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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Articles

- The Grotto as Neo-Victorian Heterotopia: Sonia Overall's *The Realm of the Shells* (2006) and Essie Fox's *Elijah's Mermaid* (2012) 11
LAURA MONRÓS-GASPAR
- Modality in Climate Change-Related Discourse by King Charles III 31
OLEKSANDR KAPRANOV
- Punctuation in Early Modern Texts: The English Translation of Rembert Dodoens' Herbal in Handwriting and Printing 60
JUAN LORENTE-SÁNCHEZ
- In Defense of *Fifty Shades* by E. L. James: Does It Really Contain Gender-Based Violence? 93
CATHAYSA SANTANA RODRÍGUEZ
- Provincial Newspapers as Vehicles for Dialect Spread and Enregisterment: Insights from Nineteenth Century Devonshire Dialect 116
RENE TISENS
- A Psychoanalytic Approach to Louise Glück's Blended Receptions of the Myths of Narcissus and Persephone in *Averno* 145
SANAE KICHOUH AIADI
- "I Was in No Mood for People Who Tried to Lay Claims on Me": Community, Hospitality, and Friendship in Teju Cole's *Open City* 170
FATMA AKÇAY
- The Blurred Line between Good and Evil in *Moby-Dick* and Post-WWII Cinema: How John Huston Read Melville for his Movie Adaptation 192
UNAI IZQUIERDO BERASALUCE
- Queering the Vietnam Trauma Narrative in Ocean Vuong's *On Earth We're Briefly Gorgeous* 217
MARÍA ABIZANDA-CARDONA
- Oscar Wilde's Trials as a Haunting Presence: An Approach to the Role of Fantasy in Contemporary Neo-Victorian Novels Depicting Same-Sex Romance Between Men 241
MANUEL HUESO VASALLO

Error Corrective Treatment in Spanish L1 ESL Learners: Suggesting and Empirical Method 269

MANUEL MACÍAS BORREGO

Book Reviews

David West Brown and Danielle Zawodny Wetzel, editors. *Corpora and Rhetorically Informed Text Analysis*. By ANTONI OLIVER GONZÁLEZ 296

Gerardo Rodríguez Salas. *Vivir Sola Es Morir. El Modernismo Comunitario de Katherine Mansfield*. By ARSENIO ANDRADES MORENO 301

Zenón Luis-Martínez, editor. *Poetic Theory and Practice in Early Modern Verse: Unwritten Arts*. By CECILIA RODRIGUES 304

The Grotto as Neo-Victorian Heterotopia: Sonia Overall's *The Realm of Shells* (2006) and Essie Fox's *Elijah's Mermaid* (2012)

La cueva como heterotopía neo-victoriana: *The Realm of Shells* (2006) de Sonia Overall y *Elijah's Mermaid* (2012) de Essie Fox

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Abstract: News of the discoveries of natural grottos filled the pages of newspapers and journals throughout the nineteenth century. Additionally, artificial grottos opened regularly for the entertainment of the public and were commonplace in the cultural and literary products of the period. In this article, I analyse neo-Victorian appropriations of nineteenth-century grottos as Foucauldian heterotopias through two case studies: Sonia Overall's *The Realm of Shells* (2006) and Essie Fox's *Elijah's Mermaid* (2012). Overall's and Fox's novels illustrate how the heterotopic features of the Victorian grotto are expanded in neo-Victorian fiction as counter-spaces of emplacement that enable heterochronic forms of resistance.

Keywords: grotto; heterotopia; Victorian; Neo-Victorian; Sonia Overall; Essie Fox.

Summary: The Grotto as neo-Victorian Heterotopia. Foucault's Heterotopology and the Neo-Victorian Grotto. Neo-Victorian Grottos in Sonia Overall's *The Realm of Shells* (2006) and Essie Fox's *Elijah's Mermaid* (2012). Conclusions.

Resumen: Descubrimientos de cuevas naturales coparon las páginas de la prensa del siglo diecinueve a la vez que se inauguraban grutas y cuevas artificiales para el entretenimiento de una sociedad que era testigo de cómo éstas se convertían en lugares comunes entre los productos culturales y literarios de su tiempo. En este artículo, analizamos la apropiación neo-victoriana de grutas y cuevas del siglo XIX como heterotopías foucauldianas a través de dos estudios de caso: *The Realm of Shells* (2006) de Sonia Overall y *Elijah's Mermaid* (2012) de Essie Fox. Las dos novelas

ilustran cómo los rasgos heterotópicos de la cueva victoriana son expandidos en la ficción neo-victoriana como contra-emplazamientos que permiten formas de resistencia heterocrónica.

Palabras clave: cuevas; heterotopía; victoriana; neo-victoriana; Sonia Overall; Essie Fox.

Sumario: La cueva como heterotopía neo-victoriana. La heterotopía de Foucault y la cueva neo-victoriana. Cuevas neo-victorianas en *The Realm of Shells* (2006) de Sonia Overall y *Elijah's Mermaid* de Essie Fox (2012). Conclusiones.

THE GROTTO AS NEO-VICTORIAN HETEROTOPIA

One of the most fashionable forms of entertainment among the upper classes in the mid-eighteenth century was to visit Alexander Pope's grotto in Twickenham. The public were drawn to this grotto until the late nineteenth century and newspapers report that visitors were able to inspect the attraction during the celebrations for the bicentenary of the birth of Pope ("The Provinces").¹ Nineteenth-century travellers to the spot reminisced about the golden days of the grotto, which soon grew to be seen as a shrine for worship by intellectuals. The reporter of a London trip in *Bell's Life in London* in 1824, for example, recalls one such visit as follows:

We entered this famed subterraneous passage from the Thames, and found ourselves upon that spot where once sat in social and philosophic intercourse Swift and Atterbury, Pope and Bolingbroke, and the Nobles and wits who composed what is called the Augustan Age of English Literature. The charm of the association which this spot inspired recalled the men and events of Queen Anne's reign. ("Visit to Hampton Court")

Recurring images of Pope's grotto abound in the literature of the nineteenth century, both to praise and to denigrate the poet and as the epitome of poetic inspiration and romantic love.² Yet the grotto at Twickenham is but one of the many artificial caverns that captivated the Victorian imagination. Artificial grottos similar to Pope's opened regularly for the entertainment of the public, and reports of the discoveries of new

¹ In 1888, a performance of William Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream* was also held in the gardens of the Villa to entertain members of the "Irish party, half the Radical members, some Unionists and Conservatives, and a number of private persons" ("Midsummer Night's Dream at Pope's Villa").

² See, for example, George Colman, Thomas De Quincey, William Hazlitt and Leigh Hunt.

natural grottos filled the pages of newspapers and journals throughout the century.³ Eventually, grottos became an essential commodity in the nineteenth century for society as a whole.

Whether as part of the entertainment industry, recurring aesthetic concern or evidence of the thirst for conquest of a growing and powerful empire, the Victorian grotto may be read as one of the many cultural products that outlines the everyday life of the Victorians. As such, neo-Victorian literature, in its eagerness to excavate the past for its consumption in the present (Shiller; Gay et al.; Heilmann and Llewellyn, *Neo-Victorianism*; Robinson; Boehm-Schnitzer and Gruss), could not ignore that the grotto was constructed as a space of visual, literary, and other cultural production throughout the nineteenth century.

At a 2015 international conference in Málaga, I first proposed the association of neo-Victorianism and Foucauldian heterotopias through the trope of the Victorian grotto (Monrós-Gaspar, “Of Grottos”). To date, only a limited number of articles, doctoral theses and book chapters have been published that link the two concepts (Ho; Scott; Costantini; Suwa; Esser *Re-calibrating*), and to my knowledge, none of these propose a methodological association of neo-Victorianism and heterotopic spaces as a theoretical concern. Fortunately, the fluid association between the two terms has deepened, and in 2022, Marie-Louise Kohlke and Akira Suwa, also participants at the 2015 conference, together with Elizabeth Ho co-edited the first special issue of *Humanities* devoted to the fruitful and ongoing symbiosis of the two critical concepts (Kohlke et al.). With articles that address the heterotopic nature of cemeteries, sites of heritage, postcolonial others, Young Adult fiction, the country house, the laboratory and the concept of darkness, the contributors to the journal explored Foucauldian “counter-sites” and proposed new sites of heterotopic encounters in neo-Victorian literature.

As Kohlke et al. argue in their introduction to the collection, “the fertile affinities revealed by considering heterotopia and neo-Victorianism in tandem, namely as cultural phenomena that facilitate new ways of thinking about the Long Nineteenth Century as defined by social spaces and their counter-structures or counter-emplacements” open up “a new archive of literary and cultural production” where “incongruous spaces for re-vision and contestation” abound (2). Given that one such type of space

³ See, for example, the new grotto discovered in the southern side of the mountain of Pausillipo (“Antiquities”).

is undoubtedly the Victorian grotto (Monrós-Gaspar, “La ninfa Eco”), far too little attention has been paid to a comprehensive analysis of this trope in neo-Victorian literature. Research on the subject has been mostly restricted to landscape phenomenology as exemplified in the work undertaken by Arias (“(Sub)Urban Landscapes”) on Sonia Overall’s *The Realm of Shells* (2006). This indicates a need to widen the corpus of research and critical approaches to map the cultural significance of grottos in neo-Victorian reimagining of the nineteenth century. To contribute to such a cartography, this study takes up Sonia Overall’s *The Realm of Shells* (2006) and Essie Fox’s *Elijah’s Mermaid* (2012) as two central cases that generate new insights into the trope, exploring for the first time neo-Victorian appropriations of nineteenth-century grottos as Foucauldian heterotopias.

1. FOUCAULT’S HETEROTOPOLOGY AND THE NEO-VICTORIAN GROTTO

Foucault’s ideas on heterotopology, as is well-known, were mostly developed at a lecture delivered on 14 March 1967 to the *Cercle d’études architecturales*. The transcription of the lecture was only published almost twenty years later in *Architecture, Mouvement, Continuité* (October 1984) as ‘*Des espaces autres. Une conférence inédite de Michel Foucault*’ and first translated into English in 1986 (Dehaene and De Cauter 13).⁴ In his lecture, Foucault identifies the external space as the space “in which we live...in which the erosion of our lives, of our time and our history occurs, the space that torments and consumes us” and is defined by diverse sets of relations (Foucault 16). Some such external spaces are capable of suspecting, neutralizing or inverting their relations with other sites (Foucault 17). As I discuss below, applying the theoretical principles that underpin the construction of such contesting counter-spaces of emplacement and identity allows us to analyse the use of the grotto in neo-Victorian fiction as an element of reconstruction and revision of the self; and also as a heterochronic space where the past merges with the present to challenge prescriptive relations and overcome traumatic experiences.

As I have argued elsewhere (Monrós-Gaspar, “Of Grottos”), the Victorian grotto can be read in Foucauldian terms as both a *heterotopia of*

⁴ The translation consulted for this article was the revised and annotated translation by Lieven De Cauter and Michiel Dehaene published in 2008 under the title “Of Other Spaces”.

crisis and a *heterotopia of compensation*. It may be considered the former because the grotto represents a sacred and forbidden place where individuals in transformation—in a state of crisis in relation to society—are concealed: for example, prophetic voices entranced by frenzied visions, magic beings between two worlds and young men and women on the brink of love.⁵ Regarding the latter, Foucault explains that the role of a heterotopia of compensation is to “create another space, another real space, as perfect, as meticulous, as well arranged as ours is disorderly, ill construed and sketchy” (Foucault 21). Therefore, the Victorian grotto can function as a heterotopia of compensation in two contrasting ways. While it provides a real space of perfection where the voyeuristic male gaze can shape, mould and make use of an ideal woman, it also offers a space for female empowerment beyond the restrictions of Victorian England (Monrós-Gaspar, “Of Grottos”). The two texts considered in this article illustrate how the heterotopic features of the Victorian grotto are expanded in neo-Victorian fiction as cultural constructs that enable heterochronic forms of resistance.

In the second principle underpinning the concept of heterotopia, Foucault explains that,

in the course of its history, a society can make a heterotopia that exists, and has not ceased to exist, function in a very different way; for each heterotopia...can, according to the synchrony of the culture in which it occurs, have one function or another. (Foucault 18)

As I demonstrate in the next section of this article, the Margate Shell Grotto fulfils various functions in the construction of the female protagonists’ identities both in Overall’s and Fox’s novels. Memory and experience are the pillars that sustain the writers’ historical reconstruction and contemporary appropriation of such functions, which coincides well with Mitchell’s arguments that neo-Victorian fiction encourages us to

⁵ Illustrations of such Victorian heterotopias abound. For example, Felicia Hemans invokes grotto fairies in her poems. In the introduction to her novel *The Last Man* (1826), Mary Shelley refers to her attempts to decipher the legacy of wisdom bequeathed by the Cumaean Sibyl in her cave. A grotto was the dwelling of a mysterious man in William Godwin’s *Fleetwood; or, the New Man of Feeling* (1805). George Meredith stirred up memories from an idyllic landscape with grottos in *Diana of the Crossways* (1885). Disraeli’s *Sybil; or The Two Nations* (1845) sets a hazardous escape route in a subterranean grotto.

“resist privileging history’s non-fictional discourse” (4) in readings of the past and rely on the twentieth-century discourses of memory and non-academic forms of history to reinvent Victorian cultural products.

The multiple functions of the neo-Victorian grotto across time are also related to the sixth and final principle in Foucault’s heterotopology, which relies on the idea that every heterotopia has a function in relation to the rest of the space. The neo-Victorian grotto is a site of concealment and transformation, but also of empowerment; thus, the grotto provides a counterpoint to the mainstream spaces of Victorian society that mould mainstream identities. As such, and in correlation with the fifth principle of Foucault’s counter-spaces, which presupposes “a system of opening and closing that both isolates and makes them penetrable” (Foucault 21), the neo-Victorian grotto functions as a site of passage between temporalities but also between innocence and experience, submission, and empowerment. Ultimately, as exemplified in Overall’s and Fox’s novels, the grotto denotes a space where female minds and bodies are either constrained or challenged.

The third principle in Foucault’s heterotopology sustains that “the heterotopia has the power to juxtapose in a single real place several spaces, several emplacements that are in themselves incompatible” (Foucault 19), which he exemplifies with the space of the theatre, the cinema, or the garden. In the fourth principle, Foucault nourishes the idea that heterotopic spaces are open to heterochronisms where time is accumulated indefinitely, as in museums and libraries (Foucault 20). Historically, the intriguing life of artificial grottos began in the Hellenistic period, when grottos were built to honour water spirits (Jackson 4). Over time it became a custom to erect *nymphaeum*—temples and artificial grottos—around public fountains, Roman villas and gardens. During the sixteenth and through the eighteenth century, the tradition of artificial grottos occupied a place of honour in Italy. The practice then spread to England, where it remained in fashion until the late twentieth century (Jackson). Just as in the Foucauldian garden, the superimposed meanings of the grotto, from the Hellenistic period to the nineteenth century in Western culture, juxtapose in the same space two emplacements that might seem incompatible: sacred spaces of worship and ludic spaces of recreation. Additionally, the grotto overlays the present with fossilized reminiscences of the past: decorations of embedded minerals, shells and mosaics serve as a catalyst for reading the grotto as a neo-Victorian heterochronic space, where the echoes of the past coexist with the voices of the present. In the

section that follows, I support my claim that neo-Victorian grottos are best understood as Foucauldian heterotopias through two case studies that reveal the utility of the heterotopia as an analytical frame. The two selected novels re-write the nineteenth-century stories of Margate Shell Grotto to challenge the prescriptive social norms for women and restore their identities.

2. NEO-VICTORIAN GROTOS IN SONIA OVERALL'S *THE REALM OF SHELLS* (2006) AND ESSIE FOX'S *ELIJAH'S MERMAID* (2012)

A mere two years before Queen Victoria ascended the throne, a legendary cavern in England was first discovered by a young boy, Joshua Newlove, during excavations for the foundations of a new school in Margate. From that moment on, the cavern was known as Margate Shell Grotto. It is said that when Joshua lowered his head into a hole in the ground, he emerged mesmerized by the shell tunnels he found there. With over four million shells and two thousand square feet of mosaic, the fascinating mystery surrounding the construction of the shell grotto still remains unresolved. This might explain why from 1838 until now, the grotto is one of the major local attractions in Margate (Haslam).

The discovery of the grotto was widely covered by the press of the time with illustrations of its tunnels and secret passages (“Links with the Past”). Provincial newspapers announced the opening of the mysterious grotto in 1838, highlighting its inscrutable aisles:

The grotto...extends to a great distance under the hill, and is laid out in serpentine walks, alcoves, and passages of considerable extent, the sides being studded with shells, formed into elaborate and curious devices, and doubtless executed by torchlight. (*Kendal Mercury*)

Even though no conclusive evidence exists of the grotto's origins to date, some contemporary newspapers ventured to set its construction around the time of the “Saxon heptarchy” (*Kendal Mercury*). This increased the allure of the place to those inquisitive minds to history and to the recovery of the past in Victorian England. Much speculation surrounded the purpose of the chapels and tunnels of the grotto, which were believed to have been built as a place of worship. Conjectures reached the twentieth century with intellectuals championing both its ancient origin and modern construction alike (“Nota Bene”).

In an intertextual and metatextual dialogue between the past and the present, both Sonia Overall and Essie Fox interrogate the Victorian penchant for grottos in *The Realm of Shells* (2006) and *Elijah's Mermaid* (2012), respectively. The two writers create a credible representation of the Margate grotto, interspersing historical veracity with fictive plots. As I shall contend next, Overall and Fox refigure the Victorian grotto through revisionist resignification of the trope to position women as central agents of the narrative. Both reshape past abuses of female minds and bodies into future processes of empowerment by reimagining Victorian grottos in revisited heterotopias.

Overall and Fox's approaches to the Victorian grotto in relation to female bodies may be discussed through various theoretical approaches to neo-Victorian fiction, such as trauma theory and notions of the trace.⁶ Because, as Heilmann and Llewellyn put it, "Victorian sexuality and the way we re-imagine it . . . holds an irresistible appeal for the neo-Victorian imagination. The nature of our interest in the Victorian body arguably reveals less about the Victorians and more about our own preoccupations" (*Neo-Victorianism* 107). Due to practical constraints, this article cannot provide a full discussion of such theories as applied to the heterotopic space of the grotto in neo-Victorian fiction. Still, while the focus of the article remains on the analysis of the Foucauldian trope, I bring to light questions about the relationship between neo-Victorian appropriations of grottos and trauma that may be further explored in future publications.

In *Nostalgic Postmodernism*, Gutleben poses two questions that are central, Bowler and Cox argue, to the "neo-Victorian project" (Bowler and Cox 5) and have remained in neo-Victorian criticism since (Gay et al.; Heilmann and Llewellyn, *Neo-Victorianism*; Robinson; Boehm-Schnitzer and Gruss). First, Gutleben questions whether the contemporary novel "sets out to rectify certain historical wrongs, to fight against specific prejudice and to subvert ideological and aesthetic commonplaces" (Gutleben 7). Then, Gutleben goes on to argue whether it simply "takes over a set of themes, of characters and of novelistic devices either because they appear as tokens of an unsurpassed art or because they perpetuate the immense success of the Golden Age of the British novel" (Gutleben 7). According to Renk, women writers' approach to the neo-Victorian project is revisionist when they address "the ways in which gender and sexuality

⁶ See, for example, Arias ("Traces and Vestiges"), Onega and Ganteau (*Contemporary Trauma Narratives*), and Scott.

are constructed in the Victorian era” (3). The same argument permeates Maier and Ayres’ edited volume on neo-Victorian representations of female madness. Therefore, even if neither Overall nor Fox defend an explicit feminist stance in their narratives,⁷ the structure, plot, narrative voice and psychological depiction of the female characters in the two novels point to an intentional redefinition of female identities. For both Overall and Fox, the Margate grotto becomes—at very specific moments in the novels—the crime scene for the worst abuses. The sense of antiquity and exoticism occasionally associated with Victorian grottos wanes, and the once-fantastic pleasure domes are linked to anxiety and oppression. In a determined effort to overcome such abuses and re-define their identities, Frances and Pearl—the two heroines of the respective novels—contest and reinvent the space of the merciless grotto by recreating experiences that free their bodies through their own narratives. As such, they confirm the neo-Victorian premise that contemporary narratives remodel past social histories to “provide mechanisms of resilience” that restore wronged minds and bodies (Onega and Ganteau, “Introduction” 5).

Inspired by one of the display cases in Margate’s grotto Museum,⁸ Sonia Overall’s *The Realm of Shells* was first published in 2006. The book is based on the discovery and exploitation of the site from the naive yet truthful eyes of the Newlove children. The narrative voice combines the internal monologue of a little girl—Frances Newlove, Joshua’s sister and daughter of the schoolmaster who owned the ground—with the formal letter-writing of the seventy-year-old Frances who recalls the dark secrets of her infancy at the grotto from the perspective of the main female character. After biographical research into the real Newloves and the lives and customs of Margate residents in the 1830s, Overall recreates the characters who developed around the place from Frances’s perspective. We therefore learn about their education, family, and social relations, including Captain Easter, the antagonist of the novel. The book, Overall claims, “is essentially a novel about place, about how a place can influence

⁷ With regard to *The Realm of Shells*, Overall claims, “I didn’t write the women in this book with any gender agenda. Having said that, it’s impossible to ignore nineteenth-century attitudes towards women” (4).

⁸ “In one of the display cases is a potted history of the shell grotto’s ‘discovery’, in 1835, by Joshua Newlove . . . I read this, as most visitors do, before going into the grotto. It was a good story but it didn’t mean much without seeing the place. Then I went into the chalk tunnel and saw the scale of the site and quality of the shell work. . . It was the central image for a story that unfolded over the next few months of research” (Overall 9).

and manipulate people. The grotto exerts a fascination on the book's characters, who all want a piece of it for themselves" (Overall 9).

The subjective relation of the characters with the place adds the factor of "interexperientiality" to Ricoeur's metaphor of the construction of new spatial structures. Ricoeur's association is founded on the idea that every new building "is inscribed in urban space like a narrative within a setting of intertextuality" (150). Overall expands the simile through a set of individual experiences—stories—which add to the objective, analytic and 'intertextual' construction of the place. This infrastructural approach to narrative-building holds because, as Koselleck argues, "there is no history which could be constituted independently of the experiences and expectations of active human agents" (257). For Koselleck, two concepts underpin chronologies of place: 'spaces of experience' and 'horizons of expectation.' The former are considered the present of the past, while the 'horizon of expectations' is the present of the future. If one should understand history as the dialogic tension between the two notions, the history of the Margate grotto as re-imagined by Overall is the history of the two presents retold and recalled by the two female narrators in the novel, the young and the adult Frances. By recreating her "horizon of expectations" and "spaces of experience" in the time frame of the narrative, Overall makes the readers witnesses of her own emplacement in and displacement from the enticing cave in various heterochronisms. As such, the grotto reveals "the power relations that still exist as haunting legacies in the present" (Kohlke et al. 2), thus proving to be an apt example of a Foucauldian heterotopia. Overall superimposes conceptions of time to refigure the grotto as a space where experiences and expectations meet to "rectify" the past (Gutleben 7).

Overall's neo-Victorian reappraisal of the trope serves as a tool of female empowerment only when understood in relation to time and the gesture of writing. Therefore, it is not only an example of literary healing, but it also demonstrates Heilmann and Llewellyn's ideas on women writers redressing "the past -a female past either outside of or silent within the male tradition" ("Hystorical" 142). As a *heterotopia of compensation*, Overall's Shell Grotto arouses the high expectations of the Newlove children who see in its secret chambers the space of illusion that exposes the strict instruction they received in the context of evangelical Christianity. As Overall explains, "The grotto responds to the motives and actions of the characters that explore it, being read by them accordingly as a magical space, a demonic realm or a *locus horridus*" (30). This recalls

the effects of Utilitarianism on the Dickensian Gradgrind children in *Hard Times* and the actions triggered after peeping through the grotto-like booth of the circus beyond the sensorial stance developed by critics (Arias, “(Sub)Urban Landscapes”). The dissolute behaviour that Overall allows in Shell Grotto interrogates Victorian attitudes towards education. As a *heterotopia of crisis*, Overall’s grotto serves as the umbrella for the process of growth and transformation of the younger characters as well as for the corruption of the morale of the adults. Young Frances’s disillusionment and unfulfilled expectations grow as Captain Easter’s ambition for economic wealth is uncovered.

In contrast to the strong magnetism that the grotto exercises on the children at the beginning of the novel, the last letter written by the adult Frances in 1897 reads, “the place is nothing to me. I’m not interested in it any more” (Overall 325). Between 1835 and 1897—the time frame of the narrative—the grotto involves disparate moments in time where conjectures about its first builders, memories of its first discovery, and the set of experiences lived by the Newlove family intersperse to unfold the plot. They provide the adult Frances Newlove with the narrative frame in which to overcome her silenced encounter in the grotto.

Captain Easter’s abuse of the young Frances is undisclosed by the narrative voice of the little girl who recalls the history of the Newloves at the grotto. The Captain’s cruelty towards Fanny is stifled under the naked cries of “*No-oh-oh. No-oh-oh*” (Overall 61) and henceforth barely verbalized by her recurring address to the character as “*Hateful hateful*” (Overall 266). Only when Wales is working on the remodelling of the grotto and invites Fanny to see the shells does her interior voice dare to admit that the dark room in the shell is devilishly haunted by her memories of the past: “‘Thank you for showing me’ say I. He shrugs again, pointy. ‘Don’t you fret about that room, my girl’ he says. ‘It in’t haunted.’ It is though. Just not by anybody who is dead” (Overall 305).

Fanny’s last chance to speak is through her last letter, where the adult Frances Schmidt responds to Mr. Goddard. The very last sentences in the letter culminate the sporadic efforts of the double narrator to excavate Fanny’s memories: “there is still something I have to tell you, if you want to hear it. I swore once I’d never say, but that was all a long time ago. It can wait” (Overall 326). Correspondence between the schoolmaster’s daughter and the real-life historian Algernon Goddard is filed in the archives of Canterbury Cathedral and served as a source of inspiration for Overall (Overall 10). Fanny’s letter, therefore, acts as the archaeological

vestige that proves David Lowenthal's "mistrust of nostalgia" in contemporary reappraisals of the Victorian past. As Arias and Pulham argue with regard to Lowenthal's theories, "we no longer seek in the past a refuge of the present; instead, we excavate the past to expose its 'iniquities and indignities.'" (xiv). Frances' last letter accounts for her final excavation of her memories that attempt to denounce her silenced suffering. By asking the readers to fill in the gaps of such memories, Overall makes use of the voice of a postmodern narrative to expose and condemn the ignominy of the past.

Six years after the publication of *The Realm of Shells*, Essie Fox refigures the Victorian grotto in *Elijah's Mermaid* as a neo-Victorian heterotopia where female identities are moulded, contested, and (re)created through memory. *Elijah's Mermaid* opens when the infant of a young woman discovered dead by the Thames is found and brought to an exclusive brothel in London: Mrs Hibbert's *House of Mermaids*. Brought up under the name of Pearl, the girl is sold to Osborne Black—a patron of the brothel—at the auction of her maidenhood at the age of fourteen. The story of Pearl runs in parallel with that of the orphaned twins Lily and Elijah, who eventually meet the girl and form a bond that will mark their future personal, emotional and sexual development. Fox relies on neo-Victorian narratives with actual and invented nineteenth-century epigraphs, interpolated letters, tales, diaries and newspaper clippings to help her unfold the plot of the novel. Yet the narrative is mainly told from Pearl's and Lily's perspectives. This is a recurring trope in Fox's neo-Victorian novels, where stories are narrated from the viewpoint of two, often opposite, female subjectivities.

In the section "The Real Places Which Have Influenced the Settings for *Elijah's Mermaid*" appended to the novel, Fox declares that "The Grade I listed Margate Shell Grotto plays a relatively small part in *Elijah's Mermaid*, being the underground 'cave of shells' in which Pearl first poses in darkness for the artist Osborne Black. But it has a great significance in terms of what her life is about to become" (Fox 398). In no way insignificant to the plot of *Elijah's Mermaid*, the events that take place in the Margate Grotto are the turning point for various key elements in the plot of the novel. They develop Osborne Black's fanatical infatuation with Pearl and also influence the unfolding of Pearl's adult life.

Osborne Black is an artist obsessed with the painting of pale mermaids and forces Pearl to pose for him—first as his daughter and later his wife—for his paintings of mermaids. The first time that Pearl sits for Osborne

Black is in the Margate grotto, where “his vision grew too dark, before he was taken up with the madness of hiding his mermaid away from the world” (Fox 344). Pearl is a young adolescent, and her experience parallels an act of sexual initiation. Fox’s narrative evidences the act of possession with the recurring phrase “You are my mermaid”—first stated in this passage and a returning motif throughout the novel. The physical and psychic pain that Pearl suffers from that very first act of abuse at the grotto haunts her memories of the place and is evoked in every subsequent space of reclusion that she endures. As a result, Dolphin House—Osborne Black’s hall—and Chiswick House asylum become extensions of that first grotto of abuse and provide the foundations for the elaborate rhizomatic structure of spaces of concealment that build Pearl’s identity.

Fox’s conceptualization of the grotto as a symbol is more complex than Overall’s as, far from being central and unique as an enchanting space of secrets and cruelty, it expands into an intricate chain of connections beginning at the House of Mermaids. In Fox’s rhizomatic reinvention of the grotto, three caves are worth noting for the purpose of this article. The first is Margate Shell Grotto, which sparks the abuses that ensue. The next significant grotto is Osborne Black’s own hall, where, triggered by his sick imagination, Black has built his “own world, modelled on a grotto” (Fox 190). In Black’s grotto, his “secret realm” and “darkness” perpetuates the artists’ possession of the muse that eventually ends in her seclusion in an asylum when the first signs of age and adult sexuality appear in her body (Fox 190).

The third relevant space in Fox’s rewriting of the Victorian cave is the grotto built by the two siblings, Lily and Elijah, in Kingsland House. The children constructed the grotto with the shells sent by Frederick Hall. Pearl’s first and last encounters with the Kingsland House grotto are sensorial experiences that reanimate her personal story of concealment.⁹ When Pearl first visits Kingsland House as Black’s wife, the stroll in the garden with Lily takes her to a stream, to the “sound of water” that she “paddles” until she finds “the spot where some shells still adhered to the damp mossed walls” (Fox 118)—the traces of the old grotto. She then recalls her story at Margate:

⁹ See Arias (“(Sub)Urban Landscapes”) for a thorough analysis of the grotto as a source for sensorial experiences in Sonia Overall’s *The Realm of Shells*.

‘You have your own grotto!’ She smiled back through the dappling shadows until suddenly flinching, as if in pain. For a moment or two she bit down on her lip before letting out a lingering sigh, and then that guarded note in her voice when she murmured, ‘Osborne must not see this place. He would only want to paint me here.’ (Fox 118–19)

Pearl’s recollection of her traumatic experiences through her senses illustrates the role of sensorial meanings in trauma narratives where, “unable to narrativize the traumatic experience in logical terms, the subject gives expression to his or her trauma by means of sensorial images instead of words” (Onega and Ganteau, “Introduction” 3). The second encounter with this grotto is at the end of the novel, when Pearl is about to give birth to Elijah’s child. In a trance she finds the same stream and the old grotto:

Where am I? Is this Margate? For a moment, I cannot think. My world is nothing but sensory touch, dampness and greyness and cold hard stones, and the glisten of shells beneath velvety moss, and the patterns they make—like stars, like moons.

And then I remember. This is the grotto. I say, ‘I am your mermaid.’

Why does Elijah not reply? There is only the silver of tears in his eyes. There is only the glint of the gold on my hand when my wet fingers twine with his, turning and squeezing, gripping hard when he pulls me from darkness and into the light. (Fox 345–46)

In the two examples, the transcendence of Pearl’s recollections of Margate is rekindled by the immanence of her sensorial experiences—by the material trace of the Kingsland House grotto. For Merleau-Ponty, immanence and transcendence form a co-constitutive paradox: “[i]mmanence, because the perceived object cannot be foreign to him who perceives; transcendence, because it always contains something more than what is actually given” (16). Considering Freud’s premise that the “child is always father to the adult,” the transcendence of the various grottos in Fox’s narrative is always related to Pearl’s first experiences at Margate. This illustrates Ricoeur’s ideas of how external marks are adopted as “a basis and intermediary for the work of memory” (147).

Yet in Fox’s novel, the external marks of the Kingsland House grotto not only revive disturbing memories of Pearl’s past as a sexual object but also re-imagine the space of the grotto as a modern and female-centred heterotopia. Fox’s revisitation of Margate Shell Grotto exemplifies neo-Victorian appropriations of the trope as a Foucauldian heterotopia: both as

a *heterotopia of crisis* and of *compensation*, it reveals a female character on the verge of adulthood at the same time that it recreates a palace of pleasure for the male artistic gaze that abuses his muse. Still, as the plot unfolds, Pearl's narrative voice deconstructs the grotto as a *heterotopia of compensation* where the hands of the male artist no longer mould an objectified Galatea. When she is giving birth to Angel and re-imagines Margate, the real-life experience supersedes the illusion of memory. The grotto becomes Pearl's palace of pleasure and perfection. Pearl manages to conceal it from the hands of Osborne Black and respond to the petrification of his models' minds and bodies by giving birth to a new life.

CONCLUSIONS

The two case studies considered for this article confirm how the Victorian grotto, both as an aesthetic trope and as a product of consumption, survives as a cultural commodity enmeshed in contexts that created meanings not only for its contemporaneous consumers but also for contemporary Victoriana enthusiasts. Neo-Victorian appropriations of the trope in fiction rely on a non-factual, yet historic-archaeological, excavation to unveil the micro-histories of memory and experience that helped to build such meanings. In their engagement with the Victorian age, Overall and Fox reinvent the grotto as a Foucauldian heterotopia that challenges and denounces the past abuses of history. The authors develop examples of the neo-Victorian grotto as a heterotopia of crisis and a heterotopia of compensation that adopt different functions depending on the culture that re-invents it. The neo-Victorian grotto described by Overall and Fox is a site of passage, of transition from pain to healing, from submission to empowerment, and stands in contrast to other mainstream emplacements that limit women's emancipation and autonomy. Finally, the grotto also reconciles various and seemingly conflicting spaces through sensorial memories in a process of healing where, in the case of Overall, the act of writing is imperative to authenticate Frances' version of the story and, in the case of Fox, the act of childbirth reconciles Pearl with her past experiences.

The micro-histories recovered by Overall and Fox revisit the nineteenth-century grotto as a neo-Victorian heterotopia where the static, enchanting and repressive site is revaluated as a fluid *place-as-event* that is constantly subject to change through social and material relations. As such, they evidence Massey's theories by which she reads any place as

“woven together out of ongoing stories” (131) and open up further analysis of the neo-Victorian grotto in other eminently spatial mediums such as theatre. Whether or not the fictional neo-Victorian grotto addressed in this article may find its corollaries in other neo-Victorian genres and media is still a question to be answered. Nonetheless, the porosity of the performing arts in the nineteenth century—which allow grottos to appear recurrently in ballet and opera but also in burlesque and pantomimes (Monrós-Gaspar, “La ninfa Eco”)—together with the variety of genres in which the Victorian grotto is adapted, transformed, and transposed onstage at present expands the possibilities to new, and still unexplored, neo-Victorian heterotopic grottos.

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Modality in Climate Change-Related Discourse by King Charles III

Modalidad en el discurso relacionado con el cambio climático del rey Carlos III

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Abstract: The article presents a corpus-based study that aims at establishing how modality is used in climate change-related discourse by King Charles III of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland (the UK). The study involved a corpus of speeches on the topic of climate change delivered by King Charles III from 2005 to 2023. The corpus was analysed in the computer software AntConc (Anthony) in order to compute the frequency of the occurrence of the central modal verbs. Thereafter, they were analysed qualitatively to establish the types of modality associated with them. The analysis revealed that climate change-related discourse by King Charles III was marked by a high frequency of the occurrence of the modal verbs *will* and *can*. Their frequency, pragmatic roles, and association with the different types of modality are further discussed in the article.

Keywords: climate change-related discourse; epistemic modality; deontic modality; dynamic modality; modal verbs.

Summary: Introduction. The Issue of Climate Change in British Political Discourse. Modality in Political Discourse on the Issue of Climate Change: Literature review. The Present Study. Results and Discussion. Conclusions.

Resumen: El artículo presenta un estudio basado en corpus que tiene como objetivo establecer cómo se utiliza la modalidad en el discurso relacionado con el cambio climático por parte del rey Carlos III del Reino Unido de Gran Bretaña e Irlanda del Norte (Reino Unido). El estudio incluyó un corpus de discursos sobre el tema del cambio climático pronunciados por el rey Carlos III entre 2005 y 2023. El corpus fue analizado en el software AntConc (Anthony) para calcular la frecuencia de ocurrencia de los verbos modales centrales. Posteriormente, fueron analizados

cualitativamente para establecer los tipos de modalidad asociados a ellos. El análisis reveló que el discurso relacionado con el cambio climático del rey Carlos III estuvo marcado por una alta frecuencia de aparición de los verbos modales *will* y *can*. Su frecuencia, funciones pragmáticas y asociación con los diferentes tipos de modalidad se analizan con más detalle en el artículo.

Palabras clave: discurso relacionado con el cambio climático; modalidad epistémica; modalidad deóntica; modalidad dinámica; verbos modales.

Sumario: Introducción. La cuestión del cambio climático en el discurso político británico. Modalidad en el discurso político sobre el tema del cambio climático: Revisión de la literatura. El presente estudio. Resultados y discusión. Conclusiones.

INTRODUCTION

The discursive means of communicating the issue of climate change to the public at large are essential in addressing, mitigating, and tackling climate change as a global challenge (Andersen et al. 397). Assuming that discursive means of communicating the issue of climate change to the public are both critical and powerful (O'Neill et al. 413), it is of paramount importance to gain insight into how celebrities, politicians, public figures, and royalty construe their discourses concerning climate change (Anderson 535). It is argued in the literature that such symbolic figures as, for instance, King Charles III of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland (the UK), “are increasingly appearing as key voices within the climate change debate” (Anderson 535). Conceivably, it seems pertinent and relevant to shed light on climate change-related discourse by King Charles III (further in the article—the King), given that he is considered one of the key public figures whose views on climate change are heeded to by the British public at large (MacGregor 124).

Informed by the need to investigate the attitude towards climate change by the members of the British royalty (Anderson 535; MacGregor 124), the article presents a corpus-based study that seeks to elucidate how modality is employed in climate change-related discourse by the King. It should be specified that discourse in general is referred to as the use of language as a social practice, which is instantiated as “a way of signifying experience from a particular perspective” (Fairclough 91). In discourse, modality is argued to play a critical role that pertains to a range of phenomena in pragmatics, morpho-syntax, and semantics (Lillian 2). The present study is based upon the definition of modality as a complex grammatical, pragmatic, and semantic phenomenon, which is employed in oral and written discourse as an indication of the “speaker’s attitudes

concerning the validity, possibility, necessity, predictability, desirability, inclination, volition, obligation, permission and evaluation of the events” (Cheng 176). Modality in English is conveyed by different word classes, for instance, adjectives, adverbs, nouns and noun phrases. It is deemed to be expressed most directly by the central modal verbs, such as *can*, *could*, *may*, *might*, *must*, *shall*, *should*, *will*, and *would* (Kiefer 69; Levine 70; Lyons 787; Nuyts 7; Payne 255; Wildman 1455).

Presumably, by means of identifying and analysing the frequency of the occurrence of the central modal verbs in the King’s discourse on climate change, it would be possible to gain a deeper insight into his discursive preferences in terms of the use of modality in his speeches on the topic. Currently, however, there are no recent studies that investigate the use of modality in the King’s discourse on climate change (Kapranov, “Modality in Sustainability Discourse” 88). The present study aims at generating new knowledge about modality in the King’s climate change-related discourse by means of collecting a corpus of his speeches on the issue of climate change and analysing it in order to establish the most frequently occurring modal verbs, their respective pragmatic roles and types of modality they are associated with. Specifically, the study seeks to answer the following research questions (RQs):

RQ 1: What are the most frequent central modal verbs in the corpus of the King’s speeches on climate change?

RQ 2: What pragmatic roles and types of modalities are associated with the most frequent central modal verbs in the corpus?

Further, the article is structured as follows. First, a brief summary of the literature on the issue of climate change in British political discourse is presented in section 1. Thereafter, in section 2, an outline of the prior studies on modality in climate change discourse is provided. Then, in section 3, I discuss the theoretical premises of the study and its methodology. The results of the study and their discussion are given in section 4. Finally, in section 5, the article concludes with the summary of the major findings and avenues for future research.

1. THE ISSUE OF CLIMATE CHANGE IN BRITISH POLITICAL DISCOURSE

The issue of climate change in British political discourse appears to attract a substantial amount of attention by researchers in discourse studies (Boas 21; Capstick et al. 725; Carvalho 172; Cass 47; Detraz and Betsill 303; Jaspal and Nerlich 122; Kapranov, “Rishi Sunak’s Framing” 85; Müller and Stegmeier 309; Nerlich 31; Peters 196; Rogers-Hayden et al. 134). Judging from the prior studies, climate change in British political discourse is seen as a political challenge both on the international and domestic levels (Cass 47). Notably, current British political discourse appears to adjust the major foci of the international agenda on climate change to the domestic realities (Cass 47). In line with the international actors and stakeholders, climate change discourse in the UK addresses, primarily, (i) the considerations of negative consequences of greenhouse gas emissions, (ii) the measures undertaken to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, and (iii) the rise in mean temperatures that constitutes a threat locally (i.e., in the UK) and globally (Jaspal and Nerlich 122; Kapranov, “The Framing of Climate Change” 55).

Research indicates that British political discourse on climate change is determined, at least partially, by how British media construe the issue of climate change and communicate it to the public at large (Carvalho 172). It is argued in the literature that media representations of climate change may influence the British voters’ political engagement by pointing out some aspects of media discourses that may either facilitate or constrain their engagement in terms of the voters’ choices that involve climate change-related issues (ibid.). In addition to the transmission of climate change-related discourses by mass media, British political discourse on climate change reverberates with the public’s opinion, or rather, opinions on the matter (Capstick et al. 725). Whilst the literature notes a volatile nature of the general public’s opinion on climate change in the UK, it is, nevertheless, posited that the public understanding of climate change is based upon the voters’ ethics and value-based notions that are not likely to be changed easily (ibid.).

Considering the literature, British political discourses on climate change have incorporated the construals of security and securitisation into the issue of climate change (Boas 21; Detraz and Betsill 303; Peters 196). In this regard, the literature argues that British political discourses on climate change have undergone, at least, a partial securitisation (Boas 5; Peters 198). In other words, the issue of climate change is no longer seen

as a merely environmental problem but is regarded by the British political elite within the domain of national security (Peters 196).

Alongside the construal of climate change within the realm of securitisation, the current British political discourses appear to regard climate change from the perspective of sustainability and renewable energy, which both pertain to the issue of climate change mitigation (Kapranov, “The Discourse of Sustainability” 35; Müller and Stegmeier 309). Prior studies point out to the recurrent discursive theme in British politics that frames climate change as a political issue that needs to be resolved within the context of sustainable and renewable energy sources (Rogers-Hayden et al. 134).

Summing up the present overview of the literature, it seems conceivable to contend that climate change is involved in British political discourses as an essential component of policy-making pertaining to risk, security, sustainability, and renewable energy. Importantly, it can be gleaned from the literature that British political discourse on climate change is affected dynamically by the influence of both media and the public at large.

2. MODALITY IN POLITICAL DISCOURSE ON THE ISSUE OF CLIMATE CHANGE: LITERATURE REVIEW

Modality is a well-researched area in discourse studies (Fløttum, “A Linguistic and Discursive View” 19; Juliansyah et al. 1; Kapranov, “Modal Verbs in Research Articles” 6; Lillian 1; Malik et al. 13; Nartey and Yankson 21; Poole and Hayes 37). The literature indicates that modality, which is manifested discursively by the central modal verbs, is amply used in political discourse (Nartey and Yankson 21). In particular, Lillian (6) demonstrates that political discourse is characterised by the presence of modal verbs that are associated with epistemic modality. It should be noted that epistemic modality

is concerned with the speaker’s assumptions, or assessment of possibilities, and, in most cases, it indicates the speaker’s confidence or lack of confidence in the truth of the proposition expressed. (Coates 112)

Typically, epistemic modality is deemed to be manifested by such modals, as *might* and *may* (Portner 2). It has been established that epistemic modality, which is realised via the aforementioned modals, is

employed by politicians in order to inform and persuade the public at large (Lillian 12). In addition, the literature posits that political discourse utilises modals as a marker of stance (Poole and Hayes 37) in order to explicate the pragmatic strategies of hedging and politeness (Boicu 15; Hyryn 101).

In contrast to the prior studies on modality in political discourse, however, modality in climate change discourse by prominent politicians, public figures, and royalty has attracted insufficient scholarly attention (Juliansyah et al. 1; Malik et al. 13; Poole and Hayes 37). Judging from the studies that shed light onto modality in climate change-related issues within political discourse, *can* and *could* are reported to be frequent modals that indicate conditionality and/or possibility in addition to uncertainty (Bailey et al. 202; Fløttum and Dahl 20). Similar findings are communicated by Fløttum (“Linguistic Mediation” 8), who argues that political climate change-related discourse involves a high number of modals, such as *may*, *might*, *could*, and *would*, which are used in order to convey hedging and hesitation in climate change-related discourse.

Additionally, the literature has established that the central modal verbs *will* and *can* are rather frequent in the corpus of speeches on climate change by the Secretary-General of the United Nations (Juliansyah et al. 4). Similarly, the central modal verbs *will* and *must* are reported to be frequently used in political discourse that involves climate change-related issues by the politicians, who seek to show a strong display of conviction in the betterment of the environment (Malik et al. 19).

Summarising this section of the article, we may argue that modality is manifested in the discursive space of climate change-related political discourse by a range of modal verbs that play important pragmatic roles and reflect a variety of discourse-pragmatic purposes of the particular text at hand.

3. THE PRESENT STUDY

As previously mentioned in the introductory section of the article, modality seems to be an under-researched aspect of the King’s discourse on climate change. The current gap in scholarship concerning his climate change discourse appears rather surprising given that he has been addressing this critical issue repeatedly since the early 2000s (MacGregor 124). At that time, however, he was referred to as The Prince of Wales. In light of the contemporaneous gap in research, the present study aims to enhance our knowledge about modality in the King’s speeches on climate

change by means of (i) collecting a corpus of his speeches on this issue and (ii) identifying the central modal verbs in them. Following the research aims, two RQs (i.e., RQ 1 and RQ 2) are formulated and presented in the introductory part of the article. To reiterate, the RQs are focused on learning about the most frequent modal verbs in the corpus and their association with the pragmatic roles and types of modality. Prior proceeding to the study, however, it is relevant to specify its theoretical premises, which, in particular, pertain to RQ 2. Namely, in the subsection below, I explain the theoretical framework allied with (i) the pragmatic roles of modals in climate change discourse and (ii) the types of modality associated with them.

3.1 The Theoretical Premises of the Study

On the theoretical level, the study is informed by the approach to modality and the English modals formulated by Palmer (24–50) in his seminal monograph *Modality and the English Modals*, second edition. Palmer proposes the division of modality into epistemic, deontic, and dynamic types (35).

Let us consider in more detail the way Palmer defines and reasons about the aforementioned types of modality. According to Palmer, epistemic modality is easily distinguishable in its syntax and semantics from the other two (50). Moreover, he contends that epistemic modality is characterised by a substantial degree of internal regularity and completeness (ibid.). Specifically, Palmer indicates that

the function of epistemic modals is to make judgments about the possibility, etc., that something is or is not the case. Epistemic modality is, that is to say, the modality of propositions, in the strict sense of the term, rather than of actions, states, events, etc. (50)

In other words, he maintains that “epistemic modals are normally subjective, ie that the epistemic judgment rests with the speaker” (50). Furthermore, Palmer (ibid.) points out that the relevant modals that are associated with epistemic modality occur, predominantly, in the present tense.

As far as deontic modality is concerned, Palmer asserts that it is typically manifested by the modals that denote giving permission (e.g., *may*) (69). However, he proceeds that it also may refer to an obligation

(e.g., *must*), a promise and/or a threat (e.g., *shall*). In terms of the deontic type of modality, Palmer demonstrates that *may* appears to be almost invariable associated with deontic modality (69–82). Palmer indicates that *can* may be reflective of deontic modality, given that it is often used to give permission.

Palmer explains that the dynamic type of modality refers to the ability or volition of the subject in a clause (83). Dynamic modality is thought to consist of two subtypes. The first subtype is referred in his monograph as (i) dynamic possibility, which is conventionally represented by the modal verb *can* and semi-modal *be able to*, and (ii) dynamic necessity, which is normally associated with *must*, *have to*, and *have got to*. In addition, it should be specified that Palmer posits that

dynamic modality is subject-oriented in the sense that it is concerned with the ability or volition of the subject of the sentence, rather than the opinions (epistemic) or attitudes (deontic) of the speaker (and addressee). (113)

Another theoretical pillar of the study is represented by the approach towards the pragmatic roles of modals, which has been developed by Kjersti Fløttum (“A Linguistic and Discursive View” 19). Having examined an extensive corpus of texts on climate change, Fløttum considers modality as an invaluable linguistic resource that allows a researcher to investigate the intricacies of climate change-related discourse (“A Linguistic and Discursive View” 19; “Linguistic Mediation” 7–20). Fløttum argues that a detailed examination of modal verbs as a micro-discursive means of structuring the speaker’s discourse on climate change can facilitate a better and deeper understanding of the speaker’s intentions, stance, and attitudes towards the topic (Fløttum and Dahl 14–23). It follows from Fløttum’s (“A Linguistic and Discursive View” 19; “Linguistic Mediation” 7–20) reasoning that from the point of view of pragmatics, modal verbs are involved in the manifestation of the speaker’s stance vis-à-vis the issue of climate change. According to Fløttum (“A Linguistic and Discursive View” 19), the speaker’s stance on the issue of climate change may be direct and precise or, alternatively, less direct and, even, circuitous. In particular, Fløttum (“A Linguistic and Discursive View” 19) posits that the modals *may*, *might*, *could*, *should* and *would* are pragmatically involved in toning down, or hedging, the propositional content of a stretch of discourse on climate change in which they occur. Fløttum (“A Linguistic and Discursive View” 19) further illustrates her

contention by a quote from the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), in which the modal verb *may* is utilised as a hedging device to impart the proposition a tentative tonality, e.g.

Without substantial investment flows and effective technology transfer, it *may* be difficult to achieve emission reduction at a significant scale. Mobilising financing of incremental costs of low-carbon technologies is important. (IPCC 20)

As seen above, the modal verb *may* as a hedging device conveys a degree of uncertainty to the clause, thus facilitating its hedging. It should be noted that Fløttum's treatment of hedging in climate change discourse finds multiple parallels with hedging in academic discourse, which has been postulated by Hyland (239). In contrast to the modals, which are involved in hedging (i.e., *may*, *might*, *could*, *should* and *would*), Fløttum ("A Linguistic and Discursive View" 19; "Linguistic Mediation" 7–20; Fløttum and Dahl 14–23) considers the modals *can*, *must*, *shall*, and *will* to be associated with the pragmatic role of rendering a piece of discourse on climate change certainty and boosting a certain part of the utterance. In other words, the modals *can*, *must*, *shall*, and *will* as boosters contribute to (i) emphasising the part of discourse on climate change and (ii) facilitating its prominence.

Another theoretical consideration that harkens back to Fløttum's ("A Linguistic and Discursive View" 19; "Linguistic Mediation" 7–20) approach to modal verbs in climate change discourse, involves her seminal ideas concerning the discursive roles of passive and active constructions in relation to modals. Specifically, it is inferred from Fløttum that active constructions with modals (e.g., *can mitigate*) facilitate the creation of a more direct tonality in climate change discourse. In contrast, however, passive constructions with modals (e.g., *can be mitigated*) are ascribed to a rather detached and more objective pragmatic tonality in texts that deal with the issue of climate change. Unfortunately, Fløttum does not pursue the findings concerning the pragmatic role of active and passive constructions with modals and does not report any statistical measures associated with their pragmatic roles. Nevertheless, the present study takes on board Fløttum's observations as far as the pragmatic roles of active and passive construction with modals are concerned.

3.2 The Corpus of the Study

With the aforementioned theoretical and methodological considerations in mind, the corpus of the study was collected. The corpus was comprised of the King's speeches on climate change from 2005 to 2023. I accessed the written transcripts of his speeches on the official website of the British royal family at www.royal.uk and searched for them with help of the keywords "climate change," "global climate change," "global warming," "greenhouse gas/gasses," "CO2 emissions," "the rise of sea level/levels," and "global temperature rising." Once the relevant transcripts of the speeches were identified, they were downloaded as Word files in order to calculate the descriptive statistics of the corpus in the software program Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 20.0 (IBM) (see Table 1 below).

Table 1. The descriptive statistics of the corpus

#	The descriptive statistics	Value
1	The total number of speeches	20
2	The total number of words	36 272
3	Mean words	1 813.6
4	Standard deviation words	842.1
5	Maximum words	3 462
6	Minimum words	829

3.3 The Methodology of the Study

In terms of the methodology, the study employed a quantitative corpus-based component that was subsequently enhanced by a qualitative analysis. The quantitative analysis of the corpus was carried out in the computer software AntConc version 4.0.11 (Anthony) in order to compute the frequency of the occurrence of the central modal verbs, namely *can*, *could*, *may*, *might*, *must*, *shall*, *should*, *will*, and *would*. To do so, each transcript of the King's speech on climate change was downloaded from the website www.royal.uk, converted into a Word file and processed in AntConc (Anthony), which yielded the occurrence of the respective modal verb per file. Thereafter, the occurrence of each modal verb per file were

merged in SPSS in order to compute mean and standard deviation per each modal verb in the entire corpus.

In addition, the quantitative analysis of the most frequent modal verbs was extended by the N-Gram function of AntConc in order to illustrate the textual environment in which the most frequent modal verbs in the corpus occurred. It should be specified that the N-Gram function was used to scan the corpus for an N number of clusters. Following Szczygłowska (18), the N value in N-Gram analysis was set at 3. That was done in order to see how modals were used in active (e.g., *will mitigate*) and passive (e.g., *will be mitigated*) constructions, respectively. In line with Svenonius, the term “construction” was treated in the analysis as “a characteristic formal pattern of syntactic categories or features, usually associated with some meaning and/or discourse function” (15).

Following that, the qualitative part of the investigation was carried out. It involved a manual identification of the types of modality associated with the central modal verbs in the corpus. The qualitative analysis was based on Palmer’s (50–133) classification of the types of modality summarised in the preceding subsection of the article. Methodologically, the inclusion criteria of each individual modal verb in the corpus into the respective types of modality were in line with Palmer and summarised in Table 2.

Table 2. The inclusion criteria of modal verbs into the respective types of modality based upon Palmer (50–133)

#	Types of Modality	Inclusion Criteria: A Modal Verb
1	Deontic	(i) Expresses a speaker’s permission (for instance, <i>may, can</i>), obligation (e.g., <i>must</i>), a promise or a threat (e.g., <i>shall</i>), which take place at the moment of speaking; (ii) Expresses possibility, which consists in giving permission (for instance, <i>may, can</i>); (iii) Expresses a command, often of a brusque or impolite kind (e.g., <i>can</i>); (iv) Expresses obligation (e.g., <i>must</i>), which implies that the speaker is in a position to lay the obligation, and is thus in a position of some authority;

2	Dynamic	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> (i) Expresses physical possibility (e.g., <i>can</i>) by indicating that an event is possible; (ii) Expresses judgments about the degree or extent that an action is possible (e.g., <i>can</i>); (iii) Expresses implicitly what one can do or what possibly will/should be implemented (e.g., <i>can</i>). (iv) Refers to the ability of the subject, animate or inanimate (e.g., <i>can</i>); (v) Co-occurs with self-mentions, such as <i>I</i> and/or <i>we</i> (e.g., <i>can</i>); (vi) Co-occurs with the sense verbs, such as <i>see, hear</i> (e.g., <i>can</i>); (vii) Co-occurs with such verbs, as <i>afford, bear, face, remember, stand, think, understand</i> (e.g., <i>can</i>); (viii) Refers to rules and regulations (for instance, <i>can, may</i>);
<hr/>		
3	Epistemic	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> (i) Expresses the degree/degrees of possibility and necessity that are marked, typically, by <i>may</i> and/or <i>must</i>; (ii) Expresses subjectivity, i.e. that the subjective judgment rests with the speaker; (iii) Expresses a tentative form of <i>will</i> (i.e., <i>would</i>), which can be paraphrased as ‘I should think that ...’ or ‘It would be reasonable to conclude that’; (iv) Functions in making judgments about the possibility, etc., that something is or is not the case; (v) Manifests weak probability (e.g., <i>may</i>), which can be paraphrased as ‘(it is) possible that’; (vi) Refers to what is reasonable to expect (e.g., <i>will</i>), which can be paraphrased as ‘A reasonable inference is that.’

Importantly, it should be noted that whereas two subtypes of dynamic modality were considered by Palmer in his monograph (83), namely (a) dynamic possibility and (b) dynamic necessity, they were analysed in the present study as one type (i.e., without any further distinction of subtypes). That was done due to the following reason. According to Palmer (83), the distinction was necessary in order to account for the difference between

must and *have to*. Given that *have to* and other semi-modals (e.g., *used to*) were not analysed in the study, the distinction between the two subtypes of dynamic modality was considered unnecessary for the purpose of the present investigation.

