de Pantoja, María Josefa Magán**,** que parece ser fue agredida verbalmente por su compañero de corporación, el también edil socialista, José Luis de Lucas, quien llamó a la señora Magán "**perra**"*. (The case is that the faithful squire of Cospedal and regional congresswoman of PP in Castilla-La Mancha, Cesárea Arnedo, has expressed her outrage because of "the silence" kept by the Socialist Party and its president of the regional government, Emiliano García-Page, after the insults targeted at the socialist city councilwoman (now former councilwoman) in the city of Pantoja, Toledo, María Josefa Magán, who, apparently, was verbally attacked by her socialist colleague, José Luis de Lucas, who called Mrs. Magán "**bitch**.") ("Insultos en la política" 11)

(30) *Debido a los celos, el acusado estaba convencido de que ella le engañaba. "Puta, guarra, dime la verdad, no me fío de ti, me estás mintiendo, me estás engañando con otro", le decía. Otro día, en el interior del coche, también motivado por los celos, comenzó a golpearla. Ella le suplicaba llorando que no lo hiciera pero él continuaba: "Que no tengo huevos a pegarte, te pongo ahí de pegatina, te meto un puñetazo que te comes el cristal entero. Eres una mierda, una mierda de tía, voy a estar detrás de tuyo hasta que me muera. Ten cuidado que te pego y te arranco la cabeza, puta gilipollas de mierda, que te pego un puñetazo que te arranco la cabeza, puta de mierda. Puta de mierda que te parto los brazos. Puta* ***perra*** *de mierda", le espetó.* (Due to jealousy, the accused man was convinced that she was cheating on him. "**Bitch**, pig, tell me the truth, I do not trust you, you are lying to me, you are cheating with another guy," he told her. The other day, inside the car, again moved by jealousy, he started beating her up. In tears, she begged him to stop, but he kept on going: "I have the balls to hit you, I am going to turn you into a sticker, I am going to punch you so that you will eat the whole window. You are shit, a shitty woman, I am going to chase you till I die. Be careful because I am going to hit you and pull out your head, fucking asshole, I am going to punch you and pull out your head, fucking **bitch**. Fucking **bitch**, I am going to break your arms. Fucking **bitch**," he blurted out.) ("Un acusado" 3)

The woman is a pig

Like its English counterpart "pig," "*cerda*" and its synonymous "*guarra*" are offensive terms for a woman, conveying the implications of fatness, ugliness, and dirtiness. In most cases, the animal metaphor is used to attack a woman's choice of wardrobe (regarded as sexy for their male partners) and to suggest their promiscuity, and even work in the sex industry. In this sense, it bears striking similarities to the English "pig" to debase the female victim in episodes of gender violence:

(31) *Gritos de "****Cerda****" y amenazas a una mujer en Murcia por ir en pantalones cortos.* (Yells of "**pig**" and threats to a woman in Murcia because she was wearing shorts.) (Aragón 1)

(32) *La joven asegura que el hombre—ilocalizable tras las primeras gestiones policiales—la sometía a vejaciones, la llamaba "hija de puta", "****guarra****" y "enferma". La menospreciaba a ella y a toda su familia, tratando de alejarla de los suyos bajo supuestas amenazas de*

hacerles daño, dice. (The woman claims that the man—untraceable after the first police reports—subjected her to harassment and called her "son of a bitch," "**pig**" and "sick." He despised her and all her family, trying to isolate her from her relatives by threatening to hurt them, she says.) (Bigné 2–3)

(33) *A principios del mes de octubre, la víctima decidió poner fin a la relación y se lo comunicó a J. Éste no aceptó la ruptura e inició una discusión con ella en la que le profirió expresiones como "**guarra**, eres una prostituta de viejos, te pagan dinero por acostarte con otros". El procesado, con conocimiento de que tal actitud provocaría en la mujer un sentimiento de culpabilidad, le pidió mantener relaciones sexuales*. (At the beginning of October, the victim decided to end the relationship and told J. This did not accept the break-up and started an argument where he called her "**pig**, you are a whore for old men, you get paid for having sex with other men." The accused man, knowing that this behavior will make the woman feel guilty, asked her to have sexual relations.) ("Violencia de género" 1)

(34) *En el juicio, la mujer, J. S., está separada por una mampara para no ver a su expareja. Durante su declaración comenta que la llamó "puta, **guarra**" y muchas cosas más y que rompieron en febrero. "Ha violado dos veces la orden de alejamiento con mensajes. No quiero que se vuelva a comunicar conmigo, es un acoso psicológico y sigo en tratamiento en el Centro de la Mujer"*. (In the courtroom, the woman, J.S., was separated with a screen so that she did not have to see her former partner. During her testimony, she said that he called her "bitch, **pig**" and other things and that they broke up in February. "He has violated twice the restraining order with messages. I do not want him to communicate with me, this is psychological harassment and I am still in therapy in the Center of Women.") (Guillamón 2)

The woman is a she-wolf

The predatory she-wolf denotes aggressive, sexually active, and even promiscuous women and sex workers (López-Rodríguez, "Of Women" 92). It is in this last sense that the ones registered in the corpus refer to, for it appears in an article informing of a network of prostitution where the sex workers are named after this animal. Besides, the name of this illegal business of sexual trafficking is made up of the blend "love" and the Spanish "*loba*" ('she-wolf'):

(35) *Búsqueda y captura contra el presunto líder de la red de prostitución de menores 18* ***Lovas****. El juez procesó el pasado 30 de noviembre a Agustín Alemán Barreto por 24 delitos de prostitución de menores, dos de agresión sexual y otros dos de trato degradante. Las chicas eran las* ***lobas****.* (Search and capture order against the leader of a prostitution nework for minors known as 18 **she-wolves**. On November 30th, the judged pressed charges against Agustín Alemán Barreto for 24 crimes involving sexual trafficking with minors, two of sexual aggression and other two of mistreatment of women. The girls were called **she-wolves**.) (Gabilondo 1)

The woman is a bunny

The data only showed one instance of "*coneja*" ('bunny'). This zoomorphic metaphor, often used to denote the female genitalia (López-Rodríguez, "Of Women" 92), also refers to sexually attractive women. The corpus registers "*coneja*" in an article reporting on an entire men's dorm's sexist chants harassing female students. These college male students described the female dorm as a burrow (i.e., *madriguera*), which implies that those women were bunnies. The faunistic metaphor in this chant exploits the sexual connotations of the semantic field of bunny, where the furry animal visually recreates the female genitalia:

(36) *"¡Putas, salid de vuestras madrigueras! ¡Vais a follar como* ***conejas****!", el grito machista de universitarios del colegio mayor masculino Elías Ahúja en Madrid*. ("Whores, get out of your **burrows**! You're gonna fuck like **bunnies**!", the male chauvinistic chant in the university male dorm Elías Ahúja in Madrid.) (Silió 1)

CONCLUSIONS

The aim of this study on animal metaphors in newspaper articles reporting on episodes of gender violence in Spain and Canada was to analyze the use(s) and function(s) of the bestial iconography in the discourse of abuse against women. An analysis of a corpus consisting of 357 faunistic metaphors (129 pertaining to the English corpus and 228 to the Spanish corpus) has shown how male abusers think of women in terms of different animals (e.g., *pig*, *bitch*, *cow*, *dog*, *vixen*, *bunny*, etc.), and, as a result, exert all sorts of violence against them. Along with their dehumanizing effect,

most faunistic metaphors encountered in this research contribute to the sexualization and belittlement of the female subject. In addition to their usage, data analysis has revealed that these animal metaphors do not usually appear in isolation in the discourse of the male batterer, but rather, are part of a metaphorical network (e.g., *bunny-burrow*, *bitch-dog*, *pig-sow*, *cow-moo*, etc.). Hence, despite the conventionality of these metaphors in the discourse of gender violence, creativity also seems to play a role in the encoding of their spin-offs.

Despite the cultural and linguistic differences that separate Spain and Canada, there are some commonalities regarding the use of animal metaphors encountered in the discourse of gender violence reported in Spanish and Canadian newspapers (i.e., *bitch-perra*, *pig-cerda*). Other zoomorphic metaphors, however, differ (*cow*, *dog* vs. *zorra*, *loba*, *coneja*), given the pivotal role played by culture in metaphorical reasoning (Kövecses, *Metaphor*). Furthermore, considering the time span of this research (16 years), one can see a clear upward trend in the reporting of all these animal metaphors in both countries (e.g., *bitch* is recorded two times in 2006 and 11 times in 2022 and its Spanish counterpart *zorra* appears 6 times in 2006 and 33 times in 2022). This does not mean, however, that male abusers are increasingly resorting to the metaphoric animal kingdom to conceptualize their victims, but rather that the media and society in general are more aware of the social problem of gender-based violence. This, certainly, manifests in more women denouncing abuse and a wider coverage of gender-based violence in newspapers.

Finally, because, as Lévi-Strauss (10) states, animals are essential in people's lives not only because they are good to eat, but, more importantly, because they are good to think with, the analysis of the bestial iconography that articulates the discourse of the male abuser in episodes of gender-based violence as reported in Canadian and Spanish newspapers can shed some light onto the detrimental and lethal effects that this type of language can have on the female victim. Hence, notwithstanding the numerous shortcomings of the present research (i.e., its theoretical nature, its limited use of newspapers, or the lack of reliability tests for the analysis of the corpus), this study has attempted to demonstrate how the discourse of the male abuser in episodes of gender-based violence reported in Canadian and Spanish newspapers is tinged with similar and/or identical animal metaphors that dehumanize, debase, and sexualize women.

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The Spanish *Descamisado(s)*: Zero-Translating in the London Papers during the Liberal Triennium (1820–1823)

Los *Descamisados* españoles: "Traducción cero" en los periódicos londinenses durante el Trienio Liberal (1820–1823)

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Abstract: This article analyses the introduction and use of the word *descamisado(s)* in newspapers around London during the Spanish Liberal Triennium. It focuses on how the term was introduced, the editors' sources of information, and the evolution of its meaning, paying attention to the representation of the radical liberals involved and the events portrayed. As previous studies centred on the use of the term by Peronism, this draws on the references found in London periodicals at that time. A critical review provides information on the press' role during the liberal revolutions and might bring to light the importance of translation in newspapers.
Keywords: *Descamisado(s)*; Liberal Triennium; *The New Times*; London papers; British press; zero-translation.
Summary: Introduction. First Records of the Word *Descamisado(s)*. The British Press and the *Descamisado(s)* (1820–1823). Year 1821. Year 1822. Year 1823. Conclusions.

Resumen: Este artículo analiza la inclusión y el uso de la palabra *descamisado(s)* en los periódicos londinenses durante el Trienio Liberal español. Se centra en cómo se introdujo, las fuentes de información de los editores y la evolución de su significado, prestando atención a la representación de los liberales radicales y los acontecimientos descritos. Como los estudios previos se centraron en el uso del término por el Peronismo, este se basa en las referencias localizadas en los diarios londinenses. Su revisión crítica aporta información sobre el papel de la prensa durante las revoluciones liberales, y la importancia en esta de la traducción.

Palabras clave: Descamisado(s); Trienio Liberal; *The New Times*; periódicos londinenses; prensa británica; "traducción cero".
Sumario: Introducción. Primeros registros de la palabra *descamisado(s)*. La prensa británica y los *Descamisados* (1820–1823). Año 1821. Año 1822. Año 1823. Conclusiones.

INTRODUCTION

At the beginning of 1820, a liberal revolution started in Spain after General Rafael del Riego's military insurrection in Cadiz. The restoration of the 1812 Constitution, finally accepted by Ferdinand VII, gave rise to a new period known as the Liberal Triennium (1820–1823). In this period Spanish affairs were closely followed by European powers that, gathered in the Quintuple Alliance, feared the impact of those revolutionary movements on their countries. In contrast to the Peninsular War, Great Britain agreed on a policy of non-interference in Spain. The crisis there was not assessed by authorities in London as a real threat to the European balance of power. British energy, resources, and time should go instead into recovering maritime strength, with an eye on the Spanish American colonies (Guerrero Latorre 216–20). However, events in Spain were very carefully followed in the British Isles by the Government, the press, and civilians. The public, who had never approved of Ferdinand's policy, were surprised by the Spanish liberal revolution British newspapers were echoing from the very first moment. Despite claiming political neutrality, there was growing support for the liberals among the press and its readers. However, public opinion was less unanimous as the conflict radicalised. From November 1821 onwards, London newspapers used the Spanish word *descamisado(s)* on a regular basis to generally refer to the radical liberals or *exaltados*. The historical evolution of the term throughout the nineteenth century and its inclusion without translation in British papers during the liberal revolutions make it particularly interesting since previous scholarship has exclusively analysed its employment by supporters of Peronism in speeches and the press in the twentieth century.

This article therefore aims to examine the use of the word *descamisado(s)*, rather than its translation to "shirtless," in the British newspapers, specifically those published in London, during the Liberal Triennium. First, a brief explanation is given of the term's first records both in Spanish and in English, focusing on the evolution of its meaning in that first language from the fifteenth century to its peak use between

1820 and 1823. The following sections centre on the analysis of its appearance in the London papers in 1821 and special attention is paid to the translation techniques applied, or the lack thereof, and the changes in the word use and meaning in English until the year 1823. Emphasis is also placed on the context in which the word is inserted, that is, the events described in those newspaper articles, but mainly on their source of information. This, together with the paper's ideology, greatly determined the image of the Spanish radical liberals the press was presenting to its readers, which is explored here as well.

In consequence, this study draws on the references found in London periodicals, available online on the British Newspaper Archive (hereafter BNA) website, from 1820 to 1823.[1] Secondary sources on the Spanish Liberal Triennium (Gil Novales, Rújula and Chust, Carr, and Esdaile), on the British Press during the nineteenth century (Barker, Bourne, Brake and Demoor, Brown, and Laspra Rodríguez), and on translation analysis (Coletes Blanco, Molina and Hurtado, and Newmark) have also been examined to approach the use of the word *descamisado(s)* in the period. A critical review of these documents and works provides an example of the early stages a foreign word follows to become part of a language lexis, although *descamisado(s)* seems not to have lasted over time in English as terms like *guerrilla* has. More importantly, it might offer more information on the role the press played during the liberal revolutions and, also, bring to light the relevance of translation, or the lack of it, in newspaper reporting.

1. First Records of the Word *Descamisado(s)*

The word *descamisados*, according to Waissbein, was possibly used in Spanish for the first time in the first half of the fifteenth century in a poem entitled "Coplas de los pecados mortales,"[2] collected in the Duke of Híjar's songbook. However, some other experts transcribed the term in the original manuscript as *descaminados* instead, meaning that some doubt surrounds this particular instance (Waissbein 119–20). After that, and with more certainty, it is found in 1629 in Jacinto Antonio de Maluenda's ten-line stanza named "A la miseria que pasa un pobre estudiante,"[3] included

[1]The British Newspaper Archive (hereafter BNA): www.britishnewspaper archive.co.uk/.
[2] My translation: "Coplas" on the Deadly Sins.
[3] My translation: To the Poverty that a Poor Student Suffers, in *Taste Tickle*.

in his work *Cozquilla del gusto* (Waissbein 120). In both cases, its meaning is connected to "nakedness" and "poverty," and that is how the *Real Academia Española de la Lengua*, the Spanish Language Academy, defined it in 1729 (Waissbein 118).

It was not until the French Revolution, and mainly at the beginning of the nineteenth century, that the word *descamisados* acquired moral and social class connotations, detaching itself from its literal meaning: clothes were then understood not only as a reflection of the person's social and economic level, but also of a specific ideology. Thus, it became commonly used from 1810 onwards to, contemptuously or proudly, refer to dissatisfied low-class members of society and, later on, to violent and radical liberal groups. The connection between the term *descamisados* and the French word *sans-culottes* is therefore clear, providing an example of the translation technique called modulation, which Vinay and Darbelnet defined as a "variation through a change of viewpoint, of perspective and very often of the category of thought" (trans. in Newmark 88).[4] That meaning seems to be conveyed for the first time in Ramón María Salas' book *El mayor despotismo acompañado de la más crasa ignorancia*[5] published in 1811 (Waissbein 132). It was, however, during the Liberal Triennium when the number of examples in Spanish debates, books, and papers, both with a positive or derogatory sense, increased considerably. After that, it would not be so extensively used again in the Spanish language until the 1940s in Argentina.

In the British context, the *Oxford English Dictionary* (hereafter *OED*) defines the Spanish term *descamisado*—which unlike the word *guerrilla* is not classified as a borrowing—as "a nickname given to the ultraliberals in the Spanish revolutionary war of 1820–23" (234). The *OED* rightly contends that it was introduced in the English language during the Spanish Liberal Triennium and states that its earliest record is to be found in 1823 in volume 14 of *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine*, a Tory monthly literary review, as follows: "They are men of liberal ideas, and in general, members of the Descamisado" (514). This article, however, will show that prior evidence of its use can be traced back to the London dailies in 1821.

[4] Vinay and Darbelnet defined modulation as: "Variation obtenu en changeant de point de vue, d'éclairage et très souvent de catégorie de pensée" (11).
[5] My translation: The Biggest Despotism Accompanied by the Crassest Ignorance.

2. THE BRITISH PRESS AND THE *DESCAMISADOS* (1820–1823)

Just like the Peninsular War, the outbreak of the Spanish Liberal Triennium had a significant impact on the British Press. Papers tried once more to provide their readers with the latest news about the revolution in Spain, even if Great Britain was also undergoing a period of serious social unrest. In 1819, numerous working-class riots had ended with the passing of the Six Acts (or Gags Acts) in December (Laspra Rodríguez). The situation in the British Isles, and in Europe in general, was thus far from stable, which influenced not only the publication of news about Spain in those periodicals, but the press's interest in the events there. In that turbulent context, it is also important to bear in mind the increasing role of the press as a public opinion generator among popular classes. British periodicals, regardless of their ideological leaning, supported Spanish liberals and their confrontation with Ferdinand VII's absolutist monarchy, closely observing the situation in the Spanish American colonies. Liberal, independent, and conservative papers exploited events in Spain, albeit in different ways: the former, to criticise the British Government without being sanctioned and, the latter, to draw their readers' attention away from internal affairs, such as the consequences of the Peterloo Conspiracy and Massacre, the Cato Street plot, George III's death, and Queen Caroline's return to England.

According to Laspra Rodríguez, the first British paper to report, briefly, Riego's military uprising in Cadiz was the radical-liberal *The Examiner* on 23 January 1820. However, no comment on the news was made and the idea of it being quickly controlled was transmitted. From the 25th onwards, all London dailies were communicating the beginning of the Spanish revolution. Surprisingly, the word *descamisados* does not appear in the periodicals until the second half of 1821. This might be striking because the division between moderate and radical (or *exaltados*) liberals is asserted to have occurred after the dissolution of the Army of La Isla, led by Riego, in August 1820 and with the Decrees of 21 and 22 October that year on Patriotic Societies and the Freedom of the Press, respectively (Gil Novales 22–25). Neither Spanish papers nor French ones included the term until mid-1821 either. A plausible explanation is that at that time, and essentially after the Battle of the *Platerías* (September 1821), the Spanish mob violently burst into politics and, in consequence, intense social disturbances took place in several provinces in the following months. In that context, the word being analysed suited perfectly.

Before examining the use of the term *descamisado(s)* in the London papers between 1821 and 1823, some significant figures should be considered. The search engine on the BNA website finds a total of 235 results for *descamisados* in that time and area range, although the number is indeed higher since more references were located while browsing the papers. The comparison with the Spanish words *liberales* and *exaltados*, shown in the table below, speaks for itself on the relevance of each one. Regarding the term *descamisados*, if the total figure is broken down by years, there would be 9 for 1821 (mainly in December), 111 in 1822 (August and December gather the most references), and, finally, 115 in 1823 (mostly in February and March). The word is found in 30 periodicals of rather different ideologies, from the liberal *The New Times* or the *Morning Herald*, and the conservative *The Sun* or the *Morning Post*, to the independent *Public Ledger and Daily Advertiser*, being the first paper mentioned the one that used it the most.[6] *The New Times* will thus play a central part in this article.

Table 1. Comparison among references to *descamisados*, *liberales* and *exaltados* in the London papers

Year	*Descamisados*	*Liberales*	*Exaltados*
1820	–	64	–
1821	9	63	–
1822	111	85	42

[6] The 30 London papers in which the word *descamisado(s)* appears (number of references in round brackets) are: *Anti-Gallican Monitor* (4), *Baldwin's London Weekly Journal* (8), *Bell's Weekly Messenger* (1), *British Mercury of Wednesday Evening Post* (3), *British Neptune* (2), *British Press* (5), *Commercial Chronicle* (11), *English Chronicle and White Hall Evening Post* (19), *General Evening Post* (2), *John Bull* (3), *London Chronicle* (1), *London Courier and Evening Gazette* (1), *London Evening Standard* (1), *London Moderator and National Advertiser* (1), *London Packet and New Lloyd's Evening Post* (12), *Morning Advertiser* (1), *Morning Chronicle* (6), *Morning Herald* (20), *Morning Post* (12), *National Register* (1), *New Globe* (2), *New Times* (63), *The News* (2), *Observer of the Times* (3), *Public Ledger and Daily Advertiser* (10), *Saint James's Chronicle* (12), *Star* (5), *Statesman* (1), *The Sun* (29), and *Weekly Dispatch* (1). Source: The BNA. Their affiliations from the website www.victorianperiodicals.com/ and, also, from The British Library. Newsroom Research Guide (UK National Newspapers).

1823	115	25	99
Total	235	237	141

Source: Prepared by author from data in The British Newspaper Archive.

2.1 Year 1821

On 29 November in 1821 the word *descamisados* first appeared in a London periodical: *The New Times*. On page 2, in a section entitled "French Papers," it included the translation into English of some extracts from private correspondence dated "Madrid, November 14" and published in *Le Gazette de France* and the *Journal de Paris*, both pro-Bourbon papers and organs of the French Government. In an alarming tone, those dispatches described the riots that were taking place in Madrid and also in other towns, such as Cadiz and Valencia, which brought the Spanish Government into question. In this context, the term *descamisados* was used in the first excerpt in italics, accompanied by an explanation in brackets, "(sans-culottes)," and in relation to the Spanish liberal paper *El Eco de Padilla* (hereafter *El Eco*), which was defined as "the Journal of the *Descamisados*" (2). These texts were later published in *The Sun* that same evening, and in the *London Packet and New Lloyd's Evening Post* the following day.[7]

The transference of the word *descamisados* from the Spanish journals via the French papers into the London press seems clear, thanks to instances like this one, and can be easily traced. As stated in *The New Times*, the information published that day came from *Le Gazette de France*. The French periodical actually inserted this piece of news in its issue for 23 November, in a section entitled "ESPAGNE. Madrid, 14 novembre," as follows: "L'Echo de Padilla, journal de *descamisados* (sans chemises ou *sans culottes*) annonce aujourd'hui que la véritable révolution aura lieu dans un mois au plus tard. Cette nouvelle peut être prématurée, mais elle fait grand tort à l'emprunt."[8] Not only does the London daily

[7] *The New Times*, 29 Nov. 1821, p. 2; *The Sun*, 29 Nov. 1821, p. 2; and, the *London Packet and New Lloyd's Evening Post*, 30 Nov. 1821, p. 1. Online editions in the BNA, www.bl.uk/collection-guides/british-newspaper-archive/.

[8] *Le Gazette de France*, 23 Nov. 1821, no. 327, p. 1. Online edition in *La Bibliothèque nationale de France* (hereafter BnF), www.bnf.fr/fr/. My translation: The *Eco de Padilla*, journal of the Descamisados (without shirt or *sans culottes*) announced today that the real

include the same information in translation, but it also explains the term *descamisados* in the same way, that is, through the French perspective and wording. This, however, is not the first reference to the Spanish word found in the Paris papers. It seems to have been previously used once, along with a similar description, in the *Journal des débats politiques et littéraires* three days before, on 20 November, in connection with a private dispatch dated in Madrid on the 8th of that same month.[9]

The term *descamisados* can still be traced further back in the press, *El Eco.* Both *The New Times* and *Le Gazette de France* cited the issue for 14 November as the source of the mentioned extracts, although a search reveals that they cannot actually be found there. Instead, on that date *El Eco* included the word twice in a supplement dedicated to the newspaper's defence against the attacks of *El Imparcial* and *El Universal* on the representation to the King made by the authorities in Cadiz, San Fernando, and Seville. *El Eco* criticised that the papers falsely attributed the disturbances in the said towns, first, to a small group of *descamisados* and, then, questioned the content of the representations, not daring to define merchants or upper-class people involved in the issue in that way (5). The first time, however, that *El Eco* used that term was at the end of August and, according to *El Imparcial*, copied it from *El Espectador* (5).[10] This is the fourth Spanish newspaper referred to on the preceding lines, which illustrates the remarkable outburst of periodicals during the Liberal Triennium. As Gil Novales states, 680 papers appeared at that time (qtd. in Rújula and Chust 43).

From the end of August to November 1821, *El Eco* used the word *descamisados* seven times to describe the violent mob. In all such cases, the paper criticised how the term was being used, in the construction of a "counterrevolutionary" or "counterradical" discourse (Behrendt 17), to disrespectfully refer to those who did not accept the political and social situation at that time. In addition, the periodical defended that the so-called *descamisados*, and thus individuals dissatisfied with the system, were not just the low-class people involved in the disturbances. This might justify

revolution will take place in a month at the latest. This news might be premature, but it seriously damages the loan.

[9] *Journal des débats politiques et littéraires*, 20 Nov. 1821, p. 1. Online edition in the BnF, www.bnf.fr/fr/.

[10] *El Eco de Padilla*, 14 Nov. 1821, supplement to no. 106, p. 5; 22 Aug. 1821, no. 22, p. 5; and *El Imparcial*, 31 Oct. 1821, supplement to no. 52, p. 5. Online edition in the *Bibiloteca Nacional de España* (hereafter BNE), www.bne.es/es/.

El Eco's nickname as "the Journal of the *Descamisados*" by the French press.[11]

As previously stated, *The New Times* was the first London paper to include the word *descamisados* in connection with *Le Gazette de France* and the *Journal de Paris* on 29 November 1821. But this is not all. The most relevant section on its page 2 is found in the following column: its leading article. Echoing the alarming tone of the French papers, the editor comments on the events unfolding in Madrid and identifies and describes the responsible ones, the *descamisados*, disapproving of English radicals' support and of a worrying lack of concern in Britain over a revolutionary contagion.[12] The term is used four times. The first instance is introduced in italics, copying the mentioned French source, and followed by the phrase "fellows without a shirt," to ensure readers' understanding:

> The political news from Spain is of the most gloomy and disastrous kind. It is painful to see our worst anticipations realised as they are, in that ill-fated country. The Clubbists of the Fontana de Oro parade the streets of Madrid by night, shouting 'Long live RIEGO, Emperor of the Spanish Republic!' —The *Descamisados*, or 'fellows without a shirt,' are ranked as a distinct political party. They have a Journal devoted to them, 'the Echo de Padilla,' which announces, without the least reserve, that the real Revolution will take place at latest within a month. Thus, the secret is at length revealed, that the so much vaunted Spanish Constitution was a mere stepping-stone to the real Revolution; which must be sealed (as it was in France) with the blood of the Bourbons!—in short—Spain must be plunged into blood, anarchy, and Atheism, to pave the way for a Republic, of which RIEGO, or some other Military Despot is to be the Emperor—such is the decree of the *Descamisados*! (2)

In the rest of the instances, in which their similarities with the French *sans-culottes* and their revolutionary ideas are examined emphasising their violent nature, the word appears on its own. Like the term *guerrilla* or Spanish place names, this might be understood as an example of what Coletes Blanco, building on Barthes, coined "Zero-Translation" ("Anglo-Spanish Transfers" 234). This means the introduction of a Spanish source

[11] *El Eco de Padilla*, 22 Aug. 1821, no. 22, p. 5; 1 Sep. 1821, no. 32, p. 4; 28 Oct. 1821, no. 89, p. 3; 30 Oct. 1821, no. 91, p. 5; 1 Nov. 1821, no. 93, p. 3; 2 Nov. 1821, no. 94, p. 3; and, 6 Nov. 1821, no. 98, p. 3. Online editions in the BNE, www.bne.es/es/.

[12] *The New Times*, 29 Nov. 1821, p. 2. Online edition in the BNA, www.bl.uk/collection-guides/british-newspaper-archive/.

text (a single word here) without being translated into an English target one. The word "shirtless" could have been used, but instead the Spanish one was preferred, due to the lack of a cultural-pragmatic equivalence, as a better way to represent that specific reality, that is, the most violent radical-liberal groups made up mainly of the Spanish mob, whose main objective was to establish a republic. This leading article somehow lays the foundations for the use of the term and its meaning in the following three years. Likewise, the editor of *The New Times*, in line with the British liberal press, exploits the Spanish Revolution to criticise the Government's performance during that turbulent period, warning about a radical future in Great Britain. No wonder the paper was aligned with the Spanish *moderados*' ideology. The "self-referential way," according to Howarth, in which the British usually observe the events in Spain can be appreciated here (33).

In December 1821, the word *descamisados* is found in four more papers: *Morning Post* (10 and 21 Dec.), *General Evening Post* (11 Dec.), *Baldwin's London Weekly Journal* (15 Dec.), and *Public Ledger and Daily Advertiser* (21 Dec.). In all of them, it appears in the sections on page 2 made out of translated extracts from the French periodicals, and entitled as "French Papers," "Foreign Affairs," and "Foreign Intelligence," where social disturbances are described. For example, the excerpts in the *Morning Post* (10 Dec.), the *General Evening Post* (11 Dec.), and the *Baldwin's London Weekly Journal* (15 Dec.) reads as follows: "(From *Le Moniteur*) MADRID, Nov. 22. — This morning a numerous assemblage took place in front of the Fontana d'Oro, when the following communication was made to the *descamisados* (shirtless herd), and hailed with loud acclamations by the multitude." Also, the one published in the *Morning Post* on the 21st provides the following information: "Paris, Dec. 17. — The elections in that quarter [Pamplona] have been less revolutionary than in other provinces; and this has occasioned the disorder, by exciting the dissatisfaction of the garrison and the *descamisados* (*sans-culotte* tribe)."[13] Two main conclusions can be drawn from the analysis of these references. First, the Spanish word was introduced in the London periodicals in italics and followed by an explanation in English, or in

[13] *Morning Post*, 10 and 21 Dec. 1821, p. 2; *General Evening Post*, 11 Dec. 1821, pp. 2–3; *Baldwin's London Weekly Journal*, 15 Dec. 1821, pp. 1–2; and *Public Ledger and Daily Advertiser*, 21 Dec. 1821, p. 2. Online editions in the BNA, www.bl.uk/collection-guides/british-newspaper-archive/.

French, to ensure readers' understanding; and second, its origin was always the French press. Except for *The New Times*, the papers analysed, regardless of their ideological bent, did not include the term in their own comments on the events yet, which is revealing.

2.2 Year 1822

In 1822, the first paper to use the word *descamisados* was again *The New Times* on 8 January in the section devoted to the French press. In it, the London periodical featured the violent riots occurring in Cartagena:

> The advices [*sic*.] from Madrid in the French Papers mention that the Society of *Descamisados* (the Club of the shirtless), at Carthagena, have addressed RIEGO, inviting him to become their chief and father. He has answered in the most obliging manner, that he accepted the flattering title: 'Yes,' he says, 'since you wish it, I will become the first of the virtuous *descamisadoes*; and all burning with the same patriotic fire, we will be the terror of tyrants; and the rock upon with all the projects of our enemies shall go to pieces.' (3)

This extract is particularly interesting since it illustrates an attempt to "domesticate" the Spanish word by applying to it the English rules to form the plural of a noun: as *descamisado* ends in "-o," the suffix "-es" is added to it.[14] No more instances of this pluralisation process, however, have been found in the British press during the Liberal Triennium.

Throughout 1822, the pieces of news in the London papers in which the term *descamisados* was integrated deal with the following topics:

- urban disturbances in several Spanish cities and towns (such as Madrid, Barcelona, Bilbao, La Coruña, Valencia, and Seville);
- General Riego's arrival in Madrid in February as a deputy for Asturias in the Cortes, his performance as President of this representative body, and his participation in the disorders in the Spanish capital in July;
- complaints about the growing union between the *descamisados* and the Cortes, and the debates in that assembly on the Freedom of the Press, the Right of Petition, and Patriotic Societies;

[14] *The New Times*, 8 Jan. 1822, p. 3. Online edition in the BNA, www.bl.uk/collection-guides/british-newspaper-archive/.

- the fear of the spread of the revolutionary ideas in France and in other European countries, a possible military intervention in Spain, the Duke of Wellington's role to prevent it, and the Pyrenean cordon sanitaire;
- the liberals' hypocritical attitude towards the American colonies and the Spanish Government's economic problems;
- and, finally, British support of the liberals and the Spanish Constitution.

From these articles, *The New Times*'s leader on 20 August stands out due to its analysis of the terms used to refer to and describe the opposing factions in the Spanish Revolution. In it, the editor discusses an extract from *Le Conservateur*, dated in St. Petersburg, as follows:

> It is not less essential to remark the names which the revolutionists apply to those who oppose their system of destruction; they call them rebels and insurgents—expressions no more applicable to them than to the man who defends his life or his purse from highway robbers. Every subject who rises against a legitimate Government is a rebel and an insurgent: the word insurgent applies more particularly to colonies which strive to shake off the yoke of the mother country. As to the epithets of *bandits*, *brigands*, &c. lavished by the popular party on their opponents, we know that it was thus that the French Jacobins called the Royalists of La Vendée. Thus, in order to read the news from Spain, without the confusion resulting from the abuse of words, the factious of all ranks should be called *communeros*, *exaltados*, *descamisados*, *anarchists*. They have not even the right to call themselves constitutionalists, for they have not been constituted; and as long as they shall persist in an absurd and monstrous accumulation of usurped powers, they can never produce a constitution. The party on the other side, may justly have the titles of Royalists, Army of the Faith, &c. because they defend the altar, the throne, the liberties, the institutions of their country, and wish to annihilate or repress the efforts and the audacity of that class of men, who having nothing to lose, but everything to gain by troubles, are always ready to overturn social order, of which they are in all places and at all times the declared enemies. (2)

In the excerpt, the two main contending ideologies in Spain are not only being labelled but, more importantly, a negative image of the radical liberals is being constructed in opposition to the defenders of the traditional *status quo*, or *serviles*, whose identity is positively reinforced.

In this case, the *descamisados* are depicted through the Russian and French lens as violent individuals—a key feature in this narrative—who are against the monarchical system of government and the Ancient Régime social order. This demonisation, or stigmatisation, contributed to building the necessary international "counterrevolutionary" discourse to justify a foreign intervention in Spain, and also to find support to do so.[15]

The highest number of references in 1822 is concentrated in July and August, due to the Madrid uprisings from 30 June to 7 July, and in December in connection with the European discussion in the Congress of Verona (October–December 1822) on the measures to take to prevent a contagion effect. In it, Great Britain, represented by Wellington, defended a policy of "no interference" in Spain and, as a mediator, tried to avoid the Holy Alliance powers' intervention there since it could pose new obstacles to British commercial aspirations in the Spanish American colonies (Coletes Blanco, "Poems" 157; Guerrero Latorre 231).

In slightly more than 88% of the occurrences in which the London papers used the word *descamisados*, the source of information was a French periodical (*Le Quotidienne*, *La Gazette de France*, *Drapeau Blanc*, *Journal des débats*, *Journal de Paris*, *Journal Politique et Littéraire de Toulouse*, *Pilote*, *Le [Moniteur] Universel*, *Le Courrier Française*, *Le Constitutionel*, and *L'Écho du Midi*). This testifies to the fact that it was introduced into the British Press via the French papers, which in turn had borrowed it from the Spanish journals. At the beginning of the Liberal Triennium, and until correspondents were sent, the London dailies knew about and transmitted the events in Spain through the French papers (mainly Paris ones). As Laspra Rodríguez has pointed out, the reason might be an initial lack of direct information from the Iberian Peninsula. However, it could also have been used, later on, as a way for the periodicals to distance themselves from the data they were sometimes publishing without being confirmed, and on whose reliability they casted doubts. Another explanation might be that French, being the international language of communication at that time, was more widely known. In any case, the use of the word *descamisados* in the London papers continued to predominantly appear in connection with the French press or context, which had an obvious consequence: the image of the Spanish radical

[15] *The New Times*, 20 Aug. 1822, p. 2. Online edition in the BNA, www.bl.uk/collection-guides/british-newspaper-archive/.

liberals that was leaking into British press readers conveyed a pro-Bourbonic and "counterrevolutionary" perspective.

In less than a fifth of the occurrences was the term *descamisados* included in the editors' comments, which suggests that it was not part of the English journalists' word-stock yet. In 1822, it appears for the first time in a leading article in the paper *The New Times* (22 Feb.), where most of the references of this type are found (no. 9), followed by the *Morning Chronicle* (1) and the *Morning Post* (1). The editor there supported British neutrality towards the Spanish question, whereas foreign financial assistance (British, as well) is criticised.