Another critical methodological note that should be explained in more detail involved the treatment of *will* of futurity as an epistemic modal. The treatment was based upon Palmer (133), who, by quoting Coates (“The Semantics of the Modal”) referred to the epistemic *will* as being associated with predictability, whereas the futurity *will* being related to prediction, both of which were subsumed by Coates (“The Semantics of the Modal”) under the aegis of epistemic modality. Whilst Palmer (ibid.) argued against the futurity *will* as an epistemic modal, his reasoning was motivated by an attempt to account for the contrasts of the *will of futurity* with *be going to*. However, since *be going to* was not analysed in the present study, the futurity *will* and the epistemic *will* proper were treated as epistemic in the analysis. Concurrently, it should be observed that Palmer (133) argued that *will* could manifest volition. Hence, it is inferred from Palmer (ibid.) that the volitional *will* could be classified as a dynamic modal. It should be noted that a similar contention is found in the literature (see Gisborne 44–61 and Huddleston and Pullum 1171).

Concluding the methodological section of the article, it should be borne in mind that in addition to the types of modality proposed by Palmer, the present analysis considered ambiguous cases. They referred to the instances when it was not clear from the context what type of modality the modal verb belonged to. After the types of modality associated with the most frequent modal verbs had been identified and counted manually, they were converted into numerical representations and computed as percentages in SPSS. The results of the qualitative and quantitative analyses are presented and discussed below, in section 4 of the article.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The results of the quantitative corpus analysis have revealed that the King’s speeches on the issue of climate change involve eight out of nine central modal verbs, namely *can*, *could*, *may*, *might*, *must*, *should*, *will*, and *would* (the total number (N) = 825). These findings are presented in table 3, which involves the total N of the aforementioned modal verbs, their means (M), standard deviations (SD), maximum and minimum occurrences.

Table 3. The frequency of the occurrence of the central modal verbs in the corpus

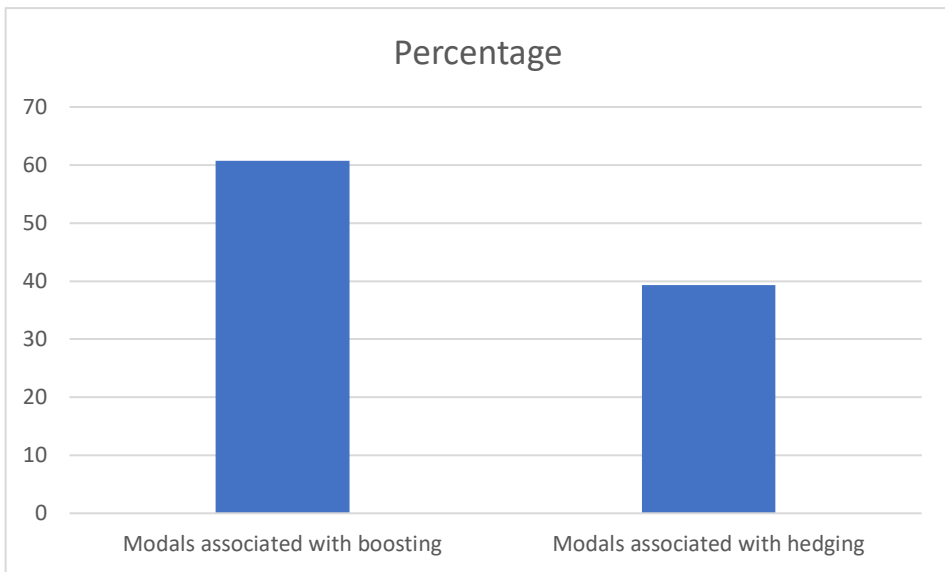
#	Modal Verbs	Total N	Mean	SD	Max	Min
1	<i>Can</i>	190	9.5	5.2	21	3
2	<i>Could</i>	78	4.3	3.3	12	1
3	<i>May</i>	92	4.8	4.3	14	1
4	<i>Might</i>	48	3.0	1.6	7	1
5	<i>Must</i>	62	3.4	2.2	9	1
6	<i>Shall</i>	0	0	0	0	0
7	<i>Should</i>	29	2.1	1.1	5	1
8	<i>Will</i>	249	12.5	6.4	25	1
9	<i>Would</i>	77	4.1	2.7	13	1

We can observe in Table 3 that the most frequent modals in the corpus are represented by *can* and *will*, respectively, whereas the frequency of the occurrence of *could*, *may*, *might*, *must*, *should*, and *would* is below N = 100.

In relation to RQ 1, let us direct our discussion towards *can* and *will*, given that RQ 1 in the study is concerned with the most frequent central modal verbs in the corpus of the King's speeches on the issue of climate change. It should be noted that the presence of the frequent modals *can* and *will* in the corpus lends support to the literature, which indicates that political discourse on climate change involves a rather high occurrence of *can* (Bailey et al. 202; Fløttum, "Linguistic Mediation" 7; Fløttum and Dahl 20) and *will* (Juliansyah et al. 4; Malik et al. 19). At the same time, however, the present results are in contrast to a number of prior studies, which demonstrate that the modal verbs *could*, *may*, *might*, *should*, and *would* are quite frequent in Anglophone political discourses (Boicu 15; Hyryn 101; Lillian 12; Poole and Hayes 37), in which they are employed as a pragmatic marker of hedging. Judging from the findings outlined in table 3 above, the hedging-related modal verbs *could*, *may*, *might*, *should*, and *would* in the King's discourse on climate change are less frequent in comparison with *will* and *can*. This finding is further supported by the comparison of the combined frequency of the occurrence of the modal verbs that are typically associated hedging (i.e., *could*, *may*, *might*, *should* and *would*) on the one hand and the modals that are thought to be related to boosting (i.e., *can*, *must*, and *will*) on the other hand. The comparison

is illustrated by Fig. 1 as the percentage of these two groups of modals to the total number of modals in the corpus.

Fig. 1. The percentage of modal verbs as hedgers and boosters in the corpus

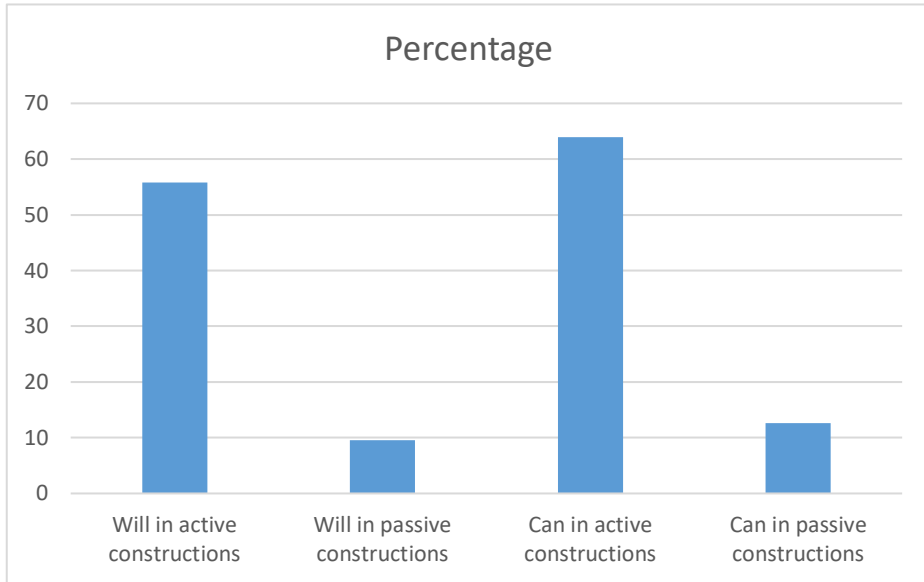


It is illustrated by Fig. 1 that the King’s speeches on the issue of climate change utilise more boosters in comparison with hedgers, which are typically associated with the modals *can*, *must*, and *will* (Fløttum, “A Linguistic and Discursive View” 19; “Linguistic Mediation” 7–20; Fløttum and Dahl 14–23). A relatively higher frequency of the occurrence of modals as boosters, in particular *can* and *will*, seems to render a more direct, engaged, and perhaps, pro-active tonality of the King’s speeches on climate change.

As far as the contention concerning the King’s engaged and pro-active tonality is concerned, it is further supported by the findings that have been yielded by the application of the N-Gram function in AntConc. Specifically, it has been revealed that *will* occurs in the textual environment of the corpus, predominantly, in the form of active constructions (56%), whereas the passive constructions with *will* are less numerous (10%). Similarly, *can* is utilised substantially more in active

constructions (64%), whilst the passive ones are employed significantly less (13%), as emblematised by Fig. 2 below.

Fig. 2. *Can* and *will* in active and passive constructions

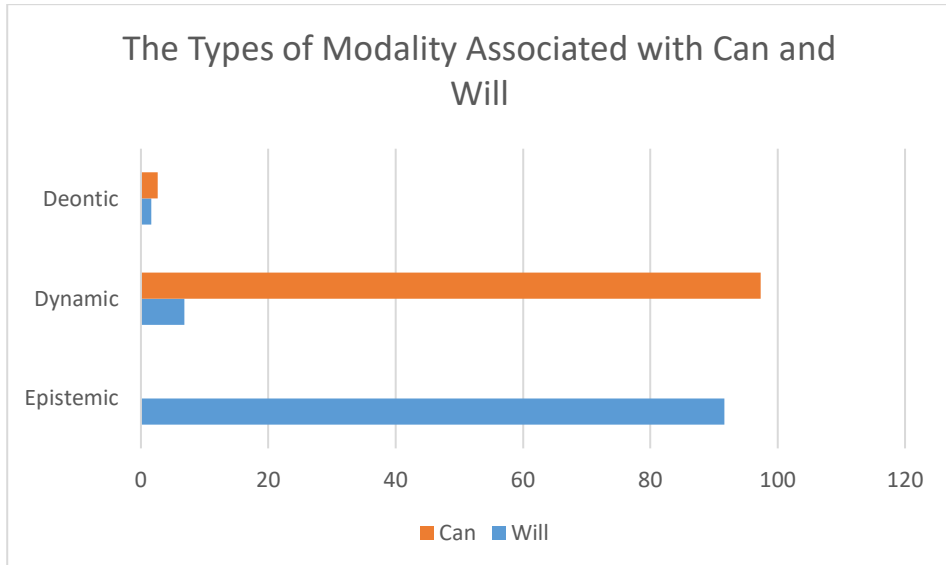


Given that modal verbs in the passive voice are considered to impart a less personal pragmatic tonality (Narrog 118), it can be argued that the prevalence of *will + verb* and *can + verb* constructions in active voice (see Fig. 2) is indicative of the King's engagement and, quite obviously, personal involvement in the issue of climate change. Indeed, active constructions with *will + verb*, as well as *can + verb*, collocate quite regularly with the first-person pronoun *I* in the corpus. The use of the self-mention *I* in conjunction with the aforementioned active constructions is illustrated by excerpt (1) below:

(1) This is really is a groundbreaking development which could make the whole difference to the future of the rainforests, about which **I will say** more later. Meanwhile, **I can only hope** that other companies which use palm oil will follow your determined and principled leadership—this really is corporate responsibility in action. (Speech by HRH The Prince of Wales at the Second May Day Business Summit on Climate Change)

Whilst we have established that *will* and *can* are the most frequent modals in the corpus, which are used, typically, in active constructions, it is pertinent to shed light on them from a qualitative perspective. In this regard, let us return to RQ 2 in the study, which addresses the types of modality that are associated with the most frequent modals in the corpus. Presumably, by examining the types of modality we may deepen our understanding of the King’s stance vis-à-vis the issue of climate change. It should be reiterated that the pragmatic role of modal verbs is regarded in the study through the prism of the approach proposed by Fløttum (“Linguistic Mediation” 7), who posits that modals, along with other micro-discursive means, facilitate our comprehension of the speaker’s attitudes and intentions on the topic of climate change. The qualitative analysis of the types of modality associated with the most frequent modals in the corpus has yielded the findings that are summarised in Fig. 3, in which the types of modality related to *will* and *can* are given as the percentage to the total number of these modals in the corpus.

Fig. 3. The types of modality associated with *will* and *can*



Prior to discussing the findings summarised in Fig. 1, the following should be noted. Whilst the methodology in the study factored in a possibility of ambiguous cases (i.e., instances when it was not clear from

the context what type of modality the modal verb belonged to), the application of Palmer's typology of modality to the corpus provided clear indications what types of modality the most frequent modals in the corpus (i.e., *can* and *will*) are associated with. In particular, it is evident from Fig. 3 that the modal *will* is employed in the King's speeches, predominantly, as epistemic *will*. This finding can be illustrated by a quote from the King's (back then—The Prince of Wales) speech at the meeting about Forests and Climate Change at Lancaster House on 29 October 2015:

(2) . . . an absolutely crucial milestone in the long overdue international effort to keep to a 2 degree world, although I think that everyone realizes that this C.O.P. *will* be the beginning of a new phase in the process, not the end in itself.

Notably, in the same speech, there is a case of the use of *will* that, according to Palmer, can be interpreted as deontic *will*, assuming that it is utilised to render permission: "Before we begin, though, and if you *will* allow me, I would just like to make three brief observations—the first on C.O.P.21 and its significance."

Whilst deontic *will* is infrequent in the corpus (see Fig. 3), dynamic *will* is more numerous, even though it is utilised substantially less than epistemic *will*. The presence of dynamic *will* is exemplified by the following excerpt taken from the speech by The Prince of Wales at The Prince of Wales's International Sustainability Unit's meeting on Forests, Climate Change and Development on 26 January 2015:

(3) So, above all, I pray this meeting *will* give rise to further ambitious international partnerships to implement good policies and incentives on sustainable land use and integrated, ecologically minded, truly resilient rural development in all countries of the world.

It follows from Fig. 3 that epistemic modality is the prevalent type of modality as far as the modal *will* is concerned. Arguably, the prevalence of epistemic modality associated with the frequent modal *will* renders the King's speeches on climate change a subjective, perhaps, deeply personal dimension, which, according to Palmer, is routinely associated with the epistemic modals that are typically "subjective, i.e. that the epistemic judgment rests with the speaker" (50).

In contrast to *will*, however, the modal *can* in the corpus of the King's speeches appears to be associated, mainly, with dynamic modality and to a substantially lesser degree with the deontic type of modality. Let us illustrate *can* as a deontic modal by excerpt (3), which is represented by the transcript of the King's speech delivered at a meeting about Forests and Climate Change at Lancaster House on 29 October 2015:

(4) We *can't* possibly allow it to become 4 degrees as climate scientists have warned, that's 7 degrees Fahrenheit, a big increase which will be impossible, I think, to adapt to.

Deontic *can*, which denotes permission, or rather the lack thereof as in (4), is not frequent in the corpus. Unlike deontic *can*, however, dynamic *can* occurs in the majority of cases. Its occurrence is further illustrated by excerpt (5), which involves a speech delivered by HRH The Prince of Wales by video to the DEFRA Conference 'Climate Change: The Business Forecast' on 6 October 2005:

(5) Are there really no additional cost-effective steps that could be taken to encourage everyone to do more to save energy? Even the seemingly little things *can* make a significant contribution—such as switching off lights and the “stand-by” buttons on televisions and computers.

Given that dynamic *can* prototypically manifests possibility and expresses judgments about the degree that an action is possible, we may argue that its high frequency of the occurrence in the King's speeches is concomitant with the King's view of what he and the general public can do and implement in order to mitigate the negative consequences of climate change, such as “switching off lights and the ‘stand-by’ buttons on televisions and computers” (see excerpt (5)).

Summarising the discussion of the findings, we may posit that the King's speeches on climate change are characterised by his preference for the modal verbs *will* and *can* that are associated, primarily, with epistemic and dynamic modalities, respectively.

CONCLUSIONS

The article introduced and discussed a study that sought to learn about (i) the frequency of the occurrence of central modal verbs and (ii) the types

of modality associated with them in the corpus of speeches by King Charles III on the topic of climate change. Whilst “modality and modal verbs in particular are one of the most researched topics in the English language” (Rizvić-Eminović and Šukalić 211), there are insufficient studies on the frequency and use of the central modals in climate change discourse in general, and by the members of the British royal family in particular. Whereas the present investigation is one of the first attempts at shedding light on this under-researched topic, its findings, nevertheless, have revealed that the modal verbs *will* and *can* are the most frequently occurring modals in the corpus of his speeches on climate change. By means of adopting Palmer’s classification of the types of modality, it was established in the present investigation that the most frequent modals in climate change-related discourse by King Charles III, namely *can* and *will*, were associated, predominantly, with dynamic (*can*) and epistemic (*will*) types of modality.

The aforementioned findings could be interpreted within the parameters of Fløttum’s approach to modal verbs and modality as micro-discursive means that allow to shed light onto the King’s attitude and position towards the issue of climate change. Given that his speeches on climate change were found to be characterised by epistemic modality, it could be concluded that his climate change-related discourse could be described as subjective and personally engaged. Additionally, the highly frequent modal *can*, which was found to related to dynamic modality, imparted King Charles III’s speeches on climate change a more action-oriented and practical dimension, which involved the King’s considerations of what could be done and implemented to stave off the negative consequences of climate change.

Obviously, the findings should be treated with caution, since more research should be conducted on the central modals in climate change discourse by the British royals. Hopefully, the present investigation could provide a bench-mark for future studies, which would examine other linguistic and micro-discursive means associated with the central modals and modality in order to arrive at more comprehensive findings. Another direction for future research could involve a comparison of potential changes in the use of modals and modality in the speeches on climate change by King Charles III in his role of His Royal Highness (HRH) Prince Charles and after his coronation.

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Punctuation in Early Modern Texts: The English Translation of Rembert Dodoens' Herbal in Handwriting and Printing

La puntuación en textos del período moderno temprano: la traducción en inglés del herbario de Rembert Dodoens en la escritura a mano y en la impresión

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Abstract: The present paper analyses the punctuation of a handwritten and a printed version of a distinguished herbal from the Early Modern period—that is—the English translation of Rembert Dodoens' *A Nieuwe Herball or Historie of Plants*. The paper aims to contribute to the dissemination of knowledge on the use and distribution of punctuation in Early Modern English texts of a diverse typology, as well as to provide fresh observations as regards the historical linguistic comparison between scribes and printers' writing practices. All this considered, it pursues the following objectives: to undertake (i) a quantitative survey of the various punctuation marks occurring in the texts; (ii) a qualitative examination of these at macro- and micro-textual levels; and (iii) an evaluation of the similarities and differences between the manuscript and the printed versions.

Keywords: Punctuation; Early Modern English; herbal; handwriting; printing.

Summary: Introduction. The Text: An Overview of its Historical Background and Contents. Methodology. Analysis. Summary of Findings and Conclusion.

Resumen: El presente artículo analiza la puntuación de una versión manuscrita y de otra impresa de un prestigioso herbario del inglés moderno temprano, a saber, la traducción de *A Nieuwe Herball or Historie of Plants* de Rembert Dodoens. El artículo pretende contribuir a la difusión del conocimiento sobre el uso y distribución de la puntuación en textos históricos de diversa tipología

escritos en inglés, así como proporcionar nuevas percepciones en lo que respecta a la comparación lingüística histórica entre las prácticas de escritura de los escribas y de los impresores. Se persiguen, por tanto, los siguientes objetivos: (i) un estudio cuantitativo de los signos de puntuación utilizados en los textos; (ii) un análisis cualitativo de estos a nivel macrotextual y microtextual; y (iii) una evaluación de las similitudes y diferencias entre las versiones manuscrita e impresa.

Palabras clave: Puntuación; inglés moderno temprano; herbario; escritura a mano; impresión.

Sumario: Introducción. El texto: Un resumen de su contexto histórico y descripción de los contenidos. Metodología. Análisis. Recapitulación y conclusión.

INTRODUCTION

The study of English historical punctuation has received in the last thirty years a notable volume of academic consideration—“mainly from different Spanish universities” (Calle-Martín and Esteban-Segura, “The Egyptians” 68–69)—possibly impelled by its direct association with orthography, and the standardisation process it underwent for more than two centuries (see Scragg 52–81; Blake 9–15; Salmon 15–53; Moessner 700–02). Such a significant degree of scholarly attention also resides on the importance that the chronological diffusion and functionality of the phenomenon has within the present-day punctuation paradigm. As it occurs with other language levels such as morphology and phonology, the current mechanism of punctuation is the outcome of a continuous variation process over many centuries, which has influenced the visual appearance of the symbols, as well as their usages (Crystal 278).

The first traces of punctuation dates to the third century BC, when Aristophanes of Byzantium started to implement certain punctuation marks in those places of the written text in which traditionally no separation was provided.¹ This allowed readers to discern the specific moments wherein pauses were required for a correct oration of a document, as the practice of reading aloud in public—regarded as an elite and specialised task—was commonplace at the time. To ensure it, Aristophanes split the text into the Greek units *periodus*, *komma*, and *kolon*,² each of these respectively represented by a raised, medial, and

¹ The ancient writing system is denominated *scriptura continua* or, as Clemens and Graham (83) also note, “*scriptio continua*.”

² Note that Thaisen (14) represents the units with the grapheme <k> to avoid any erroneous interpretation with our present-day *comma* and *colon*.

lowered point, which served to indicate a specific pause-type. (Thaisen 14; Parkes 1; Crystal 278). According to Denholm-Young,

[t]he [*komma*] is a pause when the hearer still expects something; the [*kolon*], a pause when the hearer does not necessarily expect anything, but when something may still follow, i.e. when the sense is complete but the sentence is not concluded. The [*periodus*] is the point at which the speaker or writer concludes the sentence. (77)

Aristophanes' punctuation units survived for approximately eight centuries, until the era of Isidore of Seville, who also "recommended their use, now under the Latin names *distinciones* or *positurae*" (Thaisen 14). The first of these systems remained in use up to the twelfth century, whilst the second prevailed throughout an extended portion of the medieval period, with a series of innovations that supposed a drastic change as to the way the phenomenon was employed (Clemens and Graham 82–83).

Once Middle English started to give way to Early Modern English, the qualitative uses of punctuation began to progressively experience some modifications as a consequence of the rise of silent reading praxes, which were established as general rule in libraries after the introduction of printing enabled the production of multiple copies of a same text. Silent reading permitted the individual examination of a text at the expense of the traditional practice of reading aloud, thus helping to introduce an array of norms concerning the functions of punctuation marks that eventually came to be part of later English grammars (Medina-Sánchez and Rodríguez-Álvarez 101). As shown by Rodríguez-Álvarez, the phenomenon became a matter of paramount concern in most Early Modern English books designed for the study and learning of the language, where authorities such as John Hart, Richard Mulcaster and Edmund Coote—among many others—instructed a number of conventions for punctuating which were "devised to convey sense to the students' reading and writing" ("Teaching Punctuation" 46).

Even though discourse-based punctuation (see Thaisen) was still in use in the sixteenth and the seventeenth centuries, the system was steadily replaced by grammatical punctuation, with most authors devoted to reproducing punctuation symbols as a means to signal the various syntactic relationships between a text's sentences, clauses, and/or phrases (Calle-Martín and Esteban-Segura, "New Insights" 4). The period also sees an ongoing standardisation of the phenomenon characterised by the

disappearance of such classical devices as the *punctus elevatus* from the English repertory (see Petti 26; also Clemens and Graham 85),³ the incorporation of new ones—comprising the comma, the apostrophe, the semicolon, the question mark and the exclamation mark (Tannenbaum 140–48; Dawson and Kennedy-Skipton 18; Hector 45–49; Petti 26–28; Jenkinson 153–55)—and the final stabilisation of these in terms of their shapes and “the functions attributed to them” (Calle-Martín and Criado-Peña 166).

As mentioned before, historical punctuation has been broadly treated in the academic literature since the last decade of the twentieth century and, above all, in the 2000s and 2010s, as demonstrated by the increasing number of publications addressing the theme (see Parkes; Rodríguez-Álvarez, “The Role of Punctuation”; Alonso-Almeida; Marqués-Aguado, “Old English Punctuation Revisited”; Calle-Martín and Miranda-García; de la Cruz-Cabanillas, “Punctuation Practice”, to cite just a few). Between 2019 and 2024, an important number of works have considered punctuation with regards to its quantitative distribution and its linguistic functions in different early English text-types, with a special emphasis on medical/scientific prose (see Honkapohja; Romero-Barranco; Criado-Peña; Thaisen) and legal compositions (see Calle-Martín), although documents of a different nature have also been recently surveyed (see Calle-Martín and Thaisen). Other studies, however, have accounted for the chronological evolution and the uses of certain punctuation devices—including commas, hyphens, parentheses, and exclamation marks—,⁴ as well as for the philological connections between punctuation and historical pragmatics in several pieces (see Smith, “From ‘Secretit’”; González-Díaz; Calle-Martín and Romero-Barranco).⁵

In line with those investigations focusing on specific types of historical English documents, this paper aims to analyse the punctuation

³ Also known as *inverted semicolon* (ˆ), the *punctus elevatus* is a “sophisticated” mark of punctuation employed throughout the medieval period to indicate a short length pause (Derolez 185; Petti 26).

⁴ Some examples of these studies include, among others, Smitterberg, Calle-Martín and Criado-Peña, Sánchez-Stockhammer, Moore, and Claridge.

⁵ According to Smith (“From ‘Secretit’” 237), the recent interest in the historical development of the phenomenon and its association with pragmatics is grounded on the fact that “punctuation is a vector of meaning in the complex, historically situated communicative relationships that exist between readers, copyists (whether scribes or printers), editors, and authors.”

of a prestigious herbal from the Early Modern period: the translation of Rembert Dodoens' *A Nieuwe Herball or Historie of Plants* (see Dodoens), first published in English in 1578. The choice of such a piece not only stems from the importance it had at the time of publication, but also from the fact that a substantial part of it has been preserved in handwriting in Glasgow University Library, MS Ferguson 7 (ff. 23r–48v; 59r) (*F7* for short). According to De la Cruz-Cabanillas, “little has been published concerning punctuation variants in different copies of the same text” (“Is Punctuation Comparable” 12), especially when it comes to pieces available in both handwritten and printed format (see Lorente-Sánchez, “Punctuation Practice” 62). This considered, apart from contributing to the dissemination of knowledge on the use and distribution of punctuation in Early Modern English texts of a diverse typology, this work seeks to provide fresh observations towards the historical linguistic comparison between scribes and printers' writing practices. The paper intends to accomplish the following objectives: to produce (i) a quantitative survey of the various punctuation marks occurring in the texts; (ii) a qualitative examination of these at macro- and micro-textual levels (see Romero-Barranco 63); and (iii) an evaluation of the similarities and differences between the manuscript and the printed versions.

The article is divided into four sections; section 1 presents a historical overview of the text as to its origin and its subsequent development in Early Modern English, together with a summary of the contents included in the printed and the handwritten volumes; the methodological procedure followed in the gathering of data is offered in section 2; section 3 then covers the analysis of the phenomenon in terms of the quantitative distribution of the various symbols of punctuation and its qualitative usages at four different text-levels; lastly, the closing section supplies a summary of the results and draws a conclusion.

1. THE TEXT: AN OVERVIEW OF ITS HISTORICAL BACKGROUND AND CONTENTS

The Early Modern English period is characterised—among other things—by a notable thriving attraction towards medical literature motivated by the radical decline of reader illiteracy but, above all, by the impact of the press as for its propagation, both in terms of the form wherein it is presented and of the quantity of works spread (see Taavitsainen et al.; Nurmi). Though not the most common text-type of a medical nature at the time, especially

when compared with others such as recipe books, the sixteenth and the seventeenth centuries experienced a prolific boost in the amount of edited herbals, which could “range from pocket-sized, unillustrated octavos to huge folios filled with costly woodcuts” (Neville 30).

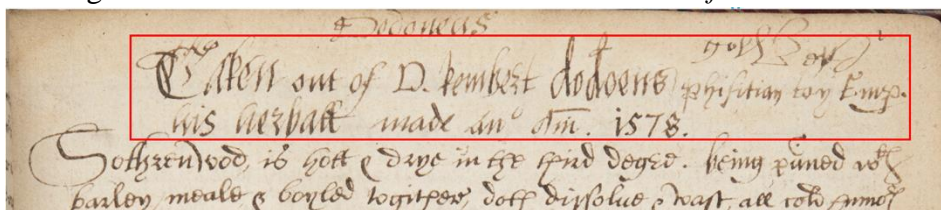
Such an increase might have found part of its motivation in the influence exerted by the Continent in those days, where the popularity of these compositions and the number of authors devoted to arranging them were increasing extraordinarily (Arber 52–145). The history of the English printed herbal extends from the beginning of 1525 until 1640, two moments where the first and the last print occurrence of this text-type take place. The former emerged as an anonymous publication entitled the *Little Herball*, whereas the latter was developed by the London apothecary John Parkinson under the abbreviated Latin title *Theatrum Botanicvm* (Neville 30; see also Parkinson). Between them, a remarkable quantity of botanical works—along with their corresponding editions—were issued in the country. These encompassed volumes such as William Turner’s *A New Herball* (1568) and John Gerard’s *The Herball or Generall Historie of Plantes* (1597) (Arber 119–38), pieces by high-esteemed figures among which the English translation of Dodoens’ text is also found.

A Niewe Herball or Historie of Plants came to light in England in 1578 through a translation from a 1557 French version of the material undertaken by the botanist Henry Lyte (1529?–1607), who is likewise remembered for writing the so-called *The Light of Britayne; a Recorde of the honorable Originall and Antiquitie of Britaine*, released in 1588 (Lee 364–65). However, the history of this specific herbal goes back twenty-four years before the appearance of the earliest English edition, as it is in 1554 Antwerp when the original text, rendered in Flemish, is printed under the single-word title *Cruydtboeck*. This primary version reached a noteworthy degree of reputation among the majority of experts on medicinal plants of the era, to such an extent that almost a decade after its materialisation, a variety of printed editions in different languages were released, including the above-mentioned French translation (Arber 82; Lorente-Sánchez, “Dodoens’ Herbal”).

The esteem of the *Cruydtboeck* was also extrapolated to the English printed translation, not only for the prestige brought from the original document, but also for its extraordinary layout in opposition to other contemporaneous specimens of the kind. This great appreciation is reflected in the development of three further editions after the 1578 release, two of them published before the end of the century, in 1586 and 1595,

and the other in 1619 (see Barlow 141; Lorente-Sánchez, “*Rams Little Dodeon*”). In handwritten format, by contrast, the volume has not been as acclaimed as the printed book insomuch that, up until the present day, it has uniquely been identified in *F7*. This witness stands as one of the 113 seventeenth-century representatives of Professor John Ferguson’s medical collection of historical manuscripts (see Glasgow University Library), which comprises a segment of the Archives and Special Collections section of the University of Glasgow Library.⁶ As illustrated in Fig. 1, *F7* features a set of plant portrayals manually reproduced and customised from Henry Lyte’s 1578 version, since the following lines may be read at the beginning of the treatise: “Taken out of *Doctor. Rembert dodoens* phisitian to *pe Emperour. his herball made anno domini. 1578.*” In light of this, both the manuscript text and the earliest English edition (hereafter *PH1578*)⁷ are employed as sources of evidence for the scrutiny of punctuation in Early Modern English handwriting and printing (see section 2).

Fig. 1: First folio of *A Niewe Herball or Historie of Plants* in *F7*⁸



As might be assumed from a herbal, the two versions of the piece supply us with minute depictions of numerous healing plants and herbs, covering information such as the sorts of subspecies identified within the same genus, their appellatives in several European and classical languages, their nature, the location where these grow, and their medicinal properties

⁶ See the University of Glasgow’s archives and special collections www.gla.ac.uk/myglasgow/archivespecialcollections/.

⁷ The letters of this label stand for ‘Printed Herbal’, whereas the number corresponds to the date of publication of the piece.

⁸ All the images of *F7* reproduced in the article come from *The Málaga Corpus of Early Modern English Scientific Prose (MCEMESP)* (Calle-Martín et al.). Courtesy of University of Glasgow Archives and Special Collections, MS Ferguson 7 (ff. 23r, 25r, 32r, 35v and 47v), the images became part of the *MCEMESP* in 2019 after the compilers paid the required fee and obtained the corresponding permission for their online publication. The said department has the ownership of the manuscript.

and hazards (Lorente-Sánchez, *The Secrets* 7). Nevertheless, when it comes to the quantity of material, the handwritten document concerns only part of the printed volume, given that, “out of the 571 plants with their diverse subspecies described in the original, only 198 are recorded in [F7], that is, approximately 35% of the total held in the English printed edition” (Lorente-Sánchez, “Dodoens’ Herbal”).

Divided into six books as the initial 1554 Flemish version, *PH1578* presents a relatively balanced distribution in terms of the extent of descriptions from the different parts of the collection, which incorporate diverse topics of discussion ranging from simple contrasts between herbs to sketches of their respective parts. Even though the copyist of *F7* assembles fragments of all the books, as shown in Table 1, he displays an apparent preference for those of the first, followed at a considerable distance by those of the third, second, and fourth, and then by those of the fifth and sixth (Lorente-Sánchez, “Dodoens’ Herbal”).

Table 1. Figure of plant characterisations in the six books of the printed edition and the manuscript

Book	Topic	<i>PH1578</i>	<i>F7</i>
<i>First</i>	Differences and lively description of sundry sorts of herbs and plants.	103	61
<i>Second</i>	Differences and descriptions of pleasant- and sweet-smelling flowers.	117	35
<i>Third</i>	Descriptions of medicinal roots and herbs that purge the body, and of noisome weeds and dangerous plants.	94	36
<i>Fourth</i>	Descriptions of corns, grains, legumes, thistles and such like.	82	27
<i>Fifth</i>	Descriptions of herbs, roots and fruits which are daily used in meats.	81	21
<i>Sixth</i>	Descriptions of trees, shrubs, bushes and other plants of woody substance, together with their fruits, rosins, gums and liquors.	94	18
Total		571	198

Source: Lorente-Sánchez, “Dodoens’ Herbal”

2. METHODOLOGY

From a methodological point of view, my analysis of punctuation is based on the manual semi-diplomatic transcriptions of the texts (Petti 34–35), where the contents of these, punctuation included, have been reproduced in the same form as they are in the original to conduct an accurate analysis, and thus a correct interpretation of the data.⁹ The transcriptions have then been scrutinised by means of Laurence Anthony's *AntConc*, a free corpus software which has given me the chance to search for the various punctuation marks employed in the versions, as well as to export the gathered occurrences to an external .xlsx file for an eventual classification of both the quantity and the qualitative uses of these in the documents.

The retrieval of instances has finally reported 11,718 symbols of punctuation, 3,269 of which are from *F7* and 8,449 from the printed counterpart. Although the study has exclusively focused on those parts of the piece that are contained within the manuscript for a suitable scrutiny of the phenomenon, the number of words differs between the versions. The manuscript consists of 18,165 words, whilst *PH1578* contains 37,936. Consequently, the figures have been normalised to 10,000 units to make the results comparable. After such a process, the normalised frequencies amount to 1,799.61 and 2,227.17 occurrences, respectively. This confirms that punctuation is more recurrent in the printed edition than in the handwritten document.

Table 2. Overall distribution of punctuation in the manuscript and the printed versions of the herbal (normalised frequencies)

Text version	<i>F7</i>	<i>PH1578</i>
Punctuation	1,799.61	2,227.17

⁹ Editorial intervention has been preserved to a minimum insofar as the unique modifications carried out reside on the different abbreviations attested in the documents. These have been widened and the omitted units have been supplied in italics (e.g. *w^c*, *w^t* and *þ^t* have been reproduced as *which*, *with* and *þat*, respectively) (see Petti 35). This allows for a better comprehension of the text, especially by any reader unacquainted with the basic notions of historical palaeography (see Miranda-García et al.; Calle-Martín et al.). At the same time, it offers the possibility to vouch for those instances wherein certain punctuation devices display some functions at the phrase level (see section 3.2.2.3).

3. ANALYSIS

This section addresses the quantitative diffusion of the different punctuation symbols in the texts and their linguistic functions at macro- and micro-textual levels. It is, therefore, organised into two sub-sections. Section 3.1 identifies the marks employed across the versions and explores their incidences to ascertain whether there is variation between the handwritten and the printed copies. Section 3.2, in turn, analyses the symbols according to their uses, examining their similarities and/or disparities as regards to their functionality within the texts' arrangement (section 3.2.1), and regarding their language operability at the sentence, clause, and phrase levels (section 3.2.2).¹⁰

3.1 Quantitative Analysis

The inventory of punctuation marks available for Early Modern English scribes and editors is abundant to say the least, particularly when compared to those observed in Old and Middle English texts. According to Tannenbaum (140), the symbols available to writers come to at least fourteen different types, a number which is without doubt many more than those discernible in earlier documents (Derolez 185–86; Clemens and Graham 84–86). Tannenbaum does, however, remark that the use of a limited number of these is “very erratic even in the first quarter of the seventeenth century.” As expected of two samples of written material from the Early Modern era, *F7* and *PH1578* accommodate an important array of devices, consisting of the following: (i) the period; (ii) the comma; (iii) the virgule; (iv) the colon; (v) the semicolon; (vi) the hyphen; (vii) the parenthesis; (viii) accents; (ix) the apostrophe; (x) the caret; and (xi) line-fillers. Table 3 exhibits the frequencies of appearance of these symbols in the documents object of research. A test of significance of the overall figures carried out via the t-test shows that the variation between the Early Modern English handwritten and printed representatives is not statistically significant (t-score = 0.63; p-level = 53.87%). Nevertheless, a detailed look at the distribution of the various marks in each document denotes that

¹⁰ This is the same rationale adopted by a number of studies on the use and distribution of punctuation in texts from different stages of the history of English (see Marqués-Aguado, “Old English” 54; “Punctuation Practice” 56–57; Calle-Martín and Miranda-García 360–61; Romero-Barranco 62–63; Criado-Peña 84; Lorente-Sánchez, “Punctuation Practice” 62, etc.).

there are differences between the printed book and the manuscript copy with respect to their punctuation practices, both on quantitative and qualitative grounds.

Table 3. Distribution of punctuation marks in the manuscript and the printed versions of the herbal (normalised frequencies)

	<i>F7</i>	<i>PHI578</i>
Period (.)	799.89	400.67
Comma (,)	821.36	1,224.96
Virgule (/)	3.3	13.18
Colon (:)	38.54	301.56
Semicolon (;)	8.81	0.79
Hyphen (-)	24.77	157.37
Parenthesis [()]	8.81	9.49
Accents (´)	10.46	116.25
Apostrophe (´)	-	2.9
Caret	4.4	-
Line-fillers	79.27	-

As may be attested, the comma is the most common punctuation symbol in both the handwritten and the printed formats, especially in the latter, where its incidence compared with that of the second most recurrent symbol—the period—is more than triple (1,224.96 and 400.67 instances, that is, 55% and 17.99%, respectively).¹¹ In handwriting, however, the difference between the two marks is slight inasmuch that the comma is reported to occur in 821.36 cases (45.64%), whilst the period is attested in 799.89 occasions (44.45%). *F7* and *PHI578* coincide in that, in proportion to commas and periods, the rest of the symbols fall markedly behind in quantitative terms, although with a variable diffusion as well, which eventually corroborates the existence of evident punctuation contrasts between the versions.

Although the two texts share a large number of the symbols enumerated above, *PHI578* displays a greater preference for their usage in view that the majority of punctuation marks are more regularly seen in printing. The only exceptions are the period and the semicolon, the recurrences of which are substantially more prominent in the handwritten

¹¹ Percentages in this section represent the rate of occurrence within each text of the different marks in proportion to the totality of instances of punctuation.

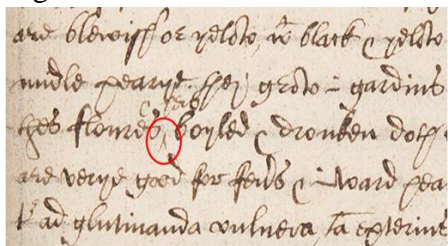
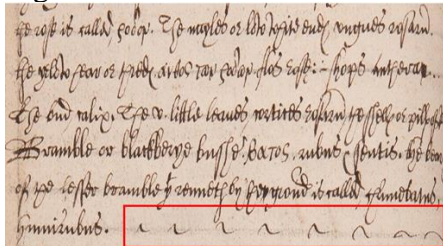
volume. First, the prevalence of the period in this medium (799.89 instances in *F7* vs 400.67 in *PH1578*) is grounded on the scribal habit towards continuously employing it for a clausal purpose (see section 3.2.2.2), more specifically as an enumerator of items in a series, as exemplified in (1).¹²

(1) Mulleyne or high taper. φλομισ. Verbascum. lychnitis. picnitis. tapsus barbatus. candela regis. The white male mullein, hath great, broad, longe, white softe *and* wollie leaues, from the lowest parte vpwward . . . (*F7*, f. 29v)

Second, the regularity of the semicolon in the handwritten manuscript may be based on its apparent recent nature at the time in which the volume was written. Even though this mark “makes a very public appearance at the end of the fifteenth century in the humanist circle surrounding Aldus Manutius the elder” (Parkes 49), it is seldom applied in England until approximately the last two decades of the sixteenth century (Petti 26). The semicolon appears to gain some ground from that moment onwards; hence its use in *F7* could stem from the point that the treatise was composed in the early seventeenth century (see Lorente-Sánchez, “Dodoens’ Herbal”), a time when such a means of punctuation seems to experience a flourishing in handwriting (see Lorente-Sánchez, “Punctuation Practice” 77).

The analysis also shows some variation between the documents when seeing that certain symbols are observed to occur in one of the versions, but are unattested in the other. On the one hand, while non-existent in the printed piece, the caret and line-fillers are witnessed in *F7* on 4.4 and 79.27 occasions. Always placed under the writing lines and rendered as a sort of small triangle without a base (Fig. 2), the caret is used to denote “[t]he insertion of an extra word or words between the lines” that the scribe should have initially neglected to include when undertaking his task (Tannenbaum 147). Line-fillers, in turn, are curly horizontal lines of diverse lengths (Fig. 3) situated in empty spaces at the end of the lines to impede any posterior incorporation of undesired material (Petti 28; Derolez 186).

¹² In this specific case, the scribe uses the period to enumerate several names of the herb mullein.

Fig. 2. Caret in folio 32r of *F7*Fig. 3. Line-fillers in folio 47v of *F7*

On the other hand, the apostrophe is uniquely viewed in *PH1578* (2.9 instances), in passages where the French name of a specific plant is provided, as in (2a). By contrast, it is completely overlooked in the handwritten counterpart, since the scribe seems to only be keen on reproducing the English, Latin, and—in a fewer number of cases—Greek names of an array of the medicinal plants depicted in the original, as in (2b).

- (2) a) This herbe is called in shops Artemisia, *and* of some Mater herbarum: in Spanish Artemya: in English Mugworte: in French Armoyse, l'herbe S. Ian: in high Douch Beyfusz *and* S. Iohans gurtel: in base Almaine Byuoet . . . (*PH1578*, p. 16)
- b) “Mugwort, artemesia, mater herbarum, called of ould παρθενικ. mugwort pownd with oile . . .” (*F7*, 23r)

3.2 Qualitative Analysis¹³

3.2.1 Punctuation at Macro-Textual Level

Punctuation performs a limited set of macro-textual purposes in the two documents object of study. This means that there are cases in the pieces in which certain punctuation symbols, rather than effecting grammatical functions, are employed as devices contributing to a better organisation and structure of the text throughout the pages. These uses are confined to

¹³ Accents, apostrophes, carets, and line-fillers have been disregarded in this part of the analysis insofar as these marks do not perform any linguistic functions in the texts, neither at a macro-level nor at a micro-level. Therefore, the figure of punctuation marks under examination has been reduced at this point to 1,650.43 instances in *F7* and 1,950.13 in *PH1578*.

mark out the end of paragraphs, as in (3), and to denote the end of section headings, as in (4).¹⁴

(3) It hath diuers small woddye braunches somtymes trayling alongst þe ground, *and* somtymes growing vpright of a foote *and half* longe sett full of small leaues, much like to þe leaues of garden tyme but much larger. the floures grow about þe top of the stalkes like to crownes or garlandes, *after* the manner of horehound floures, most commonly of a purple red colour, *and* somtymes (but very seldom) as white as snowe. the roote is hard *and* of a woddy substaunce *with* many thredye stringes, it groweth in vntilled *and* stony places, by the hye way sides *and* in the borders of fieldes. *calidus. siccus. 3. gradu.* it floureth from after may tyll the end of sommer, (F7, f. 35r)

(4) Of wilde or common Camomill.

The first kinde of wilde Camomill is now called Chamæmelum album: in Shoppes Chamomilla, whereas it is aptly vsed for Leucanthemum: in English common Camomill: in Italian Camamilla. in Spanish Macella, Manzanilla. in French Camomille vulgaire: in high Douch Chamill. Albeit this is not the right Camomill. Wherefore we call it Chamæmelum syluestre, that is to say, wilde Camomill. (PH1578, p. 184)

The data in Table 4 reveal that punctuation is more recurrently used at the macro-textual level in the manuscript version, with a total of 171.76 attested cases, than in the printed equivalent, amounting to 102.54 occurrences. Despite this overall distribution, PH1578 demonstrates a higher degree of standardisation than F7. Similar to present-day writing, the printed version only makes use of the period to operate the distinct macro-linguistic functions. However, whilst a clear preference for the period is also noted in the handwritten text, F7 provides us with some instances in which the comma and, to a lesser extent, the virgule are likewise employed to such ends. The presence of these symbols in identical contexts was routine in many Early Modern English manuscripts, where they could take “the place of any punctuation mark (a period, an

¹⁴ Apart from these two major goals, punctuation also acts at macro-level to indicate lacunae. This use, however, is sporadic in the pieces since it is only seen once on folio 35r of F7, where it is marked off by means of the virgule.

exclamation mark, an interrogation point) the writer may happen to think he needs” (Tannenbaum 140).¹⁵

Table 4. Functions and distribution of punctuation at macro-textual level in *F7* and *PH1578* (normalised frequencies)

	<i>F7</i>			<i>PH1578</i>		
	.	,	/	.	,	/
End of paragraph	77.62	0.55	0.55	52.98	-	-
End of section heading	73.77	18.72	0.55	49.56	-	-
Total	171.76			102.54		

3.2.2 Punctuation at Micro-Textual Level

This section considers the linguistic functionality of punctuation in the texts from a micro-textual viewpoint, assessing it in terms of its miscellaneous uses within sentences, clauses, and phrases. To this purpose, it has been structured into three minor sub-sections, each of them corresponding to a particular level.

3.2.2.1 Punctuation at Sentence Level

First, punctuation conducts seven linguistic functions aimed at associating textual material at the level of the sentence, namely, (i) to introduce sequential markers, as in (5); (ii) to introduce coordinate sentences, as in (6); (iii) to supply readers with explanatory comments or additional information, as in (7); (iv) to mark off the beginning of new sense-units, as in (8); (v) to introduce non-finite verb forms, as in (9); (vi) to divide the different parts of a same section, as in (10); and (vii) to precede paraphrased quotations, as in (11).

- (5) . . . they geue him straight wayes to drinke a dram of the powther of this rote *with wyne* in winter and in *somer with the distilled water* of scabiosa, *carduus benedictus* or *Rosewater*, then they bring him to bed *and couer* him well, tyll he haue swett well . . . (*F7*, f. 42r)

¹⁵ Note that Tannenbaum (140) only refers here to commas, without making any mention to other marks. Virgules have been added to this interpretation because these symbols were, functionally speaking, ‘long commas’ in early English writing that began to be obliterated as soon as ‘regular commas’ commenced to be used among scribes and printers (see Petti 26).

- (6) . . . the floures dronke *with* honyed water openeth the liuer, and are verie good against the iaundise. this seed is somewhat hurtfull to the stomack, therefore . . . (*F7*, f. 24v)
- (7) The flower of wheaten meale boyled with hony and water, or with Oyle and water, dissolueth all tumours, or swellinges. The same layde vpon with vineger and hony (called Oximel) doth clense and take away all spottes and lentilles from of the face (*PH1578*, p. 453)
- (8) . . . the raw leaues punde are very good to be laid vpon spreading sores, *and* þe naughtye scurf *which* causeth þe hear to fall. The broth of beetes scoureth away the scurvie scales nyttes and lyce of the head being washed therwithall . . . (*F7*, f. 43v)
- (9) . . . The stalke is smooth, rounde, holowe, and ioynte, of the length of a man or more, with spokie rundels or tuffetes, at the top of the stalkes: bearing a yellow flower, and a round, flat, broade, seede . . . (*PH1578*, p. 294)
- (10) Mulleyne or high taper . . . tapsus barbatus. candela regis. The white male mulleyn hath great, broad . . . like a wax candle or taper. The white female mulleyn, hath white leaues frised *with* a softe woll . . . parted in vj little leaues. The third, being the white female mulleyn with yelow floures . . . (*F7*, f. 29v)
- (11) Mugworte as Plinie saith, had this name of Artemesia Queene of Halicarnassus and wife of Mausolus king of Carie, who chose this herbe and gaue it her name, for before . . . (*PH1578*, p. 16)

Table 5 shows the distribution of the different punctuation marks in line with the sentential functions they carry out across the versions. The results report again that the phenomenon is more frequent in the handwritten piece than in the printed edition (725.02 vs 614.45 occurrences, respectively). As might be expected, the survey also shows certain disparities between the texts apropos of the inventory of symbols employed at this level and, more importantly, the linguistic roles some of them accomplish depending on the format.

Table 5: Functions and distribution of punctuation at sentential level in *F7* and *PHI578*
(normalised frequencies)

	<i>F7</i>										<i>PHI578</i>									
Sequential marker	.	'	:	;	(/	.	'	:	;	(/	.	'	:	;	(/		
Coordinate sentence	1.65	6.61	0.55	-	-	-	2.11	2.37	2.11	-	-	-	2.11	2.37	2.11	-	-	-		
Explanatory comment	9.36	94.14	3.85	2.2	-	-	3.43	104.91	8.17	-	-	-	3.43	104.91	8.17	-	-	-		
New sense-unit	6.06	61.66	1.65	-	8.81	1.1	1.58	79.08	3.95	-	-	-	1.58	79.08	3.95	-	-	9.49		
Non-finite form of verb	289.57	133.77	19.82	4.95	-	-	234.34	55.62	25.31	-	-	-	234.34	55.62	25.31	-	-	-		
Separate parts of section	0.55	40.74	-	-	-	-	0.26	51.67	0.79	-	-	-	0.26	51.67	0.79	-	-	-		
Quotation	36.88	-	-	-	-	-	25.04	-	-	-	-	-	25.04	-	-	-	-	-		
	-	1.1	-	-	-	-	-	4.22	-	-	-	-	-	4.22	-	-	-	-		
Total	725.02										614.45									

Although both documents make use of the same four symbols—the period, the comma, the colon, and the parenthesis—the manuscript additionally turns to the semicolon and the virgule to achieve a confined handful of purposes, namely, the introduction of new sense-units (4.95 instances of the semicolon), coordinate sentences (2.2 instances of the semicolon), and explanatory comments to the readers (1.1 occurrences of the virgule). On the other hand, it seems that the absence of semicolons and virgules for these purposes in the printed text is correlated with the overwhelming prevalence of other symbols, i.e. the period and the comma, as illustrated in (12) and (13). The first device presents a rate of 74.32% of the whole occurrences where punctuation introduces new sense-units in *PHI578*. The second, in turn, is employed in 90.04% and 84.04% of the occasions to coordinate sentences and to provide readers with further explanations, respectively.

- (12) a) *Pondeweede, hath long round and knotty branches. The leaues grow vpon smal short stems, and are large great and flat, layde and carried vpon the water, somewhat like to great Plantayne, but . . .* (*PHI578*, p. 104)
- b) *Pondweed, hath long round and knottie braunches; the leaues grow vpon small short stems, and are large great and flatt, laid and caried vpon þe water somewhat like to great plantayn, but . . .* (*F7*, 28v)
- (13) a) *The same floures boyled with their herbe or plante, and giuen to be dronken, doth clense the lunges and breast, and are very good for feuers, and inward inflammations or heates.* (*PHI578*, p. 149)
- b) *. . . they grow in gardins and cornfeldes, they are temperate. thes floures /and herb\ boyled and dronken doth clense the lunges and brest; and are verve good for feuers and inward heates.* (*F7*, 32r)

Interestingly, some other differences are also discerned regarding these three mentioned sentential uses and the introduction of sequential markers. As far as the last function is concerned, *F7* manifests an apparent tendency towards rendering commas to precede units such as “then” or “afterwards” (75%),¹⁶ while in *PHI578* there is no clear preference for an exclusive

¹⁶ In this part of the analysis, percentages represent the rate of occurrence within each text of the different punctuation devices in proportion to the totality of instances of every individual linguistic function. In the specific case at hand, for instance, 75% denotes the

punctuation device, given that commas present almost a similar frequency to periods and colons (that is, 36%, 32%, and 32%, respectively). When it comes to new sense-units, even if the period is the mark that predominates in the two versions, the manuscript is also prone to using the comma to such an end (see Lorente-Sánchez, “Punctuation Practice” 68), with a figure of 133.77 occurrences (30.19%), more than doubling that of the printed volume, which is restricted to 55.62 (17.64%). Another difference in this context lies within colons, displaying a higher distribution in *PHI578* (25.31 occurrences, i.e. 8.03%) compared with the handwritten copy (19.82 instances, i.e. 4.47%).

As for coordination, whereas commas stand out both in *F7* and *PHI578*, the manuscript shows a major inclination towards periods as opposed to the printed text (8.54% vs 2.94%, respectively), where colons are more favoured than in the handwritten piece (7.01% in *PHI578* vs 3.52% in *F7*). Finally, most symbols, namely the comma, the colon, and the parenthesis, are more frequently employed in printing for the provision of explanatory comments, with the only exception being the period, which is repeated more in handwriting.

3.2.2.2 Punctuation at Clause Level

At clausal level, punctuation performs the following uses: (i) to enumerate items in a sequence, as in (14); (ii) to separate short units in a series comprising internal punctuation, as in (15); (iii) to associate the clause constituents, as in (16); (iv) to introduce coordinate phrases, with listed elements in particular, as in (17); (v) to introduce appositional phrases, as in (18); and (vi) to link main and subordinate clauses, as in (19).

(14) The Great Tornosoll. heliotropium magnum. verrucaria maior. herba cancri. herba solaris. scorpionis herba. siccus. et calidus. 3° gradu. It hath straight round stalkes, couered with a white hearye cotton . . . (*F7*, f. 26r).

(15) This herbe is called in Greeke ἀχιλλεῖα; in Latine Achillea, and Achillea sideritis, of Apuleius Myriophyllon, Myriomorphos, Chiliophyllon, Stratioticon, Heracleon, Chrysitis, Supercilium Veneris, Acron syluaticum, Militaris, and of some Diodela; in Shoppes at this present Millefolium; in Italian Millefoglio; in Spanish Yerua Milloyas; in English also Milfoyle,

rate of appearance where commas are employed to introduce sequential markers with respect to the whole figure of occurrences in which this function is observed.

Yerrow, and Schaffrip, and Tausenblaet: in base Almaigne, Geruwe. (*PH1578*, p. 144).

(16) The stalkes be rounde, smooth, and holow, at the toppe whereof: groweth the yellow flower with the three leaues hanging downewardes, like to be garden flower Deluce, *and* three mounting vpwardes . . . (*PH1578*, p. 199).

(17) The polished barke of the chesnut boyled *and* dronken stoppeth the laske, bloodye flixe, and all other yssue of bloode ~ ~ (*F7*, f. 48v).

(18) . . . the high Germaynes do make of it Flos tinctorius, that is to say be flower to staine, or dye withal, *and* do terme it in their language, Ferbblumen . . . (*PH1578*, p. 667).

(19) . . . for it dryeth *and* strengteth the stomack, *and* stirreth vp appetite. It is good for corrupt sores and stinking mouthes, yf one wash with be decoction therof. (*F7*, f. 42v).

Table 6 reproduces the distribution of punctuation in the two versions in reference to the above clausal functions, where, overall and contrary to the other linguistic levels already explored, the printed herbal far and away outnumbers the manuscript (1,218.08 vs 642.13 occurrences, respectively). This prevalence of punctuation in *PH1578* is largely—yet not solely—based on the prominent bias of the printer towards employing colons as separators of units containing internal punctuation (254.64 instances) and commas as predecessors of coordinate phrases (281.79 instances).

Table 6: Functions and distribution of punctuation at clausal level in *F7* and *PHI578*
(normalised frequencies)

	<i>F7</i>														<i>PHI578</i>													
Enumerate items	.	’	/	:	;	-	.	’	/	:	;	-	.	’	/	:	;	-	.	’	/	:	;	-				
Internal punctuation	150.84	200.94	-	11.01	1.65	0.55	11.86	386.7	12.92	4.74	0.53	-	4.22	41.12	-	254.64	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-				
Associate clause constituents	11.56	5.51	-	0.79	-	-	0.26	63.26	-	0.26	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-				
Coordinate phrase	-	95.79	-	-	-	-	-	281.79	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-				
Appositional phrase	-	2.75	-	-	-	-	-	29.52	-	1.32	0.26	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-				
Link main and subordinate clause	-	90.28	-	-	-	-	-	124.68	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-				
Total																							642.13	1,218.08				

As far as internal punctuation is concerned, the printer is prone to include the different names of the accounted plants in a number of languages; not only English, but also others such as Greek, Latin, Italian, Spanish, and German, as shown in (15). In a large number of cases, a plant contains at least two names in a specific language, which are generally enumerated through commas, so the printer tends to provide colons (84.88%) to separate them from those pertaining to a different language. The scribe, however, is more reluctant to apply this practice, as its incidence in *F7* is negligible compared with the primary printed version. As previously mentioned, he appears to be uniquely captivated by the English and some classical names of certain herbs, and thus avoids a regular usage of this clausal function inasmuch as it might have been redundant for him. Even in those limited cases where this use emerges, he generally turns to the period (11.56 instances, that is, 61.76%).