An evolution in the word's use and meaning has been found in the instances located in the 1822 press. First, from July onwards, a translation or explanation of the term is no longer included; and also, in the second half of the year, especially after 7 July, its meaning expands emphasising the radical ideology and identifying Spanish institutions with the *descamisados*, as an apparently *exaltado* government took over (Gil Novales 55–56). The word did not exclusively refer to that violent mass any longer, but powerful, educated, and upper-class individuals were also included in it. A double evolution is thus appreciated in its scope: from referring to a very specific part of society, the lower-class mob, to its highest representatives; and simultaneously, from being limited to the borders of the Spanish territory to opening to the wider European context, being used in relation to other revolutionary episodes (Italy, Portugal and Greece), the impact on France and Great Britain, and the discussion on an intervention policy in Spain. Yet in the word's meaning one feature remained consistent: the *descamisados*' aggressiveness.

2.3 Year 1823

Finally, the search engine of the BNA website reports 115 results for the word *descamisados* in the London papers in 1823, mainly in its first three months. Apparently, this is a slightly higher figure than in the previous year, 1822, but a careful analysis reveals that it is not so. In most cases, periodicals were just copying the same translated French extracts, and thus including the term. This fact might reflect that British interest, or at least that of the British press, shifted to internal or other international issues (e.g., the crisis in Ireland due to famine and social unrest). Despite the lower number of new references to the *descamisados* in 1823 (roughly 48% of the global figure), *The New Times* should be highlighted once more

for its extensive use of the word, being the first paper to include it this year as well. On 2 January, in the leading article on page 2, the editor responds to their Paris correspondent's dispatch, dated 29 December, in which foreign intervention in Greece is justified, as follows:

> We have always expressed ourselves most decidedly against wars of aggrandisement. We distinctly assert, that England would not suffer a war of aggrandisement to be undertaken, either by France against Spain, or by Russia against Turkey; but the case is widely different where an oppressed population implores foreign aid against the tyranny and barbarity of a *Descamisado* faction, or of a Musulman despot. The *right* of foreign intervention in the civil wars of Spain or Turkey is clear: the *expediency* of such intervention is in all such cases a problem of great delicacy; but its resolution, so far as concerns England, may safely be left to those firm but temperate councils by which the British Cabinet has long been guided. (2)[16]

On this occasion, the adjective *descamisado* is used instead of the noun. In the overall figures (total no. 235), this word category appears in less than 6% (no. 13) of the references between 1821 and 1823, and thus they have been analysed together in this article. Some examples are: "the *descamisado* Ministry," "the *descamisado* consul of Spain," "the *descamisado* cabinet of Spain," "the *descamisado* Jacobins," and "the *descamisado* faction." These instances show the semantic shift in the use of the word, in which Spanish authorities and institutions are gradually integrated as radical liberals come to power.

In 1823 the term *descamisado(s)* was included in the London papers in articles and extracts describing or commenting on a wide range of topics:

- the agreements reached in the Congress of Verona at the end of 1822, and an ongoing debate in Europe about a possible military intervention in Spain;
- the impact of the Spanish Revolution on France (a deep social and political division there), the replacement of the cordon sanitaire for a French Army of Observation in the Pyrenees, and war preparations;

[16] *The New Times*, 2 Jan. 1823, p. 2. Online edition in the BNA, www.bl.uk/collection-guides/british-newspaper-archive/.

- the entrance and advance into Spain of the Hundred Thousand Sons of Saint Louis, under the Duke of Angoulême's command, General Francisco Espoz y Mina as a radical-liberal leader, and relevant military operations;
- the British stance on the situation in the Peninsula, commitment to their position of neutrality, and their economic support of the liberals;
- King Ferdinand VII's possible transfer to Andalusia, and urban disturbances in Madrid and other towns and cities (such as Seu d'Urgel, Valencia, Bilbao, León, and Alcalá);
- and finally, the fall of the Spanish bonds in Great Britain, and the *descamisados*' problems to fund the war.

The source of this information was once again the aforementioned French papers, and thus, the context for the word being used in more than 70% of the cases. On the contrary, the remaining almost 30% of the references are found in the periodicals' comments, and even in a reader's letter to the editor, an important part of the "writing culture" that might help better understand historical events (Behrendt 19). On 5 April, *The New Times* printed a dispatch, signed by "PUBLICOLA," in a section entitled "To the Editor of *The New Times*." In it, people's attention was drawn to another benefit of England's neutral position towards the European intervention in Spain: the low price of the Hackney Coach fares. While developing this argument, "PUBLICOLA" referred to the *descamisados* in the following way:

> I am far from wishing to deprive any set of men of all the benefits that have flowed to them from the peace (which I trust we shall honourably maintain for many years to come, notwithstanding the pseudo patriotism of our Radicals, who would identify our country in common cause, if they could, with the Descamisados of Spain); yet it does seem to me, that an extension of time and distance might be conceded to the Public, and the Hackneymen at the same time liberally rewarded for their labour. (4)[17]

In this extract, the author reveals some relevant information about the situation in Great Britain: an underlying social division between supporters

[17] *The New Times*, 5 Apr. 1823, p. 4. Online edition in the BNA, www.bl.uk/collection-guides/british-newspaper-archive/.

and detractors of the Spanish radical liberals' cause, despite the official neutral position claimed.

Shifting the emphasis to the use of the word *descamisados* in the press, in 1823 there is a moderate increase in the number of times it was included in the periodicals' own articles and comments, regardless of their ideological bent. It appears in *The New Times* (no. references: 15), *Morning Herald* (1), *John Bull* (2), *Anti-Gallican Monitor* (1), *The Sun* (8, reproducing *The New Times*), and *Saint James's Chronicle* (1, reproducing *The Times*). This shows a gradual incorporation of the Spanish term into the journalists' and their readers' word-stock and speech, or at least, a tendency in this direction. Evidence can be found in *The New Times*'s leading articles published from January to July. There the editor continues siding with British neutral position in the Spanish question while opposing the *Descamisados*' Regime and a French intervention. However, he insists that the British press should focus on internal issues instead and seems concerned about the consequences for British people of their financial support of the radical liberals. For example, in the issue for 5 July, *The Times* was accused of leading many British families to ruin after having encouraged them to acquire Spanish bonds. The editor of *The New Times* continued his attack by "dismantling" *The Times*'s warnings on the negative consequences of asking for a French loan and the effect that would have on Spanish credit. It is there where the *descamisados* are mentioned as follows:

> Why, the Spanish Cortes is bankrupt, broken up, and run away, long ago. Some twenty or thirty fugitives have sought a shelter in Cadiz; but as to credit, even their portmanteaus have fallen into the hands of the French, and few of them will find credit enough to buy themselves new shirts and breeches. They must become Descamisados and Sansculottes, in a literal as well as in a figurative sense. Again, English families which have lent money to the Cortes will be ruined! (2)

At a later date, on 10 July, *The New Times* referred to the *descamisados* for the last time during the Liberal Triennium. In a similar way to the ball that took place in London on 26 April 1820 to celebrate the reinstatement of the Spanish Constitution (Laspra Rodríguez), a "Grand Spanish Fete" was held, with the presence of the Duke of San Lorenzo, in the Covent Garden Theatre on 4 July 1823. Its purpose was to raise money for the Spanish radical liberals, although expectations seemed not to have been

met. In that issue, the editor of *The New Times* was thus mocking the ridiculous amount of money collected:

> It was to recruit the exhausted treasury of the Descamisados—to buy shirts for the shirtless, and breeches for the Sansculottes—it was to raise armies, to purchase cannon, to store magazines, in fine, to build *chateaux en Espagne*—and has netted 3721.6s. (3)[18]

Two aspects need to be highlighted in both previous extracts. First, the word *descamisados* was no longer accompanied by a translation into English or written in italics, in contrast to the French phrase "*chateaux en Espagne*" included in the second quotation. This might suggest that at least that person had assimilated the Spanish term and it was thus part of his lexis. In addition, a play on words can be appreciated in those references, which shows another step towards the term's incorporation into the English word-stock. To create that word play, the editor of *The New Times* combines the term's figurative and literal meanings: not only the Spanish liberals' ideas are *descamisadas*, but they are also physically naked now. There is, in consequence, a return to the original meaning in Spanish explained above.

In the 1823 references, the noun *descamisados* consolidates the shift or expansion in its meaning observed in the previous year: from referring to the Spanish poor mob that took up arms, emphasising their violent nature, to now drawing the attention to radical and revolutionary ideas in connection with political leaders and institutions. Although both meanings coexist and their aggressiveness is present in the second one as well, the latter seems to be more widely used at this time, given the radicals' control of the Spanish constitutional government (at least, apparently) and a greater interest in international "diplomacy" (due to the negotiations over a foreign intervention in Spain). Finally, the different labels attached to the Spanish liberals seem to gradually disappear from the analysed London papers, presenting them as a homogeneous radical entity. This might explain the sharp decrease in the use of the term *descamisados* after Angoulême's arrival in Madrid (no. 3) in favour of *exaltados* (no. 40), but that is already another story.

[18] *The New Times*, 5 and 10 July 1823, pp. 2 and 3, respectively. Online editions in the BNA, www.bl.uk/collection-guides/british-newspaper-archive/.

CONCLUSIONS

This article has sought to analyse the introduction and use of the term *descamisado(s)* in the London papers during the Spanish Liberal Triennium (1820–1823), paying attention to the evolution of its meaning and the source of those references. The following conclusions can be drawn. First, the term was widely used (mostly as a plural noun) between 1821 and 1823 by the periodicals printed in the British capital, particularly in the liberal *The New Times*. And, after tracing the news source, it seems to have been borrowed from the French press. This might be explained considering that information arrived in London faster from Paris than from Madrid, and also the international status of that language, which made its translation easier. This had, however, an impact on the image of the *descamisados* transmitted to British readers, since the French pro-Bourbonic perspective resonates in it, helping to construct an international "counterrevolutionary" discourse.

Second, the word meaning did not remain static, but evolved over the three years. In the early examples, the term *descamisados* referred to the aggressive and poor crowd that wanted to change an unfair system in a violent way. This is the definition conveyed when the use of the word reached its peak in 1822, and most of the references were registered in the London papers. It was later expanded emphasising the radical ideology behind it, maintaining the violent nature but leaving aside economic or social levels, incorporating politicians, ministers, officers, and institutions in the scope of the term. This broader meaning is the one that leaked out to the *OED*. On a wider scale, a shift in the context surrounding the word has also been appreciated: from an initial national-related environment, focused on the situation in Spain, to a more international and even French and British oriented one, when the Spanish Revolution started to have a bigger impact beyond its borders.

Finally, the inclusion of the word *descamisados* in the London periodicals as untranslated is an example of "Zero-Translation." However, its use in the papers underwent some changes during the time range of this study (1820–1823). Initially, it was always incorporated in italics followed by an explanation, or a possible translation into English, in brackets, to ensure readers' understanding. After a few months, that support was removed, and editors and press readers started to include *descamisados* in their own comments. There was thus a tendency to integrate the term into the English word-stock as had happened with the word *guerrilla* during

the Peninsular War although possibly not in such a successful way. Lord Byron, for example, referred to the radical liberals in Canto XII of his *Don Juan* using the English translation instead: "Who rouse those Spanish shirtless patriots?" (verse 5, line 3). However, a footnote was added to that line stating "The Descamisados" in a single volume of Byron's complete works published by John Murray in 1837 (719). A further study needs, therefore, to be conducted to examine the use of this word, or rather its translation, in other fields such as literature, art and popular culture, to better determine the extent to which the term was part of the English lexis.

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The Awefull Afterlife of *Cats*: From the Illustrated Book to the Stage

La terrible inmortalidad de *Cats*: Del libro ilustrado al escenario

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Abstract: T. S. Eliot's *Old Possum's Book of Practical Cats* (1939) gained popularity due to its adaptation as an acclaimed musical by Andrew Lloyd Webber (1981). For Eliot, the popular entertainment was a great source of inspiration, which makes examining the opposite process especially interesting—to see how his poetry inspired other arts and how its adaptation has interpreted or transferred *Practical Cats*' strong rhythm and sense of humour. The focus of this paper will be on how Lloyd Webber's musical *Cats* is in tune with Eliot's theories regarding drama, music, and dance, especially influenced by music hall.
Keywords: T. S. Eliot; *Cats*; musical; adaptation; poetry; music hall.
Summary: Introduction. How to Ad-Dress Eliot's *Practical Cats*. The Dramatic Monologue and Characterisation in *Practical Cats*. The Dramatic Monologue and the Musical. Eliot's Verse Drama and its Popular Roots. *Cats* as Embodiment of Eliot's Aspirations for Verse Drama. Conclusions.

Resumen: *Old Possum's Book of Practical Cats* (1939) de T. S. Eliot adquirió mayor popularidad tras ser adaptado a musical por Andrew Lloyd Webber (1981). El entretenimiento popular fue para Eliot una fuente de inspiración, lo que hace especialmente interesante examinar el proceso contrario: ver cómo su poesía ha inspirado otras artes y cómo esta adaptación ha interpretado o transferido el ritmo y sentido del humor de *Practical Cats*. Este artículo se centra en cómo el musical *Cats* de Lloyd Webber está en continuidad con las teorías de Eliot sobre drama, música y baile, especialmente influenciadas por el *music hall*.
Palabras clave: T. S. Eliot; *Cats*; musical; adaptación; poesía; music hall.
Sumario: Introducción. Cómo enfrentarse a *Practical Cats* de Eliot. Monólogo dramático y caracterización en *Practical Cats*. El monólogo dramático y el musical. El drama en verso de Eliot

y sus raíces populares. *Cats* como encarnación de las aspiraciones de Eliot para el drama en verso. Conclusiones.

INTRODUCTION

T. S. Eliot's celebrated collection of poems *Old Possum's Book of Practical Cats* was first published in 1939 but since then it has witnessed a continuing presence on stage and in illustrated editions by different artists. This whimsical poetry collection has gained more popularity due to its adaptation as an acclaimed and award-winning musical written by Andrew Lloyd Webber (1981). The record-breaking megamusical *Cats*, directed by Trevor Nunn and choreographed by Gillian Lynne, was launched in London's West End and New York's Broadway in 1981 and 1982 respectively. From the moment of its initial opening, *Cats* became an immediate sensation and set new records in musical productions: to this day it remains the fourth-longest-running show on Broadway and the seventh-longest-running in the West End. The musical has been seen by millions of people worldwide, staged in numerous countries and translated into fifteen languages.

Eliot's widow, Valerie, demanded that "the poet's own words—not some paraphrase or script" (Sutherland) were used in the musical, including an unpublished draft of "Grizabella," a poem which was discarded as too depressing, but which helped create the plot for the show. As a result, most of the lyrics are taken from *Practical Cats* with barely any modifications, except for the acclaimed song "Memory" (adapted from Eliot's "Rhapsody on a Windy Night"), and a brief song called "The Moments of Happiness" (adapted from a passage in Eliot's *Four Quartets*). The musical is characterised by its being told through music, which ranges from diverse styles, with no dialogue in between songs, and by the importance of dance.

In the following sections, it will be established how Lloyd Webber's musical is in continuity with Eliot's dramatic monologue and his ideal of contemporary drama influenced by the music hall tradition. An analysis of how *Cats* draws on Eliot's theories regarding verse drama, which take their cue from the popular entertainment admired by Eliot will also be carried out. Lloyd Webber's musical translates several of Eliot's theories into practice, engendering an embodiment of the poet's ideas on contemporary drama as it brings together his poetic practice and his aspirations towards

verse drama. The present article will contribute to further current scholarship in adaptation studies regarding Lloyd Webber's *Cats*.

Thus far these studies have been few and far between, though we can find previous scholarship such as Bay-Cheng's examination of Eliot's poetic playfulness and Lloyd Webber's adaptation, or Siropoulos' study on the blockbuster aesthetics of *Cats*. Yet a cohesive comparative analysis was long overdue, i.e., an analysis which considers not only Eliot's *Practical Cats,* but also his theories and ideas concerning drama, music, and dance, since *Cats*, as a musical, is a combination of these three aspects. Hence, engaging with previous work on Eliot and *Cats*, this article seeks to begin a more active conversation about the connections between Eliot as a poet and essayist and Lloyd Webber's musical adaptation, a line of study which remains mainly underexplored. The sections which follow explore Eliot's own works and theories, showing how they can be connected to *Cats* in ways thus far neglected, since Eliot's main aspirations and influences for his own verse drama inform the making of *Cats*. This article aims to offer a new perspective on Lloyd Webber's *Cats* by examining the production without placing its limit on regarding it as a mere adaptation based on Eliot's *Practical Cats*, but rather by drawing parallels with the poet's postulates in a broader sense.

1. HOW TO AD-DRESS ELIOT'S *PRACTICAL CATS*

When Eliot writes for children, he fills his verses with plenty of action. In *Practical Cats* there is a plethora of felines *doing* things: dancing, performing, conducting, stealing, etc. Here Eliot is extremely playful in the way he portrays his characters and in the way he writes about them. Still, it is not only *what* he writes about the cats, also *how* he does it, for language is playful as well. According to Sutherland, Eliot relies on two traditions of children's verse; both the nursery rhyme and nonsense poetry have great potential for its musical adaptation. These qualities will be capitalised by Andrew Lloyd Webber in his musical production, as Eliot's musicality and use of nonsense poetry prove to be extremely attractive assets for a musical adaptation. Eliot had already shown his interest in children's rhyme in *The Waste Land* ("London Bridge is falling down falling down falling down" (Eliot, *Poems* 71). In *Practical Cats*, the strong rhythm and the use of rhyme recall this type of traditional verse for children: the repetitive structure, heavy and witty rhymes, and repetitions of words or catch phrases make these lines easy to remember. This

redundancy favours musical adaptation, for it gives a singsong quality to the poems, which will be exploited by Lloyd Webber in his show. The use of recurring motifs and reprises play an important role in the music and provide a parallel for Eliot's verses, for, as the poet himself pointed out, "[t]he use of recurrent themes is as natural to poetry as to music" ("Music of Poetry" 321).

The musicality of Eliot's verses is obvious when hearing the poems read aloud—a good example of that is the recording of Eliot himself reading the whole collection of *Practical Cats*.[1] Lloyd Webber claimed to have been surprised at how much these poems sounded like song lyrics, which reminded him of the popular songs of Eliot's time (Riedel 281). He was not the first one to recognise the musical potential of these poems: British composer Alan Rawsthorne set six of the poems for speaker and orchestra, which was first performed at the Edinburgh Festival in 1954 and later recorded with actor Robert Donat as the speaker.

Besides that, nonsense poetry is by definition playful, and Eliot invents nonsense words that play with the sound patterns of language: "effanineffable," "huffery-snuffery," "Firefrorefiddle," or cat names such as "Bombalurina," "Jennyanydots," "Rumpelteazer," etc. These words mostly rely on sound effects, on the way in which they are pronounced, instead of on meaning. Eliot noted about musical poems in "The Music of Poetry" (1942) that nonsense is closer to music than other modes of expression (qtd. in Rother 187), where the "musical pattern of sound" and the "musical pattern of the secondary meanings of the words" are two patterns which are "indissoluble and one" ("Music of Poetry" 316). Interestingly, Eliot said about poetic drama that "[t]o work out a play in verse is to be working like a musician … it is to see the whole thing as a musical pattern," (qtd. in Fuller 141) as music cannot exist without pattern—though words can—and poetry can be moulded after musical devices. In brief, Eliot's use of nonsense poetry and the singsong qualities of his lively verses tinge his poetry with a musicality which will be easily exploited by Lloyd Webber.

[1] This reading is fully available on YouTube: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=x9v06L_NIYE&list=OLAK5uy_l0u-5LtL9NEAr7mzJ5M-AzgoWqK4Iv4nc.

2. THE DRAMATIC MONOLOGUE AND CHARACTERISATION IN *PRACTICAL CATS*

Before discussing the techniques of characterisation through the use of the dramatic monologue and how this is transformed in the musical production, which will be addressed in the following section, it is noteworthy to observe first how Eliot characterises the different feline voices in his verses. In his poems cats are endowed with names, descriptions, and strong and eccentric personalities, which render them quite apt to be adapted into a stage production. Most of them perform human actions as in a giant game of role-play. Felines are psychologically characterised, as they are usually presented in a dramatic situation (battles, thefts, performance, theatre). Growltiger is, for instance, "the roughest cat that ever roamed at large. / From Gravesend up to Oxford he pursued his evil aims" (Eliot, *Practical Cats* 14), while Rum Tum Tugger "is a Curious Cat" whose "disobliging ways are a matter of habit" (Eliot, *Practical Cats* 26), just to give a couple of examples. The poem of "The Song of the Jellicles" presents this world inhabited by cats with human traits and attitudes.

Changes of speaker are, moreover, indicated by a metrical variation in the poems. More precisely, poems begin with a specific metre to introduce the cat through the poet's voice, which is narrative. Eliot calls this the second voice of poetry in his essay "The Three Voices of Poetry," for it is "the voice of the poet addressing an audience" (817). The metre is then varied when someone else, other than the narrator, speaks within the poem, especially humans. These other dramatic voices are the third voice of poetry, when "the voice of the poet . . . attempts to create a dramatic character speaking in verse" (Eliot, "Three Voices" 817). Voices are re-presented with different metres and position of lines. An illustrative example can be seen at the end in "Mungojerrie and Rumpelteazer" when it is the family who speaks, where we can observe a shifting of the final lines to the left as compared with the lines of the narrator's voice:

> And when you heard a dining-room smash
> Or up from the pantry there came a loud crash
> Or down from the library came a loud *ping*
> From a vase which was commonly said to be
> Ming—
> Then the family would say: 'Now which was which cat?

It was Mungojerrie! AND Rumpelteazer!'—And there's
Nothing at all to be done about that! (Eliot, *Practical Cats* 42).

A comparison could as well be drawn between the first two lines and the actual words of the human speaker in the last lines, which can be found in "Old Deuteronomy," where Eliot plays with the metre, but also with placement of lines so as to create movement and tension:

At the sight of that placid and bland physiognomy,
When he sits in the sun on the vicarage wall,
The Oldest Inhabitant croaks: 'Well, of all…
Things… Can it be… really!... No!... Yes!...
Ho! hi!
Oh, my eye!
My sight may be failing, but yet I confess
I *believe* it is Old Deuteronomy!' (Eliot, *Practical Cats* 44).

We see here that verses waltz in rhythm, metre, and placement: there is a variation when Eliot uses exclamatory and staccato refrains for the human speaker, which then return to the tetrameter of the beginning of the poem with the voice of the narrator. In Bay-Cheng's words, "[r]ecalling Charles Dickens's line 'He do the police in different voices'—Eliot's working title for *The Waste Land* (1922)—these rhythmic devices effectively pull the reader into the experience of the poem . . . Eliot do the cats in different voices" (232).

The characters have a different "kind of poetry" which identify them, according to their particularities, in conformity with Eliot's concept of verse drama ("Three Voices" 820). As a matter of fact, while working on *Practical Cats*, Eliot was also writing his verse drama *The Family Reunion* (1939), where he employs the same technique for the members of the chorus: every individual speaker has different verse patterns and rhythms so as to represent their personalities (Smith 119–20).

This leads us to the notion of the dramatic monologue, for each feline has its own personal voice and the poetry employed whenever one of them speaks characterises them. Douglass (117–18) has pointed out how "Old Deuteronomy" and "Gus, The Theatre Cat" use dactylic tetrameter, whilst "The Old Gumbie Cat" is in octameter and "Mungojerrie and Rumpelteazer" uses octameter stanzas and tetrameter refrains, to name a

few examples. But even in these poems, as observed before, Eliot plays with metre and rhythm, especially when there is a transition from the narrator to the feline character or the human speakers within the poem.

3. THE DRAMATIC MONOLOGUE AND THE MUSICAL

Delving into the techniques of characterisation, as already briefly mentioned, each poem in *Practical Cats* introduces a feline in a manner which recalls dramatic monologues, which Eliot employed in some of his famous early poems, as in "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock" (1915). In that sense, Eliot is said to have "contributed more to the development of the form [dramatic monologue] than any poet since Browning" (Langbaum 77). These monologues express an interest in character and the mind of the speaker. In *Practical Cats* it is the author/narrator who mainly speaks about each cat, their lives, and characters, but the constant references to the first-person narrator, the characterisation of different voices within the poem, and how the speaker addresses his audience are reminiscent of dramatic monologues. It is noteworthy that the initial title for this collection was *Mr. Eliot's Book of Pollicle Dogs and Jellicle Cats as Recited to Him by the Man in White Spats*, which strengthens the idea of the dramatic monologue to a certain extent—as a monologue to be heard by a listener or an audience. Exceptions to this are the last poem, "Cat Morgan Introduces Himself," which is a dramatic monologue by the feline character himself, and "Gus, the Theatre Cat," who gives a monologue about his life as a music hall star within the poem.

Characterisation in the musical production is achieved through costumes and make-up, for its purpose is to establish the cats' personality at first sight, as conceived by stage designer John Napier. They are presented in a lively manner and many of them have mischievous personalities. Music—and even dance—also contributes to the characterisation of the felines, as there is a different type of music for each of them. Asparagus, or "Gus, the Theatre Cat," has a nostalgic song reminiscent of the music hall atmosphere, as an indication of the cat's age and classical training. "Mr Mistoffeelees" and "The Rum Tum Tugger" are rock numbers, whilst "Old Deuteronomy" presents a lullaby-styled song, which almost turns into an anthem, as a hint to the relevance of the character within the musical (Snelson 31). "The Old Gumbie Cat" includes a tap-dancing routine, a style reminiscent of the 1930s, and "Macavity, The

Mystery Cat" is a sensual number the choreography of which reminds us of Bob Fosse, just to give a few examples.

As pointed out by Siropoulos, "[t]he use of pastiche in the musicalization of the poems creates some sort of quickly grasped musical characterization for each cat type, a musical image that communicates directly to the audience each character's defining features" (*Ideology* 178). Everything is, in fact, very physical in this musical production, as the attitudes of the feline characters are expressed mainly through body movement and dance, which is what further characterises these cats, which are portrayed accordingly as sensual, playful, mysterious, shabby, etc. Napier offers us, then, a fantastic anthropomorphic feline world where cats

> move in a combination of animal movement, acrobatics and various dancing styles, sing a vast array of musical pastiches and speak in a distinctively Victorian and Edwardian language, which contrasts in a playfully dissonant way with their ghetto-fabulous corporeal stylization (leg-warmers, arm-warmers, punk haircuts, new-wave make-up). (Siropoulos, "*Evita*" 174)

Collage, the most favoured technique in *Cats*, enables the combination and blending of these dissonant styles. Moreover, the musical will further reinforce the concept of the dramatic monologue by transforming many of these character portraits into first-person lyrics, making them true dramatic monologues in which the felines introduce themselves in order to explain the reason why they are worthy of going to the Heaviside Layer. That is to say, though some of the songs in *Cats* have a chorus or a character singing and introducing another cat—as is the case of "The Old Gumbie Cat"—, several of them adapt the poem so as to allow the cats to speak for themselves. Some of these modifications can be seen in "The Rum Tum Tugger," where a chorus of cats still sing the parts of "The Rum Tum Tugger is a Curious Cat," while the following lines describing his habits are transformed to the first-person singular. Therefore, it is Rum Tum Tugger who introduces himself to the audience in a—dramatic—monologue, as there is no dialogue between the characters on stage and they only interact with one another through gestures and dance. Another example is "Mungojerrie and Rumpelteazer," whose modifications can be observed here:

> Mungojerrie and Rumpelteazer were a very notorious
> couple of cats

> . . .
> They had an extensive reputation. They made their
> home in Victoria Grove—
> That was merely their centre of operation, for they were
> incurably given to rove. (Eliot, *Practical Cats* 36–37)

And the song of the musical, which changes the pronouns and tenses to allow the cats to present themselves for the audience in the present and in the first-person plural, as a couple of indivisible cats:

> Mungojerrie and Rumpelteazer
> *We're* a notorious couple of cats
> . . .
> *We have* an extensive reputation
> *We make* our home in Victoria Grove
> *This is* merely *our* centre of operation
> For *we are* incurably given to rove. ("Mungojerrie and Rumpelteazer," emphasis added)

Yet perhaps the clearest example in the musical is offered through the song "Memory," the lyrics of which were taken from Eliot's "Rhapsody on a Windy Night." This dramatic monologue lets Grizabella reminisce on stage about her past and voice her hopelessness in a ballad, or rather a pop aria. In "Rhapsody on a Windy Night," a monologist and flâneur wanders the city streets and, while observing the nocturnal scene, recalls past memories. The speaker is presented as isolated and hopeless, highlighting the bleakness of mundane life and futile existence. Both speakers in the poem and in the song are portrayed as lonely and weary of their sterile life.

4. ELIOT'S VERSE DRAMA AND ITS POPULAR ROOTS

The previous section has shown to which extent *Practical Cats* and the musical tally with Eliot's concept of contemporary drama as regards dramatic monologues and the characterisation of voices, made evident via the metrical variations and rhythms. Speaking of drama, Eliot disapproved of the prose realism and absence of rhythm in the plays of authors such as Ibsen, adopting new verse forms himself. An illustrative example is his drama *Sweeney Agonistes*, with musical rhythms that find their roots in the music hall, which Eliot would continue to explore in his essays and in later works—such as *Practical Cats*. Plays had to be poetic for Eliot, since his

purpose was to revive verse drama. He would even argue that "the craving for poetic drama is permanent in human nature" (Eliot, "Dialogue" 407), and, in order to be popular, it should be written with verses transparent enough for everyone to understand, as poetry, in Eliot's own words, "is the only language in which the emotions can be expressed at all" (Eliot, "Poetry and Drama" 591).

Concerning verse drama, Eliot was notably inspired by the popular entertainment of his day, most especially the music hall. As Faulk argues, Eliot "envisioned a new verse drama . . . with the rhythms and idioms of modern life" which would "attract a wide audience by artfully combining sophisticated ideas with contemporary amusements" (189). Eliot praised music hall comedians as performers who were able to adapt themselves and their performance to the required ends ("Possibility" 283) and saw the music hall as a type of performance which thrived on the involvement of its audience, an aspect to be ideally emulated by contemporary drama. This music hall tradition, which combined popular songs, tricks, stunts, and comedy with no thematic connection, can be found in *Practical Cats* and in the musical as a key element, as the next section will demonstrate.

As his broader criticism reveals, Eliot's sources of inspiration for his concept of verse drama were much wider, for his drama theory and practice were also rooted in the popular entertainment and artistic revolution initiated by the Ballets Russes which so deeply influenced his writings. Rhythm is an important aspect for Eliot, both in his poetry and in his drama. He wrote about the origins of drama, whose roots he saw in ritualistic dance (Eliot, "Beating" 473). Eliot was indeed a connoisseur of dance, and he greatly admired the Russian Ballet, which, for him, tapped into the ritual expressing "something intangible, or spiritual, which speaks to the entire human community" (Richardson 163).

Keeping these statements in mind, it is no wonder that his *Practical Cats* also features amazing dancers who "know to dance a gavotte and a jig" (Eliot, *Practical Cats* 32). In fact, as Douglass points out, "The Song of the Jellicles" is "a ritual poem about ritual; and the Ball is a ritual dance of life" (122). Eliot's critical responses to the Russian Ballet allow us to see his literary aesthetic goals: the relationship between performer and the work of art, and the integration of popular art into high art. Koritz notes that "[m]ajor tenets of literary modernism, as expressed in Eliot's criticism of the late teens and early twenties, are cut from the same conceptual cloth as many of the aesthetic values informing the dance modernism of the Russian Ballet during the same period" (137–38).

Eliot praised the impersonal performance of dancers such as Vaslav Nijinsky and Léonide Massine, for they adhered to a tradition, to "an askesis" in Eliot's own words ("Dialogue" 410). Dancers sacrificed themselves to this tradition (Mester 116), as their performances were subjected to the text they were enacting. This is a recurring idea in Eliot, for he talked about it too in "The Possibility of a Poetic Drama" (1920), where he lamented the "triumph of the actor over the play," as performers are "interested not in form but in opportunities for virtuosity or in the communication of [their] 'personality'" (283).

While discussing a representation of Webster's *The Duchess of Malfi* in 1920, Eliot emphasises again that "the ideal actor for a poetic drama is the actor *with no personal vanity*," since "poetry is something which the actor cannot improve or 'interpret' . . . poetry can only be transmitted" ("*Duchess*" 173). It is important to note that Eliot said the same thing about poetry when he wrote in "Tradition and the Individual Talent" (1919) that "poetry is not a turning loose of emotion, but an escape from emotion; it is not the expression of personality, but an escape from personality" (111).

Poetry, thus, should be "impersonal," separated from the character of the writer. The artist must accordingly suppress their own personality in favour of tradition, be that literary tradition or ballet, for there is a complete separation between "the man who suffers and the mind which creates" (Eliot, "Tradition" 109). Along the lines of John Keats's understanding of the "*camelion* Poet" who "is not itself—it has no self—it is everything and nothing—it has no character. . . . A poet . . . has no identity" (Keats 500–1), for Eliot "a poet has, not a 'personality' to express, but a particular medium" ("Tradition" 110), and "[t]he progress of an artist is a continual self-sacrifice, a continual extinction of personality" ("Tradition" 108).

All in all, impersonality, tradition, and self-sacrifice are key concepts in Eliot's essays. He also admired the way in which ballet dancers made use of the popular while transforming it into fine art, which is something he praised too in music hall artist Marie Lloyd. In this regard, he observed that "our problem should be to take a form of entertainment, and subject it to the process which would leave it a form of art" (Eliot, "Marie Lloyd" 283). For all these reasons, ballet became for Eliot a model for his verse drama, as an art which expertly integrated tradition and innovation, the popular and the elitist, rhythm and ritual; an art that conveys an immediate and direct effect to the audience (Eliot, "*Duchess*" 173) and which is universal.

5. *CATS* AS EMBODIMENT OF ELIOT'S ASPIRATIONS FOR VERSE DRAMA

Keeping these statements in mind, in *Cats* we can see how dancers on stage must be "impersonal" in the sense that they assume the personality of a cat; they are not even "human" anymore. Curiously enough—and quite appropriately—, the movement of the actors on stage has been referred to as "neo-primitive" by Siropoulos (*Ideology* 210, 227). During rehearsals, performers in the musical had to take part in "Cat School," where they learnt how to portray the movements and physicality of a cat. Through improvisation and mimics, they learnt to behave like felines, so as to be able to perform on stage incorporating all these cat-like manners.

At the same time, in Lynne's daunting choreography they mix popular dances on stage (rock, jazz, tap dancing, modern dancing, acrobatics, etc.) with more classical ballet, as Lynne herself was a trained and successful ballerina. Unsurprisingly, for some of the numbers, actors had to be trained ballet dancers. Such is the case of Mr. Mistoffelees, whose solo has some of the most difficult choreography, including twenty-four consecutive *fouettés en tournant*. Regarded as an extremely challenging production to dance, most especially the "Jellicle Ball" number (a 10-minute unbroken dance), the show pushed their performers to their limits with the dancing, acrobatic, and cat-style behaviour. As has been recognised, *Cats* is mainly "a piece of physical theatre: a corporeal spectacle, in which . . . [the character's] essence is communicated basically through movement" (Siropoulos, *Ideology* 184). That is why *Cats* has been labelled as a "dance musical."

Interestingly, Eliot's cats are heavily influenced by the popular entertainment the poet was seeking to incorporate in his drama, since many of his felines are performers, dancers, actors, or magicians. In addition to that, though writing in the 1930s, Eliot employs an English reminiscent of the Victorian and Edwardian eras, in its structure and lexicon. This fact proves to be even more significant when we think that it was precisely in the early Victorian era that the music hall came into vogue. Furthermore, while Eliot struggled to reconcile high art and popular culture, as Chinitz explores in his work *T. S. Eliot and the Cultural Divide*, *Cats* succeeded at this by having Eliot's verses as a libretto and presenting it in the form of a musical, highly accessible for every kind of audience. Yet, as a musical production, *Cats* naturally had to transform Eliot's poems in order to achieve a narrative structure around the Jellicles, a tribe of cats, so that the production is not just based on solo performances on each individual poem.

This is what happened in the initial stages of the production, for it began as a cycle of character songs at Sydmonton Festival in 1980 (Snelson 31). The musical, therefore, tells the story of the Jellicles in the night in which it is decided which cat will ascend to the Heaviside Layer to be reborn and embark on a new life. That is the linking motive for the slim plot. Hence, music plays an essential role in the characterization of the felines and confers cohesion to the show. Poetry, music, and dance blend here over traditional narrative, since the show draws closer to the music hall, a kind of entertainment close to Eliot's heart, as previously argued. The influence of popular music is, indeed, traceable in all of Eliot's works. For instance, Katherine Mullin ("Sounds in *The Waste Land*") has written about the influence of music hall in *The Waste Land,* a poem with a quick succession of scenes, registers, and voices, in addition to the significance of other popular arts such as ragtime or jazz in the rhythms of the poem. Mullin observes that *The Waste Land* is "a noisy poem" where music, especially the music hall tradition, plays a vital role in its structure and idiom: just like in a music hall, *The Waste Land* rapidly changes registers and scenes, offering different sequences of disconnected acts.

Parallels between music hall acts and the musical can be traced in the characters and their musical numbers. First, the character of Bustopher Jones reminds us of the *lion comique,* typical of music hall entertainments, who appeared elegantly dressed as a parody of the "swells"—rich and fashionable people from the upper classes. Bustopher Jones is indeed an "aristocratic" cat, for "he's the St. James's Street Cat!" (Eliot, *Practical Cats* 88) and leads an idle life from club to club; that is why he is called the "Brummell of Cats" (Eliot, *Practical Cats* 90), a reference to Beau Brummell, a very popular man of fashion in Regency England.

Nevertheless, if there is a character within the book reminiscent of the music hall that is "Gus, The Theatre Cat," whose acting career epitomises Victorian theatrical entertainment, with its many references to Queen Victoria, actors Sir Henry Irving and Sir Herbert Beerbohm Tree, and the Victorian pantomime. He was a theatre star who now complains that "the Theatre's certainly not what it was," and that "kittens . . . do not get trained / As we did in the days when Victoria reigned" (Eliot, *Practical Cats* 87). This reminds us of essays written by Eliot in the 1920s, as this seems to be a reference to the decadence of music hall entertainment, which Eliot decried when he wrote about the demised of music hall artist Marie Lloyd ("Marie Lloyd" 419). This might also be a reference to the decadence represented by prose realism and absence of rhythm, as previously

observed. In the stage production, the melody of this number evokes in its style the music hall with its nostalgic undertones, and so does too the musical number of "The Old Gumbie Cat," which features a tap-dancing routine, part of music hall and vaudeville entertainments.

Moreover, *Practical Cats* and, ergo, the musical, is full of specialty acts. For instance, Mr. Mistoffelees is the "Original Conjuring Cat" (Eliot, *Practical Cats* 60) with amazing magical powers who performs great tricks of illusion and prestidigitation. In the musical, his number is awash with artifices characteristic of theatrical entertainment such as the music hall: he makes his grand entrance by sliding down a rope in the middle of the stage and combines his spectacular dance moves with magic tricks through special effects. Simply put, in the musical production this character becomes a true showman. Macavity also reminds us of magic acts of the music hall tradition due to his mystical powers: he can perform hypnosis, appear and disappear at will, and teleport. He is a master of disguises too. In addition, Mungojerrie and Rumpelteazer are two cats which are described as "knockabout clowns, quick-change comedians, / tight-rope walkers and acrobats" (Eliot, *Practical Cats* 35), that is, they are proper music hall performers. In the musical, their performance has a dance number full of acrobatic feats, ending the act with a series of their signature cartwheels. Quite appropriately, the music of this number begins in a circus/vaudeville-style.

Yet not only are characters reminiscent of the music hall tradition, but there are also musical numbers, such as "The Awefull Battle of the Pekes and the Pollicles," which is performed as a play within the musical, sung by Munkustrap, who narrates while the other cats act the story out. This can be seen as a metatheatrical reference— a play within a play—, which can also remind us of the—comedy—acts so popular in the music hall. Interestingly, as Bay-Cheng observes, metatheatrical references and role-play are some of the thematic connections which can be drawn between Eliot's *Practical Cats* and the three plays (*The Rock: A Pageant Play, Murder in the Cathedral*, and *The Family Reunion*) he was working on at the same time (229). Lastly, we also have the example of "Gus, The Theatre Cat," which is sung nearly verbatim, the only alteration being "He once played a Tiger—could do it again" to "I once played Growltiger." This small modification in the lyrics leads Gus to recreate his role as a pirate cat singing the song "Growltiger's Last Stand." This number, not always present in the different productions, is usually a pastiche of jazz and a parody of Italian opera and is full of metatheatrical references.

The musical features elements of the revue as well, as it brings together music and dance over a narrative line. The origin of *Cats* as a song cycle already points to its resemblance to the revue and concept musical, as each song focused on introducing the feline characters and the world they inhabit without any storyline at first. In Jubin's words, "[f]rom a dramaturgical point of view, it is perfectly legitimate to call *Cats* a revue" (158), as it mostly presents different numbers for the felines themselves where the visual presentation has great significance, and its foremost aim is to offer an experience for spectators. With a general loose theme as background, the revue usually presented acts which fluctuated between dance ensembles and solo performances with a single—and mostly large—cast and splendid sets.

Naturally, this connects back to the music hall, for it could be argued that there is a continuum from the music hall to the revue, and then to the concept musical. It has been noted that *Cats* lacks a traditional narrative structure and cohesiveness, and, consequently, the musical is rather strange in its conception, combining "elements of the revue and concept musical" (Everett and Laird xliv). The concept musical could be considered an evolution from the revue, as it develops around a general theme, instead of a plot, and the emphasis lies on style and staging.

Just as Schuchard describes that Eliot must have been "electrified to see the artistic fusion" in Cocteau's ballet *Parade* (qtd. in Mester 120), he might also have been by the blending of contemporary elements in *Cats*. These coincide to a certain extent with those features enumerated by Russian ballet dancer Massine about *Parade*: "ragtime music, jazz, the cinema, billboard advertising, circus and music-hall techniques" always "adapting them to [their] own ends" (105). Though Jones advises against drawing "too close an analogy between any Diaghilev production . . . and the relatively spare aesthetic of an Eliot poem" (225), it would not be such a preposterous idea to conclude that the influence of the Ballets Russes on Eliot is to be traced in his *Practical Cats* and, consequently, in the musical, where body movement, dance, and visual aesthetics are highlighted, for all of them thrive on the hybridity Eliot admired and employed throughout his work.

Cats would end up becoming a "megamusical," an absolute commercial success and a popular cultural reference up to the present day. And for all these reasons, according to Lentricchia, Eliot "would have loved *Cats*" (280), for he aspired to be like the music hall artist Marie Lloyd, expertly achieving both artistry and popularity, "able to control . . .

audiences by maintaining 'sympathy' with them while still retaining a 'moral superiority'" (Badenhausen 126). Chinitz is, in this regard, more sceptical: Eliot would have been happy to take part in the most popular Broadway production, although he would have wished that the musical "had been rather better than it was" (Chinitz 18). Curiously, this musical production would posthumously award Eliot his second—and third—Tony Award, which he had already won for Best Play for the Broadway production of his verse drama *The Cocktail Party* in 1950, his greatest success in the theatre.

However, many have pointed out the irony of "the fact that one of the most austere poets of the 20th century . . . should have provided the pretext for such a gigantic extravaganza" (Kissel qtd. in Chinitz 18). The musical *Cats* became, in truth, a mass phenomenon and blockbuster, loved by the audience, but with mixed reviews by critics. The book *Practical Cats* shares in this disregard by critics, neglected initially perhaps for not being serious enough. Yet this collection of poetry "is the only one of his works in which Eliot succeeded in being a poet for the whole community," as Stephen Medcalf has noted (qtd. in Chinitz 228n53). Thanks to *Practical Cats* and its multiple adaptations, Eliot's "desire to reach out to a broader audience" (Badenhausen 126) has been fulfilled. Eliot praised the "collaboration of the audience with the artist which is necessary in all art and most obviously in dramatic art" ("Marie Lloyd" 420), as drama was for him "the ideal form in which an artist could interact with his audience" (Badenhausen 126). Following that line, *Cats* once again embodies Eliot's aspirations by providing an immersive experience and interacting with its spectators.

CONCLUSIONS

As Eliot suggested about Marie Lloyd, *Cats*, with its roots in the English music hall and the revue, epitomises the popular itself, representative of a contemporary mass cultural phenomenon where the highbrow and the lowbrow, the old and new go hand in hand and overflow old boundaries. Overall, *Cats*, for all its faults, was successful in rendering new life to the initially misjudged playfulness of Eliot's *Practical Cats*. It created a pleasurable experience where the original creator is present, and, at the same time, hidden, for his verse, his aspirations and inspirations for his verse drama, his spirit is at the core of the production, though many spectators may ignore it.

As an adaptation on *Practical Cats*, the musical production succeeds in giving these playful and strongly characterised felines the opportunity to introduce themselves in a technique which recalls Eliot's use of dramatic monologues. Furthermore, as already noted, characterisation is mostly achieved through music, employing different genres throughout the show just as Eliot portrays different voices with the variation of metres, placement of lines, and rhythm in his verses. It is precisely rhythm that is at the core of the production, in a microcosm which takes over from the performances of Marie Lloyd and the Russian Ballet, so admired by Eliot. In fact, Eliot's verses for children, by heavily relying on sound and rhythm, have a strong musicality, which, together with the poet's use of nonsense poetry and nursery rhymes, gives *Practical Cats* a great potential to be adapted into music, a quality exploited by Lloyd Webber in his production.

In brief, Lloyd Webber's *Cats* remains faithful to Eliot by focusing on the characters and by embodying Eliot's poetic practice and theory. And it does so by reconciling the poet's techniques, musicality, rhythm, and inspirations, delivering an extremely challenging show where hybridity, impersonality, innovation, and tradition combine in new and spectacular ways. Bringing Eliot's Victorian and Edwardian feline world to life, *Cats* would become a show for family entertainment, with great live energy which involved the audience with enormous popular appeal, expertly combing the high-cultural and the popular. Its many revivals, translations, and adaptations account for its long-lasting popularity, including two films—the 1998 direct-to-video and the 2019 feature film. This, coupled with the multiple illustrated editions of the poetry collection, lead us to conclude that these *Practical Cats* have definitely withstood their nine lives.

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"Sorry, One More Time": The Role of Resolution Strategies in a Virtual Exchange Partnership

"Por favor, una vez más": El papel de las estrategias de resolución en un intercambio virtual

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Abstract: With new technologies rapidly developing and the growing relevance of communicative competence in language education, Virtual Exchanges (VEs) are receiving increased attention in research within the framework of the Interaction Hypothesis. One of the intrinsic elements of interaction is Negotiation of Meaning (NoM), a process in which students attempt to solve communicative issues. Nevertheless, few studies have scrutinised how students solve these breakdowns in VE interaction. The purpose of this paper is to identify the most employed resolution strategies in three online audio-visual interactions. The participants are university students from Japan and Spain who carried out one-hour Zoom interactions. Methodology-wise, Clavel-Arroitia's categorisation was adapted to the purposes of this study in order to identify the strategies in the corpus. The results illustrate how certain factors (language proficiency, cultural background, and communicative dynamics, among others) condition the strategies employed, emphasising the complexity of foreign language learners' interaction.
Keywords: Interaction; Resolution Strategies; Negotiation of Meaning; English as a Foreign Language; Virtual Exchange.
Summary: Introduction. Theoretical Framework. Methodology. Results and Discussion. Conclusions.

Resumen: Con la rápida evolución de las nuevas tecnologías y la creciente importancia de la competencia comunicativa en la enseñanza de idiomas, los Intercambios Virtuales y el estudio de su interacción están recibiendo una atención cada vez mayor. Uno de los elementos fundamentales de este campo es la Negociación de Significado, un proceso en el que los

estudiantes tratan de resolver problemas comunicativos. Sin embargo, solo unos pocos estudios han analizado cómo se resuelven estos problemas en interacciones virtuales entre alumnos. El objetivo de este artículo es identificar las estrategias de resolución más utilizadas en tres interacciones en línea. Los participantes son estudiantes universitarios japoneses y españoles que realizaron interacciones por Zoom de una hora. En cuanto a la metodología, la categorización de Clavel-Arroitia se adaptó a este estudio para identificar las estrategias en el corpus. Los resultados muestran que ciertos factores (competencia lingüística, entorno cultural, y dinámicas comunicativas, entre otros) condicionan las estrategias empleadas, remarcando la complejidad de las interacciones entre estudiantes de lenguas extranjeras.
Palabras clave: Interacción; estrategias de resolución; negociación de significado; inglés como lengua extranjera; intercambios virtuales.
Sumario: Introducción. Marco Teórico. Metodología. Resultados y Discusión. Conclusiones.

INTRODUCTION

As extensive research within the fields of Second Language Acquisition (SLA) and Teaching English as a Foreign Language (TEFL) illustrates, the promotion of communicative competence is one of the prevailing learning outcomes in current language classrooms. Certainly, communication skills are not only a determining factor for the proficient use of a second language (L2), but, fundamentally, the foremost goal for students during their language learning process (Kohn and Hoffstaedter 1).

Some of the configurations that practitioners, teachers, and researchers have employed to foster communicative competence among foreign language students are Virtual Exchanges (VEs) due to their pronounced focus on interaction. In particular, the potential of VEs and other configurations of this typology transcend the sole prompting of interactive scenarios, as they may even motivate the production of "unlimited input and repetition," "modifying input," and "interaction and negotiation of meaning" episodes (Chun 101).

Due to these affordances, along with many others, the body of research concerning this topic has gained growing interest. Among the features mentioned by Chun, this article will focus solely on Negotiation of Meaning (NoM), which is the process carried out by interactants when attempting to solve a communicative issue. Due precisely to their presence and relevance in students' interaction, these episodes have emerged as a focus of empirical interest among multiple scholars (Bower and Kawaguchi; Clavel-Arroitia and Pennock-Speck; Cook; Lee, "Online Interaction," "A Study of Native"; Li and Lewis; Smith, "Computer-Mediated," "The Relationship between Negotiated"). These NoM episodes

unfold in interaction when "breakdowns in communication" (Bower and Kawaguchi 44) occur. Hence, students involved in these episodes make use of different strategies to solve the communicative issue and, eventually, continue with the conversation.

Although NoM episodes have been widely scrutinised in research, there is one aspect that requires further investigation. Some studies have attempted to identify how students solve these communicative breakdowns, although very few have implemented an exhaustive categorisation of the resolution strategies employed.

Thus, this paper aims to identify the most utilised resolution strategies in three online audio-visual *lingua franca* exchanges between learners of English from Kwansei Gakuin University (Japan) and Universitat de València (Spain). To this effect, the resolution strategies will be identified and analysed according to Clavel-Arroitia's ("Analysis of Telecollaborative") adaptation of Long's categorisation ("Native Speaker/Non-Native"). Firstly, a brief outline of the main ideas posed in the Interaction Hypothesis will be provided, together with further information concerning NoM episodes, VEs and resolution strategies. Subsequently, after pointing out some methodological considerations, the main results will be presented and discussed. Lastly, the main conclusions inferred from the data analysis will be stated, as well as some implications for future research.

1. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

1.1 L2 Learning, Interaction Hypothesis, and Negotiation of Meaning

Several studies concerned with conversation and its role in the L2 learning process have been conducted from the standpoint of the Interaction Hypothesis. Inspired by Krashen's comprehensible input theory (*Fundamentals, The Input Hypothesis*), Long underlined the significance of interaction and its different components in the language learning process ("Linguistic and Conversational"; "The Role"; "Native Speaker/Non-Native"). Research has evidenced that interactive processes allow students to attain increased levels of comprehensible input, peer feedback, and utterance modifications (Gass et al.; Loewen and Erlam; Pica).

Along the same lines, Ellis argues that "learning arises not through interaction but in interaction" ("Task-Based Research" 209), thus

emphasising the relevance of interaction as a suitable environment for the acquisition of an L2. Accordingly, and as expounded in section 1.2 below, the Interaction Hypothesis has also been studied within the field of Computer-Assisted Language Learning (CALL), with Chapelle as one of the first researchers to explore learners' interaction in Computer-Mediated Communication (CMC) environments.

Among the central elements analysed in the Interaction Hypothesis, there is one that requires further exploration for the aim of this study, which is Negotiation of Meaning (NoM). Varonis and Gass define NoM episodes as "those exchanges in which there is some overt indication that understanding between participants has not been complete" (73). More specifically, Pica, who refers to this phenomenon solely as "negotiation," describes such episodes as those instances in which students "anticipate, perceive, or experience difficulties in message comprehensibility" (494). Thus, NoM episodes can be considered as the process of interaction in which participants seek to attend certain communicative issues using specific resolution strategies.

The representation of these episodes in SLA and TEFL research is influenced not only by the presence of such episodes in classroom interaction, but also by the multiple affordances implied in students' exposure to them (Clavel-Arroitia, "Analysis of Telecollaborative"; Gass, *Input, Interaction*; Long, "Linguistic and Conversational," "The Role"; Smith "Computer-Mediated"; Varonis and Gass). NoM processes may be considered "an initial step in learning" (Gass, "Input and Interaction" 235), since these episodes establish a suitable space for students to carry out their learning process. Long also suggests that the cognitive process of students during "negotiation work" may promote the acquisition of "vocabulary, morphology, and language-specific syntax" ("The Role" 414). Moreover, Smith states that increased attention to possible problems that may arise in interaction between peers is fostered thanks to students' output modifications ("Computer-Mediated" 39), making them more conscious of the "gaps in their own competence" (Wilkinson 531).

Furthermore, since NoM episodes are one more element of interaction, it is inferred that they will present similar outcomes, including comprehensible input (Long, "Linguistic and Conversational"; Krashen, *The Input Hypothesis*). Due to the presence of this type of input, interactants are encouraged to produce "pushed output" (Swain), since students may need a wider vocabulary range to solve certain issues. Thus,

the acquisition of new terms in an unpremeditated manner may take place during these NoM episodes (Ellis, *Learning a Second* 4).

1.2 Virtual Exchanges and Negotiation of Meaning

As mentioned earlier, these NoM episodes are considered crucial in language learning processes (Pica; Pica et al.) and are present in activities that promote interaction between students (Ellis et al.; Long, "Linguistic and Conversational"; Yanguas). Consequently, the significance of these episodes has been studied not only in face-to-face conversation, but also in interaction within digital environments (Bohinski and Mulé; Bower and Kawaguchi; Clavel-Arroitia and Pennock-Speck; Kern et al.; Lee "Online Interaction," "A Study of Native"; Smith, "Computer-Mediated," "The Relationship between Negotiated"; Sotillo).

NoM episodes are becoming increasingly popular in CALL and blended learning research due to the autonomous learning space constructed in these activities. Indeed, this autonomy allows students to seek higher levels of understanding between themselves and their peers using various linguistic and intercultural strategies (Akiyama 191). Moreover, NoM episodes in CALL contexts are considered "the most effective way for learners to acquire new words" (Smith, "The Relationship between Negotiated" 54).

More specifically for this paper, the presence of NoM episodes has previously been studied in VEs (Clavel-Arroitia, "Analysis of Telecollaborative"; Helm; Lee, "Online Interaction," "Synchronous Online Exchanges"). VEs have been defined as configurations that involve "engaging learners in sustained online intercultural collaboration and communication with online peers under the guidance of trained facilitators or educators" (European Commission et al. 17). Hence, students participating in VEs are to work with peers from a country different from their own to improve their interactive skills (Bassani and Buchem; Bohinski and Mulé).

The growing attention that VEs are receiving in current research is explained through their multiple beneficial outcomes. First and foremost, since participants in these exchanges perform the role of "L2 users" (Helm), it is expected from them to present increased levels of autonomous learning (Pérez Cañado; Vinagre). Furthermore, this is an initiative with a strong focus on culture (Kern et al.), and it promotes the acquisition of Intercultural Communicative Competence (ICC) (O'Dowd,

"Understanding"; "Evaluating the Outcomes"). Additionally, research has coined VEs as highly motivational activities (Canto et al.; Helm; Pennock-Speck and Clavel-Arroitia; Pérez Cañado; Schenker).

Research on VEs has advanced from studying solely asynchronous computer-mediated communication (ACMC), namely email or forums, to focusing on more complex forms of interaction present in synchronous computer-mediated communication (SCMC) (Akiyama and Cunningham 50). In terms of synchronous VE partnerships, Sauro shows in a review of 97 pieces of research concerning SCMC that communication in these platforms can potentially improve grammatical, sociolinguistic, discourse and strategic competences (382). Most importantly for this study, extended research has proved the presence of NoM episodes also in SCMC partnerships (De la Fuente; Fernández-García and Martínez-Arbelaiz; Lee, "Synchronous Online Exchanges"; Smith, "Computer-Mediated," "The Relationship between Scrolling").

Among the increasing variety of VE models reviewed in research, *lingua franca* exchanges can be considered one of the most popular kinds of partnership. In these monolingual configurations, students from different countries interact in the language that they want to learn or where they want to improve their skills (Clavel-Arroitia and Pennock Speck). NoM episodes may be initiated in *lingua franca* VEs to avoid misunderstandings, ensure their message clearly reaches their listeners, or even verify if they understood their peers correctly, among other motivations. Hence, depending on the communicative issue and the objectives of the main task, students may attend some triggers or decide to ignore them (Clavel-Arroitia, "Analysis of Telecollaborative"; Guill-Garcia). Research on English as a Lingua Franca (ELF) has expounded why students decide not to attend certain triggers following the "let-it-pass" principle, which takes place when an interactant "lets the unknown or unclear action, word or utterance 'pass' on the (common-sense) assumption that it will either become clear or redundant as talk progresses" (Firth 243). This phenomenon, however, may be more evident in conversations between higher-level students of the second language or in those exchanges in which correctness is not considered as relevant as language functionality (Yazan et al. 153).

1.3 Resolution Strategies: Decoding Students' NoM Episodes

As previously pointed out, in NoM episodes students face a communicative breakdown mostly because they do not have the set of skills necessary to express themselves as they would in their L1 (Bohinski and Mulé; Bower and Kawaguchi; Smith, "The Relationship between Negotiated"; Yanguas). In this context of problem-solving moves made by students, resolution strategies play a crucial role. Some instances of these strategies may be "utterances to gather one's thoughts, questions for clarification" or "statements of affirmation" such as confirmations of understanding, among others (Bohinski and Mulé 11), which are employed to solve the communication issues and resume the normal course of the conversation, since this was previously interrupted by these NoM episodes.

There have been studies that addressed these strategies. For instance, Lee ("Focus-on-Form") introduces multiple resolution strategies found in online student interaction, among which comprehension checks (when students ascertain if their peers understood them), clarification requests (instances in which students ask their peers to define or further elaborate on a triggering element), vocabulary exchange and assistance (utterance co-construction) are found. Smith, however, highlights the relevance of confirmations in CMC and even considers them a crucial step in the closing of NoM episodes ("Computer-Mediated"; "The Relationship between Negotiated"). Since online interaction, especially that found in the written media, can be considered "communication in slow motion," students may take longer than in face-to-face contexts to solve a breakdown, making explicit confirmations necessary (Loewen and Sato 312).

Diverse studies concerned with ELF have identified various strategies used in interaction of non-native speakers of English. For instance, Björkman divides strategies into "self-initiated" and "other-initiated." In the first category, moves that students may resort to after perceiving a potential misunderstanding can be found. "Other-initiated" strategies, on the other hand, are those utilised once a peer has expressed misunderstanding or pointed out a trigger (129).

An alternative bipartite model related to resolution strategies was described by Cogo and Dewey, who, based on Varonis and Gass' model of NoM episodes, differentiate between strategies used when indicating a trigger and those employed when resolving the communicative issue.

Another categorisation, although more exhaustive, was carried out by Clavel-Arroitia (*Analysis of the Teacher-Student*), who adapted Long's classification of strategies used between native and non-native speakers of English ("Linguistic and Conversational"). Recently, this categorisation was updated and applied to VEs between Spanish and British secondary education students (Clavel-Arroitia, "Analysis of Telecollaborative"). The 16 strategies listed by her will be further explained in section 2.

2. METHODOLOGY

As outlined above, the goal of this paper is to identify the resolution strategies used in three *lingua franca* exchanges carried out between Japanese and Spanish university students.

This article constitutes an expansion of the results found in a previous paper (Guill-Garcia), which implies that all the data obtained in the preceding study of this corpus would provide further detail on the topic of NoM. In the previous article, the NoM episodes were identified and classified so as to determine the relevance of such episodes, while in this paper the main focus lies on the use of resolution strategies. Hence, it is suggested to refer to the previous publication to gather more information about the general participation and moves of students and the relevance of NoM in these exchanges.

Moreover, only three out of eleven interactions were studied, since this is a study intending to test the methodology and categorisation of strategies. This field of study presents a lack of consensus on the specific strategies that are used by students in virtual interactive processes, which explains the preliminary nature of this paper. The totality of the corpus is currently being studied by a fellow researcher under the same conditions, i.e. employing Clavel-Arroitia's categorisation, to compare the results obtained. This comparison may ascertain not only the main conclusions of both papers, but also provide deeper insights on this classification of resolution strategies.

In order to disclose the presence of specific resolution strategies in these three interactions, it is necessary to address the research questions listed as follows:

(RQ1). Which resolution strategies were used the most?
(RQ2). Are there any differences in the use of resolution strategies between work groups?

(RQ3). Are there any differences in the use of resolution strategies between cultural groups?

These questions will be addressed by providing both quantitative and qualitative data. Hence, RQ1 will be answered by identifying and classifying the resolution strategies in the corpus according to Clavel-Arroitia's categorisation ("Analysis of Telecollaborative" 103), in which we can find the categories presented in Table 1 below.

Table 1. Adapted version of Clavel-Arroitia's ("Analysis of Telecollaborative") categorisation of resolution strategies

Resolution strategy	**Definition**
Comprehension check	Expressions used in order to prevent a breakdown or to confirm that their peers have understood them and vice versa.
Clarification request	Utterances used to elicit further details or explicit explanation.
Repetition request	Explicit demand of repetition of an utterance.
Repetition	When a participant repeats what was mentioned earlier on in a literal manner.
Reformulation	When a participant repeats what was mentioned earlier on by altering the previous utterance.
Acceptance	Explicit indication that a student has accepted one of their peer's feedback.
Confirmation	Indication that the problematic element was finally understood or clear statement of the closure of a NoM episode.
Asking a peer	Direct question from one peer to another.
Asking a teacher	Direct question from one student to a teacher.
Topic shift	When a change of topic takes place, usually in order to avoid further communicative issues.

Peer correction	When a student provides their peer with explicit feedback concerning a mistake made or a mispronunciation.
Self-correction	When a student reformulates their own utterance so as to correct their own mistake or mispronunciation.
Code switching	Change of language, normally from their L2 to their L1.
Explanation	Detailed answer to a student's inquiry.
Change of mode	Change of communicative media, normally making use of a chat or their smartphones.
Tolerance of ambiguity	When students deliberately decide not to attend a communicative issue.
Use of gesture	Non-verbal cues utilised in problem resolution, mostly to represent complex terms that the student is unable to explain.

Source: Prepared by the author.

As observed from Table 1, a slight adaptation of this categorisation was made to ensure better adequacy to the corpus under study. Since non-verbal cues represented a significant component of the interactions analysed, and of audio-visual virtual exchanges in general, the category "use of gesture" was added to the study.

In order to determine the number and type of resolution strategies present in the corpus, the interactions were recorded and then transcribed. Subsequently, the NoM episodes were identified according to Varonis and Gass and categorised, first, into attended and unattended, and then into resolved and unresolved. As indicated above, the results of this categorisation have been reported in Guill-Garcia. For this specific study, the identified NoM episodes were studied once again to look for the resolution strategies employed by students. These strategies were then classified according to Clavel Arroitia's categorisation ("Analysis of Telecollaborative"). In this step, the corpus was scrutinised with the simultaneous reading of the transcriptions and re-watching of the recordings. A second researcher then revised the classification of the

strategies found. In case of disagreement, both researchers discussed and shared their views until a consensus was reached.

For RQ2 and RQ3, the strategies found in the corpus were classified according to two criteria. Firstly, the strategies were analysed according to the work group that employed them, since each group's interaction may present unique features. Subsequently, those utilised by either the Japanese or Spanish students were studied separately, since cultural differences may influence the usage and frequency of certain strategies.

All the quantitative results obtained in these three sections were later analysed and further explored through a qualitative study, which primarily consist of the observations made by the researcher, who also participated in the partnership. Thus, certain discussions presented in the results section were perceived through a "participant observer" viewpoint (Freeman and Hall). Moreover, as indicated above, the data were obtained through the recordings of the interactions, which implies that a total of 2 hours and 55 minutes of recordings were viewed and transcribed. References to both the transcriptions and the recordings may provide the study with a wider perspective when it comes to identification and, most importantly, classification of resolution strategies. Even though the transcriptions include non-verbal cues, some of the episodes analysed may be better perceived through the actual recordings, which is why both elements are considered for the analysis of the corpus.

2.1 The Corpus

The interactions analysed were obtained from a partnership organised in the framework of the VELCOME project (Virtual Exchange for Learning and Competence Development in EMI Classrooms, 2019-2021. RTI2018-094601-B-100. Project "Retos," Ministerio de Ciencia, Innovación y Universidades) with the purpose of finding out the impact that VEs of diverse characteristics may have on certain competences. In this partnership between two universities (Kwansei Gakuin University and Universitat de València), 23 Japanese and 22 Spanish students formed 11 groups of four or five to carry out their main task, in which they had to talk about a specific topic for approximately an hour.

The exchange consisted of a pre-task, a main task, and a post-task. In the case of this article, since the focus lies on resolution strategies, only the main task will be addressed due to space constraints. During their Zoom interactions, which was the main task of the partnership, the

assigned groups discussed the topic of "Beliefs and Superstitions." Students were given a PDF in the pre-task which included some superstitions that they could mention in their verbal intercourse as a starting point, but they were given freedom to speak about any other topics they liked and had no time limitations, although they were expected to talk for approximately an hour.

2.2 Participants

As previously mentioned, 11 groups of students were formed, including two Japanese and two Spanish students in each except for one of the groups. This specific group was formed by three Japanese and two Spanish students. For this study, in which three out of the 11 Zoom conversations were analysed, the participants were 7 Japanese and 6 Spanish students. To maintain the anonymity of the students, their moves were labelled by the tags <JAPX>, and <SPAX>.

The participants in this study did not have the same proficiency levels in English. While Spanish students were enrolled in a C2 English module at the time of the exchange, Japanese students were, according to their teacher, lower-intermediate English speakers.

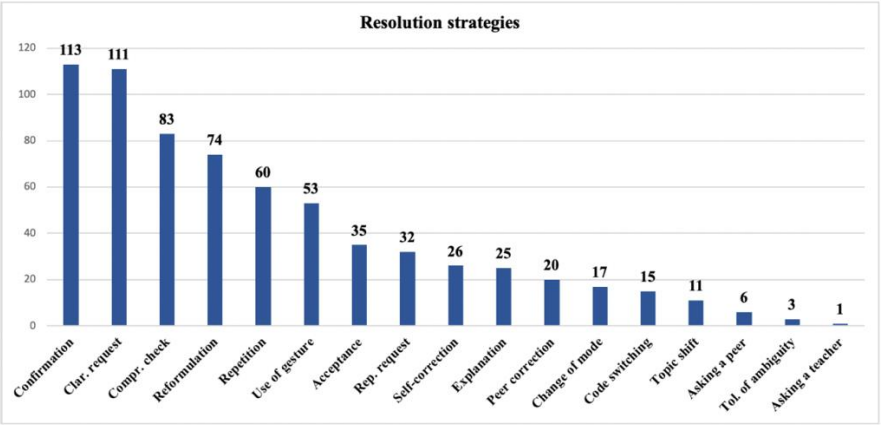
Since the participants in this study were university students, the outcomes of the VE will not be the same as previous ones obtained for other education levels. More particularly, VEs in this tertiary education level may aim for further exposure of the students to authentic language and communicative settings, extended understanding of their peers' culture, and learner autonomy (Vinagre 241–42). Additionally, O'Dowd highlights the importance of students' reflection not only in terms of intercultural communication, but also concerning technology ("Supporting In-Service" 68). As Kitade points out, the presence of reflection related to such diverse elements and aspects in tertiary education VEs is considered to "encourag(e) intercultural learning to move from knowledge exchanges to perspective changes" (65). Hence, higher levels of content complexity and critical thinking are expected in VEs within tertiary education groups.

3. Results and Discussion

Having underlined the most important methodological aspects of this research, it is time to identify the resolution strategies in the corpus and

find out which were the most frequently used. On the whole, a total of 685 resolution strategies were found in the entire corpus:

Fig. 1. Results for the number of resolution strategies found in the corpus



Source: Prepared by the author.

As portrayed in Fig. 1, confirmation was the strategy which students mostly resorted to. Indeed, it can be inferred that "explicit acknowledgements of . . . understanding/ nonunderstanding" (Smith, "Computer-Mediated" 52) are an important element in VEs of this nature. Audio-visual SCMC, as previously mentioned by Smith, presents a slower manner of communication compared to face-to-face interaction ("Computer-Mediated"; "The Relationship between Negotiated"). Hence, the need for confirmation at the end of a NoM episode is significant in the results of this study.

(1) *<SPA4> In Spain is also… I think it's only in <pointing to the ceiling>… In the UK. <Use of gesture> (Content. Attended. Resolved)*
<JAP5> UK? <Clarification request>
<SPA4> In Spain we don't have it. <Reformulation>
<JAP4> **Ah, ok. <looks left> <Confirmation>**

(2) *<SPA6> Yeah, so, in Spain also many people believe that if you open an umbrella <as if she was doing so>, that would bring you bad luck as well. <Use of gesture> (Content. Attended. Resolved)*
<SPA5> But inside the house or in… [Somewhere.]
<SPA6> [Inside the house yeah]
<JAP7> Umbrella? <Clarification request>
<SPA6> Umbrella? <like holding an umbrella>. To protect yourself from the rain. <Use of gesture>
<JAP7> **Yeah yeah. <Confirmation>**
<JAP6> **Hmm… <nods> <Confirmation>**

These same arguments could also be applied to the third most employed strategy in these interactions-comprehension checks. Due to technical issues and other constraints of communication in VEs, comprehension checks may be used with more frequency than in face-to-face communication contexts. Following Lee, comprehension checks are among the most recurrent strategies ("Online Interaction" 238). However, clarification requests were used in a higher number of instances in Lee's study. The reason for the lower number of comprehension checks in her study may be the fact that Lee considered comprehension checks and confirmation checks as two different strategies. Nevertheless, in this corpus it was observed that comprehension checks carried out both functions: confirmation of understanding (as in Example 3) and indication of understanding achievement (see Example 4):

(3) *<JAP1> And people with <points to her ear> large earlobes become rich. (Content. Attended. Resolved)*
<SPA2> People who have yellow? <Clarification request>
<JAP1> Big <touches her ear> earlobes. <Reformulation>
<SPA2> Ah, big earlobes. <Acceptance>
<SPA1> ***[Big <points to his ear> earlobes?] <Comprehension check>***
<JAP1> [Become rich]. Yeah. Become rich. <Repetition>

(4) *<SPA3> And we think that it is because, uhm, the mirror kind of represents the soul <hands on chest>, like, your bad soul. (Content. Attended. Resolved)*
<JAP5> Sorry? <closer to the screen and separating his headphone from his ear> <Repetition request>

<SPA3> Your bad soul, like you bad side <laughs> <Repetition and explanation> <JAP5> <laughs>
<SPA3> You know? Like, you look at the mirror <as of holding a mirror> it's like you see your soul. <Explanation>
<JAP5> Ok. <Confirmation>
<JAP4> Ok. <Confirmation>
<SPA3> **Ok?** *[So] breaking a mirror, it's like breaking your soul.* **Does that make sense? <Comprehension check and explanation>**
<JAP4> [Ok.]

Additionally, the results show clarification requests as one of the most used strategies. It is the most resorted to when it comes to the explicit indication of a trigger in the conversation, i.e. on those occasions in which a participant verbalised that they need assistance from their peers. Examples of clarification requests are more frequent in the corpus than those of repetition requests (when students ask their peers to repeat an utterance), even though these strategies present various similarities. This could be explained by the fact that clarification requests (in Example 5) require less linguistic elaboration in comparison to repetition requests (in Example 6), hence, allowing students to economise in linguistic terms:

(5) *<JAP6> <chuckles> Thank you. <silence>. Spanish is very difficult, ahh, I learn Spanish a little in college, but very difficult. <smiles> (Content. Attended. Resolved) <SPA6>* **The language? <Clarification request>**
<JAP6> Ah, yes, Spanish language. <Acceptance>
<SPA6> Ok, yeah. <nods and smiles> <Confirmation>

(6) *<SPA3> Uhm… and we haven't really talked about us. <pointing to the screen and then to herself> Like… Where about in Japan do you live? (Content. Attended. Resolved)*
<JAP5> Sorry <unintelligible> **Sorry <chuckles>, say it again please. <Repetition request>**
<SPA3> Where about in Japan do you live? <Repetition>
<JAP5> Ah, where? Where our live? <Comprehension check>
<SPA3> Yeah like, East, North, South, yeah <pointing>
<JAP5> Uhmm I live in… middle? <hands> Middle of Japan. Middle.

Reformulations and repetitions in the corpus were the most used to refer to the trigger in a direct manner. While reformulations require the speaker to resort to synonyms or paraphrasing, students only need to reproduce the same utterance once again when using repetition. Despite this, in this case, both strategies present very similar instances in the corpus:

(7) *<SPA2> Is it common there to believe in ghosts? <Topic shift> (Indicator and trigger. Content. Attended. Resolved)*
<JAP1> Uh? <Clarification request>
<SPA2> Is it common there? <Repetition>
<SPA1> **Do people believe in… in ghosts there? Generally. <Reformulation>** *<JAP1> Genera—… Uh… <looks left>*
<SPA2> No?
<JAP1> No.