Apropos of coordinate phrases, their introduction is systematically accomplished in both *PH1578* and *F7* through the use of commas, albeit with a different diffusion, the former summing an aggregate almost three times higher than the latter. The lower occurrence in the manuscript dwells in an evident scribal boundedness to ignore their usage when writing the text. As illustrated in (20), the copyist refrains from including these punctuation devices for the purpose in an important quantity of fragments wherein the printer renders them in the original.

(20) a) “. . . Moreouer it taketh away the payne *and* heate of all woundes inflamed, vlcers, and Phlegmons being applied thereto.” (*PH1578*, p. 139)

b) “. . . moreouer it taketh away the payn *and* heat of all woundes inflamed vlcers and phlegmons being applied therto.” (*F7*, 31v)

Together with this, there is a pair of differences between the versions that are worth mentioning as for the way several elements are enumerated in a series. To start with, while the comma is the predominant mark of punctuation in the printed book (386.7 instances, i.e., 92.79%), its leading character in the handwritten treatise (200.94 instances, i.e. 55.05%) is relatively shared with the period, which displays a figure of 150.84 occurrences (i.e. 41.33%). The notable regularity of the period in this environment may be explained by the scribe’s tendency to employ it in order to differentiate the names that a medical herb possesses in diverse

languages (see examples 1 and 12), as opposed to other forms of enumeration seen throughout the text, where items are almost systematically separated from each other by means of commas (e.g. “parietarie is singuler against choleric inflammations, ignis sacer, spreading and runing sores, burninges and all hott vlcers,” f. 25v). Despite irregular in printing, this tendency is not at all surprising among Early Modern English manuscripts as, apart from its more ordinary functions, the period could also do “service as a type of comma” until at least the first two decades and a half of the seventeenth century (Petti 25; Lorente-Sánchez, “Punctuation Practice” 70).

On the other hand, the data likewise indicate that there is a specific symbol used in *PH1578* which is absent in *F7*, that is, the virgule. Found on 12.92 occasions, this means of punctuation is always located in some section titles of the printed edition and applied as a divider of the main names of certain herbs depicted in it (e.g., “Of great Pellitorie of Spayne / Imperatoria / or Masterwort,” p. 299).¹⁷

3.2.2.3 Punctuation at Phrase Level

Punctuation is lastly noticed to carry out a couple of aims at phrasal level. These encompass the indication of abbreviations, as shown in Fig. 4, and the circumscription of numerals, as illustrated in Fig. 5. In these particular cases, the period stands as the unique symbol of punctuation, with none of the other marks from the complete inventory employed for any of the two usages. Nevertheless, this device exhibits a dissimilar distribution across the text-formats. As reproduced in Table 7, its frequency of appearance in *F7* outnumbers its occurrence in *PH1578* for both the totality and the individual phrasal functions. This picture, among others, may also come

¹⁷ It should be noted that in just a raw instance (i.e. 0.55 normalised occurrences), the hyphen also operates in *F7* at the clause level to separate an item from the rest in a sequence of enumerated elements (e.g. “Water betonye. brown wort- Scrophularia maior. ficaria. millemorbia. ferraria,” f. 25r). This example, however, seems to have emerged here by mere accident, since the scribe normally employs other marks when it comes to enumerating. Except for such instance, the hyphen does not run any linguistic function in the texts, as it is in most cases intended to signal the specific places wherein words are split at the end of the line and, less frequently, to join some compounds (e.g., “tooth-ache” *PH1578*, p. 32) (see Petti 27). As may be seen in Table 3 (section 3.1), this punctuation mark is more regular in *PH1578*, with a total of 157.37 occurrences, an incidence substantially larger than that of *F7*, with 24.77 instances.

to justify the noteworthy degree of occurrence of the period in the manuscript compared with the printed edition.

Fig. 4. Instances of punctuation used at phrasal level to indicate abbreviations (F7, f. 25r)

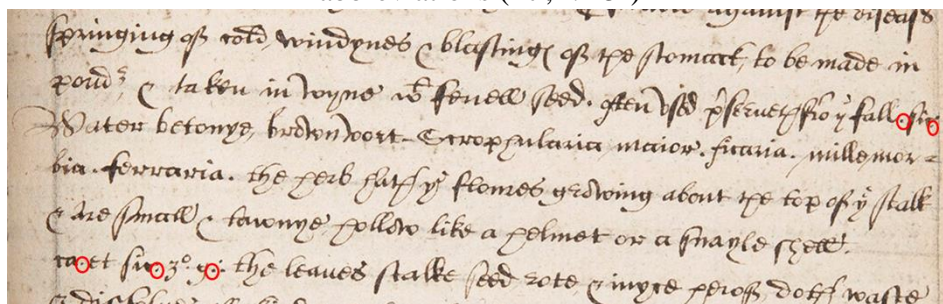


Fig. 5 Instances of punctuation used at phrasal level to circumscribe numbers (F7, f. 35v)

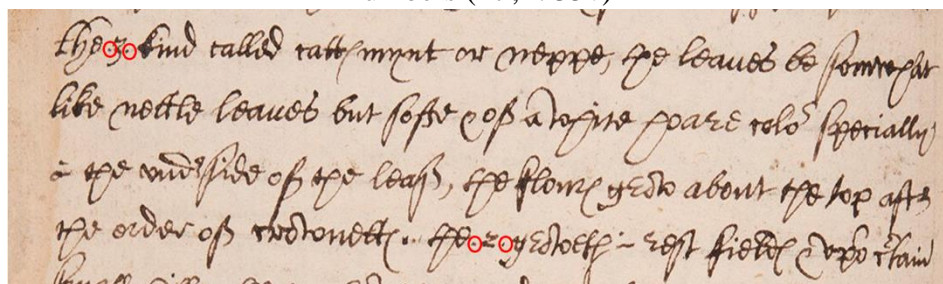


Table 7. Functions and distribution of punctuation at phrasal level in F7 and PH1578 (normalised frequencies)

	F7	PH1578
Abbreviations	75.97	7.12
Numerals	35.78	7.91
Total	111.75	15.03

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS AND CONCLUSION

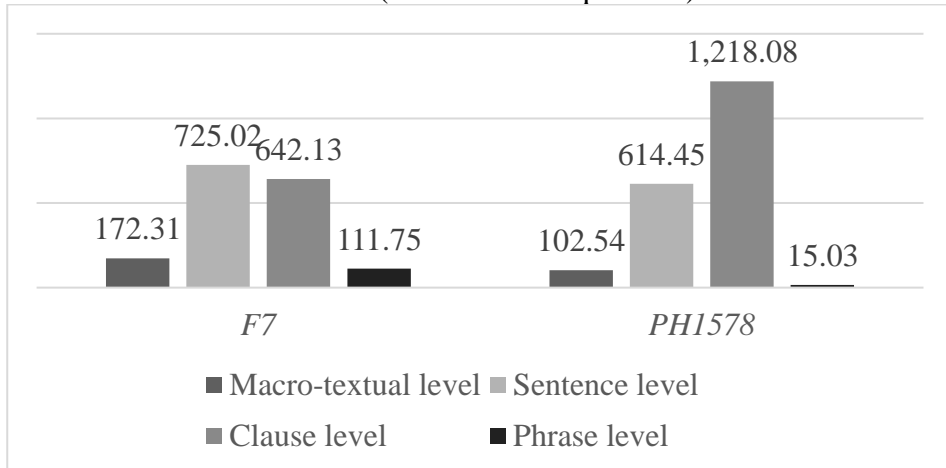
The present paper has analysed historical punctuation in handwritten and printed texts from the Early Modern English period, providing a particular consideration to its quantitative distribution and its qualitative usages at

macro- and micro-linguistic levels. To such a goal, it has focused on the examination of both the English 1578 printed translation of Rembert Dodoens' *A Nieuwe Herball or Historie of Plants* and a manuscript version of this, which has survived up to the present-day in Glasgow University Library, MS Ferguson 7 (ff. 23r–48v; 59r). On the whole, the analysis has permitted me to assess a number of similarities and differences between the two pieces.

Quantitatively speaking, the phenomenon is more regularly observed in the printed version in light of a major occurrence of most punctuation devices in comparison with the manuscript, with the unique exceptions of the period and the semicolon. The study has also revealed some contrasts between the documents to the view that some specific marks such as the caret, line-fillers, and the apostrophe are non-existent in a particular text-type, although they appear in the other. The first two are uniquely attested in the handwritten version, where they are respectively employed to indicate the incorporation of some word(s) in the writing lines and to fill up those vacant areas at the end of these. The third, on the contrary, is only seen in the printed document as an aid to reproduce the French names of some herbs.

On qualitative grounds, the results indicate that punctuation operates mainly at sentence level in the manuscript, whereas it predominates at clause level in the printed book, as summarised in Fig. 6. The data also show that the role of punctuation diffuses more frequently at phrase and macro-textual levels in handwriting in comparison to printing. In addition to this, there are some differences respecting the manner diverse sub-functions are accomplished across the pieces, which arise as a result of a kind of linguistic adaptation of punctuation taking place when the scribe copies the original printed edition in his treatise.

Fig. 6: Distribution of punctuation at the different levels in *F7* and *PH1578* (normalised frequencies)



At macro-textual level, the phenomenon presents a higher degree of variation in the handwritten texts. While in printing the period is the mark *par excellence* to denote the end of paragraphs and section titles, in handwriting the comma and the virgule are likewise found for these functions.

At sentence level, some variation is observed apropos of the introduction of sequential markers, the use of coordination, the marking off the beginning of new sense-units, and the introduction of explanatory comments. As far as sequential markers are concerned, the comma is more numerous than the rest of marks in *F7*, whilst in *PH1578* it presents a balanced distribution together with the period and the colon. Regarding the rest of sentential uses, the printed edition denotes some preference for the colon, though other devices are salient in each specific case, whereas in the handwritten volume the period normally stands as the favoured mark.

At clausal level, the major distinction between the versions is based on the way in which some marks split units in a series including internal punctuation. In the printed book, the colon is the preferred symbol, while in *F7* the period is again the most recurrent device. Apart from this, another difference is witnessed as for the enumeration of items. Although the comma is almost the only mark of punctuation employed in *PH1578*, the scribe also tends to share its use—once more—with the period.

Finally, at phrasal level, the phenomenon is used to abbreviate and circumscribe numbers. Both functions are more recurrent in the

manuscript, with the period being the only chosen means of punctuation to accomplish them.

All in all, this work has demonstrated that there are still some consistent patterns towards the use of punctuation in handwritten and printed documents from the Early Modern English period; those manually produced stand in a less advanced stage of regularisation, as the phenomenon seems to be somewhat contingent on the peculiar writing procedures of each scribe. This conclusion, however, is just based on the evidence gathered for the present study, hence should not be assumed to correspond to the overall picture of other individual texts and, as such, of the entire historical era. More research on the usage and distribution of the phenomenon in documents from the period of both the same and a varied typology is required, as it would undoubtedly help elucidate this question, at least in part.

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In Defense of *Fifty Shades* by E. L. James: Does It Really Contain Gender-Based Violence?

En defensa de *Fifty Shades* de E. L. James: ¿Realmente contiene violencia de género?

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Abstract: This article presents a response to the harsh criticism expressed against E. L. James's *Fifty Shades*. Accusations have been made from many sides that it encourages gender-based violence within a romantic relationship, unjustly stereotyping the female character Anastasia (Ana) as a battered, submissive, weak woman and a "sex slave." However, as this thorough analysis will argue, Anastasia does not fit the profile of a victim of gender-based violence. Rather, she embodies the traits of an empowered woman. From this viewpoint, it is unfair to consider *Fifty Shades* as promoting violence against women.

Keywords: *Fifty Shades* series of novels; gender-based violence; battered woman; empowered woman; BDSM.

Summary: Introduction. *Fifty Shades*. Gender-Based Violence: The Perfect Backdrop for Criticism. A Thorough Analysis of Anastasia's Role as an Empowered Woman. Conclusions.

Resumen: Este artículo presenta una respuesta a las duras críticas expresadas contra *Fifty Shades* de E. L. James. Muchos sectores la han acusado de fomentar la violencia de género dentro de una relación sentimental, estereotipando injustamente al personaje femenino Anastasia (Ana) como una mujer maltratada, sumisa, débil y una "esclava sexual". Sin embargo, como se argumentará en un análisis detallado, Anastasia no encaja en el perfil de una víctima de violencia de género. Más bien, refleja los rasgos de una mujer empoderada. Desde este punto de vista, es injusto considerar que *Cincuenta Sombras* promueve la violencia contra las mujeres.

Palabras clave: Serie de novelas de *Cincuenta Sombras*; violencia de género; mujer maltratada; mujer empoderada; BDSM.

Sumario: Introducción. *Fifty Shades*. Violencia de género: el telón de fondo perfecto para las críticas. Un análisis detallado del papel de Anastasia como mujer empoderada. Conclusiones.

INTRODUCTION

The best-selling *Fifty Shades* series of novels has achieved great success and has topped best-seller charts in the United Kingdom, the United States, and many other countries. By way of illustration, *Fifty Shades of Grey* became the fastest-selling book in the United Kingdom and stayed on the *New York Times* best-seller list for 133 consecutive weeks. In addition, the books have received nominations and awards: “*Fifty Shades Freed* won the Goodreads Choice Award (2012), and *Fifty Shades of Grey* was selected as one of the 100 Great Reads, as voted by readers, in PBS’s The Great American Read (2018)” (James, *Freed* 758). Because of this extraordinary success, British author Erika Leonard Mitchell, better known as E. L. James, was declared in 2012 one of Barbara Walters’s “Ten Most Fascinating People of the Year,” one of *Time* magazine’s “Most Influential People in the World,” and *Publishers Weekly*’s “Person of the Year” (James, *Grey* 561).

As well as writing the novels, E. L. James also worked as a producer on the film adaptations of her trilogy for Universal Pictures. Such as with the novels, the film adaptations became a huge hit. In fact, the *Fifty Shades* films, starring Jamie Dornan and Dakota Johnson, made more than a billion dollars at the box office (James, *Freed*). Thus, in 2015, the film adaptation of *Fifty Shades of Grey*, broke box-office records all over the world and it was followed by *Fifty Shades Darker* (2017) and *Fifty Shades Freed* (2018), which won the People’s Choice Award for Drama in 2018 (James, *Darker*, *Freed*). Yet, popularity does not mean acceptance. Despite its runaway success, *Fifty Shades* has sparked controversy among critics and feminists who have harshly criticized it. They argue that it emulates violent and aggressive patterns which encourage gender-based violence. The idea that *Fifty Shades* is nothing more than sex and porn alongside the foregrounding of BDSM (a common abbreviation for the terms Bondage and Discipline (BD) Domination and Submission (DS) Sadism and Masochism (SM)) might have contributed to this claim.

Female sexuality, porn and BDSM are still considered taboo. While many regard pornography and BDSM as stigmatized sexual practices and standardizing vehicles for violence against women, others emphasize that

pornography is fantasy and that BDSM is distinct from violence or torture because it draws on consent and sexual pleasure. Likewise, while some see *Fifty Shades* as a manual for sexual torture, others view it as a self-help manual on love, sex, and eroticism, as well as sexually liberating for women. In any case, *Fifty Shades* is not a work of psychological or social realism. It depicts a fictional love story framed within the erotic romance subgenre characterized by explicit sex, emotional bonding between the protagonists, eroticism and “a happily ever after,” including marriage and having children. These key elements of the story and characters along with the fantasy and fanfiction origins have been dismissed by many critics and feminists.

Consequently, this article presents a response to the volleys of criticism which have been launched against the *Fifty Shades* series of novels, accusing it of encouraging gender-based violence within a romantic relationship. Arising from this claim, stereotypes such as “battered,” “submissive,” “weak” or “sex slave” among others have unjustly pigeonholed the female character, Anastasia (Ana), as a victim of gender-based violence. However, as will be argued, Anastasia seems to exhibit traits that fit the profile of an empowered woman. From this viewpoint, it would be unfair to consider *Fifty Shades* as promoting violence against women. In order to carry out this defense, I first explain the origins of *Fifty Shades* along with a brief plot summary. Subsequently, I present the negative reviews. Then, I provide a thorough analysis of the female character’s role, placing special focus on her words, behavior and relationship with the male character, Christian.

1. *FIFTY SHADES*

James first conceived *Fifty Shades* as a trilogy: *Fifty Shades of Grey* (2011), *Fifty Shades Darker* (2012) and *Fifty Shades Freed* (2012). All these novels were narrated in first person by the female character, Anastasia Steele. This trilogy has been translated into fifty-two languages and more than one hundred and fifty million copies have been sold worldwide (James, *Darker*). Later on, James decided to write *Fifty Shades* in the first person from the perspective of the male character, Christian Grey. Hence, the trilogy gave place to a hexalogy with the publication of *Grey* (2015), *Darker* (2017) and *Freed* (2021).

Prior to the *Fifty Shades* series of novels, E. L. James had published *Master of the Universe*, a fanfiction for the vampire *Twilight* saga by

Stephanie Meyer, under her web name Snowqueen's Icedragon (McAlister; Schreck). According to Salam Al-Mahadin, the trilogy was written to complete "the niches and gaps James felt were left unfilled by the *Twilight* series by Stephanie Meyer (2010)" (568). However, James has never confirmed Al-Mahadin's opinion. What James has argued is that she was a fan of the *Twilight* saga ("*Fifty Shades of Grey*") and, most likely, used it as a source of inspiration not only to continue the love story between Bella Swan and Edward Cullen but also to rewrite it from a different perspective by dispensing with the supernatural phenomena present in the vampire genre and in the saga itself, and adding new elements more in line with our times such as the BDSM lifestyle, episodes of a traumatic childhood with neglect and physical abuse, and sexual harassment. Thus, *Master of the Universe*, uploaded in serial installments to a popular FanFiction forum on the Internet (Illouz 19–20), became the basis for *Fifty Shades of Grey* and the subsequent novels.

As James states, *Fifty Shades* is a love story, product of her imagination ("*Fifty Shades of Grey*"). It belongs in essence to the popular genre of romance fiction. Romances are a form of fairy tales where love and happy endings are key elements. *Fifty Shades* is a romance novel embedded within the erotic romance subgenre. Erotic romance stories are based on romantic love, portrayals of explicit, often taboo, sexual and erotic elements, and an emotionally satisfying happy ending. Sex plays an integral part in the stories and "the declaration of love between heroine and hero" (Regis 30) is one of the central elements. Further, *Fifty Shades* rests heavily on romance tropes such as "unexpected virgin," "self-made billionaire," "alpha hero," "heroine breaks hero's control and exposes his vulnerability," "hero overcomes the pain of physical and psychological scars from the past with the heroine's help" and others.

Fifty Shades narrates a passionate love story between twenty-one-year-old Anastasia Steele, a student of English literature at Washington State University and twenty-seven-year-old Christian Grey, a successful, powerful, and wealthy entrepreneur, CEO of Grey Enterprises Holdings. Both Anastasia and Christian meet for the first time at Christian's office when Anastasia interviews him for the student newspaper. From that time onward, they start dating and Christian lures Anastasia into being his submissive in a sexual relationship characterized by the BDSM lifestyle. However, as they fall in love, the initial proposal, centered on a consensual dominant/submissive relationship, will eventually turn into a romantic relationship on Anastasia's own terms.

Throughout the novels Anastasia and Christian will have to face a series of mishaps and challenges which, instead of breaking their love relationship forever, will help them reinforce it. They will realize that they cannot be without each other and that they are stronger together. To achieve this happy ending, Anastasia will play a role of paramount importance in their relationship, since her choices and decisions will help improve not only her life but also Christian's. In doing so, she will have to accept and learn to live and share Christian's powerful and wealthy lifestyle without sacrificing her own control and power over her own life, including choices and decisions concerning her work, together with her emotional and economic independence. Similarly, Christian will have to learn to love Anastasia on her own terms. He will also have to overcome the horrors, fears, nightmares of his childhood, his self-loathing, insecurity, and his need for control with the crucial help of Anastasia, who will become his best form of therapy. In the end, Anastasia and Christian, with their passionate love for each other, will break all chains. They will defeat the hindrances that limited and prevented their complete happiness, which will prove the strength of their unbreakable love and, in turn, will serve to consolidate their marriage and new role as parents.

2. GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE: THE PERFECT BACKDROP FOR CRITICISM

This section provides an overview of what most critics and feminists have expressed against *Fifty Shades*. Their critiques are often based on social or psychological realism that might not be appropriate for a novel that falls into the erotic romance subgenre that incorporates themes still considered taboo such as BDSM. Critics have always misunderstood and had a disdain for romance novels. They have condemned the repetition of thematic and structural formulas in the genre. Also, feminists have considered that romance novels perpetuate patterns of patriarchal domination and they have warned of how harmful the gender stereotypes reflected in some of these stories can be. Nonetheless, romance novels have evolved. They reflect the gradual shifts around female sexuality and independence. The portrayal of romance heroines has also changed over time, showing how women can overcome all kinds of adversity, have a successful career, find love, enjoy sex, have multiple orgasms, and start a family.

Fifty Shades explores a BDSM relationship between two fictional characters. With the publication of *Fifty Shades of Grey*, BDSM has

become a staple of the erotic romance subgenre. BDSM refers to a variety of consensual and desired practices involving power, domination, subordination, humiliation, the infliction or reception of pain or injury for pleasure through, but not limited to, caning, spanking, whipping, blindfolding, flogging, or restraining (Weiss). BDSM practices have never been acceptable, above all, among the most conservative strata of society because, according to them, they are not ethically and morally correct, even when these activities are consensual and safe. “BDSM has been historically labelled as being deviant and this label has still not fully disappeared” (Drdová and Saxonberg 1002). Most feminists contend that, through these BDSM activities, both the books and the film adaptations promote the idea of “a perceived normalization and naturalization of violence against women” (Larabee 223). Ultimately, they assert that Anastasia experiences gender-based violence. The Istanbul Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence, as the benchmark for international legislation to address gender-based violence, defines gender-based violence and violence against women (two terms that are often used interchangeably), as a gender act that

is understood as a violation of human rights and a form of discrimination against women and shall mean all acts of gender-based violence that result in, or are likely to result in, physical, sexual, psychological or economic harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or in private life. (Council of Europe 3)

This definition will be used to frame the analysis in the next section. In any event, feminism is not a monolith; while many feminists state that *Fifty Shades* portrays violence against women and therefore Anastasia is a battered woman, others argue against this stance and praise the fiction series for promoting female sexual liberation and empowerment. Even James herself has expressed her view in this regard:

“Who is interested, as a woman, in reading about abuse? Why have these books taken off if they are about abuse? Domestic violence, rape, are unacceptable. They are not entertaining in any way. Let me be absolutely clear. Everything that happens in this book is safe and consensual . . . What do I need to do to convince people?” (Steinkellner)

As Lucie Drdová and Steven Saxonberg put it, “Ana is portrayed as a person with no ‘sexual agency,’ no ideas or desires of her own, and she appears to be passively receptive to the male” (989–90). Their statements are mainly grounded in the contention that Anastasia is a shy, weak, vulnerable, submissive, and sexually inexperienced young woman who consents to be dominated, controlled, and cruelly punished by a wealthy, powerful, secretive, selfish, abusive, and sadistic man. An example of this perception is demonstrated in a study by Beatriz Inzunza-Acedo in which the survey responses by participants, who had seen *Fifty Shades of Grey* movie, showed similar views about Christian Grey’s and Anastasia Steele’s behavior:

- 83.3% said [*sic*] that he’s more aggressive/violent than tender or sweet with Anastasia Steele
- 73% think that he’s a cold person, versus the option of saying he has a romantic personality
- 72.6% feel he’s psychologically or physically sick
- 67.1% perceive him as an antisocial man
- 59.5% consider that he’s a disrespectful man
- And [*sic*] 65% of the participants said [*sic*] he’s very confident and with a [*sic*] high self-esteem (44, bullet points in original)
- 76.5% believe she has a weak, submissive character
- 73.5% think she has a [*sic*]very low or none [*sic*] self-esteem
- 60.1% perceive her as a dependant [*sic*] person (instead of independent emotionally and/or economically)
- 56.4% described [*sic*] her as dumb instead of smart
- 50.2% indicated [*sic*] that she has no values
- The only positive characteristic was that 67.9% believe that she has no economic [*sic*] interest in Christian, in other words, she’s not a *gold digger* (45, bullet points and italics in original)

Personality traits should not be interpreted to mean that Christian is an abuser or that Ana experiences abuse. One can be antisocial or have mental health issues such as depression, obsessive-compulsive disorder or post-traumatic stress disorder and not be an abuser. If personality traits or mental health conditions were the cause of abuse, then abusive men would physically or emotionally abuse other people, including relatives, friends, or colleagues, not only their female partners (Bancroft 23–48).

The fact that the film adaptations were centered on commercial issues and merchandising strategies has probably contributed to spreading, especially through word of mouth, such strenuous allegations of violence and sexual abuse in *Fifty Shades*. They have distorted or altered the real message and essence of the literary work and, consequently, the authentic roles of Christian Grey and Anastasia Steele. Due to this moral outrage, there were complaints about the way BDSM is dealt with in the story “as being not a sexual proclivity, but an act of abuse” (Steinkellner). Even some practitioners have pointed out that BDSM practices and relationships reflected in *Fifty Shades* are not realistic and therefore inaccurate: “*Fifty Shades* portrays BDSM in a manner that aims to repulse the readers rather than make them understand how BDSM is practiced in reality” (Drdová and Saxonberg 1002). In part, their complaints are based on the fact that the set of rules and the issue of consent are not sufficiently clear. Anastasia never actually signs the BDSM contract, and she is free to renegotiate rules and boundaries at any time. She agrees to a trial period in which sexual encounters with Christian are consensual, as will be argued in the next section.

What is more, some members of the BDSM community disagree with *Fifty Shades* because the portrayals of BDSM practitioners (Christian, Elena, Leila) suggest that they are mentally damaged and in need of psychiatric professional help, thus implying that BDSM practitioners engage in such practices due to a mental disorder. Historically, BDSM practices have been pathologized and stigmatized as proof that practitioners suffered from psychological disorders or were damaged by traumatic pasts. However, the most recent scientific studies have concluded that there is no obvious connection between psychological disorders or trauma and BDSM. Indeed, in the Nordic countries it is no longer considered a psychiatric disease. Besides, “sexual sadism” and “sexual masochism” are not recognized as psychopathological paraphilias in the fifth edition of the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (American Psychiatric Association, qtd. in Weiss). This is also

evinced in *Fifty Shades Darker* (James) when Dr. Flynn, Christian's psychiatrist, explains to Anastasia that "sadist" is "no longer recognized as a psychiatric term . . . It's not even classified as a paraphilia anymore" (412). He also clarifies that "sexual sadism . . . [is] . . . not a disease; it's a lifestyle choice . . . practiced in a safe, sane relationship between consenting adults" (413).

In addition to the harsh criticism of the film adaptations, the *Fifty Shades* series of novels and, most specifically, "the quality of the prose has been severely disparaged by critics" (Van Reenen 226). Comparisons between the novels and the films are frequent. "People who had read the novels before were dissatisfied with the adaptation of the book to the movie because they believed it was less erotic and romantic than the original story" (Inzunza-Acedo 44). The novels and films were defined, among other terms, as "mommy porn" (Inzunza-Acedo 44). *Fifty Shades* is an erotic romance novel that does not primarily aim at the sexual stimulation of its readers. It focuses on the plot, the protagonists, their personalities, their emotional bond, their respective developments, and a happy ending. These elements are not essential in pornography where depictions are reduced to sexual organs and plots "are designed to sexually arouse the reader and nothing else" (Sylvia Day, qtd. in McAlister 214).

Moreover, the first installment, *Fifty Shades of Grey*, and its film adaptation have also been accused of glorifying, glamorizing, and even romanticizing violence against women (Casey; Dines; O'Clare; Smith). Likewise, in their research into *Fifty Shades of Grey*, Amy Bonomi et al. identified "abuse patterns" and found that Anastasia "suffers reactions typical of abused women" (742). Following this line, Claire Philipson, director of Wearside Women in Need, a charity aiding victims of domestic abuse, called *Fifty Shades of Grey* "an instruction manual for an abusive individual to sexually torture a vulnerable young woman" (Inzunza-Acedo 37). As a result, several campaigns and boycotts were organized to stop the sales of the book and the release of the film. For instance, the National Center on Sexual Exploitation "launched an online campaign to take donations for battered women and urged a boycott of the movie's opening weekend. It told readers what message to take from it: 'It is really about sexual abuse and violence against women' (Dawn Hawkins, qtd. in Smith)" (Larabee 223).

There were more examples such as the feminist Radical Alliance for Women which protested "outside movie theatres . . . and distributed Valentine's Day cards with information about domestic violence and abuse

. . . promoting the idea of ‘fifty dollars not *Fifty Shades*’ requesting that ticket money went to women’s shelters instead of movie tickets” (Steinkellner). Furthermore, the book was even banned from some Florida libraries, for example in Brevard County, and from other US libraries for being too pornographic, according to local librarians (Flood). On the one hand, Dawn Hawkins, executive director of National Center on Sexual Exploitation stated: “The porn industry has poised men and women to receive the message that sexual violence is enjoyable” (Smith). On the other hand, Amy Bonomi et al. criticized the stance of the librarians for banning the books due to “semi-pornographic content” rather than abuse:

our analysis shows perpetuation of abuse in one of the Western world’s most popular novels . . . Concerning is that the banning of *Fifty Shades* in public libraries is linked to issues of semi-pornographic content, rather than to the underlying pervasive abuse patterns we documented . . . This suggests, in part, a continued underlying societal tolerance of abuse. (742)

The fact that some librarians see pornography and not abuse in the books does not mean that society continues to tolerate gender-based violence. The librarians’ position is as respectable as that of those who argue that *Fifty Shades* is abuse and those who defend that it is a self-help manual to improve sexual relationships or a tool for social empowerment and sexual liberation.

On the conservative, moralist, and Christian side, it is worth mentioning the Roman Catholic archbishop of Cincinnati, Dennis Schnurr, who claimed that “a young Miss Steele is urged to sign a contract becoming a sex slave and agreeing to an abusive and degrading relationship.” He affirmed that *Fifty Shades of Grey* “is in direct contrast to the Christian message of God’s design for self-giving and self-sacrificing love, marriage and sexual intimacy.” Consequently, he declared it “a direct assault on Christian marriage and on the moral and spiritual strength of God’s people” (Wyatt). Having sex outside of marriage for pleasure without reproductive purposes as well as engaging in sexual activities like BDSM is frowned upon by the Church. Women’s lives and behavior have been under constant scrutiny and have received countless strictures from various sectors of society, including conservative Christian circles. These norms have influenced women by imposing roles and expectations on them that have shaped their public perception.

3. A THOROUGH ANALYSIS OF ANASTASIA'S ROLE AS AN EMPOWERED WOMAN

Female empowerment has increased in popularity as never before, especially since the “Me Too” movement in 2017, which represented a breakthrough. For the first time, women joined together to raise their voices to publicly denounce sexual abuse and harassment, and at the same time, it encouraged and empowered younger and more vulnerable women to do the same, making them feel that they were no longer alone. Female empowerment implies women’s capability to make and determine their own decisions, choices, and goals in all aspects of their lives, whether in society, education, work, or others. In other words, an empowered woman fights for her rights, freedom, opportunities, and emotional and economic independence. This is precisely what Anastasia Steele does throughout the novels. For example, Anastasia faces situations of sexual harassment by her boss, Jack Hyde, (James, *Fifty Shades Darker* 369–70) and by a man who touches her hips and behind while she is dancing on a dance floor at a nightclub in Aspen (James, *Fifty Shades Freed* 303). In both scenes, she fights back by hitting them demonstrating that she is an empowered woman who is not afraid of sexual harassers. More importantly, she feels empowered when Christian is near her: “I pull his lips to mine tasting his surprise as I push my tongue into his mouth. I am standing on the step above him—we’re at the same level, and *I feel euphorically empowered*” (James, *Fifty Shades Darker* 386, emphasis added).

According to Smith et al., disempowerment is “women's routine existence and the loss of power that occurs with sustained battering as their thoughts and behaviors become habitually modified in accordance with the batterers’ desires” (176). These scholars consider disempowerment typical of battered women. As such, the definition of this concept would mean that “battered” and “empowered” are incompatible terms. In fact, women who have been battered, once they are able to leave abuse behind, must be provided with the appropriate tools and resources to empower themselves. If Anastasia were a battered woman and Christian, a batterer, she would feel disempowered because her thoughts and behavior would be routinely altered according to Christian’s wishes. But Anastasia feels happy, comfortable, and alive with him: “I have never felt as alive as I do now. It’s a thrill to be sitting here beside him” (James, *Fifty Shades of Grey* 355). There appears to be no evidence of gender-based violence (Council of Europe 3).

When having sex, Christian asks Ana questions such as “You okay?"/ “More?"/ “Again?"/ “Did I hurt you?"/ “Seriously, are you okay?” (James, *Fifty Shades of Grey* 117–18), “How does that feel?” (James, *Fifty Shades of Grey* 321) to assess Ana’s positive reaction to her sexual experience, thus showing that he is an attentive, respectful, and caring man, concerned about Ana’s well-being, not an abuser. In addition, there are scenes in which Anastasia is drunk and Christian does not engage in sexual activities with her (James, *Fifty Shades of Grey* 66, *Fifty Shades Freed* 310). Similarly, there is a scene where Christian is drunk and wants to have sex with Anastasia, but she also sets boundaries related to consent and alcohol by telling him that he is drunk and needs some sleep, and he respects her decision not to have sex (James, *Fifty Shades Freed* 422–23). In all these scenes Christian’s behavior does not seem to exhibit signs of sexual harm or coercion towards Ana (Council of Europe 3).

Anastasia knows exactly what she wants and how she feels. She rejects two suitors: Paul Clayton, her boss’s brother, and her friend José Rodríguez, even knowing that with them she would have a more “regular” relationship than with Christian: “Grey is only interested in a dominant/submissive relationship . . . Steele just wants a regular boyfriend” (Williams). However, Anastasia has no feelings of love for them. She is sexually inexperienced, that is, she is a virgin and for the first time in her life, she wants to have sex with a man and “feel his hands and his mouth on [her]” (James, *Fifty Shades of Grey* 69). That man is Christian Grey not Paul or José. Thus, she chooses Christian over them, and they make love because it is Anastasia’s choice and decision. Moreover, Christian asks her if she wants to make love to him and she accepts (James, *Fifty Shades of Grey* 110–11). This is an example of explicit consent. She loses her virginity because it is her body, her choice and this is what she also says to Christian:

“I don’t think you robbed me,” I mutter haughtily—*I am not a helpless maiden*. “I think my virtue was offered up pretty freely and willingly. I wanted you too, and if I remembered correctly, I rather enjoyed myself.” I smile shyly at him, biting my lip. (James, *Fifty Shades Darker* 200, italics in original)

By telling Christian she enjoyed her first sexual experience with him in a positive way, she is showing a high level of sexual communication. Anastasia does not appear to exhibit traits of “physical, sexual or

psychological harm or suffering . . . , including threats of such acts or coercion” (Council of Europe 3).

Christian proposes a BDSM relationship to Anastasia where he is the dominant and she is the submissive. After thinking it over, she agrees to a trial period of engaging in a submissive role. That means that he will have control over Ana’s health, exercise, sexual activity, and food. But Anastasia never signs the BDSM contract. The only contract she signs is a nondisclosure agreement (NDA) which means she cannot disclose anything about them and their relationship to anyone (James, *Fifty Shades of Grey* 96) and she signs it voluntarily. Anastasia does not sign the BDSM contract because she wants to establish her limits and negotiate the contract on her own terms at any time (James, *Fifty Shades of Grey* 105–08; 216–26; 254–60). For instance, she decides to exercise three times a week, and not four, as Christian wishes (James, *Fifty Shades of Grey* 107). Regarding food, she says: “No one is going to dictate to me what I eat” (James, *Fifty Shades of Grey* 222). In doing so, Christian himself recognizes she is a good negotiator and offers her a job in his company, but she rejects it (James, *Fifty Shades of Grey* 107); Anastasia does not want to be professionally dependent on Christian. She is determined to pursue her dream of becoming an editor. In fact, she has interviews for internships at two publishing houses. Finally, she gets a job at one of them, Seattle Independent Publishing and, starts a new career as assistant to the editor Jack Hyde (James, *Fifty Shades of Grey*). Besides, Christian encourages Anastasia to take time to research, ask questions or talk to one of his former submissives to clarify doubts about the BDSM lifestyle (198). Anastasia rejects the last option; she does not want to talk to any of his former partners. As shown, Anastasia sets boundaries around Christian. At the same time, her behavior manifests traits of empowerment.

According to Matilda Swinney, “*Fifty Shades* is the same story as *Beauty and the Beast* . . . innocent girl falls for troubled man, endures his anti-social behavior out of belief in his ultimate goodness, and eventually teaches him to be a sociable, polite member of society.” Anastasia is determined to drag Christian into the light. She wants to show him that another kind of relationship based on love not submission is possible, especially when Christian confesses to her that one of his mother’s friends, Elena Lincoln, had seduced him when he was fifteen years old. Elena brought him into a BDSM relationship as her submissive for six years (James, *Fifty Shades of Grey* 154). After this confession, Anastasia feels repulsed by Elena. At Christian’s birthday party, after Christian proposes

marriage to Anastasia, she does not hesitate to call her “sick child molester” (James, *Fifty Shades Darker* 521) for having abused a minor. Additionally, Anastasia plucks up the courage to defend and protect her relationship with Christian from Elena’s interference (James, *Fifty Shades Darker*). In this scene, Anastasia displays characteristics of an empowered woman confronting a pedophile for physically and sexually abusing a 15-year-old minor. In turn, by protecting and defending her relationship with Christian, she does not seem to act like an abused woman.

Anastasia wishes to express her love for Christian by touching him and that is the reason why she consents to him punishing her with a belt. Christian hits Anastasia but it is all consensual; it is her choice, her decision. Nevertheless, this ordeal turns out to be a “wake-up call” for her (James, *Fifty Shades of Grey* 507). Anastasia finds out that she does not want him to hit her like that again. At the same time, she realizes that Christian has needs she cannot fulfill. She feels they are incompatible, and she leaves Christian (even though he wants her to stay) but not without confessing to him that she has fallen in love. Following this confession, Christian is horrified because nobody has told him they love him before, and he feels that he does not deserve to be loved (James, *Fifty Shades of Grey*).

After a brief breakup, Anastasia and Christian understand that they cannot be apart. They miss each other and Christian uses the occasion of José’s show to see Anastasia again and makes a new suggestion. He realizes that, despite his BDSM lifestyle, he needs Anastasia more. Anastasia accepts Christian’s proposal but, this time, on her own terms, that is, without punishments and rules. In other words, Christian and Anastasia reconcile their differences:

“Ana, believe me. After I punished you and you left me, my worldview changed. I wasn’t joking when I said I would avoid ever feeling like that again.” He gazes at me with pained entreaty. When you said you loved me, it was a revelation. No one’s ever said it to me before, and it was as if I’d laid something to rest—or maybe you’d laid it to rest, I don’t know. Dr. Flynn and I are still in deep discussion about it” / “The thought of hurting you . . . in any real way . . . it’s abhorrent to me” / “If you wanted to do that, then fine . . . but you don’t and I get it. I can’t do all that shit with you if you don’t want to. I told you once before, you have all the power. And now, since you came back, I don’t feel that compulsion at all.” (James, *Fifty Shades Darker* 330)

When Anastasia asks Christian to “show [her] how much it can hurt”, Christian asks her: “You would try?” and she replies: “Yes. I said I would try” (James, *Fifty Shades of Grey* 504). As observed, Anastasia and Christian are two willing adult participants who are going to participate in a BDSM activity. Consensual BDSM requires limits, rules, and mutual respect. Ana sets and resets her boundaries and Christian takes them into consideration. By contrast, Christian’s relationship with Elena probably lacked consent, as he was a minor. Their relationship was not legal; she physically and sexually abused Christian. However, Anastasia and Christian are both adults and capable of giving consent. After this experience, Anastasia chooses to leave and end the relationship, not because she might feel physically abused, but because she realizes that she cannot satisfy Christian’s needs, that is, more extreme BDSM activities, and neither can he satisfy hers (James, *Fifty Shades of Grey*). She just understands they are incompatible. Elena, however, was physically and emotionally abused by her husband who, in addition to being controlling (James, *Fifty Shades Darker*), “beat her to a pulp. He broke her jaw, her left arm and four of her ribs” because she was having sexual relations with Christian (James, *Fifty Shades Freed* 522). This episode evinces a clear example of abuse.

But, what about the episode between Anastasia and Christian based on mutual consent? Would the law consider it a case of abuse? As Margot Weiss specifies, “the legality of BDSM varies internationally and is often a gray area.” She explains that in countries such as the United States, the United Kingdom or Canada, consent is not a legal option for defense if assault is involved. Hence, it will hinge on whether the courts see a specific BDSM activity as a form of assault or not (5). However, in the Netherlands, Germany, Scandinavia, and Japan, BDSM activities are legal if they are practiced with the mutual consent of the practitioners involved. In other countries, legality depends on the interpretation of the legal code by the judges. Thus, considering that the BDSM activity carried out by Anastasia and Christian takes place in the United States, if it were to be judged, their consent would not be valid, and we would have to wait for the sentence. The question of whether there was assault or not would have to be settled. On the other hand, if, for example, it had happened in Germany, it would have been legal. Finally, if it had occurred in Italy, it would have depended on the decision of a judge according to his or her interpretation of the legal code.

James herself has explained that *Fifty Shades* depicts a love story whose main characters have sexual encounters which are safe and consensual (“*Fifty Shades of Grey*”). All sexual relationships must be consensual with or without BDSM activities. Anastasia and Christian practice the BDSM lifestyle within a context of mutual respect and pleasure, a game in which he plays the role of the dominant and she plays the role of the submissive. Anastasia is not forced to engage with this lifestyle by Christian. On the contrary, Anastasia acquiesces to BDSM activities, but on her own terms:

The book actually keeps its female protagonist in charge of everything that happens in the bedroom. She has the power. The couple in *50 Shades* only pretends to be slave and master. Anastasia is actually the one setting the rules (she renegotiates the sex contract on just about every page) and Christian accedes to all her wishes. (Elaine Liner, qtd. in Illouz 56)

Indeed, when Christian makes Anastasia a new proposition, she also renegotiates it. She refuses whips, canes, belts, punishments, and rules (James, *Fifty Shades Darker* 33–36). In this way, the initial proposal is renewed with a softer version of the BDSM lifestyle based on Anastasia’s preferences and desires: “a regular vanilla relationship with kinky fuckery” (James, *Fifty Shades Darker* 34). As shown, Christian is patient and understanding with Ana, not abusive. He does not mind when Anastasia takes control of everything (James, *Fifty Shades Freed*) and gains power within the relationship.

As mentioned earlier, Anastasia never signs the contract. Nor does she self-identify as a submissive. Christian wants Anastasia to stay with him and not go to work, especially in order to protect her from Leila Williams, who is suffering a psychotic breakdown and is armed and following Christian. However, Anastasia does not obey him and refuses to stay at home without working. She “fights tooth and nail for her autonomy” (Illouz 45). Her work is of vital importance, and she does not want to be financially dependent on Christian or any other man. After discussing the situation with Christian, she finally achieves her goal, that is, she goes to work although it entails having a security detail (James, *Fifty Shades Darker*). A similar situation occurs when Christian is in New York and Ana goes out for a drink with her friend Kate. Christian wants Ana and Kate to stay in the apartment because Jack Hyde is still out there (James, *Fifty Shades Freed*). Christian gets angry at Ana for not obeying him and

Anastasia reminds him of one of her wedding vows: “I never promised to obey you, Christian” / “Deal with it please. For both our sakes” (James, *Fifty Shades Freed* 251). Anastasia understands that Christian is just being protective in a very dangerous situation. But, as she has acknowledged from the beginning of the story, she “doesn’t have a submissive bone in [her] body” (James, *Fifty Shades of Grey* 226). That is the reason why Anastasia does not include obedience in her wedding vows. This causes arguments between Christian and her. Anastasia is even determined to leave him if he insists on her changing her vows to include obedience. She is not prepared to make a vow she might break. Anastasia’s decision causes him to suffer a nightmare. When he wakes, he says:

“The vows. No obeying. I can do that. We’ll find a way.” The words rush out of his mouth in a tumble of emotion and confusion and anxiety. / “Yes. We will. We’ll always find a way,” she whispers, and her lips are on his, silencing him, bringing him back to the now. (James, *Fifty Shades Freed* 4)

Again, Anastasia sets boundaries and shows traits of empowerment. Christian is understanding and willing to find a way for them to work out their differences without hurting each other. Anastasia and Christian show a high level of communication, which is positive for a long-lasting relationship. In addition, these examples suggest that there is no violence or abuse (Council of Europe 3).

As a result of the sexual harassment and blackmail suffered by Anastasia, Jack is fired and Anastasia is promoted, becoming acting editor (James, *Fifty Shades Darker* 400–02). Because of this unexpected situation, Jack decides to take revenge committing a series of criminal acts: he sabotages Christian’s helicopter, sets fire to Christian’s office, and tries to kidnap Anastasia. Fortunately, Ryan, one of Christian’s security men, catches him and Hyde is “charged with attempted kidnapping and arson” (James, *Fifty Shades Freed* 327). Nevertheless, when Jack Hyde is released on bail, he commits another crime. This time he kidnaps Mia, Christian’s sister, and wants five million dollars. He phones Anastasia, who is in her workplace, to inform her and she has to deal with the situation on her own (James, *Fifty Shades Freed* 445). Anastasia has two hours to get the money and she cannot tell the police, Christian or his security team. If she does, Jack will rape and kill Mia.

Once Ana gets the money and meets Jack, he hits her, but she gathers the strength to shoot Jack in the leg (James, *Fifty Shades Freed* 459–60).

Ana saves Mia and her father-in-law, Carrick, thanks her for risking her own life to save his daughter (James, *Fifty Shades Freed* 477). By performing this feat, Anastasia shows that she is an empowered woman capable of risking her life to help and save others. Many critics have highlighted Christian's stalker-like behavior. According to them, Christian monitors Ana's whereabouts using devices such as GPS and phones that he purchases for her. However, as Christian is a billionaire and needs protection, he has hired security men for that very reason. It is natural that he buys these devices for his own and Anastasia's safety to prevent serious situations such as kidnapping. Undoubtedly it was thanks to the GPS and phones, Christian was able to find the whereabouts of Mia and Anastasia to call the ambulance and the police (James, *Fifty Shades Freed* 460).

When Anastasia discovers she is pregnant and tells Christian, his reaction is far from ideal: he is really angry and leaves home to get drunk (James, *Fifty Shades Freed* 418–19). Christian feels that it is not the right time and that he will not be a good father. In light of Christian's behavior, Ana decides to choose her baby over him if he does not change his attitude:

“Well, you were right. I do choose this defenseless baby over you. That's what any loving parent does. That's what your mother should have done for you. And I am sorry that she didn't—because we wouldn't be having this conversation right now if she had. But you're an adult now—you need to grow up and smell the fucking coffee and stop behaving like a petulant adolescent.” / “You may not be happy about this baby. I'm not ecstatic, given the timing and your less-than-lukewarm reception to this new life, this flesh of your flesh. But you can either do this with me, or I'll do it on my own. The decision is yours” (James, *Fifty Shades Freed* 434–35)

This scene clearly exemplifies the spirit of an empowered woman. She argues with Christian, raises her voice, and strongly disagrees with his attitude. Anastasia is not afraid or threatened by Christian. Now she is pregnant, and her priorities have changed. She is willing to care for the baby on her own if necessary.

The *Fifty Shades* love story ends up revealing that Anastasia does not give up but grows in the face of adversity. Indeed, due to her desire to have another child and despite the difficulties when giving birth to her first (James, *Fifty Shades Freed* 444–46), Anastasia gets pregnant again with a baby girl. Similarly, despite Christian's economic status and financial help, Anastasia achieves her dreams of becoming an editor and running

her own company, Grey Publishing, which is very successful and “makes money”, by using her own intelligence, effort, and determination:

“Grey Publishing has an author on the *New York Times* best-sellers [*sic*] list—Boyce Fox’s sales are phenomenal, the e-book side of our business has exploded, and I finally have the team I want around me.” / “And you’re making money in these difficult times,” Christian adds, his voice reflecting his pride. (James, *Fifty Shades Freed* 541)

By praising her success, Christian is supportive of Ana, not violent towards her. In addition, Christian wants Anastasia to succeed and, therefore, he does not hesitate to help her financially as Elena did with him; she had lent him “a hundred grand to start his business” (James, *Fifty Shades Darker* 109). Moreover, when they marry, they do so in community property; Christian has always wanted to share all his wealth with Anastasia: lavish gifts, goods, assets, and bank accounts (James, *Fifty Shades Darker* 380). That is the reason why he does not want her to sign a prenuptial agreement (James, *Fifty Shades Freed*). Christian wants Anastasia to be financially independent and successful like him. These instances seem to indicate that there is no sign of “economic harm or suffering” (Council of Europe 3). The books contain a wide range of examples which demonstrate that Anastasia is not a victim of gender-based violence, thus leaving open the way for further analysis of Anastasia’s role as an empowered woman.

CONCLUSIONS

Unfortunately, gender-based violence is still present in 21st century society. *Fifty Shades* by E. L. James has been accused of encouraging it by emulating violent and aggressive patterns within a romantic love story between two fictional characters, Anastasia and Christian. Anastasia’s participation in BDSM activities and the controversial assumption that BDSM is about abuse have probably contributed to her being typecast as a battered woman. Nonetheless, through the analysis of Anastasia’s role, it has been evinced that she does not fit the Istanbul Convention’s definition of gender-based violence.

The aim of this article has been to express a different viewpoint on *Fifty Shades* where BDSM, surprising as it might seem, becomes the scaffolding on which Anastasia and Christian build, consolidate, and strengthen their loving relationship while Anastasia emerges as an

empowered woman who questions the patriarchal discourse of femininity associated with obedience. Anastasia does not lose her power to Christian but gains it throughout the novels. She exhibits her firm willingness to set and reset boundaries. She does not succumb to Christian's BDSM proposal; she does not indulge his desire to become his submissive. She negotiates and renegotiates the rules, thus drawing the lines around her comfort zone and preferences. Anastasia does not conform or submit to Christian's desires and preferences. Rather, it is the other way around; Anastasia changes Christian's thoughts and behavior to suit her own wishes and he compliantly accepts. Further research on this series of novels might be helpful to confirm this thesis, using tenets taken from other disciplines, including Psychiatry and Psychology and also linguistic perspectives, such as those offered by Sociolinguistics (with its focus on language and gender), Conversation Analysis and Discourse Analysis.

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Provincial Newspapers as Vehicles for Dialect Spread and Enregisterment: Insights from Nineteenth Century Devonshire Dialect

Periódicos provinciales como vehículos de difusión dialectal y *enregisterment*: Percepciones de Devonshire durante el siglo XIX

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Abstract: This paper takes provincial newspapers as the basis for a discussion on dialect spread and enregisterment during the nineteenth century. It departs from the premise that, during this era of nationwide diaspora and industrial advancement, periodicals served as the main means of entertainment and identity expression. For this purpose, it takes two letters submitted by R. Giles to the *North Devon Journal* in 1885, where his use of the Devonshire dialect is available for analysis. It aims to explore the most remarkable dialectal features documented in his submissions in an attempt to justify my claim that provincial press could have contributed to an early process of Enregisterment in dialects.

Keywords: Provincial-newspapers; Devonshire dialect; nineteenth century; enregisterment.

Summary: Introduction. The Varied and Short-lived Life of Nineteenth Century Periodicals. On the enregisterment of English. Devonshire Speech during the Nineteenth Century: An Overview. R. Giles: "The Gude Old Times in Welcombe" (September 1885) and "Lucy Passmore, The Wite Witch" (December 1885). Linguistic Data and Methodology. Coincidental Features. Conclusive Remarks and Deductions.

Resumen: Este artículo toma los periódicos provinciales como base para debatir la difusión dialectal y *enregisterment* durante el siglo XIX. Parte de la premisa de que durante esta era de diáspora nacional y avance industrial, los periódicos sirvieron como el medio principal de entretenimiento y expresión identitaria. Para este propósito, se utilizan dos cartas enviadas por

R. Giles al *North Devon Journal* en 1885, donde su uso del dialecto de Devonshire está disponible para análisis. El propósito sería explorar las características dialectales más remarcables documentadas en sus aportaciones en un intento de justificar mi idea de que la prensa provincial hubiera contribuido a un proceso temprano de *enregisterment* dialectal.

Palabras clave: Periódicos-provinciales; dialecto de Devonshire; siglo XIX; *enregisterment*.

Sumario: Introducción. La variada y corta vida de los periódicos del siglo XIX. Sobre el *enregisterment* en inglés. El habla de Devonshire durante el siglo XIX: un vistazo general, R. Giles: “The Gude Old Times in Welcombe” (septiembre de 1885) y “Lucy Passmore, The Wite Witch” (diciembre de 1885). Datos lingüísticos y metodología. Características coincidentes. Conclusiones y deducciones.

INTRODUCTION

The speech of Britain shows a history of varied intermingling and transformation. English has become a linguistic collage comprising many diverse forms because of the parallel development of its varieties throughout history. Whilst Britain lacked a standardised version of English as such until the eighteenth century, commentary on the subject is hardly dismissible. The type of English spoken in the capital had always posed a contrast with the speech of the layman and communities that fared away from the metropolis. Differences of speech became the subject of discussion as well as a literary device, as reported by Norman Blake. At least from the Early Modern English period, and especially during the nineteenth century (see Hodson), various forms of English developed (e.g., the Northern variety in areas like Lancashire or Yorkshire) into (socio)linguistic and literary strategies whereby writers recreated nonstandard language and its socio-cultural associations. The impact that such representations had on readers established the grounds for commentary on the cultural associations linked to language and its itemisation as a tool for autochthonal affiliation. Indeed, literary recreations of dialects have gained considerable scholarly interest in the past few years on account of the insight they may provide into such socio-cultural associations, which have been explored within the framework of *enregisterment* (e.g., Agha, “The Social Life”). Whilst most research has looked into the linguistic evidence present in novels and drama (e.g., Cooper, *Enregisterment*; Ruano-García, “Aw’m Lancashire”; Schintu), newspapers (only addressed in Paulsen), and more specifically, provincial newspapers, have gone largely unnoticed despite having an equal potential for the dissemination of dialect. Identitary and idiosyncratic devices (such

as specific language belonging to the area) were indeed present in these publications: they were the printed voice of communities that found in their local newspaper a means to vindicate their relevance and presence in the national milieu. Customs, traditions, local businesses, festivities and religious flairs peppered the contents of these newspapers and manifested their distinctiveness over metropolitan discourses. This cultural insulation was furthered by readers who contributed with their own writings to influx vitality into a communicative medium they saw as belonging to them. This process engendered some questions: what were the traits that defined one community? How distinctive and representative of ancient ways of life were those traits? And, above all, were they worth fighting for? Among such features, language established a kind of individuality that no material means (clothing, festivities) could achieve.

This paper discusses the impact of dialect writing in the provincial press as another medium of dialect recording, spread and enregisterment. It argues that the availability of newspapers to local readers helped them acquire a new understanding of their own dialect and its relevance in the national scene. For this purpose, two letters sent by R. Giles to the *North Devon Journal* (now *Devon Live*) in 1885 will be considered to explore the role of newspaper publications in the enregisterment of the Devonshire dialect. This paper undertakes a quantitative and qualitative analysis of the data to identify the most recurrent dialect traits documented in Giles's letters, which will be linked to the values associated with the dialect in the context of these publications. Likewise, they will be compared to the dialect features recorded in contemporary and later works like Wright's *English Dialect Dictionary* (*EDD*) and Ihalainen to evaluate the authenticity of Giles' dialect and his potential contribution to the enregisterment of Devonshire speech as an identity device.

1. THE VARIED AND SHORT-LIVED LIFE OF NINETEENTH CENTURY PERIODICALS

Claridge (590) dates 1670 as the year when the term “newspaper” was coined. During the seventeenth century, a series of primitive formats that barely resembled the Berliner and tabloid publications known today were published. The *London Gazette* ruled the stage along *The Current Intelligence* for a period of thirty years until 1695. Udo Fries comprehensively follows the evolution of periodicals from this point onwards, drawing a chronological line that led to current newspapers. The

glorious period enjoyed by the *London Gazette* (previously known as *Oxford Gazette*, as the publication was moved to Oxford during the Great Plague years) was terminated by the inception of tri-weeklies such as *The Post Boy* and *The Post Man*. Fries indicates that the dawn of the eighteenth century caused a newspaper enthusiasm which provoked the genesis of several other publications, among which we can find *The Evening Post*, *The Daily Advertiser* and *The Gentleman's Magazine*, as well as an increase in the number of weekly, bi-weekly and tri-weekly offerings encouraged by the Licensing Act of 1695. The tri-weekly design allegedly found better reception (Black 13) and held sway for many years. However, the 1700s would prove difficult in view of increased competitiveness, since several names started to crowd coffee shops and gentlemen clubs alike. A few names to be recalled during this time would include *The St. James's Evening Post*, *The Whitehall Evening Post*, later renamed *Whitehall Evening Post* or *London Intelligencer*, or the *St. James's Post*.

The increase in the number of publications was provoked by the growth in readership that took place during the nineteenth century. Palmer indicates that daily Britain was inscribed in the pages of periodicals as a sort of entertainment device. Marriages, obituaries, job offers, Royal affairs or local concerns were pressed into the pages of newspapers across the country. Whilst publications whose heritage is maintained today, such as *The Daily Telegraph* or *The Guardian*, smaller titles emerged to fulfil the needs of certain sectors of society. Stephanie Olsen discusses that the periodical press at this time was varied in matter, since it informed, entertained, and shaped their readers' opinion, which seems to have led to the diversification of the readership in terms of men, women, or children. Olsen offers a few names in the male panorama: *Kaleidoscope: Or, Literary and Scientific Mirror*, the *Scots Observer* or the *Gentleman's Magazine*. Women enjoyed the advantages and pleasure of periodicals as well. Kathryn Ledbetter refers to titles such as *Ladies' Pocket Magazine*, *World of Fashion and Continental Feuilletons* and *La Belle Assemblée*, mostly weekly publications in the magazine range that tried to collect female archetypes in vogue in the years prior to the coronation of Queen Victoria.

The ample range of options offered by publishing houses and editors often reflected a social choice and showed the stratification of a layered society. London-based periodicals were focused on parliament affairs and conservative-leaning ideals, economics, and foreign policies, as well as highly literate articles for the expensively educated.

In the countryside, provincial newspapers attempted to superimpose the relevance of its county, parish or town in contrast to the metropolis. Most of these provincial publications faced a quick demise or were purchased by massively wealthy companies in the twentieth century. Clarke and Black both refer to the *Norwich Post* as the first provincial newspaper, suggesting the *Worcester Postman* as presumptively previous.

In Devon, Exeter became a periodical press workhouse and the county's main producer. Titles existing during the early eighteenth century included *Sam Farley's Exeter Post-man*, *Exeter Mercury or Weekly Intelligence*, *Plymouth Weekly Journal or General Post*, *Brice's Weekly Journal* and *Farley's Exeter Journal*. Some newspapers evolved and were renamed, as is the case with the *Exeter Mercury or West Country Advertiser* (1765), which underwent several retitling processes, becoming the *Exeter Evening-Post or the Plymouth and Cornish Advertiser*, and by the first half of the nineteenth century the *Trewman's Exeter Flying Post Devon, Cornwall, Somerset, Dorset, Wilts and Gloucester Advertiser*.

Fries questions whether examples from the provincial press should be considered in corpora compiled to analyse the language of newspapers, as he himself concedes that a language "different from that of London newspapers" (61) could be whittled from those publications. However short-lived and transitory, Andrew Hobbs evidences that most publications "from 1830 to the 1890s . . . were published outside of London," preoccupied with local matters and identities. Their less metropolitan apparel made them, in Hobbs' words, more "national" than the average London newspaper due to their less synthetic feel and closer approach to the average Briton. Hobbs points out that, although the life expectancy of the provincial press was less than a year, their celebration of the ordinary and local was much enjoyed by the native readership. These newspapers were configured around advertisements and "non-news content [such as] poetry, history, geography, biography, jokes, maps, gossip 'London letters' . . . reviews of books and magazines" (226), where local language played a key role in the configuration of the readers' identities and their sense of belonging. In this regard, the provincial press relied on dialect as a means of self-reflexive celebration as linguistically different individuals, which could point to the enregisterment of some dialect features.

2. ON THE ENREGISTERMENT OF ENGLISH

Enregisterment refers to the “processes through which a linguistic repertoire becomes differentiable within a language as a socially recognized register of forms” (Agha, “The Social Life” 231), meaning that some linguistic forms become “socially recognised as indexical of speaker attributes by a population of language users” (Agha, “Voice, Footing, Enregisterment” 38). In the wake of Agha’s groundbreaking framework, Hernández-Campoy explains that enregisterment “accounts for how meaning gets attached to linguistic forms and how these indexicalised forms metapragmatically circulate and reproduce in social interaction, permeating discourse” (50). Agha’s notion of enregisterment is critically grounded in Silverstein’s three orders of indexicality, which some scholars such as Johnstone et al. have linked to Labov’s concepts of *indicators, markers and stereotypes*. Johnstone (“Enregisterment”) defines indexicality as “a sign . . . related to its meaning by virtue of co-occurring with what it is taken to mean” (633). Thus, Silverstein’s first order of indexicality refers to the association between a linguistic form, or sign, in a community and a social category, as perceived by an outsider like a linguist. At the second order, members of that community are aware of such correlation. The third order shows that the linguistic forms associated with a particular type of speaker, or community, are the object of overt commentary and representation in various forms, such as literature or memorabilia (see Beal, “Enregisterment” on the commodification of dialect). This ideological approach to the study of variation is inscribed within the so-called third wave of sociolinguistics (Eckert), which “locates ideology in language itself, in the construction of meaning, with potentially important consequences for linguistic theory more generally” (Eckert 98).

Research on enregisterment has covered salient varieties of English all over the globe, including historical dialects. Barbara Johnstone’s groundbreaking work on Pittsburghese (*Speaking Pittsburghese*) resulted in a relevant academic growth in enregisterment studies due to her insightful analysis. Enregisterment has also been explored in the US by Picone as well as in Ireland by Amador-Moreno and McCafferty. Historical varieties of Northern English in the UK have been vastly investigated by Beal (“Enregisterment,” “Dialect as Heritage”), Cooper (*Enregisterment*, “It takes a Yorkshireman,” “Enregisterment”), Beal and Cooper and Ruano-García (“On the Enregisterment,” “Aw’m Lancashire”)

in the Late Modern English period, which is also the focus of Schintu, who examines the enregisterment of the Derbyshire dialect. This time period witnessed prolific amounts of nonstandard literature and data available for analysis. Ruano-García observes that dialect writing in the Late Modern English period is a fertile ground given the “linguistic insight it may give on the language of bygone times, especially when contemporary records are scarce or unavailable” (“On the Enregisterment” 188). Paul Cooper (“Deregisterment”) advances the notion of *deregisterment* (previously introduced by Williams 2012) to refer to enregistered forms such as the northern *gan* “to go” and *mun* “must,” which have fallen into disuse and, therefore, lost their enregistered status in Yorkshire whilst still being enregistered northern forms in general.

In this regard, Devonshire seems to have escaped enregisterment analysis so far, despite its ancestral complex form. The linguistic background of the area would prove excellent for dialectal studies, both in literature and the press. The following section will try to draw a concise picture of Late Modern Devonshire speech based on contemporary and modern accounts of the dialect as a domain of distinct speech salience and indexicality.

3. DEVONSHIRE SPEECH DURING THE NINETEENTH CENTURY: AN OVERVIEW

Devonshire has traditionally been labelled as one of the prominent counties belonging to the West Country, along with Cornwall and Somerset. The West Country itself, charted apart from the kingdoms that occupied the British territory in the centuries after Roman conquest, remained a stronghold of Cornish, a Celtic language in the same regard as Breton, Gaelic and Manx, until as late as 1777, when the last native speaker, Dorothy Pentreath, passed away (see Hoskins, *Old Devon, Devon and its People*). Although the West Country is now totally English-speaking, its linguistic ancestry is attestable in the divergence of features that contrast with other forms across the country. The counties belonging to the West Country consensually include Cornwall, Somerset, Devon and Dorset, with Gloucestershire and Wiltshire as an extension, although opinions vary. Geographically, however, they are commonly integrated into the Southwest peninsula. This perspective is endorsed by Payne, whose history of the West Country describes five counties, among which Wiltshire is found, and Wagner (“English Dialects”), who adds

“Gloucestershire, Oxfordshire, Worcestershire, and Herefordshire, which create a transition zone” (417). Joseph Wright (*The English Dialect Grammar*) lists Wiltshire within the same group as other core West Country counties.¹ A poll conducted in 2018 by YouGov showed that only 28% of participants considered Wiltshire as part of the West Country, whilst Gloucestershire closely followed with barely the 27%. It is worth noting that the four core dialects share a set of features, differing slightly in certain linguistic aspects such as universal *-s* (e.g. *They takes it*) and the realisation of ME /a/ as [a] or [æ] in Somerset (e.g. *dance*) (Wakelin). Table 1 shows the main characteristics of West Country, or rather Southwestern, dialects as recorded by Ihalainen from Late Modern sources. Such features are widely shared and acknowledged, as well as corroborated by other scholars such as Trudgill, Görlach (*English in Nineteenth Century England*) and Wagner (“Late Modern English”), among others.

Table 1. Southwestern dialect features collected by Ihalainen

Features	Examples
periphrastic <i>do</i>	<i>They da peel them</i>
universal <i>-th</i>	<i>He go'th, Folks go'th</i>
universal <i>-s</i>	<i>They makes them, Farmers makes them</i>
plural <i>am</i>	<i>They'm nice</i>
pronoun exchange	<i>Her told I</i>
<i>Ich</i> ‘I’	<i>Ich say</i>
proclitic ‘ <i>ch</i> ‘I’	<i>Cham, chall</i>
second person singular verb	<i>Thee dost know</i>
uninflected <i>do, have</i>	<i>He don't know, it have happened</i>
otiose <i>of</i>	<i>Whot's er a-düing ov?</i>
voicing of initial fricatives	<i>zay, vinger, zhilling</i>
retention of ME ai	<i>day [dai]</i>
<i>r</i> for <i>gh</i>	<i>fought pronounced [fort]</i>

¹ “Southern including Wil. Dor. n. & e.Som., most of Glo., sw.Dev., and small portions of w. Brks. and w. Hmp” (Wright, *The English Dialect Grammar* 5).

Ihalainen suggests that the features listed above were well-established dialect characteristics in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century. Less frequent yet equally distinctive forms such as the rounding before nasals (e.g., *hond* ‘hand’), uninflected *be* usage (e.g., *They be fine*), dropping of /w/ in words like *woman*, the realisation of *thr-* as *dr-* (e.g. *dree* ‘three’), among others, could be listed as well. Devon exhibits many of these features.

In *The Peasant Speech of Devon*, Sarah Hewett dictates that Devon speech “is undoubtedly the purest remains of the Anglo-Saxon tongue extant in England at the present time” (vii). She offers some correlations between the Devonshire speech and Anglo-Saxon equivalents, such as *dring* vs *Pringan*, *cussen* vs *cursen*, as a means of proving their closeness. In her description of pronunciation forms, she reproduces some fine examples where non-standard spellings evoke dialect sounds:

A tuppeny² loave tü veed tha Pope,
 A pound ov cheese tü chuck ‘n,
 A pint ov beer tü make ‘n drunk,
 An’ a vaggot ov vuzz tü burn ‘n
 Wurrah! wurrah! wurrah! (15)

We can see a pattern to stress certain peculiarities such as the voicing of initial consonants (as in *veed* ‘feed’), or <ü> in several instances of the preposition *tü* “to,” which, as she explains, “takes the sound of the modified German ‘ü’” (1). Another sample of the dialect can be found in “A Conversation Overheard in a Boot-shop in a North Devon Town”:

Mrs Docker. “Good-morning, Mrs. Bell. What can I show you to-day?”
 Mrs. Bell. “My veet be za bad, düee zee if yü’ve a-got ort’ll dü vur me.”
 Mrs Docker. “Yes, these boots are strong.”
 Mrs. Bell. “Well, ‘ess, theys’ll dü jist thoft they wut a-mide vur me.”
 Mrs Docker. “Will you carry them?”
 Mrs. Bell. “Ess, plaize. I be out’s cüke now, an’ I likes it; they be zick güde lyvers.” (18)

The gist of the exchange between the boot-shop owner Mrs. Docker and the customer Mrs. Bell is easily grasped, yet it is the representation that

² Standard: “Leave a twopenny for the Pope, a pound of cheese to chuck in, a pint of beer to make him drunk, and a faggot of sticks to burn him. Hurrah! hurrah! hurrah!”

deserves attention here. Again, features like the voicing of initial fricatives (e.g., *veet* ‘feet,’ *za* ‘so’) and <ü> instead of <o(o)> in cases such as *dü* “do” and *güde* “good,” along with uninflected *be* and *r* for *gh* (*ort*, ‘ought’), are noted. The recurrent employment of such features goes some way to indicating that Hewett relied on certain conventions to reproduce the dialect. This is directly inherited from the prolific tradition of dialect writing that took place during the nineteenth century. Hodson summarises the state of dialect writing during this period, addressing the realist literary trend as the initiator of dialect representation. She reasons that “dialect literature written by local authors and aimed at local audiences became increasingly popular, thanks to increased urbanisation, greater literacy and cheaper printing costs” (1, 2). In Devon, this fact is further substantiated by other textual testimonies like some translations of the Bible. Henry Baird’s *Tha Gauspil Accaurdin to Zin Matthee* (*The Gospel of St. Matthew*), commissioned by linguist Louis-Lucien Bonaparte, serves as example:

Tha buk uv tha jinerashin uv Jayzis Christ, tha zin
 a David, tha zin a Abrim.
 Abrim begot Izie; an Izic begot Jakib; an Jakib
 Begot Judis an ez brithers (1)

The voicing of initial fricatives is clearly the most distinctive trait, whilst there are spelling variants (such as *Jayzis* ‘Jesus’ or *brithers* ‘brothers’) that imply phonological changes (diphthongisation of ME /i:/ and raising and fronting of ME /u/). This evidence confirms that Devon was a linguistically distinct variety during the nineteenth century, and people’s awareness of such distinctiveness leads to believe that the dialect had gone through Silverstein’s three indexical orders. Hewett’s book is proof of the establishment of the “speech of Devonshire peasants” as unique and recognisable both within and beyond Devonshire. The same can be said about provincial periodicals as their pages incorporated samples of the Devon vernacular, in a way advocating its validity and uniqueness. Since periodicals represented an elevated and formal means of communication available to many, as well as proof of a community’s political and geographical legitimacy, dialectal usage within their pages implied a vindication of its rightful employment and lineage. The following section addresses R. Giles’s dialect contributions to the *North Devon Journal* to

demonstrate that periodicals were powerful devices of dialectal broadcasting.

4. R. GILES: “THE GUDE OLD TIMES IN WELCOMBE” (SEPTEMBER 1885) AND “LUCY PASSMORE, THE WITE WITCH” (DECEMBER 1885)

Hewett’s compendium of Devonshire speech also provides an account of the beliefs and traditions pertaining to the area. She lists several superstitions, including remedies for snakebites, warts, fits and the whooping-cough, among others. She also describes how one could, according to Devonshire folklore, detect a thief as well as a description of weather rhymes and harvest protocols. White witches, however, are also part of this mythology; Hewett indicates that it was believed people in a favourable social and economic position were ready to “engage the services of the white witch” (viii). In writing no fewer than twenty-seven letters to the *North Devon Journal*, R. Giles appears to have contributed to this fashion of recounting Devonshire and its superstitions, however otherworldly, for outsiders. R. Giles was probably the name taken by an anonymous contributor whose identity can only be ventured,³ speculated and, at best, attached to some other author of prominent prestige at the time. Whilst he presumably wrote from Welcombe (North Devon), R. Giles was a common name at the time, and therefore it could designate anybody as specifically as the American sobriquets John and Jane Doe. Local registers from parishes confirm this, as the results provided by the National Archive show 6,169 matches for “R. Giles” in the whole British territory between 1837 and 2007. His references to the area and customs point at his having been a native or local, presumably a parson, teacher or some other educated member of society, considering his reading/writing skills and the fluid usage of dialect in his writings. Further research is advised to delve deeper into this question, and for practical purposes R. Giles will be considered a real name rather than a moniker. His productive period in the press spans from 1885 to December 1887, when he submitted a farewell rhyming letter, mentioning “Welcom(b)e” for the last time. The topics touched upon are varied in form and style, ranging from reviews, answers to other correspondence contributors, political views on parliamentary decisions and descriptions of country life and events in Welcombe. Most of his production is presented in non-standard writing

³ Allegedly male, since 1887 publications are signed Roger instead of R.

(with the vast majority beginning with the polite formulation *Zur* ‘sir’). Only a few exceptions were submitted employing Standard English, such as the one titled “Indulgence” appearing on the issue published on February 3, 1887, or another one on the 10th, titled “Welcombe Theology.”

This paper will examine two of his letters, “The Gude Old Times in Welcombe” and “Lucy Passmore, the Wite Witch,” dated 10 September 1885 and 23 December 1885 respectively, to identify dialect traits. They are examples of fictional letters, which can be taken as examples of dialect literature given that they are essentially written in dialect and are aimed at local audiences (see Shorrocks).⁴

5. LINGUISTIC DATA AND METHODOLOGY

The data considered for analysis in this paper is presented in table 2, where title, date of publication and word count are visible.

Table 2. Title, date of publication and word count of both texts

Title	Publication	Word Count
“The Gude Old Times in Welcombe”	10 September 1885	1,420
“Lucy Passmore, the Wite Witch”	23 December 1885	2,480

This paper takes a quantitative and qualitative approach, whereby word lists generated by AntConc 4.1.4, a software employed for corpus analysis, are examined to quantify the number of non-standard items and tokens present in both texts. Following standard practice, non-standard phonological features have been classified in accordance with Wells’ lexical sets and their Middle English (ME) vowel, providing examples of respellings which suggest dialect sounds, as well as examples of dialect morphology. This selection has considered nineteenth century and modern descriptions of the dialect, including Weymouth, Hewett, the *EDD*,

⁴ Shorrocks introduces the term “dialect literature” (386) to refer to fiction produced wholly or partly in dialect with a native reader as target. Giles’s fictional letters present dialect on a provincial medium with local readers in its scope, thus qualifying as dialect literature.

Ihalainen and Görlach (*English in Nineteenth Century England*), comparing the data they provided with the one offered by Giles.

5.1 Text 1 – “The Gude Old Times in Welcombe”

This fictional letter represents a portrait of bucolic affairs in Welcombe as homage to the ancient yet perishing lifeway of nineteenth century Britain. Giles’ composition exposes the role of the parson in little communities such as Welcombe, illustrating the illiteracy of average countryside men and women. To exemplify this, the letter narrates the comic misunderstanding between the local parson, reading a letter sent by a woman’s son working abroad, and the woman herself. When recounting the son’s frustration at being constantly attacked by mosquitoes at night in Brazil, the woman understands there is some mischievous Miss Kittie who romantically harasses her son, thus leading her to believe her son is a rather successful lover. Giles’s letter closes with a recollection of images described by the author as a means of conveying a feeling of homesickness. He mentions the view from a local cliff and how there seems to be nothing comparable to it. At the end of the letter, Giles uses a short poem as closure, reinstating this sentiment:

This is my own my native land,
no spot so dear to me,
No city with its hoards of wealth,
Has half such charms as thee.
The rugged hills and grassy slopes,
Where oft I’ve romped and played,
Remind me of companions dear,
Now sleeping in the shade.

Interestingly, this is the only piece of text provided entirely in standard English in the whole letter. Whether this was engineered to contrast with the dialect, as if to snap from the nostalgic reverie, it cannot be said with certainty, but it could be safely assumed to be the case.

5.1.1 Results and discussion

Table 3 shows the repertoire of dialect features documented in this text.

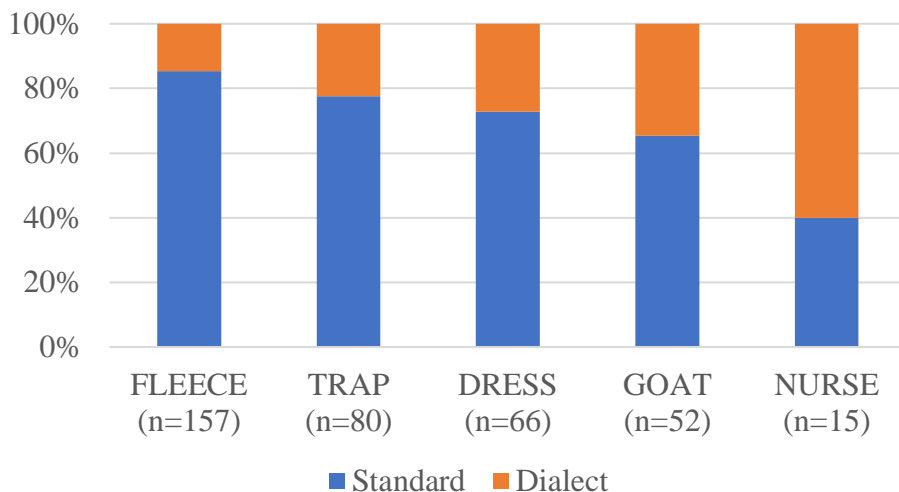
Table 3. Repertoire of Devonshire features: Text 1, including normalised frequencies

Features and examples	Types	Tokens	NF / 1,000	
Voicing of initial fricatives	<i>veet</i> ‘feet,’ <i>vind</i> ‘find’	22	66	46.4
FLEECE	<i>bayches</i> ‘beaches,’	13	23	16.1
ME /ɛ:, ε: + j, e:/	<i>betwayn</i> ‘between’			
LOT	<i>wis</i> ‘was,’ <i>vrum</i> ‘from’	3	20	14
ME /o, a/				
TRAP	<i>thits</i> ‘that’s,’ <i>hid</i> ‘had’	5	18	12.6
ME /a/				
GOAT	<i>foom</i> ‘foam,’ <i>auver</i>	11	18	12.6
ME /ɔ:/	‘over’			
DRESS	<i>splindid</i> ‘splendid,’ <i>niver</i>	10	18	12.6
ME /ε, ε:, a/	‘never’			
STRUT	<i>rinnin</i> ‘running,’ <i>jist</i>	8	14	9.8
ME /u, u:, o:/	‘just’			
NURSE	<i>larn</i> ‘learn’	3	13	9.1
ME /ε:+r/	<i>zur</i> ‘sir’			
SQUARE	<i>thares</i> ‘theirs’	1	12	8.4
ME /ei+r/				
Weak verb treatment	<i>zed</i> ‘seen,’ <i>gived</i> ‘gave’	4	10	7
FORCE	<i>hosses</i> ‘horses,’ <i>turment</i>	4	9	6.3
ME /ɔ:, o, o+r/	‘torment’			
Personal pronoun	<i>Min</i> ‘them’	1	7	4.9
KIT	<i>rayflectors</i> ‘reflectors,’	5	5	3.5
ME /i/	<i>sperrits</i> ‘spirits’			
PALM	<i>passon</i> ‘parson’	1	5	3.5
ME /ar/				
THOUGHT	<i>watter</i> ‘water,’ <i>draeback</i>	3	3	2.1
ME /a, aw/	‘drawback’			
GOOSE	<i>tew</i> ‘too’	1	3	2.1
ME /o:/				
FOOT	<i>wid</i> ‘would’	1	2	1.4
ME /u/				
BATH	<i>laest</i> ‘last’	1	2	1.4
ME /ar/				

Voicing of initial fricatives is the most frequent feature, followed by FLEECE (*bayches* ‘beaches’), which seems to perform as the most prominent lexical set, closely followed by LOT (*vrum* ‘from’), GOAT (*foom* ‘foam’) and DRESS (*niver* ‘never’). Although the normalised frequencies cast comparable results, Giles does not seem to follow a rigid set of conventions, but rather his dialect employment fluctuates as an average speaker’s would in a normal conversation.

Fig. 1 shows the relation between standard and dialect forms according to their lexical sets in this letter.

Fig. 1. Standard vs dialect forms in “The Gude Old Times in Welcombe”



This chart demonstrates the standard-dialect fluctuation in the text works on a saliency basis. Spelling variants indicating phonological change are more acute in the NURSE lexical set, with TRAP, DRESS, GOAT and ultimately FLEECE progressively less salient as localised Devonshire traits.

The morphological aspects in “The Gude Old Times in Welcombe” offer little data, probably due to its brevity. The overall presence of strong verbs given a weak treatment aligns conveniently with what is known of nineteenth century Devonshire speech, whilst personal pronouns work as a functional dialectal feature even if less profusely; there seems to be no

instances of pronoun exchange.⁵ This is mostly explained by the letter structure: not being a narrative filled with indirect accounts and dialogue, it seems less probable that the author felt inclined to employ pronoun exchange, yet personal pronouns still find their way into the letter, as in “*zo the passon wid bring min auver*” (my emphasis).⁶

The lexical repertoire in this text cannot be verified by the EDD as Devonian, therefore including them here would be misleading. Many of the lexical forms found throughout the body of the text appear to be spelling variants of Standard English vocabulary.

On balance, this letter contains a fair amount of dialectal material which is contrived to perform a series of authenticating effects (see Bucholtz) to appeal to a given set of readers from within the area of publication. A celebration of uniqueness, his use of non-standard spellings to point at forms typically recognised in Devon and close vicinities indicates that, by the end of the century, there were enregistered Devonshire forms in the area, easily captured in writing and identifiable by local readers.

5.2 Text 2 – “Lucy Passmore, The Wite Witch”

In contrast with the nostalgic tones expressed in the previous letter, this one opens with a few lines regarding the fulfilment of a promise to write again about the odd customs and traditions that were recently carried out in Welcombe and thereabouts at the time. On this occasion, he dedicates the letter mostly to a description of the white and kind witch Lucy Passmore, her place of residence and business occupation, how she passed away and was replaced by cheap imitations. At the beginning, Giles describes her as follows:

Tu Lucy ivery boddy thet was in innny trubble wud resort; in fact, hur was the oracle vow awl misterys. Wither ov witchin or love squabbels or innnythig lost, the vokes wud traipse away vrom miles an miles arown, tu kunsult hur; an hur wud rayd the planets for mun.

⁵ This feature is marked by Ihalainen and Wagner (“English Dialects”) as representative of the dialect.

⁶ Standard equivalent: “so the parson would bring him over.”

The letter includes a comic passage where Lucy argues with the local parson about her practices. Whilst the parson insists that Lucy's influence on the town folk is negative and, in some cases, evil enabling (prompting people to steal), the confrontation ends when Lucy discloses the dishonesty of the parson himself. Apparently, the parson's sermons were bought from another parson and delivered to his congregation as original creations. From then on, the parson sees no reason to bother Lucy and she resumes her business to the end of her days. The letter concludes with a poetic farewell, where Giles promises to go back to the folklore topic, mentioning "pixys, hobgoblins, an reckers" and hopes people will not be too judicial of "the hignorant times thit be past."

5.2.1 Results and discussion

Table 4 displays the dialect features used in this text.

Table 4. Repertoire of Devonshire features: Text 2 (N= 2,480 words), including normalised frequencies

Features and examples	Types	Tokens	NF / 1,000	
Voicing of initial fricatives NURSE ME /er, ɛ:+r, ir/	<i>zeed</i> 'seen,' <i>Zinday</i> 'Sunday'	21	110	44.3
GOAT ME /ɔ:, ɔu/	<i>hur</i> 'her,' <i>sarmins</i> 'sermons,' <i>ware</i> 'were,' <i>zur</i> 'sir'	9	79	31.8
DRESS ME /ɛ/	<i>auver</i> 'over,' <i>awlmost</i> 'almost,' <i>doant</i> 'don't'	11	35	14.1
Personal pronouns FLEECE ME /ɛ:, e:/	<i>inny</i> 'any,' <i>ivery</i> 'every'	13	32	12.9
KIT ME /i/	<i>en</i> 'him,' <i>hess</i> 'us'	4	32	12.9
TRAP ME /a/	<i>betwayn</i> 'between,' <i>layst</i> 'east,' <i>rayd</i> 'read'	17	30	12.09
STRUT ME /u/	<i>way</i> 'with,' <i>wey</i> 'with'	2	18	7.2
LOT ME /o/	<i>thet</i> 'that,' <i>zot</i> 'sat'	2	16	6.4
	<i>sitch</i> 'such'	2	12	4.8
	<i>acrass</i> 'across,' <i>dizen</i> 'dozen'	5	9	3.6

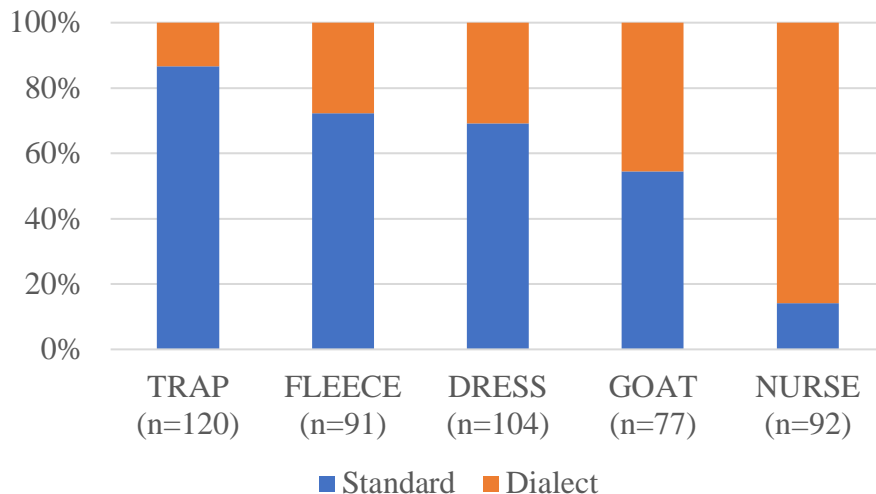
Weak verb treatment	<i>bilded</i> ‘built,’ <i>nawd</i> ‘knew’	3	8	3.2
Reflexive pronoun	<i>mezel</i> ‘myself,’ <i>hissel</i> ‘himself’	4	7	2.8
THOUGHT ME /a/ -th instead of -s	<i>watter</i> ‘water’	1	4	1.6
	<i>contaynth</i> ‘contains,’ <i>gieth</i> ‘gives’	3	3	1.2
PRICE ME /i:/	<i>mezel</i> ‘myself’	1	2	0.8
FORCE ME /o+r/ and /ɔ:+r/	<i>baurn</i> ‘born,’ <i>mare</i> ‘more’	2	2	0.8
SQUARE ME /ɛ:+r/	<i>thares</i> ‘theirs’	1	2	0.8
GOOSE ME /o:/	<i>tew</i> ‘too’	1	2	0.8
FACE ME /ei/	<i>aytpense</i> ‘eightpence’	1	1	0.4
PALM ME /a/	<i>haff</i> ‘half’	1	1	0.4
Addition of -en	<i>hathen</i> ‘hath’/ ‘has’	1	1	0.4

The most frequent feature here is the voicing of initial fricatives, which Ihalainen points at as one of the most characteristic features belonging to the West Country. The most prominent lexical set appears to be NURSE (e.g., *zur* ‘sir’), followed by GOAT (*auver* ‘over’), DRESS (*inny* ‘any’) and FLEECE (*betwayn* ‘between’). Interestingly, the pattern that occur the most belongs to the latter, since the digraph <ay> is employed almost invariably in all the types documented for this lexical set.

Fig. 2 shows the relation between standard and dialect forms according to their lexical sets.

As with the previous text, this chart shows the standard-dialect fluctuation on terms of saliency. Spelling variants indicating phonological change are more acute in the NURSE lexical set, with FLEECE, DRESS, GOAT and ultimately TRAP progressively less salient as localised Devonshire traits. Contrary to text 1, this chart presents more balanced standard-dialect percentages, with GOAT nearing 50% for both types.

Fig. 2. Standard vs dialect forms in “Lucy Passmore, the Wite Witch”



The morphology and syntax of the West Country has been widely debated, centred mostly on aspects of pronoun exchange, uninflected *be*, otiose *of* and periphrastic *do*, as listed by Ihalainen (see Table 1). Pronoun exchange alone designates a specific geographic area as it has traditionally been ascribed to the Southwestern peninsula (see Wagner, *Gender in English Pronouns* 19, “English Dialects” 157). Indeed, Ihalainen, along with Wagner (“English Dialects”), points at this feature as dialect defining. Although the instances of pronoun exchange are but scarce in this sample, examples such as *Her glinted acrass* “She glinted across” and *Her zed* “She said” show that this was taken by Giles as a characteristic feature of the dialect represented, as Hewett likewise reports that the nominative 3rd person singular is *Her*, whilst the nominative 1st person plural becomes *Us*.

Given the brevity of the letter, some of those characteristic features of the West Country are not attested, yet most of those that *are* present go some way to suggesting that they were indeed associated with Devonshire as well. In this regard, the treatment of strong verbs as weak is commented by Weymouth, whilst demonstrative pronouns such as *thicky* are accounted for by Wagner (“English Dialects”). Although the Southwest prioritises uses such as *-s* or *do* periphrasis as tense and aspect markers (as discussed by Elworthy), Chope affirms that “[Devonians] use the inflection *th* more than . . . [Somerset people] do” (3–4), which could still

point at a certain Devonshire distinctiveness within the West Country, even if the feature is shared by counties outside the Southwest.

As regards to lexis, this letter mixes regional words (e.g. *clibbed* ‘stuck,’ see Table 2) with standard lexis, in some cases slightly respelt (*parrish* ‘parish,’ *peese* ‘piece’) to create an illusory effect, or *eye dialect*, yet none of them could be certified as Devonian since their area of action is wider and could be come across in texts outside the West Country. For this reason, although a valuable item in literary composition to the effect of visual dialect colouring, we cannot consider it for analytical purposes.

All things considered, Giles’ second letter presents a fair number of phonological and morphological traits, which provides us with a picture of some of the Devonshire traits that may have been in use at the time Giles wrote this text, or at least those that readers of the *North Devon Journal* understood as characteristic of the dialect. The landscape he proposes is nurtured by a mixture of Devonian features that were well-known at the time, wisely whittled in the text with a native public in mind. Given the “localisedness” (Honeybone and Watson 311) of some variants, it would be imprudent to assume it was written for an out-group readership, yet the newspaper as broadcast medium facilitated its nationwide acquisition.

6. COINCIDENTAL FEATURES

To reach a conclusion regarding Giles’s employment of Devonshire dialect, it seems necessary to detail those items from both texts that, together, create a group of coincidental and salient elements. Such a group allows to ascertain which linguistic constituents could be considered “nuclear” in Giles’s writing. The evidence suggests that the dialect forms representative of the GOAT, FLEECE, NURSE, SQUARE, DRESS and TRAP sets were the most characteristic of the dialect in terms of phonology. Respellings of the GOAT diphthong (<au>, <oa>, <aw>, <oo> as in *auver* ‘over,’ *aloan* ‘alone,’ *blaweth* ‘blows,’ *foom* ‘foam’) are commented by Wright (*The English Dialect Grammar*), who concludes that Devonshire presents a development of “old long o . . . like the ö in German *schön*” (17), the close-mid back rounded vowel. The Devonshire realisation of the FLEECE monophthong appears to be regularly represented by <ay> (as in *rayd* ‘read,’ *rayson* ‘reason’), whilst NURSE and SQUARE seem to prefer an overall weakening of their vowel elements, as suggested by *zur* “sir” and *thare* “there.” The DRESS set is mainly defined by the close realisation of /e/ = [i] as all related examples

show <i> instead of <e> (e.g., *splindid* ‘splendid,’ *inny* ‘any’), which is likewise suggested in the case of TRAP words, where we can find *hingin* “hanging” and *thits* “that’s.” The voicing of initial fricatives proves to be a defining characteristic in the representation of the dialect given the overall frequencies of this feature in both texts, as we have seen, with 110 and 66 tokens, respectively. Grammatical features are comparatively less frequent, and possibly salient, than respellings evoking Devonshire sounds, except for pronoun exchange, reflexive pronouns (only documented in text 2) and the treatment of strong verbs as weak. Table 5 conclusively shows the most coincidental features for better visual apprehension:

Table 5. Repertoire of coincidental Devonshire features in text 1 and 2, with their normalised frequencies combined

Features and examples	Items	Tokens	NF/ 1000	
Voicing of initial fricatives	<i>zeed</i> ‘seen,’ <i>veet</i> ‘feet’	43	176	45
NURSE	<i>sarmins</i> ‘sermons,’ <i>larn</i>	12	92	23.5
ME /er, ε:+r, ir/	‘learn’			
GOAT	<i>auver</i> ‘over’	22	53	13.5
ME /ɔ:, ɔu/				
FLEECE	<i>bayches</i> ‘beaches’	30	53	13.5
ME /ε:, e:/	<i>betwayn</i> ‘between’			
DRESS	<i>inny</i> ‘any,’ <i>splindid</i>	23	50	12.8
ME /ε, ε:, a/	‘splendid’			
Weak verb treatment	<i>gived</i> ‘gave,’ <i>bilded</i>	7	18	4.6
	‘built’			

These coincidental traits in Devon indicate the existence of “a set of linguistic features” which “have come to be linked . . . to [a] place and ‘enregistered’ . . . as a dialect” (Johnstone et al. 78). This group of traits is “associated with a personal or social identity” (Johnstone, “Pittsburghese Shirts” 160), and thus represents indexical meanings working at the time of publication, recorded in monographies and falling within Sebba’s so-called *zone of social meaning*.⁷ Their employment in a written medium

⁷ Sebba explains that variation must “occur only within fairly tight parameters” (33), meaning that for R. Giles’s letters to “aim for a special effect” (Görlach, “Regional and

published with a restricted readership scope (that is, a regional newspaper) indicated a wish to celebrate sociolinguistic aspects particular to Devon, “recognizable sign-values” that are brought into circulation (Agha, *Language and Social Relations* 145) to raise awareness in the reader and disassociate them from the Standard. Whilst the *North Devon Journal* could have been enjoyed by outside readers, R. Giles’s choice to write dialect in a local journal, employing enregistered phonological traits marked by non-standard spellings (Jaffe 500) seems to support the idea that newspapers, especially regional ones, could be used to bring attention to the dialect, characterise its average speaker and eulogise the culture it indexes.

7. CONCLUDING REMARKS AND DEDUCTIONS

Nineteenth century periodicals played a fundamental role in the society of the period. They were a main form of entertainment, a lifeway of news broadcasting and an emblem of ideological alliance. In turn, provincial publications became the flagship of a county or parish, bearing news, traditions, festivities and relevant events such as marriages, births and deaths. Sometimes, they could also display a critical piece of literary contribution with outstanding value: dialect literature shaped as a form of original correspondence. Because dialect employment is a self-conscious practice within a media form, it could be considered that dialect literature in provincial newspapers deployed nonstandard language agentively to highlight its value and attachment to a given community. Taking R. Giles as a conscious contributor whose grasp of the local dialect had been honed by years of attentive listening, it can be assumed that he was already aware of the uniqueness of the dialect and decided to employ it as ideological material. Considering that the *North Devon Journal* lacked the spread and reach of bigger newspapers such as *The Times*, the idea that Giles only performs a celebration of Devon speech as a kind of homage gains more weight, but also tells how influential a newspaper could become to deliver an identity message. The letters contributed by Giles analysed in this paper provide insight into his dialectal patterns and redundancy on several lexical sets (e.g., GOAT, NURSE, FLEECE) as well other dialectal features supported by contemporary research. Taken in the company of the

Social Variation” 134), he must have adhered to recognisable patterns acknowledged by readers as Devon speech.

27 letters published in total, we could assume his contribution to recording the dialect of Devon and highlighting its importance was remarkable.

In sum, this paper has tried to present the reader with some evidence of the role that dialect had in local newspapers and how they acted as a conduit to spread ideas of localness and linguistic idiosyncrasy. Although the examples so far provided are not large enough for generalisation, they suggest that provincial periodicals were a singular device that, like other forms of printed literature, contributed to dialect enregisterment in the nineteenth century.

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A Psychoanalytic Approach to Louise Glück's Blended Receptions of the Myths of Narcissus and Persephone in *Averno*

Un enfoque psicoanalítico de las recepciones combinadas de Louise Glück de los mitos de Narciso y Perséfone en *Averno*

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Abstract: In recent years, mythological retellings have garnered increasing acclaim. One such example is Louise Glück's book of poetry *Averno* (2006), in which she blends the myths of Narcissus and Persephone. In the *Homeric Hymn to Demeter*, a narcissus serves as bait when Hades abducts Persephone. However, in Glück's contemporary rewriting, Persephone seeks to escape her authoritarian mother by embracing Hades, whose perspective is given in "A Myth of Devotion," but the ultimate outcome is that Persephone is controlled by both her mother and her husband. In the present paper, I shall first address the reception of the myths of Persephone and Narcissus in Glück's "A Myth of Innocence." Then, I shall analyse sexuality, trauma and marriage in "A Myth of Innocence" and "A Myth of Devotion" from a psychoanalytic perspective, while also exploring the motifs that occur in Glück's appropriation of the two myths in question.

Keywords: Louise Glück; *Averno*; Persephone; Narcissus; psychoanalysis.

Summary: Introduction. Classical Receptions. Psychoanalysis: Sexuality, Incest and Trauma. "A Myth of Innocence" and the Myths of Persephone and Narcissus. Incest and Trauma. Marriage as Metaphorical Death. Conclusions.

Resumen: En los últimos años, los relatos mitológicos han obtenido una aclamación cada vez mayor. Un ejemplo de ello es el poemario *Averno* (2006) de Louise Glück, en el que combina los mitos de Narciso y Perséfone. En el *Himno Homérico a Deméter*, un narciso sirve de cebo cuando Hades secuestra a Perséfone. Sin embargo, en la reescritura contemporánea de Glück, Perséfone busca escapar de su madre autoritaria abrazando a Hades, cuya perspectiva se da en “A Myth of Devotion,” pero el resultado final es que Perséfone está controlada tanto por su madre y como por su esposo. En el presente artículo, abordaré primero la recepción de los mitos de Perséfone y Narciso en “A Myth of Innocence” de Glück. Luego, analizaré la sexualidad, el trauma y el matrimonio en “A Myth of Innocence” y “A Myth of Devotion” desde una perspectiva psicoanalítica, explorando al mismo tiempo los temas en la apropiación de Glück de los dos mitos en cuestión.

Palabras clave: Louise Glück; *Averno*; Perséfone; Narciso; psicoanálisis.

Sumario: Introducción. Recepciones clásicas. Psicoanálisis: sexualidad, incesto y trauma. “A Myth of Innocence” y los mitos de Perséfone y Narciso. Incesto y trauma. El matrimonio como muerte metafórica. Conclusiones.

INTRODUCTION

Recent years have witnessed the rise of mythological retellings, with many authors addressing myths in their work. One such author is Louise Glück (1943–), an outstanding American poet who has written thirteen books of poetry, two of criticism, and one novel. This prominent author has received many awards, including the National Book Critics Circle Award in 1985, the Pulitzer Prize in 1993, the Bollingen Prize in 2001 and the National Book Award in 2014. She was Poet Laureate of the United States from 2003 to 2004 and received the 2020 Nobel Prize for poetry. In her work, she typically draws on several different literary traditions, such as theology (from the Hebrew Bible and the New Testament), Greek mythology and fairy tales. Among her books of poetry containing vivid retellings of mythology are *The Triumph of Achilles* (1985), focusing on Achilles; *Meadowlands* (1996), dealing with the *Odyssey*; and *Vita Nova* (1999), addressing Orpheus. In addition, Glück’s poetry book *Averno* (2006) considers the Demeter and Persephone myth. As Isobel Hurst has explained, the poems in *Averno* “evaluate and interrogate the significance of love and death with a decided inclination towards the peace of the afterlife” (75).

Regarding Glück’s writing, Tanzina Halim, Rizwana Wahid and Shanjida Halim have aptly remarked that “the end of human life is one of the central themes of Glück’s poetry” (436). Meanwhile, Henri Cole has highlighted the plainness of Glück’s poetry, observing that she “is not a poet of elliptical fragmentation—she goes deeper. With her simple

vocabulary, dramatic juxtapositions, and subtle pacing, the poems seem to be more in conversation with Blake, Yeats, and Eliot" (98). Similarly, Glück appears strongly influenced by Sylvia Plath and the confessional style (MacGowan 159). As Robert Baker has contended, "Louise Glück is surely a confessional poet in some basic sense. She returns time and again to a series of wounding predicaments in her intimate life" (131), combining this with psychology and metaphysics (Bartczak 74). Indeed, autobiographical experiences form a constant theme in Glück's writing. From an early age, she felt controlled by her mother and constantly longed for her approval (Glück, *Proofs* 6). As a way of breaking free from this, she stopped eating to gain control over her body, although she notes that this enterprise was ultimately unsuccessful:

what I had thought of as an act of will, an act I was perfectly capable of controlling, of terminating, was not that; I realized that I had no control over this behavior at all . . . I understood that at some point I was going to die . . . I didn't want to die. Even then, dying seemed a pathetic metaphor for establishing a separation between myself and my mother. (Glück, *Proofs* 11)

I consider this quote imperative for an understanding of Persephone in "A Myth of Innocence," which appears in *Averno*.¹ Contrary to Glück, Persephone's strategy to free herself of her mother's control is to embrace Hades, the god of the dead. Glück states that "poems are autobiography, but divested of the trappings of chronology and comment, the metronomic alternation of anecdote and response" (Glück, *Proofs* 92). There is no doubt that Glück reflects her personal experience in her poetry in general and in this poem in particular.²

Previous studies of Glück's work have examined the myth of Demeter and Persephone in *Averno* in isolation (Spann; Azcuy, "Louise Glück's Twenty-First Century," "Persona, Trauma and Survival," "Louise Glück's Irenic Poems"; Hurst, "Love and Blackmail," "An Autumnal Underworld"; Frankel; Zhou) and in combination with the book's autobiographical dimension (Keniston, "Balm after Violence"; Brown;

¹ Glück's poem "Pomegranate," included in *The House on Marshland* (1975), was her first rewriting of the myth of Demeter and Persephone, but she returned to the same theme later, in four separate poems in *Averno* (2006): "Persephone the Wanderer," "A Myth of Innocence," "A Myth of Devotion" and "Persephone the Wanderer."

² See Morris 29–30; and Pereira 142–59 for Glück's poetical motifs. For the sake of brevity, my analysis will focus on "A Myth of Innocence" and "A Myth of Devotion."

El Bakary), or have explored the reception of the myth of Demeter in combination with psychoanalytic themes (Wong; Gosmann; Yezzi; Cooke), inviting a consideration of narcissism and trauma in Glück's writing (Morris; Keniston, "Balm after Violence"; Sastri; Bartczak). Other studies have concentrated solely on autobiography without considering the myth of Demeter and Persephone (Chiasson), while still others have focused on a particular poem, namely "October," in reference to the 9/11 attacks (Keniston, "Balm after Violence," "Not Needed"; Kočan Šalomon). None, however, have analysed the myth of Narcissus in association with "A Myth of Innocence," encouraging me to fill this gap.

Unlike previous studies, my research suggests that the myths of Narcissus and Persephone are pivotal in Glück's rewriting. By depicting Demeter as an authoritarian mother and Persephone as wanting to escape from her control, Glück successfully blends the myths of Persephone and Narcissus.³ It is thanks to the *Homeric Hymn to Demeter* that these two myths dovetail so neatly because it is there that the tale first appears of the narcissus flower used as bait to lure Persephone to marry Hades,⁴ and now in Glück's appropriation of the myth the abduction is deployed as a metaphor for marriage. In this case, Narcissus' story is embedded in Glück's retelling of the myth of Persephone.⁵ Therefore, in this study, I shall explore how the myths of Persephone and Narcissus are blended in Glück's "A Myth of Innocence." In addition, I shall analyse sexuality, trauma and marriage from a psychoanalytic standpoint in both "A Myth of Innocence" and "A Myth of Devotion." Finally, I shall conclude by

³ On Narcissus, see Favre 1071–75; and Grafton et al. 620. On Persephone, see Doudoumis 1539–46; and Grafton et al. 254–55.

⁴ Glück's *The Wild Iris* (1992) lends a voice to various kinds of flowers, demonstrating her extensive knowledge of these. Glück constantly refers to the idea of a doppelgänger, e.g., Narcissus and his reflection in the pool, or the Demeter-Persephone duality (see Powel 253). The myths of Narcissus and Persephone are two independent stories, but Glück justifies this connection through Narcissus, who metamorphoses into the narcissus flower.

⁵ Glück has not written about the myth of Narcissus in her poetry, but in *American Originality* (2017) she addressed the mythical story and correlated it to psychoanalysis and literature; see Glück, *American* 8–22. Moreover, the contemporary psychoanalytic concept of narcissism is present throughout Glück's poetry. This interest in psychoanalysis started with her anorexia nervosa (Glück, *Proofs* 10–12). On the anorexic experience in Glück's poetry, see Vembar.

discussing how Glück revisits the classical tradition in her portrayal of these mythological characters in both poems.

1. CLASSICAL RECEPTIONS

Reception studies explore “on the two-way relationship between the source text or culture and the new work and receiving culture” (Hardwick 4). Anastasia Bakogianni has observed that “Classical reception focuses on the way in which the classical world is received in subsequent centuries and in particular on those aspects of the classical sources that are altered, marginalized, or neglected” (97). Recently, reception studies related to Greek and Roman texts have aroused increasing research interest, raising the profile of classical receptions (Hardwick and Stray 33–34).

Reception studies encompass a variety of disciplines (Brockliss 11) and form part of the classical tradition which has “studied the transmission and dissemination of classical culture through the ages, usually with the emphasis on the influence of classical writers, artists and thinkers on subsequent intellectual movements and individual works” (Hardwick 2). In fact, according to Maarten De Pourcq, classicists use the classical tradition as a shield to protect their study of the ancient sources (222).

As for the reception of the myth of Demeter and Persephone, Glück seems to draw on various sources. The first is the *Homeric Hymn to Demeter*, which tells the story of Persephone (Foley 28–64), who was abducted by Hades while gathering flowers in a meadow (*HDem.* 1–21). Demeter, the goddess of the harvest, cannot find her daughter and in despair, stops plants from growing.⁶ Zeus then sends Hermes to the underworld to bring Persephone back (*HDem.* 30–341). Once in the world of the dead, Hermes explains the situation to Hades, who agrees to let Persephone go, but before she leaves, he informs her of the honours she will acquire as his wife and puts a pomegranate seed into her mouth (*HDem.* 342–74). Persephone and Demeter are reunited, and the goddess of the harvest restores the vegetation. However, because of the pomegranate seed, Zeus decides Persephone will spend one-third of the year with Hades and two-thirds with her mother and the other Olympian gods and goddesses (*HDem.* 384–452). In the two Ovidian versions⁷ and

⁶ See Brunel and Karakostas 515–20.

⁷ Ovid's *Metamorphoses* (5.341–641) and Ovid's *Fasti* (4.393–614).

D'Aulaires' *Book of Greek Myths* (1962),⁸ Persephone reaches for the pomegranate, from which she eats a few seeds and thus dooms herself to spend part of the year in the underworld and the other part with her mother.

In Glück's *Averno*, "Persephone the Wanderer" (I) follows the ancient sources, encapsulating Demeter's reaction to the loss of her daughter—stopping all vegetation from growing—as "the goddess of the earth / punishes the earth" (2–4) and "It is snowing on earth" (46), where winter echoes Demeter's coldness and pain while Persephone "is lying in the bed of Hades" (51). Persephone's marriage to Hades transforms her from a maiden—Koré—to the goddess of the underworld—Persephone. Thus, in "A Myth of Innocence," "The girl who disappears from the pool / will never return. A woman will return, / looking for the girl she was." (23–25), while in "A Myth of Devotion," Hades tells Persephone, "*you're dead, nothing can hurt you*" (46), summarising Persephone's situation as goddess of the underworld. This is further explained in "Persephone the Wanderer" (II), where "Persephone / is dead. She dies, her mother grieves—" (1–2), but "if Zeus will get her back, / winter will end" (73–74). However, Zeus commands Persephone to spend one-third of the year with Hades and two-thirds with her mother.

2. PSYCHOANALYSIS: SEXUALITY, INCEST AND TRAUMA

The discipline of psychoanalytic studies emerged in the nineteenth century. Among the central concepts in psychoanalysis are sexuality, incest and trauma. Sexuality is indeed very present not only in our everyday life but also in literature; as Jeffrey Weeks has soberly remarked, "sexuality is not a given, it is a product of negotiation, struggle and human agency" (19). In this paper, sexuality will be regarded as a natural impulse regulated by social convention when exploring "concepts such as repression, sexual drives and the libido" (Jackson and Scott 5). However, certain sexual practices encourage trauma, which as Caroline Garland has explained:

is a kind of wound. When we call an event traumatic, we are borrowing the word from the Greek where it refers to a piercing of the skin, a breaking of the bodily envelope. In physical medicine it denotes damage to tissue. Freud

⁸ In an interview, Glück explicitly cites D'Aulaires' *Book of Greek Myths* (1967) as her source of information about the Demeter and Persephone myth (Gosmann 220).

(*A General Introduction*) used the word metaphorically to emphasise how the mind too can be pierced and wounded by events . . . (25)

Although there are many possible traumatic events, not all traumas are the same: some are more devastating than others (Garland 26). Such is the case of incest, which entails major trauma (Jacobs 104). Incest, therefore, is one of the most traumatic sexual practices, and it generates what is known as incest trauma. This conceptualisation resonates with Freud's understanding of primary narcissism. As Freud explained, "a human being has originally two sexual objects—himself and the woman who nurses him—and in doing so we are postulating a primary narcissism in everyone, which may in some cases manifest itself [*sic*] in a dominating fashion in his object-choice" ("On Narcissism" 88). Primary narcissism seems to be the starting point of sexual attraction, leading to Freud's understanding of the Oedipal complex, which is also related to trauma and may lead to incest (Jung et al. 73). Moreover, Freud developed the Oedipal trauma theory, opening "the door to serious consideration of incest as a problem for psychoanalytic investigation and treatment" (Klett and Rachman 46).

Furthermore, by uniting mythology and psychoanalysis, this theory endowed Oedipus with a new psychoanalytic association (Bowlby 806). However, it also generated the dilemma of whether the child is to blame for the incestuous sexual act. As Susan Klett and Arnold William Rachman have noted:

Influenced by the Oedipal complex, analysts, parents, authorities, and social institutions suggested that *the child's sexuality seduced the adult. In actuality, it is the adult's sexuality that is at issue . . .* the child partner is extremely vulnerable, in a position of unequal power, status, and control, the adult seducer does not have to cope with the difficulties of an adult relationship. He/she literally seduces an innocent. (129)

Thus, sexuality, primary narcissism, incest and trauma are interrelated. All of them can be applied to Persephone because she encounters them all simultaneously when gazing at herself in Glück's pool, where Hades seizes her.

3. “A MYTH OF INNOCENCE” AND THE MYTHS OF PERSEPHONE AND NARCISSUS

Persephone “was the daughter of Demeter, goddess of the harvest, and her mother loved her so dearly she could not bear to have her out of her sight. When Demeter sat on her golden throne, her daughter was always on her lap; when she went down to earth to look after her trees and fields, she took Persephone” (D’Aulaire and D’Aulaire 58). When Persephone was first abducted in the *Homeric Hymn to Demeter*, “she still hoped / to see her dear mother” (*HDem.* 35–36, Foley 4). Yet, as Valerie Estelle Frankel has remarked, in contrast to the original myth, “A Myth of Innocence,” “sees Persephone seeking an escape from life so close to her mother that she has no identity of her own” (43). Hence, Persephone is no longer presented as someone emotionally attached to her mother, but rather as a child suffocated by her mother’s control:

One summer she goes into the field as usual
stopping for a bit at the pool where she often
looks at herself, to see
if she detects any changes. She sees
the same person, the horrible mantle
of daughterliness still clinging to her. (1–6)

Glück is playing here with different allusions. Firstly, it is summer, which indicates that Persephone is under her mother’s care because summer falls within the part of the year when Persephone is on earth. This allusion may have been taken from D’Aulaires’ *Book of Greek Myths*, where only winter represents the time she is away from her mother (D’Aulaire & D’Aulaire 62). Secondly, the pool where Persephone is gazing at herself represents the first allusion to Narcissus.

Much more implicitly, “A Myth of Innocence” depicts the moment in the myth of Narcissus when Echo falls in love with him, but he rejects her love as he had done before with the many others that had become enamoured of him. Therefore, condemned to love his own image, Narcissus dies after falling in the pool when trying to reach his reflection (*Met.* 3.339–510). Nevertheless, in D’Aulaires’ *Book of Greek Myths*,

unaware that he had fallen in love with his own reflection,⁹ Narcissus “sat smiling at himself, forgetting to eat, forgetting to drink, until he wasted away and died” (D’Aulaire and D’Aulaire 92). Narcissus gazes at his reflection in the pool¹⁰ in the same way that Persephone does in “A Myth of Innocence” when she stops “for a bit at the pool where she often / looks at herself” (2–3). However, Persephone sees “the horrible mantle / of daughterliness still clinging to her” (5–6), whereas Narcissus becomes besotted with his mesmerising reflection. Meanwhile, in the *Metamorphoses*, once Narcissus realises that the image he has fallen in love with is his own, he understands the enormity of his curse and prays to escape from his body (*Met.* 3.437–473), as Persephone does in “A Myth of Innocence” (30–31), both thus longing for death. Another aspect that unites Persephone and Narcissus is the fact that both undergo change. The former becomes the goddess of the underworld and the latter a narcissus flower.

Glück’s allusion to Narcissus is more than justified as “Ovid’s Narcissus appears to be the psychoanalytical subject par excellence—split into two, desiring in vain, impelled by a desire born of lack, captivated by an image he can never possess. What is more, he knows how it works. He has been demystified” (Vallury 82). The moment Narcissus becomes besotted with his own image, he is doomed to failure as he will never attain his love object. However, as Victoria Graham-Fuller and Robinson Hazel have observed, the myth of Narcissus represents much more than that because the “interaction of Narcissus and Echo is set during adolescence, during which a young person begins to emerge from childhood dependence, through defiance, curiosity and experimentation, towards a relatively established adult identity” (10).

I suggest that to leave childhood behind is exactly what Persephone seeks. Moreover, the fact that Persephone wants to see “if she detects any changes” (4) indicates that she is impatient for change, longing to leave her body and become a woman who is no longer attached to her mother; however, she only sees “the same person” (5), a child who is still under her mother’s care. The mantle that clings to her is a reminder of Demeter, who tears her veil in grief at her daughter’s loss (*HDem.* 40, Foley 4). Nonetheless, in Glück’s rewriting of the myth, rather than being proof of

⁹ See also Ovid, *Metamorphoses* 421, on how Narcissus falls in love with his reflection which for him is the “other.”