(8) *<SPA3> And what other things bring bad luck or good luck in Japan? (Content. Attended. Resolved)*
<JAP5> <close to the screen> What? Please… <Repetition request>
<SPA3> <louder> **What other things bring bad luck or [good] luck in Japan? <chuckles> <Repetition>**
<JAP5> [Ok.] Ok. Ok, I got it. Ah…

Respecting gestures, they were used by students to illustrate an idea that they could not express through verbal cues or linguistic resources. Hence, the results suggest that these are an intrinsic element of online audiovisual interaction, in contrast to previous research aimed at online written interaction (Lee, "Online Interaction"; Smith, "Computer-Mediated"; "The Relationship between Negotiated").

(9) *<SPA1> <nods> Ok. <Confirmation> And… What about the <points to the screen> horseshoe? The next picture. (Content. Attended. Resolved)*
. . .
<JAP1> Ah, I don't <nods> know.
<SPA1> No? It's the… What a… a horse - *shoe, actually is self-explanatory, it's, eh, it's when, you know* **<hand imitating the hoof of a horse>** *when the, the… <Use of gesture>*

<JAP1> Yeah, ok. <smiles> <Confirmation>
<SPA1> [The horse leg is like… you put it] under, under… **<as if placing a shoe on a horse's hoof>** *feet? <Use of gesture>*
<JAP1> **[<as if placing a shoe on a horse's hoof>]** *Ok, ok. <Use of gesture and confirmation>*

As for self-correction and peer correction, some instances were found in the corpus, and they took place in a similar number of instances. It is crucial to point out that self-correction implies a more complex process of self-awareness than peer correction. In the words of Kormos, self-corrections are considered "overt manifestations of the monitoring process" (123). Either way, both strategies are types of explicit correction, which are triggered by more complex cognitive processes than other strategies listed in this study. This may be the reason why most instances of corrections were found in participants with higher proficiency levels, as will be presented in further detail when discussing RQ2 and RQ3. Moreover, according to ELF literature, students may not resort to peer correction in order to avoid face-threatening situations (Firth; Beuter), which may suggest that students in the corpus used other strategies to save their listener's face. However, in line with Bower and Kawaguchi (61) and Clavel-Arroitia ("Analysis of Telecollaborative" 105), examples of both self-correction and peer correction are scarce in these interactions.

(10) *<JAP5> Sorry… Ah!* **Thirteen on Friday (Linguistic. Attended. Resolved)** *<tilts head>*
<SPA4> On Friday… ah! Yes, yes, yes thirteen <looks up>
<SPA3> Yeah, yeah
<SPA3> **Friday thirteenth <nods> <Peer correction>**
<SPA4> Yes, yes

(11) <SPA1> *<chuckles> Well some of them, ah,* **doesn't *exist*** *there right? (Linguistic. Attended. Resolved)* **Don't exist. <Self-correction>**

The results hereby presented, hence, provide an answer to RQ1 (*Which resolution strategies were used the most?*). Indeed, confirmation was the most used strategy. Other recurrent strategies in the corpus are clarification requests, comprehension checks, reformulation, repetition, and use of gestures.

Nevertheless, these portray no clear diversity between each interaction in the study. For this reason, and to answer RQ2 (*Are there any differences in the use of resolution strategies between work groups?*), the strategies found in each interaction are presented in Table 2 hereunder:

Table 2. Results for the number of resolution strategies on each interaction

	Group 5	**Group 8**	**Group 9**
Comprehension check	23	33	27
Clarification request	45	19	47
Repetition request	4	6	22
Repetition	23	23	14
Reformulation	31	13	30
Acceptance	13	6	16
Confirmation	35	42	36
Asking a peer	1	2	3
Asking a teacher	1	0	0
Topic shift	9	2	0
Peer correction	9	7	4
Self-correction	14	2	10
Code switching	1	11	3
Explanation	4	12	9
Change of mode	7	5	5
Tolerance of ambiguity	2	0	1
Use of gesture	11	15	27
Total strategies	**233**	**198**	**254**

Source: Prepared by the author.

It can be inferred, thus, that each group of peers made use of resolution strategies in a similar manner, although some differences were not perceivable in the previous general results. Consequently, the use of strategies may be subject to different variants that will be commented on throughout this section.

One of the main differences noticed in these results is related to the use of clarification requests. While groups 5 and 9 made use of this strategy in a similar number of cases, group 8 presents fewer examples of it. The

reason for this could be explained by looking at the instances of code switching in this group. Even though, agreeing with Clavel-Arroitia's results ("Analysis of Telecollaborative" 110), there is generally a low frequency of code switching in comparison to other strategies, the instances in this group were a lot higher than in the rest. In this interaction, the Japanese participants made use of their L1 in order to solve certain communicative issues, which led to fewer chances for negotiation with the Spanish students.

Another significant difference is concerned with the use of self-corrections, since group 8 presented fewer examples of this strategy than the other groups. One reason for this could be the proficiency level of the participants, as presented in previous sections. The same explanation could be applied to reformulations, since students in Group 8 produced more instances of repetitions instead. Moreover, the instances of repetition requests are higher in Group 9, which presented higher proficiency levels and higher linguistic production. As stated above, repetition requests require higher linguistic production processes and longer utterances, so it is expected to be used in groups where students' language competence is higher.

Lastly, it is crucial to point out the presence of the strategies proper from communicative episodes in online audio-visual environments. Firstly, it can be concluded that confirmations were present very frequently in all three interactions, making it clear once again that this strategy is crucial in VEs of this nature. Another aspect worth mentioning at this point has to do with the use of gestures. The interaction which presents a higher number of gestures is that of Group 9, which is also the longest (one hour and 47 minutes). Moreover, the utterance production in this interaction was more elaborate and complex due precisely to their higher proficiency level. Nevertheless, students in Group 5 did not make use of gestures as much as their other peers. The reason for this may be the fact that students attempted to resort to their linguistic knowledge to solve the problems that arose. Thus, students avoided gestures unless it was strictly necessary by making use of self-corrections, repetition, and reformulations instead.

Having looked at the results corresponding to each interaction, it can be stated that the use of resolution strategies can be different depending on certain variables, including proficiency levels, students' participation, the participants' group dynamics, and even the students' predisposition towards the activity.

There is one more aspect that needs further study, and that is related to the cultural background of the participants (RQ3: *Are there any differences in the use of resolution strategies between cultural groups?*). Hence, Table 3 presents the strategies used by both Japanese and Spanish students from each group:

Table 3: Results for the number of resolution strategies on each cultural group

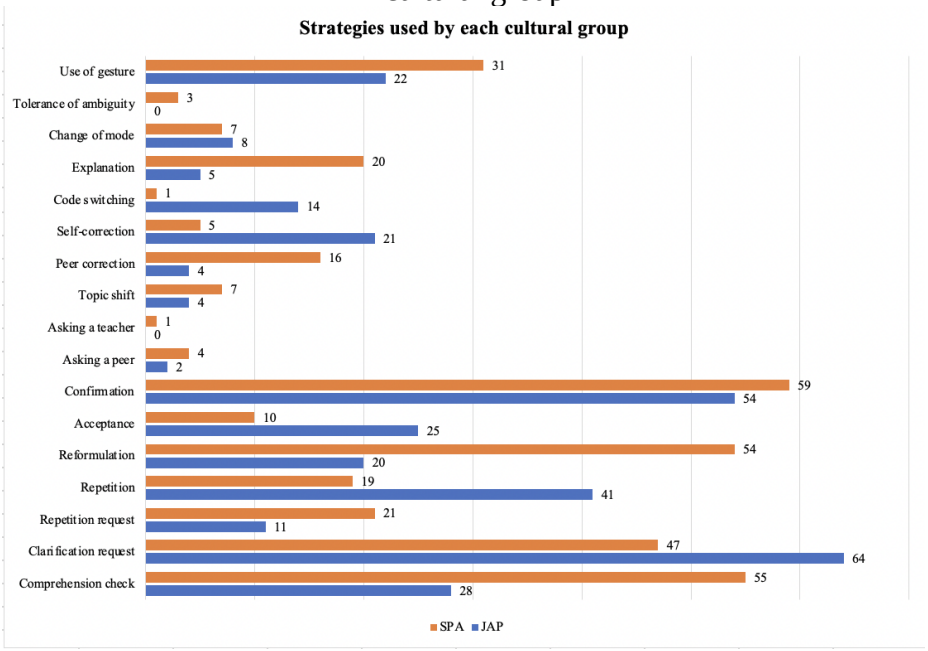
Strategies	**JAP Group 5**	**JAP Group 8**	**JAP Group 9**	***All JAP***	**SPA Group 5**	**SPA Group 8**	**SPA Group 9**	***All SPA***
Comprehension check	4	12	12	**28**	19	21	15	**55**
Clarification request	16	13	35	**64**	29	6	12	**47**
Repetition request	0	5	6	**11**	4	1	16	**21**
Repetition	14	17	10	**41**	9	6	4	**19**
Reformulation	9	3	8	**20**	22	10	22	**54**
Acceptance	10	4	11	**25**	3	2	5	**10**
Confirmation	12	28	14	**54**	23	14	22	**59**
Asking a peer	0	0	2	**2**	1	2	1	**4**
Asking a teacher	0	0	0	**0**	1	0	0	**1**
Topic shift	3	1	0	**4**	6	1	0	**7**
Peer correction	2	2	0	**4**	7	5	4	**16**
Self-correction	12	1	8	**21**	2	1	2	**5**
Code switching	1	11	2	**14**	0	0	1	**1**
Explanation	0	3	2	**5**	4	9	7	**20**
Change of mode	5	2	1	**8**	0*	3	4	**7**
Tolerance of ambiguity	0	0	0	**0**	2	0	1	**3**
Use of gesture	6	6	10	**22**	5	9	17	**31**

Source: Prepared by the author.
*The other two changes of mode found in the exchange were carried out by a teacher

Even though there are certain differences between same-culture peers in all three groups, this section will only point out some of the most relevant results from a general perspective due to space constraints. Therefore, Fig. 2 below presents a general overview of the most and least

used resolution strategies by both Japanese and Spanish students in all three interactions:

Fig. 2: Summarised results for the number of resolution strategies in each cultural group



Source: Prepared by the author.

Despite the slight difference in numbers, the most used strategy is not the same for both cultural groups. In the case of Japanese students, clarification requests present the highest number of instances. Spanish students used more confirmations instead. This may be related to the role of students in the interactions. Probably due to their higher proficiency level or even cultural behaviours, Spanish students seemed to direct the interactions in all three cases. Since the function of confirmations is to close the NoM episodes, it may be possible that Spanish students took the lead of the conversation in most cases and decided when a NoM episode was supposed to be finished, as reflected in Example 12:

(12) <*SPA1*> *Oh, really?*
<*JAP1 chuckles*>

<SPA1> All of them? [Always?]
<JAP1> [Uhm…] <nods> Always, yeah.
<SPA1 chuckles>
<SPA2> Ok.
<SPA1> That's interest—. Pretty interesting actually. Uhm… So, can you go to the next page?
<JAP1> Ok.
<SPA1> So, uhm, actually, can you read it? Any of you.

In terms of trigger indication, as pointed out above, higher proficiency students are expected to use more repetition requests than their peers, and that is the case for Spanish students. Nonetheless, it must be pointed out that both cultural groups made use of clarification requests on more occasions, even though Japanese students presented more examples. Precisely due to the linguistic economisation that clarification requests provide, students may feel the NoM episodes are closed in a more straight-to-the-point manner than by using repetition requests.

Another noticeable difference that may be dependent on language proficiency is concerned with the use of repetition and reformulation as a resolution strategy in the corpus. As reflected by the results, Japanese students made use of repetitions more often, while Spanish students resorted to reformulation on most occasions. Since reformulations require higher levels of linguistic variation and richness, it can be inferred that Spanish students, who were advanced English learners, produced these utterance modifications more often. This same argument may apply to the use of explanations, which are also higher in the case of Spanish participants. Additionally, another reason may be the fact that more advanced learners (the Spanish students in this case) could be more prone to accommodate their peers and adapt their utterances, especially if a communicative breakdown occurs.

Even though L2 proficiency was expected to influence the use of peer correction and self-correction too, the results reflect a very different situation. Peer correction is used by Spanish students in a higher number of situations, while self-correction is mostly used by Japanese students. There may be certain reasons for this phenomenon. The first one is the fact that Spanish students made fewer mistakes than Japanese students, therefore having less chances to correct themselves. Another feasible explanation could be that Japanese students may be less prompt to correct their peers to avoid face-threatening situations or save their peer's face

(Brown and Levinson). Another reason may be related to the Japanese students' predisposition to solve the triggers through their linguistic resources. This affirmation, however, does not mean that students were always successful at correcting their own mistakes. Since this study is not focused on effectivity, but rather on frequency, it may be the case that some of the most used strategies are not necessarily the most effective ones in terms of trigger resolution. As reflected in Example 13 below, JAP6 attempts to self-correct, although unsuccessfully:

(13) *<SPA5> Do you know why does it bring bad luck in Japan a black cat? <Reformulation> (Response and trigger. Linguistic. Unattended)*
<JAP6> Ah… <Confirmation> Maybe in Japan **black is death mean***… (Linguistic. Attended. Unresolved) Black has mean… uhmmm… black has mean…* **bad means***. <Self-correction> For example, uhmm… <unintelligible> uhmm… <chuckles>… I don't know well, but has bad mean <Linguistic. Unattended> in Japan.*

Lastly, there is one more finding worth mentioning—the presence of tolerance of ambiguity and topic shifts in Spanish students' moves. The former takes place when students, after discussing a problematic utterance, decide to cease their attempt of solving the communicative issue. Topic shifts, on the contrary, require students to change the topic of conversation in order, for instance, to avoid further misunderstandings. Even though these strategies were not used very often, there is a clear tendency which indicates that Spanish students used them on more occasions, although in all of them they led to the irresolution of the breakdowns. The vast majority of the examples found in the corpus present a characteristic very much related to cultural differences in communication dynamics. According to Akiyama, Japanese students are expected to recur to silence more often than students from other cultures, since "the Japanese read meaning into silences and make decisions based on them" (192). Hence, Spanish students, which may not understand this cultural difference, may be urged to fill the silence with further questions or, in other cases, to just direct the focus of the conversation to another topic.

(14) *<SPA2> Do you have those kinds of fortune tellers? (Content. Attended. Unresolved)*

<SPA2> Ok.
((pause))
<SPA1> Ok, what about hypnosis? <Topic shift>
<JAP3> Hypnosis…

CONCLUSIONS

The purpose of this article was to trace the most used resolution strategies in three audio-visual VEs between Spanish and Japanese university students. Hence, the results and subsequent discussion have pointed out the relevance of confirmations in the corpus, in concordance with Smith ("Computer-Mediated"; "The Relationship between Negotiated"). Moreover, despite the similar number of instances of repetitions and reformulations found in the general results, further data has revealed that certain work groups, and especially Spanish students, made use of reformulations on more occasions. This fact, together with other strategies such as peer correction, imply the relevance of one variable that needs to be considered when studying interaction in language learners: L2 proficiency. This aspect may not only affect the language production or lexical richness of students, but also the role assumed by them in the interactive process. It must also be pointed out that gestures and changes of mode were present in the corpus, while these strategies cannot be found in written SCMC for instance. It has also been suggested in the results that the cultures participating in the exchanges may play a crucial role when it comes to the use of certain strategies.

Even though the study has meant to amplify the results extracted from a previous analysis, there are some limitations which could be addressed in future research. One of the limitations of this study is related to the size of the corpus analysed, consisting of three interactions. Delving into all the interactions carried out in this partnership could provide deeper insights into the corpus and even reconfirm the results presented in this paper. Moreover, there are some individual differences between the participants' use of certain strategies that could not be dealt with in this article. More detailed discussions on interactive processes and both individual and cultural differences may help scholars to further understand the complex process of interaction.

As the results and conclusions obtained from this study suggest, further research concerning intercultural learners' interaction and NoM processes is needed, especially in terms of methodological aspects. Future

projects may shed light on the multiple variables and factors that play a role in trigger resolution on VEs and students' interaction.

Apart from the necessity to further explore variables in intercultural learners' interaction, an interesting aspect which could be studied is the effectiveness of these resolution strategies in VEs, since this could allow teachers and practitioners to have adequate tools to promote NoM episode resolution in the classroom. Moreover, NoM episodes need to be further analysed precisely because of the multiple benefits and opportunities that they offer in the L2 learning process.

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"The Voice of the Sea Speaks to the Soul": Voicing Silence in Kate Chopin's *The Awakening* and in Rebecca Migdal's Graphic Adaptation

"La voz del mar se comunica con el alma": Dando voz al silencio en *The Awakening* de Kate Chopin y en la adaptación gráfica de Rebecca Migdal

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Abstract: This article examines Kate Chopin's second novel, *The Awakening*, in conjunction with a graphic novel of this work developed by Rebecca Migdal in *The Graphic Canon, Vol. 3* and aims to study the use of silences in Chopin's novel and the graphic version. This analysis examines non-linguistic communication presented in Chopin's novel in the figure of her literary alter ego, Edna Pontellier. The methodological framework of this investigation draws on intermedial semiotics with the aim of discussing the use of the literary resource of silence as a visual communicating device in Chopin's cornerstone of feminist literature *The Awakening*.
Keywords: Kate Chopin; *The Awakening*; silence; feminist literature; graphic novel.
Summary: Introduction: from the unfair price of speaking to the precious prize of a voice. Visual words and verbal silences: Chopin's heroine in *The Awakening* and the graphic novel. Conclusions: from imposed silence into introspection.

Resumen: Este artículo se centra en la segunda novela de Kate Chopin, *The Awakening*, en relación con una novela gráfica de este trabajo desarrollada por Rebecca Migdal en *The Graphic Canon, vol. 3* con el fin de estudiar el uso de los silencios en la novela y en la versión gráfica. Este análisis examina la comunicación no lingüística en la figura del alter ego literario de Chopin, Edna Pontellier. El marco metodológico se basa en la semiótica intermedial para investigar el uso del recurso literario del silencio como mecanismo de comunicación visual en la novela de Chopin *The Awakening*.

Palabras clave: Kate Chopin; *The Awakening*; silencios; literatura feminista; novela gráfica.
Sumario: Introducción: del injusto precio de hablar al precioso premio de la voz. Palabras visuales y silencios verbales: la heroína de Chopin en *The Awakening* y en la novela gráfica. Conclusiones: del silencio impuesto a la introspección.

1. Introduction: From the Unfair Price of Speaking to the Precious Prize of a Voice

> In a world where language and naming are power, silence is oppression, is violence. (Adrienne Rich, *On Lies, Secrets, and Silence: Selected Prose, 1966–1978* 204)

Women were long neglected in societies up until some voices were raised such as John Stuart Mill in his essay from 1869: *The Subjection of Women*. Women had their spaces banished from the public sphere, a tendency that was radically defied by the movement of the "New Woman" and which found in literature its battle horse. The term "New Woman" was coined by the Irish feminist author and Woman Writer's Suffrage League activist Sarah Grand (1854–1943) to refer to the women who "were awaking from their long apathy, and, as they awoke . . . began to whimper for they knew not what . . . [and who] might have been easily satisfied at that time had not society . . . shaken them and beaten them" (660–61). These "new women" sought equality of rights mainly through the control of their own bodies and, the sexual side of the marriage contract, which they perceived as terribly asphyxiating. Literature has been a most powerful reflection for their claims ever since this idea emerged in the late nineteenth century in novels like that which is examined in this study, the masterpiece of feminist narrative *The Awakening* by Kate Chopin (*née* Katherine O'Flaherty, 1850–1904).

This second novel in her literary production was not well-received by critics, who found in its protagonist, the young wife and mother Edna, a dangerous mixture of female emancipation and a challenge to their patriarchal stability. With her female main character, this American novelist and writer of short stories takes readers through a voyage along Edna's first steps into the world upon her epiphanic awakening to the sensuality of life. In her study on the phenomenon of synaesthesia as manifested in this novel, Eulalia Piñero Gil explores the affordances of the aural channel and its evocative potential for the woman-artists in *The*

Awakening; "when words cannot express a mode of perception, arts such as music or painting can liberate humans from the prison of language" (120). Chopin's subtle style knits an earthly paradise in the exotic landscape of Grand Isle where Edna first becomes familiar with the tender murmur of the Louisiana Gulf coast in a spiritual watery baptism and ensuing metaphorical rebirth.

The delicate narrative of this novel embarks readers on a trip of discovery of Edna's self in a cathartic manner through the maze of the inner alleys of her mind. Chopin permeates this narrative with a remarkable load of information which is expressed through the silence of its protagonist. One of the most characteristic signs of the New Woman in literature (such as in Charlotte Brontë's *Shirley* or Ibsen's *A Doll's House*), was her outspoken character regarding taboo topics such as sex and passion (adultery, as in the case of Edna) in order to attain full liberation from the male-dominated society that relegated them to the role of second-class citizens. Interestingly, this book opens not with an image, but with a sound: the voice of a parrot who verbalizes the protagonist's thoughts casting out strangers: "Allez vous-en! Allez vous-en! Sapristi" (1) (*Go away! Go away! Sapristi*). The initial image in the novel is not the woman's voice, but a parrot's, thus deferring the emergence of Edna's voice both literally and metaphorically. Mr. Pontellier's speech (Edna's forty-year-old Creole husband) precedes that of his wife in the novel as he addresses her "as one looks at a valuable piece of personal property which has suffered some damage" (4). Although verbally engaging, this first encounter with the Pontelliers bespeaks a clear (verbal) dominance on the part of the man as a subject and a visibly passive role on the part of his submissive wife, at least in the beginning.

This article examines the representation of silences in Chopin's narrative from an intermedial lens mediated by a modern comic adaptation of this book. The female emancipation that women have gained with the passing of time has, nonetheless, not meant their immediate visibility in Western societies. This fact makes it crucial to examine the semiotic use of silences in literature in different media (written and visual formats) in order to study how a physical awakening is reached by struggling with silences. The writer and graphic artist Rebecca Migdal has produced a twelve-page graphic novel reading Chopin's novel published in *The Graphic Canon Vol. 3: From Heart of Darkness to Hemingway to Infinite Jest* and edited by Russ Kick. Migdal's comics have been presented in

different exhibits from museums to bookstores to galleries such as "Exit Art" in New York City.

The Canadian critic and writer Linda Hutcheon points out in *A Theory of Adaptation* the scholarly disapproval experienced by modern popular adaptations (2). Hutcheon claims that a "transmutation or transcoding" is required when a change of medium and code are involved in a process of adaptation (16), as in the case of a written novel turned into a graphic work. As the comics critic Thierry Groensteen states in *The System of Comics*, readers of graphic novels inevitably gaze from one side of the comic page to another more randomly than classical readers do (47). In the theoretical framework that allows for the comparative analysis of a graphic adaptation of a work of literature, balloons are the visual elements which capture readers' attention (Groensteen 79), since they carry the written mode that readers are more familiar with.

In her study "Intermedial Metarepresentations," the Estonian semiotician Marina Grishakova discusses the different meanings that a work of literature acquires depending on its medium and the semiotic potential of both the support and the work. Grishakova develops a theory of intermedial texts based on the two main communication modes: the visual and the verbal. In her analysis, she differentiates between metaverbal texts, which examine "the incomplete nature of the verbal medium by probing the limits of verbal representations" (315) and metavisual texts, in connection with the "incomplete nature of the visual representation by juxtaposing image with verbal message and revealing their discrepancy" (315). The scenes from *The Awakening* examined in this article analyze the ways in which Edna resorts to silence for an answer, a gateway from internal or external trouble, or simply to turn to her inward eye for understanding (e.g., the splash page or introductory page and the last panels in Midgal's graphic adaptation examined in the following section).

The intermedial perspective of this study enables a contemporary and broader reading of this novel from the combinatory use of the written and the visual modes; as Silvia Adler claims in relation to this form of literature: "we could place comics, and graphic novels as a particular case, somewhere in the middle in the sense that both the verbal and the visual (non verbal) channels are equally important to meaning processing" (2284). This article explores the silent voices and the silenced internal speech that this female protagonist is not allowed to verbalize. In considering the issue of women's expression of their thoughts and feelings,

Adrienne Rich poses the following question which this article will examine from an intermedial lens: "*[w]hat kind of voice is breaking silence, and what kind of silence is being broken?*" (italics in the original; *Arts of the Possible* 322). Rich asks this question in the context of a woman poet (herself) who wonders about the potential topics for her literary creation; similarly, in *The Awakening* Chopin deals with the long-sustained norm of silence imposed on women for the sake of male command over their female companions.

2. VISUAL WORDS AND VERBAL SILENCES: CHOPIN'S HEROINE IN *THE AWAKENING* AND THE GRAPHIC NOVEL

Silence is certainly an auditory means of communicating without words, as Adam Jaworski agrees in *The Power of Silence* (151). Jaworski claims that silence can also be rendered visually in the graphic medium which is characterized in this iconic means of communication as having "minimal internal contrast" among the elements that give form to it (142). Thus, Edna reacts speechlessly when she finds herself abandoned to the delicious odor of the night after her first awakening bath: "[n]o multitude of words could have been more significant than those moments of silence, or more pregnant with the first-felt throbbings of desire" (Chopin 77). After that her husband, Léonce, instructs her to come into the house. Fig. 1 below corresponds to that moment, and in the comic we notice the semiotic significance of the linguistic utterances devoted to Edna and to the two men in the scene: her lover, Robert, and her husband. Fig. 1 shows four speech bubbles in Edna's conversation with Robert Lebrun, and six speech bubbles for him; in her husband's exchange, Edna has only one speech bubble and Mr. Pontellier, two, which shows in visual terms the men's social power over her, based solely on gender constructs.

Fig. 1. *The Awakening* (Migdal 18)

The resources that Chopin puts at play aim to replace Edna's silences with a most vivid scene with only the voices of some bathers and her silence full of the satisfaction of liberation—albeit tentative. In the first panels of the graphic novel seen in Fig. 1 above, Migdal draws this moving moment of intense secrecy between the lovers. The small speech bubbles in the panels on Fig. 1 account for the outweighing load of the visual

medium. Edna is comfortable here until her husband commands her to enter the cottage. The panels that Migdal depicts in this page all have homogeneous proportions and their size is average, which the celebrated scholar Will Eisner interprets from a semiotic intermedial lens as steadiness in the narrative pace (32). Another relevant scene is her first bath in the sea, when she feels the smooth and calming murmur of the sea despite her initial fear to become lost in the dark waters of the Gulf. Panels three, four and five in Fig. 2 (on the next page) show Edna as she penetrates the deep waters. There is a visible difference in the form and size of these three middle panels and the panels that surround them on that page. These three panels attract the observers' attention as they are placed in the center of the page, and they disrupt the visual narrative rhythm of the rest of the page. As Eisner states, this kind of panel: "create[s] a crowded feeling [in order to] enhance the rising tempo of panic" (33), the same excitement that this awakening New Woman felt when she swam in the sea for the first time.

It is worth noting that Edna's inability to raise her voice and speak her mind when she is scolded by Léonce Pontellier for neglecting their children derives (to a large extent) from her inability to make sense of her submissive situation as a woman. As this analysis of verbal and visual silences examines, the protagonist in *The Awakening* moves from a male-imposed silence on women to a feminist adoption of this resource by Edna as the ultimate form of expression left for her in her sociocultural milieu (although Chopin did not regard herself as a feminist). This process of self-realization is progressive and steady throughout the novel, demonstrating that silence may also be read as "a state in which one gains knowledge [i.e., when Edna admits the only way out from her society], or it may be a state of idle ignorance, or unlearning [i.e., her incomprehension concerning her unfavorable marital situation]" (Jaworski 69). This way, after being scolded for not taking proper care of her children, Edna starts to sob frantically and the narrator informs us that "she could not have told why she was crying" (Chopin 14) although "[s]uch experiences as the foregoing were not uncommon in her married life" (14). As Catherine Adamowicz argues, she does not realize at first why she obeys her husband so compliantly, a silence that was, as this critic agrees, characteristic of—and expected from—the southern lady stereotype she was bound to live by (39). The internal struggle of this literary alter ego of Chopin stems from the sheer clash between her view of female life—and sought-after liberation from patriarchal control—and the gender roles and impositions

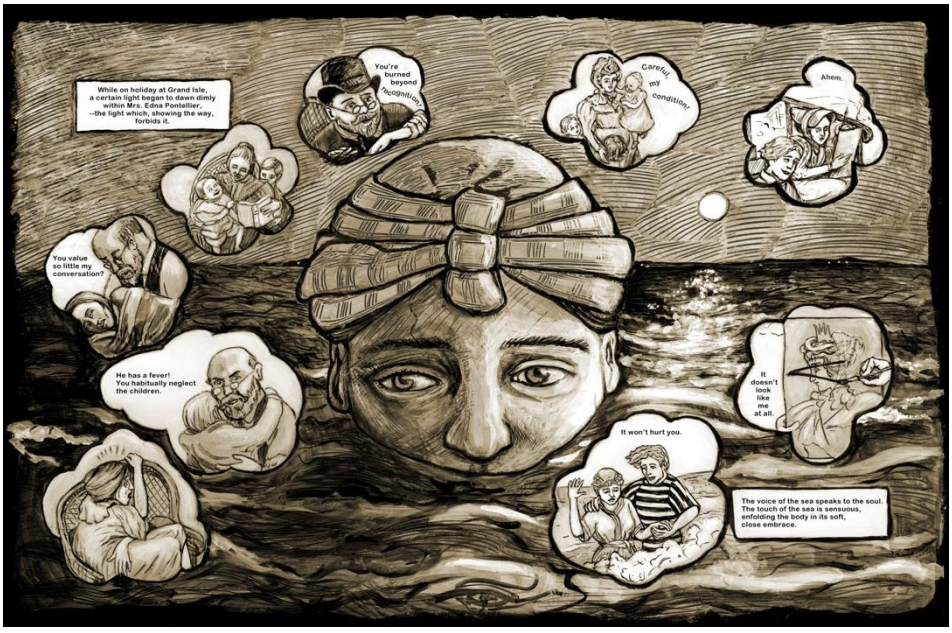
that women had to conform to in Louisiana's middle-upper groups at the turn of the twentieth century (Adamowicz 38). Chopin was, in effect and with all her strength, challenging the image of the southern lady (Adamowicz 52) as a compliant angel in the house.[1]

Fig. 2. *The Awakening* (Migdal 17)

[1] The notion of the "angel in the house" is a term coined in 1854 by the English poet and critic Coventry Patmore in his homonymous narrative poem.

The main reason is that it offers a view of its protagonist from within (Huck 204) in the manner of the insightful novels of Henry James, Virginia Woolf and James Joyce. If "'to see' means 'to know' and thus to verbalize" (Grishakova 323), in several moments Edna avoids speaking as if she has to justify her decision or explain it to anyone (knowing that no one would listen to her), so she turns the former silence of oppression into an empowering inward strategy to move towards self-fulfillment. Fig. 3 represents the splash page, and it uses thought bubbles to depict the unuttered thoughts of its protagonist. This silent macro-panel does not provide a temporal framework, whose wordless quality endows her thoughts with a sort of timelessness in line with the scholar Scott McCloud's ideas on the visual representation of time in comics: "when the content of a silent panel offers no clues as of its duration, it can also produce a sense of timelessness" (102).

Fig. 3. *The Awakening* (Migdal 14–15)



But silence is not always presented in this novel as a representation of Edna's lack of knowledge or inability to see or speak. Hence, early in the novel (chapter two) readers become aware of the difference between male silences and their female analogues in the conversation between this young

lady and her lover, Robert Lebrun, using speech as its active counterpart to show the visible-invisible dichotomy: "Robert talked a good deal about himself. He was very young, and did not know any better. Edna talked a little about herself for the same reason" (Chopin 8). Chapter one shows only one verbal utterance from Edna, and it is addressed to Mr. Pontellier. Chapter two opens with a description of this woman by the narrator (7), and the only direct speech we receive from her is, again, about her husband, regretting that he would probably come back home late that night (10). The third chapter does not devote any direct speech from this character to herself, either; here we can only read a few lines where she celebrates the wedding gifts they would buy for her sister Janet with the money that Léonce had made that night at Klein's hotel (16). Silences are, for Edna, a haven with no place; when she breaks them in the first chapters of the story, her words are devoted to her husband in order to detach the focus of attention from herself.

There is not a single reference to herself in any of the direct speech manifestations that we find in the first three chapters of the novel: she is either talking about her husband or a member of her family. Not all silences stem from the same causes; hence, not every wordless utterance has the same implications. In the case of women, we must distinguish between female silence "as a sign of their submission and the silence of women as a reaction to their ambiguous (taboo) status" (Jaworski 126). Edna conveys both sides: she is both subjected to her husband (she has no voice of her own until later) and struggles to find her inner voice while being part of a society that relegates her to a secondary individual. Yi Chen identifies in the study "The Silent Majority: The Function of Female Characters in *The Awakening*" the role of women of color as the case of the Pontelliers' quadroon, whom, as this scholar declares, are the "silent majority" and foils to Edna (108) who are thrice subjugated in virtue of their "(taboo) status" (Jaworski 126) as women, dark-skinned, and working under the orders of their masters. The panels in Fig. 4 correspond to the first three chapters of this novel. In all five panels Edna is presented in a submissive manner: with her head mildly leaning, in silent contemplation of her husband and Robert, or in quiet meditation in the lower panel of the page. A reading of her behavior from the proxemics lens reinforces this claim: Edna is depicted both by Chopin and by Migdal in a wordless, passive attitude that bespeaks her initial state of ignorance as regards the reason why she could not speak out her mind (Adamowicz 39).

Fig. 4. *The Awakening* (Migdal 16)

Only when she is surrounded by the art of dance (bottom left panel) is she kinesthetically active, performing, assuming a leading role in her actions. The bottom panels where she is surrounded by the arts of dance and music are "bleed" panels; they extend the images contained in them outside the frames that contain them. As Scott McCloud claims, this iconographic mechanism represents the timelessness of the scene depicted in it, and its temporal infiniteness (103). As McCloud declares in his book

Understanding Comics: The Invisible Art, "comics are just *one* of *many* forms of self-expression and communication available to us" (italics in the original; 162). In line with this affirmation, Migdal's comic represents Edna's speechless presentation at the beginning of the novel. The panels demonstrate that she is only free when she is able to express herself in the language of art, not in words.

The scholar Joseph R. Urgo states that Edna's "story . . . is unacceptable in her culture . . . in order to live in society she has to silence herself . . . [which] she rejects" (23). This is the "social problem" partially identified by the men and male authorities in her family and her society—her father, her husband and Doctor Mandelet. Indeed, she moves from silence to speaking (Urgo 22), and the following instance from the novel illustrates this steady progression towards self-discovery after her lover Robert's escape to Mexico:

> She had all her life long been accustomed to harbor thoughts and emotions which never voiced themselves. They had never taken the form of struggles. They belonged to her and were her own, and she entertained the conviction that she had a right to them and that they concerned no one but herself. (Chopin 121)

Léonce, concerned about his wife's emotional state, visits Doctor Mandelet and talks about her wellbeing in the following terms: "[s]he's got some sort of notion in her head concerning the eternal rights of women" (Chopin 170). He is unable to realize the (psychological) ills that affect Edna as regards her oppression and impossibility to express her feelings. The critic Barbara C. Ewell argues rightly in this sense that we are in front of "a woman whose shaping culture has, in general, refused her right to speak out freely; this is, moreover, a culture that construes a woman's self-expression as a violation of sexual 'purity'" (90).

Her lack of verbalization creates a torrent of emotions which only serve to intensify her passion for Robert Lebrun, Alcée Arobin and Victor Lebrun. As Ewell claims, a lack of linguistic expression of her thoughts triggers her fall in disgrace, given that she is unable to share her distress (90). The life and personality of this young southern lady is narrowly tied to that of her creator. Katherine O'Flaherty also fought to find her own voice in a world that seldom regarded women as anything other than possessions and children-bearers. This writer, as Emily Toth's fine biography *Unveiling Kate Chopin* reads, suffered from "loss of voice"

after the war, which she overcame thanks to the female models she counted on in her schools (34). The opposite process occurs in Edna: she moves from a lost voice to regaining it. She is not a devoted mother and her clearest rejection of the role of "mother-woman" (Chopin 19) is presented at the end of this narrative during Madame Ratignolle's delivery of her fourth child which is described by the protagonist as a "scene of torture" (288).

Edna is represented as a woman that was aware of the life she was leaving behind in accepting to be a wife first, and a mother later. According to Toth, "[s]he became a mother without particularly wanting to be one, and she silenced her own voice" (210). This silencing of her own voice is very much connected with the many instances in this novel in which her protagonist, Edna, is silenced by the pervasive male discourse. A clear example of the male *versus* the female discourse in this narrative is expressed by a male science authority, Dr. Mandelet, who speaks of the "story of the waning of a woman's love, seeking strange, new channels only to return to its legitimate source after days of fierce unrest" (182). In response to this not-too-subtle hint at Edna's love affairs, "[s]he had one of her own [stories] to tell, of a woman who paddled away with her lover one night in a pirogue and never came back" (183).