¹⁰ See Ballesteros González 50.

healthy mother love, the mantle is suffocating because it recalls Demeter's control over Persephone, as demonstrated by the use of the adjective "horrible" to define "mantle" (5). Persephone finds her condition as a daughter dreadful, and at this point, everything surrounding Persephone is an expression of Demeter's authority:

The sun seems, in the water, very close.
That's my uncle spying again, she thinks—
everything in nature is in some way her relative.
I am never alone, she thinks,
turning the thought into a prayer.
Then death appears, like the answer to a prayer. (7–12)

First, Persephone feels constantly watched by everything in nature: even the sun, Helios, is spying on her. This is consistent with the Homeric version, as Helios was the only eyewitness to Persephone's abduction. Thus, the narrator focuses our attention on Persephone's desire to escape her mother's control. She feels suffocated by her mother's authority and everything around her reminds her of her mother—the mother goddess and the goddess of the harvest and vegetation. There is nowhere she can go without feeling observed. The emphasis on the way Persephone feels is seen in her address to the reader, which is in italics. Willing to try anything to escape her current life, she places all her hopes in a prayer.

Persephone experiences the total opposite of what Freud calls "primary narcissism."¹¹ She despises her reflection in the pool, whereas Narcissus directs the libido towards his own body. Narcissus attains death because he is blinded by his own beauty, but Persephone seeks a transformation that will allow her to escape her condition as a daughter. Whether as a trap, as in the *Homeric Hymn to Demeter* (Katz 223 in Foley), or as a representation of untimely death, the narcissus flower is repeatedly associated with Persephone and her abduction. Persephone's prayer at the pool implies death, albeit not a physical one but rather marriage with the god of the dead:

No one understands anymore
how beautiful he was. But Persephone remembers.
Also that he embraced her, right there,

¹¹ See Fonagy et al. 20; Solan 8.

with her uncle watching. She remembers
sunlight flashing on his bare arms.

This is the last moment she remembers clearly.
Then the dark god bore her away.

She also remembers, less clearly,
the chilling insight that from this moment
she couldn't live without him again. (13–22)

On seeing the result of her prayer, Persephone is struck by the beauty of the god of the dead, and while Helios continues to watch, Hades embraces her before carrying her away. The fact that she remembers these events indicates that she was initially satisfied with the outcome of her prayer. However, from this point on, her memory of the events is less clear. Dependency has been newly established, and Persephone can no longer live without Hades. Here, she is taken by the god of the dead because of the hate she feels towards her reflection in the pool.

In the *Homeric Hymn to Demeter*, Persephone was trapped by a narcissus, a beautiful flower which the Earth had grown as a bait on Zeus' command (*HDem.* 8–9, Foley 2) and her action in bending to pluck the narcissus hints at her readiness to mature (Suter 22), as she “reaches to pick it on an impulse of her own nature” (Suter 11). In the ancient sources, Persephone displays many characteristics, as Holly Virginia Blackford has noted:

She is of ambiguous age but young and human enough to cry as much over her spilt flowers as over her abduction (in Ovid's re-working of the *Hymn*); innocent and curious enough to reach for a lovely narcissus without realizing the consequences of that action; vulnerable and scared enough to cry out for her mother as she exchanges her life as a maiden for the awesome powers of underworld queen. (21)

Blackford adds that Persephone “is a powerful evocation of child development, which makes her a crucial figure for the scholar of girls' literature to pursue” (21). Moreover, “the myth specifies that the perpetuation of natural and cultural orders depends upon this girl's development from the world of mother to a world beyond maternal authority” (Blackford 21), which implies a transition from childhood to

adulthood, as “the girl who disappears from the pool / will never return. A woman will return, / looking for the girl she was” (23–25). Her search for the girl she once was demonstrates her regret. As Iman El Bakary has observed, the speaker is lamenting the loss of innocence (131), and according to Cyril Wong Yit Mun, “Persephone has discovered her own loss of innocence” (83). Once she has become goddess of the underworld, she begins to question herself and wonders if this was what she really wanted. Demeter’s emotional neediness impels her to encroach on her daughter’s freedom. As a result, Persephone wants to die because she feels drained by the impossibility of feeling whole, and the emptiness that she carries with her initially makes her see death as a relief. Thus, unable to make a sound judgement, Persephone reaches for the god of the dead, but following her disappointment on finding the same lack of freedom with Hades as she had experienced with her mother, she questions her choice and wonders whether she was abducted or not. At this point, Persephone feels a void because of her mother and her husband’s control.

4. INCEST AND TRAUMA

Regarding Glück’s appropriation of the myth of Demeter and Persephone from a contemporary point of view, Persephone’s implicit sexual¹² encounter with Hades is something that Freud would categorise as a traumatic event. Persephone realises that she wishes to escape her mother but is unaware of what this implies. It was when Persephone desired a change that Hades appeared, reflecting a dynamic that Giovanna Ambrosio has described as follows:

from the psychoanalytic standpoint it is sometimes difficult to establish the limits between active and passive, abuser and victim, seducer and seduced, since the bond that ties them together is an entangled web of projective and introjective identifications, in which an infinite series of mirror reflections is far too complex to be differentiated. (56)

Moreover, “we need to emphasize that it is precisely this entangled web that the incestuous genitor weaves, using a kind of hypnotic power to immobilize the child in the snares of the abuse” (Ambrosio 56). On the one hand, Persephone is presented as active in that she attempts to escape her

¹² See Person et al. 136–37 on the association of incest and narcissism.

body in order to break free of her mother's authority, and on the other, as passive, because she is oblivious to her abduction. Notwithstanding, there is a fine line between wanting to die and being seized by the god of the dead. In Persephone's case, sexual contact with her uncle transforms her from maiden to goddess of the underworld. In Glück's rewriting of the myth, by spiriting Persephone away, Hades not only prevents her from dying but also from sharing Narcissus' fate by forcing her to live on earth and in the underworld, unable to die. The fact that Persephone is presented as unaware of what has happened to her and blind to the truth indicates that Hades has manipulated her so successfully that she is unable to determine if this was truly what she really wanted:

She stands by the pool saying, from time to time,
I was abducted, but it sounds
 wrong to her, nothing like what she felt.
 Then she says, *I was not abducted*.
 Then she says, *I offered myself, I wanted
 to escape my body*. Even, sometimes,
I willed this. (26–32)

Persephone initially states that she was abducted, indicating that she did not want to go with Hades, but she subsequently corrects herself and asserts that she was not abducted, implying that she had acted of her own volition, in order to escape her mother. Deeply baffled, she cannot discern reality from fantasy. In this context, Hades could be associated with a perverse seducer.

In ancient mythologies—Greek, Egyptian and Sumerian—all relations are incestuous since all beings proceed from one and the same god. It is thus a mistake to interpret myths naturalistically. However, Glück's appropriation of the myth of Demeter and Persephone is a contemporary book of poetry. Hence, viewing *Averno* through a contemporary lens, Hades' incestuous relationship with his niece can be explained by the Electra complex,¹³ where the daughter is in love with her father and rejects her mother; in fact, "when the girl turns away from her mother, she also makes over to her father her introduction into sexual life"

¹³ See Jung et al. 72–73 on the Electra complex.

(Freud, “Female Sexuality” 238).¹⁴ Another indication of Persephone’s trauma is her confusion over whether or not she has been abducted, which echoes Klett’s and Rachman’s view that emotional and intellectual confusion is one of the mechanisms which enable a child to cope with incest trauma (89–90). Moreover, in “the obnoxious type of incest, the more vulnerable participant, whose consent has at most been minimal, experiences the pleasant effects of seduction together with subsequent confusion” (Ambrosio 107). This explains Persephone’s bewilderment.

All the different nouns—
 she says them in rotation.
Death, husband, god, stranger.
 Everything sounds so simple, so conventional.
 I must have been, she thinks, a simple girl.

She can’t remember herself as that person
 but she keeps thinking the pool will remember
 and explain to her the meaning of her prayer
 so she can understand
 whether it was answered or not. (35–44)

The nouns Persephone utters in rotation summarise all that has happened to her: the “death” she desired, the “husband” she obtained instead when Hades carried her away, and the “god” of the underworld who, although related, was a “stranger” to her. According to Reena Sastri, these nouns represent all Persephone’s traumas (553). When Hades abducts Persephone in “A Myth of Devotion,” he appears to distance himself from his abusive act by justifying his actions and assuming that everyone desires love:

Gradually, he thought, he’d introduce the night,
 first as the shadows of fluttering leaves.
 Then moon, then stars. Then no moon, no stars.
 Let Persephone get used to it slowly.
 In the end, he thought, she’d find it comforting.

¹⁴ See Jacobs 51 on the image of the father as a sexual seducer, although I consider that Hades is here the one taking Zeus’ place.

A replica of earth
 except there was love here.
 Doesn't everyone want love? (8–15)

By introducing change gradually, Hades manipulates Persephone to prevent her from immediately perceiving the truth, fooling her with his acts of gaslighting. Furthermore, as Klett and Rachman have observed, perpetrators also feel confusion as they use “denial and dissociation to distance themselves from the abusive act” (89–90). Thus, in justifying his actions, Hades only considers his own desires, rendering him incapable of empathy. Persephone, meanwhile, is trapped in a vicious circle, as explained by Klett and Rachman:

An individual will have internal objects and split-off parts of the self that exist as pathologically motivational systems in which the original trauma is repeatedly re-enacted and replayed . . . Freud's ego psychology did emphasize the attempt to achieve mastery over the earlier trauma by repeating it, but missed the need to remain attached to earlier abusive objects, despite conscious aversion to those objects. (94)

In parallel, Zeus decrees that she must spend part of the year with Demeter and the remaining part with Hades, with the result that Persephone is forced to return each year to the original abusive object.

5. MARRIAGE AND METAPHORIC DEATH

The title of the poem “A Myth of Devotion” suggests that devotion is a myth, and indeed its opening lines portray a calculating Hades who “decided” to love Persephone:

When Hades decided he loved this girl
 he built for her a duplicate of earth,
 everything the same, down to the meadow,
 but with a bed added. (1–4)

His addition of a bed to this “duplicate of earth” reveals not only the true purpose of the abduction, but also Louise Glück's distinctive perception of marriage. Each of her books of poetry depicts marriage as a death of the self, as is further demonstrated in “A Myth of Innocence,” where Persephone cedes part of herself to Hades. Persephone sees death as an

escape and wants to share the same fate as Narcissus, but Hades reminds her of her immortality. In my opinion, she is doomed to relinquish part of who she is—the earlier version of herself—for the sake of who is now her husband. The girl must become a woman. In the *Homeric Hymn to Demeter*, the narcissus is described as a “lovely toy” (Foley 2), which Ann Suter has contended is a reminder “of the toys that brides dedicate to Artemis on the eve of their weddings. Here, Persephone is giving up her childhood, her narcissus, her toy. Athurma is a rare word, occurring only six times in archaic epic” (56).

In “A Myth of Devotion,” Hades selfishly makes Persephone his wife, but he fails to consider all that becoming his wife entails:

That’s what he felt, the lord of darkness,
 looking at the world he had
 constructed for Persephone. It never crossed his mind
 that there’d be no more smelling here,
 certainly no more eating.

Guilt? Terror? The fear of love?
 These things he couldn’t imagine;
 no lover ever imagines them. (29–36)

Hades neither cares about Persephone nor considers her feelings because she is only the desired object, nothing more. He refuses to contemplate either his own guilt or the guilt that Persephone will feel because she believes herself to be responsible for her abduction. Similarly, he ignores both the terror that she will feel at being with the lord of darkness and her fear of love, since her route to marriage was abduction, which will always render “love” terrifying to her. Stalking, abducting and manipulating Persephone is how Hades makes her his wife. Love, here, seems to be a lie:

A soft light rising above the level meadow,
 behind the bed. He takes her in his arms.
 He wants to say *I love you, nothing can hurt you*

but he thinks
 this is a lie, so he says in the end
you're dead, nothing can hurt you
 which seems to him
 a more promising beginning, more true. (41–48)

Hades almost comes close to feeling guilty about lying to Persephone, which is ironic as his abduction of her had been carefully calculated from the moment he carried her away. Therefore, pretending to care about Persephone is only further proof of Hades' self-exonerating discourse, and is the reason why Persephone subsequently questions her perception of events. However, Hades forces Persephone to rely on him to determine what happened and what did not, and his manipulation works, as is best illustrated when Persephone returns to the pool where she was abducted in an attempt to find answers. There, after a moment of confusion, she realises that she was the one responsible for what had happened to her.¹⁵ Here, marriage seems to represent the death of the self and Persephone's path towards resignation and trauma (Morris 102), trauma she will never be able to overcome, as she is doomed to repeat the same cycle.

It seems to me that this poem could be a metaphorical representation of marriage. First, Persephone wants to escape her home and her mother's authority. Then, just as in the original myth, she is lured by Hades, and as soon as she is distracted, he carries her away, making her his wife. Persephone desired a change, but her new circumstances are nothing like what she had expected. She is trapped and has no way of escaping her new situation. As Freud remarks, "Marriage brings fresh sexual traumas. It is surprising that the wedding night does not have pathogenic effects more frequently, since unfortunately what it involves is so often not an erotic seduction but a violation" (*Studies on Hysteria* 141). Freud's understanding sheds light on the traumatic side of Persephone's marriage. Manipulating someone into intimacy encourages the awakening of new traumas, confusing the victims and leading them to wonder if this was truly

¹⁵ See Jordan 62 for further understanding of self-attributed blame.

what they wanted. This alludes strongly to sexual assault, which furthers Persephone's trauma.

CONCLUSIONS

Louise Glück finds a way to merge the myths of Narcissus and Persephone by establishing a correlation between both tales. The first hint of this association is the new locus Glück gives to the story of Persephone. Unlike the ancient myth, she has Persephone observing herself in a pool as Narcissus did. Both maiden and adolescent see an image in the pool that draws their attention. The former is horrified by her condition as a daughter because it reminds her of Demeter's authoritarian approach to motherhood, while the latter is spellbound by what he sees. As a result, Persephone feels compelled to escape her body in order to throw off the shackles of her mother's control, and Narcissus wishes for the same thing, to free himself from the curse of having fallen in love with his own image.

In Glück's contemporary appropriation, Hades is portrayed as a stalker who spies on Persephone, waiting for the right moment to carry her off. Taking advantage of Persephone's prayer, Hades appears and takes her away, leaving her confused and making her wonder whether death was what she really wanted. I contend that the confusion she experiences indicates the degree of trauma she undergoes. She is traumatised both by her mother's control and by her marriage to Hades. Ultimately, she is possessed for part of the year by Demeter and for the remaining part by Hades, which results in her emotional devastation. When Persephone wonders whether or not her prayer was answered, we perceive her sense of deception as she discovers that marriage is nothing but a trap. Persephone is stuck in a state somewhere between physical life and mental death, unable to overcome her limitations as she will never be able to develop a strong sense of self because of the power Demeter and Hades hold over her.

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“I Was in No Mood for People Who Tried to Lay Claims on Me”: Community, Hospitality, and Friendship in Teju Cole’s *Open City*

“No estaba de humor para las personas que trataban de interpelarme”: Comunidad, hospitalidad y amistad en *Ciudad abierta* de Teju Cole

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Abstract: This article examines community, friendship, and hospitality in Teju Cole’s novel *Open City*, drawing on Nancy’s *The Inoperative Community*, Blanchot’s *The Unavowable Community*, and Derrida’s *The Politics of Friendship* and *Of Hospitality*. I aim to show how the representation of migratory experiences in this novel revolves around the contrast between operative communities based on immanence, fusion, and essentialist concepts such as race and ethnicity, and inoperative and elective communities characterized by openness and exposure to alterity. I examine how friendship and hospitality prove to be the necessary force in the novel to transform New York and Brussels into truly “open cities” hospitable to people of different races.

Keywords: Community; friendship; hospitality; openness; alterity.

Summary: Introduction. Operative and Essentialist Communities. The Elective Community: Friendship and Hospitality. Conclusions.

Resumen: Este artículo examina la comunidad, la amistad y la hospitalidad en la novela *Open City* de Teju Cole, basándose en *The Inoperative Community* de Nancy, *The Unvowable Community* de Blanchot, y *The Politics of Friendship* y *Of Hospitality* de Derrida. Pretendo mostrar cómo la representación de las experiencias migratorias en esta novela gira en torno al contraste entre comunidades operativas basadas en la inmanencia, la fusión y conceptos esencialistas como raza

y etnia, y comunidades inoperativas y electivas caracterizadas por la apertura y exposición a la alteridad. Examino cómo la amistad y la hospitalidad demuestran ser la fuerza necesaria en la novela para transformar Nueva York y Bruselas en verdaderas “ciudades abiertas” que son hospitalarias para personas racialmente diversas.

Palabras clave: Comunidad; amistad; hospitalidad; apertura; alteridad.

Sumario: Introducción. Comunidades operativas y esencialistas. Comunidad electiva: Amistad y hospitalidad. Conclusiones.

INTRODUCTION

Teju Cole belongs to the third generation of Nigerian writers whose works address issues of migration, dislocation, and cross-border movements. In his introduction to *The Granta Book of the African Short Story*, Helon Habila refers to these writers as “post-nationalist” (viii), as they have freed themselves from the “almost obligatory obsession of the African writer with the nation and with national politics” (viii). Cole’s novel *Open City* has such a post-national and transnational dimension, as it depicts the life of a character of Nigerian origin, Julius, in New York. The novel has been critically examined from the perspective of cosmopolitan identity and community.¹ In her article “History in Place: Territorialized Cosmopolitanism in Teju Cole’s *Open City*,” Emily Johansen discusses how the novel suggests the possibility of creating cosmopolitan communities in the form of inoperative communities that reject any form of hierarchical structure and categorisation.

In this article, I contribute to this discussion of community in Cole’s novel by arguing that the communitarian theories of Jean-Luc Nancy and Maurice Blanchot can be drawn upon to examine the protagonist’s portrayal of the coexistence of diverse people and communities in contemporary New York and Brussels, and his relationship to these social groups and collectives. My focus, however, is not on the concept of cosmopolitanism, but on the concepts of friendship and hospitality—as theorised by Jacques Derrida in *The Politics of Friendship* (1997) and by Derrida and Anne Dufourmantelle in *Of Hospitality* (2000)—in order to argue that they are central to the protagonist’s experience of community.

In *Open City*, characters of African descent ask for recognition to connect with Julius based on the injustices and inequalities they have experienced in history. Therefore, they expect to create a sense of

¹ See Hallemeier and Oniwe.

community based primarily on their place of origin, skin color, and discourses of victimhood. This is the type of community that Nancy identifies as operative in *The Inoperative Community* (1991), characterised by “immanent unity, intimacy, and autonomy” (9). Julius, however, ceaselessly refuses to become part of an organic community based on race, place of origin, or shared vulnerability. I argue, therefore, that he prefers instead inoperative communities and elective communities, that is, communities of choice based, in his case, primarily on intellectual affinities. In his experience of community, friendship as discussed by Blanchot in *The Unavowable Community* (1988) and Derrida, along with Derrida’s notions of hospitality, plays a key role. Hospitality, understood as openness to the racial and migrant other, is a common thread throughout the novel, in which New York and Brussels are portrayed as only partially ‘open cities’ because of the racist ideologies and practices still prevalent towards African and black people.

1. OPERATIVE AND ESSENTIALIST COMMUNITIES

Julius, who has a German mother and a Nigerian father, and is originally from Nigeria, is an intellectual with a cosmopolitan spirit living in New York. He is completing a fellowship at Columbia Presbyterian Hospital and has a deep knowledge of humanistic heritage, ranging from art, music, history to politics. From the beginning, the novel draws our attention to Julius’s constant activity of walking, an individual act linked to his sense of isolation and marginalized position in New York. Andrew P. Roger refers to Michel de Certeau’s *The Practice of Everyday Life* (1984) to describe walking as a tactic used by “those without a place” in order “to create space for themselves in environments defined by other people’s strategies” (128). It may be argued, then, that Julius uses walking as a tactic to resist the exclusionary aspect of space as defined by the strategies of hegemonic power in New York. Unlike the figure of the *flâneur*, much revered by twentieth-century modernist writers, Julius, however, can be more readily associated with, as Pieter Vermeulen argues, “the nineteenth-century figure of restless mobility: the *fugueur*” (42). Vermeulen describes the *fugueur* as “‘mad travelers’ who unaccountably walked away from their lives” (42), which fits Cole’s description of Julius travelling to New York to break away from his national and ethnic community in Nigeria and walking around the city to overcome his sense of loneliness.

The novel begins with Julius introducing his routine of evening walking, which is modelled on the way he observes the migration of birds from one place to another from the window of his apartment: "Not long before this aimless wandering began, I had fallen into the habit of watching bird migrations from my apartment, and I wonder now if the two are connected" (Cole 3). Birds, especially migratory birds, are an important motif, described at one point in the novel as "homeless travelers" (Cole 181). The metaphor constructed between migratory birds and migrants like Julius is clear, for both are in a state of mobility and dislocation. Migratory birds seek to transform their new environment into a place of belonging; they seek to make it their "home." Similarly, as Julius wanders aimlessly, he negotiates and reflects on his place in New York, along with that of collectives that have traditionally occupied and continue to occupy a marginalized position, such as African Americans and "recent immigrants: Africans, Latinos, Eastern Europeans, Asians" (Cole 63). My particular focus, therefore, is on the relationship between his walks and his experience of community.

I will first show how Julius refuses to make connections with people who claim to be related to him because of their shared racial identity or African heritage, which implies a rejection of an operative community, as defined by Nancy. The operative community, according to Nancy, is built upon a common "substance or subject—be these homeland, native soil or blood, nation" (15). These moments could also be read in the light of Blanchot's conception of "traditional community," the community "imposed on us without our having the liberty of choice in the matter: it is *de facto* sociality, or the glorification of the earth, of blood, or even of race" (46). The rejection of such a communal affiliation is seen in the passage in which after leaving the American Folk Art Museum in New York, Julius gets into a cab. As he is still thinking about a portrait by John Brewster of a deaf young girl, Sarah Prince, he does not immediately realize that the cab driver is an African, like him. Julius, then, addresses the cab driver to give him his address:

So, how are you doing, my brother? The driver stiffened and looked at me in the mirror. Not good, not good at all, you know, the way you came into my car without saying hello, that was bad. Hey, I'm African just like you, why you do this? He kept me in his sights in the mirror. I was confused. I said, I'm sorry about it, my mind was where, don't be offended, eh, my brother, how are you doing? He said nothing and faced the road. I wasn't

sorry at all. I was in no mood for *people who tried to lay claims on me*. (Cole 40, my emphasis)

This passage is particularly revealing because it shows how people may demand recognition and brotherhood from people who are related to them by their common race, national origin, or ethnicity. Yet Julius rejects this kind of connection based on similarity. The commonalities and the recognition of them are precisely what Nancy questions in his understanding of community: “he or she does not resemble me as a portrait resembles an original. It was this type of resemblance that constituted the initial given of the classic and tortuous problematic (or impasse) of the ‘recognition of the other’” (33). As opposed to a recognition of the self in the other—just “as a portrait resembles an original” (33)—that we find in operative and traditional understandings of community—represented in this passage by the cab driver—Nancy suggests a kind of community which “does not occur through the mediation of specular recognition” (33). Therefore, it is a community in which the other is characterized by an excess that cannot be recognized or appropriated: “the sovereign exposure to an excess (to a transcendence) that does not present itself and does not let itself be appropriated (or simulated) that does not even *give itself*” (18, emphasis in the original).

In the passage from *Open City* quoted above, the driver approaches Julius through a logic of “specular recognition” (33), which Julius rejects. The passage’s focus on the concept of community is also evident in its use of the term “brother,” which leads us to Derrida’s argument in *The Politics of Friendship*, where the French thinker undertakes a revision of the concept of friendship in the Western philosophical tradition. Derrida goes back to Cicero, whose conception of friendship exemplifies the idea of the friend as one of the same kind. According to this conception, the friend is not “the other,” but “the same”: the “ideal double, [the] other self, the same as self but improved” (4). Derrida, however, wonders: “why would the friend be *like* a brother? Let us dream of a friendship which goes beyond this proximity of the congeneric double” (viii, emphasis in the original). The use of the term “brother” in the passage from Cole’s novel exemplifies this idea of friendship based on what Derrida calls “the principle of fraternity” (viii). It is this fraternity that the cab driver expects of him because of their common African origin. Julius’s use of the term “brother,” however, is a mere convention, for he does not consider the cab driver to be his brother or “congeneric double” (viii) at all.

The rejection of connections based on race, skin color, and place of origin features prominently in the novel, suggesting the failure of the operative community, as in the passage in which Julius involuntarily engages in a conversation with an African American postal clerk. Julius refuses to choose stamps with flags, wishing for "something more interesting" (Cole 186). Julius's post-national mindset is evident in this choice, which shows his aversion to national symbols.² The postal worker, Terrence McKinney, on the other hand, invokes a logic based on common African roots: "Say, brother, where are you from?' Cause, see, I could tell you were from the Motherland" (Cole 186). Similar to the cab driver, Terry assumes a commonality that connects him and Julius because of their shared history and suffering and the fact that they still "remain the unconquered" (Cole 187). He tells Julius that he wants his children to preserve their original African values, calling Julius a "visionary" (Cole 187), and telling him that they need to be a guide for future generations. Julian, however, has the following thoughts: "I made a mental note to avoid that particular post office in the future" (Cole 188). This passage demonstrates that Julius, as Susanne Gehrman argues, "may identify politically as Black, but obstinately refuses any racial group affiliation . . . and challenges victimhood discourses attached to Africa" (68). With his refusal to befriend the postal worker simply because they share the same African and racial origins, Julius once again rejects a conception of community and friendship based on the experience of brotherhood. It may be argued, then, that in Cole's novel we find a critique of the figure of the friend similar to the one that Derrida makes in *The Politics of Friendship*: "the figure of the friend, so regularly coming back on stage with the features of the *brother*—who is critically at stake in this analysis—seems spontaneously to belong to a *familial, fraternalist* and thus *androcentric* configuration of politics" (viii). The failure of a politics of community based on fraternity—and thus on homogeneity and similarity—reaches its climax in the eighteenth chapter. When he first encounters two young men on the street, Julius assumes "a gesture of mutual respect based on our being young, black, male; based, in other words, on our being 'brothers'" (Cole 212). However, the assumption of solidarity and respect based on shared racial origin and gender is radically broken when they attack and

² As Serena Guarracino argues, Teju Cole, like Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, are among "the writers encompassed in the burgeoning corpus of third generation Nigerian literature [who] do not operate on a national level" (3).

beat him. Fraternity emerges in this passage as a fallacy, an idealistic notion of communal belonging that is not realized in actual social relations based on mutual respect and mutual aid.

Julius's experience of community also plays a central role in his stay in Brussels, where he travels in search of his maternal grandmother and where a significant part of the novel unfolds. On the plane on the way there, he befriends Dr. Maillotte, a Belgian surgeon. When she learns that Julius is a psychiatry fellow, she asks him if he has ever been to Harlem Hospital in New York (Cole 88) where—she adds—there are “a lot of Africans, Indians, Filipinos, and really, it is a good environment” (Cole 89). Dr Maillotte states that she was educated at the Catholic University of Louvain, whose main requirement is to be Catholic in order to teach there. Yet she claims the Catholic University of Louvain to be better than the Université Libre de Bruxelles, founded and run by Masons, where one cannot climb the academic ladder unless one is a Mason. Dr. Maillotte's words illustrate the exclusionary nature of operative communities. The institutions Dr. Maillotte mentions refuse entry to those who might pose a threat to their homogeneity. The implicit assumption is that an African immigrant, like Julius, would not be welcome there. She also refers to Belgium's unsuccessful resistance under the rule of Leopold III to the Nazi onslaught, which she witnessed when she was fifteen years old, referring to the Nazis as “parasites” (Cole 90). It is revealing that Dr Maillotte pays attention to the Nazis, who, according to Nancy, embody the logic of immanent and operative community in its most extreme form, since they wanted to eradicate those who differed from their homogeneously conceived community: “the logic of sacrifice aimed at all those in the ‘Aryan’ community who did not satisfy the criteria of pure immanence” (12). Those who represent alterity and difference are seen as a threat by the immanent community and risk exclusion and even annihilation.

During Julius's stay in Brussels, his tendency to approach people who follow his intellectual interests is again evident. This is at the heart of his relationship with Farouq, a Moroccan translation student who speaks English, Spanish, Arabic and French. Farouq has been living in Brussels for seven years and works at the Internet and telephone shop Julius visits regularly. In their relationship, we see how diasporic subjects can form communities with other migrants to alleviate their sense of disillusionment and to resist antagonistic conditions. As Delphine Fongang argues, this kind of connection in Cole's novel “symbolizes the development of cluster immigrant communities within the larger diasporic community to cater for

other dispossessed migrants (as part of a surviving strategy) in a hostile environment” (143). When Julius addresses Farouq for the first time, calling him his brother and shaking his hand, he immediately regrets it, thinking that this gesture may make him seem insincere. Julius confesses that “I wondered how this aggressive familiarity had struck him. I wondered, also, why I had said it. A false note, I decided” (Cole 102). This passage again brings to mind Nancy’s theorization of a community which does not ask for recognition: “It does not seek the self-appropriation of subjective immanence” (34). The novel suggests that Farouq has no desire at all to be recognized and appropriated as a brother from the point of view of a community characterized by an “immanent unity” (9), a unity that arises from his and Julius’s common African origin. Julius himself understands that Farouq would find his gesture insincere, for Farouq responds only “[g]ood” (Cole 101), “with a quick, puzzled smile” (Cole 101).

Julius and Farouq’s friendship—which will be analyzed in detail in the next section—takes place against the backdrop of a context characterized, as depicted in the novel, by increasing fear and even violence towards Arabs and Africans. In such a context, Julius feels uncomfortable and tries to avoid the bars and restaurants dominated by whites. He reflects that already in fifteenth-century Ghent, “the stranger was nothing unusual” (Cole 106) when Turks, Arabs, or Russians were present, adding that

the stranger had remained strange and had become a foil for new discontents. It occurred to me, too, that I was in a situation not so radically different from Farouq’s. My presentation—the dark, unsmiling, solitary stranger—made me a target for the inchoate rage of the defenders of Vlaanderen: I could, in the wrong place, be taken for a rapist or “Viking.” But the bearers of the rage could never know how *cheap* it was. They were insensitive to how common, and how futile, was their violence *in the name of a monolithic identity*. (Cole 106, my emphasis)

In the lines above, Julius criticizes the exclusionary nature of organic communities formed on the basis of homogeneous identity, pointing to its effects on migrants—and thus “strangers”—like him and Farouq. This passage evokes Sara Ahmed’s *Strange Encounters* (2000) where Ahmed discusses the implications of being “the outsider inside” (3). Being a stranger in a foreign country puts into question the “relations of proximity

and distance,” that is, “by coming too close to home, [aliens] establish the very necessity of policing the borders of knowable and inhabitable terrains” (3). When African migrants like Julius and Farouq find themselves in territories mainly occupied and defined by Europeans and *whites*, they are automatically perceived as “strangers”; they are seen as having invaded that territory, which triggers in *whites* the need to protect their space. The novel illustrates the violent consequences of such perceptions of migrants by drawing attention to a number of “hate crimes” (Cole 99) promoted by the policies and ideology of right-wing parties such as the Flemish right-wing party Vlaams Belang (Cole 98), which incite fear and hatred against foreigners. An example of this is the crime committed by an eighteen-year-old boy who perceives Africans as “*makakken*” (Cole 99), a term that suggests a similarity between Africans and monkeys. The boy ends up killing a girl from Turkey and a nanny from Mali, along with the Flemish child she was caring for. However, he only expresses regret for having killed the Flemish child (Cole 99). Returning to Ahmed, this event demonstrates the perception of migrants as “strangers” that may lead members of the community to carry out violent actions aimed at expelling them “from the purified space of the community” (22).

Back in New York, a concert at Carnegie Hall dedicated to the music of Gustav Mahler, which Julius attends, is particularly revealing for Nancy’s description of the exclusionary nature of operative communities and Ahmed’s notion of the stranger. Finding himself among white and well-off people, Julius feels like Ota Benga, a young African man who was put on view in a cage at the Bronx Zoo in the United States (Cole 252). When he was finally freed from the zoo, he attempted to go back to Africa but could not. Ota Benga could not bear the emotional toll of his sufferings and committed suicide in his early thirties. According to Dorottya Mózes, what Julius feels is “the impossibility of escaping the White gaze” (278), which also evokes the scene in Frantz Fanon’s *Black Skin, White Masks* (1952) in which a child shouts “Look, a Negro! . . . see the Negro! I’m frightened! Frightened! Frightened!” (84). Julius is perceived as an Other—a stranger, borrowing Ahmed’s term—primarily because of his racial difference, which sets him apart in a white-dominated place and racially homogeneous community. Julius muses on these exclusionary homogeneous places by saying, “it never ceases to surprise me how easy it is to leave the hybridity of the city, and enter into all-white spaces, the homogeneity of which, as far as I can tell, causes no discomfort to the

whites in them” (Cole 251). His reflections highlight the paradoxical dimension of cities like New York and Brussels, which are characterized by hybridity because communities of different racial and ethnic backgrounds live together there, but at the same time are still dominated by racist, white-dominated practices that condemn the African and migrant Other to a position of marginality and oppression, i.e., to the role of “stranger.”

2. THE ELECTIVE COMMUNITY: FRIENDSHIP AND HOSPITALITY

In contrast to the essentialist and exclusionary notion of community suggested by the white-dominated concert at Carnegie Hall or the perception of Africans as “*makakken*” analyzed in the previous section, *Open City* also offers examples of elective communities that are heterogeneous and thus hospitable, emerging from acts of friendship and hospitality. This would be the case of Farouq’s Internet and telephone shop, where all kinds of people go to communicate with people from all over the world: “Colombia, Egypt, Senegal, Brazil, France, Germany” (Cole 112). Farouq believes that he can coexist and live with all kinds of people and still retain the idiosyncratic characteristics that set him apart from others:

it is a test case of what I believe; people can live together but still keep their own values intact . . . people can live together, and I want to understand how that can happen. It happens here, on this small scale, in this shop, and I want to understand how it can happen on a bigger scale. (Cole 112–13)

Farouq’s words imply a belief in a sense of community based on differences rather than homogeneity. It can be said that his friendship with Julius is in some ways an example of such a community, a friendship based not on their common continent of origin but on their intellectual interests. They engage in a series of historical, political, and literary conversations, many of which concern Farouq’s belief in the value of difference and Julius’s rejection of groups formed around a homogeneous sense of identity. They discuss Tahar Ben Jelloun, a Moroccan writer who lives in France and has written all his works in French. Farouq claims that Ben Jelloun relies on an Orientalist view of his country and is not realistic because he does not refer to real problems in his books. He claims that it is “mythmaking” (Cole 103) to respond to the “oriental fantasy” (Cole

104) in order to gain recognition and be published in the West. Farouq invokes Edward Said to support his notion of the importance of difference, claiming that “difference as orientalist entertainment is allowed, but difference with its own intrinsic value, no” (Cole 104). Farouq himself clearly resists the binaries dictated by the dominant discourse and perceptions, as he does not fit into the stereotypical image expected of him in relation to his place of origin. Tahar Ben Jelloun, on the other hand, as Farouq claims, reinforces these stereotypes in his works in order to be a recognized author in the West.

Farouq reinforces his argument by bringing Malcolm X into the discussion. According to Farouq, “Malcolm X recognized that difference contains its own value, and that the struggle must be to advance that value” (Cole 105). Farouq’s praise of difference may be related to the novel’s critique of communities formed on the basis of homogeneous identity and its defence of openness to otherness in the coexistence of people from different racial backgrounds. Kwame Anthony Appiah’s *Cosmopolitanism: Ethics in a World of Strangers* (2006) can be seen as the basis for the understanding of cosmopolitanism that we find in *Open City*. This is, in fact, the book that Julius sends to Farouq when he returns to New York. Oniwe approaches Appiah’s concept of cosmopolitanism as a humane idea that embraces all differences between people (45). This cosmopolitan understanding of community includes everyone, even those who hold essentialist ideals of community, to make living together possible. Oniwe notes that “as Appiah the self-avowed cosmopolitan posits, ‘We do not need, have never needed, settled community, a homogenous system of values, in order to have a home . . . one distinctively cosmopolitan commitment is to pluralism’” (45).

Julius’s and Farouq’s relationship, then, suggests an experience of community that departs from the essentialist and operative community, but is rather an “elective community,” as defined by Blanchot (46). Such a community, unlike the “traditional” one, is not “imposed on us” but is characterised by “the liberty of choice” (46). An example of such a community would be the community of friends (33), a form of community that is particularly evident in the friendship between Julius and Professor Saito in New York and to which the novel devotes much attention. Professor Saito, of Japanese descent, is an eighty-nine-year-old homosexual professor emeritus of early English literature who was formerly Julius’s mentor at Maxwell University. Professor Saito has always been kind to him, and throughout the novel, they have various

conversations based on their intellectual and cultural interests. Over coffee, their discussions range from Beowulf and other classics to Professor Saito’s experiences as a student before the outbreak of the Second World War. In most of the passages analysed in the previous section, we have seen the failure of community and friendship based on commonalities that depend on race and African origin. Julius and Professor Saito, on the other hand, share neither their racial nor their national origins, and therefore their friendship is of a different kind:

After we became friends, I made it a point to see Professor Saito two or three times each semester, and those meetings became cherished highlights of my last two years at Maxwell. I came to view him as a grandfatherly figure entirely *unlike* either of my own grandfathers (only one of whom I’d known). I felt *I had more in common with him* than with the people who happened to be related to me. (Cole 10, my emphasis)

As can be seen from this passage, Julius and Professor Saito’s friendship is not characterised by brotherhood. The fact that Julius emphasises how Professor Saito is “entirely unlike” members of his family—his grandfathers, in particular—suggests that Professor Saito does not fit into the category of friend according to a familial or fraternalist logic (*Friendship* viii), as defined by Derrida. They are friends, on the contrary, “of an entirely different kind . . . without common measure, reciprocity or equality. Therefore, without a horizon of recognition. Without a familial bond, without proximity” (*Friendship* 35). They can also be seen as an example of the elective community of friends as defined by Blanchot: “One calls it elective in the sense that it exists only through a decision that gathers its members around a choice without which it could not have taken place” (46–47). The particular idiosyncratic nature of their relationship is also evident in the fact that when Professor Saito dies, Julius does not know who to talk to about his death, as they have no mutual friends or connections:

I did not know whom to call. He had meant so much to me but, I realized, our relationship had been so private or, rather, outside a network of other connected relationships, that hardly anyone else knew about it, or about how important it had been to us”. (Cole 184)

This passage suggests that Julius's and Professor Saito's friendship does not operate according to prevailing conventions or conventional bonds. In this sense, again, it resembles the "elective community," as defined by Blanchot: a community "that attracts the beings in order to throw them towards each other (two by two or more, collectively), according to their body or according to their heart and thought, by tearing them from ordinary society" (47). This kind of friendship, then, is not based on the expectations or dictates of ordinary society but is detached from them. There are other examples of this kind of friendship in the novel. We see it in Julius's relationship with an African American assistant professor whom he refers to simply as "my friend" (Cole 179). Their conversations range from the origins of the tree species in his friend's garden to environmental issues and recycling. It appears to be a form of friendship not rooted in "affinity or proximity" (*Friendship* 3) or a "schematic of filiation" (*Friendship* viii), as defined by Derrida. These relationships reveal a kind of friendship that transcends immanent ties and is imbued with heterogeneity. This kind of community thus contrasts with the racial, national, and familial community to which one is inherently assigned without freedom of choice.

The novel suggests that Julius has never felt part of a racial, national, ethnic, and familial community. Because he had a German mother and a Nigerian father, he was considered a "half-Nigerian, a foreigner" (Cole 83) in Nigeria. His foreign name, Julius, contributed to the fact that he did not feel "fully Nigerian" (Cole 78). After his father's death, he became estranged from his mother and eventually stopped speaking to her. He organizes a trip to Brussels to locate his maternal grandmother, but he is unable to find her. His experiences of friendship and his social relationships with people based on his intellectual curiosity, on the other hand, prove to be temporary. Professor Saito's death and his friend's move to another city reinforce his loneliness and the impossibility of lasting communal ties in this novel.

Julius, then, can be said to walk the streets to overcome his sense of loneliness and to resist the alienating nature of the city. It is the act of walking that enables him to cross different places, however homogeneous they may be, and claim his right to be there. Julius refers to walking as "therapy" (Cole 7) and describes the feeling he has while walking as one reminiscent of freedom:

Every decision—where to turn left, how long to remain lost in thought in front of an abandoned building, whether to watch the sun set over New Jersey, or to lope in the shadows on the East Side looking across to Queens—was inconsequential and was for that reason a reminder of freedom. (Cole 7)

Julius notes, however, that the impressions he receives from people while walking exacerbate rather than alleviate his loneliness: “the impress of these countless faces did nothing to assuage my feelings of isolation; if anything, it intensified them” (Cole 6). Julius’s sense of loneliness is thus underlined by his walks in the city. New York is indeed portrayed as a city where people are doomed to isolation and inwardness: “Everything was built up, in concrete and stone, and the millions who lived on the tiny interior had scant sense about what flowed around them” (Cole 54). This description of New York and the people who live there is also reflected in the passage where Julius describes his experience in the New York underground, which is full of people, as an experience that reinforces his loneliness (Cole 7).

This alienating character of the city is felt especially by immigrants and refugees, such as those Julius meets during his visit to an immigrant detention center in Queens. Julius is assigned to a young asylum seeker named Saidu, from Liberia, who recounts his painful migration experience to Julius. Saidu’s mother and sister were killed by Charles Taylor’s troops during the Liberian civil war. Because he was a man, he had to work on a farm, from which he later fled when soldiers cut off the limbs of his fellow workers. From Liberia, Saidu made his way to Tangier, from Tangier to Ceuta, from Ceuta to Algeciras, from there to southern Spain and then to Lisbon, where he raised enough money for his ticket to the USA by working in a butcher’s shop and a hairdressing salon. He finally arrived in the USA with a forged Cape Verdean passport and his mother’s birth certificate, as he did not have one himself. After 11 September 2001, however, strict immigration restrictions were enforced. While Saidu would have received asylum without any problems before 11 September, he was denied it after 11 September: “the lawyer they assigned to me said I might have had a chance before 9/11” (Cole 69).

Saidu’s experience may be read in the light of Derrida’s discussion of hospitality. In *Of Hospitality*, Derrida distinguishes between traditional/conditional and absolute/unconditional hospitality. Traditional hospitality may be identified with juridico-political hospitality, which is limited by law. Traditional hospitality implies that the host has the right to

choose his guests before deciding whether to admit them, grant them the right of asylum or expel them. The host thus decides whether the guest has earned the right to hospitality or not. Derrida's argument is that once the host selects and excludes in the traditional sense of hospitality, they are exercising violence. Absolute hospitality, on the other hand, requires that the host does not expect the guest to speak their language and does not ask for the guest's name. Absolute hospitality only takes place when the host gives the stranger full control of their house, as if the stranger were the master of the house. However, this is beyond the realm of possibility, and therefore absolute hospitality would consist of making this impossibility possible. Absolute hospitality would therefore mean that asylum seekers like Saidu are unconditionally welcome "before any determination, before any anticipation, before any identification" (Derrida and Dufourmantelle 77).

I will draw upon the distinction between Derrida's concept of unconditional hospitality and Kant's understanding of hospitality, as discussed in *Of Hospitality*, to illustrate why Saidu's request for asylum is rejected. Derrida explains how Kant prioritizes communal relations over unconditional hospitality. Kant takes in a guest who asks him for refuge from the assassins who are looking for him. However, Kant does not lie to the assassins to protect his guest when they ask for him, as he believes that no one should lie to anyone under any circumstances. Kant's response demonstrates a high regard for communal duty and therefore represents a reverence for communal bonds (Derrida and Dufourmantelle 67–68). This makes Kant's and Derrida's understanding of hospitality different. On the one hand, Kant views the reception of the guest from a legal and conditional perspective. It involves rules and conditions that must be followed in order to protect refugees like Saidu. On the other hand, Derrida describes unconditional/absolute hospitality as a hospitality that is devoid of calculation and welcomes the absolute other without questioning their identity. Unconditional/absolute hospitality, according to Derrida, is,

A law without law, in short. For if I practice hospitality "out of duty" [and not only "in conforming with duty"], this hospitality of paying up is no longer an absolute hospitality, it is no longer graciously offered beyond debt and economy, offered to the other, a hospitality invented for the singularity of the new arrival, of the unexpected visitor. (Derrida and Dufourmantelle 83)

The novel's concern with the possibility of hospitality towards African and black migrants is reminiscent of the motif of migratory birds mentioned earlier. At one point, Julius reflects on the sparrows he observes through the window as follows:

There were sparrows flitting about in the distance, attempting to find a place to rest for the night . . . As I reflected on the fact that in each of these creatures was a tiny red heart, an engine that without fail provided the means for its exhilarating midair maneuvers, I was reminded of how often people took comfort, whether consciously or not, in the idea that God himself attended to these homeless travelers with something like personal care; that, contrary to the evidence of natural history, he protected each one of them from hunger and hazard and the elements. (Cole 181)

It could be argued that Derrida's idea of absolute/unconditional hospitality is echoed in Julius's reflection on sparrows as "homeless travelers" in search of a place to stay. A hospitable God is portrayed as an ideal host, in contrast to the authoritarian forces that have prevented Saidu's entry into the United States. God offers unconditional hospitality to migratory birds in search of a place where they can find shelter overnight. Saidu, on the other hand, together with many others, is denied entry into the United States where he has come to seek protection from the danger in his country of origin. In *Open City*, then, Cole draws our attention to the status quo of nations such as the United States as exclusionary and inhospitable places, while pointing to the need for them to become hospitable places. Saidu did not choose his birthplace. He is not responsible for the political upheavals taking place there. His family was killed, and he was subjected to abuse and violence. His fate calls into question the ethics of traditional, juridico-political hospitality that determines who is admitted and who is rejected.

The novel points out that long before September 11, the city of New York was characterized by a lack of hospitality, especially toward African migrants and African Americans. Thus, as Julius reflects on the various historical events and processes that took place in New York, he repeatedly encounters signs and traces that point to the status of black people as unwelcome Others. Julius refers to a site that was an African burial ground in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, an area of "some six acres, as far north as present-day Duane Street and as far south as City Hall Park" (Cole 220). He highlights that "the bodies of some fifteen to twenty thousand blacks, most of them slaves" (Cole 220), were allowed to be

buried at this site, which was not considered part of the city: “It was here, on the outskirts of the city at the time, north of Wall Street and so outside civilization as it was then defined, that blacks were allowed to bury their dead” (Cole 220). This passage underlines the irony of the novel’s title, for New York was never truly an “open city”—a hospitable city—for the African slaves. Since they were not considered proper residents of the city, or even proper human beings, they could only be buried “outside the city walls” (Cole 222). Derrida discusses hospitality to the migrant who is an *arrivant* in the context of the concept of the border, “the very border that delineated a legitimate home and assured lineage, names and language, nations, families, and genealogies” (*Aporias* 34). We see this boundary materialized in the walls of New York City, which determined who belonged to the city and was welcome and who was instead considered a stranger. Ahmed has also consistently considered borders and boundaries as central to the recognition of the stranger as “the outsider inside” (3): “the stranger is an effect of processes of inclusion and exclusion, or incorporation and exclusion, that constitute the boundaries of bodies and communities” (6). The image of New York as a city enclosed by borders comes into full play in chapter four, as Julius walks to the South End and heads towards the waterline:

The strangest of islands, I thought, as I looked out to the sea, this island that turned in on itself, and from which water had been banished. The shore was a carapace, permeable only at certain selected points. Where in this riverine city could one fully sense a riverbank? (Cole 54)

The fact that New York is built on an island that is “turned in on itself,” with a shore that acts as a “carapace, permeable only at certain selected points” suggests the exact opposite of openness and hospitality, but rather a space—and thus a community—that is “sealed: it is like a body that is fully contained by the skin” (Ahmed 25). The obvious implication is that such “an organic community . . . does not let outsiders (or foreign agents/viruses) in” (Ahmed 25) and is not open to all—an idea hinted at later in the text when Julius turns his attention to Ellis Island, which functioned as the country’s main immigration station in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries: “the focus of so many myths; but it had been built too late for those early Africans—who weren’t immigrants in any case—and it had been closed too soon to mean anything to the later Africans like Kenneth or the cabdriver, or me” (Cole 55). Julius’s

reflections strongly underscore Ellis Island's mythic status as a symbol of the United States as a land of hospitality for newcomers, offering hospitality to Europeans but not to black people. Julius acknowledges the value the island may have had "for European refugees" (Cole 55) but adds that "[b]lacks" knew "rougher ports of entry" (Cole 55).

The novel references a long tradition of fear and rejection of the African and black stranger that leads to "violence in the name of a monolithic identity" (Cole 107) in both New York and Brussels. The novel thus focuses on the historical and legal conditions that constrain and limit hospitality, which contrasts with the heterogeneity that characterizes these cities in the present. Therefore, the novel, which deals with hospitality in the cosmopolitan contexts of New York and Brussels, is also in dialogue with Derrida's remarks on hospitality toward migrants, refugees, and asylum seekers in *On Cosmopolitanism and Forgiveness* (2001). In this text, Derrida introduces the notion of a kind of cosmopolitan city where migrants can seek refuge from any kind of threat. Derrida thus develops the concept of "open cities" or "refuge cities" (viii), "where migrants may seek sanctuary from the pressures of persecution, intimidation, and exile" (viii). Such cities would welcome newcomers according to Derrida's concept of absolute/unconditional hospitality, Kant's concept of moral law, and Levinas's concept of infinite responsibility (xi). The existence of such cities which do not homogenize and do not exclude the other, would welcome migrants of all kinds without assimilating them or expecting anything in return, and would be a solution to the agonizing migration experiences and the grim fates of most of Cole's characters.

Open City ends with Julius recalling the death of migratory birds when the Statue of Liberty acted as a lighthouse, directing ships into Manhattan Harbor; "that same light," however, "especially in bad weather, fatally disoriented birds. The birds, many of which were clever enough to dodge the cluster of skyscrapers in the city, somehow lost their bearings when faced with a single monumental flame" (Cole 258). It is telling that these birds lose their lives crashing into the Statue of Liberty, a symbol of freedom and hospitality for newcomers. Julius elaborates on the "large number of birds [that] met their death in this manner" (Cole 258), particularly in 1888:

On October I of that year, for example . . . fifty rails had died, as had eleven wrens, two catbirds, and one whip-poor-will. The following day, the record showed two dead wrens: the day after that, eight wrens . . . the sense persisted

that something more troubling was at work. On the morning of October 13, for example, 175 wrens had been gathered in, all dead of the impact, although the night just past had not been particularly windy or dark. (Cole 259)

With these words the novel ends abruptly. The fatal fate of the birds refers not only to the unfulfilled migration experience of many of the novel's characters, but also to the experiences of forced resettlement, suffering, exile, torture and ultimately death that African and black people have had throughout history. Hospitality thus becomes a chimaera and an unfulfilled expectation.

CONCLUSIONS

In *Open City*, Julius oscillates between rejecting organic communities based on African origin and race and experiencing friendships rooted in his intellectual interests, which transcend racial and ethnic boundaries. However, these friendships prove to be transient and ultimately dissolve. Julius's mistrust of operative, organic and essentialist communities points to their marginalizing dimension, which in the urban context of New York and Brussels is shown in the lack of hospitality towards the black migrant, who is condemned to the role of "stranger."

The novel thus questions the extent to which New York and Brussels are actually open and hospitable cities. Although both New York and Brussels are racially heterogeneous, they are portrayed as being shaped by an urban, spatial logic that is both "protective and defensive" (Ahmed 26), which corresponds to the functioning of immanent and operative communities. In the part of the novel devoted to Brussels, particular attention is paid to how migrants and foreigners are met with suspicion, fear and even violence. The city functions largely as "an organic community" (Ahmed 25) characterized by "the expulsion of difference" (Ahmed 25) to create "purified spaces" (Ahmed 25). Places like Farouq's shop stand for the possibility of a different kind of coexistence between people of different origins and races, a coexistence in which there is no longer a difference between natives and strangers, a kind of community characterized by friendship and hospitality. However, it is a friendship "of an entirely different kind" (*Friendship* 35), as defined by Derrida: a friendship that is not based on sameness, fraternity, or commonality, but on the absence of commonalities of race, ethnicity, or national origin.

As Julius's thoughts and reflections on the Statue of Liberty and other parts of the city show, the novel is highly critical of the common notion of New York as a city open and hospitable to all foreigners and migrants. The idea that New York is an open and welcoming city may be true for migrants of European origin. Yet there have also always been communities and racial groups that have been systematically marginalized and excluded in this city: black slaves, the African American community and, more recently, black migrants of African descent. With the image of migratory birds crashing into the Statue of Liberty, Cole undermines the myth of the United States as the promised land for all immigrants and newcomers, highlighting instead the lack of hospitality experienced by migrants like Saidu, especially after 11 September.

Julius remains trapped in his role as "the dark, unsmiling, solitary stranger" (Cole 106), a role that is largely forced upon him given the exclusionary spatial, social, and racial configurations that prevail in the urban contexts in which he finds himself. Walking proves to be only a temporary release from such constraints, just as migratory birds find temporary shelter. In New York, it is still possible to be in "all-white spaces" (Cole 252) like Carnegie Hall, whose "homogeneity . . . causes no discomfort to the whites in them" (Cole 252). In such a context, however, Julius experiences Mahler's music as "not white or black" (Cole 252), suggesting the possibility of overcoming racial discrimination and separation so that, as Farouq puts it, "people can live together" (Cole 112).

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The Blurred Line between Good and Evil in *Moby-Dick* and Post-WWII Cinema: How John Huston Read Melville for his Movie Adaptation

La difusa línea entre el bien y el mal en *Moby Dick* y en el cine posterior a la Segunda Guerra Mundial: cómo John Huston interpretó la novela de Melville en su adaptación cinematográfica

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Abstract: John Huston found ambiguity between good and evil in Melville's *Moby-Dick*, which he represented in his 1956 movie adaptation. Hans Robert Jauss' reception theory complements this analysis of both works through the reactions of their audiences. *Moby-Dick* is analyzed together with its adaptation, considering the work as a fluid text, to offer a deeper perspective on its ambiguity between good and evil. While the novel responds to Transcendentalism's enthusiastic view of nature and its search for essential truths, Huston's adaptation reflects how post-WWII cinema was influenced by the conflict and the consequent difficulties in separating good and evil in humans, who were seen as capable of both sublime noble acts and devastating evil.

Keywords: *Moby-Dick*; Herman Melville; John Huston; ambiguity; good and evil.

Summary: Introduction: Good and Evil in Post-WWII Cinema and Herman Melville's *Moby-Dick*. An Inseparable Mixture of Good and Evil: The Inscrutable White Whale and the Adaptation of *Moby-Dick* as a Blasphemy. Conclusion: The Appreciation of Ambiguity in a Time of Moral Uncertainty.

Resumen: John Huston apreció ambigüedad en la representación del bien y el mal en *Moby Dick*, de Melville, y la trasladó a su adaptación cinematográfica de 1956. La estética de la recepción de

Hans Robert Jauss complementa este análisis de ambas obras con la reacción de sus respectivos públicos. Se analiza a *Moby-Dick* junto con su adaptación, considerando la obra como un texto fluido, para ofrecer una perspectiva más profunda sobre su ambigüedad entre el bien y el mal. Mientras que la novela responde a la visión entusiasta de la naturaleza del transcendentalismo y a su búsqueda de verdades esenciales, la adaptación de Huston refleja cómo el cine posterior a la Segunda Guerra Mundial recibió la influencia del conflicto y las consiguientes dificultades para separar el bien y el mal en el ser humano, al que se consideraba capaz tanto de sublimes actos nobles como de un mal devastador.

Palabras clave: *Moby Dick*; Herman Melville; John Huston; ambigüedad; el bien y el mal.

Sumario: Introducción: el bien y el mal en el cine posterior a la Segunda Guerra Mundial y en *Moby-Dick*, de Herman Melville. Una mezcla inseparable de bien y mal: la inescrutable ballena blanca y la adaptación de *Moby-Dick* como blasfemia. Conclusión: el interés por la ambigüedad en una época de incertidumbre moral.

1. INTRODUCTION: GOOD AND EVIL IN POST-WWI CINEMA AND HERMAN MELVILLE'S *MOBY-DICK*

This paper examines the nuanced portrayal of good and evil in Herman Melville's *Moby-Dick* and John Huston's 1956 movie adaptation through reception theory, specifically Hans Robert Jauss' concept of the horizon of expectations. Analyzing these works within nineteenth-century Transcendentalism and the Cold War, this study highlights how their ambivalence toward good and evil is articulated and understood in relation to these distinct historical contexts.

A deeper understanding of *Moby-Dick*'s well-known ambiguity regarding good and evil benefits from considering the text as a fluid entity that encompasses its various versions, including extra-authorial adaptations. In Melville studies, the concept of the fluid text, as articulated by John Bryant, acknowledges that *Moby-Dick* exists in multiple sequential versions, evolving from the original writer to revisionary writers and adaptors ("Wound" 202). Linda Hutcheon further validates the critical legitimacy of adaptations, describing them as "interpretive creations" and a form of "cultural revision" that extends the originating author's fluid text (171).

From a fluid text perspective, adaptation represents a way to reshape narratives in response to changing historical contexts. John Huston's *Moby Dick*, as an adaptation, engages in an aesthetic pattern that reacted to the troubled post-WWII years by generating a film production focused upon the fragile barrier that separated good and evil at that time. Similarly, Herman Melville's *Moby-Dick* avoids a univocal interpretation of good

and evil's embodiment. Melville responded to Transcendentalism, championed by Ralph Waldo Emerson, which advocated for a rejuvenated American culture rooted in the nation's awe-inspiring landscapes. Unlike Emerson, Melville recognized the perils of nature and lacked optimism in humanity's inherent goodness or its capacity to attain knowledge solely through direct experience (Gray 97).

The deep and ambiguous reflection on good and evil in *Moby-Dick* interlaces with the Cold War context surrounding John Huston's 1956 adaptation. Building upon Hutcheon's positions, this adaptation serves as a cultural revision that explores the complexities of Melville's fluid text, in which Huston found a suitable material to reflect the distorted line between good and evil in the post-WWII era.

How Huston, as a reader, understood the novel after the outcome of WWII is essential to exploring his representation of good and evil in the film, as is the reception of *Moby-Dick* in Melville's time, which sheds light on his intentional ambiguity regarding morality and human capabilities. Given the importance of context in studying the portrayal of good and evil in *Moby-Dick*'s fluid text, Hans Robert Jauss' reception theory supports the discussion in this paper.

Reception theory is particularly well-suited for studying a text as a fluid entity because, for Jauss, texts are dynamic units the appreciation and ideas of which fluctuate over time. The set of ideas, assumptions, and social behaviors prevalent during Melville's and Huston's eras constitutes what reception theory defines as the "horizon of expectations," elucidated by Jauss in *Toward an Aesthetic of Reception* (1982). The task of the critic is to analyze the text and its reception context to determine the balance between the readership's expectations and their fulfillment in the text.

When a text fails to meet readers' expectations, it can lead to frustration but also prompt a shift in the readership's horizon within a specific historical moment. Jauss considers this transformative capacity of the reception process to be a crucial part of the literary work's emancipatory function. Reception theory reconstructs the reception context of each work to uncover its emancipatory potential. The ensuing analysis also examines whether the ambiguous portrayal of good and evil adheres to or diverges from prevailing aesthetic norms or ideologies during the release of Melville's novel and Huston's film adaptation.

2. AN INSEPARABLE MIXTURE OF GOOD AND EVIL: THE INSCRUTABLE WHITE WHALE AND THE ADAPTATION OF *MOBY-DICK* AS A BLASPHEMY

Upon the publication of *Moby-Dick*, Melville confessed to Nathaniel Hawthorne that he had “written a wicked book, and fe[lt] spotless as the lamb” (Niemeyer 37). However, this alleged wickedness must be considered alongside Ishmael’s warning against viewing the white whale as “a hideous and intolerable allegory” (Melville, *Moby-Dick* 164). This quotation to Ishmael reinforces the critical view contending that Melville avoided a singular interpretation of the novel and its symbols, including the whale, whose meaning is deliberately open to a wide range of interpretations, unlike conventional allegories.

In the nineteenth century, readers were accustomed to the moral teachings of Puritan allegory, which provided a one-to-one correspondence between symbol and meaning. Nathaniel Hawthorne had already begun to subvert this tradition in works like “Young Goodman Brown” (1835) to critique Puritan allegorists, but Melville went further by overturning these clear parallels entirely. This departure sets the stage for understanding how Melville challenged the traditional expectations of nineteenth-century readers about goodness and evil, as explored through Jauss’ concept of the horizon of expectations.

The “pure evil” (Melville, *Moby-Dick* 151) Moby Dick represents for Ahab is far from absolute in the novel’s network of references. Fortunately, Melville provides readers with a rich—albeit ambiguous—background to tease out the text’s deep meaning. The section entitled “Extracts” at the beginning of the novel is the first part of this background. It contains a variety of quotations concerning whales, ranging from the Old Testament and Shakespeare to scientific treatises and traditional sources; just as *Moby-Dick* mixes its main plot with an epic atmosphere, chapters influenced by drama, and minor genres like technical manuals or exegesis. “Extracts” anticipates the blending of genres that puzzled the first readers of *Moby-Dick* and would define many modern novels. Jauss emphasizes the importance of the literary genre system, wherein readers engage with a text and assess their horizon of expectations, suggesting that readers tend to displace any element not perceived as typical of the genre.

To reconstruct a work’s horizon of expectations, analyzing historical documents reflecting contemporary reactions complements the tradition of a genre. Early critical reviews of *Moby-Dick* include one by the literary magazine *Athenæum* on October 25th, 1851, which claimed that *Moby-*

Dick was “an ill-compounded mixture of romance and matter of fact” and that “the idea of a connected and collected story ha[d] obviously visited and abandoned its writer again and again in the course of composition” (Chorley 581). As follows, on December 6th, 1851, the *Literary Gazette* judged it to be “an odd book, professing to be a novel; wantonly eccentric; outrageously bombastic” (qtd. in Weinstein 209). These initial reactions demonstrate that the novel’s structure and heterogeneity widened the aesthetic gap between readers’ expectations and what they found, with some even failing to recognize it as a novel.

As confusing as it turned out to be, Melville’s intention in both “Extracts” and the entire work is to offer diverse materials whose symbolic meanings readers feel unable to reconcile into a coherent body of signs. “Extracts” serves as the first map to encourage speculation on the novel’s meaning, presenting a list of quotations related to whales, with the first five originating from the Bible:

And God created great whales. (Genesis)

Leviathan maketh a path to shine after him;
One would think the deep to be hoary. (Job)

Now the Lord had prepared a great fish to swallow up Jonah. (Jonah)

There go the ships; there is that Leviathan whom thou hast made to play therein. (Psalms)

In that day, the Lord with his sore, and great, and strong sword, shall punish Leviathan the piercing serpent, even Leviathan that crooked serpent; and he shall slay the dragon that is in the sea. (Isaiah) (*Moby-Dick* 8).

The quotations referring to Leviathan in Job, Psalms, and Isaiah could connect *Moby Dick* with evil and death, as Leviathan embodies the dark, destructive forces to which God grants some freedom and which He will ultimately slay to eradicate evil and misfortune, as put forth in Job and Isaiah. Maria Isabel de Sousa contends that Ahab considers himself predestined to remove this malicious force (18), and quotes Ahab wondering if it is God who “does that beating, does that thinking, does that living, and not [Ahab]” (Melville, *Moby-Dick* 396). The interpretation of *Moby Dick* as an evil creature is mainly associated with Ahab’s vision of the white whale as a symbol of evil. Ahab is free in his confrontation with

the whale only within God's plans, as Leviathan shall be killed someday, perhaps by Ahab, to rid the world of the monster's evil. Ahab's obsession with the whale torments him, but he feels that his monomania cannot solely originate from within himself.

The generation of Americans reading *Moby-Dick* upon its publication was steeped in Reformed Christianity, which emphasized a divine plan determining all events. This worldview struggled to reconcile worldly evil with the notion of objective justice. As T. Walter Herbert aptly states, Protestant theology provides a major solution to this contradiction: "The ledgers that are so heavily weighted toward injustice in this world will be corrected at the end of time" (97).

For Melville, choosing a tortured and evil character as the instrument of God aligns with his intellectual curiosity about Christian beliefs and his skepticism about humanity's innate goodness. Melville had already expressed disagreement with Ralph Waldo Emerson's trust in humanity and optimistic view of nature. For instance, in *Typee* (1846), the narrator, Tom (an intelligent and enlightened ethnographer), describes the white civilized man as "the most ferocious animal on the face of the earth" (182). Many of Melville's readers would have found it conflicting to see a character like Ahab as the means that God uses to eliminate the evil represented by Leviathan, given their assumption of a just and pious liberator chosen from among humanity.

John Huston supported this interpretation of the fight between Ahab and the white whale, viewing Ahab's pursuit as "an attempt to extinguish the epitome of evil that God allows to exist in the world" (qtd. in Meyers 223), a view shared with Ray Bradbury, the screenwriter of the movie adaptation. The cultural trend arising in the post-WWII era (late 1940s and 1950s) was often considered conformist and conservative, contrasting with the social revolution of the 1960s. But, in *The Romantic Manifesto*, philosopher Ayn Rand argues that Modernism fully took over the United States after a temporal halt during WWII (36). Rand chronicles how the established Romantic school lost ground while Modernism increasingly depicted the depraved and morally corrupted as common subjects in American culture, in lieu of merely artistic idealizations representing the capacity of the individual for heroism and moral good. This perspective adds another layer of complexity to Ahab's apparent evilness, creating a character whose capability for sublime deeds blurs the line between good and evil. After the movie's release, some critics questioned several decisions to adapt the novel, though the production team and subsequent

bibliography on the movie revealed that these changes aimed to apply this central idea to the film, as the audience's readiness to confront the ambiguity between good and evil was more conducive in the context of the movie adaptation compared to the novel's initial reception.

Thus, the shifting horizon of expectations over time brought different receptions of *Moby-Dick* across different mediums. For example, Milton R. Stern notes how faithful Stubb's statement in the Spouter-Inn when he first meets Ishmael is to the novel: "Mind, lad, if God ever wanted to be a fish, he'd be a whale." Yet Stern wonders why the significance of these words is lost in the adaptation, as the movie "is not clear about the Nature of God," and "we cannot know whether Ahab obeys or disobeys whatever God the movie assumes" (473). As Huston himself puts it, despite the clear connection between Moby Dick and God at the beginning of the movie, "[the critics] failed to recognize that [the novel] was a blasphemy," and that, for Huston, "Ahab speaks for Melville, and through him he is raging at the deity" (qtd. in Spengler 145).

For post-WWII filmmakers and viewers, the recent past provided a backdrop of conflicting sides committing atrocities in the name of their causes, with God allowing the existence of evil, which wartime heroes confronted. *Moby-Dick*, as a fluid text, presents ambiguity between good and evil that extends beyond Melville's work; it incorporates cultural revision by other artists interpreting Melville's messages. Huston and Bradbury believed Melville depicted God in the white whale and saw Ahab's actions as blasphemous, and the director preserved many aspects of the novel to show this view. Part of the dialogue between Ahab and Starbuck in Chapter 36, "The Quarter-Deck," is reproduced almost verbatim. Starbuck rebukes the captain for his rage against "a dumb thing," which "seems blasphemous" (Melville, *Moby-Dick* 133). Starbuck's judgment supports Huston's interpretation of the story, which he defines as "a blasphemy, . . . an assault on God" (Meyers 473). In the movie, Ahab answers that "[he]'d strike the sun if it insulted [him]," aligning with Melville's work and Huston's vision of Ahab. For the director, Ahab views the whale as "the mask of a malignant deity who torments mankind" and "pits himself against this evil power" that "Melville doesn't choose to call Satan, but God" (qtd. in Inge 703). In turn, Huston seems to draw upon this same chapter, in which Ahab thinks of Moby Dick as a mask against which he turns his anger:

All visible objects, man, are but as pasteboard masks. But in each event . . . some unknown but still reasoning thing puts forth the mouldings of its features from behind the unreasoning mask. If man will strike, strike through the mask! (Melville, *Moby-Dick* 133)

Ahab's vendetta against evil is irrational because it is ultimately a fight against himself; against the evil in his human condition. Melville scholars have interpreted the white whale as a symbol representing the coexistence of good and evil in everyone (e.g., Ishag 54–56; Hao and Chi 14–17). The climax of their battle inside the captain is his fierce obsession with Moby Dick. In Chapter 41, "Moby Dick," an excerpt expresses the whale's meaning to Ahab as a symbol of humanity:

The White Whale swam before him as the monomaniac incarnation of all those malicious agencies which some deep men feel eating in them, till they are left living on with half a heart and half a lung. That intangible malignity which has been from the beginning; . . . All that most maddens and torments; all that stirs up the lees of things; all truth with malice in it; all that cracks the sinews and cakes the brain; all the subtle demonisms of life and thought; all evil, to crazy Ahab, were visibly personified, and made practically assailable in Moby Dick. (Melville, *Moby-Dick* 148)

Although some "deep men" feel that the "malicious agencies" and "the intangible malignity which has been from the beginning" are "eating in them," Ahab identifies this malignity in Moby Dick. These evils are present in every human being, and Ahab does not realize that God's evil, which he sees in the whale, is also in himself. Ahab's self-deception leads him to immolation because the evil that the whale represents for him is the target of his hatred, but by attacking Moby Dick, he mutilates his own body, just like the white whale ripped off his leg in the past.

A key difference between the novel and its movie adaptation lies in Melville's greater emphasis on repentance and humility. Despite the biblical associations of the white whale with Leviathan in "Extracts," which could imply Ahab's struggle against evil power, Melville balances this notion with the story of contrition presented in Jonah and also quoted in "Extracts." Father Mapple recounts how Jonah, swallowed by a great fish when attempting to flee God's dominion, is delivered when he prays and accepts his punishment. Contrarily, in Chapter 41, "The Whiteness of the Whale," Ishmael explains that Ahab, in his initial encounter with Moby Dick, "did not fall down" but "cherished a wild vindictiveness against the

whale” and “pitted himself, all mutilated, against it” (Melville, *Moby-Dick* 148). Ahab did not become mad just when the whale tore off his leg, but rather when he was “forced to turn towards home, and for long months of days and weeks, . . . his torn body and gashed soul bled into one another; and so interfusing, made him mad” (Melville, *Moby-Dick* 147–48).

Considering the Calvinist substratum of American churches, the events and traits characterizing Ahab as similarly evil to the white whale do not necessarily imply a break in the reader’s horizon of expectations at Melville’s time. The doctrine of innate depravity, stemming from the Fall or original sin, was widespread, asserting that human nature was partially corrupt, hence incapable of choosing the path of salvation and refraining from evil. After his first defeat against Moby Dick, Ahab lets himself be invaded by his dark side, latent in all human beings since the Fall, according to Puritan belief. In essence, the fruitless first hunt for the white whale serves as the catalyst for unleashing the inherent malignancy within Ahab.

But there are also grounds for suggesting a mixed reaction from readers to Ahab’s challenge. From their perspective, the main reason for understanding (which certainly does not mean ‘supporting’) the captain’s degradation would be the aforementioned Puritan belief in the fallen human nature, which ends up causing damnation in the absence of strength in God. The reason to reject Ahab’s fight against Moby Dick would stem from interpreting his monomania as a direct defiance of God’s will. Unlike other captains maimed by the whale, Ahab neither repents nor ceases his pursuit and, like Satan, is depicted as a soul that rebels against God consumed by pride and vengeance, seeing evil in the natural creation by a divine tyrannical figure.

Ahab’s behavior must also be understood within the shifting landscape of Reformed Christianity in America, which was gradually losing its unquestioned authority (Herbert 97). This transformation coincided with a period of comprehensive identity formation across America in the nineteenth century. Literary critic Francis Otto Matthiessen coined the term American Renaissance in his 1941 book, *American Renaissance: Art and Expression in the Age of Emerson and Whitman*, spotlighting Ralph Waldo Emerson as the vanguard of Transcendentalism. This movement, blending European romantic individualism with an emphasis on inner truth-seeking, regarded nature as a companion to introspection and esteemed the power of knowledge as a route to transcend intellectual growth and spirituality. Melville is often categorized within the

pessimistic offshoot of Transcendentalism, which portrays nature as reflective of both human consciousness and its darker aspects.

In response to the spiritual oppression in Christianity, Melville often satirically alluded to scriptures and their moral authority. Jonathan A. Cook has explored Melville's fixation on evil and extensive use of biblical allusion. Cook highlights an instance of Melville's irreverence when Flask, alluding to the biblical story of Satan's afflictions upon Job, suggests that sometimes God allows evil to roam freely, while Stubb insists that Fedallah should be thrown overboard because he is the Devil (178–79). What is more, Melville suggests similar insubordination in Ahab, as Ishmael narrates how the captain attached “not only all his bodily woes, but all his intellectual and spiritual exasperations” to the whale, identifying in it “the sum of all the general rage and hate felt by his whole race from Adam down” (*Moby-Dick* 149) that he will not let escape.

Based on this rationale is the idea of Moby Dick as an agent of divine justice punishing Ahab's challenge to God, which finds support in speech and report. In Chapter 54, “The Town-Ho's Story,” Moby Dick is described as an “*inverted visitation* of one of those so called judgments of God which at times are said to overtake some men” (Melville, *Moby-Dick* 190, my emphasis), symbolizing God's action over those who try to grasp His power for themselves. Likewise, in the last chapter, “The Chase. Third Day,” Ishmael reports that “Moby Dick seemed combinedly possessed by all the angels that fell from heaven” (Melville, *Moby-Dick* 406) when the whale outmaneuvers the boats, which makes Moby Dick side with a vengeful God defending Himself from the whalers of the *Pequod*, who defy His authority and obey Ahab's orders. Another clue is the formula Ahab uses in Chapter 113, “The Forge,” to make a pact with his harpooners, whom he baptizes in the name of the Devil: “*Ego non baptizo te in nomine patris, sed in nomine diaboli!*” (Melville, *Moby-Dick* 384). From this perspective, Ahab could represent evil itself, yet is also a sort of tragic hero (Bercaw 16; Hayes 55), as he rebels against God or, perhaps, against his evil works reflected in nature (Spengler 159).

Huston and Bradbury endeavored to depict this amalgamation of virtue and malevolence in Ahab, in conjunction with the darkness present in God's natural creation, on the big screen. Studying Huston's adaptation is crucial within the postmodern paradigm, where texts are seen as fluid entities. From this perspective, Melville, as a writer, is known to us only through his texts, whose ideas exist solely within the realm of textuality. Instead of limiting understanding to a single version of *Moby-Dick*, we

must acknowledge that textuality encompasses not only printed words but also the text as an ever-evolving entity. Bryant insists on considering any state or version of the text that helps us understand it more fully, including its adaptations (216–17). Huston’s movie is especially significant as it reshapes the ambiguity of *Moby-Dick* through reading and subsequent reformulation by the film artists.

Building on this reasoning, this paper examines the perception and articulation of ambiguity between good and evil in the novel and its adaptation through the relationship of text recipients—screenwriters, novel readers, or cinema spectators—and their horizon of expectations within their historical period. At the center of this dynamic, *Moby-Dick* and its vision of good and evil exist in multiple versions—not only Melville’s original but also the interpretations and revisions by readers and adapters, who infuse the work with the particularities and cultural anxieties of their times. Bryant illustrates how *Moby-Dick* exists as a multiplicity of versions by citing an interview with Edward Said, wherein the critic seems to attribute to Melville’s Ahab the manner of death depicted in the 1956 movie adaptation (“Rewriting” 1043–49). Said asserted, “In the final scene of the novel, Captain Ahab is being borne out to sea, wrapped around the white whale with the rope of his own harpoon and going obviously to his death” (qtd. in Bryant, “Rewriting” 1045). Said conflates the demise of the cinematic Ahab with Melville’s Ahab to elucidate the US response to 9/11 as akin to suicidally binding oneself to a self-created monster—a stance exemplifying the shift from readings of *Moby-Dick* as a simplistic battle between good and evil that had taken place until the Cold War (Metz 224, 229). In doing so, Said ironically overlooks Fedallah’s significance in Ahab’s death, a critique of Orientalism in Melville’s work according to postcolonial criticism (see Finkelstein; Leroux).

Bryant encapsulates this interpretation by explaining how Fedallah prophesies that only hemp, the material of whale-lines, can destroy Ahab, linking these ropes to Fedallah and the Orient (“Rewriting” 1046–48). Melville appears to reinforce the view of the Orient as mysterious and fatalistic, but he is actually associating the notion of fate with human beings themselves, their choices, and their self-destruction, while disassociating fate from the supernatural. Fedallah’s prophecy logically warns Ahab that pursuing Moby Dick and being tied to the monster will destroy him, but Ahab’s hubris prevents him from interpreting Fedallah’s ominous signs. In the novel, Ahab is strangled by the whale-line and swiftly consumed by the sea in his pursuit; not only for chasing the monster

he had elevated to the status of evil, but also for misreading Fedallah's prophesies (and the Orient). Ahab ties his destiny to the mystical, and Fedallah, fundamentally, to the purely causal.

Said's postcolonial perspective likely guided his view of *Moby-Dick* as countering the Western portrayal of Islam as the antagonistic foil or Other, influencing his interpretation of Ahab's death. Put differently, the current horizon of expectations, influenced by the climate of anxiety and debate following 9/11, shaped Said's (mis)attribution. Additionally, by blending Melville's novel with Huston's movie, Said affirmed the adaptation's textual identity while expanding the symbolism of the whale-line to encompass media and contemporary politics, highlighting *Moby-Dick*'s inherent fluidity ("Rewriting" 1047).

In a similar vein, Bradbury's omission of Fedallah from the film underscores the ambiguous interplay of good and evil within Ahab, yet it disregards Fedallah's role in the intricate struggle between Ahab—driven to combat the evil inherent in God's creation—and Moby Dick—embodying the malevolence that God permits to exist unrestrained. Bradbury saw Fedallah as a production hindrance and transferred his role to Ahab, possibly due to censorship during the Cold War Era (Eller 36), part of the horizon of expectations at that time, in which Fedallah might have been perceived as possessing anti-American traits.

Melville keeps Fedallah's origins mysterious but introduces him as a Persian pagan with long white hair wrapped around his head like a turban and wearing a Chinese-style coat. Despite Iran's neutrality in WWII, its sympathy with the Axis powers prompted invasions by the UK and the Red Army, fearing oil shortages and supply disruptions via the Persian Corridor. During the Cold War, Chinese nationals faced Senator Joseph McCarthy's anti-Communist campaign, targeting Americans perceived as Soviet tools. In the 1950s, some critics associated Fedallah with sixth-century BC Parsee fire-worshippers, followers of the prophet Zoroaster who battled evil spirits or *ahriman* (for example, see Finkelstein for Fedallah's interpretation as an assassin, connecting his onomastics to the Islamic Fedai order, which killed using hemp-derived intoxicants). This view suggests that Parsees performed God's work and interprets Fedallah as a divine double agent thwarting Ahab's plans, echoing communist espionage fears.

The production circumstances, part of the screenwriter's and director's horizon of expectations, probably made them perceive Fedallah as expendable, much like how the whalers aboard the *Pequod* view him—

as closer to a villain. Nevertheless, an uncensored interpretation of Fedallah adds complexity to the interplay between good and evil, portraying him as potentially malevolent yet also a facilitator for Ahab's encounter with God's wrath in nature, which the captain relentlessly pursues and mistakenly believes he can overcome.

The fluidity of the text (as defined by Bryant) and its dynamic nature (depending on its readership and their changing societal circumstances, as outlined by Jauss' horizon of expectations) enabled the film adaptation of *Moby-Dick* to capture the ambiguity between good and evil. The creators saw the novel as a means to express the blurred line between these extremes following WWII's unrest and horrors. The portrayal of Ahab as a tragic hero rebelling against the evil allowed in nature took time to be embraced. Jauss offers *Madame Bovary* (1857) as an example of a work that initially failed to meet readers' horizon of expectations, and which, like *Moby-Dick*, required decades to find a context of reception where its messages could resonate (27–28).

Regarding the horizon of expectations of *Moby-Dick*'s readers, mid-nineteenth-century America was one of the periods that most steemed nature. Emerson's ideas thrived in a patriotic climate, encouraging Americans to engage directly with their country's landscape. While the notion of good and evil in Ahab, as previously discussed, may have been more readily accepted, the idea of evil in nature, as suggested in *Moby-Dick*, likely challenged readers' assumptions about nature, which, as the driving force for the nation's development, was inherently positive for Americans.

To blend and harmonize good and evil in creation, Melville seemingly drew upon the romantic concept of the sublime. Humanity's relationship with nature, as per romantic aesthetic philosophy, could justify the simultaneous awe and fear that, for Melville, the creation sometimes inspires. Scott Horton cites Edmund Burke's *A Philosophical Inquiry into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful* (1757) to explain Melville's use of *Moby Dick* for exploring the sublime:

There are many animals, who though far from being large, are yet capable of raising ideas of the sublime, because they are considered as objects of terror . . . And to things of great dimensions, if we annex an adventitious idea of terror, they become without comparison greater (Burke 131).

Kant rendered the sublime into different modes.¹ Throughout *The Critique of Pure Reason* (1787), *The Critique of Practical Reason* (1788), and *The Critique of Judgment* (1790), he distinguished between the mathematical and the dynamic sublime, the first covering an element of huge dimensions, and the latter corresponding to an object of impressive power. As the most powerful and enigmatic creature of the ocean, Moby Dick embodies aspects of both sublime notions, eliciting varied reactions from the novel's characters.

As for proud Ahab, he is obsessed with Moby Dick not so much due to the evil that the whale represents but because he cannot control or defeat its natural power. Ishmael, for his part, is the reflective character who cannot identify good or evil in Moby Dick. Through him, Melville seems to voice his own uncertainties about understanding the division between these two opposites, and the sea is the romantic setting where Ishmael struggles to distinguish both.

The upsurge of maritime studies has enriched the reading of the ocean and its creatures as metaphors or symbolic settings. The sublimity in the sea, according to Holmqvist and Pluciennik, can be both “absolutely great” and “absolutely menacing” (725). Frank J. Novak identifies a series of binary oppositions that acquire meaning through the aquatic medium. The main dichotomy is beauty versus terror, manifested in the ocean as “a contrast between physical appearances” (119). The quotation from Burke above belongs to the second chapter of the second part of his *Inquiry*, entitled “Terror,” where he directly links terror with the sublime and treats this feeling as a key part of the sublime experience: “Indeed, terror is in all cases whatsoever, either more openly or latently, the ruling principle of the sublime” (131).

Ishmael identifies beauty—manifested in the color white—and terror as capable of raising ideas of the sublime. In Chapter 42, “The Whiteness of the Whale,” Ishmael first defines whiteness as something that “refiningly enhances beauty, as if imparting some special virtue of its own” (Melville, *Moby-Dick* 151) and gives many examples of how the color white embellishes various natural and non-natural objects, such as marbles, pearls, Japanese tree flowers, the alb of Catholic priests, etc. But then Ishmael explains that when white is “divorced from more kindly associations” and “coupled with any terrible object in itself,” white can “heighten that terror to the furthest bounds” (Melville, *Moby-Dick* 152).

¹ Melville owned a copy of Burke's *Enquiry* (Sealts 9, 44).

These beautiful and terrible objects, like the white bear, the white shark, or the white whale, belong to marine environments and represent the combination of beauty and terror in such natural settings.

Burke laid negative stress on his notion of the sublime, which made a difference in the contribution to the romantic sublime of other authors. While for his predecessors the sublime was “liberating and exhilarating, a kind of happy aggrandisement” (Paulson 69), Burke posited that terror is the main source of the sublime. But, in line with the tension between good and evil that underlies *Moby-Dick*, Burke’s *Inquiry* shows that the sublime consists of “two equally important, although mutually incompatible, experiences” (Gasché 26)—like delight and pain, clarity and gloom, or society and lonesomeness—to prove that, in Burke’s words, “opposite extremes operate equally in favor of the sublime” (157). Therefore, Ishmael’s descriptions of sublime sea objects align with Burke’s terrifying sublime and his pairing of terror with its antithesis, the beautiful.

White evokes feelings of the sublime by giving beauty to certain animals and making them cause fear. The most representative and impressive example is the whiteness of the whale, on which Ishmael reflects in the eponymous chapter. He emphasizes that the “elusive quality” of white, when deprived of any positive or negative associations, can by its own means intensify terror, as there is still “an elusive something in the innermost idea of this hue, which strikes more of panic to the soul than that redness which affrights in blood” (Melville, *Moby-Dick* 152). Consequently, terror lies in the white color because white is ungraspable, as it enhances beauty and terror simultaneously.

In the novel, Melville’s ambivalent stance toward good in nature and trust in humanity intertwines not only with the Burkean but also with Immanuel Kant’s concept of the sublime, prominent in nineteenth-century Romanticism. According to Kant, the sublime involves an encounter between the “I” (the individual as subject, or the ego) and that which can annihilate that “I” completely (Battersby 28–29). The Kantian sublime accounts for the function of the ocean in the example provided by Milton R. Stern, who argues that in Chapter 92, “The Castaway,” Pip drifts alone across the endless Pacific and goes insane because he cannot bear the view of God “as an eternal, disinterested emptiness” that the ocean represents. By extension, “there is no conscious benevolence or malevolence,” and *Moby Dick* is “as colorless, blank, ubiquitous, eternal, and blind as the Pacific in which Pip is momentarily abandoned” (471). Accordingly, the novel is laden with passages describing the paradoxical coexistence of

beauty and wickedness in nature, aligning closely with the Calvinistic concept of humanity in a constant struggle between its virtue and innate depravity, with which readers must have been familiar:

Consider, once more, the universal cannibalism of the sea; all whose creatures prey upon each other, carrying on eternal war since the world began. . . . Consider all this; and then return to this green, gentle, and most docile earth, consider them both, the sea and the land; and do you not find a strange analogy to something in yourself? (Melville, *Moby-Dick* 215)

In this quotation, nature and the human soul share the same dichotomies and conflicts. Through the novel's characters, Melville suggests that their attitudes toward the white whale reflect different perspectives of humanity toward the world and nature. Ahab, compelled by a desire to be above nature, feels threatened by it and embarks on a quest to pursue the evil he sees in Moby Dick. Meanwhile, Ishmael seeks freedom and self-discovery but remains unfazed when unable to find a clear cut between good and evil in the ocean's natural mysteries, which he cannot comprehend.

Screenwriter Bradbury almost entirely relies on Ahab to convey the struggle between nature and humanity, a recurring theme throughout the movie. The opening credits, featuring nineteenth-century engravings of whaling scenes, establish the film's focus on gloomy lighting to underscore nature's dangers and indifference to humanity. Scenes in New Bedford or aboard the *Pequod* feature dim lighting and sepia tones, capturing human despair in the face of nature through the worn, taciturn countenances of the villagers and whalers, whose lives depend on the sea. This composition contrasts with the hunting scenes, employing technicolor and black-and-white imagery to create an allegorical, turbulent atmosphere presenting the encounters with the mysterious white whale. Hence, the whale's instinctive defensive response, shaking his body and resisting the harpoons that hurt him, represents God's wrath against the pride inside Ahab, whom Huston sees as "a kind of Anti-Christ, noble in his blasphemy" (Meyers 223). Just as Christ, who is human insofar as He is the Son of God made man, is humble and gentle, in Christian theology, the Antichrist is a proud and triumphant human being who will spread hatred, war, and revenge, as opposed to Christ, who preached love, peace, and mercy. Both can work great wonders, but those of the Anti-Christ are terrible deeds.

To understand the portrayal of good and evil in the film, it is essential to explore the evolving perception of the 1950s—once seen as marked by censorship and conservatism—and how they shaped the horizon of expectations for both artists in their cinematic representations and viewers in their reception. James T. Patterson points out that “many of the ‘threats’ to older ways of life in the 1950s were exaggerated” (344). He refers to Senator McCarthy’s anti-Communist efforts in the Cold War era, which echoed the Red Scare of the 1920s and involved blatant accusations of association with leftist organizations against many Hollywood stars and directors. Patterson also acknowledges “exposed undercurrents of dissatisfaction and rebellion” (344, 374) that were to grow in the 1960s. Similarly, Gertrude Himmelfarb highlights how the generation later dubbed “the revolutionaries of the sixties” benefited from “attending colleges that flourished ... thanks to the G.I. Bill of Rights and the infusion of government funds” initiated by WWII (13). This support nurtured the emergence of intellectual movements like the Beat Generation, providing “the intellectual stimulus to challenge the dominant culture” (14). In “Bad Old Days: The Myth of the 1950s,” Alan J. Levine notes a gradual relaxation of censorship soon after WWII, paving the way for the so-called revolution of the sixties and the emergence of movies “more mature, even bleak, sometimes, even, repulsively cynical or perverse” (92).

John Huston’s words describing Ahab in his film as a noble Anti-Christ and the captain’s fight against *Moby Dick* as an act of blasphemy become significant when viewed from this different perspective about post-WWII cinema. Over time, critical interpretations of the film have shifted, with contemporary analyses considering the director’s remarks about the movie and its reflection of the American cultural milieu in the aftermath of WWII. Cold War criticism framed *Moby-Dick* within America’s anti-communist struggle, emphasizing Ishmael’s assertion of liberty against Ahab’s tyranny (Pease 113), with the *Pequod*’s destruction symbolizing the loss of American diversity—echoing Pacific atomic tests—and Ishmael’s survival symbolizing enduring American freedom (Metz 223–24).

Nonetheless, authors like David Hunter argue that a new artistic trend emerged as Americans grew skeptical and fearful because of “the ever-present threat of nuclear destruction, divisive conflicts such as the Vietnam War and a changing moral framework” (109). Through examples of movies starring John Wayne, this author illustrates the process whereby Modernism fueled “moral relativism and a growing lack of positive

metaphysical abstractions” (199), which expanded throughout post-WWII American cinema.

Whereas pre-war films maintained a clear distinction between right and wrong, movies steadily moved “toward the creation of a cultural landscape in which the distinctions between good and bad became blurred” (107) after the war, when the individual had difficulties finding a clear cut between good and evil and walked on the thin line demarcating sublime good deeds and devastating evilness. Ahab, as an Anti-Christ, has the polyglot crew of the *Pequod* as his followers and pacts with them to kill Moby Dick—a symbolic act that Huston employs to convey the novel’s great blasphemy.

Thus far, John Huston’s adaptation has generally met the audience’s horizon of expectations regarding *Moby-Dick*’s canonical perceptions. Viewers have identified elements of the film with good or evil or, more recently, have appreciated the film as an example of the trend blurring this binary in post-WWII cinema. In Melville’s deliberate ambiguity, Huston found a canvas to explore this theme further, with the novel and film complementing each other.

Contrary to Melville’s earlier novels, *Moby-Dick* presents a nuanced exploration of good and evil, displeasing readers with its unconventional structure. While Melville’s audience was accustomed to complex themes, his earlier successes, like *Typee* (1846) and *Omoo* (1847), were rooted in their exotic South Seas settings, where Melville criticized colonialism and missionary activities. In *Moby-Dick*, Melville capitalizes on the sea’s allure and Pacific legends, yet its oceanic setting serves purposes beyond mere adventure-seeking readers.

Melville utilizes the sea and Ishmael to endow the text with metaphysical uncertainty, hindering any definitive association of the novel’s symbols with good and evil. For instance, in Chapter 1, “Loomings,” Ishmael engages in philosophical speculation and seeks categorical answers to his questions. As the narrative unfolds, however, Ishmael realizes that he cannot reconcile every symbol he encounters with a singular, definitive meaning—an ambiguity extended to readers attempting to interpret the novel as a cohesive whole.

In the same vein, Ishmael’s parsing of the color white in “The Whiteness of the Whale” is arguably another map that works together with “Extracts” to explore the meaning of the whale and its peculiar hue. Ishmael sees white as such a “vague, nameless horror” and “so mystical and well nigh ineffable” that he “almost despair[s] of putting it in a

comprehensible form” (Melville, *Moby-Dick* 151). Furthermore, the terrible creatures Ishmael gives as examples of acquiring the “elusive quality” of white (like the white shark) are described in quasi-oxymoronic terms, displaying an “abhorrent mildness” owing to the opposite emotions aroused by the contrast between their nature and outer appearance, making them “the *transcendent horrors* they are” (Melville, *Moby-Dick* 152, my emphasis).

The chapter “The Whiteness of the Whale” exemplifies why *Moby-Dick* is an artistically emancipatory, groundbreaking text in its ambiguous definition of good and evil. Ishmael employs rhetorical tactics in assembling this chapter to explain what the white whale and its color mean to him, contrasting with the evil they signify to Ahab, but Ishmael’s rhetoric does not lead to a definitive conclusion, as the color white (and, ergo, the white whale) has both good and evil associations interacting within it.

The novel plays a two-level game with the reader. First, readers expect a whaling adventure novel when they start reading it. In fact, Melville, in a letter to his editor, defined the first draft as “a romance of adventure, founded upon certain wild legends in the Southern Sperm Fisheries, and illustrated by the author’s own personal experience, of two years and more, as a harpooneer” (qtd. in Gray 121). What readers found in *Moby-Dick* subverted genre expectations: instead of a straightforward narrative of a whaling voyage, the novel dispenses with the generic conventions and rejects being merely the romance Melville described to his editor. As such, *Moby-Dick* is based on a legend and contains fantastic, preternatural occurrences, partially fitting Walter Scott’s definition of romance as a “fictitious narrative in prose . . . ; the interest of which turns upon marvelous or uncommon incidents” (Abrams et al. 20–21). But Melville went beyond what readers could expect from a romance of adventure by joining writers who broadened the restrictive concept of genre, a process that began in the eighteenth century with the appearance of genre-mixing texts. The work’s eclecticism increases its elusiveness in defining the color white, leaving the reader guessing whether it embodies good or evil. Melville defied the unambiguous allegorical mode by introducing whiteness as a symbol that escapes Ishmael’s rhetoric, scientific observation, and the multiplicity of voices of the novel, testing readers’ assumptions of white as a symbol of purity through a text where the meaning of one of its most important symbols is constantly deferred.

Thus, the union of the dangerous whale and the inscrutable white color, coupled with the unclear identification of Moby Dick as good or evil, prevail over Ahab and his crew. To Ishmael, white overwhelms humans, as its indefiniteness reflects “the heartless voids and immensities of the universe” and right after “stabs us from behind with the thought of annihilation, when beholding the white depths of the milky way” (Melville, *Moby-Dick* 157). Above all, Ishmael makes the color white stand for emptiness, for nothing, “the visible absence of color” that at the same time is “the mystical cosmetic which produces every one of [nature’s] hues, the great principle of light,” but “for ever remains white or colorless in itself,” “all-color of atheism” (Melville, *Moby-Dick* 157). As a result, at the novel’s end, Moby Dick remains a mysterious symbol, neither good nor evil, but an enduring, powerful force that no one can defeat or comprehend.

3. CONCLUSIONS: THE APPRECIATION OF AMBIGUITY IN A TIME OF MORAL UNCERTAINTY

The blurring of good and evil in Melville’s *Moby-Dick* stems from the author’s skepticism and romantic strain, while the WWII context is pivotal in Huston’s adaptation.

In Melville’s novel, the white whale is the main symbol of good and evil, and Ishmael cannot but blur out the distinction between both opposites when confronting the monster. To combine good and evil in Moby Dick’s ambiguous meaning, the evidence suggests that Melville drew on the Burkean sublime, which manifests itself in how opposites blend and produce sublimity.

Ishmael, the sole survivor and arguably the most compelling character, expresses the most inaccurate judgments about Moby Dick’s significance. Ishmael is eventually unable to apprehend the leviathan, and the most he can do is look at Moby Dick and its whiteness as a powerful abstraction with ambiguous meaning. Melville’s doubts about humanity’s ability to grasp the world’s significance gave rise to the white whale, a symbol breaking with Puritan certainty based on moral certainty and the transcendentalist accurate connection between the written word and reality.

Comparing Huston’s *Moby Dick* (1956) with his prior works reveals consistent artistic and aesthetic themes. Both in the noir *The Maltese Falcon* (1941) and *The Treasure of the Sierra Madre* (1948), he explored

the destructive effects of greed and pride, which blind individuals and lead to ruin. His documentary *Let There Be Light* (1946) delved into the emotional scars borne by American veterans returning from WWII, and Melville's *Moby-Dick* provided fertile ground to continue exploring the consequences of encounters between tortured souls and human pride.

Notwithstanding the time that separates *Moby-Dick* from Huston's movie adaptation, the novel underwent a reevaluation in the post-WWII era, when the director interpreted the ambiguity of symbolism in the Melvillian novel in light of a trend emphasizing the liminal space between good and evil in post-WWII cinema. This shift in the appraisal and interpretation of *Moby-Dick* aligns with the principles of fluidity and dynamism of text in reception theory and Postmodernism: *Moby-Dick* has never been a static entity but re-read and reinterpreted by different generations and in different eras. Its heterogeneity of genre and symbolic openness regarding good and evil might have caused it not to meet the horizon of expectations of nineteenth-century readers, but later generations found it to be an emancipatory work addressing existential doubts about morality in a hostile world.

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Queering the Vietnam Trauma Narrative in Ocean Vuong's *On Earth We're Briefly Gorgeous*

Queering la narrativa del trauma de Vietnam en *On Earth We're Briefly Gorgeous* de Ocean Vuong

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Abstract: Veteran memoirs, imbued with white, masculinist bias, dominate US perceptions of the Vietnam War. Drawing from an intersectional approach to trauma studies, this article examines Ocean Vuong's novel *On Earth We're Briefly Gorgeous* (2019) as a rewriting of the paradigmatic Vietnam trauma narrative. Vuong challenges normative understandings of traumatic events by shedding light on the effects of the war upon female civilians and their descendants, as well as on the traumatogenic aftermath of all-American masculinist violence for its queer, Asian American protagonist. Vuong also calls for an alternative model to working through trauma based on empathy and relationality.

Keywords: Vietnam War; Ocean Vuong; trauma; queer.

Summary: Introduction. The Vietnam War Story. Rewriting the Vietnam Trauma Narrative in *On Earth We're Briefly Gorgeous*. Writing as Healing? Conclusions.

Resumen: Las memorias de veteranos, imbuidas de un sesgo blanco y masculinista, dominan las percepciones estadounidenses de la guerra de Vietnam. Partiendo de un enfoque interseccional de los estudios del trauma, este artículo examina la novela de Ocean Vuong *On Earth We're Briefly Gorgeous* (2019) como una reescritura de esta narrativa del trauma paradigmática. Vuong desafía las definiciones normativas del trauma, denunciando los efectos de la guerra sobre las civiles y sus descendientes, así como las secuelas de la violencia masculinista sobre su protagonista queer y asiático-americano. Además, Vuong reclama un modelo alternativo para trabajar el trauma basado en la empatía y la relacionalidad.

Palabras clave: Guerra de Vietnam; Ocean Vuong; trauma; queer.

Sumario: Introducción. La narrativa de la Guerra de Vietnam. Reescribiendo la narrativa del trauma de Vietnam en *On Earth We're Briefly Gorgeous*. ¿Escritura como cura? Conclusión.

INTRODUCTION

The Vietnam War continues to grip the American imagination, turned into an ideological arena for questions of masculinity, race, and exceptionalism. From Hollywood blockbusters to bestseller novels, the white ex-combatant perspective has reigned supreme in popular accounts of the conflict, privileging the exploration of the soldiers' traumatized psyche. These works have disseminated a particular vision of the war, intrinsically linked with hypermasculinity, whiteness, and heterosexism, that has rendered the marginal views of Vietnamese locals invisible. However, in recent years, writing penned by Vietnamese-American writers has offered new perspectives on the "American war," seeking to fill in the gaps left in memory and history by hegemonic narratives. In this context, Ocean Vuong's debut novel *On Earth We're Briefly Gorgeous* (2019) stands as a powerful contribution to the Vietnam War literary canon. Through the story of Little Dog, a queer Vietnamese-American narrator, Vuong's novel reimagines the paradigmatic Vietnam War story, challenging dominant conceptions of gender, sexuality, and trauma.

In this article I will examine the rewriting of the Vietnam trauma narrative in *On Earth We're Briefly Gorgeous*, drawing from an intersectional approach to trauma theory, informed by feminist and postcolonial tenets. By concentrating on the experiences of female Vietnamese civilians, as well as the narrator's reality as a racialized, queer immigrant in the United States, Vuong's novel inscribes an othered standpoint into the memory of the war and explores the traumatogenic aftermath of the American masculinist cult of violence in both the Vietnamese past and the American present. Besides, this article will claim, *On Earth* challenges the individualist approach to healing proposed by Western trauma paradigms, calling instead for acts of empathy and community as the path to working through the traumatic past. In so doing, I contend, the novel adopts a sociopolitical approach to trauma, aligned with the denunciation of insidious oppression and political compromise that are the keynote of intersectional reappraisals of trauma studies.

1. THE VIETNAM WAR STORY

1.1 Masculinity, Race and the Vietnam Veteran

In *War and Gender* (2001), Joshua Goldstein explores how gender identity becomes “a tool with which societies induce men to fight” (252), attaching the achievement of manhood to qualities such as physical courage, endurance, strength, honor, and sexual prowess. Men who fail to comply with this standard are publicly shamed and held as a corrective example, particularly by associating their lack of virility with homosexuality and effeminacy. Hence, under the militaristic cult of violence, gender and sexuality become “a code for domination” (Goldstein 333), whereby enemies and subordinates are gendered as feminine, and defeat is conveyed in terms of castration.

These codes animated political and social discourses on the Vietnam War. The American intervention in the country was projected as a “Western ‘Orientalist fantasy’ of sexual conquest in Asia” (Goldstein 359), interwoven with longstanding racist discourses that conceptualized Asian males as effeminate,¹ and all-American myths of exceptionalism. As Ron Eyerman puts it, the American youth was recruited as much by the draft board as by the cultural discourses that linked masculinity with warmongering and patriotic sacrifice (20).

This normative construction of masculinity undergirds the plethora of novels, memoirs, and films on the Vietnam War, which have become the dominant intertext mediating the conflict for the American public. It would be difficult to overestimate the salience of books such as Tim O’Brien’s *The Things They Carried* (1990), Philip Caputo’s *Indian Country* (1987), or Larry Heinemann’s *Paco Story* (1987), and films such as Oliver Stone’s *Platoon* (1986) and *Born on the Fourth of July* (1989), Michael Cimino’s *The Deer Hunter* (1978), or Francis Ford Coppola’s *Apocalypse Now* (1979) for the construction of the collective memory of the conflict.

Even a cursory glance at this cluster of works evidences the overpowering predominance of the veteran perspective in what Susan Faludi has christened “the Vietnam War Story” (1999). The prototypical

¹ As David L. Eng has argued at length (18), the historical division of labor and citizenship in terms of gender and race in America has located male Asian bodies at the intersection of a double discrimination, whereby they are projected as effeminate, queer, and subordinate to the white, cis-heterosexual male citizen.

Vietnam War story, labeled the “Vietnam Veteran Narrative” by Christina D. Weber, centers on the experience of the white male veteran, who stands as a banner of unjustly discriminated masculinity. In these accounts, the Narrator is identified with the Good Son—as opposed to the undutiful draft dodgers—bound to attain the social power allotted to the masculine subject through the rite of passage of war. Nonetheless, the American defeat at the hands of North Vietnamese soldiers denies the veteran identification with the patriarchal figure of domination and dispels his ability to maintain belief in American exceptionalism. As Faludi puts it:

The frontier, the enemy, the institutions of brotherhood, the women in need of protection—all the elements of the old formula of attaining manhood had vanished in short order. The boy who had been told he was going to be the master of the universe and all that was in it found himself master of none. (30)

His passage into social power castrated, the protagonist of the Vietnam War story finds himself doubly stigmatized, as he faces public backlash on part of the anti-war majority and is chided for indiscipline and lack of manliness by war supporters. In popular narratives such as the *Rambo* films, the Vietnam veteran appears as an “emblem of an unjustly discriminated masculinity,” victimized by society, and betrayed by the feminized, weak-willed political establishment (Jeffords 116).

Contemporary discourses and accounts of the Vietnam War, in a word, were permeated by a hierarchical structure that linked power, whiteness, and masculinist codes of violence, privileging the experience of the white veteran and alienating the perspective of those othered by hegemonic codes of masculinity: women, queer, and racialized men. Even though drafting took a disproportionate toll on the African American population, and there was a remarkable presence of Hispanic soldiers and women in the front, these viewpoints are eroded from popular renderings of the conflict in favor of the white ex-combatant stance. Likewise obliterated is the experience of the hundreds of thousands of Vietnamese civilians that fell prey to Agent Orange, Napalm, bombings, poverty or famine.

1.2 Classical Trauma Theory and Intersectional Reappraisals

The centrality of white, male experiences which suffuses canonical Vietnam War stories is also at the core of one of the most salient offshoots of the conflict: modern trauma theory.

Trauma studies as conceived today are indebted to the psychoanalytical theories of Sigmund Freud. In *Studies on Hysteria* (1895), Freud and Breuer formulated trauma as a malfunctioning of conscious memory caused by the subject's incapacity to assimilate an overwhelming event, which is lodged in the mind without being fully registered into ordinary narrative memory. The traumatic reminiscence remains repressed during a period of latency, "completely absent from the patient's memory when they are in a normal psychological state," but lying "astonishingly intact" and with "remarkable sensory force" in the threshold of consciousness (Freud and Breuer 9–10). Because of its unassimilated nature, the traumatic memory can be triggered by any stressor in the present, manifesting compulsively and involuntarily in the form of intrusive hallucinations, dreams, or flashbacks, in a vivid reliving of the events that, "like an unladen ghost" (281), haunts the subject. Thus, trauma takes place in a two-stage process, dubbed "belatedness" by Cathy Caruth (18): the event is not experienced fully at the time of its occurrence, but rather in its recurring possession of the subject, in a phase known as "acting out."

As is well documented, activism by Vietnam veteran associations and rap groups pressed the American Psychiatry Association to recognize post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) as an official diagnosis in 1980. In its definition, the APA's 1987 *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual* described trauma as "an event that is outside the range of normal human experience," threatening to life or limb (247). The suffering of such events lead to the appearance of a series of symptoms such as the unconscious "acting out" of traumatic memories, hyperarousal, emotional numbing, substance abuse, and outbursts of violence; comprised under the stamp of PTSD. Within the APA's conception of trauma, the war veterans' harrowing war experiences—violence, bombings, injuries, torture—were viewed as the archetypical instance of an event "outside the range of normal human experience" and have become shorthand for what is popularly understood as trauma (247).

In the 1990s, the work of Yale scholars such as Cathy Caruth or Geoffrey Hartman, who applied medical insights on trauma to the analysis

of literary texts, inaugurated the burgeoning field of Trauma Studies. Thereafter, feminist and postcolonial interventions into trauma scholarship have contested the narrow, biased understanding of trauma in its classical conception. The seminal feminist psychologist Laura S. Brown spells out how, in the DSM definition,

The range of human experience becomes the range of what is normal and usual in the lives of men of the dominant class; white, young, able-bodied, educated, middle-class, Christian men. Trauma is thus that which disrupts these particular human lives, but no other. War and genocide, which are the work of men and male-dominated culture, are agreed-upon traumata. Public events, visible to all, rarely themselves harbingers of stigma for their victims, things that can and do happen to men, all of these constitute trauma in the official lexicon. “Real” trauma is often only that form of trauma in which the dominant group can participate as a victim rather than as the perpetrator or etiology of the trauma. (“Not Outside” 121–22)

Or, as Rodi-Risberg succinctly puts it: “not all trauma victims are constructed equally” (115). Against the conventional understanding of trauma as individual and event-based, feminist psychology widens the lens to a broader spectrum of traumata, shedding light on “the traumatogenic effects of oppression that are not necessarily overtly violent or threatening to bodily well-being, but which do violence to the soul and spirit,” (Brown, “Not Outside” 128). Maria P.P. Root uses the case of rape to illustrate this concept of “insidious trauma” (240): due to the high rates of sexual assault among American women, awareness of the danger of rape may cause women who have not suffered it to exhibit symptoms akin to rape victims, including hypervigilance, avoidance or emotional numbness. Similar insidious traumata haunt other marginalized groups:

The African-American who must constantly anticipate a Howard Beach, the lesbian or gay man who must walk in fear of being murdered for who they love, the person with a disability never knowing when she or he will be dropped, perhaps fatally, through the cracks of the social so-called safety net. (Brown, “Not Outside” 128)

A parallel warning against the shortcomings of the classical trauma paradigm is taken up by postcolonial criticism. In his seminal monograph *Postcolonial Witnessing* (2013), Stef Craps contends that the uncritical adoption of a Western event-based model of trauma fails to account for the

experiences of non-Western cultures and diasporic, postcolonial, or disenfranchised groups living in Western countries. For instance, the feelings of self-hatred and inferiority caused by the continuous exposure to racist stereotypes and prejudices among racialized communities are unaccounted for by the “accident model” of trauma studies, but are described by Frantz Fanon as akin to “psychic splitting and physical amputation” in their traumatic dimension (qtd. in Craps and Buelens 3).

Against the exclusionary Eurocentric paradigm, intersectional emendations of the field advocate for widening definitions of trauma to encompass the psychological pain caused by the insidious experiences of marginalization and exclusion lived under the structures of racism and colonization.² This represents a shift in focus from events to living conditions as the source of trauma, since, as Craps asserts, “for many disempowered groups, trauma is a constant presence, meaning that there is no pre-traumatized state of being that can be restored in any straightforward manner” (33).

Intersectional trauma criticism also draws attention to how the uncritical cross-cultural application of event-based notions of trauma “fails to live up to its promise of cross-cultural ethical engagement” (Craps 2), reproducing instead the practices and structures that sustain inequality. Since racist, sexist, or homophobic oppression are not occurrences “outside the range of normal human experience,” but rather “the intended consequences of institutionalized forms of discrimination” (Brown, “Feminist” 465), those who respond with psychic pain to these subthreshold traumata are pathologized and chemically silenced, “consigned to the category of less-than-human, less-than-deserving of fair treatment” (Brown, “Not Outside” 124). In its biased recognition of valid sources of psychic pain, then, Western paradigms of trauma sanction the perpetuation of social and political discrimination, further disempowering the disenfranchised communities subjected to insidious oppression, and turning Western culture into “a factory for the production of so many walking wounded” (Brown, “Not Outside” 123).

² Labels such as complex PTSD (Herman), insidious trauma (Root), postcolonial traumatic stress disorder (Turia) or oppression-based trauma (Spanierman and Poteat) have been suggested to expand the scope of DSM definition of PTSD to account for the chronic psychic suffering caused by structural oppression.

2. REWRITING THE VIETNAM TRAUMA NARRATIVE IN *ON EARTH WE'RE BRIEFLY GORGEOUS*

The reclaiming of othered forms of psychic suffering rehearsed by intersectional reappraisals of trauma studies is at the core of Ocean Vuong's rearticulation of the memory of the Vietnam conflict in *On Earth We're Briefly Gorgeous*.

Vuong's novel has been described as a work at the crossroads of "the epistolary novel, the coming-of-age story, and the coming-out novel" (Neumann 279). Written as Little Dog's, Vuong's alter ego, epistle to his illiterate mother, the novel is composed by fragmented, highly lyrical vignettes, recounting Little Dog's memories across different times and settings, intertwined with episodes from the war recounted by his grandmother. The narrator reflects upon his family's history in Vietnam and immigration to the States and grapples with his experiences growing up in Hartford, Connecticut, as the son of an immigrant single mother, and a queer Asian-American. The novel dwells especially in Little Dog's struggles with identity and sexuality, particularly in relation with Trevor, a white boy with whom he shares his romantic and sexual awakening.

By foregrounding the aftermath of war and migration for Vietnamese civilians, as well as the overlapping of race, class, and sexual oppression upon arrival to America, Vuong introduces into the idiosyncratic Vietnam War narrative the subjectivities and experiences historically been deemed "outside the range." In this sense, Vuong follows in the footsteps of the so-called "1.5 generation" of Vietnamese-American writers,³ who have sought to revise the American-centeredness of popular accounts of the conflict, narrating the Vietnamese experience of war and displacement and grappling with questions of identity and belonging in the new continent (Tuon 4). By centering the perspectives alienated in mainstream Vietnam stories as an enunciative site, these narratives amount to an effort for creating a post- or counter-memory, resisting "the erasure of Vietnamese

³ Some notable instances of this corpus are Lan Cao's *Monkey Bridge* (1997), Lê Thị Diễm Thúy's *The Gangster We Are All Looking For* (2003), Anh Vu Sawyer's *Song of Saigon* (2003), Aimee Phans' *We Should Never Meet* (2004), Nguyen Kien's *The Unwanted* (2001), Bich Minh Nguyen's *Stealing Buddha's Dinner* (2007), the short story anthologies *Other Moons* (2020) and *Family of Fallen Leaves* (2010), etc. Some of these works, including Hieu Minh Nguyen's *This Way to the Sugar* (2014), Monique Troung's *The Book of Salt* (2004) or Viet Thanh Nguyen's *The Refugees* (2017) address issues of sexuality, anticipating Vuong's grappling with queerness in his writings.

existence and experience” from the collective remembrance of the war (Ryeng 27).

2.1 “This Man-made Storm”: The Other Side of Vietnam Trauma

In the typical fashion of Vietnam War stories, the traumatic aftershock of the conflict takes a central role in *On Earth*. PTSD symptoms, a commonplace of veteran memoirs, are exhibited by Little Dog’s mother and grandmother, Rose and Lan. Both women are, in Lan’s own words, “sick in the brains” (103): they suffer flashbacks from the American air raids upon hearing the Fourth of July fireworks, are plagued by nightmares, and bear a constant feeling of threat—as when Rose maniacally counts money to buy a secret bunker (72) or makes Little Dog check if the dress she intends to buy is “fireproof” (9). Rose’s frequent beatings of Little Dog can also be ascribed to the outbursts of violence and emotional numbing perceived among PTSD patients. The novel’s showcasing of the traumatic aftermath of the war for its civilian victims entails a turn away from traditional narratives on the Vietnam conflict, shifting the focus from the male combatant to the overlooked reality of the Vietnamese victims.

Significantly, besides the usual stressors present in a military conflict—raids, bombs, the impending threat of death—many of the traumatogenic situations endured by Lan and Rose are gender-inflected, specific to the experience of women. In line with Vietnamese patriarchal traditions, Lan is labeled “the rot of the harvest” (33) for escaping her forced marriage to a man thirty years her senior, disowned by her own mother, and forced to work as a prostitute for American “johns.” Decades later, recounting her story to Little Dog, she reminisces about “how the soldiers’ boots were so heavy, when they kicked them off as they climbed into bed, the thumps sounded like bodies dropping, making her flinch under their searching hands” (40). After the war’s end, the village ostracizes her as “a traitor and a whore” for sleeping with American soldiers (52).

The half-white Rose, in turn, is shunned for being a “ghost-girl” and harassed by the village’s children, who cut her auburn hair and slap “buffalo shit” on her skin “to make her brown again” (52). When the war ends, the famine forces her to abort her firstborn, who is “scraped out of [her], like seeds from a papaya, with only Novocain injected between [her] thighs,” in a hospital that “still smelled of smoke and gasoline” (114). After her family migrates to the States fleeing Vietnam’s widespread poverty,

she becomes a victim of domestic abuse, in an on-and-off toxic relationship culminating in a nearly deadly beating.