Metavisual texts account for visual representations which offer a surplus of visual information in the absence of verbal reports. The graphic representation of this novel offers an engaging source of metavisual information when Chopin articulates silence at key junctures in the story that is useful in the analysis of silences in both works developed in the present research. Edna slowly removes the blindfold from her eyes so that she feels that she has: "risen in the spiritual [scale]. She began to look with her *own* eyes" (emphasis added; 245) when she manages to live in her "pigeon house." This metavisual excerpt offers an overload of the narrator's voice at the expense of a verbal utterance from Edna expressing her ambiguous feelings in this respect since the metavisual text relies on the "inability to capture the overwhelming complexity of the perceptual world" (Grishakova 322). This is so in Migdal especially because of the inherent inability of a graphic artwork to capture the entirety of a given situation beyond the immediate setting where the action in each panel takes place. Upon learning about her recent acquisition of the pigeon house, Léonce immediately conceives of a plan to "save . . . appearances" (Chopin 245) in front of the public eye, yet Edna "admired the skill of his maneuver, and avoided any occasion to balk his intentions" (245). Finely drawn, what

this American writer is presenting here is a silent moral defeat for this proto New Woman developed by her husband to stop people's criticism concerning the abandonment of his wife. This is only a gentle token of the soundless abuse that the patriarchal control enforced and that they had to endure in their roles of mothers, wives and, simply, women.

Another central rite of passage in the life of Edna—besides the musical evening party studied by Piñero Gil in her article (124)—is her last and ultimate bath in the sea. Mercedez L. Schaefer finds in Edna's suicide "her great work of art" (14). She eventually finds her own voice: the voice of the sea, which she welcomes warmly. As Schaefer declares: "The female artists in *The Awakening* . . . seek new ways to express and define themselves; they move within the margins and discover creative outlets to negotiate with language and their own phallogocentric internalizations to form subjectivities outside the traditional sphere of gender roles and expectations" (12). Curiously, the "voice of the sea" changes its tonality depending on Edna's state of mind; from a "whisper . . . through the reeds that grew in the salt-water pools!" (Chopin 91) to being finally "seductive, never ceasing, whispering, clamoring, murmuring, inviting the soul to wander in abysses of solitude" (34, 300) to being "sensuous, enfolding the body in its soft, close embrace" (301). The sea does have a voice, which she longs for, and which only *she* can hear. Fig. 3 and Fig. 7 present this proto-Modernist character in the midst of this element in a calm way, as if she felt at ease with her body submerged in the water.

A central moment in this novel in which Edna lets her frustration loose upon her husband's abusive power over her takes place towards the end of chapter eighteen when, "taking off her wedding ring, [Edna] flung it upon the carpet. When she saw it lying there, she stamped her heel upon it, striving to crush it" (135). This scene develops after her husband reprimands her for not receiving the visits of some of the richest women whose husbands could ensure him a considerable amount of money. She refuses to wait patiently for these visits at home and she reacts to her husband's resentment with the scene quoted before. This scene develops with Edna's verbal silence, and it becomes even more powerful in this context because it is her action and her anger that speak for her. Her anger turns into rage as she tries to get rid of the circle that tied her to the man who found in her little more than a precious possession of his. However, in spite of her fury, "her small boot heel did not make an indenture, not a mark upon the little glittering circlet" (135). This vivid image is more

symbolic than verbal; the words she cannot utter turn her despondency into the evidence that women's efforts to break free from the yoke of the patriarchal institution of marriage were indisputably helpless. Fig. 5 shows Migdal's interpretation of this moment.

Fig. 5. *The Awakening* (Migdal 19)

In the lowest panels of Fig. 5, we can see a succession of stylized, narrow panels that, as examined before in this article, bear, for Eisner, the symbolism of increasing temporal succession of events due to panic (33), or as in this case, of rage. Edna's desire to banish the wedding ring from her life is thwarted by the implied power that this tiny object bears (that is, sustaining an entire system of social order based on male control over women). The bottom left and bottom central panels depict the lady "seiz[ing] a glass vase from the table and flinging it upon the tiles of the hearth [because] [s]he wanted to destroy something. The crash and clatter were what she wanted to hear" (Chopin 135). In the bottom right two last panels of this page, Migdal presents the ring on the floor (upper panel) and her foot (lower panel) in smaller square frames. All four bottom panels lack speech bubbles since, as mentioned earlier on, Edna does not utter a word in this fit of anger, she only acts. Just an upper caption in the bottom left panel provides the narrator's words as if from within Edna's head: she has just learned that Robert is immediately leaving for Mexico and she is trapped in an empty, loveless marriage.

In her semiotic approach to the intermedial rendering of silence in comics, "Silence in the Graphic Novel," Silvia Adler sets forth one more difference in the interpretation of silences: "silence related to the protagonist's voice channel, in one case, and silence of the narrator (who intentionally lets the iconographic level and the implicatures—below the surface—'talk'), in another" (2279). Consequently, in the previous comic page (Fig. 5), which shows Edna's rage and mute acting, the narrator is represented in the comic with an upper caption over Edna's head (bottom left panel). This iconographic depiction of the omniscient narrator in *The Awakening* informs about the pervading presence of this unseen voice and its controlling power over her. Silences in these panels come both from the narrator and from the protagonist (which Chopin manifests as an overload of the narrator's presence at this point). These wordless panels serve as an emphatic device that directs the observers' attention towards the main character and her movements in the graphic novel. The gutter in this comic (the blank space separating the panels) is prominently wide, which operates as a cognitive-emotional resource. Observers and readers "fill in the details that are missing between the frames, but [they] also responds with an intense emotional, intellectual and/or critical reaction to what is not articulated explicitly and therefore restored through [their] own understandings" (Adler 2279). The broad gutters in Fig. 5 and the perfectly framed panels they separate represent the "struggle with the angel [figure

in] nineteenth-century writers" (Paretsky 14) as women well-girded in their domestic, private sphere. The gutters construct a visually arranged graphic discourse that bespeaks order, contrary to the images depicted in them, which disrupt this image.

Edna Pontellier, the pioneering New Woman in this novel, is a noticeably rebellious protagonist, not only for her love affairs with other men but also on account of her intellectually engaging attitude as regards knowledge and books. In a very insightful instance in Chopin's story, we can hear Edna's thoughts mediated by the narrator—thus only partly hers—when her husband leaves the family home to work abroad, and his two children are sent to stay with their grandparents. When she is finally alone in the house, she "breathed a big, genuine sigh of relief. A feeling that was unfamiliar but very delicious came over her" (Chopin 188). That day she played with the children's dog, dined, read Emerson because "[s]he realized that she had neglected her reading, and determined to start anew upon a course of improving" (190) and, after that, she had "a refreshing bath" (190) while "a sense of restfulness invaded her, such as she had not known before" (190). The series of actions that she performs take the form of a domestic ritual of purification of her soul (indulging herself in the pleasure of literature) and of her body, too (the bath she takes are reminiscent of the purifying waters that cleanse the body and soul), indicating her rebirth. In fact, "[t]he story which Edna needs to tell, of course, is the story of her awakening body" (Urgo 28) and her domestic ritual prepares both her mind and her body for her spiritual and bodily awakening (Chen 107). Resuming the persistent distinction that men and women make of silences in view of their unequal access not to linguistic expression, but to an ensuing adequate societal response—to be heard in society—Bobbye D. Sorrels states that "women often have less opportunity than men for the kind of private silence that leads to good thinking and rehabilitating meditation. . . . [Women] do not have that special room or special time that society permits the man to take" (114). In effect, Léonce fits in the mold of the prototypical middle-upper businessman from the late nineteenth century who was fond of his control over everything and everyone around him, an attitude against which his wife rebels.

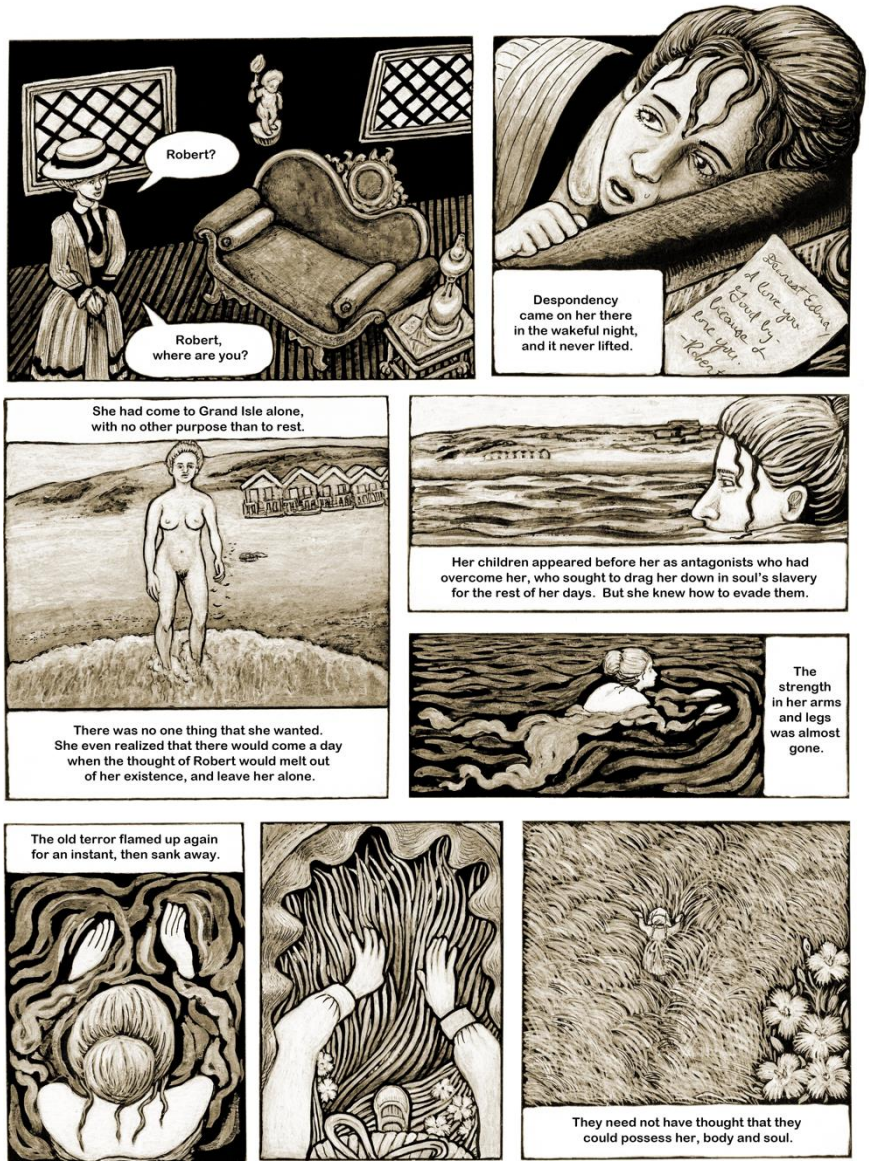
Fig. 6. *The Awakening* (Migdal 20)

No words are mouthed during the previous domestic scene of female liberation in which readers are informed about the steps Edna takes, presenting this character as the object of the narrator's gaze. Fig. 6 has a

lower frame where this narrative scene is visually condensed in a large horizontal panel. In that panel, Edna's image is placed in the middle. This location of the mute character is significant in the sense that we can perceive she is not the speaking subject but the object of the narrator's, readers', and observers' intruding gaze into the privacy of her life. We find now the self-imposing narrative view. This narrator is the subject of vision and Edna, the object of this gaze. The central character is here rendered silent by the narrator, whose overwhelming omniscient gaze pervades this frame. The protagonist directs her eyes at the observer and her bodily language seems to control the panel, an image that opposes her tragic end. However, it would not be completely untrue to say that she is not in command of her actions and her life: in taking action and resolving to free herself by drowning in the water that brought her awakening, Edna is choosing her own path. From this point of view, her suicide is not presented as a surrender but a deliberate choice of her destiny.

The last page of Migdal's adaptation shows the voice of the narrator in the form of captions (see Fig. 7, center and bottom panels) with the dissimilar size of the panels indicating her internal unrest at the act she is about to carry out (Eisner 32–33). Visually, the last three panels of the comic also become steadily larger in size, symbolizing the magnitude of her decision and operating on the perspective moving from a close-up shot of her body diving into the water to a long shot. This movement of visual focalization is mirrored in the novel with the narrator's voice pervading the final scene and Edna's own voice fading into nonexistence (at least in the form of direct speech). The graphic representation shows this progressive distance from her as she returns to her merrier, bygone life, hearing "her father's voice and her sister Margaret's" (Chopin 303), the "hum of bees, and the musky odor of pinks" (303). In this critical moment of her being, Edna retrieves a happier time in her life by resorting to her time in Kentucky in the form of sound (voices) and odor (the flowers) in a vivid portrait of an unrecoverable past. Yet, she does not see herself among these memories, but rather presents them as an external observer would narrate a novel alien to his or her life. The protagonist is slowly detaching herself from everything around her because she notices that she was no more than an observer in her own life, an external being meant to be controlled and cared for by her father, her husband, or her lovers.

Fig. 7. *The Awakening* (Migdal 25)



Edna finally loses herself in the sea, represented as the grassy meadows of her native hometown. This is yet another visual manifestation of timelessness, eternity fusing the past quietly—her childhood memories—with the present time in the sea and the promise of a liberated

future ahead, far from the distant shore at her back; Edna has, in the end, gained enough power and knowledge to design her own journey. We are accustomed to interpreting silence in the form of tacit acceptance of impositions or norms by the subjugated, but as this study demonstrated, the meanings of this device are as varied as its linguistic and literary manifestations. Silence in this novel ends up being Edna's chosen escape from a world where she did not belong. She was the Other, the alien being in a male-controlled society which saw the publication of this novel as a challenge for the upkeep of male supremacy. As Adrienne Rich reminds us:

> If we have learned anything of our coming to language out of silence, it is that what has been kept unspoken, therefore *unspeakable*, in us is what is most threatening in the patriarchal order in which men control, first women, then all who can be defined and exploited as "other." All silence has a meaning. (italics in the original; *On Lies* 308)

Indeed, Edna's silence in her speechless, sad final decision is the outcome of profound reflection upon her life and her position in it. Curiously, if we take a look at the introductory page (Fig. 3) of the graphic adaptation and we compare it with the fourth panel on the right in Fig. 7 we can appreciate that her mouth is the only part of her face that is sunken in the water with the panel stressing her eyes and forehead. If we assume that the mouth is the symbol of speech, its position under the water implies impossibility to speak, silence. This image is repeated at the beginning and at the end of the comic, encompassing the thematic circularity of the novel in relation to the image of Edna's watery awakening because, as she is forced to admit in the end, "[p]erhaps it is better to wake up after all, even to suffer, rather than to remain a dupe to illusions all one's life" (Chopin 292).

A more modern reading of this mechanism of self-expression or rebellion against the norm is presented in Sara Paretsky's book: *Writing in an Age of Silence*. In it, this scholar and writer of science fiction states that "[s]ilence does not mean consent. Silence means death. When we have something to say, and we are afraid to speak, or forbidden to speak, we feel as though we've been walled into a closet" (113) and she further adds in connection with Chopin, "[s]ilence can come from . . . public hysteria, as it did for Kate Chopin" (Paretsky 113). A hysteria triggered by her sheer disregard as a woman, a wife and with the only traditionally feminine role left for her of motherhood, which relegated her to the domestic sphere of

silence and obedience. This death is what is left for Edna upon her husband's lack of understanding of her emotional needs as an individual, for he "could not see that she was becoming herself and daily casting aside that fictitious self which we assume like a garment with which to appear before the world" (Chopin 148). In fact, it is Léonce's inability to understand—to *see*—what eventually triggers Edna's death when, in the end, she did open her eyes and faced reality as it was. The last panels of the graphic version show this reflection; once she is aware of her place in life and of the mechanisms that govern society, she realizes that words are useless from her position in society and so, the narrator tells us, "she had resolved never again to belong to another than herself" (208).

CONCLUSIONS: FROM IMPOSED SILENCE INTO INTROSPECTION

In Edna's physical and spiritual awakening in this novel, Chopin manifests her inner unrest as regards the secondary role of women in society and in the marriage institution in the late nineteenth century (which she shares with her protagonist). Her silences in this novel bear a rich variety of meanings; from an internal rebellion in not replying to some of her husband's demanding utterances about her role as a mother, to her liberating muteness as the only way out of social oppression, as in the final scene. Migdal's graphic adaptation draws on the absence of speech balloons to portray Edna's silences and on the powerful potential of images to direct the observers' attention to her and her actions in the panels, instead. Edna partakes of Kate Chopin's "quiet" laugh and her "gentle and low" voice according to her biographer Per Seyersted (24). This writer and her heroic alter ego manifest in an earnest manner women's agitation "against tradition and authority; with a daring which we can hardly fathom today . . . she undertook to give the unsparing truth about woman's submerged life" (Seyersted 198).

To conclude, a comparison between the first and the last pages where water intervenes shows Edna's progression in *The Awakening* from blindness to blinding light; the splash page of this comic (Fig. 3) already foreshadows this encompassing the rhythmic progress towards Edna's final awakening into the world through language. This can be perceived in Migdal's version in the presence of water in the macro-panel that opens the comic (Fig. 3) and the bottom panels in Fig. 7. As Adrienne Rich put it, women had to strive to find their own voice for, historically, "[p]atriarchal lying has manipulated women both through falsehood and

through silence" (*On Lies* 189). The metavisual page that opens up the comic shows the protagonist avoiding the use of language (speech bubbles representing verbal silence and an internal flood of thought). As a result, the graphic designer replaces those bubbles with thought bubbles, contrary to the silent panels in the last page of the comic and the dominance of the visual mode by the end of the novel in both versions. As this article demonstrates male dominance in Chopin's society and their economic, social, and institutional preeminence automatically placed women in a disadvantageous situation which rendered them unseen and, unheard. Consequently, female vision—gaze—and voice were raised by some brave writers as Chopin and literature denouncing this unfair situation was immediately discarded as inadequate.

Sara Paretsky makes a strong claim in favor of women's rights as regards their access to culture. This writer acknowledges Chopin's titanic effort to make their adverse situation public and reverse the course of history through her literature, an admirable effort that was not praised and, on the contrary, punished by male contemporary critics. Paretsky engages in this demand for basic human rights for women who have struggled "standing up to excoriation—or in the case of writers like Kate Chopin dying in the face of it—to come to our present situation, where women have easy access to books, both as readers and as writers" (77). In the end, Chopin has her heroine stand up for her inner thoughts until the end, not letting society tame her into what they claimed was proper for a lady. As such, Chopin "was unable to see [her] heroine as [a] sinner [and this novelist] braved public opinion by refusing to have [her protagonist] repent" (Seyersted 193). After the analysis developed in these pages, we return to the question posed by Adrienne Rich in the introduction of this study: "*[w]hat kind of voice is breaking silence, and what kind of silence is being broken?*" (italics in the original; *Arts of the Possible* 322). It is not an individual voice, but an entire history of female subjugation that Chopin represents in this challenging proto New Woman at the expense of Edna's own life and Chopin's literary fall from grace in the eyes of male critics' of her day. It is the clamor of generations of women left aside who are slowly thriving among their male peers transmitting the cry of those who were not heard. The silence from which Chopin intended to save women was, in sum, the oblivion of their forgotten voices and her claim, the celebration of woman's inner and outer awakening.

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"You Knit to Save Your Life": Trauma and Textile in Ann Hood's *The Knitting Circle* (2006)

"Haces Punto Para Sobrevivir": Trauma y Tejido en *The Knitting Circle* (2006) de Ann Hood

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Abstract: This paper includes a hermeneutic revision of Ann Hood's novel *The Knitting Circle* (2006), a text that has been scarcely approached from the perspective of literary theory and criticism. In order to carry out this analysis, particularly focused on its protagonist, the presuppositions of trauma studies are employed, especially the considerations of Laurie Vickroy, as well as the semiotics of the textile in terms of its discursive and collective potential. Through the prism of close reading, it is proposed that the textile activity (and, by extension, the community that is generated around it) fosters a process of psychological recovery that depends not only on the articulation of the traumatic event, but also on the forms of social experiencing established around that episode.
Keywords: Knitting studies; Ann Hood; trauma; community; grief.
Summary: *The Knitting Circle* (2006): Knitting in a contemporary context. The word and the needle: Convergences between the textual and the textile. Trauma traces in *The Knitting Circle* (2006). Recovering the word: Stitch'nBitch as a healing space. A journey from private to public grief. Conclusions.

Resumen: Este trabajo incluye la revisión hermenéutica de la novela *The Knitting Circle* (2006) de Ann Hood, un texto escasamente abordado desde la teoría y crítica literaria. Para llevar a cabo este análisis, en particular enfocado en su protagonista, se emplean los presupuestos de los estudios del trauma, especialmente las consideraciones de Laurie Vickroy, así como las semióticas de lo textil en torno a su potencial discursivo y colectivo. A través del prisma del close reading, se plantea que la actividad costurera (y, por extensión, la comunidad que se genera en torno a ella) propicia un proceso de recuperación psicológica que no solo depende de la articulación del evento

traumático, sino también de las formas experienciales sociales establecidas alrededor de ese hecho.
Palabras clave: Estudios del punto; Ann Hood; trauma; comunidad; duelo.
Sumario: *The Knitting Circle* (2006): Hacer punto en un contexto contemporáneo. La palabra y la aguja: Convergencias entre lo textual y lo textil. Vestigios de trauma en *The Knitting Circle* (2006). Recuperando la palabra: Stitch'nBitch como espacio cicatrizante. Un viaje del duelo privado al público. Conclusiones.

1. *THE KNITTING CIRCLE* (2006): KNITTING IN A CONTEMPORARY CONTEXT

In the last years we are witnessing what many cultural studies scholars (Bratich and Brush; Bryan-Wilson; Hackney; Attfield; Bristow) have called fabriculture or craft culture and what I define as an evident resurgence of textile disciplines around practices such as crochet, embroidery, quilting and knitting. Textile floods our lives, transiting through the urban space, passing through the most mainstream entertainment platforms and arriving, of course, in the literary field. As in other moments of revival, this latest renaissance coincides with periods of financial recession in which the social situation has triggered the vindication of the homemade, the handmade and the natural (Parker xi). In the case of the text analysed here, its publication coincides with the economic crisis of the late 2000s. Considering the present, the same pattern can be found in our recent pandemic context, in which, in addition to mirroring the financial factor, situations of isolation have led to a resignification and revaluation of the domestic, causing thousands of people to become interested and involved in the practice.

We have certainly landed in a converging paradigm between traditional design and new media. The advances of technological science have irremediably invaded the knitting world, leading to the conception of new forms and new readings, both artistic and political. Thus, new and innumerable cultural forms emerge that convey the expansion of fabriculture through virtual knitting circles, blogs and textile websites, and cyberfeminist magazines or accounts on social networks thematically oriented to the textile. All these types of meetings, which traditionally took place in settings such as churches, or the headquarters of associations and political groups, are now being transferred to a virtual space. That is, the "new domesticity" migrates to a digital universe (Bratich and Brush).

Another of the particularities that the conditions of the twenty-first century have predisposed is the creation (or rather, the consolidation) of knitting communities. These communities transcend the mere sharing of projects, techniques, patterns, or textile concerns, and include the association of people who take up private and public spaces to knit, no longer just as a leisure or relaxation activity, but as a genuine form of expression or, at the very least, introspection. In this sense, I bring up the case of Stitch'nBitch. It consists of a movement, particularly established in Europe, the United States and Australia, which generally brings together women who meet, either virtually or physically (in spaces such as university campuses, bars or private homes), to stitch together, share their creations and, in short, socialise around textile creation. The name is taken from the eponymous title of a book published by Debbie Stoller, editor of the New York feminist magazine *Bust*, in 2003. According to Minahan and Cox, Stitch'nBitch could represent a new *Arts and Crafts Movement*,[1] in that it constitutes a new form of community gathering based on material production, traditional techniques and the new opportunities offered by digital technologies (6).

What's more, the gradual loss of feminine implications is another aspect that permeates contemporary needlework. In this regard, Rosenberg notes: "in the 70s artists who swapped their paint brushes for a needle and thread were making a feminist statement. Today, as both men and women fill galleries with crocheted sculpture and stitched canvas, the gesture isn't quite so specific" (para. 1). This is due, on the one hand, to the gradual active participation of women in the art world over the last centuries and, on the other hand, to the increasing involvement of men in the textile field. According to Parker, thanks to the Women's Liberation Movement,[2] the spectrum of values, aesthetics and roles socially categorised according to gender becomes more flexible, naturalising, and normalising male contributions to the activity. Nevertheless, it is essential to bear in mind

[1] Aesthetic, philosophical, and political movement emerged in Great Britain at the end of the 19th century which is associated with the figure of William Morris. It promotes a revision of medieval crafts and trades involing the revaluation of these disciplines through the search for meticulousness and originality in works, distancing itself from mass-produced industrial products.

[2] Political alignment of feminist intellectualism in the West from the 1960s to the 1980s, whose influence brought about a major political and cultural transformation throughout the world.

that the entrenchment of feminine, trivial, and domestic implications in the needlework context continue to prevail (xiii).

Even so, as a result of the theorisation and social resonance of the new masculinities,[3] especially since the 1990s, the visibility of men who dedicate their time to needlework has become more and more frequent. In this regard, it is worth mentioning the work of Joseph McBrinn who, as a response to Rozsika Parker's foundational text *The Subversive Stich: Embroidery and the Making of the Feminine* (2010), revisits the male participation in textile orbits in his contribution *Queering the Subversive Stitch: men and the culture of needlework* (2021). In terms of activism and digital presence, perhaps one of the most representative cases in the English-speaking context is Jamie Chalmers, whose website (*Mr. X Stitch: Changing the Way You Think about Embroidery*) with a domestic punk aesthetic functions as a space of confluence between international textile artists and as a digital resource for contemporary embroidery:

> It's not always easy being a Manbroiderer, people sometimes can't get their head around the fact that I'm six feet tall and yet I like stitching. But I'm not too fazed. I know how much I enjoy it and I just want to help other people share that experience. (xiii)

Likewise, queer realities also inhabit the textile space, with creators such as Sarah Zapata, LJ Roberts and Jesse Harrod, among others, standing out. In this regard, it is highly recommended to consult the work by Julia Bryan-Wilson *Fray: Art and Textile Politics* (2017), which dedicates its first chapter, "Queer Handmaking," to the artistic itinerary around textiles during the sixties and seventies, delving into the trajectory of the theatre group The Cockettes and the artist Harmony Hammond. Meanwhile, in *Queer Threads: Crafting Identity and Community* (2017), John Chaich and Todd Oldham examine the work of various contemporary artists belonging to the LGTBIQ+ collective.

In short, the magnitude of the textile panorama in the twenty-first century is overwhelming. As has been explained, its new popularisation does not imply a return to its old articulations, but an adaptation to the contemporary theoretical, political, social, economic, and artistic conjuncture. It is not, therefore, a question of rescuing the discipline from

[3] Male identity movement articulated as an alternative to hegemonic masculinity. It advocates gender equality and condemns all forms of violence against women.

the past, but of rethinking stitching from the present paradigm with its new devices.

Coinciding with this revival or phenomenon of fabriculture, narrative fiction texts linked to fabric have begun to proliferate in recent decades. Normally the textile dimension of these plots is transferred to the formal idiosyncrasy of the text, which is presented in a fragmentary and sometimes incomplete form, either by its structural arrangement in chapters, epigraphs or passages, by the polyphony of its characters or by the intercalation of styles or genres within the limits of the work itself. In addition, these works are compiled in different volumes forming sagas, and their plots, suspenseful or detective-like in tone, are developed around a crime or mystery that somehow includes the presence of a woman (or, more commonly, women) involved in the resolution of the enigma. Another of the most recurring scenarios revolves around a group of seamstresses, which the protagonist usually joins and from which her recovery process after experiencing a traumatic event is generated. This is exactly the pattern of *The Knitting Circle*, published by the American writer Ann Hood in 2006. The book is divided into ten parts, each containing two chapters, the titles of which alternate between the names of the characters and the title of the novel itself.

The story opens with Mary Baxter's first visit to Big Alice's shop (Sit and Knit), where she goes on her mother's recommendation to join knitting classes. Just five months ago, Mary tragically lost her five-year-old daughter Stella, due to meningitis. The protagonist is deeply affected by the trauma of this premature death and is therefore completely cut off from the world and the people around her. Unable to get past this experience, Mary is plunged into a pervasive depression that makes it impossible for her to restart her life, or even to go through her own mourning process. Naturally, these circumstances prevent the protagonist from returning to her job and imply obstacles in her closest interpersonal relationships: the marital one, which is threatened when their trauma coping mechanisms come into conflict, and the maternal-filial one. Mary's mother is portrayed as an absent parent who has had problems with alcohol and has not been involved in her daughter's most important moments in life (such as her own wedding or Stella's funeral): "Her mother had disappointed her for her entire life. She was not the mother who went to school plays or parents' nights; she gave praise rarely but never gushed or bragged" (Hood 19).

However, in the Sit and Knit shop, Mary meets six women (Scarlet, Lulu, Beth, Harriet, Ellen and Alice) through whom she embarks on an

introspective process of self-recognition through the bonds she establishes with them. They all share, to a certain extent, a harrowing life story, cut short by some traumatic event: some have been victims of sexual violence, others suffer from terminal illnesses, others have lost family members in terrorist attacks, etc. Therefore, all this shared pain embodies the communal nature of the textile practices that exist in our contemporary world. In addition to these women, it is worth mentioning the intermittent presence of Roger, a male knitter who has suffered the painful death of his partner from AIDS. Although he is not one of the main characters, his name is given to one of the chapters into which the novel is divided. His inclusion in the story is also evidence of the idea expressed in the previous section about the influence that the new masculinities and queer realities have had on needlework in recent decades.

2. The Word and the Needle: Convergencies Between the Textual and the Textile

According to cultural studies theory, cultural embodiment and its corresponding epistemological dimension is conceived within linguistic and symbolic terms: "thus cultural representations are said to work 'like a language'. Indeed, it is argued that to understand culture is to explore how meaning is produced symbolically through signifying practices" (Wayland Barber 14). In the case of the concurrence of the textual and the textile, it is traditionally orchestrated at a conceptual level from multiple semiotic prisms. Barber stresses the historical importance of textiles as a primitive mode of transmitting messages that are enunciated in an accessible and effective way, both visually and silently (148). Along the same lines, Sullivan Kruger argues for the inclusion of textile productions in the study of literary and historical texts:

> How the texts of textiles function in any specific story tells us about a very important form of communication heretofore ignored. From such an examination we might come to see a connection between the history of woven cloth and our attitudes toward literature; we might further speculate that the older tradition of weaving—one which dates back between nine thousand and twenty-five thousand years—has influenced the newer one of writing. Writing was invented around fifty-five hundred years ago, and has only become a widespread practice in the last four hundred years or so.

> Before written texts could record and preserve the stories of a culture, cloth was one of the primary modes for transmitting these social messages. (12)

From the etymological dimension, many scholars have traced routes through numerous words involved in textiles. Barthes links the notions of text and textile, pointing to their shared Latin root through the verb *texere* (to build, to weave) and the Greek *tekhne* (art, craft and technique) (76). On her befalf, Postrel highlights the case of fabric and fabricate, which come from the Latin root fabrice, meaning skillfully made. In addition, she mentions the French word *métier* (art or industry) which denotes the meaning of loom. Beyond the European sphere, she also highlights the case of the Quiché language, which shares the root *tz'iba* both for weaving patterns and for hieroglyphic writing, or Sanskrit, with the word sutra, which today refers to a literary aphorism, but originally meant thread (15-16).

In the field of feminist criticism, the correlation between textiles and the female discourse is evident. The conceptual link woven between women and the world of weaving is established in the West since Ancient Greece and its corresponding divine representations in relation with the practice (the Moiras, Aracne, and Penelope, among others). With the support of the ideologies of femininity and the categorisation of textiles as craft in opposition to the higher Fine Arts, stitching ends up being associated with the nineteenth-century values of an obedient, patient, delicate and virtuous woman. For this reason, the textile is historically inscribed in the domestic sphere, and it is be understood as a mere pastime that housewives are authorised to do while they devote themselves to caring for their children.

Even so, it is essential to conceive the metaphorical association between the female word and needlework not as an inherent and transhistorical method of women's expression, but as a crucial gendered practice that has been transmitted and become a symbol of female messages from a personal, political, spiritual, and artistic dimension (Bost 21). Therefore, I understand the textile as a tool that enhances the possibilities of narrativity of discourses that have been issued from the margins. Consequently, I approach the literary work by applying a knitting semiotics, which configures the whole story according to a textile idiolect that the characters themselves recognise. One of the first times that Mary goes to Sit and Knit, she listens to the instructions Big Alice gives to another of the women present: "It's like another language, Mary thought,

remembering her idea to learn Italian. . . . Better than complicated rules of grammar" (Hood 26).

Likewise, during the conversation in which Mary discovers her companion Ellen's life story, Ellen establishes a suggestive correlation: "'Stories are kind of like knitting, aren't they? Everything intertwined. Everything connected'" (97). For her part, when Alice recounts her unpleasant first contact with knitting, she reproduces the words of her governess: "'Every specialty has its own lexicon,' she said, 'and knitting is no exception to this rule. There are certain terms we must learn and certain symbols we must recognize'" (142). Thus, we perceive how the text itself offers effective hermeneutic tools in a textile key, inviting us to access the story through a close reading.

3. TRAUMA TRACES IN *THE KNITTING CIRCLE* (2006)

To understand the discipline of trauma studies in the context of literary criticism, the following definition proposed by Mambrol can provide a starting point: "Trauma studies explores the impact of trauma in literature and society by analysing its psychological, rhetorical, and cultural significance" (para. 1). In this regard, it may be useful to link the previously mentioned notion of fabriculture (Bratich and Brush, Bryan-Wilson, Hackney, Attfield, Bristow) to that of traumaculture proposed by Roger Luckhurst in his publication "Traumaculture" (2003) and further developed in works such as *The Trauma Question* (2008). Trauma studies thus are closely linked to the representationality of language and the role of memory in shaping individual and collective identity. From a theoretical breeding ground that draws from psychoanalysis, post-structuralism and post-colonialism, trauma is conceived as "a severely disruptive experience that profoundly impacts the self's emotional organisation and perception of the external world" (Mambrol para. 1).

The field began to take shape in the 1990s around the work of theorists like Kali Tal, Shoshana Felman and Dori Laub, and, most importantly, Cathy Caruth and her foundational texts *Explorations in Memory* (1995) and *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative, History* (1996). According to this first model of traditional trauma, which reinterprets Freudian theories, trauma is ineffable, which evidences the problematic between language and experience. The traumatic event produces a profound disruption in consciousness, irrevocably damaging the psyche and preventing a direct and effective linguistic representation. Because of

this inability to properly assimilate the experience and its corresponding impediment to articulate it, "both individual traumatic experiences and collective historical extreme events are ultimately never known directly but only through an interrupted referentiality that points to the meaning of the past only as a type of reproduction or performance" (Caruth, *Unclaimed Experience* 11).

These ideas were soon reconsidered by revisionist methodologies of the traditional model, which proposed overcoming the argument of unnamability and approaching trauma by also considering other factors which may circumscribe it. Among these revisionist contributions, it is worth highlighting the proposals for aesthetic analysis suggested by Alan Gibbs in *Contemporary American Trauma Narratives* (2015), Joshua Pederson in "Speak, Trauma: Toward a Revised Understanding of Literary Trauma Theory" (2014), Laurie Vickroy in *Trauma and Survival in Contemporary Fiction* (2002) or Anne Whitehead in *Trauma Fiction* (2004), in which the authors link prescriptivist aesthetic models to the representation of trauma. Thus, in contrast to the first generation of theorists, it is argued that victims are capable of accessing a traumatic memory and constructing a narrative around that disruptive event, thus looking at the text itself rather than its lapses, opening up "broad new expanses of material for interpretation" (Pederson 338).

Moreover, the post-colonial perspectives of authors such as Gert Buelens, Samuel Durrant, and Robert Eaglestone in their volume *The Future of Trauma Theory: Contemporary Literary and Cultural Criticism* (2014) highlight, in line with Roger Luckhurst in *The Trauma Question* (2008), that the modern notion of trauma has been gestated in a Western context that is assumed to be universal. For this reason, they express the need to link trauma to "other disruptive social forces" (Buelens et al. xiii) by stripping away imperialist logics and thus proposing the "building [of] a non-Eurocentric, fully historicized trauma theory" (Buelens et al. xiii).