Particularly telling of the Vietnamese women's distinct experience of the "man-made storm" (30) of war are the parallel vignettes that depict Lan crossing an American patrol checkpoint carrying her daughter, permeated by the looming threat of rape or assault; and a group of American businessmen hacking a macaque monkey's skull open to devour its brain as a cure against impotence. The montage of these two scenes, which takes up a large section of Part I, invokes images of the predatory consumption of Orientalized, vulnerable bodies, animal and woman alike, at the whim of Western fantasies of masculine dominance.

The fact that these gender-declined traumatic events—forced marriages, rape, prostitution, gender violence—prove as harrowing for Lan and Rose as mainstream stressors of war testifies to the inadequacy of the definition of traumatic events as "outside the range of normal human experience" (247), since these are all too common occurrences in the lives of women worldwide. In illuminating the traumatic potential of the insidious oppression in women's experiences, overlooked in the canonical conceptions of trauma dictated by men's experiences, the novel enacts a further shift away from the paradigmatic Vietnam trauma narrative.

2.2 "When Does a War End?": Intergenerational Transmission of Trauma

At the onset of his epistle, Little Dog raises a rhetorical question to his mother: "When does a war end?" (9). Trauma theory provides an uneasy answer to Little Dog's inquiry: the distressing effects of traumatic events are not circumscribed to those directly affected by the experience, but can be vicariously absorbed across generations and acted out by the victims' descendants. A valuable contribution to this notion is the "theory of the phantom" formulated by psychoanalysts Nicolas Abraham and Maria Torok in *The Shell and the Kernel*. Abraham and Torok postulate that descendants of trauma victims might unconsciously become the lodgers of the silenced traumas of their forebears (173). This vicarious traumatization may trigger PTSD symptoms such as anxiety, nightmares, guilt, hypervigilance, and difficulties in interpersonal functioning, a compulsion to enact the parents' traumas, and struggles in establishing firm demarcations between "the time after" and "the immediacy of the present" (Aarons and Berger 34).

All these signs of vicarious traumatization become apparent in Little Dog's account. Throughout the novel, his mother's and grandmother's traumatic experiences compulsively haunt his imagination, besieging his narrative like a "flood" (65). Some of these episodes are transmitted through Lan's oral narration. Some others, however, have not even been witnessed by nor explicitly narrated to Little Dog, but still plague his memories, in tune with the phantom-like transgenerational transmission of trauma described by Abraham and Torok. The vivid imagery and sensory quality of these episodes correspond with the unassimilated nature and belated manifestation of traumatic memories. In this sense, Little Dog becomes a reservoir for his family's trauma, which becomes, in his own words,

A bullet lodged inside him. He'd feel it floating on the right side of his chest, just between the ribs. The bullet was always here, older even than himself—and his bones, tendons, and veins had merely wrapped around the metal shard, sealing it inside him. It wasn't me, the boy thinks, who was inside my mother's womb, but this bullet, this seed I bloomed around. (64)

In this portrayal of the longstanding harm endured by the Vietnamese population and its descendants, *On Earth* treads one step further away from normative narratives about the war, further evidencing the inadequacy of individual, event-based paradigms for conceptualizing what counts as trauma.

2.3 “The Dialect of Damaged American Fathers”: Masculinity, Race, and Insidious Trauma

Hitherto, this paper has looked at Vuong's articulation of a trauma narrative on the Vietnamese past, one that brings the experience of female civilians and their descendants to the forefront to contest veteran-centered accounts of the war. However, the American cult of masculinist, colonial violence that informed military aggression in Vietnam is not conscripted to the bygone experiences of the conflict, but remains ubiquitous in Little Dog's American present. As a queer, immigrant Asian American boy, Little Dog falls prey to the same all-American masculinity that encouraged imperialist violence against his foremothers.

As Goldstein remarks, the first manifestations of the military code of manhood can be located in the “toughening up process” and “socialization

for aggression” of young boys, which turns into “the seed of later homophobia,” and works toward the perpetuation of normative gender roles (290). As someone marked from an early age as a “queer yellow faggot” (166), Little Dog fails to live up to requirements of all-American masculinity, and is severely punished for it. Throughout his childhood, he is repeatedly humiliated by his classmates for his perceived effeminacy: he is called “freak, fairy, fag” after being seen playing with his mother’s dress (11), thrown off his pink bike by an older boy who scrapes the paint off the metal, and publicly branded a “FAG4LIFE” by a red spray graffito on his front door (151). The most illustrative episode in this regard takes place when Little Dog is bullied by one of his classmates on the school bus. The boy’s words, charged with sexist codes of domination, reveal the all-pervasiveness of masculinity and aggression in young boys’ socialization:

‘Don’t you ever say nothin’? Don’t you speak English?’ He grabbed my shoulder and spun me to face him. ‘Look at me when I’m talking to you.’ He was only nine but had already mastered the dialect of damaged American fathers. When I did nothing but close my eyes, the boy slapped me. ‘Say something.’ He shoved his fleshy nose against my blazed cheek. ‘Can’t you say even one thing?’ The second slap came from above, from another boy. Bowlcut cupped my chin and steered my head toward him. ‘Say my name then . . . Like your mom did last night.’ . . . I willed myself into a severe obedience and said his name. ‘Again,’ he said. ‘Kyle.’ ‘Louder.’ ‘Kyle.’ My eyes still shut. ‘That’s a good little bitch.’ (20)

Significantly, Little Dog’s own mother partakes of the process of “manning him up,” encouraging him to become “a real boy and be strong” (22), and systematically assaulting him until he is finally capable of standing up to her, an act that Little Dog rationalizes by relating it to his mother’s condition: “I read that parents suffering from PTSD are more likely to hit their children. Perhaps to lay hands on your child is to prepare him for war” (10). Furthermore, when Little Dog comes out as gay to her, Rose laments the “healthy, normal boy” she gave birth to (110) and warns him against the homophobic aggressions that he is bound to confront: “They’ll kill you. They kill people for wearing dresses. You know that” (110). Rose, well aware of the price to pay for being alien to the American standard, reproduces the equation of masculinity and violence with power, attempting to ensure her son’s survival.

These direct attacks are intertwined in Little Dog's narration with pieces of news relating episodes of homophobic aggressions, which appear as cautionary tales of the consequences for those deemed deviant by heterosexism:

A few months before our talk at Dunkin' Donuts, a fourteen-year-old boy in rural Vietnam had acid thrown in his face after he slipped a love letter into another boy's locker. Last summer, twenty-eight-year-old Florida native Omar Mateen walked into an Orlando nightclub, raised his automatic rifle, and opened fire. Forty-nine people were killed. It was a gay club and the boys, because that's who they were—sons, teenagers-looked like me: a colored thing born of one mother, rummaging the dark, each other, for happiness. (116)

Little Dog's inability to fit in the cage of American masculinity as a queer boy is aggravated by him being a first-generation Asian migrant: his bullies urge him to "speak English" (20), his mother forces him to drink American milk to "erase all the dark inside him with a flood of brightness" (22), and he feels compelled to become "invisible in order to be safe" (80) in a country where normalcy comes only in "pink and beige" (51). These insidious racist aggressions become a further source of inadequacy and self-loathing for Little Dog.⁴

The grievous consequences of straying from the rules of white, all-American manhood are epitomized in Little Dog's relationship with Trevor, which is warped by internalized homophobia and racial power dynamics. In the novel, Trevor is equated with "the fabric and muscle of American masculinity" (170): he is white, charismatic, athletic, drives big trucks, enjoys baseball and shooting, and often wears a soldier's helmet, which explicitly evokes the image of the masculine hero. Because of his internalization of the codes of manhood, Trevor is unable to come to terms with his own sexuality: he cries "in the dark, the way boys do" the first time he and Little Dog "fake fuck" (97), refuses to be topped by Little Dog because "he don't wanna feel like a girl, like a bitch" (102), asks Little Dog "You think you'll be really gay, like, forever? I mean, I think me... I'll be good in a few years, you know?" (179), and begs him to "Please tell me I am not a faggot. Am I? Am I? Are you?" (158). Trevor's drug addiction and eventual overdose, Amin reasons at length, can even be

⁴ For an in-depth exploration of the effects of internalized racism and colorism upon Little Dog, see Eren (2022).

interpreted as a form of self-harm motivated by internalized homophobia (273). As Trevor's storyline demonstrates, then, the rigid codes of masculinity allocated to American men prove harmful even for those granted dominant social positions. In Little Dog's words: "to be an American boy is to move from one end of a cage to another" (98).

Trevor and Little Dog's uneven relationship can also be read in terms of racial hierarchies. As Stephen Sohn argues in his discussion of the queer Asian-American identity,

The queer Asian North American man is often considered as the submissive, obedient partner, mainly matched in an interracial relationship with a Caucasian man. His relative status as the "bottom" is linked to the longer racialization of Asian North American men as effeminate, sexually deviant, and undesirable. (5)

Little Dog, subject to lifelong degradations on account of his sexuality and race, and perfectly aware that "he was white. I was yellow" (94), internalizes this emasculated position, and "lowers himself" before Trevor (100). The most telling episode in this regard occurs during their first anal sexual encounter, when Trevor's penis is stained. Little Dog's reaction testifies to his feelings of inferiority, shame and guilt: "I feared for what would come. It was my fault. I had tainted him with my faggotry, the filthiness of our act exposed by my body's failure to contain itself" (170). Little Dog, who had thought that "sex was to breach new ground, despite terror, that as long as the world did not see us, its rules did not apply" (102), soon realizes that gender and racial hierarchies "were already inside us" (102), condemning their relationship to secrecy and shame.

From the standpoint of intersectional trauma studies, the sustained assaults to Little Dog's bodily and emotional wellbeing for failing to comply with the standards of American racism and heterosexism classify among the subthreshold agents of "insidious trauma" deemed "outside the range" by normative definitions. Despite not being threatening to life or limb, these episodes of homophobic and racist violence become traumatic, unassimilated memories, repeatedly acted out in Little Dog's narration through fragmented, impressionistic vignettes, in line with the belated manifestation of traumatic experiences.

The trauma inflicted by both the vicarious reception of his family's memory and the insidious oppression of violent, white, all-American machismo triggers in Little Dog PTSD-like symptoms, including maimed

attachments with others, jumping between “elation” and “sadness” (152), recurring nightmares, and constant re-enactment of traumatic episodes. However, because his traumatic experiences are the fruit of “institutionalized forms of discrimination” (Brown, “Feminist” 465), his reaction is pathologized, deemed the abnormal result of “wrong chemicals in his brain,” of a “bipolar disorder” that must be targeted through medication (Vuong 152). Little Dog’s response to this prescriptive diagnosis can be aligned with the refusal to pathologize the psychic suffering of disenfranchised communities on part of feminist and postcolonial critics:

I don’t want my sadness to be othered from me just as I don’t want my happiness to be othered. They’re both mine. I made them, dammit. What if the elation I feel is not another “bipolar episode” but something I fought hard for? (152)

The scope of the novel’s portrayal of insidious trauma is multiplied by encompassing the experiences of other oppressed communities beyond Little Dog’s perspective: the Vietnamese women working alongside Rose in the nail salon, the Latino temporary workers collecting tobacco crops in Trevor’s farm, the “abuelas, abas, nanas, babas, and bà ngoàis” of Hartford raising the grandchildren left behind by estranged fathers (179), the lower-class kids overdosing with Oxycontin.

This portrayal of the aftermath of oppression for those outside the narrow confines of normalcy illustrates Laura Brown’s assertion that “our culture is a factory for the production of so many walking wounded” (“Not Outside” 123). In this, Vuong adheres to a socio-political approach to trauma akin to that heralded by postcolonial and feminist critics, which departs from the individual, event-based model to consider wider socio-political dynamics. As will be discussed in the following section, this approach also informs the novel’s grappling with the possibility of working through the traumatic past, which disregards the Eurocentric therapy paradigm in favor of politically charged acts of empathy and communal empowerment.

3. WRITING AS HEALING?

To halt the “acting out” of traumatic memories, Freud and Breuer devised “the talking cure” (30), a therapeutic method where patients were asked to

discuss their memories through free association of ideas. This inscription of traumatic events into a coherent narrative allowed patients to move on to a healing phase of “working through,” defusing the memory’s overwhelming effect.

Under the light of Freud’s notion of the talking cure, literature—or “scriptotherapy,” to use Suzette Henke’s term (12)—seems a privileged medium for the therapeutic reenactment of the traumatic experience. However, as Caruth notes in her influential monograph *Unclaimed Experience* (1996), because of its unassimilated nature, the narrativization of trauma is inevitably caught in a representational aporia: while the event demands narration to be integrated into the subject’s consciousness, by nature trauma precludes language and representation. To bridge this representational paradox, traumatic experiences demand a particular aesthetic, one that “incorporates the rhythms, processes and uncertainties of trauma within its consciousness and structures” (Vickroy xiv). This aesthetic must, following Roger Luckhurst, be “uncompromisingly avantgarde” (81), violating the conventions of realism in favor of disrupted linearity, suspended logical causation, repetition, gaps, open endings, and dispersed narrative voices that echo the unsettling workings of traumatic memory (Whitehead 161).

A priori, Vuong’s *On Earth* could be read as a talking cure, an attempt “to break free” from the traumatic past through writing (2). Vuong’s epistle is definitely attuned with the avantgarde aesthetic that Luckhurst prescribes for the integration of traumatic events into narrative memory. It presents, in Little Dog’s words, “not a story” but “a shipwreck—the pieces floating, finally legible” (160): he “travels in spirals” (23) through juxtaposed, fragmented stories, linked together by free association of ideas. The linear flow of the narrative is disrupted by repetitions and flashbacks, and complicated through lyrical narratorial intrusions, imitating the workings of a “fractured, short-wired” mind distorted by trauma (19). Vuong’s memoir seems to echo Little Dog’s question: “Why can’t the language for creativity be the language of regeneration?” (150), as he attempts to “fill in our blanks, our silences, stutters” (26), translating the past’s ghosts into a creative account that will grant him the power to exorcize them.

However, the narrative is permeated by a sense of failed delivery that undercuts the infallibility of the talking cure. Little Dog makes frequent allusions to his mother’s illiteracy and broken English. Little Dog is aware that, even though he is “writing to reach [her],” “each word [he] puts down

is one word further from where [she is]" (2), and acknowledges that "the very impossibility of [her] reading this is all that makes [his] telling it possible" (95). Thus, the validity of language—particularly of the colonial, Western-imposed code of English—to attain healing is challenged. The talking cure prescribed by normative understandings of trauma, it seems, is ineffective to convey the particular "queer yellow" location of Little Dog's experiences.

This failure of the therapeutic model acquires greater poignancy under the light of postcolonial trauma studies. Intersectional theorists have denounced the traditional talking cure as inadequate for rendering the experience of those othered by canonical definitions of trauma, because of its narrow focus on individual, event-based traumata, and its emphasis on the return to a pre-traumatic condition unavailable for those affected by insidious oppression. Postcolonial scholars have especially taken issue with the politically disempowering effect that the counseling paradigm holds for disenfranchised communities. As Craps and Buelens expound, the counseling model is permeated by uneven power dynamics, apt to reproduce racial, class, or gender imbalances:

The respective subject positions into which the witness and the listener/reader are interpellated are those of a passive, inarticulate victim on the one hand and a knowledgeable expert on the other. The former bears witness to a truth of which he or she is not fully conscious, and can do so only indirectly, making it impossible for his or her testimony to act as a political intervention. The latter responds to the witness's testimony by showing empathy, a reaction that supposedly obviates any need for critical self-reflection regarding his or her own implication in ongoing practices of oppression and denial, let alone political mobilization against those practices. (5–6)

Against this prescriptive and homogenizing therapeutic model, postcolonial scholars have called for a trauma paradigm "open and attentive to the diverse strategies of representation and resistance" created in non-canonical contexts (Craps 43), paying attention to local coping strategies alien to the Western counselling paradigm. For instance, postcolonial studies call attention to the "healing resources of family and community" (Konner 230), and "the transformative capacities of non-narrative, even non-linguistic reparation" (Kabir 66). Furthermore, they advocate for "a non-therapeutic relation to the past, structured around the notion of survival or living on rather than recovery" (Lloyd 220),

promoting an affirmative politics of agency, empowerment, or “post-traumatic growth” (Borzaga 74). In the same vein, feminist psychology adopts a relational-cultural model of trauma treatment, based on linking individual experience to its social causes, and raising awareness of one’s kinship with other survivors. In this shift from the individual to the collective, from victimization to empowerment, trauma acquires a more blatant political purchase, aiming to spark sociopolitical change.

In line with intersectional reroutings of trauma studies, Vuong’s *On Earth* narrates several episodes which illustrate alternative pathways to healing that step away from the prescriptive model of the talking cure, favoring instead acts of community, empathy, and resistance. One of these pictures can be pinned down in Lan’s oral storytelling to Little Dog, which weaves together fact and fiction, history, and stories, and is described as

Traveling in a spiral. As I listened, there would be moments when the story would change—not much, just a minuscule detail. Shifts in the narrative would occur—the past never a fixed and dormant landscape but one that is re-seen. (23)

Lan’s narration appears as an iteration of the idiosyncratic talking cure, but devoid of the pathologizing stance and uneven power dynamics that characterize it. As Vuong recounts in an interview, for Vietnamese women as his grandmother, doubly disenfranchised by war and diaspora, creating “a mythology of their lives” through the ancient tradition of oral storytelling was a way to acquire “rhetorical power,” to step out of their powerless status and inscribe their othered testimony into the “grand historical epic” of the conflict (qtd. in Brockes).

Another tableau of alternative “working through” is presented in one of Little Dog’s memories, when an amputee woman comes into his mother’s nail salon and nervously asks to receive a pedicure on her missing leg. No questions asked, Rose proceeds to wash and massage the phantom limb and is rewarded by a hundred-dollar tip. This episode stages an intimate, relational act of healing, as Rose acknowledges the vulnerability caused by the severing of the limb and carries out an embodied, compassionate attempt at metaphorical regeneration, animated by empathy rather than pathologizing judgement toward the woman’s pain.

But perhaps the most relevant instance of alternative paths to working through trauma occurs at the end of the novel when Rose and Little Dog return to Vietnam to lay Lan’s ashes to rest. Back at their Saigon hotel after

the burial, Little Dog is surprised by a neighborhood party in the small hours of the night, complete with food trucks, dancing, and a music performance by drag queens. This merrymaking, he discovers, is a common scene in Saigon, where the underfunded city coroners are unable to tend to night-shift deaths. Upon a sudden death in the middle of the night, then, a grassroots neighborhood movement pools money to hire a troupe of drag performers and organize a party with the aim of “delaying sadness” until the morning (189):

In Saigon, the sound of music and children playing this late in the night is a sign of death—or rather, a sign of a community attempting to heal. It’s through the drag performers’ explosive outfits and gestures, their overdrawn faces and voices, their tabooed trespass of gender, that this relief, through extravagant spectacle, is manifest. As much as they are useful, paid, and empowered as a vital service in a society where to be queer is still a sin, the drag queens are, for as long as the dead lie in the open, an othered performance. Their presumed, reliable fraudulence is what makes their presence, to the mourners, necessary. Because grief, at its worst, is unreal. And it calls for a surreal response. The queens—in this way—are unicorns. Unicorns stamping in a graveyard. (189)

In the drag queens’ performance, the embodied Otherness of being a “queer yellow faggot” that had sentenced Little Dog to a lifetime of insidious oppression becomes instead a source of regeneration and communal salve. While the homogenizing, dehistoricizing talking cure fails to become a vehicle to work through the pain, this alternative form of resistance, based upon the joyous reclaiming of difference and community, successfully brings about solace.

Despite denouncing the insidious oppression and violence exerted against Vietnamese-American, queer bodies, hence, *On Earth* also offers “a narrative of hope” (Ryeng 18), refusing to reduce his community to the passive status of pathologized victim, and choosing instead to empower it through acts of post-traumatic, communal survival.

CONCLUSIONS

This paper has examined the revision of traditional trauma narratives on the Vietnam War in Ocean Vuong’s novel *On Earth We’re Briefly Gorgeous*. As this article has noted, dominant accounts of the conflict

traditionally dealt with shell-shocked white veterans and built upon the equation of manhood with military, misogynistic, and homophobic values. In *On Earth*, Vuong neutralizes these discourses by shifting the focus to a female, queer, and diasporic perspective on the horrors and aftershock of the conflict. By bringing to the foreground the harrowing gendered violence imposed upon Rose and Lan and its vicarious consequences upon Little Dog, Vuong illuminates the experiences that hegemonic narratives of the Vietnam conflict have left in the dark. Moreover, if canonical Vietnam narratives promoted conservative notions of masculinity, race, and power that were leveraged to scorn gender, racial, and sexual difference, *On Earth* denounces the insidious oppression and aggression that arises from nonconformity with all-American standards. This rewriting is attuned with the intersectional forays into trauma theory by feminist and postcolonial critics, which disclose the traumatic aftermath of systemic oppression. The novel also points toward paths for relieving psychic pain other than the individual-based, medicalized logotherapy prescribed by classical conceptions of trauma, calling instead for communal acts of empathy and vulnerability which prompt interpersonal healing and political empowerment.

Appropriating the idiosyncratic vehicle for all-American discourses on the war, then, Ocean Vuong's *On Earth We're Briefly Gorgeous* queers the Vietnam trauma narrative to bring into the spotlight the stories of those who have historically been swept "outside the range." In so doing, Vuong joins the endeavor of the growing corpus of works produced by the Vietnamese-American 1.5 generation, who aim at building an inclusive counter-memory of the conflict. The migratory monarch allegory that is repeatedly invoked throughout *On Earth* serves as an apt metaphor for the post-memory endeavor carried out by Vuong and his fellow writers, as they attempt to grapple with and work through the trauma of the Vietnamese-American community:

The monarchs that fly south will not make it back north. Each departure, then, is final. Only their children return; only the future revisits the past. . . Monarchs that survived the migration passed this message down to their children. The memory of family members lost from the initial winter was woven into their genes. . . Sometimes, I imagine the monarchs fleeing not winter but the napalm clouds of your childhood in Vietnam. I imagine them flying from the blazed blasts unscathed . . . for thousands of miles across the sky, so that, looking up, you can no longer fathom the explosion they came

from. Only a family of butterflies floating in clean, cool air, their wings finally, after so many conflagrations, fireproof. (11, 15, 19)

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Oscar Wilde's Trials as a Haunting Presence: An Approach to the Role of Fantasy in Contemporary Neo-Victorian Novels Depicting Same-Sex Romance Between Men

La presencia fantasmal de los juicios de Oscar Wilde: Una aproximación al rol de la fantasía en las novelas neo-victorianas contemporáneas que representa el romance entre hombres

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Abstract: The main aim of this essay is to assess the impact of Oscar Wilde's trials on neo-Victorian representations of same-sex desire between men. Throughout the text, I argue that the consequences of Wilde's imprisonment have become a haunting presence that still pervades how male sexual dissidence is represented in neo-Victorian novels. The works examined in this essay are therefore considered differently than those which portray sapphic relationships or other forms of non-heterosexual desires. Ultimately, I argue that a new trend within neo-Victorianism, in which fantasy elements are intertwined with queer desire among men, could offer a new way of portraying same-sex desire between men; this new portrayal could be more in compliance with the political, cultural, and social agenda of neo-Victorianism. Through a brief analysis of Natasha Pulley's *The Watchmaker of Filigree Street* and a more in-depth exploration of Freya Marske's *A Marvellous Light*, I conclude that fantasy may—if the writer wishes it—allow a portrayal of queer desire that overcomes many of the traumatising and haunting obstacles which resulted from Wilde's plight.

Keywords: Neo-Victorian; Oscar Wilde; fantasy; Queer studies.

Summary: Introduction: The Labouchère Amendment. A Haunting Presence in Neo-Victorian Literature. Fantasy and the Representation of Same-Sex Desire Between Men in Contemporary Neo-Victorian Fiction. Conclusions.

Resumen: El objetivo principal de este ensayo es el de evaluar el impacto que los juicios de Oscar Wilde aún tienen sobre las representaciones del deseo homosexual entre hombres en los textos neo-victorianos. A lo largo del ensayo, desarrollo la idea de que las consecuencias del encarcelamiento de Wilde se han convertido en una especie de presencia espectral que se infiltra en la forma en la que el deseo sexualmente disidente es representado en las novelas neo-victorianas, separando así estos textos en un contexto completamente distinto al de las novelas del mismo género que representan relaciones heterosexuales o sáficas. Mi intención es demostrar la existencia de una nueva corriente dentro del neo-victorianismo que emplea elementos fantásticos en interacción con el deseo sexual y romántico entre hombres y que ofrece, de esta forma, una nueva representación de este tipo de deseo que está más en consonancia con la agenda cultural, política y social del neo-victorianismo. A través de un análisis breve de la obra *The Watchmaker of Filigree Street* de Natasha Pulley y de una exploración crítica más específica de la novela *A Marvellous Light* de Freya Marske, concluyó que lo fantástico puede—si así lo desean—ofrecer a los escritores de prosa neo-victoriana una manera de representar el deseo queer que consigue superar los efectos traumatizantes y espectrales heredados de los juicios de Wilde.

Palabras clave: Neo-Victoriano; Oscar Wilde; Fantasía; Estudios Queer

Sumario: Introducción: La Enmienda Labouchère. Una presencia espectral en la literatura neo-Victoriana. Fantasía y la representación del deseo homosexual entre hombre en la literatura contemporánea neo-Victoriana. Conclusiones.

INTRODUCTION: THE LABOUCHÈRE AMENDMENT

On April 26, 1895, a series of judicial proceedings concerning the Irish author and aesthete Oscar Wilde began at the Old Bailey in London. Wilde was sentenced to two years of imprisonment with hard labour, the harshest sentence that the British legal code could impose upon those found guilty of the crime of “gross indecency.” In this paper, I explore whether Wilde’s hugely traumatic experience acquired such power over culture and literature that it continues to haunt the neo-Victorian fictional genre. Furthermore, I explore how the recent surge in neo-Victorian novels depicting same-sex relationships between men that incorporate fantasy elements may demonstrate the direct impact of the trials’ haunting on this genre. These elements may actually dissipate or exorcise some of the representational restraints that can be found in the genre’s representation of male same-sex desire. Considering the fluid nature of a literary trend that has always been open to re-assessing and critically approaching the past; this new branch of novels may therefore be another milestone in neo-

Victorianism's quest to be "self-consciously engaged with the act of (re)interpretation, (re)discovery and (re)vision concerning the Victorians" (Heilmann and Llewellyn 4).

In other words, this essay poses two questions. Firstly, has the fear generated by Wilde's ordeal been encrypted into neo-Victorian representations of queer desire between men? Secondly, and more importantly, do fantasy elements have the potential to challenge this influence and portray this desire in a way that engages with the cultural agenda of neo-Victorianism without focusing on criminality and fear? Many late twentieth-century and contemporary texts set in the Victorian past represent loving and positive relationships between men. In asking the above questions, this paper thus examines whether neo-Victorian fantasy tales have a special potential to showcase these relationships while simultaneously engaging with other cultural concerns in a freer way than realistic novels, which are still influenced by Wilde's trials.

To achieve this aim, I follow a methodological approach in which I consider the way Queer Studies, neo-Victorianism, and fantasy interact, influence, and accommodate each other, with a special emphasis on how these three areas of academic interest may offer new ways to create and understand LGBTQ+ representation in a positive, considerate, and holistic manner. In my analysis, I focus on the representation of sexual dissidence in Natasha Pulley's *The Watchmaker of Filigree Street* and in Freya Marske's *A Marvellous Light*, and consider how this representation seems to defy the spectral presence of traumatic events which are often present in queer narratives between men.¹ I also briefly mention the many aspects in which this topic seems to interact with other issues related to gender, race, and legal history, thus indicating how the ideas presented here may offer great potential for further research.

However, before addressing these concerns, the social and cultural context of Wilde's trials must be carefully considered. Wilde's conviction was the direct result of the Criminal Law Amendment Act of 1885, specifically its eleventh section, known as the Labouchère Amendment:

Outrages on decency. Any male person who, *in public or private* commits, or is party to the commission of or procures (a) or attempts (b) to procure the commission by any male person of, any act of gross indecency (c) with

¹ This trauma is often illustrated as fear and anxiety about discovery, or shown by portraying homosexuality in an almost voyeuristic, reductive way.

another male person, shall be guilty of a misdemeanor, and being convicted thereof shall be liable at the discretion of the court to be imprisoned for any term not exceeding two years, with or without hard labour. (48 & 49 Vic. C. 69 s. 11 qtd. in Fone 335, my emphasis.)

Although the Labouchère Amendment did not consider the death penalty for homosexual acts, its text fomented a sense of paranoia and unsafety for queer men throughout the United Kingdom (Fize 5). For the first time in Britain's legal history, the acts condemned were those committed both in public and in private, meaning that men who had sex with other men had to be wary not only of what they did in public, but also of what might happen behind closed doors. The wording of the amendment was ambiguous, so many different affective displays between men could be condemned.

The amendment's greater accomplishment, however, came not only with Wilde's imprisonment, but also with the way in which this event consolidated the already pervasive sense of fear and paranoia among queer men. After Wilde's conviction became public, masses of people congregated outside the Old Bailey to celebrate the event (Bristow 405). The decades following Wilde's trials have been described as an era "understandabl[y] rife with sexual inhibitions in the aftermath of the Wilde's trials" (Martin and Piggford 12). These times, according to Eric Haralson carried within themselves a rage "unleashed by the 1895 trials [which] sought to demonize Wilde and to purge his kind out of the system" (19). As a consequence, many men "were fearful of being publicly linked with Wilde's milieu, especially after his arrest, which produced a 'general shudder' not only among gentlemen in London (as [Henry] James reported) but throughout all of Anglo-American society" (Bristow 59). Indeed, Henry James stated in a letter to his friend Edmund Gosse: "These are days in which one's modesty is, in every direction, much exposed, and one should be thankful for every veil that one can hastily snatch up" (James 12). We can therefore assume that Wilde's imprisonment, along with the public sexual scandals that followed the amendment, became a constant presence in the minds of queer men who were always aware of the legal consequences of their sexual orientations, even years after the trial's conclusion. Furthermore, considering that the Labouchère Amendment was not completely abolished in England until the passing of the 1967 Sexual Offences Act, (whereas homosexuality remained illegal in Scotland until 1980 and in Ireland until 1993), the fear induced by

Wilde's trials may still have remained encrypted in popular consciousness for almost a century. This lingering fear is addressed in the following section, and is arguably accountable for many of the points therein.

1. A HAUNTING PRESENCE IN NEO-VICTORIAN LITERATURE

Wilde's trials and the socio-cultural context surrounding them were a traumatising event for queer individuals. Considering, then, the self-evident interest of neo-Victorianism in the Victorian past, it follows that these events may appear as a ghost or spectre that haunts narratives dealing with romance and desire between men, even when they are not openly articulated or acknowledged. As Rosario Arias and Patricia Pulham argue:

the impact of the Victorian age on contemporary culture can be interpreted as a form of haunting and spectrality. The ghost's liminal existence, neither present nor absent, functions as a powerful metaphor for the dynamic relationship maintained between Victorianism and neo-Victorianism. (xxv)

In this sense, I believe that Wilde's trials and their surrounding context are an easily identifiable ghost that haunts neo-Victorianism. This is because, after all, the presence of same-sex desire between men in this literary current is neither an absence nor a presence, but something in between, something far more liminal, and contextualised by Wilde's legal misfortunes. For if "literature is permanently haunted by ghosts, revenants and spirits which travel across time and make an appearance in the form of textual/spectral traces" (Arias and Pulham xix), the neo-Victorian fiction—considering the way in which same sex desire between men is featured compared to that of sapphic desire—is definitely brimming with spectral and ominous traces. And these traces can, indeed, be better understood through the perspective of haunting conceived by Nicolas Abraham and Maria Torok: as a dark knowledge that conditions an individual and haunts their psyche through a process of generational trauma (17–20).

Neo-Victorianism is deeply connected to lesbian desire, romance, and identities. Of course, this literary and cultural phenomenon is vastly plural and encompasses many contemporary and historic concerns grounded in the Victorian era; as Cora Kaplan argues, neo-Victorianism perpetuates and updates Victorian concerns about "class, gender, empire and race" (5). However, it is possible to claim that some of the founding texts of this

genre are directly linked to sapphic desire and representation. Even before the term “neo-Victorian” was coined, A.S. Byatt’s *Possession*, a clear precursor to the genre, featured a (doomed) lesbian relationship that outlined the path followed by later contemporary novelists interested in the Victorian past. As such, we must remember that one of the founding stones of neo-Victorianism is Sarah Waters’s Victorian trilogy. According to Caroline Koegler and Marlena Tronicke, the first novel within this trilogy, *Tipping the Velvet*:

was hailed as ground-breaking . . . It not only shifted the lesbian novel away from the margins and into the mainstream of popular fiction, but also popularised a literary approach of queer writing-back to heteronormative historiography, illuminating the struggles, vibrancy, and desires of a diverse community operating in the interstices. (1)

With the ensuing publication of Waters’s *Affinity* and *Fingersmith*, “the cultural representation of nineteenth-century queerness . . . gained considerable momentum” regarding queer subjectivities and their potential existence in the Victorian era (Koegler and Tronicke 2–5). These novels, of course, still contain a sense of being haunted; their protagonists experience many harrowing situations (especially in *Affinity*). However, the novels portray sapphic desire in such a way that—contrary to how many texts that represent same-sex desire between men—resonates with the finer cultural expectations of neo-Victorianism, as explained below. This resonance may be unsurprising if we consider how one of the main tenets of neo-Victorian literature, as excellently argued by Linda Hutcheon, is its staging of “the nineteenth century for contemporary readers who look back into the past in search for a different view of history” (Pettersen 11), and even more so for LGBTQ+ authors and readers, who, as Christopher Chitty argues, live with a “homosexual desire for history” (149).

Furthermore, the impact of Waters’s works on the whole genre is clear: they have set a significant precedent for how neo-Victorian narratives of sexual dissidence imply a political and humane commitment to queer modes of living:

Particularly when centred on queer concerns, neo-Victorianism has followed a visionary politics of resurrecting forgotten queer lives for the sake of the living. With its illumination of queer Victorian interstices, it has had much

to offer to queer individuals, with “queer” here understood as a self-ascribed marker of gender and/or sexual positionality or identification for LGBTQIA+ persons. (Koegler and Tronicke 6)

However, while Koegler and Tronicke's article aims to explore “Neo-Victorianism's queer potentiality” (1), most of the novels examined within are connected to same-sex desire between women, showcasing the larger queer potential that has been attributed to neo-Victorian representations of sapphic desire. The reasons behind this exclusion of male same-sex desire are perhaps better understood when one considers how these novels, in contrast with other works within the genre inspired by Waters's political commitment, fail to resurrect “forgotten queer lives” in any way that is significant or relevant to contemporary queer individuals.

Contrary to the representation of sapphic relationships in neo-Victorian fiction, the genre's ability to portray sexual and romantic relationships between men seems oddly stunted from the very beginning. As Caroline Duvezin-Caubet argues regarding the role of same-sex romance between men in neo-Victorian fiction, the genre's way of dealing with sapphic romance “does not exactly map onto” the representation of male homosexual desire (245). Although Duvezin-Caubet does not expand this discussion, I argue that the divergence occurs because of the (generally) rather shallow analysis of dissident sexualities and the early instances of contemporary portrayals of same-sex desire between men in the Victorian era. She does state that “[t]he mass of published works [dealing with homosexual relationships between men set in the Victorian era] comprises some very obscure books and a lot of problematic ones, which reiterate heterosexism, queerphobia, and other forms of discrimination” (Duvezin-Caubet 243). If we consider this and contrast it with how Waters's novels and their successors engage in a “writing-back to heteronormative historiography” (Koegler and Tronicke 1), while also following a “visionary politics of resurrecting forgotten queer lives for the sake of the living” (Koegler and Tronicke 6), it is clear that the treatment of same-sex desire between men in neo-Victorian fiction has not lived up to the expectations set by other authors dealing with women and sexuality.

As Duvezin-Caubet indicates, there are many examples (often obscure) of how same-sex desire between men in neo-Victorian fiction has been not only problematic but has also failed to engage with both the political agenda of lesbian texts and with the main ideological foundations of neo-Victorianism. These foundations, identified by Ann Heilmann and

Mark Llewellyn in their now seminal *Neo-Victorianism: The Victorians in the Twenty-First Century, 1999–2009*, can be summarised in the genre's potential and determination to represent texts that go beyond contemporary narratives set in the past but that also establish a dialogue between contemporary concerns, theories, and concepts and the Victorian past (Heilmann and Llewellyn 4–5). According to Kaplan, the neo-Victorian genre experiments with new forms and aesthetics while at the same time being “philosophical [and] political” (9). However, early examples of neo-Victorian depictions of same-sex relationships between men are better understood as catering to the erotic interests of their readers, rather than as self-conscious reinterpretations of the past and its impact on the present. These novels “wrestle with the pitfalls of representation” (Koeigler and Tronicke 11) as they present tales that can be read as erotic fiction rather than as well-researched incursions into the Victorian past from a contemporary perspective. The novels written by Christ Hunt during the 1980s are a clear example of this. His novel *Street Lavender* is regarded in certain circles (as Goodreads shows) as a classic and even as a direct precedent to Waters's *Tipping the Velvet*. However, its plot poses several problematic questions that seem to run counter to the genre's spirit of political and humanitarian revision and rediscovery.

Street Lavender asks us to sympathise with the protagonist, William—a male sex worker—who sexually abuses his minor cousin. The scene, described in painstaking detail, uses erotically titillating language, and the request for empathy towards William during the rest of the novel begs the question of whom this scene is designed to cater towards. While the fourteen-year-old cousin of William repeats sentences such as “I don't like it, Willie; it hurts, it's horrible, take it out” (Hunt 115), the sixteen-year-old William answers in an abusive and violent manner: “Lie still then, else it'll hurt more” (Hunt 115). Despite this disturbing rape scene carried out by William, as readers, we are then asked to feel empathy for the protagonist throughout the remaining 200 pages of the book. In short, the novel caters to the erotic interests of an audience that seems to expect only a certain fetishisation or eroticisation of the past as a place of libidinal expression.²

² A clear example of the text's lack of self-conscious reflection between the Victorian era and its own period can be seen in how the novel avoids any mentions of sexual diseases, despite the fact that its protagonist is, as said before, a male sex worker and that it was written during the peak of the AIDS crisis.

The same seems to be true for many contemporary novels, such as Ruth Sims's *The Phoenix*, which, while dealing with some of the tropes present in Waters's trilogy—such as dramatic performances and class differences—also reads as an eroticised account of a “forbidden” relationship. The protagonist, for instance, constantly thinks about both the legal and religious consequences of his sexual orientation, in a way that is full of guilt and consistently suggests condemnation: “Nick’s lust was replaced by fear. ‘One of my kind.’ Hugh had said the same thing. If St. Denys and Hugh could recognize his demon so did God” (Sims 94, original emphasis). Both these novels, then, fit in the group of neo-Victorian novels that Koegler and Tronicke have identified as “reactionary exoticisations of sexual deviance” that do little more than “cater to the expectations of white conservative audiences regarding queer obscenity, or overlap with imperial fantasies of racialisation and miscegenation” (Koegler and Tronicke 11). In other words, Sims's novel, and Hunt's entire historical fiction, can stand as representatives of a way of portraying same-sex desire between men that is more concerned with their potential readers' interests in an exoticised sense of white eroticism. This entails a failure to represent a form of queerness that could be read as a “writing-back to heteronormative historiography” (Koegler and Tronicke 1) because, as Duvezin-Caubet argues, these texts “reiterate heterosexism, queerphobia, and other forms of discrimination” (243). It is possible to assume, thus, that these texts fall short of the “philosophical” and “political” status of neo-Victorianism defended by Kaplan, Heilmann, and Llewellyn, while also failing to stage the past for those who are searching “for a different [homosexual] view of history” (Kaplan 9; Petterson 11). In fact, and whilst they may engage in “discovering the dark underbelly of Victorian respectability” with which, according to Marie-Luise Kohlke and Christian Gutleben, neo-Victorian texts are concerned, this type of novel also overlooks the contemporary “equal rights claim” that is shared by many sapphic novels within the genre (Kohlke and Gutleben 15).³

These are just two examples of the “obscure” and “problematic” novels that, according to Duvezin-Caubet, conform the genealogy of neo-

³ For instance, Georges Letissier makes a compelling case on how Waters's *Tipping the Velvet* and *Fingersmith* challenge patriarchal assumptions through the creation of queer (sapphic) families. Other novels, such as Emma Donogue's *Frog Music*, or Sara Collins's *The Confessions of Frannie Langton*, perpetuate these challenges, that could be traced back to one of the first published neo-Victorian narratives involving sapphic love: Isabel Miller's *Patience & Sarah*.

Victorian representations of same-sex love and desire between men (243). Queer sexualities in men are neither an absence, because there are novels that deal with them, nor a presence, as these novels fall dramatically short of both the reflexive and political stances taken in the representation of lesbian desire within the genre. They constitute, thus, a kind of spectre, of haunting presence as defined by Abraham and Torok, as explained below. The novels which consider queer sexuality in men limit themselves to presenting erotic situations that do not question the *status-quo* of Victorian traditions. The following questions are therefore raised: Why is there such a significant difference between how male and female same-sex desire has been portrayed in neo-Victorian fiction? Secondly, why does male homosexuality have a spectral status in this genre? The reason, I argue, may be found precisely in the way Wilde's trials still haunt our collective memory. While queer women were, according to Terry Castle, rarely openly acknowledged in the Victorian era (5)—resulting in “limited scientific effort to define lesbianism” (Vicinus 71)—Wilde's trials and their surrounding socio-legal context put male queerness under heavy scrutiny during this period. Indeed, the Labouchère Amendment was not modified to include same-sex acts between women until 1921, while, as noted before, Wilde's experience became a traumatic one that strongly linked male homosexuality with legal discourses and judicial punishments.

This transgenerational traumatic experience can be better understood when examined using the concepts of the crypt and the phantom as defined by Abraham and Torok. They suggest that the “crypt,” when applied to both psychoanalysis and literature, represents a psychic tomb “arising from . . . inassimilable life experiences,” whereas the “phantom” is “the unwitting reception of a secret which was someone else's psychic burden” (Abraham and Torok 19). I argue that the kind of haunting that Wilde's trials entail is a mixture of both concepts.

On the one hand, same-sex desire between men had to become cryptic for fear of both the Labouchère Amendment and Wilde's conviction. As Henry James's previously quoted letter shows, the experiences lived by Wilde and by others under this harsh law were regarded as “inassimilable life experience” in as much as they promoted a sense of unsafety even in private, and a clear reminder of the punishment that queer men could fear if they were caught. Taking this into account, it is not surprising that James, who has been related to queerness himself on numerous occasions, suggested to Gosse the necessity to “hastily snatch up” as many “veil[s]”

as possible (James 12).⁴ However, this experience is also phantasmagorical in as much as it was, undoubtedly, transmitted beyond the period of its occurrence. Even if only Wilde and the other men directly affected by the Amendment had carried the “psychic burden” of the affective and vital consequences of their convictions, this psychic burden was, undoubtably, received unwittingly by those who contemplated it and felt a sense of affinity with the victims. Considering that “[t]he phantom that returns to haunt bears witness to the existence of the dead buried within the other” (Abraham and Torok 175), we could say that the fear that Wilde's situation inspired in others can be interpreted as a dead buried within the collective memory of queer men, and that its haunting of neo-Victorian fiction bears witness to his suffering.

Indeed, this phantasmagorical and cryptic haunting of Wilde's trials is arguably one reason for the different approaches to same-sex desire between men and women within neo-Victorianism. The traumatic implications of male homosexual love and sex during the nineteenth century—still alive through the buried memory of Wilde's trials and the lengthy process of revoking the Labouchère Amendment—are one of the reasons why novels, such as those written by Hunt and Sims, refuse to revisit, reinterpret, or rediscover the Victorian past in a way that is meaningful, political, or that illuminates the interstices of queer experience. The collective haunting of the atmosphere of fear surrounding same-sex relationships between men during the Victorian era makes it difficult for contemporary authors to approach this topic without engaging with the legal and medical discourses of the period, which would inevitably restrict the ways in which these authors can explore male homosexuality.

This does not mean that there are no neo-Victorian novels in which same-sex desire between men is not represented thoughtfully. Texts such as Colm Tóibín's *The Master* and *The Magician*, or Louis Edward's *Oscar*

⁴ There is an ongoing debate regarding James's own sexuality. This debate, however, tends to be rather unproductive as the author's novels and letters can be interpreted from many different angles. However, there is an academic consensus that relates James's life and works with queerness (Haralson 27). Studies such as Hugh Stevens's *Henry James and Sexuality* or Eric Haralson's *Henry James and Queer Modernity*, for instance, claim that the author's texts are an integral part of queer history (Stevens 1–2). What is most pertinent in this case is to understand that regardless of his sexuality, James contributed to the queer circles of his time, just as he keeps contributing to the field of Queer studies thanks to his ambiguous and experimental prose.

Wilde Discovers America, to name but three, engage with the Victorian past while still highlighting contemporary concerns for queer men. However, these works, albeit more complex and much less problematic than the ones by Sims and Hunt, still carry some legal-related fears and concerns that seem to have been avoided by the neo-Victorian fantasy novels analysed below. In this sense, I am more concerned with how the alliance between fantasy and neo-Victorian fiction can facilitate a thought-provoking and culturally engaging representation of same-sex desire between men that re-signifies the haunting potential of Wilde's experience. In other words, the negative outcome of Wilde's trials and the social anxiety it generated in later years complicates the potential ways in which contemporary authors can engage in depictions of homosexual love between men without also simultaneously engaging, at the same time, with negative and legal consequences that leave no space for hope or for developing characters in different contexts unrelated to hiding and fear. This does not justify, of course, the eroticisation and the exoticisation of the past that these novels represent, but it can explain why the development of the representation of queer love between men has been so stunted in neo-Victorian literature compared to the representation of sapphic relationships. However, and as Allan Lloyd Smith argues, the hauntings of the past encrypted within our own selves vastly, and silently, condition our identities (294), which explains the recurring presence of traumatic experiences in neo-Victorian queer representations of desire between men. It is admittedly difficult to illuminate the interstices of queer experience and to approach a specific topic from a political perspective when criminality, unresolved trauma, and the collective memory of the people these novels ought to deal with are being phantasmagorically haunted by the burden of those who suffered under Labouchère's Amendment.

2. FANTASY AND THE REPRESENTATION OF SAME-SEX DESIRE BETWEEN MEN IN CONTEMPORARY NEO-VICTORIAN FICTION

Despite all previous considerations, I would like to draw attention towards a new trend within neo-Victorian literature that seems to treat same-sex romances and desire between queer men in a rather different light. In the last ten years, a group of novels set in the long nineteenth-century depicting same-sex love between men have been published, setting sales records and receiving major public attention. These novels differ from previously mentioned examples of the same kind of text in that they mix

the Victorian past with fantasy elements. They also engage with the Victorian past in a more profound, political, and self-conscious manner than their predecessors. This is not surprising if we consider Irina Golovacheva's argument that despite being a generally neglected genre, fantasy possesses a "cross-genre nature" that does not seek to completely obliterate what we consider real but, rather, to disrupt it through the "irruption of the inadmissible" (Golovacheva 63). Recent novels by British and Australian female authors such as Natasha Pulley's *The Watchmaker of Filigree Street*, and Freya Marske's *A Marvellous Light* represent sexual and romantic interactions between men in the Victorian era with an added element of fantasy. These fantasy elements substitute the traumatising context of Wilde's trials by creating alternatively—magical or otherwise—ways for characters to explore their sexual identities while being able to mock, disrupt, or ignore the Labouchère Amendment and its ominous social consequences. More importantly, these novels approach other issues, such as class, race, or education, from a more innovative perspective, and simultaneously establish narratives that elude the extreme eroticisation of their characters.

Notably, the novels I consider here have all been written by women. A more in-depth analysis of the relationship between gender and queer desire would be, without a doubt, both illuminating and conducive to new, revealing conclusions for those researching the representation of same-sex desire in neo-Victorian fiction. Why do women write fantasy queer novels set in the Victorian era that engage with neo-Victorianism's interest in the present? Does this imply that Wilde's trials have affected literature written by men differently from how it has affected women? These topics could constitute extremely interesting avenues of research for those who wish to explore neo-Victorian fiction and queer desire. In this instance, however, I am more interested in finding out how the use of fantasy in these novels can lead to new ways to represent queer desire between men in the genre.

The use of fantasy to articulate male same-sex desire is not exclusively a neo-Victorian phenomenon. A number of Victorian texts have already connected fantasy and queerness in ways that have been widely discussed by many scholars through the years.⁵ Wilde himself

⁵ For a more exhaustive understanding of the connection between fantasy, the Gothic, and dissident sexualities in the Victorian era, the reader should direct their attention to Ardel Haefele-Thomas's *Queer Others in Victorian Gothic*, and their brilliantly edited volume *Queer Gothic*.

famously encoded this desire in *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, a tale whose supernatural elements seem intrinsically entangled in the homoerotic tensions within the plot. In addition, many other scholars have read sublimated sexual desire in the narratives of other late Victorian fantasies/Gothic fictions, such as Bram Stoker's *Dracula* and Robert Louis Stevenson's novella *The Curious Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde*. Additionally, while late Victorian Gothic, with its array of fantasy elements, certainly shows an encoded "sympathy" or affinity with the queer (Haefele-Thomas 4), its neo-Victorian counterpart (or, rather, evolution), does not only display this same affinity, it also more openly discusses same-sex desire between men, facilitating these novels' engagement with other neo-Victorian cultural concerns.

The relevance of the connection between neo-Victorian revision, fantasy, and same-sex relationships between men is better understood if we look closely at the state of what Duvezin-Caubet calls "M[ale]/M[ale] genre romance" (242) in contemporary neo-Victorianism. In her article "Gaily Ever After: Neo-Victorian M/M Genre Romance for the Twenty-First Century," Duvezin-Caubet focuses on neo-Victorian novels that represent "a central love story between two male characters and an emotionally satisfying and optimistic ending" (243). She bases her research on a series of novels written by two female authors, K.J. Charles and Cat Sebastian, arguing that "the selected books are representative of what the subgenre can do in terms of raising up marginalised voices and building a fictional past of joyful queerness from a popular perspective" (Duvezin-Caubet 243) and stating that these novels' "happy endings" constitute a "Gaily Ever After" effect that can be deeply healing to contemporary audiences (Duvezin-Caubet 244). While I do agree with Duvezin-Caubet's assessment of these authors' works and the narrative, self-awareness, and historical growth they represent in contrast with earlier instances of texts that deal with same-sex love between men set in the Victorian era, I also believe that Charles's and Sebastian's (non-fantasy) novels are still influenced by the haunting presence of Wilde's trials and the law.

Even if many of these novels are set before the Labouchère amendment was passed, it must be noted that its protagonists "are much more careful than most heterosexual romance protagonists, and that the threat of exposure never completely disappears" (Duvezin-Caubet 253). What this implies is that these authors have incorporated the phantasmagorical impact of the amendment and are writing about the long

nineteenth century while also remembering a very specific set of laws that would not necessarily be active at the moment the narrative is set. Despite the obvious dangers that same-sex relationships between men entailed all throughout the Victorian era, the constant fear of the sexually private becoming publicly exposed, which constitutes almost invariably the central trope of Charles's and Sebastian's texts, belongs more clearly to the aftermath of the amendment's passing. In other words, even if there is a new set of writers dealing with queer desire between men in a neo-Victorian context, their representational strategies are still quite haunted by the Labouchère Amendment and Wilde's trials, in as much as the central issue in their plots is the fear of the private becoming public. However, when fantasy is added to the formula, this kind of novel seems to provide further insight into the interstices of the complex relationship between queerness, the present, and the past.

While we may agree that

[t]he affective focus of the romance genre can go a long way towards depicting the inner lives of characters who are marginalised in different ways, as long as the authors do their research and get help from sensitivity readers to avoid harmful tropes. (Duvezin-Caubet 258)

the phantasmagorical presence of the fear of discovery and legal punishment is hardly conducive to a profound exploration of Victorian queer identities in relation to the present. In this sense, fantasy provides authors with the chance to explore sexuality in its relation to other issues more freely, without Wilde's conviction acting as a constant reminder of the danger that was imperative during the period. Rosemary Jackson, for instance, defends the idea that the fantastic provides authors with a way to look at reality more closely. As fantasy represents "the unsaid and the unseen of culture: that which has been silenced, made invisible, covered over and made absent" (Jackson 4), it allows a clearer view of both the present and the past. Fantasy can therefore be considered as an exorcising agent that articulates that which has become cryptic or entombed within an individual's—or a whole society's—memory.

In the case of Wilde's trials and their haunting potential, this means that the fantastic can break the phantasmagorical presence of this trauma by exposing it and moving beyond its constricting implications, and thus articulating ways in which it can be left behind. If, after all, Wilde's trials act as some sort of negative haunting presence that conditions the

representation of same-sex desire between men in a considerable number of neo-Victorian texts, fantasy can be said to have the potential to subvert its entombed traumatic trace into a more complex kind of haunting, one to which neo-Victorian narratives can talk back or reinterpret in order to show readers different approaches to queer affection. Furthermore, fantasy can depict the inner lives of those who have been mostly represented as erotic agents of fear and social dispossession because it allows harmful tropes to be sidestepped in favour of a more nuanced analysis of the psyche of the characters that are still deeply embedded in the real world without necessarily following its rules. As Roger Caillois states, in fantastic narratives,

the intrusion of the strange does not lead to the replacement of the naturalistic world by a totally different one where there is nothing but miracles. The established and acknowledged order of things, its regularity, is transformed by the irruption of the inadmissible. (349)

In other words, neo-Victorian texts that incorporate fantastic elements can both faithfully reflect the peculiarities of the era and allow for the incorporation of “the inadmissible,” that is, those occurrences that—whether magical or not—allow the characters to engage with their own identities in more profound ways. In this sense, fantasy allows for the exorcisation of those “secret[s] which w[ere] someone else’s psychic burden” (Abraham and Torok 19) because it allows for the inadmissible to happen. The inherited fear produced by Wilde’s trials is expelled from the narrative by the presence of certain elements that, in a way, unburden the protagonists of the weight of the real-life potential and legal consequences of their sexual and romantic identities.

A clear example of this and of the way in which contemporary fantastic neo-Victorianism deals with same-sex relationships between men in a more self-conscious, reflexive, and intersectional way than its non-fantasy counterpart, can clearly be seen in Pulley’s *The Watchmaker of Filigree Street*. The novel tells the story of a British civil servant, Thaniel Steepleton, and of a Japanese watchmaker, Keita Mori. Set in 1883,⁶

⁶ Even if the novel is set before the actual passing of Labouchère’s Amendment, we must take into consideration that it has been written in the Twenty-first Century. This means that despite its taking place before the Amendment’s passing, the novel is affected by the author’s consciousness of both its approval and of the dangers of being queer in the Victorian era, even if Wilde’s trials have yet to take place in the novel’s plotline.

Pulley's text deals with both the evolving romantic relationship between the two characters and with the clash between Japanese and Victorian culture at the height of British imperialism. Mori's clairvoyance and unusual technological skills provide the narrative's fantastic element. These skills become morally suspicious to the other characters in the novel, who otherwise mostly ignore the legal consequences of Steepleton and Mori's desire for each other. In fact, Thaniel's fiancée, Grace, is almost unconcerned about her intended's growing relationship with Mori, but she becomes aggressively unsympathetic towards him when she learns about his fantastic otherness, convinced that, due to his clairvoyance, he has the power to manipulate others to mistrust her: "I don't think you'll make any real choices until you're away from him" (Pulley 246). Furthermore, she continues to link Mori to the bombing of Scotland Yard, the opening engine of the text (Pulley 246). Even Mori's fellow countrymen grow suspicious of him—not because of his sexual orientation, which is hinted at in the first part of the novel—but because of his powers (Pulley 255, 274).

Finally, Thaniel and Mori's growing confidence and romantic feelings toward each other achieve two different purposes. First, it depicts a relationship between men in which, unlike most previous examples of neo-Victorian representations of same-sex desire between men, neither character is described in erotic terms. Instead, Thaniel and Mori's love seems to be based on a deep understanding of the other's personality, as Thaniel comes to realise Mori's deep humanity despite his otherness: "[n]o one asked [Mori] if he wanted anything or if he was all right. It was Mori who asked those things" (Pulley 274). Their feelings are also used to portray a queer relationship free of moral prejudice, which allows readers to reflect on the complex racial relationships between Victorian England and Japan. For example, Thaniel comes to realise the many outrages committed by Britain against Japan, such as the 1856 bombing of Canton (Pulley 192). Also, Mori introduces him to Japanese culture by guiding him through a decorative Japanese villa built in London to promote Gilbert and Sullivan's operetta, *The Mikado*.⁷ Furthermore, Thaniel, originally a pianist, manages to find work in this musical production through Mori's

⁷ Gilbert and Sullivan's original musical is a rather racist and exoticized representation of Japan created to cater to a Victorian, white, and imperialist sense of humour. In the novel, however, Pulley reimagines *The Mikado* as a well-intended effort by the British government to establish better relationships with Japan (Pulley 207–09).

intervention (Pulley 192–200). In this sense, the fantasy elements within the narrative exorcises the haunting of Labouchère’s Amendment by shifting the focus from the punitive and legal consequences of same-sex desire to other aspects that have scarcely been depicted in neo-Victorian representations of love between men. This is because fantasy orientates the readers, mostly, towards issues of race and otherness, thus exploring an interstice of queer experience that is usually forgotten in this genre of novel. It downplays the legal aspects of the period to enhance the otherness produced by clairvoyance, thus effectively re-thinking Victorian dissident sexualities. *The Watchmaker of Filigree Street* can be said to represent the opposite of Koegler and Tronicke’s idea that many queer neo-Victorian texts are

reactionary exoticisations of sexual “deviance” that do little more than cater to the expectations of white conservative audiences regarding queer obscenity, or overlap with imperial fantasies of racialisation and miscegenation. (Koegler and Tronicke 11)

Thus, in this specific case, fantasy allows the real-life haunting of the Labouchère Amendment in the lives of queer men during that period to be downplayed, propelling the narrative into a more nuanced account of same-sex love. In its place, fantasy lends the narrative the ability to focus on other aspects of same-sex relationships that were often overlooked in previous neo-Victorian depictions of these relationships: race, class, and the dynamics of imperialism. As Mark Fabrizi states: “[o]ne of the most interesting aspects of fantasy literature is that it tends to ask the ‘big’ questions of life . . . the role of the individual in society, and the importance of cultural diversity” (1). In other words, this implies that the phantasmagorical, cryptical fear caused by the law in the aftermath of Wilde’s trials is somehow exorcised by fantasy’s ability to overlook certain aspects of reality and focus, instead, on other aspects that are more in accordance with the agenda of neo-Victorian studies and literature. Thaniel and Mori are protected by Mori’s divination abilities from being arrested or condemned, opening a new field of racial and imperial exploration. The author then conjures up an in-depth exploration of the clash of two different cultures on the cusp of Victorian imperialism instead of focusing on the dangers of the character’s love story or on creating “reactionary exoticisations of sexual ‘deviance’” (Koegler and Tronicke 11).