As demonstrated in the previous lines, moving away from a universalist vision, the pluralist models reject a structural approach to trauma and reveals "the specificities hiding under the apparently neutral and universal face of this understanding of trauma." Like this, these current ideas allow us to pay more attention to the variability and complexity of narratological representations of trauma. Having said that, for my approach to *The Knitting Circle* (2006), I especially follow Laurie Vickroy's considerations in her publication "Voices of Survivors in Contemporary Fiction" regarding cognitive psychology and narrative and

cultural theories. Vickroy argues that the fictionalisation of trauma produces three substantial effects:

> The awareness of the multidimensionality of an extreme experience and particularly the social influences that shape the survivor's personality, the textual modeling of the social aspects of the individual's mind, and the ethics of reading that compel a compassionate correspondence between reader and survivor. (Quoted in Balaev 10)

As readers, fiction offers a wide range of dimensions from which to observe the multiplicity of responses we experience as humans to a traumatic event. These responses are embodied in subtle ways through certain behaviours, transitional identities, bodies in awe, and survival tactics. Among the most recurrent signs in survivors are episodes of fragmented memory, panic, physical pain, guilt, blocking, diminished self-perception, shame or fear. Of particular significance is the threat to one's own security and the loss of autonomy and self-sufficiency (Vickroy, "Voices of Survivors" 130–31).

Transferring these reflections to the work, I focus particularly on the life process of the protagonist, as this is the case that allows us to study the text in the most detailed way. Her discourse and plot arc reveal a wide range of traumatic manifestations, and a clear situation of vulnerability and helplessness. Perhaps the most striking symptom, in line with Caruth's ideas, is the impossibility of narrating her pain with the rest of the world, especially with the women she meets in the knitting circle. Already from the beginning, this premise is explicitly reflected: "It is my story, yet I do not have the words to tell it" (Hood 11). Near the end, this passage is repeated, revealing her true sender, Mammie, who circularly closes the story by settling her differences with Mary and strengthening their mother-child bond.

Likewise, in line with the observations made in the section concerning the textual and the textile, it is worth stressing the significance of the protagonist's profession. Mary is a journalist, working for the local newspaper *Eight Days a Week* writing articles and reviews about films, restaurants and books. Hence, her own employment, directly involved with written production, implies metatextuality and another materialisation of the metaphor I have been discussing about the creative female figure in correspondence with her role as a knitter. In this sense, the loss of speech also affects her career, as she is unable to work despite the attempts made

by her boss, who gives her small tasks to keep her distracted: "Words, her livelihood, her refuge, even at times her salvation, were now the most useless things in the world" (35).

Nonetheless, this is not the only metalinguistic reference in the novel; when Dylan proposes a trip to Italy, he tries to convince her by telling her: "'If we're going to sit and cry all the time, we might as well sit and cry in Italy. Plus, you said something about learning Italian?'" (24). Faced with her proposition, the narrator introduces us to the protagonist's train of thought, which, once again, reveals her discursive inadequacy: "She couldn't disappoint him by telling him that even English was hard to manage, that memorizing verb conjugations and vocabulary words would be impossible. The only language she could speak was grief. How could he not know that?" (24).

Following the pluralistic considerations of trauma theorists, it is discovered how, beyond these linguistic deficiencies, Mary's trauma is evident through many other symptomatologic behaviours. These include her memory loss: "Like everything else, Mary could easily have forgotten the woman's name. She'd written it on one of the hundreds of Post-its scattered around the house like confetti after a party" (14); spatial disorientation: "Mary stopped and got her bearings. These days this was always necessary, even in familiar places. In her own kitchen she would stop what she was doing and look around, take stock" (14) or inability to show (or even feel) affection: "Instead, she said, 'I love you.' She did. She loved him. But even that didn't feel like anything anymore" (24).

In addition, she exhibits a low self-perception, feels extremely misunderstood (especially in relation to her husband), experiences constant intrusive anticipatory thoughts, feels an acute sense of emptiness and is particularly irritable with her surroundings. Mary feels a compelling need to escape from her own reality: "'I didn't want to'—she stopped herself before she said the truth: I didn't want to be home—'to miss a night'." This is precisely why she chooses Big Alice's shop to learn to knit, and not other establishments much closer: "Mary had driven forty miles to this store, even though there was a knitting shop less than a mile from her house" (15).

On the other hand, she is envious of other families who do enjoy the company of their children, followed by a deep sense of guilt in recognising her own resentment. Indeed, she often experiences frustration at the perceived insignificance of her loss in a world that naturally continues to function, despite everything. Her anhedonia and apathy also manifest

clearly: "Other people's stories held little interest for her" (15), "That sad summer, time passed indifferently. . . . Instead, she was home not knowing what to do with all of the endless hours in each day" (22). Finally, the protagonist shows fear of loneliness, resistance to oblivion and a marked sense of dissociation, which prevents her from even recognising herself in her own reflection.

4. RECOVERING THE WORD: STITCH'NBITCH AS A HEALING SPACE

As discussed above, community is a constitutive property of contemporary knitting, and the pivot around which the protagonist's healing process begins. Despite her initial reluctance, she soon recognises the benefits that knitting (and, by extension, the knitting circle as Stitch'nBitch) grants her. The most quickly identifiable one is a powerful evading possibility. Thus, Alice's shop becomes a safe space for her: "Now here she stood in a knitting store, and that same sense of safety, of peace, filled her" (Hood 39).

Mary uses knitting as a strategy to keep her mind occupied in order to avoid the recurring thought of her daughter Stella: "You have to concentrate so hard when you do them that you have no room for anything else" (75). She herself comes to affirm this escapist dimension when she has a conversation with her companion Lulu, who establishes a metaphor by relating the point to the prayer of rosaries: "'It's perfect for contemplation' (76) notes Lulu, to which Mary replies: 'Or escape'" (76). The soothing power of knitting is also evident for the protagonist in the scene in which she feels tense about her mother's presence within the circle:

> As soon as Mary picked up her needles and began to knit, her anger dissipated. She was calmed by the motion of slipping one needle through a stitch and pulling the yarn onto the other needle, by the feel of wool in her hands, by the sound of everyone's knitting needles clicking. (238)

In this sense, it is important to underline, on the one hand, the notion of repetition and automatism that emerges from the abstraction of the textile process: "'There's something about knitting,' her mother said. 'You have to concentrate, but not really. Your hands keep moving and moving and somehow it calms your brain'" (20). Regarding this matter, in line with the symptomatology described in the previous section, reference should be

made to the concept of acting out coined by LaCapra through which he theorises the idea of repetition (sometimes taken to compulsion) present in traumatised subjects who either relive past events or constantly revisit them in the present through flashbacks, nightmares or even by verbalising certain words or phrases. On the other hand, returning to the above quote, the bodily implications of the textile act are noticeable within the text. This corporeality is embodied particularly in the hands, the human instrument that makes the creation of the fabric possible: "Her hands needed to do it. It was as if the movement of the needles coming together and falling apart took away the horrible anxiety that bubbled up in her throughout the day" (Hood 36); "My hands seemed to knit away the noise that had kept me awake, to erase the questions for which there were no answers" (49).

As the story progresses, the bonds of affection between the members of the circle grow stronger and the community consolidates itself. Illustrative of this strengthened bond is the moment when Sit and Knit burns down and they all come together to survey the damage and encourage Alice to restore the shop, or Beth's funeral, the chapter of which is aptly titled "Common Suffering," in which the knitters share their grief in confronting the tragic loss of their companion. According to Farrell, Mary's arc comes to a fittingly circular close when she offers to teach Maggie, a new character who comes to the shop and with whom the protagonist is deeply identified, to knit (30):

> Mary recognized something in this woman. A sadness, a grief that was yet too fresh to put into words. 'I'm going to give you my phone number,' she said, 'and when you've finished that, call me and I'll teach you how to purl.' . . . Mary knew that Maggie would call her soon. Tomorrow, or the next day. She would go home and knit and eventually the knitting would make the endless, painful hours somehow bearable. Mary knew this. (Hood 250)

Stitch'nBitch therefore provides an unavoidable pretext for conveying the healing nature of knitting, as it offers a safe place from which to deal communally with the traumatic experiences of the knitters. As the story progresses, the protagonist conducts through her companions what LaCapra has defined as empathic unsettlement; that is: a process of attentive listening (usually through secondary witnesses to the traumatic event) through which this secondary subject empathises with the story of the traumatised person while being aware of their external location in the event. In LaCapra's own words, "it involves a kind of virtual experience

through which one puts oneself in the other's position while recognising the difference of that position and hence not taking the other's place" (78). This mechanism constitutes the group as a privileged emotional location from which to ask for advice, to laugh, to express frustration, to commiserate, or simply to share silence.

> The fact that the group provides a forum for open expression and the ability to be an active part of organizing something that helps others, evokes feelings of empowerment, thus strengthening an individual's self-perception. . . . Communities are created through compassion, trust and communication. Communication is supported and encouraged via the establishment of a safe space where group members are provided with a place to openly express their thoughts and ideas. (Sharp 122)

Nevertheless, according to Tapia De la Fuente, just as the textile pieces are never arranged in a tight way, allowing the fabric to breathe or move without breaking, so is this knitting community. The relationships between the women in the novel are not always idyllic; indeed, we witness several situations of tension and dispute that form part of the knitting circle as well. However, the dialogic nature of their collectivity allows them to function cooperatively in a stable way and to forge an affective fabric between them all (91–92):

> El bordado fortalece el tejido comunitario y promueve el diálogo y cuidado mutuo, nutriendo a la comunidad y facilitando escenarios de encuentro, los que se configuran como constelaciones comunitarias circulares, gestionados por los cuerpos activos ubicados concéntrica y horizontalmente.[4] (99)

At the end of the novel, the protagonist's journey concludes with a powerfully symbolic episode, which corresponds with the affirmation of her own identity, and the materialisation of the accompaniment and ethics of care that have been developed throughout the story thanks to Stitch'nBitch. Finally, once consolidated as a knitter, Mary regains her voice and, therefore, feels ready to narrate to all her companions the heartbreaking experience of her daugther's death: "Mary took a breath.

[4] Embroidery strengthens the community network and promotes dialogue and mutual care, nurturing the community and facilitating meeting scenarios, which are configured as circular community constellations, managed by active bodies located concentrically and horizontally. (Translated by the author)

She knit one more row. It was time, she knew, and so she began" (Hood 239). After her story, Mary and Mamie share a touching scene of reconciliation, in which they embrace and, putting aside their differences, affectionately recognise each other again: "For the first time in a very long time, Mary let her mother take her in her arms. She let her mother cradle her. At last, the two women held each other and cried" (244). Finally, again drawing on LaCapra, it is plausible to associate this passage with the notion of working through, which refers to the moment of agency in which the traumatised subject is able to take a critical distance from the disruptive event and, recognising the impossibility of detaching it from his or her identity, to integrate it in order to be able to face the present and its contingencies.

In relation to this word recovery, certain techniques of formal representation are observed through the knitting symbol and the trauma narration, such as intertextuality, repetition, or the dispersion of the narrative voice (Whitehead 84). These devices are already evident from the very structure of the text, which is fragmented into chapters by interspersing the names of their protagonists in their respective titles. In turn, this tool suggests the interconnectedness of all the experiences narrated, which are somehow knitted through dialogues throughout the novel. The stories of these women gradually approach Mary as the plot progresses, taking turns between them as narrators. In all these articulations, the level of material detail brought to the conversation, pointing out photographs, dates or specific names, the importance of the spaces and the non-verbal language of their interlocutors, stand out. In addition, it is essential to underline the reflection of Mary's experience that is outlined in the stories of her companions as they enunciate their traumas, especially in the internal flow of the protagonist's thought, but also in small conversational brushstrokes in which she briefly suggests the loss of her daughter.

As for Mary's own individual discourse as narrator, her trauma leaves blank spaces when it comes to articulating itself through absences and incongruities of information or chronologically disordered events. The idea of repetition is also evident at the narrative level through flashbacks and intrusive memories that interrupt the narrative. Finally, consistent with Mary's lack of control over her life, the narrator also does not govern the development of the plot, rather, the storyline drives her own narrative.

5. A JOURNEY FROM PRIVATE TO PUBLIC GRIEF

Finally, it is worth emphasising that, as with the knitting, which Mary ends up taking with her everywhere she goes, escaping strictly domestic boundaries, the protagonist's trauma also transcends from the private to the public dimension and becomes part of a shared experience of loss (Farrell). In line with Vickroy's ideas ("Voices of Survivors"), I finally propose a reading of *The Knitting Circle* (2006) from theories of trauma that go beyond Freudian models of repetition and muteness in the face of the traumatic episode, emphasising the need to consider the social and cultural factors involved in the particular case in which the disruptive experience has occurred. These contextual conditioning factors determine either the victim's assimilation and corresponding recovery from the trauma, or his or her impediment to this process (Vickroy, "Voices of Survivors" 132):

> These attitudes and practices influence notions of expected behavior, responses, and even symptoms. Life roles and emotional management are 'facilitated and ordered' within a culturally prescribed social and community structure where stress, illness, and grief are dealt with on personal and group levels. (De Vries 401)

Thus, having moved into the public sphere, Mary's grief interacts with her immediate social environment, which is mostly represented through her husband, her mother, or her work colleagues. Therefore, examining her interactions with them goes some way to approximating the ways in which loss is socially articulated in Western cultures such as the one presented in the novel. In Dylan's case, it is clear how the protagonist's post-traumatic suffering takes a considerable toll on her marital relationship. Often, during the course of the story, their grief processing mechanisms come into conflict: while Mary isolates herself and experiences, as detailed above, recurrent and varied episodes of alienation, Dylan, on the other hand, exhibits what appears to be a much more integrative position in this regard: he is proactive, proposes trips and plans to keep his mind occupied, quickly returns to his job, etc.

> 'It might be fun,' Dylan said, but she could tell his heart wasn't into having this argument again. It had become a pattern with them, his frustrated urging for her to go back to work, her anger at him for being able to work at all. A

> few times it had grown into full-blown fighting, with Dylan yelling at her, 'You have to try to help yourself!' and Mary accusing him of being callous. More often, though, it was this quiet disagreement, this sarcasm and misunderstanding, the hurt feelings that followed. (Hood 34)

When these disagreements occur, they trigger different feelings of frustration, dissatisfaction and, above all, incomprehension in Mary. By way of illustration, the following passage shows Mary's internal dissatisfaction, as she watches almost resentfully from the window (which could be understood as a metaphor for the invisible portal between the protagonist's mental framework and the rest of the tangible world) as Dylan rebuilds his life while ignoring her mute cries for help, which in turn provokes a marked sense of abandonment:

> From the window, she watched him drive away, a man in a suit going to his office. A man who didn't have a clue that his wife was getting worse. A man, she thought, who could still go into an office every day and defend clients and write briefs and go to court and even have friendly cocktails with his partners after work. (87)

At other times, it is Dylan who exhibits more hostile behaviour towards his wife: "But Dylan said, 'I guess I can't hide from everything like you can,' and she heard that too-familiar edge in his voice" (62), which awakens in her the guilt of dragging with her a too slow pace of recovery: "'I'm sorry,' Mary told him, though she wasn't certain what she was sorry about: sorry that Stella had died and she couldn't handle it? Sorry she couldn't be more like him in the face of this?" (62).

Regarding the rest of her interpersonal relationships, it seems that they all follow an evident pattern of avoidance when dealing with the protagonist's vulnerability. At first, the dedication that her surroundings show towards her is exposed: "When Stella died, Mary had been overcome by the way people had helped. . . . Friends sat by her side, offered advice, offered shoulders for leaning, for crying" (236). Still, as the weeks go by, the neglect of her social circle increases and with it, her loneliness. In fact, Mary even perceives the sense of discomfort that her presence provokes for people who know her story: "This happened over and over. Women in the supermarket, in the post office, staring at her as if she should not be alive herself" (93). Finally, Mammie never shows the slightest willingness

to accompany her daughter's grief and limits herself, always from a distance, to unawarely encourage her to stay active:

> Mary's mother didn't ask questions. When Mary tried to tell her how much she missed Stella, how long her days had grown, how sad she was, her mother suggested she knit more, travel more, join a book group, take a class. (150)

According to De Vries' theories, the optimal conditions for psychological recovery from a traumatic event have to do with the way in which society turns suffering into a meaningful mode of action and integrates it as part of its own identity (401–2). Thus, I argue that in the context of the novel these circumstances do not occur, so that the protagonist feels unprotected and seeks to adapt through the only way she finds available to deal with her pain: isolation. From this convenient social perspective, it is possible to understand that individual traumatic experiences are closely related to the dynamics of collective treatment that are orchestrated around a given traumatic event. In the case of *The Knitting Circle* (2006), the loss of the child is a taboo, which tends to be avoided due to the unpleasantness of living with such a tragic reality. According to Vickroy, these insidious experiences are read as endemic and detrimental to the functioning of the social structure: "Communities and societies can perpetuate the isolation felt by trauma survivors according to Root because communities want to protect themselves from vulnerability, avoid what survivors have suffered, and prevent survivors from sharing their experience with others" ("Voices of Surviors" 132).

CONCLUSIONS

Having elucidated all these concerns, it is necessary to point out two fundamental and consecutive ideas: firstly, that knitting (fabriculture) is drawn in the text as an operative discursive artefact through which to narrate the trauma (traumaculture) and, in a way, to recover Mary's silenced word and, secondly, that the very process of textile creation in a community context (in this case, the Sit & Knit group as an analogue of the Stitch'nBitch phenomenon) constitutes an effective therapeutic tool through which to heal, or at least mitigate, the suffering caused by the trauma.

Thus, knitting emerges as a rhetorical exercise of expression and writing, both private and public, which tends to make dissident experiences visible. It is, therefore, an ideal space from which to articulate the construction of identity through self-representation and self-affirmation (Tapia De la Fuente 47–49). Farrell notes that "the material nature of these crafts leads to something meaningful and immaterial—the opportunity to matter to others and to oneself" (37). In consequence, it is appropriate to assert that the knitting circle raises affective infrastructures that allow its participants to develop a sense of belonging to the group:

> Los espacios de bordado colectivo proponen un lenguaje particular, un modo de comunicación basado en la ética del cuidado y de la responsabilidad colectiva, reivindicando una voz libre, una escucha acogedora y espacios de diálogo interdependientes donde cada persona pueda manifestar sus necesidades; liberando a las mujeres de la imposición patriarcal de cuidar abnegadamente a los demás, para pasar a una propuesta en la que el cuidado sea asunto colectivo.[5] (Tapia De la Fuente 48)

Regarding the treatment of trauma, it has been proven that it is necessary to follow a pluralistic approach that, far from understanding the phenomenon from structural logics, attends to the contextual particularities of each individual. In this sense, fiction provides valuable prisms through which to observe the potential causes, mechanisms of action, responses, and possibilities for healing according to the singularities of the survivor. In line with Vickroy ("Voices of Survivors"), "the mechanisms of trauma, how it is caused and perpetuated, and the possibilities for healing often depend upon social interconnections, through acts of witnessing or sympathy" (137).

Considering this social circle in particular, it has been found that it does not provide the necessary conditions for the protagonist to properly digest her loss. This unsympathetic environment is represented in a distant, emotionally inaccessible, elusive or impostured way, thus revealing a tendency to avoid experiences of vulnerability such as Mary's. As a

[5] Collective embroidery spaces propose a particular language, a mode of communication based on the ethics of care and collective responsibility, claiming a free voice, a welcoming listening, and interdependent spaces for dialogue where each person can express their needs; freeing women from the patriarchal imposition of self-sacrificing care for others, to move towards a proposal in which care is a collective concern. (Translated by the author)

counterpoint and almost antagonist to this hostile social entity is the presence of Sit and Knit. From the implementation of empathic unsettlement, politics of self-enunciation and care, the community accompanies the protagonist in her process of mourning and, through the symbol of knitting, promotes her recovery (or at least stabilisation) both discursively and psychologically: "Big Alice's Sit and Knit had saved Mary. She was certain of that" (Hood 132).

To conclude, I suggest approaching the work in future research following the concept of empathic unsettlement. In particular, it would be interesting to stress the special situation presented by the characters in the novel who, despite being secondary witnesses to the trauma they accompany, at the same time experience their own trauma (caused by heterogeneous motives) in the first person, which perhaps implies a more complex procedure of listening and recognition at an ontological level. Finally, I stress that the evident emotionality of the text can also incite us to transfer these theoretical questions to the very process of empathic unsettlement that readers themselves experience in relation to the knitters.

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"Undiverted Hearts": Domestic Alienation and Moral Integrity in Jane Austen's *Mansfield Park* and Henry James's *Washington Square*

"Corazones leales": Alienación doméstica e integridad moral en *Mansfield Park*, de Jane Austen y *Washington Square*, de Henry James

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Abstract: My aim in this article is to argue that Henry James's *Washington Square* (1880) is an unacknowledged reworking of Jane Austen's *Mansfield Park* (1814). To this purpose, I have analyzed both narratives as fictions of domestic alienation in which the heroines refuse to allow their individuality to be subdued by; (a) patriarchal authority and parental mismanagement; (b) the interferences and meddlings of their manipulative aunts; or (c) the libertine corruption of their deceitful suitors. Although they have been subjected to coercion and manipulation, Fanny Price and Catherine Sloper rebel against the pressures of parental authority and emerge as the true preservers of moral integrity.
Keywords: *Mansfield Park*; *Washington Square*; domestic alienation; moral integrity; individuality.
Summary: Introduction. Authoritative Fathers. Meddlesome Aunts. Deceitful Suitors. Stoic Heroines. Conclusions.

Resumen: Mi objetivo en este artículo es argumentar que *Washington Square* (1880), de Henry James, es una rescritura no reconocida de *Mansfield Park* (1814), de Jane Austen. Para ello, he analizado ambas narraciones como ficciones de alienación doméstica en las que las heroínas se niegan a permitir que su individualidad sea subyugada por; (a) la autoridad patriarcal y la mala

gestión paternal; (b) las interferencias y las intromisiones de sus manipuladoras tías; o (c) la corrupción libertina de sus engañosos pretendientes. A pesar de haber sido sometidas a coacciones y manipulaciones, Fanny Price y Catherine Sloper se rebelan contra las presiones de la autoridad paterna y emergen como las verdaderas preservadoras de la integridad moral.
Palabras clave: *Mansfield Park*; *Washington Square*; alienación doméstica; integridad moral; individualidad.
Sumario: Introducción. Padres autoritarios. Tías entrometidas. Pretendientes engañosos. Heroínas estoicas. Conclusiones.

INTRODUCTION

In a letter to Mrs. Humphry Ward, Henry James writes "I'm a wretched person to read a novel—I begin so quickly and concomitantly for myself to write it, rather—even before I know clearly what it's about! The novel I can only read, I can't read at all!" (*Life in Letters,* 320). This statement summarizes James's process of writing; of reading the works of others with the intention to reappropriate and to rewrite them (Wrenn 13). As Adeline Tintner asserts, James felt compelled "to redo the classic works of literature . . . to improve them and to revise them in a way" (30). This tallies with one of Bloom's categories of influence, "tessera," in which the author "completes" his precursor's work, retaining its terms but arranging them in a new way, "as though the precursor had failed to go far enough" (Bloom 13). Thus, I uphold that James's novels are made of what Roland Barthes calls the "already-read," the "already-written" (Allen 70), a "multi-dimensional space in which a variety of writings, none of them original, blend and class" (Barthes 146).

Readers of *Washington Square* have detected the influence of James's preferred French patron, Balzac, especially of his short novel, *Eugénie Grandet* (1833), which shares many traits with *Washington Square*: the tyrannical father, the vulnerable daughter, and the mercenary suitor. Besides, James's tale also owes something to Victor Cherbuliez's Gothic novel, *Le Comte Kostia* (1863), which revolves around the hero's rescue of the only daughter of an oppressive father. A third source for this tale can be found in America with James's great predecessor, Nathaniel Hawthorne, and his tale "Rappaccini's Daughter" (1844), which James admired and in which we find again the triangle of James's tale: a despotic father, an imprisoned daughter, and a potentially redemptive suitor (Poole ix–xii). While these form some of the known literary sources and influences of *Washington Square,* the many thematic similarities between

Washington Square and *Mansfield Park* have passed unnoticed by both readers and critics.

Henry James's allusions to Jane Austen are scattered throughout his numerous critical essays and letters, and canonical critics like F. R. Leavis (1948), Brian Lee (1986), and Tony Tanner (1986) have pointed out Austen's undeniable influence on Henry James and more recently, critics like William C. Duckworth (1999), Mary Ann O'Farrell (2006), Elsie B. Michie (2011), and Juliet McMaster (2019) have made interesting contributions to the literary relationships between Austen and James. And yet, the link between Austen and James has not been adequately examined, most likely because it has frequently been assumed as self-evident (Valero Redondo "'Craving to Be Frightened,'" forthcoming). In this paper, I want to recuperate Tanner's assertion that Catherine Sloper "is a Jamesian version of one kind of Jane Austen heroines" (9) and to argue that *Washington Square* (1880) forms a yet unacknowledged reworking of Jane Austen's *Mansfield Park* (1814). Although *Mansfield Park* is considerably longer than *Washington Square* and its storyline far more complex, I will analyze both narratives as fictions of domestic alienation in which the heroines refuse to allow their individualism and volition to be assimilated or exhausted by; (a) patriarchal authority and parental mismanagement; (b) the perverted manipulation of meddlesome aunts; and (c) the libertine corruption of deceitful seducers. In his review on George Eliot's *Middlemarch*, James praises "the indefinable moral elevation" of Eliot's female characters ("On Middlemarch" 424). It is precisely this moral elevation that James admired in Eliot's heroines that distinguishes Fanny Price and Catherine Sloper, who eventually resist instrumentalization and emerge as the true preservers of moral integrity in *Mansfield Park* and *Washington Square*, respectively.

1. AUTHORITATIVE FATHERS

Both *Mansfield Park* and *Washington Square* are narratives about parental mismanagement and the rejection of paternal rule. Hence, although both tales have been read by critics as a satire of patriarchy, they are in fact "a satire of a failure of patriarchy" (Downie 740) since they expose the serious consequences of a childhood without adequate love and guidance. Thus, we find two severe and authoritative father figures—in the case of Fanny his uncle and in the case of Catherine his natural father—who subject their daughters to persuasion, coercion, and victimization. Sir

Thomas and Dr. Sloper significantly contribute to both Fanny's and Catherine's internal struggle between self-expression and restraint, turning them into "complex and layered individual[s]" (Armstrong 92). And yet, the heroines prove to have sufficient individuality and a capacity for self-expression to reject—or violate—paternal rule.

In *Mansfield Park*, Sir Thomas exerts pressure on Fanny by trying to convince her to marry Henry Crawford, whom he considers a young man "of sense, of character, of temper, of manners, and of fortune" (*MP* 249). Fanny longs to reveal the reason of her forceful rejection of Henry, but she cannot tell Sir Thomas that she has already engaged her heart to her cousin, Edmund Bertram, since he is socially above her. Besides, Fanny has substantial reasons to think ill of Crawford's principles. However, to describe Crawford's misconduct would imply betraying her cousins, especially Maria, so Fanny cannot justify her rejection. If unmarried women were particularly helpless in the patriarchal society of nineteenth-century England, Fanny is "both a young woman and a poor relation in comparison to the landowning Bertrams" (Folsom 91). Sir Thomas resorts to the language of "cultural propriety in patriarchal England" to subjugate his niece (Stampone 197), and the words "duty," "obligation," and "owe" pervade his discourse in the novel:

> I should have thought it a gross violation of duty and respect. *You* are not to be judged by the same rule. You do not owe me the duty of a child. But, Fanny, if your heart can acquit you of *ingratitude*—. (*MP* 249)

The discourse of "duty" and "gratitude" associates patriarchy with mental subjugation "and marks Fanny Price as the text's representative slave" (Stampone 198). Like the villains of Gothic romances, Sir Thomas demands of his niece complete submission to patriarchal norms.

In *Washington Square*, the situation is ironically reversed, and we do not find an authoritative father figure forcing his daughter to marry a prosperous man. On the contrary, Dr. Sloper coerces Catherine into giving up her suitor, Morris Townsend, alleging that he is "a selfish idler" (*WS* 243), and threatening to disinherit her if she persists in her infatuation. It is evident that Dr. Sloper perceives in Morris a disturbing alter ego of himself, since—like Morris—he also made his fortune with a highly advantageous marriage. Like Sir Thomas Bertram, Dr. Sloper also employs the discourse of "duty" and "gratitude" when he talks with Morris Townsend about his daughter:

> As for Catherine's giving you up—no, I am not sure of it. But as I shall strongly recommend it, as I have a great fund of respect and affection in my daughter's mind to draw upon, and as she has the sentiment of duty developed in a very high degree, I think it extremely possible. (*WS* 92)

He knows that Catherine worships him and he has determined to use her veneration to his own advantage. In both cases, the subtleties of language expose patriarchy as "an inescapable system of mental slavery" (Stampone 24).

Sir Thomas and Dr. Sloper contrive similar schemes to render their daughters' will or desire ineffectual and, like King Lear, they send their daughters into banishment for violating patriarchal authority and "for failing to provide the appropriate answer which, as daughter[s], is expected of [them]" (Calvo 86).[1] Sir Thomas decides to send Fanny back to Portsmouth with her original family hoping that the modest conditions there would teach her "the value of good income" (*MP* 289). Besides, the narrator's indirect account of Sir Thomas's consciousness is characterized by a discourse of medicine, cure, and prescription. Hence, Sir Thomas's plan is "a medicinal project upon his niece's understanding, which he must consider as at present diseased" (*MP* 289). He justifies his coercion by comparing himself to a doctor prescribing strong drugs to cure a dying patient.

Sir Thomas's "medicinal project" finds its parallel in Dr. Sloper's success in diagnosing diseases and in his predictions about his daughter's intelligence and her future marriage prospects. Dr. Sloper treats his daughter's infatuation as "a king of experiment in human sexual selection" (Scheiber 2) and he tends to judge everybody by means of what he considers scientific categories. In his conversation with Morris's sister, he expounds his "scientific" theory of "dividing people into classes" (*WS* 101). His profession gives him "honor" and "credit" since it combines "the realm of the practical" with "the light of science" (*WS* 27). When he realizes that his daughter will not easily give up Morris, Dr. Sloper devises a scheme to see if Catherine "will stick" (*WS* 126), since the idea of her "sticking" offers him "a prospect of entertainment" (*WS* 126). Like Sir Thomas, Sloper decides to take Catherine to a one-year trip around Europe, in the hope that she will forget Morris.

[1] I am referring here to Fanny Price as a daughter because she is symbolically one.

The imagery of cold, snow, ice, clinical whiteness, and death permeate the descriptions of the doctor (Maini 96). Thus, Mrs. Penniman says of her brother that "[h]is state of mind really freezes my blood" (*WS* 173), and Morris repeats this metaphor when he says that Dr. Sloper "combines the properties of a lump of ice and a red-hot-coal" (*WS* 174). The fact that he chooses a valley in the Alps to confront his daughter is significant, since it stresses his cold-bloodedness. Tellingly, the doctor finally dies of "a violent cold" (*WS* 207). It is possible indeed to perceive a relationship between cold, ice, suppressed sexuality, and mercilessness (Maini 96).

The relationship between Sir Thomas and Fanny is transfigured from one of power and resistance to what the narrator calls "mutual attachment" (*MP* 371), and Sir Thomas ends up realizing that "Fanny was indeed the daughter that he wanted" (*MP* 371). Sir Thomas comes to acknowledge his own shortcomings as a father: "Sir Thomas, poor Sir Thomas, a parent, and conscious of errors in his own conduct as a parent, was the longest to suffer" (*MP* 362). In *Washington Square*, however, Dr. Sloper and Catherine's relationship remains one of power and resistance since Dr. Sloper never acknowledges his parental mismanagement. He is stuck in "his know-it-all attitude and his underestimation of his daughter's ethical qualities" (Levin 275). The masterstroke of his calculating intelligence takes place during their confrontation in the Alps:

> You try my patience . . . , and you ought to know what I am, I am not a very good man. Though I am very smooth externally, at bottom I am very passionate; and I assure you I can be very hard. (*WS* 154)

Even Mrs. Almond is struck by his heartlessness: "You have no sympathy . . . . That was never your strong point" (*WS* 201). He is incapable of empathic judgment and self-reproach. Catherine finally comes to the tragic realization that "the great facts of her career were that Morris Townsend had trifled with her affection, and that her father had broken its spring" (*WS* 203). Therefore, with his heartless and selfish behaviour, Dr. Sloper breaks Catherine's heart and also creates a fissure in her affection for him.

Mansfield Park and *Washington Square* are then stories about the disintegration of a family, and the agent of this collapse is rebellion by the daughters against irrational patriarchal rule. In Austen's novel, Fanny's rejections of Henry Crawford's proposal of marriage bring about Fanny's domestic alienation in the house and Maria Bertram's adultery, since she elopes with Henry. Mary Crawford is indeed aware of Fanny's fault in the

issue: "Why would not she have him? It is all her fault. Simple girl!" (*MP* 358). Maria and Henry's adultery throws into disarray the stability of the family. Thus, Maria's marriage with Mr. Rushworth is obviously invalidated and it ends in a divorce and Maria's elopement encourages Julia to do the same with Mr. Yates. It does not matter whether the family is renewed by Fanny and Edmund's eventual marriage. The seed of chaos is already planted (Valero Redondo, "Operative and Inoperative Communities" 267).

Similarly, in *Washington Square*, Catherine's rebellion against patriarchal authority prompts her domestic isolation and the collapse of her illusions, and she becomes "a mature and diffident spinster" who, like a modern Penelope, spends her life sewing in the front parlour (*WS* 203). As Balzac puts it at the end of *Eugene Grandet*, "such is the story of a woman who, made to be a magnificent wife and mother, has neither husband nor children nor family" (192). Catherine has retreated into the back parlour of the house, her "quiet habits," and her aunt's company (*WS* 210). In other words, she has accepted her fate and resigned herself to it. That James associated Austen with the cultural figure of the old maid, is quite significant. Could he envision his heroine as an alter ego of Jane Austen?

Mansfield Park and *Washington Square* portray a conflict between paternal and social demand and personal will. And yet, there is a space of possibility in both narratives. According to Nancy Armstrong, the novels of Jane Austen "mark the simultaneous modernization of the individual and maturation of the novel" since her heroines' interiority "make[s] small but important differences within a circumscribed community of country gentry" (7). Henry James follows in his predecessor's footsteps in *Washington Square*—and in his subsequent novels—and portrays Catherine's development towards expressive individualism and the dramatization of her interiority. Hence, both Fanny and Catherine defy patriarchal authority and this results in domestic alienation and grief. They emblematize the difficulty of preserving true moral self amid tyrannical parental authority, but, at the same time, they also privilege the search for individuality and self-expression within the domestic plot of the novel.

2. MEDDLESOME AUNTS

The character of the meddlesome aunt figures prominently in both narratives and it functions as a subordinate figure of oppression and manipulation. Mrs. Norris and Mrs. Penniman are marginalized and

dependent women who force their nieces into surrogate figures, a substitute of their own making, willing to exert revenge on them or to put them at emotional risk for their own amusement. With their meddling and manipulation, they play an important part in their nieces' domestic alienation. However, the heroines eventually manage to get rid of their pernicious influence and maneuverings.

Both Mrs. Norris and Mrs. Penniman replace the maternal figure in both narratives, since the mother is either neglectful of her role—as Lady Bertram in *Mansfield Park*—or has died in childbirth—as Mrs. Sloper in *Washington Square*. Mrs. Norris is surely the most despicable character in *Mansfield Park*. She is accepted in the house as a surrogate mother, since Lady Bertram "paid not the smallest attention" to the education of her daughters (*MP* 16). Sir Thomas is aware of this and entrusts Mrs. Norris with the moral education of his offspring, but he eventually realizes "how ill he had judged" to commend his children to her care (*MP* 363). Mrs. Norris fosters Mr. Rushworth and Maria Bertram's engagement and tries to encourage—though quite unsuccessfully—a match between Henry Crawford and Julia Bertram. She is also responsible for trying to coerce Fanny into taking a part in the theatricals: "I am not going to urge her …, but I shall think her a very obstinate, ungrateful girl, if she does not do what her aunt and cousins wish her—very ungrateful, indeed, considering who and what she is" (*MP* 116). Mrs. Norris discloses here "the truth that underlies the family's attitude towards Fanny, but one that should never be spoken so brutally" (Wiltshire 108).

Mrs. Norris certainly harbors a strong antipathy for Fanny. Tellingly, it is she who persuades Sir Thomas to adopt Fanny because the latter provides a surrogate figure, an even more helpless and impoverished person in the house for her to harass, whereas Maria and Julia Bertram embody more flattering versions of herself, since they are legitimate members of the family (Souter 211). According to Tanner, this situation echoes a common theme in fairy-tales, in which the intruding step-daughter is accepted in the household until the step-mother regards her as a competitor (208). Her interest in adopting a daughter of her sister Frances and to make her internalize her own social inferiority in the house allows her to appease her bitterness and hostility (Wiltshire 88). Mrs. Norris's constant harassment and scorn of Fanny are ways to exert control upon her and to play her own frustrations. Not only does her manipulative and hypocritical discourse incessantly assert her kindness and selflessness, but it also uncovers "that she needs continuous self-soothing and self-

appeasing, and that is because in her deepest sense of herself she is a victim" (Wiltshire 89).

Mrs. Penniman is a different kind of meddler; not as mean as Mrs. Norris, and more similar to other of Austen's heroines, like Emma Woodhouse. As Adrian Poole puts it, "Mrs. Penniman is a character on whom Jane Austen would have been proud" (xx). Like Mrs. Norris, Catherine's aunt also functions as a surrogate mother for her niece. An impoverished widow, she settles herself in her brother's house with the account of "tak[ing] charge of her niece's education" (*WS* 31). Dr. Sloper—though quite skeptical about his sister's intellectual powers—accepts "the proposition which Mrs. Penniman had tacitly laid down, that it was of importance that the poor motherless girl should have a brilliant woman near her" (*WS* 32). Catherine's aunt projects her desire to experience, however indirectly, the romantic scenarios she has read about in novels. She is described as a romantic and sentimental woman who had "a passion for little secrets and mysteries" (*WS* 33). Like Emma Woodhouse does with Harriet, Mrs. Penniman tries to force Catherine into a surrogate figure who will succumb to a romantic and forbidden relationship with a dashing gallant. Her match-making fantasies serve to entertain herself and to pass her unoccupied time. She becomes a kind of chaperon and encourages the relationship between Morris and Catherine, even to the point of foiling it.

Mrs. Penniman is a quixotic manipulator who feeds off Catherine's life and who is eager to put Catherine in emotionally charged situations that she herself could never experience during her youth. She uses her niece to satisfy her own frustrated needs. Thus, when Morris deserts Catherine, Mrs. Penniman imagines that Catherine has left the house in a desperate search for her suitor, clasping her hands "with admiration and envy" (*WS* 189). In an authorial (and satirical) comment, James parodies Mrs. Penniman's clichéd romanticism, betraying her repressed desire to steal the limelight from her niece: "It may even be said that there were times when she lost sight altogether of the modest heroine of the play, in the contemplation of certain great passages which would naturally occur between the hero and herself" (*WS* 79). Mrs. Penniman represents the misguided folly of conflating art with reality, much like Catherine Morland and her fascination with Gothic novels in *Northanger Abbey* (McMaster 206).

Both Mrs. Norris and Mrs. Penniman take an active part in their nieces' misfortunes and domestic alienation with their selfishness, and

their silly intrusions and meddlings. They have projected their own frustrations and insecurities onto their nieces, who serve as scapegoats for the appeasement of their bitterness. Whereas Henry Crawford and Morris Townsend are the dangers from without, Mrs. Norris and Mrs. Penniman are the dangers from *within* the domestic realm. Despite their selfish manipulations and schemes, these meddlesome aunts do not manage to coerce Fanny and Catherine. Fanny resorts to passive resistance to endure Mrs. Norris's tyrannical behavior and she does not yield to her aunt's pressures to take part in the theatricals—although she almost yields to Edmund's pressures—and Sir Thomas, finally convinced of Mrs. Norris's pernicious influence on his offspring, banishes her from Mansfield Park: "Mrs. Norris's removal from Mansfield was the great supplementary comfort of Sir Thomas's life" (*MP* 365). Similarly, Catherine finally understands that Mrs. Penniman has been Morris's accomplice in her desertion: "A consummate sense of her aunt's meddlesome folly had come over her during the last five minutes, and she was sickened at the thought that Mrs. Penniman had been let loose, as it were, upon her happiness" (*WS* 192). She is finally awakened to her aunt's machinations and intrusions and "judge[s] her aunt finally and without appeal" (*WS* 192). Through the strategies of passive resistance and self-expression, Fanny and Catherine manage to dodge the selfish manipulations of their surrogate mother figures.

3. DECEITFUL SUITORS

Both narratives portray a conceited and deceitful seducer who likes to trifle with women's affections. This role is played by Henry Crawford in *Mansfield Park* and by Morris Townsend in *Washington Square*. According to Juliet McMaster, Morris Townsend bears a resemblance to Henry Crawford, exuding charm and sophistication while possessing an unwavering belief in his own worth (205). These seducers mask their real intentions through acting. They rely on impersonation to seduce and entrap vulnerable and unprotected women like Fanny and Catherine. The heroines, however, are capable of looking through their masks, proving to have sufficient judgment and capacity for self-expression.[2]

[2] Penny Gay (2002) and Paula Byrne (2007) have made a significant contribution to Austen criticism, analyzing Austen's novels in light of her knowledge of eighteenth-

Henry Crawford entertains himself by seducing the two Bertram sisters and once they are totally infatuated with him, he turns his mind to Fanny: "my plan is to make Fanny Price in love with me" (*MP* 179). However, Fanny is not as easily seduced as he imagines. She is not deceived by his talk and attention and she cannot forget how he compromised her cousins' decorum and propriety during the theatricals. Fanny's affections are steady and loyal, and her love for her cousin Edmund, remains unaltered. Catherine Sloper, however, *does* fall prey to Morris Townsend's gallantries, falling sincerely and devotedly in love with him. He is an opportunist who is only in love with Catherine's inheritance, and when he learns that her father will not leave her a dollar, he deserts her unscrupulously and heartlessly, leaving her with a broken heart.

Both Henry Crawford and Morris Townsend are deceitful actors who know how to play their roles. Indeed, Fanny considers Henry the best actor of all in the theatricals: "She did not like him as a man, but she must admit him to be the best actor" (*MP* 129). Like the great actor that he is, he can mimic and appropriate the feelings that he says he has. His talent for acting is again underscored in his courting of Fanny. In one interesting episode, he takes a copy of Shakespeare's *Henry VIII* and starts to read it, performing the parts of all the different characters, "and whether it were dignity, or pride, or tenderness, or remorse, or whatever were to be expressed, he could do it with equal beauty" (*MP* 264). He can imitate all these feelings because he can feel none of them inside (Tanner 169). It is telling that Austen chooses *Henry VIII* as the play that Crawford picks up, given that both Henries are real Casanovas who entertain themselves by seducing a variety of ladies (Tanner 169). Of all the characters, Henry is the one who recalls the theatricals with more enthusiasm and nostalgia: "I shall always look back on our theatricals with exquisite pleasure. . . . We were all alive" (*MP* 176). As Penny Gay, puts it, "only while acting does Henry feel really alive and purposeful; he has no other 'employment'" (Gay 103).

Similarly, when she meets Morris Townsend for the first time at a party, Catherine wonders at his eloquence:

century theatre and demonstrating how she brings the characteristics and techniques of the theatre into the narrative form of the novel.

> It was the way a young man might talk in a novel; or better still, in a play, on the stage, close before the footlights, looking at the audience, and with every one looking at him, so that you wondered at his presence of mind. (*WS* 44)

The fact that, at the same time, "he seemed so sincere, so natural" (*WS* 44), proves that he, like Henry Crawford, is indeed a very talented actor. It is also quite significant that Morris has travelled widely, read widely, and has been a keen theatergoer: he has seen "all the principal actors" and has "been to all the best theatres in London and Paris" (*WS* 57).[3] The theatrical qualities of Morris inevitably reminds us of the anecdote which triggers the plot of the novel: actress Fanny Kemle's story about her hypocritical brother, who deserted her fiancée when he learned that her father would not leave her a penny (Buonomo 34). It is as if "James had transferred Fanny Kemble's role and skills onto her brother's fictional counterpart" (Buonomo 34). Both Henry and Morris use their dramatic talents to seduce and manipulate naïve and innocent women.

These seducers have a remarkable ability to please. Henry, "though not handsome, had air and countenance" and his manners "were lively and pleasant" (*MP* 33). Not only is Henry a shrewd seducer, his sister Mary Crawford also likes "to arouse and tease affection" (Souter 209). Their spoiled childhood and the fact that they were adored and manipulated by their aunt and uncle makes them use feelings as weapons "to be used when useful, and an investment against possible future need" (Souter 209). Thus, Henry entertains himself by making the Bertram sisters fall in love with him:

> Mr. Crawford did not mean to be in any danger! The Miss Bertrams were worth pleasing, and were ready to be pleased; and he began with no object but of making them like him. He did not want them to die of love; but with sense and temper which ought to have made him judge and feel better, he allowed himself great latitude on such points. (*MP* 35)

As good a performer that he is, Henry is "quick, sensitive, and multi-talented" (Gay 99). Likewise, Morris's talk "was light and easy and

[3] Tellingly, the ghost of Peter Quint is also characterized as an actor in James's *The Turn of the Screw*. Thus, when the governess encounters the ghost for the first time, she asserts that the odious figure gave her "a sort of sense of looking like an actor" (37). For James, the ability of acting is associated with deviousness.

friendly" (*WS* 56) and he did not require a lot of effort to cajole Mrs. Penniman and Catherine at a party, an ideal setting in which he can display his performative qualities, namely his handsomeness, sophistication, pleasing manners, and eloquence (Buonomo 32).

These characters are "living commodities," offering themselves up "for visual consumption as a thing of beauty and a product to be purchased at a very high price" (Buonomo 32). Thus, despite his plain physical appearance, Crawford is soon admired by the two Bertram sisters, who compete for his attention. Morris Townsend, on his part, soon gains the admiration and confidence of both Mrs. Penniman and Catherine. Mrs. Penniman asserts that he is very handsome and clever, and that he expresses himself "with a great deal of felicity" (*WS* 47), whereas her niece compares him to "a young knight in a poem" (*WS* 56).

Apart from this, these dashing gallants have a cosmopolitan and sophisticated nature. They have travelled and read widely, and they are most comfortable when in society. Therefore, Henry Crawford, who is accustomed to the thrilling life of London, has a great dislike "[t]o anything like a permanence of abode, or limitation of society" (*MP* 33), a fact that is regarded with suspicion by the more conservative Edmund and Fanny. As for Morris Townsend, he is also a wanderer: he had been "knocking about the world, and living in queer corners" (*WS* 44). He has spent his youth travelling and spending his inheritance recklessly and, at the moment he meets Catherine, he has been teaching his nephews and nieces Spanish (*WS* 102). In short, they have turned themselves "into an exquisite object for visual and social consumption" (Buonomo 34).

As the living commodities that they are, Henry and Morris regard the women around themselves as little more than fetishist commodities, "essentially bought and sold by members of her family, encouraged to sell [themselves] for rank and wealth, and doubly deserted by both [their] immediate and adopted relatives" (Heydt-Stevenson 144). Hence, Henry schemes with her sister to "buy" Fanny with a necklace and, tellingly, Mary metonymically refers to Fanny as a "lovely throat" (*MP* 203). Additionally, Henry contrives to have William Price promoted in order to obtain Fanny's favors as a reward. He marks Fanny's body as a "displayable commodity" (Gay 115). Her very name, Fanny Price, implies prostitution, the value of her body, and echoes the name of Fanny Hill, the heroine of John Cleland's *Memoirs of a Woman of Pleasure* (1749), "the narrative that helped codify the name of Fanny as slang for female genitalia" (Heydt-Stevenson 144). Despite his maneuverings, Fanny is

able to see behind Henry's apparent benevolence and to resist his encroachments. Fanny's moral intelligence is unshakeable and resolute and she never falls prey to Henry's performative traits. In rejecting Henry, Fanny proves to have self-determination since she refuses to participate in heterosexual commerce.

Morris Townsend, on his part, woos and seduces Catherine and, when he learns that her father will not bequeath his money to her, he deserts her. Not daring to break their engagement, Morris asks Mrs. Penniman to prepare Catherine and to ease him off. However, seeing that Mrs. Penniman will not be of much help to him, he tries to provoke a quarrel between him and Catherine, behaving in a cruel manner and leaving her brokenhearted. Days later, Morris sends her an insincere letter full of excuses and playing the role of a victim of "a great social law" (*WS* 196). After Dr. Sloper's death and with Mrs. Penniman's assistance, Morris comes back to the house to win Catherine—and her inheritance—back, this time playing the role of a repentant suitor and unsuccessful man who has "an evil star against him" (*WS* 212). Morris has certainly perfected his theatrical skills and constantly rehearses his part as the hero of a sentimental romance.

But Catherine has gained maturity, judgment, and self-expression, and she rejects Morris's pitiful discourse once and for all: "I can't begin again—I can't take it up. Everything is dead and buried" (*WS* 219). She undergoes a *rite de passage* from illusion to disenchantment: "It seemed to be he, and yet not he; it was the man who had been everything, and yet this person was nothing" (*WS* 216). Her awakening is complete, and Catherine is, finally, confronted with the real man behind the mask. Her ensuing resistance to marry any other man implies a desire to preserve her social and economic independence and a rejection of any proprietary treatment of her.

4. STOIC HEROINES

In both novels, we find two stoic heroines who pay a high price for upholding their moral values in the sadistic and perverted power play that unfolds around them. In this sense, they are like Richardson's Clarissa, conservative heroines torn between the coercion of their family and the preservation of their moral self (McKeon 418). Their internal struggle between self-expression and self-discipline turns them into complex and layered individuals. And yet, both Fanny Price and Catherine Sloper

preserve their moral consciousness among the selfish and aggressive manipulation of their families and they are finally able to rebel against the pressures of paternal authority. They are timid, silent and unassertive heroines who are extremely vulnerable, but who can judge and see the world more accurately than the rest of the characters. According to Tonny Tanner, we can see in Fanny Price a "lonely conscience" (Tanner 175) and I argue that we can apply this to Catherine as well. Both protagonists have been subjected to manipulation, coercion and victimization, and yet they have been finally erected as the true preservers of moral integrity.

Fanny Price is first described as "small of her age, with no glow of complexion, nor any other striking beauty; exceedingly timid and shy, and shrinking from notice" (*MP* 10). The references to her "faults of ignorance and timidity" (*MP* 16) and her "quiet passive manner" (*MP* 12) are frequently stressed by the narrator and characters in the novel. Similarly, the ironic narrator of *Washington Square* presents Catherine Sloper as a "quiet and irresponsive girl" who, like Fanny, was "shy, uncomfortably, painfully shy" (*MP* 147). Like Fanny as well, she "is extremely modest, had no desire to shine, and on most social occasions… you would have found her lurking in the background" (*MP* 145). As opposed to most of Austen's and James's other heroines, who are active and talkative, confront injustices, and resist oppression, Fanny and Catherine are totally passive and submissive. "What is become of all the shyness in the world?" asks Jane Austen to her sister Cassandra (*Jane Austen's Letters* 124). She means "a true unassertive reticence of soul. A selflessness; a quietness" (Tanner 156). Fanny and Catherine are stoic heroines with "undiverted heart[s]" (*WS* 160) who exert resistance through silence and endurance.

However, although they are continually subjected to abuse, persuasion and oppression by their tyrannical fathers, Fanny and Catherine possess a steady and unshakeable moral intelligence. They stick to their pledges and unrequited loves, and this results in sacrifice, renunciation, and solitary grief. When her cousins and Mrs. Norris try to persuade her to participate in the theatricals, Fanny gathers all her courage to voice her rejection: "Me! . . . Indeed you must excuse me. I could not act any thing if you were to give me the world. No, indeed, I cannot act" (*MP* 115).

But Fanny's most significant resistance to pressure occurs when Sir Thomas—the figure of authority—attempts to coax her, against her better judgment, to marry Henry Crawford. Fanny is able to threaten parental logos and to resist Sir Thomas's subjugating authority: "I—I cannot like him, sir, well enough to marry him" (*MP* 246). As Jane Stabler puts it,

Fanny's resolute rejection of Henry Crawford goes beyond the courage displayed by Elizabeth in refusing Darcy and Mr. Collins in *Pride and Prejudice*. Fanny's act of resistance involves not only rejecting a potential marriage based on financial considerations but also defying parental authority (xxxii). Thus, Fanny struggles to maintain her inner independence without revealing her most cherished secret; her silent love of Edmund Bertram. Her main weapon is certainly "the consciousness of being born to struggle and endure" (*MP* 372). Clara Calvo reads Fanny as a reworking of Shakespeare's Cordelia (85); her passivity and silence certainly echo Cordelia's famous avowal: "What shall Cordelia speak? Love, and be silent" (1.1. 62). Like Cordelia, Fanny also loves Edmund and remains silent.

Similarly, Catherine Sloper also demonstrates moral vitality and independence when she refuses to be directed by her father's and her suitor's manipulations. Catherine feels a strong devotion for her father and he knows how to take advantage of this. Her docile nature is stressed by the narrator: "her father's words had such an authority for her that her very thoughts were capable of obeying him" (*WS* 124). According to Scheiber, her "subordinate position requires her to demonstrate her subservience and transparency to her father's will" (6). When Dr. Sloper orders her to choose between him or her suitor, and to give the other up, Catherine responds "with a pitiful cry" (*WS* 126) since she expected some understanding from her father. Yet, Catherine manages to resist her father's coercion and her lover's pressures by what Levin calls a "slowness campaign" against them (281). Hence, when Morris inconsiderately presses her to marry him as soon as possible, Catherine resorts to patience: "I should be strong enough to wait—to wait a long time" (*WS* 133). Her courage lies certainly in her patience and endurance. Dr. Sloper does not understand Catherine's passive resistance, her "slowness campaign," which is based on patient expectation: "To be good, she must be patient, respectful, abstain from judging her father too harshly, and from committing any act of open defiance" (*WS* 107). Like Fanny, Catherine also adopts Cordelia's strategy of passivity and silence: "What shall Catherine speak? Love and be silent."[4]

Catherine's most decisive act of resistance occurs when she refuses to make a promise that would imply total surrender to her father's coercion.

[4] This is a rewriting of Shakespeare's line in *King Lear:* "What shall Cordelia speak? Love, and be silent" (1.1. 62).

She refuses to promise him that she will never marry Townsend after his death. Instead of deceiving him, Catherine decides to remain silent with a father who is anxious to know the truth. As Rosenberg puts it, "in refusing to give to coercion what she had previously offered willingly, Catherine refuses humiliation. To her father, she will grant no leeway to injure her once more" (67). Dr. Sloper—the man who prides himself on predicting everything—dies frustrated by Catherine's enigmatic silence. The infallible philosopher, who can diagnose any sickness and who can divide people into types, is unable to foresee what her "plain inanimate girl" will do (Bell 111). Catherine asserts her independence through her silence and passive resistance.

Even though they have a passive and acquiescent surface, both Fanny and Catherine prove to have an exemplary moral consciousness that protects them against coercion and the moral corruption of their families. Our heroines are neither active nor resolute; they do not challenge their oppressors, they lack vitality, but they do possess self-reliance. Fanny and Catherine do not use their psychological depth and their ability to analyze others in order to cause damage, but to protect themselves, and this signals their own moral superiority (Zacharias 215). As Edmund says to Sir Thomas, "Fanny is the only one who has judged rightly throughout, who has been consistent. *Her* feelings have been steadily against it from first to last" (*MP* 147). Fanny follows her inner instincts "in a world of falling worldly standards" (Tanner 147). When Henry Crawford instinctively asks her for guidance and approval, Fanny answers: "We have all a better guide in ourselves: if we would attend to it, than any other person can be" (*MP* 324). Her most important weapon against coercion and immorality is her own moral consciousness, which allows her to endure and survive. For Fanny, "no law can be sacred but that of [her] nature" (Emerson 2).

Catherine also undergoes an internal development in the novel, since she eventually learns how to analyze her father's harshness towards her without condemning him. She gains insight about her father's conduct and limitations and she comes to understand that Sloper's love for her dead mother somehow hinders his paternal affections, even if he ignores it (*WS* 166). Catherine thus develops a form of "empathic judgment," which implies "an acknowledgement of what is more vulnerable in the being one judges" (Levin 286). She also demonstrates her capacity for empathic judgment when Morris Townsend returns with the aim to resume their relationship. We can trace here the evolution of her character. She is no longer the vulnerable and naïve girl who was infatuated with Morris's

eloquence and physical appearance: "It seemed to be he, and yet not he; it was the man who had been everything, and yet this person was nothing" (*WS* 216). Like Fanny, Catherine gains more psychological depth and self-reliance. This moral growth allows her to become a kind of counsellor to all the young members of the neighborhood, who go to her for guidance and counsel in amorous matters. According to Zacharias, "Catherine becomes for others the mentor she never had for herself" (215).

These heroines' vulnerabilities and silences are counterbalanced by their ability to see beyond appearances and impersonation (Calvo 87). Their rebellion against patriarchal authority not only implies a movement towards self-knowledge and self-expression, but also an awakening to the knowledge of potential freedom and autonomy.

CONCLUSIONS

To conclude, I have read Henry James's *Washington Square* as an unacknowledged reworking of Jane Austen's *Mansfield Park* and I have analyzed both novels as fictions of domestic alienation in which the heroine refuses to allow her individuality to be threatened by patriarchal authority and parental mismanagement; by the interferences and meddlings of their manipulative aunts; or by the libertine corruption of their devious suitors. Both narratives portray stories about parental mismanagement and the challenge of patriarchal authority. Therefore, we find two patriarchal figures who subject their daughters to coercion and oppression, contributing to the heroines' internal struggle between expressive individualism and emotional restraint. And yet, both Fanny and Catherine gather sufficient individuality and capacity for self-expression to confront paternal authority.

The character of the meddlesome aunt is also a subsidiary figure of coercion and manipulation in the domestic sphere. Mrs. Norris and Mrs. Penniman are frustrated women who force their nieces into surrogate figures, eager to exact retribution for their ostracised status in the household, or to put them at emotional risk for their own entertainment. With their meddling and selfishness, both aunts take an active part in their nieces' tribulations and domestic alienation. Despite this, Fanny and Catherine resort to the strategies of passive resistance and self-expression to effectively challenge their aunt's selfish manipulations.

A further participant in the domestic warfare between the heroines and the parental figure is the character of the deceitful seducer who likes to

trifle with women's affections. Henry Crawford and Morris Townsend rely on their dramatic talents and their eloquence to seduce and manipulate vulnerable and unprotected women like Fanny and Catherine. They have a remarkable ability to please and they know how to use it to their own advantage. These gallants offer themselves as "living commodities" (Buonomo 32) and, therefore, they regard women around themselves as little more than fetishist commodities. However, Fanny possesses sufficient judgement and capacity for self-expression to reject Henry, whereas Catherine, at first infatuated with Morris's eloquence, gains maturity and self-expression, and ends up rejecting Morris once and for all.

Although they have been subjected to coercion and oppression by these three manipulative figures, Fanny Price and Catherine Sloper are able to resist domestic alienation and they emerge as the true preservers of moral integrity in their families. They are neither active nor resolute, but they possess self-reliance and moral intelligence, which allow them to endure and survive in the contested domestic sphere. Their insurgence against patriarchal rule not only implies a movement towards self-knowledge and self-expression, but also the consciousness of their potential self-determination and independence.

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"The Things I Touched Were Living": Autotopography, Memory, and Identity in Patti Smith's *M Train*

"Todo lo que tocaba estaba vivo": Autotopografía, memoria e identidad en *M Train* de Patti Smith

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Abstract: In 1995, Jennifer A. González coined the concept of "autotopography" to refer to those collections of objects which contain autobiographical information and may therefore become "museums of the self." This paper analyzes Patti Smith's *M Train* as an autotopographical narrative in which the author displays (through text and photography) the many objects that connect her to the past, acting as triggers for her memories and as repositories of identity. This article stresses that looking into the nature of autobiographical objects, and their links to the different ways of remembering, will allow us to further understand how lives are constituted on the page.
Keywords: autotopography; memory; life writing; *M Train*; Patti Smith.
Summary: Introduction. Autotopography: How Objects Tell Our Lives. *M Train*: Patti Smith's Museum of the Self. Conclusions.

Resumen: En 1995, Jennifer A. González acuñó el término de "autotopografía" para referirse a aquellas colecciones de objetos que contienen información autobiográfica y que pueden llegar a convertirse en museos de identidad. Esta propuesta analiza *M Train*, de Patti Smith, como una narración autotopográfica en la que la autora expone (a través del texto y de la fotografía) aquellos objetos que la conectan con el pasado, actuando como desencadenantes de recuerdos y depósitos de identidad. Estudiar la naturaleza de los objetos autobiográficos y sus vínculos con las diferentes maneras de recordar, nos permite entender más a fondo cómo se constituyen las vidas sobre el papel.
Palabras clave: autotopografía; memoria; autobiografía; *M Train*; Patti Smith.

Sumario: Introducción. Autotopografía: Cómo los objetos cuentan nuestras vidas. *M Train*: El museo de identidad de Patti Smith. Conclusiones.

INTRODUCTION

Patti Smith was, from a very early age, fascinated by the power of words. Always a voracious reader and, for more than five decades now, a poet and singer-songwriter, it was not until 2010 that she officially embarked on prose writing—more specifically, autobiographical prose writing. With four autobiographical works in the market—three prose narratives written in the form of memoir (*Just Kids*, 2010; *M Train*, 2015; and *Year of the Monkey*, 2019), and a photobook (*A Book of Days*, 2022)—Smith's has become one of the most powerful and far-reaching female voices in popular culture. Her first memoir, *Just Kids*, won her not only the National Book Award for Nonfiction but also numerous accolades from critics, contemporary musicians and artists, and the general reading public. Her love for the magic of words has certainly got her far, but words are not the only ones that hold such power for Smith. In her second autobiographical work, *M Train*, the writer unveils her strong interest in—almost fetish for—objects and their ability to trade on sacredness and ordinariness, past and present, remembrance and forgetfulness. This essay intends to analyze the autobiographical role performed by objects in Patti Smith's *M Train* through the lens of autotopography and its connections with memory, the past, and identity construction.

There is a long tradition of viewing objects as repositories of memories, stories, and even identities. The power of objects may transcend life, as happens with grave goods buried along with someone's body for them to use in the afterlife, or with heirlooms passed down to the younger generations of a family by those older relatives who might wish to be remembered. Objects are inextricably linked to identity and its construction; they are often seen as extensions of the self (Belk), provocations to thought (Turkle), carriers of past into present (Pearce), or triggers for autobiographical memory (Berntsen). It is no wonder, then, that objects play such a fundamental role in life writing, itself being mainly concerned with the recording and shaping of selfhood. Essentially, objects encapsulate autobiographical information that, when arranged into a story, take on a new significance.

1. AUTOTOPOGRAPHY: HOW OBJECTS TELL OUR LIVES

In 1995, Jennifer A. González coined the concept of "autotopography," an approach now crucial when examining objects as autobiographical artifacts. In her definition, González argues that "just as a written autobiography is a series of narrated events, fantasies, and identifications, so too an autotopography forms a spatial representation of important relations, emotional ties, and past events" (134). According to her, objects such as photographs, souvenirs, or heirlooms function as "prostheses of the mind" or "physical extensions of the psyche" in that they represent different intangible memories of our past experiences, thus performing an autobiographical role. This is also the case for more serviceable objects (that may or may not still be in service) which are no longer valued for their utilitarian purpose but instead are treasured because they have become representative of the self (133).

This view that the more ordinary or mundane objects that surround us in our everyday lives can perform as powerful an autobiographical role as those objects whose purpose is precisely that of representing a part of ourselves (e.g. photographs) is generally accepted among theorists. Joanne B. Karpinski notes that "any personal possession can be considered an auto/biographical artifact" (55). These might fall, according to Karpinski, into one of two categories: "objects that physically encode auto/biographical information"—among which she distinguishes between those that are literally part of the subject's life and those that are merely representative of that life in a pictorial or graphical way—"and objects that have been preserved due to their auto/biographical associations" (55). Along the same lines, Petrelli et al. observe how "everyday objects become mementos by virtue of what the owner has invested in them, be it time or emotion" (56). They argue, however, that these objects are not as directly related to the original memory as photographs or artwork can be (57). Similarly, Sherry Turkle's work on *Evocative Objects* draws attention to those items which seem intrinsically evocative because of the vividness of the memory they bring back, as opposed to those objects whose significance stems from the moment or circumstance they entered the person's life (8). Richard Heersmink, too, acknowledges these two categories, making a distinction between "representational objects" and "non-representational objects." According to Heersmink, the main difference lies in the fact that the latter leave room for more interpretation: "A photo or video of a past holiday exactly shows what a certain event was

like, but a souvenir of the same holiday has no isomorphism to a past event and so provides more room to the imagination of the user" (1836). Nuances aside, there seems to be agreement among theorists on the distinction between those objects which literally depict a particular memory and those which are merely reminiscent of such memory—and, perhaps more importantly, they all acknowledge the autobiographical power held by the latter. Representational or not, whenever several of these auto/biographical objects are arranged or gathered into a collection, however neat or messy, we can then speak of an autotopography, as is the case with Patti Smith's *M Train*.

2. *M TRAIN*: PATTI SMITH'S MUSEUM OF THE SELF

The story in Patti Smith's *M Train* opens as the year 2011 is coming to an end. Smith, a 66-year-old widow living in New York, goes about her daily life while reflecting on loss, self-awareness, and the passing of time. In a book so connected to memory and the past, autotopography plays a significant role not only in highlighting the ability of certain objects to enclose autobiographical information, but also in revealing how these act as triggers of Smith's memories. Although *M Train* is chiefly understood as a narrative in which Smith writes about herself (as in an autobiography or memoir), it is also a space in which she displays—both in writing and through the photographs that illustrate the text—many of the objects that link her present self to the past by means of the memories they evoke (as in an autotopography). Through this "museum of the self" that the author crafts narratively and visually, an identity is constructed both for the reader and for the writer herself.

"Museum of the self" is a phrase coined by Jennifer González as a synonym for "autotopography" which she explains arguing that "the material world is called upon to present a physical map of memory, history and belief" (134). Autotopography is inextricably linked to the concept of identity, so much so that Pearce thinks of objects as external souls: "external because physically distinct and separate, but souls because the meaning projected on to them brings them into the interior of our personal lives" (45). For her, the connection between object and identity, then, lies in the exercise of attributing meaning to the items we own. Belk, nevertheless, goes one step further and regards possessions as parts of an extended self. This self may continue to exist beyond death by virtue of the objects which create, enhance, and preserve our sense of identity

("Possessions" 150). Likewise, Heersmink considers that "the self is partly constituted by the web of evocative objects in our lifeworld" (1830). To a certain extent, we are made of the possessions which hold a special place in our hearts, objects which are probably more representative of our identity than any narrative of ourselves we may produce (Pearce 55). This museum of the self that we (consciously or not) curate over time, ultimately becomes a physical autobiography, that is, an autotopography, which "provides stability and continuity for our autobiographical memory and narrative self. By interacting with these objects, we construct and reconstruct our past and by doing so also our personal identity" (Heersmink 1846). Objects that link us to our past selves thus help us reflect on our future selves and end up shaping our identity, and by extension, shaping us.

M Train works as autotopography, or museum of the self, on two different levels. On the one hand, embedded in the text are countless references to objects which disclose autobiographical information. Whether only mentioned or extensively described, every one of these items reveals something about the author's identity. On the other hand, the book also contains a personal museum made up of more than fifty Polaroids taken by Smith which complement the narrative. These photographs may be analyzed from different perspectives when it comes to autotopography. Let us focus first on the Polaroids as actual (material) objects. Sontag describes photographs as "miniatures of reality" (2), privileged moments turned into objects (12), objects of fascination (17), inventories of the world (16), "unpremeditated slices of the world" (54). Thinking of photographs as actual objects is relevant because, while we tend to engage in their content alone, the pictures themselves already carry some sort of meaning. As any other object, they may deteriorate or get lost; they may be gifted or arranged into a collection. All these possibilities grant photographs a status of their own. This is particularly true of Polaroids, regarded as "image-objects" by Peter Buse, who argues that "[t]he Polaroid image is stubbornly attached to its material support in a way that even conventional negative-based photography never was" (85). "Every photographic print," Buse concludes, "is a material object, but a Polaroid is somehow more so" (228). The absence of a negative, as well as its characteristic white border, make Polaroids singular artifacts (Buse 228). Smith seems to acknowledge that her Polaroids are not only images representing a particular moment in time, but also artifacts that can be

stacked, collected, or lost. In *M Train*, she describes pictures as sacred pieces that adorn her "Polaroid rosary" (168):

> Spanish pilgrims travel on Camino de Santiago from monastery to monastery, collecting small medals to attach to their rosary as proof of their steps. I have stacks of Polaroids, each marking my own, that I sometimes spread out like tarots or baseball cards of an imagined celestial team. (200–02)

Similarly, in *Year of the Monkey*, when Smith comes across a manila folder containing Polaroids of her various trips, she writes: "One after another, each a talisman on a necklace of continuous travels" (123). Photographs are, for Smith, magical objects containing memories, scraps of life.

Interesting, too, is photography's inherent connection to the past: a moment photographed is a moment gone, a moment that will never take place in exactly the same way. "All photographs are memento mori. To take a photograph is to participate in another person's (or thing's) mortality, vulnerability, mutability. Precisely by slicing out this moment and freezing it, all photographs testify to time's relentless melt" (Sontag 11). Photography's link to nostalgia, then, is perhaps more evident than any other object's; holding a picture is like holding an actual piece of the past. When speaking about items that elicit from us an emotional response connected to the past, the photograph is the evocative object *par excellence*. Photographs call for a distinct analysis, for although they may fall into the category of evocative objects, and despite the fact that they sometimes function as souvenirs, they are essentially different.

Because of their representational character, photographs bear a direct relation to the memory they depict. Hence, they make our stories more believable. When combined with a written text, however, this is not photography's only function. Timothy Dow Adams points to a "common sense view . . . that photography operates as a visual supplement (illustration) and a corroboration (verification) of the text—that photographs may help to establish, or at least reinforce, autobiography's referential dimension" (xxi). Yet he argues that "the role of photography is far from simple or one-dimensional," noting how the combination of text and image "may intensify rather than reduce the complexity of each taken separately" (xxi). This is not to say that photography does not serve the purpose of authenticating text, only that it does more than that. In her article "Photo-as-Thing," for instance, Julia Breitbach examines how

pictures (as physical objects) serve as slices of the past which help us make sense of our present:

> Bringing the past into the present and transforming absence into presence, photographs of younger selves, long-lost friends, or unforgettable vistas become cornerstones to the narrative edifice of one's life story. By way of their sheer materiality on the one hand, and their seeming transparency of a bygone reality on the other, photos seem to lend a vicarious stability and substantiality to fickle memories, providing structural support, factual evidence, and narrative coherence to human biographies. They are convenient biographical props to be (re)appropriated by human subjects and put into the context of their lives in the present tense. (37)

Photographs' connections to memory and identity, then, prove to be more complex than those of objects with no isomorphism to the moment, place or person they represent.

Photography anchors people, places, and objects to particular moments in our timelines, therefore making them (and the memories associated with them) more easily reachable—and yet, never entirely reached. When taping a photograph of Schiller's table in Jena above her desk, Smith reflects: "Despite its simplicity I thought it innately powerful, a conduit transporting me back to Jena" (104). Still, while the photograph may bring the past closer to us, it can also make the gap between past and present more evident. As Belk notes,

> [w]hereas possessions like furniture, houses, and clothing may act as unchanging objects proving the security of the familiar in our lives, photographs remind us of who we once were in a way that invites comparison and highlights how we have changed. ("The Role" 670)

Photography attests to change and we are not always ready to accept it. Similarly, Breitbach points to photography's silence and its consequent need for a narrative as a quality linked to nostalgia, for the accompanying narrative will be inevitably rooted in the past (138)—a past that itself is irrecoverable. The embedding of photographs is therefore particularly fitting for a narrative like *M Train*, which is, as we will see, mostly guided by nostalgia.

Out of the 55 illustrations in *M Train*, 48 are credited to Smith, half of which are pictures of objects. These seem to be reproductions of Polaroid pictures taken by the author, who declares on several occasions throughout

the narrative that she rarely leaves the house without one of her trusted Polaroid cameras. The collection of pictures incorporated into *M Train* ultimately constitutes a kind of personal museum of the self, a museum displaying photographs of objects ranging from the most mundane (a table and chair from her favorite café [6], an arrangement of items on her dresser [33] or her coffeemaker [46]) to the most extraordinary (Roberto Bolaño's chair [26] Frida Kahlo's bed [106] or Herman Hesse's typewriter [248]). As Sontag notes, "to photograph is to confer importance" (22). Even though Smith's Polaroids denote ordinariness—some of them are slightly out of focus or oddly framed—they hold a special place in her memory and thus in her heart, as do the objects photographed. What is more, these photographs are not autobiographical only in terms of what the objects portrayed represent for Smith. "In one sense," Adams notes, "all photographs are self-portraits . . . in that they tell us something about the photographer's eye" (227). *M Train* is illustrated with black-and-white Polaroid photographs with a seemingly unpremeditated style. Through her choices of focus, lighting, or framing, Smith is creating an aesthetic which is ultimately revealing of herself, of the narrative she wishes to convey, of the self she wishes to represent. With each new book, Smith has moved closer to photography, feeling notably at ease with the medium—so much so that her latest publication, *A Book of Days*, is primarily photographic, with text merely present in the form of long captions—and taking more risks as far as the interplay between text and image is concerned.

2.1 Precious Possessions: The Sacred and the Ordinary

The objects we make, acquire, inherit, or keep—even the ones we lose, discard, or gift to others—play a central role in the act of reminiscence, ultimately becoming part of our autotopography. Belk observes how "[o]bjects of the past are often intentionally acquired and retained in order to remember pleasant or momentous times in one's past" and points to souvenirs and mementos as markers of memories ("The Role" 670). These often serve no utilitarian purpose other than representing a time or a place rooted in the past; they function only as catalysts for our memories. According to Bill Brown, we are then looking at things, not objects. Although for the sake of this essay I use the terms "object" and "thing" interchangeably, I wish to acknowledge Brown's definition of things as

> what is excessive in objects, as what exceeds their mere materialization as objects or their mere utilization as objects—their force as a sensuous presence or as a metaphysical presence, the magic by which objects become values, fetishes, idols, and totems. ("Thing Theory" 5)

It is not the objects themselves, but their thingness, that really moves us. In Peter Schwenger's words, "[t]hings are valued not because of their rarity or cost or their historical aura, but because they seem to partake in our lives . . . Their long association with us seems to make them custodian of our memories" (3). As Hoskins puts it, "it is not the physical characteristics of objects that make them biographical, but the meanings imputed to them as significant personal possessions" (195). It is our interpretation of the stories we associate with these objects that make them so special. In order to understand the thingness of objects, what they come to represent, an accompanying narrative is therefore needed for souvenirs, mementos, or photographs to bear some meaning. According to Susan Sontag, "[o]nly that which narrates can make us understand" (18). Yet, however unserviceable souvenirs may seem, the people we tell our stories to are more likely to trust our accounts when there are physical traces (photographs, mementos) that represent such anecdotes. Objects, then, authenticate our narrative, prove our story. González puts it simply when she states: "Autobiography thus becomes an act of collection, arrangement, and authentication of objects as much as the construction of narrative that accompanies these activities" (142). The object needs the narrative; the narrative needs the object.

Smith's autobiographical work is filled with objects whose thingness pervades the narrative. Whether in the form of "an obsolete Brother word processor" (27), a copy of W. G. Sebald's *After Nature* (66) or a nineteenth-century wishing well (273), Smith is able to see beyond objects and appreciate the magic of their thingness. In *Just Kids*, when writing about Robert Mapplethorpe's ability to transform everyday objects into art, Smith reflects: "It is said that children do not distinguish between living and inanimate objects; I believe they do. A child imparts a doll or tin soldier with magical life-breath. The artist animates his work as the child his toys" (136). Something similar happens in *M Train*, where Smith animates the objects she encounters, to the extent that she holds conversations with a channel changer ("I changed your batteries, I say pleadingly, so change the damn channel" [32]), a fishing hook ("Hello, Curly, I whisper, and am instantly gladdened" [37]), or a bedspread ("Can

you imagine the odds of such an encounter? I say to my floral bedspread" [60]), among many others. Smith herself comes to admit: "Perhaps I should be concerned as to why I have conversations with inanimate objects" (32). In this story where dream often eclipses reality, the reader soon gets accustomed to such eccentricities. It is as if, so to speak, certain inanimate objects had a life of their own. At a given moment, she leaves her camera behind and confesses: "It was unsettling to imagine it alone in the bench without film, unable to record its own passage into the hands of a stranger" (146). This is not, however, particular to Smith. As Keith Moxey observes,

> [a]ffirmations that objects are endowed with a life of their own—that they possess an existential status endowed with agency—have become commonplace. Without a doubt, objects (aesthetic or not) induce pangs of feeling and carry emotional freight that cannot be dismissed. . . . Yet they also serve as . . . foci for the observation of ritual, and they satisfy communal as well as personal needs. (53)

Similarly, in his study on the possessions accumulated in different households in a London street, Daniel Miller realizes that objects do, in some way, talk: "These things are not a random collection. They have been gradually accumulated as an expression of that person or household. Surely if we can listen to these things we have access to an authentic other voice" (2). Possessions, then, might be regarded as bearing some sort of identity or, as the New Materialists would put it, agency. No longer relegated to the background, objects are now, with the material turn, regarded as active matter, capable of shaping our relations and perceptions, of generating emotional responses (Hallam and Hockey 43).

Smith's fascination with objects is such that she draws no line between the ordinary and the sacred, both deserving of the same consideration. Among the items which, for her, are imbued with a certain holiness, we find a handkerchief sack containing stones from the Saint-Laurent prison which "manifest a sacredness second only to [her] wedding ring" (20) or an antiquated typewriter to which she claims to owe "a nagging allegiance" (27). Such is the devotion with which Smith speaks about her possessions that Anna Heyward suggests that "the many magical objects of Patti Smith" (as she titles her article in *The New York Times*) ultimately belong to the category of "hagiography," a term which describes the writing practice concerned with the lives of saints but which may also be used,

according to the *Oxford English Dictionary*, when referring to "a biography which idealizes or idolizes its subject." Smith's autotopography is, in a way, a biography of all the objects she worships.

The more commonplace objects also play an important role in Smith's everyday life—beyond that of their inherent utility. The author even weighs the ordinariness of certain possessions against the extraordinariness of others:

> I saunter past my coffeemaker that sits like a huddled monk on a small metal cabinet storing my porcelain cups. Patting its head, avoiding eye contact with the typewriter and channel changer, I reflect on how some inanimate objects are so much nicer than others. (36)

In *Stuff Theory*, Maurizia Boscagli analyzes the role of everyday objects in the context of New Materialism, defining the more ordinary possessions as

> the satellitary system of objects that continually accompanies and never leaves us; these are the prosthetic things that fill our pockets and purses, closets and trunks with which we furnish the self and the spaces we inhabit . . . those objects that have enjoyed their moment of consumer allure, but have now shed their commodity glamour—without yet being quite cast aside. They exist brazenly as neither one thing nor the other: not quite salvable, and certainly not garbage, not monumental or important objects, but still bearing traces of the past, of desire, of life, and of the interactions between subject and object that formed them and wore them out. Not particularly useful but not useless enough to cast off, these are objects that we are not quite ready to let go of—or that are not ready to let go of us. (5–6)

To our eye, a white stone from a mountain in Monterrey might be dispensable, yet at the sight of it Smith is met with "an instantaneous affection for it" (141). A heavily marked-up copy of Murakami's *The Wind-Up Bird Chronicle*, stained with coffee and olive oil might be easily discarded by any of us, yet Smith describes it as her "traveling companion and the mascot of [her] resurging energy" (140). Objects not worth much for most people, objects which would fall into the category of "stuff," are endowed in the narrative with a certain kind of sacredness, becoming indispensable in Smith's life.

Among the ordinary items mentioned in *M Train*, the presence of a black coat particularly stands out. Unexceptional as a piece of clothing may be, the fact that there is a whole chapter in the book dedicated to it is rather noteworthy. "Vecchia Zimarra," titled after Giacomo Puccini's aria *La Bohème*, opens with Smith narrating what seems to be a dream. All of a sudden, the narrative shifts in tone and Smith introduces the said coat: "I had a black coat. A poet gave it to me some years ago on my fifty-seventh birthday" (160). From the moment she first mentions it, one already expects the coat to become part of Smith's sanctuary:

> Every time I put it on I felt like myself. The moths liked it as well and it was riddled with small holes along the hem, but I didn't mind. The pockets had come unstitched at the seam and I lost everything I absentmindedly slipped into their holy caves. Every morning I got up, put on my coat and watch cap, grabbed my pen and notebook, and headed across Sixth Avenue to my café. I loved my coat and the café and my morning routine. It was the clearest and simplest expression of my solitary identity. (160)

This last statement conveys the idea that certain objects take on a new significance when they become extensions of the self: the coat becomes synonymous with the pleasant moments Smith has enjoyed while wearing it; it becomes synonymous with her comfort, her confidence, her identity. As Brown states, "enmeshed as we are in the object world, we can't at times differentiate ourselves from things . . . those things (however actively or passively) have somehow come to resemble us" (*Other Things* 9).

What cannot be anticipated is the relevance the coat will acquire throughout the remaining chapters—or, rather, we should say that it is the absence of the coat that becomes relevant. When Smith loses her beloved black coat, it inevitably enters what she calls the "Valley of the Lost" (164), together with the many belongings she no longer possesses. "Lost things," she reflects, "claw through the membranes, attempting to summon our attention through an indecipherable mayday" (161). Although she reasons that the loss of her coat is "such a small thing in the grand scheme" (164), she cannot help but go back to it again and again. In his volume on *Affect Theory and Literary Critical Practice*, Stephen Ahern reasons that

> when things fail us, we find ourselves in an ontological crisis . . . where the things that held our existence in logical and seemingly secure structures

> revolt against us and turn us inside out, forcing us to venture into the world to take a closer look. (50)

We are, Ahern concludes, dependent on things—on the things we own as much as on the things we lose. Towards the end of the book, in a chapter precisely titled "Valley of the Lost," Smith brings up the coat in a meditation on the nature of loss:

> Do our lost possessions mourn us? . . . Will my coat, riddled with holes, remember the rich hours of our companionship? Asleep on buses from Vienna to Prague, nights at the opera, walks by the sea, the grave of Swinburne in the Isle of Wight, the arcades of Paris, the caverns of Lucray, the cafés of Buenos Aires. Human experience bound in its threads. How many poems bleeding from its ragged sleeves? I averted my eyes just for a moment, drawn by another coat that was warmer and softer, but that I did not love. Why is it that we lose the things we love, and things cavalier cling to us and will be the measure of our worth after we're gone? (242)

With this last rhetorical question, Smith introduces the idea that one may be survived by her belongings and that these come to define us, to define "the measure of our worth." *M Train* can be understood, then, as a compilation of the objects Smith wishes to be remembered by, the actual book being one of them. Ultimately, the coat is not simply a coat, just as *M Train* is not simply a book.

2.2 Material Memory Landscape: A Willful Nostalgia

Integral to autotopography is the concept of memory, so much so that, as Hallam and Hockey note, in our material culture we speak about memories as if these were possessions: "we 'keep' and 'preserve' our memories almost as though they are objects in a personal museum. We choose when to disclose or display memories to others . . . we imagine ourselves to be responsible for, or 'in control' of, our memories" (3). Our focus here, however, is on the objects which seem to hold these memories. According to Russell W. Belk, "[a] sense of past is essential to a sense of self. . . . Possessions can be a rich repository of our past and act as stimuli for intentional as well as unintentional recollections" ("The Role" 674). This intentional/unintentional dichotomy is essential in the examination of the act of recollection. In her study of autotopography, González discusses two ways in which one may access the stories objects bring to mind:

"remembering" and "memory." The main difference, she states, lies in voluntariness: whereas remembering results from "a [voluntary] retrogressive movement from the present into a reconstruction of the past," memory is "an [involuntary] intrusion of the past into the present" (136). Likewise, Dorthe Berntsen argues that some memories are generated through an active search process which is goal-oriented while others result from an associative process that most often occurs subconsciously when the individual is not focused on anything in particular (21). For González, the voluntary search into the past has much to do with nostalgia, which she defines as a "way in which the past is produced from a present yearning" (137). This longing for the past, however, must be futile; it "cannot be satisfied because it is the longing itself that structures this desire" (González 137); as Stewart notes, "[n]ostalgia cannot be sustained without loss" (145). The act of recollection, however, is not only determined by the person who is revisiting the past; we must analyze other devices involved in this exercise in order to fully understand its intricacies.

More often than not, we find ourselves unconsciously reminiscing about a particular time in the past. These moments when we are overcome with an unintentional memory are frequently triggered by elements external to the self, and what Sherry Turkle calls "evocative objects": items which are connected to our emotional lives and are able to catalyze thought and self-creation (5). Objects with a highly evocative power may be on display or concealed. Those which still serve a utilitarian purpose in our everyday lives or whose sight we are accustomed to catch belong to the first category, whereas those more unserviceable and fragile or symbolizing a more poignant memory belong to the latter. Richard Heersmink describes these as active or passive objects (1843). Active objects which are integrated into our everyday activity allow for the memories they encapsulate to become part of our day to day, "signaling continuity between past and present" (Petrelli et al. 60). On the contrary, passive objects tend to be stored away in what Petrelli et al. call "boxes of memory" which are only accessed on rare occasions (59). When rediscovered, these act as "time capsules" which take the owner back in time, therefore accentuating "the contrast between the past world and the current one, triggering a world of nostalgia when brought to light" (Petrelli et al. 60). Voluntary remembering and involuntary memory, then, are at work in this exercise; while we intentionally seek to dust off these evocative objects, the memories they evoke in us may not be anticipated.

In her definition of autotopography, González uses the phrase "material memory landscape" arguing that the arrangement or collection of certain objects "form[s] a visible and tactile map of the subjectivity" and "create[s] a metonymic link with past events and absent persons" (134). This notion is key in our analysis of *M Train*, for objects and memory are inextricably intertwined in the narrative (as they are in life). Most of the time, Smith's cherished possessions act as carriers of memories and operate as portals to people and places no longer traceable in the present. Particularly interesting is the fact that Smith holds on to certain belongings that she seldom dusts off but that she does not bear to lose:

> I slowly advance toward my desk and lift the top. I don't open it very often, as some precious things hold memories too painful to revisit. Thankfully, I need not look inside, as my hand knows the size, texture, and location of each object it contains. Reaching beneath my one childhood dress, I remove a small metal box with tiny perforated holes in the cover. I take a deep breath before I open it, as I harbor the irrational fear that the sacred contents may dissipate when confronted with a sudden onrush of air. But no, everything is intact. . . . I feel the warmth of recognition, memories of time spent fishing with Fred in a rowboat on Lake Ann in northern Michigan. (37)

Smith is referring here to stored-away objects that, for Heersmink, would fall into the category of passive evocative objects. These possessions which she keeps inside her desk ultimately become the only traces of a past that is "too painful to revisit." This explains why Smith avoids glancing at these possessions yet at the same time is comforted by the mere knowledge that they remain where she last placed them. The angst she is met with at the thought of losing these objects, reminders of her loved ones that are now gone, may be comparable, to a certain extent, to the feeling she experienced when she lost these people. After all, not having these objects would be tantamount to being deprived of the memories they contain and, as a result, losing all that is left of her loved ones. In Sara Ahmed's words, "[w]e move toward and away from objects through how we are affected by them" (32). In her analysis of the relationship between objects and happiness, Ahmed explains that the objects which make us happy tend to be placed near our "bodily horizon," thus determining our "horizon of likes." By the same token, we usually keep the things we do not like away from this horizon: "Awayness might help establish the edges

of our horizon; in rejecting the proximity of certain objects, we define the places that we know we do not wish to go . . . those things we do not want to keep within reach" (Ahmed 32). In this case, it is not so much Smith's likes what determines the nearness of certain objects, but rather the memories attached to these. We could therefore speak of a "horizon of memories" whereby what determines the closeness of an object is the way Smith is affected by the memories it evokes.

Smith's strong emotional attachment to certain objects can be further explained by the concept of "autobiographical dependency": one's inability to remember a past experience save through the interaction with an evocative object (Heersmink 1839). "How could I have forgotten our hours of sweet divination?" (37), Smith protests right after opening the metal box and (re)discovering its contents (and therefore the memories attached to them). Losing an object could therefore mean losing a memory, hence the weight attached to certain items. In fact, Belk goes as far to state that "an unintentional loss of possessions should be regarded as a loss or lessening of the self" ("Possessions" 142). But we may also borrow the phrase "autobiographical dependency" to refer to a different need: Smith's efforts to cling to her evocative objects reveal that she is not able to conceive of her present without a constant connection to her past. Not only that, but she sometimes admits to experiencing "a longing for the way things were" (164). These objects which come to stand for people or moments that cannot be brought back may become, in Hallam and Hockey's words, "pathologized":

> Profound attachment to an object may be perceived as an overevaluation of a material item, which exceeds "acceptable" limits through its estimation over and above the lost person with whom it is associated . . . [R]elationships with powerful objects can be pathologized if their importance for the individual becomes overwhelming and a "dependency" is suspected. (19)

Smith's difficulty in cutting loose from the memory of missing things and missing people, however, seems to have more to do with a tendency to romanticize the past and to engage in a willful nostalgia. This is probably best illustrated in the following excerpt:

> We want things we cannot have. We seek to reclaim a certain moment, sound, sensation. I want to hear my mother's voice. I want to see my children as children. Hands small, feet swift. Everything changes. Boy grown, father

> dead, daughter taller than me, weeping from a bad dream. Please stay forever, I say to the things I know. Don't go. Don't grow. (209)

Here lies the key to her dependence on those possessions that bring back her precious memories: they come to be the only way to revive what has been lost. While Smith may still be able to recall a considerable number of events, evocative objects are the shortcut to her past—a past that she does not wish to part with.

The concepts of autotopography and recollection are so intertwined in *M Train* that they cannot be explained independently. This book, as a work which reflects the mind's responses to evocations of the past, contains examples of both voluntary and involuntary acts of recollection. More often than not, Smith readily accepts the manifestation of past memories. What is more, she sometimes intentionally seeks reminiscence, deriving pleasure from the ability to revisit the past. At the beginning of the story, Smith confesses: "Without noticing I slip into a light yet lingering malaise. Not a depression, more like a fascination for melancholia" (25). The fact that she calls it "fascination for melancholia" already points to something that seems to be self-willed. In fact, a few pages later she finds herself meandering around her room "scanning for cherished things to make certain they haven't been drawn into the half-dimensional place where things disappear" (32). Smith seems to be willing to immerse herself in nostalgia precisely because she wishes to experience the longing for something that cannot be recovered.

There are times, however, when Smith is caught by surprise by the images that start to appear at the back of her mind. This is when memory (as opposed to remembering) comes into play. When Smith tries to visualize her copy of Sylvia Plath's *Ariel*, for instance, she is met with a different—yet connected—image. In an attempt to voluntarily remember something, she is stricken with an involuntary memory: "As I fixed on the first lines, impish forces projected multiple images of a white envelope, flickering at the corners of my eyes, thwarting my efforts to read them. This agitating visitation produced a pang, for I knew the envelope well" (197). The envelope that materializes in her thoughts is one that used to contain a handful of Polaroids she had once shot of Sylvia Plath's grave which had ended up getting lost. Smith remembers: "Heartsick, I went over my every move but never found them. They simply vanished. I mourned the loss, magnified by the memory of joy I'd felt in the taking of them in a strangely joyless time" (198). We thus realize that her sorrow results not

from being reminded of the pictures themselves but rather of their loss, for they were the only evidence of such a treasured moment. She then recalls two other visits to Plath's grave and her failed attempt to take similar pictures, concluding: "Nothing can be truly replicated. Not a love, not a jewel, not a line" (202).

CONCLUSIONS

Analyzing *M Train* as autotopography allows us to determine the extent to which objects are significant in the construction of a life narrative. A fishing hook, a black coat, or a handful of Polaroids enjoy the status of characters in Patti Smith's autobiographical book, acting as triggers for her memories and as repositories for different parts of her identity. These and other items connect Smith to the past, helping her make sense of her present self. On the one hand, autotopography becomes the common thread of an account which is guided by objects and the stories they encapsulate. On the other hand, it helps to shed light on the way memory works in life (writing). The presence of artifacts in *M Train*, then, is not arbitrary; quite the opposite, it helps establish connections among the different narrative themes: loss, self-awareness, and the passing of time.

Smith's *M Train* turns out to be, on some level, a Museum Train where she displays, both in writing and through photography, the many objects that shape (or have shaped) her identity, while disclosing the experiences attached to them. The photographs in particular end up forming a sort of exhibition catalogue whereby one can get to know the author, both through the objects portrayed and through the pictures as objects themselves. Ultimately, *M Train* (the material book in the reader's hands) becomes itself one of the objects that make up this museum. Not only does it tick all the boxes of autotopography but, as an autobiographical artifact that is bound to survive Smith, it seems to provide quite a decent measure of her (literary) worth.

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ES Review
SPANISH JOURNAL OF ENGLISH STUDIES

Ed UVa EDICIONES Universidad de Valladolid

Emily Houlik-Ritchey. *Imagining Iberia in English and Castilian Medieval Romance*. U of Michigan P, 2023. Pp. 250. $75. ISBN: 978-0-472-13335-2.

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Emily Houlik-Ritchey has written a book both timely and needed, one that in a sense looks backward to a scholarship launched and then paused, and forward toward a discourse of globally interconnected reading presently shaping itself. Her intent is to bring Iberia—her preferred term for Spain (with various glances toward the Maghreb), since Portugal figures here minimally—into the current conversation about medieval literature having the Mediterranean at its center. In this endeavor she stands out as an heir of sorts to the late Alan Deyermond, who also, and in his day almost uniquely, made it his purpose to draw important connections between works by English and Spanish authors of the later Middle Ages.

Unlike Deyermond, however, who was altogether "old school," in the manner of a criticism based on source identification and common images indicative of authorial influence, Houlik-Ritchey sets out an original theory of what she terms "neighborly comparison" (3). Drawing particularly on, but not confining herself to, "Neighbor Theory" as advanced by Kenneth Reinhard, George Edmondson (*The Neighboring Text: Chaucer, Boccaccio, Henryson*), and grounded by the ontology of Emmanuel Levinas (*Autrement qu'être ou au delá de l'essence*), hers is a "comparative methodology" (22) melding elements of "Mediterranean Studies" [sic] with "theories of neighborly textuality and ethics" (23). The result is a versatile optic, sufficiently flexible and thus adaptable to the focal matter of her study, the "imaginations of Iberia within romance" (23).

Certainly "romance" as a genre demands an approach of such a kind, especially when located within an English/Iberian sphere. As Houlik-Ritchey notes, the word itself had significantly different valences on opposite sides of the Bay of Biscay: invoking ballads in Spain, but in England a congeries of literary models. Thus she presents romance as less a "static category" than a "'transformative process' that embraces 'instability and hybridization'" (17, Houlik-Ritchey quoting Barbara Weissberger). Such definitional fluidity is conceptually essential for *Imagining Iberia*, since the works selected for discussion there require capacious embrace—and also, as Houlik-Ritchey readily admits, some

elasticity of categorization. The book takes as its major goal bringing together "disparate texts to foreground attention to the contrapuntal or uneven dimensions of their relationality, analyzing the dissonance that emerges within their affinities" (29–30).

The endeavor would seem to require a special terminology. "Cluster" is Houlik-Ritchey's operative choice for associating the works she examines. Thus *Imagining Iberia* devotes its three chapters to the "Fierabras story cluster," the "*Floire and Blancheflore* story cluster," and the "Constance story cluster." In the first, she conjoins the fifteenth-century Middle English *Sowdane of Babylone* with the second Book of Nicholás de Piemonte's *Hystoria del emperador Carlomagno y delos doze pares de Francia, et de la cruda batalla que uvo Oliveros con Fierabrás, rey de Alexandría, hijo del grande almirante Balán*, utilizing its 1521 Seville iteration as printed by Jacobo Cromberger. Her point of coherence in both texts is the mutual wounding in battle of Ferumbras/Fierabras, and (to a lesser degree) Oliver/Oliveros. She reads their injuries as emblemizations of the mutilated body of the crucified Christ, and the resultant conversion of Fierabras as an outcome akin, *in parvo*, to the divine purpose underlying the incarnation. Thus far, she aligns with Piemonte, whose "romance," while a literary production, is essentially polemical, and directly promotes that reading. The originality of Houlik-Ritchey's analysis—also notably political—of these two works, however, lies is her broadening of that conjunction. Expanding upon work by Aranye Fradenburg Joy, Houlik Ritchey argues that "*Sowdone* and *Hystoria* each claim that exemplary Christian identity coheres around . . . a Christlike acceptance of injury and suffering" (63). Such suffering she finds purposive, ultimately offering Christian readers of *Sowdone* and *Hystoria* a pathway to understand the bloodshed and regime change of the Reconquista in acceptable terms: "the violence Christians leverage against themselves, their enemies, and Muslim-ruled Iberia" is to be imagined "through the rose-colored lens of ethical sacrifice" (32).

The focus of the second chapter is political also, albeit in a different way. The "cluster" here consists of two iterations of a narrative familiar from multiple analogues in many languages: a thirteenth-century Middle English version, *Floris and Blancheflour*, alongside the fourteenth-century Castilian *Crónica de Flores y Blancaflor*, both anonymous productions. Building upon what Sarah Ahmed has termed "affective economies," Houlik-Ritchey reads these two romances as culturally iconic, each revelatory of how love is valued, weighted and assessed in the Christian

and Islamicate Mediterranean. Her analysis follows the "circulation" of Floris and Flores, the former, in a kind of barter, transmuting "emotion and devotion [into] legal tender for information and goods" (32), the latter into "renown and social credit." The difference is crucial for Houlik-Ritchey's extrapolation of "affective economies" in so far as the concept adumbrates her larger purpose in *Imagining Iberia*—that is, the simultaneous, "neighborly" presentation of a divided sociocultural geography that was medieval Spain. Superficially in her telling the "tender" accrued by Floris and Flores in their individual quests to free (and of course ultimately possess) Blancheflour/Blancaflor could not be less similar: trade itself in the case of Floris, whose disguise as a merchant is—contrarily—the more revealing of the poem's message, and renown and prestige for Flores who, active within a prestige culture, maintains his chivalric and aristocratic identity, both qualities that in fact enable his search. Following this thread, Houlik-Ritchey takes modest issue with a prevailing view of the *Crónica de Flores y Blancaflor*, that it supports and justifies "a relentless drive toward Christianity" (132–33), arguing instead that both texts, while varying "wildly" in the "purpose, context, and performance of their circulation" (165), illuminate greater and lesser degrees of commodification.

Chapter three takes up the "Constance cluster," specifically versions proffered earliest in Anglo-Norman by Nicholas Trevet in *Les Chronicles*, his history of the world. From Trevet John Gower borrowed the tale to include it in the *Confessio Amantis*, Chaucer subsequently produced the "Man of Law's Tale," based on both Trevet and Gower, and later on in the peninsula, as part of translations of the *Confessio* made by Robert Payn and Juan de Cuenca, respectively, "Constance" was rendered into Portuguese and Castilian. The key term in the title of this chapter is "De-networking." As Houlik-Ritchey explains it (169):

> This chapter investigates the resemblances between Iberia and Northumbria in three insular British versions of the tale . . . and then turns to the two lesser-known Iberian versions . . . analyzing their transformation of the way the British writers imagine Muslim rule in Iberia, and tracing the process by which these Iberian versions progressively de-network England from Mediterranean alliance, in complementary fashion to the overall tradition's ostracization of Iberia.

What Houlik-Ritchey has observed and finds fascinating is the way Chaucer and Gower steadily replace Iberia, resulting in a British link to

Roman imperium through the union of a Northumbrian king and Constance, the daughter of the emperor of Rome. Because the *Confessio Amantis* found its way abroad, enabling its translation into peninsular languages, Houlik-Ritchey makes it, in Middle English and in the translations, the center of her argument, offering passing commentary on Chaucer's and Trevet's versions. In this chapter her reliance on "neighborly textuality" as iterated by Edmondson—i.e., of "competing claims" devolving from repeated retelling—is most on display. Unsurprisingly, perhaps, Houlik-Ritchey finds Spain marginalized and heathenized by Chaucer and (especially) Gower. More striking is her discovery of an opposite vector in the Castilian, and particularly the Portuguese drafting by Payn (207–08), himself an Englishman undoubtedly connected with Philippa, daughter of John of Gaunt and wife of João I of Portugal.

Discoveries detailed in this third chapter thus elide smoothly into Houlik-Ritchey's summative conclusion, wherein she further clarifies the inherent terminology of her title. What her "neighboring" of these Middle English romances, and analogues and translations produced on the peninsula, illustrates, she proposes, is not the insignificance of Spain in the English imagination, but rather the opposite: "All the romances show us, in varying ways, a fantasy of Iberia in the making" (209). Hence "imagining" Iberia—"ultimately a contact zone, where complex cultural and geopolitical transactions at once divide and link Christians and Muslims, Europe and Africa, the peninsula and the larger Mediterranean," a complex geography at once "a war zone . . . trade nexus . . . cultural enclave . . . seat of geopolitical power . . . insular border [and] wide-reaching network" (210).

With *Imagining Iberia*, then, Houlik-Ritchey sounds a challenge to Anglophone and Francophone medievalists to recognize the inextricability of Spain from the literary productions of the authors they study. Its presence, she argues—largely successfully, in her third chapter in particular—was never absent from northern imaginations, even as contemporary writers transmuted, or strove to erase it. Undoubtedly hers is a claim to be heeded.

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Hanna Nicklin. *Writing for Games; Theory and Practice*. CRC Press, 2022. Pp. 300. Hardback £120.00, paperback £42.99, ebook £38.69 (hbk). ISBN: 9781032023069.

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Writing in the video game industry is often confused with narrative design, explains the author of *Writing for Games*, Hanna Nicklin. However, writing and narrative design are concerned with different aspects of storytelling and involve a different set of skills. Narrative design develops landscapes, the actions possible to the player, the arrangement of levels and puzzles and, all in all, the story elements conveyed through other-than-words. Writing for games refers to what is strictly communicated through text and includes not only the story and dialogues, but also game menus, promotional content, and even collaboration with translation teams to market the game in other countries. This book intends to fill a gap in the existing literature, which has not paid as much attention to video game writing as to narrative design. In this volume, Nicklin sets out to provide the reader with the background knowledge—both in game development and literary theory—and the practical tools to develop their writing skills within the video game industry. The author's aim is to bridge the way into writing for video games for people that might be knowledgeable in video games but not in writing; in writing but not in video games; or a beginner in both fields.

Writing for Games is structured in three parts: Theory, Case Studies and Practice. "Part I, Theory" contains information about the video game industry and creative writing and is divided into 9 chapters. In chapter 1, writing is defined as a craft—a discipline perfected through practice and learning—and readers are invited to reflect on their aim at taking up this book; that is, whether they want to become a professional writer, an amateur one, or simple gain some knowledge about the field without necessarily practicing it. Some of the features specific to writing for games are also outlined but are further developed in later chapters. The next three chapters, that is, chapters 2, 3, and 4, are vocabulary chapters, structured as a glossary of terms. The point is both to allow the reader to easily navigate this section as a reference book and to clarify key concepts. Nicklin bestows great importance on communicating clearly, especially with people not specialised in writing. A writer in a video game company will have to collaborate closely with colleagues who might

not be familiar with storytelling, so one will need to communicate effectively and also be able to explain storytelling concepts. Similarly, the writer might not be too familiar with game development. Therefore, chapter 2 explains the basics of the game development process and the roles carried out by each likely team member, although the author warns that a team size can vary considerably and roles could overlap. Chapter 3 concerns itself with story structure and begins by explaining traditional divisions in acts derived from drama or film. However, these divisions present certain shortcomings when applied to games that have over one hundred hours of gameplay and/or follow several different storylines. Therefore, Nicklin suggests other storytelling structures derived from media ranging from promenade performance to TV shows in order to complement the writer's resources. In chapter 4, story components such as plot, genre, form, or literary devices for audio visual media are explained with relation to the video game format. All in all, the aim of these chapters is to clarify concepts, not only to fill possible gaps in the reader's knowledge, but also to facilitate cross-disciplinary communication.

Chapter 5 departs from general concepts around writing and storytelling to close in on the specifics of writing for video games. Nicklin makes the reader aware of the differences between writing text that is to be read on screen and writing with the intention of text to be spoken by an actor. She also explains the goals writing should achieve in a game, and gaming-specific writing formats useful not only for the product itself, but also for the development process such as work-progress tracking documents. In chapter 6, the reader is invited to reflect on how the artistic medium affects the storytelling and discusses transferable skills that she herself has learnt from unexpected artforms such as dance or ceramics. The last three chapters in "Part I" are shorter, and intended as an introduction to more specific aspects of the industry and writing that the reader might be interested in: chapter 7 contains ideas specifically on comedy writing; chapter 8 presents a short list of bibliographical notes for further reading; and chapter 9 delves briefly into ethics and the gaming industry, both in terms of advocation and representation, and in terms of the well-being of the worker in an industry in which certain forms of exploitation are infamously normalized.

Throughout "Part I," Nicklin keeps a non-expert audience in mind, and so invites the reader to skip sections with which certain readers might already be familiar. Moreover, *Writing for Games* favours covering a wide variety of topics over exhaustive explorations, offering instead further suggested readings when appropriate. However, this does not mean that the author avoids currently contested issues just to focus on foundational knowledge.

She still takes the opportunity to challenge what she considers orthodoxies in the gaming industry or revise concepts that tend to be used without a critical lens. One of these is the concept of immersion, which is casually understood as enjoyability and therefore desirable, and often thought to be inherent to a video game's interactive nature. She reminds the (prospective) game writer that immersion might, first of all, not always be a desirable effect. However, if immersion is the goal, then the writing and design of a game needs to be intentional about achieving immersion, it is not inherent to video games. Finally, immersion necessarily brings up questions about the expected player. More often than not, video games adopt the perspective of the hegemonic white, heterosexual, cisgender man and Nicklin reminds us that not all identities can slip as easily into immersion—that is, self-effacing identification—with this character. The author invites the reader to think critically about who is being centred as the video game is created and how the audience is expected to interact with a video game's characters (in the case that the video has characters).

Empathy and so-called empathy games are also relevant when talking about the ethics of game playing and game development. Nicklin positions herself against empathy games that offer a clear "correct" answer to the conflict at hand to, presumably, educate the player in the right course of action. She does not commune with the idea that games could be used to re-educate people—which Nicklin likens to developing "coercion machines" (75). Instead, she cites Augusto Boal and Bertolt Brecht as inspiration for devising games that advocate for change. She prefers to introduce ethics into gaming by creating complex situations presented from different perspectives so that the player may ponder on them and draw their own conclusions.

The concept of agency is another example of a currently contested issue that Nicklin introduces in her book. In the wake of ever more complex games offering several different plot points—especially several endings—depending on the player's decisions along the way, she positions agency in a continuum with authorship. Whereas a game that offers a lot of agency is inviting the player to create their own story, a game closer to the authorship end keeps a tighter hold on the course of action to convey a given story. Nicklin explains that neither is desirable over the other, it is rather a matter of what the desired effect is in creating a given video game and what the best approach to achieve it is.

"Part II, Case Studies" analyses three games, one per chapter. Each chapter includes a section of key takeaways and further readings along with the analysis of the relevant aspect of the game. After an introductory chapter

10, chapter 11 explores character design through dialogue in *Life is Strange 2*. In chapter 12, *80 Days* is selected as an example of ethical decisions behind the readaptation of the colonially inflected novel *Around the World in 80 Days*. Chapter 13 is concerned with using well-known formats, in this case "the heist" format, to give the player a frame of reference to understand the story. This allows the game designers to give less information, already provided implicitly by the heist format, and add dynamism in a game with interweaving story arches.

Finally, "Part III, A Practical Workbook" is a collection of writing exercises accompanied with explanations and detailed suggested solutions for the reader to hone their skills. Chapter 14 invites the reader one more time to reflect on the way one learns, works, and even the way one reflects the best, as an essential part of the learning process. After that, chapters 15, 16, and 17 contain the tools and exercises for starting, developing, and finishing a story respectively. This section is especially useful to the (prospective) professional writer, as it teaches strategies to write and be creative while keeping to a specific brief and deadlines, as is usually the case in a video game company. The book ends with a conclusion, a glossary, bibliography, and an index.

Writing for Games is, therefore, a didactic handbook on creative writing skills for video game storytelling. Hanna Nicklin, who holds a PhD in games-influenced theatre and theatre-influenced games as a political practice, draws her experience from a long and varied career within the performing arts and playwrighting, as well as game writer and narrative designer, and finally as CEO at the video game company Die Gute Fabrik. As stated in the conclusion to this book, her motivation for writing was to share her cross-disciplinary experience with potential mentees that have reached out to her over the years but whom she had to turn down. The mentoring spirit behind this book informs not only its content but also its structure and style. In terms of structure, all chapters presented above have many subsections, all of them included in its thorough table of contents for easy navigation. In a fashion often reminiscent of gamebooks, Nicklin advises readers of the forthcoming content and encourages them to skip ahead to sections that might interest them the most. In terms of style, the author addresses the reader directly, using conversational language, cracking a joke or two along the way, and making intimations about her own experience as a writer in particular and as a learner in general. These structural and stylistic decisions resonate with one of the main propositions of this volume: the author is offering here the product of her own experience—her own writer's toolbox—but the reader should take her advice, try her methods, and keep, alter, or discard them as fits their needs;

that is, develop their own toolbox. Therefore, the book is not presented as a unit to be read in a linear fashion, cover to cover, but as a tool in and of itself to be used as best suits the reader. Similarly, Nicklin's approachable tone invites us to read her as the experienced mentor she intends to be in this book, but one that we can disagree with, rather than as an authority whose guidelines we must obey.

Writing for Games fulfils its aim as creative writing manual and introduction to the video game industry. It fills a gap in the current literature by focusing on the writing aspects of video game development, while also offering general information, an introduction to literary theory, and practical exercises. This volume manages to be a useful educational tool for writers at different levels of expertise while also contributing to topics of a more theoretical strand, such as the concept of immersion, the role of empathy games, or ethics and representation in media.

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