Following this narrative intersection of the neo-Victorian and fantasy genres, Marske's *A Marvellous Light* offers yet another, more nuanced example of how productive this combination can be. Throughout the book, the anxious atmosphere surrounding queer men after Wilde's trials is acknowledged. The novel, set at the beginning of the twentieth century, articulates these fears through one of its protagonists, Robin, a non-magical baronet who finds himself acting as a government liaison to England's magical population. After meeting Edwin, a magician, and starting a relationship with him, magic—the fantasy element within this novel—acts, once again, as an exorcising element that allows the protagonists to investigate their identities and configure their relationship without being in constant fear or having to hide behind a veil.

However, because Marske's novel openly articulates the atmosphere of fear and anxiety that haunted queer men after Wilde's conviction, when Robin discovers that magicians talk openly about their sexual orientations, he states the following: "It was unthinkable. Nobody would confess offhandedly to that particular crime in front of a complete stranger" (Marske 54). His incomprehension is, in fact, justified by a direct mention of Wilde's conviction, contemplating how despite the passing of several years "since Wilde's trial, . . . one still had to face the possibility of being pulled up before a jury, and considering oneself lucky if the charge was merely *gross indecency and not buggery*" (Marske 151, original emphasis). The fantasy element in the text soon begins to act as an agent that liberates Robin from Wilde's phantom. As magical society proves more sexually aware and open-minded, offering its members protection against ordinary British law, Robin and Edwin's relationship is inspected through a lens that pays attention to the problems that establishing such a relationship would entail in a complex context, rather than focusing on the potential legal consequences. In fact, when Robin argues that he had never before thought about establishing a romantic relationship with someone, he claims that this is because "[f]or men like them, only the impossible was absolutely safe" (Marske 235). Of course, magic—being, indeed, the *impossible*—offers safety and an escape from criminal concerns, just as the other impossible, or fantasy, elements do in the other novels explored here.

Once Robin discovers that he can feel safe with Edwin, the novel undertakes a serious analysis of the complexities of establishing a relationship with another man in a time when there are no patterns or almost no models for doing so. Robin lacks the vocabulary for defining

such a relationship: “It’s never been someone in particular, for me. I mean to say—at university, there were a few fellows. But all my encounters were, ah. Well. It was understood that there were limits” (Marske 150). As the plot unfolds, he begins to consider how to define his own relationship in terms that are not conditioned by fear:

Should Robin simply ask if what had happened between them could happen again, or if it could even be the start of . . . what? Robin’s mind was trying to fit itself around an unfamiliar shape, an implausible future . . . All he knew was that he didn’t want to let this slide beneath the surface of their tentative friendship as though it had never happened. (Marske 212, my emphasis)

Finally, in an echo of Sarah Waters, Robin decides that what they share is a powerful “affinity” that can be the basis for building a strong relationship together (Marske 232). The unfamiliar shape of their affinity and the ways in which it could translate into a real-life project together becomes, thus, the main focus of the novel, and the concerns surrounding Wilde consequently disappear.

Furthermore, the novel’s ending can be read as an echo of how the haunting of the legal world is definitively exorcised from the narrative. Ultimately, the protagonists are being blackmailed by Edwin’s manipulative older brother. While they are being blackmailed over a coveted magical artefact as opposed to their sexuality, the act can be easily correlated with the blackmailing craze that the Labouchère Amendment generated in the decade following the trials (Bristow 17–20). Robin and Edwin come together, however, to defy their blackmailer and succeed, as they both are motivated by the possibilities of “[f]reedom. Safety. And a chance [to be together]” (Marske 348). In this sense, and as indicated before, the novel manages to establish a dialogue between the Victorian reality of fear of queer relationships among men while also delving into a revision of the period by exploring the many ways in which potential homosexual relationships between men in this era struggled with a lack of vocabulary and the challenge of establishing their own norms and priorities without any previous patterns. In terms of Abraham and Torok’s theory of haunting through the crypt, this entails a process of “introjection,” an exorcism of intergenerational trauma that takes place when the haunted subject expands their potential “to open onto [their] own emerging desires and feelings as well as the external world” (Raid 100).

Marske's novel perfectly illustrates Nathan Fredrickson's idea that fantasy "allows one to approach the perspective of the other both in safety and yet with vulnerability" (58). While Marske does not shy away from portraying the difficulties of maintaining same-sex relationships in the aftermath of Wilde's trials (as seen in Marske 151), her novel ultimately exorcises these fears by creating a magical community that not only accepts queerness but whose magic protects her protagonists from the realities of the Labouchère Amendment. Robin's fears, thus, become more focused on the investigation and the naming and discovery of new affective and sexual categories, than on the phantasmagorical presence of the law and its consequences. In this sense, fantasy allows the narrative to form new patterns for exploring sexuality and even for the appearance of hope as the offer of a potential future in which being together is possible for the characters. This, of course, has the potential to assuage contemporary concerns related to queerness by anchoring them in a history that offers a positive representation of queer communities. In consonance with Sarah Waters's novels, thus, the text becomes a liberating negotiation of same-sex affection that replicates the political and cultural interest in exploration and re-evaluation typical of the neo-Victorian genre. By embracing other cultural concerns beyond the stereotypical fears of discovery and the law, these texts manage to re-signify the spectral traces of Wilde's trials, and what could previously be conceived as a haunting presence that generates fear and anxiety becomes, instead, a connection between Victorian and neo-Victorian literatures with which authors can establish a far more complex dialogue. Furthermore, and if we accept Lin Petterson's claim that "neo-Victorianism considers not only how we relate to the Victorians, but also how the Victorian retroactively establishes a relationship with us" (12), we can state that these novels successfully manage to connect contemporary concerns and the past in a way that is open to new interpretations away from the haunting presence of Wilde's trials.

Despite featuring different periods in the nineteenth century and different types of magical elements, these two novels use fantasy as a means to deal with the phantasmagorical, haunting presence of Wilde's trials and the surrounding context of fear and paranoia produced by the Labouchère Amendment of 1885. They both share, however, one important feature: a "self-conscious . . . revisionary capacity" that challenges "collective cultural experiences" (such as the potential haunting of Wilde's trials) and confronts contemporary readers with them

(Heilmann and Llewellyn 245). These novels, thus, fit in the “political” criterion assigned to neo-Victorianism by Cora Kaplan, in as much as they seem to conform to neo-Victorianism’s interest in “elective non-heteronormative families [and in the contemporary] climate of growing public debate about the appropriate treatment of same-sex relationships by the law” (Kohlke and Gutleben 15). Notably, as these two texts illustrate, the neo-Victorian agenda and contemporary fantasy have more in common than may appear at first glance:

[C]ontemporary fantasy authors have been some of the most adventurous and experimental in pushing the boundaries of categories like gender, sexuality, and even the bounds of human nature, again giving a voice to the silenced and representations of empowerment to the oppressed. (Fredrickson 58)

Writing about new relational patterns, social class, and racial status in novels that were frequently known for their exoticisation and eroticisation of its characters—that is, previous examples of neo-Victorian take on same-sex romance between men—through fantasy constitutes, thus, an important development within the field of neo-Victorian studies that should be carefully considered.

CONCLUSIONS

It is difficult to draw conclusions about a phenomenon that is not only still being currently developed, but whose continuity is also by no means ensured. If neo-Victorianism is characterised by something, it is by its mutability and its ability to adapt, interrogate, and present itself in new forms and styles. Despite this, the two novels briefly explored in this paper suggest that the combination of neo-Victorian depictions of same-sex desire between men and fantasy could lead to a productive and liberating path in which fear, anguish, and anxiety about legal consequences are downplayed in favour of exploring the different interstices of queer identities in the Victorian era and their relationship with contemporary culture.

Considering Dana Shiller’s claim that “the past comes to us in textualized forms, what we are left with is a proliferation of possible ‘truths,’ some more persuasive than others” (556), we could argue that the combination of fantasy and neo-Victorian narratives of same-sex desire

between men textualise a persuasive truth about the many cultural and contemporary aspects entwined in this desire while simultaneously grounding them in history. Thus, the novels presented here deal with rather different issues: race, power, the social imbalance between lovers, and the need to imagine a space that allows for the socially forbidden. However, they have something in common, because their use of fantasy as an enabler to deal with these issues creates a sharp separation between them and other examples of the neo-Victorian genre. In achieving this separation from previous popular eroticised and white narratives of same-sex desire between men, these novels fit in Koegler and Tronicke's ideas of how the treatment of queerness in neo-Victorian fiction can lead to a "writing-back to heteronormative historiography" (1). Furthermore, these novels also fit within the "visionary politics of resurrecting forgotten queer lives for the sake of the living" (Koegler and Tronicke 6). Even if fantasy may seem like a deterrent to exploring reality in depth, its usage in these texts shows that fantasy may be politically useful as it permits contemporary members of the LGBTQIA+ community to see their struggles reflected in the past; and this may help them realise the many issues that still constitute a point of struggle within the community beyond legal questions.⁸

What this fantasisation of neo-Victorian portrayals of love and desire between men entails, thus, is a repositioning of Wilde's trials as a haunting presence in queer literature and culture. The phantom, the inextricable and personal realisation that one's sexuality may be dangerous or something to fear, was instilled in several generations of queer men by Wilde's conviction and the Labouchère Amendment. In these novels, that phantom is exorcised through fantasy, in as much as it appears not as an overbearing and all-encompassing presence dictating the narrative, but rather as a contextual framework which the characters can subvert or ignore. Ultimately, returning to Arias and Pulham's ideas about haunting and spectrality in neo-Victorian fiction, Wilde's "ghost" will always be an important part of the relationship between Victorianism and neo-Victorianism (xix), but these texts demonstrate that there is not a unique way of dealing with ghosts. Much fear and anguish can be extracted from Wilde's experience, and these feelings might continue to appear in neo-Victorian narrations of same-sex love; however, Wilde, with his immense

⁸ Complementarily, there are already some studies that address how science fiction has been used to explore contemporary concerns. For more on this, the reader is advised to consult the works of Ursula K. Le Guin or John Rieder.

imagination and aesthetic creativity, might have welcomed fantasy—as he in fact did in many of his stories and texts—as a liberating factor that can shed new light on how we think about Victorianism and queerness.

My approach has focused on the importance of reconsidering the role that fantasy can play in contemporary neo-Victorian fiction which portrays same-sex desire between men. The novels I address here have been written by women, an interesting fact that demands careful research in and of itself. The way in which Wilde's trials are still felt in other cultural products may also be of interest to scholars invested in neo-Victorianism, as its spectre is an intermittent presence in contemporary media. Notably, the relationship between contemporary homoerotic fantasy and the Gothic (as an element mostly associated with Otherness in Victorian fiction) is also undoubtedly at play in some of the thoughts I have developed here.

In the future, however, there may be other novels that follow this pattern, which effectively mixes queerness and fantasy in neo-Victorian texts, but there may also be those that do so without the same effect, for different reasons, or without actually engaging in a revision or reassessment of the Victorian era. Be that as it may, I would like to conclude this paper by pointing out that these novels are worthy of studying since they allow us to better understand how an event that took place more than a hundred and twenty years ago can still influence our way of representing queerness in literature.

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Error Corrective Treatment in Spanish L1 ESL Learners: Suggesting an Empirical Method

Tratamiento correctivo de errores en aprendientes españoles de inglés como L2: Un método empírico

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Abstract: Error Analysis and Treatment seems to be paramount to the success of the learning-teaching process of a second (or further) language as it deals with the very material produced by learners during their learning process. This study aims to propose an error analysis and treatment method that could link the theoretical background of Error Analysis and the daily practice of English as a Second Language in the classroom. To reach the objective we analysed (following and applying the proposed method) 100 different written outputs of learners of different levels of English. The proposed method Discussion, Analysis, and Feedback (ADF) has clear classroom implications that can improve teachers' and learners' performance and, can also help assess and reassess the syllabi of ESL.

Keywords: CEFR; error; ESL; feedback; writing.

Summary: Introduction. Literature Review. Objectives. Methodology. Results. Conclusions.

Resumen: El Análisis de Errores parece ser esencial para el éxito del proceso de enseñanza-aprendizaje de segundas (y sucesivas) lenguas ya que trabaja con el material que producen los aprendientes durante su aprendizaje. El propósito esencial de este trabajo es proponer un método de análisis y tratamiento de errores que sea capaz de vincular el trasfondo teórico de la disciplina con la práctica diaria de la enseñanza de la lengua inglesa. Para alcanzar ese objetivo se han analizado (siguiendo el modelo propuesto) 100 muestras de redacciones escritas por aprendientes de inglés de diferentes niveles. El sistema propuesto tiene claras implicaciones pedagógicas para el proceso de enseñanza-aprendizaje, entre ellas, puede ser empleado como elemento descriptor del éxito y del fracaso de los diferentes planes de estudio.

Palabras clave: MCER; error; inglés como segunda lengua; retroalimentación; escritura.

Sumario: Introducción. Revisión Teórica. Objetivos. Metodología. Resultados. Conclusiones.

INTRODUCTION

Currently, linguistic theory and linguists do not consider errors as simply inappropriate or inadequate use of language material. Errors are treated today like any other linguistic feature to determine or assess, for instance, the acquisition or the process of learning a language (L1, L2 or L3) and to assess the process and its results in all-stages of language development (Ahmad Sheriff et al.).

Corder's seminal work, "The Significance of Learners' Errors," published in 1967, marked a pivotal moment in applied linguistics and the study of second language acquisition (SLA) by introducing the concept of Error Importance. Equally significant is Larry Selinker's notion of Interlanguage ("Interlanguage"), introduced in 1972. Subsequently, the field has witnessed significant expansion and development in the ensuing decades.

Error Analysis focuses on an attentive and close analysis of errors produced and their nature (Richards and Renandya). This discipline and its many and varied approaches to the various natures of errors have produced interesting discussions within Linguistics. However, in this paper, we will focus on what has been defined as L2 Educational Perspective of the Error Analysis or "The role of errors in learning a second language" (Hendrickson 357).

This paper intends to propose a systematic method that can help us apply some of the main principles of Error Analysis in the different stages of the feedback process in English as a second language (ESL). The use of the method could ultimately lead to the elimination of errors produced by learners in their written outputs and obtain better conformity to the rules and norms of the target language, in this case, ESL.

In the last few decades, much has been debated in the fields of Linguistics and Educational Studies about the feedback process and its natures and approaches. Here we have deemed appropriate Delayed Marking (DM) as the feedback method used in the analysis of the samples. DM is characterised by its asynchronicity as it can only happen when the instructor gives the learner feedback and guidance following the correction/revision of the output to improve the written production

(Facullo). DM, as suggested by Cornelius-White “should always be clear and easy to decode for the learner” (118). Hence, time is essential in this strategy: “the instructor cannot delay the process too much or the rules would not be internalised and applied correctly to eliminate the inadequate uses” (Keh 295). Through this systematic approach to feedback, the learner progresses in their learning process and “has a better understanding of the misconceptions and confusions outlined by the instructor” (Keh 299).

Following the DM system and the various theoretical approaches within Error Analysis already mentioned, the analysis presented here will preeminently focus on the errors themselves and the analysis of the different possible reasons behind the most systematically repeated errors made by two groups of ESL university level learners (population group of the study) in their writing outputs (corpus of the study). The errors and their analytical discussions are presented grouped according to their various levels of performance (B1 and B2 students according to Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR)). By attentively examining the rationale behind learners’ perceptions of their written output as valid and meaningful expressions, we will engage in a discourse on the efficacy of the method delineated in this study. The analytical framework utilized herein is predicated on an in-depth scrutiny and discourse of morpho-syntactic and grammatical errors observed in learners’ written works during face-to-face sessions between teachers and students. The anticipated outcome is a reduction in the occurrence of grammatical and morpho-syntactic discrepancies in subsequent written outputs.

1. LITERATURE REVIEW

Errors made by students of English (or any other foreign language) have become widely accepted as a source of information and indicators of the progression of the learning process. As a result, their treatment has been transferred from theoretical discussions into the practice of everyday teaching and learning of languages.

Nowadays, with the emergence and acceptance of generative-transformational linguistics theories and the cognitive movement in psychology being widely taught in ESL specialisations, experts agree that “the attitude towards errors seems to have changed and student’s errors are thus treated as a surface phenomenon and are sometimes the learner’s own system to approximate to the real system of the target language” (Chiang

10). This approach seems to validate one of the premises of this study: to fully understand the progression of a learner, little or no information is provided by the correctness of the language productions.

The following scheme (adapted from Huang) represents and systematises the role of errors and error treatment in the language learning process:

Try → Error → Effective Feedback (Error Treatment) → Desired goal
 Try → Error → No feedback → Given up → Failure

1.1 Error Corrective Treatment

Introduced by Craig Chaudron in 1977 through the publication of “A Descriptive Model of Discourse in the Corrective Treatment of Learner’s Errors” and widely systematised and accepted. This approach to errors committed during the learning process identifies four different possibilities/methods to treat the learners’ errors:

- Treatment that can create autonomous ability and self-correction.
- Treatment that elicits the correct response.
- Any teacher comment or request that leads to improvement.
- Approval or disapproval treatment (positive or negative reinforcement).

The theoretical approach to Error Treatment can be thus linked to the DM System mentioned above. DM is characterised by the face-to-face treatment of inadequate outputs to treat it and eliminate it by offering alternatives or corrections in a limited time after the output or product of the exercise of language has been produced (Butler et al; Kulik and Kulik; Metcalfe et al.).

1.2 Interlanguage and Language Learning Implications

Language comparison is of great interest from both theoretical and applied perspectives: “It reveals what is general and what is language specific, and it is therefore important both for the understanding of language in general and for the study of the individual languages compared” (Johansson and Hofland 25).

One of the many interesting results of the discipline, in this analytical Contrastive Linguistics perspective, is what has been defined as the Interlanguage Approach (Selinker, “Interlanguage”; Mahmood and Murad; Rajendran and Yunus). Traditionally, Contrastive Linguistics focused on the influence of the first language, on the emergence of the second language, and on the differences and similarities between the first and second languages. As suggested by Brown, Interlanguage is “a creative process of constructing a system in which the learner is consciously testing hypotheses about the target language from a number of possible sources of knowledge” (162).

However, although we currently understand Interlanguage as defined by Brown, it is essential to mention that Interlanguage, as a Linguistic hypothesis, was introduced by Selinker in 1969 (“Language Transfer”) as “the interim grammars constructed by second language learners on their way to the target language” (McLaughlin 60). Nevertheless, this concept is technically connected to the one suggested by William Nemser: “Learner speech at a given time is the patterned product of a linguistic system distinct from Native Language and Target Language and internally structured” (116).

McLaughlin presented a structured vision of Interlanguage and the ways in which it can affect the reality of L2 studies. In this vision, Interlanguage is (i) the system at a single point in time and (ii) the range of interlocking systems that characterise the development of learners over time. Hence, McLaughlin suggests that interlanguage is a system between knowing and not knowing the target language.

In McLaughlin, we can also find the five central cognitive processes of the construction of second language learning and interlanguage: (i) language transfer (transferences from the first language), (ii) transfer of training, (iii) strategies of second language learning (approaches to material taught), (iv) strategies of second language communication, and (v) overgeneralization of the second language material.

However, Powell proposes a second vision of Interlanguage in detail when he argues that much of what had been proposed by other theorists is true. Powell follows the views of William Nemser, who believed that interlanguage was an autonomous system with “elements which do not have their origin in either linguistic system [i.e., nor first nor second language]” (Powell 18). As a result, the Interlanguage is an “approximative system of approximation and emerging of the target language” (Nemser 119).

The different Interlanguage theories and debates have had interesting and remarkable results, some of which are essential features and concepts to understand the process of language learning today. According to Selinker (*Rediscovering Interlanguage*), “the core phenomena that constitutes what we understand today as Interlanguage is the study of transfer (opposed to interference), borrowings (opposed to mistakes), code-switching (opposed to full competence) and fossilisation (opposed to succeeding in treating the wrong output)” (88). All these key concepts can be easily linked to language teaching and learning and Error Analysis, as well as to Error Treatment, as those concepts are closely related to the development of competencies which lead to an expansion of learners’ ability to produce more adequate outputs in their L2.

The different visions on interlanguage share a common core idea: interlanguage is an independent language system, lying somewhere between first and second language. An especially important feature of interlanguage is that, due to its descriptive nature, it tries to explain and understand the reasons behind the imperfect language production of a second language learner in reference to the language/s available to the learner. Hence, Interlanguage can be linked with Error Analysis and Language Teaching and Learning.

1.3 Error Analysis as Opposed to Contrastive Analysis

Introduced by Craig Chaudron in 1977 through the publishing of “A Descriptive Model of Discourse in the Corrective Treatment of Learner’s Errors” and widely systematised and accepted since then, this approach to errors committed during the learning process identifies four different possibilities to treat the learners’ errors:

The following chart (following Corder and Dulay et al.) presents a systematic overview of the two different approaches to Error Treatment and their focuses on different key features:

Table 1. The main differences between Contrastive and Error analysis

<u>Contrastive Analysis</u>	<u>Error Analysis</u>
Understood as a comparison of systems of different languages and predicts the areas of difficulty.	Starts with errors in the second language learning and studies them in detail and looks for sources of significance.
It looks for differences in the whole language system of two languages.	Provides data of actual problems emphasising in pedagogical problems.
Confronts complex theoretical problems.	It confronts realistic problems in SLA. Provides real data of the learning process of the target language: -is it similar to learning L1 and L2? -is the process similar in children and adults?
Focused on language structure and system: the speaker/learner is passive.	The learner is an active participant.
Interlingual importance.	Interlingual and intralingual importance.

1.4 Morpho-Syntactic and Grammar Errors

This paper is primarily concerned with morpho-syntactic and grammar errors. These errors, as indicated by Vosse and Kempen, result from the misapplication of morphological inflection and syntactic and grammatical rules. These errors occur quite frequently in ESL learners' outputs and are considered serious because they are commonly seen as a result of insufficient language competence rather than accidental mistakes (such as typographical lapsus). Therefore, these errors constitute a broad and interesting area in English language teaching (ELT).

This paper mainly deals with two types of morpho-syntactic errors: (i) grammar structural errors and (ii) morpho-syntactic errors because, as pointed out by Purinanda in 2022, these are the most recurrent errors in ESL written productions, and it seems that these errors do effectively

hinder the progression of learners within bands and levels of the CEFR (in relative terms, from B1.2 to B1.3 and, in absolute terms, from B1 to B2).

On the one hand, morpho-syntax, the combination of morphology and syntax, is the study of the forms and rules that govern the formation of words and sentences in any language (Wilmet). Hence, morpho-syntax focuses on all structures that enable language users to build grammatically correct statements in any language.

Thus, it seems unquestionable that morpho-syntax plays a significant role in the formation of words, inflections of regular and irregular forms of nouns, verbs, and adjectives, as well as the arrangement of language patterns, such as those that happen around the nouns, verbs, adjectives, determiners, adverbs, and other discourse and speech elements (Weir 40).

On the other hand, grammatical errors occur in the writing of many non-native language learners (Abdulkareem) and rarely in native speakers' language production. Traditionally, this situation has been attributed to interferences of the L1 rules and structures, negative transference, in the production of the L2 outputs (Kumar). According to Ferris and Roberts and Clark, some of the most common errors among ESL learners include errors that could be allocated within the category of morpho-syntactic errors: (i) noun ending errors, (ii) subject-verb agreement errors, (iii) incorrect use of determiners, (iv) incorrect use of verb tenses, (v) lexical errors in word choice or word form, (vi) word order, and (vii) unidiomatic sentence construction.

2. OBJECTIVES

This paper aims primarily to develop a systematic method or analytical instrument, derived from the analysis and discussion of errors identified within the constructed corpus, for addressing morpho-syntactic and grammatical errors and conducting error analysis. This method seeks to bridge the gap between essential theoretical frameworks and practical applications in ESL classrooms. We posit that a deeper comprehension of errors can facilitate their resolution. Therefore, conducting face-to-face sessions to analyze and discuss errors, as previously suggested, can not only enhance the learning and teaching processes but also provide insights into the effectiveness and relevance of existing syllabi.

Furthermore, the paper seeks to explore the implications of Error Analysis and Corpus Studies within the context of ESL classrooms. To achieve this goal, the proposed methodology is grounded in the theoretical

review conducted in the preceding chapters of this study. By establishing its theoretical underpinnings, this methodology possesses inherent transferability, thereby enabling its replication, validation, and critique by other scholarly inquiries and teaching experiences (Richards and Renandya; Saito et al.; Sani and Ismail).

3. METHODOLOGY

Selecting the most appropriate approach for addressing grammatical errors in the written productions of ESL learners is a decision of considerable significance. Previous research studies (Díaz de Ilaraza et al.; Presada and Badea; Yilmaz and Delmir) have employed similar methodologies, such as questioning the nature of the error and attempting to elucidate it, to detect grammatical errors and prevent fossilization using context-free grammar (CFG) approaches. In this investigation, we build upon prior insights by incorporating contextual factors (intragroup dynamics and CEFR assessments) into the analysis of grammatical and morpho-syntactic errors, guided by the findings reported by Little and Mariappan et al. in their empirical investigations of error analysis.

The main objective of this paper is to propose and apply to an empirical study a systematic methodology (understood as a collection of methods as suggested by Patel and Patel) based on a particular instrument, or method (Viergever), to accomplish the task of error correction and feedback. This procedure is based on Error Analysis and Error Treatment and could be transferable to other similar studies, as well as to the reality of everyday teaching in the classroom of ESL.

The methodology will be implemented on a sample comprising 100 written compositions, equally divided between 50 samples from level B1 and 50 samples from level B2. Consequently, this initiative holds the potential to significantly enhance the writing proficiency of ESL learners through an improved feedback mechanism.

This method, referred to as ADF, entails a structured approach involving face-to-face interactions between the teacher and student for Error Analysis (A), Discussion (D) of the error's nature, and providing Feedback (F) to the learner. This analytical framework has been meticulously devised through a five-step process designed to comprehensively address the implications of the errors encountered.

– Step 1: Identifying the error in its context to create a corpus of samples. The creation of a corpus of written samples helps create

taxonomies of samples that serve the process of analysis; in this case, it helps centre the notion of average and medium. The objective is to extract materials that could be applicable and transferrable to other cases and in these cases selecting the best and worst seldom offer valuable information (Ellis).

- Step 2: Identifying errors within the corpus created. For each error, analyse what was the learner's intention and how it can be reconstructed into a correct English written output. Not only offering a correction but a set of delayed possibilities that can help learners understand their errors (DM as proposed by Facullo) because there is usually more than one possibility of reconstructing an error and the negative evidence presented to the student should depend on the intended message.

- Step 3: Explaining the error according to some basic principles: select recurrent and non-recurrent grammar and morpho-syntactic errors and provide possible causes of those errors: (i) native language transfers, (ii) developmental intralingual errors (not concerned with the first language), (iii) borrowings, (iv) overgeneralization, (v) ignorance of rule restriction - occurring as a result of failure to observe the restrictions or existing structures, (vi) incomplete application of rules - arising when learners fail to fully develop a certain structure required to produce acceptable sentences, (vii) false concepts hypothesised deriving from faulty comprehension of distinctions in the target language and/or (viii) error fossilization (intragroup and personal development fossilization).

- Step 4: Levelling within the CEFR. It is important to provide an approximate idea of the ideal performance of each level according to the CEFR. This enhances the feedback process, as it sets the derided objective, and, also, improves the self-assessment process of the learners' and the degree of consciousness of their own development as suggested by Hawkins and Filipović.

- Step 5: Effective feedback given to the learners (in a face-to-face private session). The feedback given to the learners must be error-specific and pay special attention to the nature of the error to provide viable solutions to avoid repeating the error in future written productions.

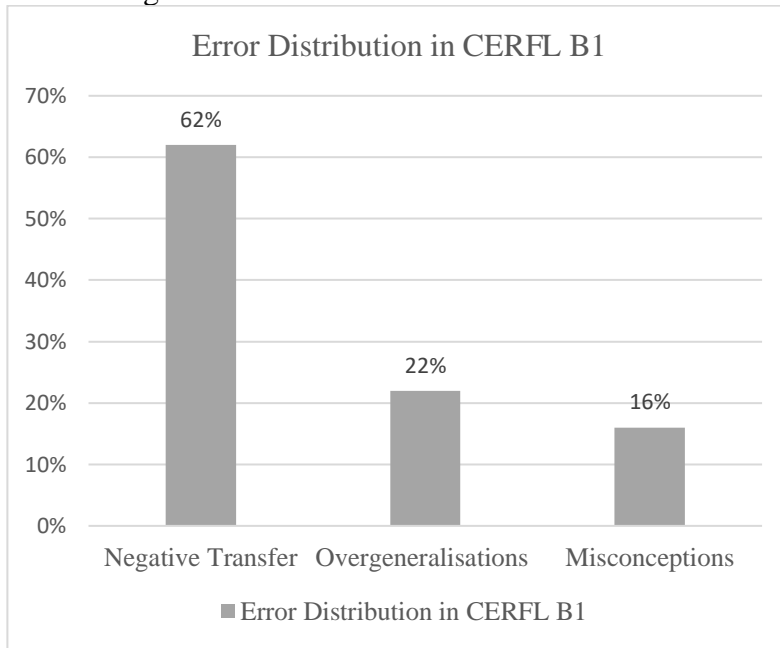
4. RESULTS AND ANALYSIS

For the study presented here, we have analysed 100 written output samples by ESL Spanish students of the CEFR levels B1 and B2 (50 of each studied level). These written outputs have been analysed following the explained

original method (ADF) suggested before and inspired by a combination of Corpus Studies methodology and face-to-face teacher-student interaction.

4.1 Errors in the B1 Level

Fig. 1. Error in the B1-subcollection of texts



4.1.1 B1 inside the CEFR

This level is the first of the two levels that are named with the letter B in the CEFR. A learner in the B levels is an independent user of the language. In the case of the B1, the CEFR states that when reaching this learning point, a learner:

- Can understand the main points of clear standard input.
- Can deal with most situations.
- Can produce simple connected texts.
- Can describe first-hand experiences and events.

4.1.2 B1 Common Errors—Analysis, Discussion & Feedback

Detailed analysis of this (sub) collection of samples demonstrates that even when learners can make themselves understood, these learners seem to encounter several problems when they try to produce complex structures as they tend to replicate the rules and linguistic patterns of their L1 in their L2 written outputs. Thus, at this stage of their learning process, the most frequent natures and sources of errors are negative transfer, overgeneralization, and ignorance of restrictive rules. This frequency in their production, makes errors attributed to these natures to be strongly visible in this stage of learning.

By analysing fragments of the samples collected of written outputs with the suggested method (ADF), it is visible that the written outputs produced by these learners cannot be easily recognised as fully English-written valid material as the number of errors that can be found in these texts distance these samples from valid English-written examples. The following extracts have been selected for deeper analysis as they constitute the core of the most recurrent errors found.

Error 1. “How I am visiting Poland I stayed in one hotel in Warsaw. I am going to stay . . .”

ADF: As may be observed, there are many deviations from the rules in this extract; learner seems to be confused with the use of verbal tenses (grammar errors) and, as a result, in the analysed extract there is no sense of time or tense sequencing. It seems quite clear that learner intended to produce sentences using the future tense. However, we do find present, past, and future tenses used without a clear distinction. It is also evident that the placement of *how* at the beginning of the sentence represents an example of negative transfer as it may respond to an exercise of translation from their first language and the use of the adverb *como* in Spanish: *Como voy a . . .* By analysing this short piece, it can also be understood that this learner seems to have a problem with the uses of the numeral one, which represents an example of overgeneralization of the rule and use, and at the same time, a failure in the application of a restrictive rule: *one* vs. *a*.

Error 2. “I heard about the Carlos’ accident. I don’t believe it.”

ADF: In this extract can be seen that the learner’s difficulties happen as a result of negative transfer and word order. A detailed analysis of this short piece reveals that in “the Carlos’s accident” we do see an example of

negative language transfer because both the use of the definite article and the choice of word order reflect the grammar rules of the learner's L1. If we examine this short piece in further detail we understand that, on the one hand, the use of the definite article *the* in "the Carlos's accident" seem to be an example of negative transfer as the sentence seems to be an exact transposition of the students L1 grammar rules regarding the use of the definite article, these rules transferred from the learner's L1 do not apply in the target language (English). On the other hand, word order also seems to be a direct transposition of the learner's L1 rules, as it reflects the typically expected order in a Spanish sentence of this kind, but not the correct word order in English (*El accidente de Carlos as opposed to Carlos's accident*).

Error 3. "Each country has own problems one of the most damage problems is the transport. They are a lot of cars on the world and they are more . . ."

ADF: A detailed analysis of this short extract reveals that this learner's written output seems to be affected by negative transfer and overgeneralisation of grammar rules. Regarding the overgeneralisation problems, this learner is using *they* instead of *there* to create an existential meaning as the pronoun *they* seems to have been placed in substitution of *there*. This error cannot be attributed to L1 transfer as there is no similar rule in the learner's L1; hence, according to Chaudron, it could only be regarded as a developmental intralingual grammar error and an overgeneralization of a known grammar rule; in this case the rule would be that all English sentences need a subject.

This extract has been problematic during the analysis because it could be a simple mistake, the learner may know the rule and failed to apply it to this sentence for reasons that may have nothing to do with the learning process.

However, what really constitutes an error, and, as a result is part of their learning process, is the problematic syntactic construction "each country has own problems one of the most damage problems is the transport"; closer analysis of this sentence reveals another example of negative transfer: the English word *own* (*to own*) is commonly translated into Spanish as a possessive meaning word; by considering this, we can see that this learner has not used the correct possessive in the produced

output (*its*) because in their understanding of the English rules, *own* seems to convey the same meaning as the structure *its own*.

Further analysis of this short extract reveals another error, which appears in the phrase “most damage problems”; in this case, the incorrect inflection of the word can be understood as another case of negative transfer.

At this point of the learning process, L1 negative transfer seems to play a significant role in the process of approximation to the target language. Consequently, grammar rules are not equally fixed; some rules are never broken while others are constantly violated, and others seem to be neither consistently fixed nor broken. Table 2 shows further examples that illustrate and complement the error discussion and analysis at this learning stage.

Some of the main errors that have been analysed are also strongly connected to more classroom-oriented linguistic features like verbal tenses, word morphology, collocations, prepositions, and word order inside the sentence.

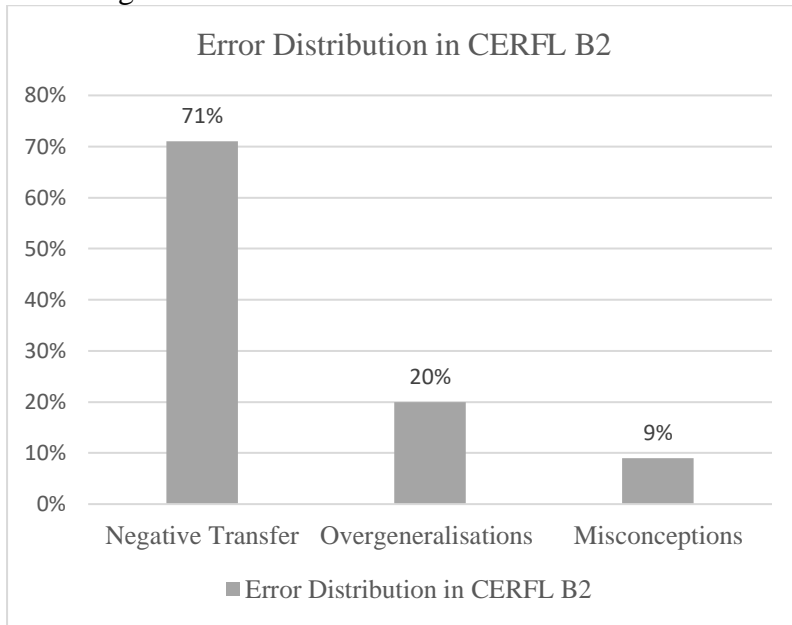
It is essential in this stage of the learning process, in the light of the results obtained, to take into consideration that errors are effective indicators of the progression of the learning process. This lead to realising that the instructor needs to make the learners aware of the importance of the errors; this could be done following: (i) stop and analyse together the recurrent errors; (ii) try to propose solutions and materials to overcome those necessities and, finally, (iii) take into consideration that errors indicate how to continue developing and planning lessons/classes as the indicate the milestones of the teaching and learning process. Hence, making learners aware of their own errors and providing feedback seems to be a good alternative to traditional treatment of the error as a mistake, which included the immediate discard of the error as something punishable in the process of learning second and foreign languages.

Table 2. Supporting examples of B1 Errors

Error nature	Examples
Negative transfer.	- I don't mind to go.
Errors that we can apply to the interferences with the first language.	- We will visit it this night.
	- We are doing very photos.
	- There isn't sun.
	- He works for the morning.
	- He hasn't girlfriend.
	- It's probably you will love him.
	- I haven't seen them since six months ago.
	- Serious.
	- We have not a very good healthy.
	- Contamination.
Overgeneralization or ignorance of a rule of restriction.	- She is the person more sweet that I met. → Fails to recognize the comparative and superlative grammar rule, applies part of it.
	- He is the boy most beautiful of the world. → Not only fails to apply the comparative and superlative grammar rule but fails in the use of the preposition of for anything that is "contained."
	- Waitting → Spelling incorrect, generalisation of an incorrect rule.
	- We are doing very photos → verb to do for every action of do or make or take.
	- The pollution not only affects the nature, the people too. They have problems with the breathing → inappropriate use of the definite article.
	- We are doing very photos. Very as a lot (of).
False concepts hypothesized. Misconceptions.	- Uses of the definite article: the people, the health, the nature . . .
	- Uses of meet and know as interchangeable.

4.2 Errors in the B2 Level

Fig. 2. Error distribution in the B2 sub-collection



4.2.1 B2 inside the CEFR

This level is the second of the two levels that are named with the letter B. The B levels are those in which the learner or the language user is seen as already independent. In the case of the B2, the CEFR underlines that when reaching this language level, a learner:

- Can understand the main points of clear standard input.
- Can deal with most situations.
- Can produce simple connected texts.
- Can describe first-hand experiences and events.

4.2.2 B2 Common Errors—Analysis, Discussion & Feedback

As learners become more competent, their errors tend to be less frequent, and whilst it seems to be true that their language use and linguistic comfort zone widens (Muñoz-Basols), learners also begin producing more complex outputs, which are characterised by the use of more sophisticated language and richer vocabulary. As a result, there seems to be an increasing desire

of approximating to a more realistic English output which can be perceived in the analysed texts. This is visible when comparing, for instance, the B1 output “how I am visiting Poland I stayed . . .” to the B2 sample “I can’t believe it (not being able to go on holidays with you) because I wanted to go with you and it this holidays were going to be incredible”; if we analyse these two extracts, it is possible to observe that the two productions differ greatly as the second sentence (B2) seems to be much closer to a natural English output, and at the same time, the absence of errors found in B1 productions indicate that it could also be the result of the process of the elimination of some of the errors present in the first sentence (B1).

However, even when the changes produced inside both sentences mentioned before may be very significant, in this stage of the learning process, we still find a critical number of errors in samples analysed—most of which could be attributed to three main error natures: negative transfer, violation of restriction rules and many examples of overgeneralization. This can be seen in the following excerpts:

Error 1. “The life is very beautiful for crying all day and wishing not be born.”

ADF: As already indicated in the general description of this learning level, written outputs seem to be better constructed, and this short extract could be an example of a better approximation to native-like written productions. However, this excerpt contains a series of errors which if not treated could hinder the learning process. First, this learner seems to misuse the definite article as in this short production the learner does not apply the restrictive rule of the correct use of the article in English, which, at the same time, could also be an example a case of negative transfer because the equivalent sentence in Spanish always contains a definite article in the noun phrase *La vida*.

Secondly, we can infer from the analysis of this short extract that the learner fails to construct the hypothesis intended in the second part of the excerpt: wishing somebody was never born. This seems to elicit another case of negative transfer, in this case, an interference or direct transfer of the infinitive construction in their first language, which seems to be replicated in the written production (. . . *demasiado corta para llorar y desear no haber . . .*).

One very interesting feature that can be found in this short extract is the learner’s success in creating a complex prepositional phrase which

included a non-finite prepositional object, in this case, it is possible to observe a preposition followed by a gerund construction, which did not appear in any of the B1 samples analysed and, thus, represents a real indication of the progression in the process of learning English.

Error 2. “I can’t go to the holidays with you because my parents want to go to the holidays with them.”

ADF: A close analysis of this short extract reveals that the use of the definite article continues to be a source of error production in this learner’s output. Further analysis reveals that this seems to happen as a result of L1 interference. If we compare the production analysed with the Spanish (learner’s L1) construction *las vacaciones* we can see that in such a noun phrase learner’s L1 would almost always be accompanied by the definite article, which seems to be prescriptive in such cases, as opposed to English in which in these situations the rule to apply is the opposite. In this short extract, this learner also fails to convey a proper meaning in the verb phrase “want to go”; the absence of the inclusion of the personal object *me*, renders the sentence ambiguous, which would not happen in the full appropriate verbal construct: “want me to go.”

Error 3. “However dinner won’t be like I expected it.”

ADF: Detailed analysis of this short extract seems to show that the overgeneralization of the use of the definite article (seen in the previous extracts) is fluctuating and not present in every writing, which makes it less frequent than in B1 productions, as expected. Attentive analysis of this selected extract elicits another example of overgeneralization as a nature of error production; in this case, the use of “*like*” which seems to be used in every comparison sentence, i.e., like equals (=) as, as though, likely, etc. The problem the learner seems to have to express comparison meanings and build comparative structures also constitutes an example in which the learner is violating a restrictive rule in English grammar: *like* vs. *as*.

Thus, it can be argued that once learners have reached this stage of the learning process they seem to be more competent and to possess a greater ability of conveying the meaning; they not only seem to be capable of producing better constructed sentences and writings in general, but they also seem to be able to introduce more complex structures in their written outputs, as the analysis of selected extracts demonstrate. However, errors

still appear in the written samples analysed and many of these seem to be the result of the negative influence of the first language of the learners in their second language written outputs. Table 3 offers some additional examples to strengthen the points already explained.

As already mentioned in the section dedicated to error in the B1 sub-collection, most of the errors that have been analysed in this section seem to be closely related to classroom-oriented language features. Taking this issue into consideration leads to the understanding that it is essential to inform learners of their errors and use them in a revised student-oriented syllabus.

One key feature of this level is the ability of the learners to express themselves in a better and more natural way; hence, they are, as suggested in the CRFL, more likely to be understood by a native English speaker with no knowledge whatsoever of their L1 (Spanish). However, even if their communication capacities increase, learners at this stage continue to show critical errors which need to be overcome to produce adequate outputs; analysis of these errors reveals that the most significant (in terms of absolute numbers) error natures seem to be (i) negative transfer, (ii) overgeneralisations and (iii) inconsistencies in word order; the following examples have been selected from the samples collected to illustrate these various error natures:

–Selected examples of problems with verb tenses and verbal groups: the group miss you, this one aren't, the phone have been, he know who did it, she has working in the museum

–Selected examples of difficult expressions that are not fixed yet: If people speak the same language, we would have less problems (the conditional is not well formed), I thought that the police had the reason (misconception of being right)

–Selected examples to show that word order is not (always) correct: I have at home some old things.

The same procedure as in B1 (what we have defined here as the ADF process) seems to lead to a better error comprehension and, hence, to an improved language competence while, at the same time, helping upgrade and enhance the quality (in terms of adequacy to the target language rules) of the learners' written output.

Table 3. Supporting examples of B2 errors

Nature	Examples
Negative transfer. Errors that we can apply to the interferences with the first language.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - I'm glad to write you. - Playing with video games. - Sore throats are frequently between adults and children. - The problem is that how I told you . . . - I only have one week. - Taking a cup of coffee. - Send me them. - Be friend of. - Felt in love. Close to Spanish feel in love than fall in love. - To have the reason. - Iquality.
Overgeneralization or ignorance of a rule of restriction.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Send me them à fails to apply the infinitive construction rule. - Turn over the page à fails to produce a proper word order in the sentence, does not break the verb and preposition. Does not apply a restrictive rule of both verbs and word order. - Uses of the, do not restrict its uses. - Have for everything someone possesses or takes.
False concepts hypothesized. Misconceptions.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Put as show. - Show as display. - Reserve as booking. - Follow as keep, carry, continue . . . any verb expressing continuity. - Stay as go or be. - To have the reason.

CONCLUSIONS

This study presents two key conclusions based on its findings. Firstly, it underscores that errors at the B1 and B2 proficiency levels are prevalent at both morphological and syntactical levels. Morphological errors

encompass inaccuracies in inflections, prepositions, articles, determiners, and other fundamental components of sentences. Conversely, syntactical errors predominantly involve misuses of the passive voice, tense, and most notably, subject-verb agreement.

Secondly, this analysis highlights that errors can often be attributed to negative language transfer or the adverse influence of learners' native language (L1) on their second language (L2) outputs. Consequently, errors serve as significant indicators of the learning process, not only for educators but also for further research in the field of SLA and ESL pedagogy. The critical examination of errors has broadened the scope of linguistic analysis in ESL, overcoming the limitations and challenges of contrastive analysis (Gass and Selinker).

From this perspective errors provide valuable insights into students' development of their L2 language system, reflecting both successful progress and areas requiring further attention. Recognizing errors as an integral aspect of the classroom environment (Rod), educators must remain adaptable, responding to the implicit cues offered by students' errors in refining syllabi and instructional approaches (Brown; Keh; Rajendran and Yunus).

However, it is essential that language specialists do not forget that over-emphasising errors may lead to learner frustration. Therefore, teachers and educators need to be able to design lesson plans that allow them to elicit the errors in a supportive and positive way that leads to error elimination. In this sense, a prolonged and systematic analysis throughout the course and an attentive revision of errors in the classroom would be necessary. Furthermore, it seems that it could be beneficial if the teacher maintained a record of errors committed by learner, which coupled with supplementary or correctional material can aid in addressing errors constructively and fostering student progress.

Viewed in this light, Error Analysis serves not only as a diagnostic tool but also as a means for evaluating the efficacy of instructional activities. By adopting a flexible and adaptive strategy informed by theoretical insights, educators can facilitate a collaborative learning environment where both teachers and learners actively engage in the process of error identification and correction (Mariappan et al.; Nayernia et al.; Rajendran and Yunus).

As we have seen in the analysis presented, there are various sources of errors when learning a second language. However, it seems clear that the main reason and most significant nature is L1 interference. Some

researchers (Ellis; Gass and Selinker), following the idea that what learners develop is never the target language but an in-between language with its own rules and ways of working, believe that errors are unavoidable in the process undergone to learn a second language. Hence, we could argue that learners are bound to a different social and cultural reality when practising and learning the L2.

Therefore, it seems imperative that teachers and educators show themselves flexible towards error correction as it has been demonstrated that being too rigid regarding errors in the classroom could be prejudicial to the learning process. Learners have diverse expectations and preferences, and teachers need to be vigilant to assess how effective their teaching is. Nevertheless, determining the appropriate timing and method for error correction poses a significant challenge. Scholars have underscored that overly correcting errors may impede learners' communicative abilities (Powell). Thus, the optimal approach to addressing errors requires a careful consideration of learners' needs and preferences, informed by a robust theoretical framework. Consequently, the ADF method proposed herein offers an effective means of integrating theoretical insights into pedagogical practice (Mariappan et al.; Nayernia et al.; Rajendran and Yunus).

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David West Brown and Danielle Zawodny Wetzel, editors. *Corpora and Rhetorically Informed Text Analysis*. John Benjamins, 2023. Pp. 292. Hardbound 99.00€, ebook 99.00 €. ISBN: 9789027213815 (Hardbound).

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Exploring the field of computational rhetoric, or as the authors describe it, rhetorically oriented corpus analysis, this book delves into how computational techniques can be used to study and generate rhetorical strategies and persuasive texts.

The authors explain various applications of a tool called DocuScope, which is freely available as an online application, and also available to download and use in Python scripts via a dedicated library. It provides powerful text analysis capabilities, making it an invaluable resource for researchers and students. Importantly, DocuScope is free to use for non-commercial purposes, providing an accessible entry point for those wishing to explore computational rhetoric and rhetorically-oriented corpus analysis.

The book is not a manual or tutorial on how to use the tool, but rather explains different areas of research where such a tool can be useful and how it can be used to obtain relevant data for the discipline. The fact that DocuScope is freely available for research and that the book covers several areas makes it of interest to a wide audience. This is an edited book that includes contributions from scholars from rhetoric, writing studies, education, data science, political science, and literary and cultural studies. Thus, the book is divided into six parts with two contributions in each part.

The first part of the book, “DocuScope and Computational Rhetoric,” offers, on the one hand, a history of the project including interesting concepts and theories of rhetoric, and on the other hand an introduction to the book itself. Authors here point out the goal of this volume: “both to reflect past applications of DocuScope in a range of historical, literary, educational, professional, and political contexts, as well as to provide space for new and experimental applications” (25).

In Part 2 of the book titled “Variation across Academic Disciplines and Contexts,” the chapters explore genre similarities and differences,

providing valuable insights for scholars seeking methods to describe rhetorical tasks effectively. In the first chapter, “DocuScope, Multi-Dimensional Analysis, and Student Writing,” DeJeu and Brown compare undergraduate and graduate student writing, highlighting the stability of academic discourse across different contexts. In doing this, authors compare tagging systems and patterns of disciplinary variation. In the author’s words, this chapter serves as a methodological case study showing how placements along dimensions can be illustrated using parallel stick plots and how the constituents of dimensions can be compared using radar plots. This chapter also highlights the distinctions between linguistically oriented taggers, which describe syntactic, morphosyntactic, and lexical structures, and rhetorically oriented taggers, capable of analyzing the topical, organizational, and affective features of texts. Beigman’s work, “Narrative Writing from Users in the Wild,” focuses on tools that measure the distance between narrative and argument, emphasizing similarities that inform effective feedback for revision. The primary objective of the chapter is to evaluate the feasibility of incorporating automated feedback features into a writing support tool using genre analysis. Both chapters contribute to our understanding of academic writing by examining genre variations and emphasizing the importance of critical linguistic awareness in the writing process.

Part 3, “Writing Pedagogy, Access and Equity” discusses writing pedagogy, justice, and genre norms. It highlights how genre boundaries are exploited by expert members of discourse communities for private intentions within socially recognized purposes. Laura Aull, in her chapter “Language Patterns in Secondary and Postsecondary Student Writing”, illustrates significant rhetorical differences between secondary and postsecondary writing, which are tied to the varying assignment tasks at each level. She also illustrates how DocuScope language clusters can be utilized to enhance students’ metacognitive awareness of writing practices across these educational stages. Additionally, Aull asserts that generalized claims like “students can’t write” (94). perpetuate a language regulation paradigm centered around error, rather than fostering a language exploration paradigm that emphasizes knowledge and analysis. Oliveri et al. chapter “Understanding Social Justice Features in Statistics Writing” is a case study of DocuScope in undergraduate writing, paying a special attention to language use from the perspective of social justice. Although the limitations of the case study, the results demonstrate the usefulness of

DocuScope to provide both teachers and students with concrete and meaningful information about the writing practice.

In Part 4, “Rhetorically Informed Models of Social Interaction,” the authors provide examples of the contribution of DocuScope to our understanding of how people can position themselves as insiders or outsiders based on their communication styles. William Marcelino, the author of the chapter titled “Public Policy Research Applications of DocuScope’s Linguistic Taxonomy,” emphasizes the value of humanistic knowledge as a necessary complement to technical advancements in Natural Language Processing (NLP) and other data-centric disciplines. In his chapter, Marcelino discusses how DocuScope has been employed at the RAND Corporation to address various public policy challenges. The chapter is divided into two sections. The first section demonstrates how the DocuScope taxonomy serves as a statistical tool for identifying patterns in text corpora. For instance, it has been used to analyze open-text responses in large surveys. By applying this taxonomy, researchers can uncover hidden insights and trends within textual data. In the second section, Marcelino highlights how the same taxonomy has enhanced machine learning algorithms. Specifically, it has improved the detection of conspiracy discourse on social media platforms. This application showcases the practical impact of combining linguistic analysis with computational methods. Importantly, Marcelino suggests that DocuScope’s applicability extends beyond rhetoric theory. He also proposes that insights from argument theory in rhetoric and philosophy could help address semantic distance limitations in Large Language Models (LLMs). Ryan M. Omizo, in his chapter titled “Be Positive,” proposes an approach that combines non-negative matrix factorization (NMF) with DocuScope Language Action Type analysis (LATs) for topic discovery. This methodology aims to extract meaningful topic models from texts while also considering their rhetorical organization. Omizo tags texts with DocuScope LATs and spaCy named entities to discover both the topicality and the formal construction of texts. Although this method may not be ideal for classification purposes, it stands out for its ease of use and interpretability.

In Part 5 of the book, “Professional Writing/Professional Genres,” the authors discuss ongoing DocuScope research and its impact on the development of feedback tools for writers. Geisler’s chapter, “DocuScope Write & Audit as an Early Feedback Machine in Genre-Base Writing,” focuses on proposal writing, a genre of written texts designed to secure a

writer the resources necessary to carry out the proposed project. She uses a prototype of a DocuScope-inspired tool called Write & Audit designed to help students revise their own text by providing early feedback. This tool helps students understand their topical themes within the proposal genre. Dreher, on the other hand, in her chapter “From Technical Reporter to Personal Guide,” explores the differences between academic and plain language abstracts using DocuScope, highlighting how writers transition from technical reporting to a more personal guide in plain language abstracts. The goal of these plain language abstracts is to make scientific research accessible to a wider audience, but most authors know little about plain language, making the resulting genre unstable. The analysis has identified six distinct areas of variation that collectively illustrate the transition in authors’ rhetorical approach from technical reporting to serving as personal inquiry guides. This shift may provide a basis for authors, editors, and publishers to develop more effective guidelines based on practical strategies, as well as areas to explore in future user testing. The chapter highlights two recommendations: First, authors should concentrate on guiding readers through essential big-picture questions, key takeaways, and impacts. Second, there should be a shift in the way information is presented in abstracts—from a straightforward report to a captivating story of inquiry and intrigue in the summaries. Prioritizing the use of first-person constructions, authors can emphasize their own voice and invite readers to join them on their research journey.

In Part 6, “Mining History”, authors explore how specific genres wield influence and motivate action. Genres play a crucial role in facilitating conversation; without recurring structures, comprehending the world becomes challenging. In the chapter by Parry-Giles et.al., titled “Strategic Language as a Family of Identity-Based Discourse Registers,” the authors delve into the intersection of language and political campaigns. They argue that language in political campaigns encompasses a variety of discourse registers, each reflecting distinct strategic roles and outcomes. Specifically, the authors identify four key registers: architect, tactician, advisor, and coach. These registers play a crucial role in shaping campaign strategies. Successful campaigns invariably involve a harmonious integration of these discourse registers. To investigate this phenomenon, the authors employed a combination of methods: DocuScope as a text mining tool and a close reading of texts. Fitzsimmons and Wu, in their chapter “Youngs for the Young,” use DocuScope to explain how in 1882, the librarian Hewins decided what texts should be assigned to girls and

boys, setting a precedent into the next century for gendered classification systems. Authors used the DocuScope dictionary, along with other techniques like topic modelling and AHC (Agglomerative Hierarchical Clustering) to examine the rhetorical rich texts of a corpus of early children's literature.

In summary, this book is an invaluable resource for researchers and students across various fields, as it provides examples of using DocuScope in disciplines such as rhetoric, writing studies, education, data science, and literary and cultural studies. Moreover, the application of DocuScope extends beyond these areas, proving useful in fields related to digital humanities, linguistics, sociolinguistics, psychology, marketing, and business. Its potential uses, combined with its free availability for research and comprehensive user guides and technical documentation, make DocuScope a versatile tool for a wide spectrum of users.

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Gerardo Rodríguez Salas. *Vivir Sola es Morir. El Modernismo Comunitario de Katherine Mansfield*. Editorial Comares, 2023. Pp. 104. Hardback 14.24€. ISBN: 978-84-1369-604-1

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Katherine Mansfield es la menos conocida de una generación de escritores que cuenta con grandes figuras de la literatura, como James Joyce, Virginia Wolf, T. S. Eliot o D. H. Lawrence, entre otros. Gracias al trabajo de Gerardo Rodríguez Salas podemos adentrarnos con rigor y originalidad en el singular mundo literario de esta enigmática escritora de origen neozelandés que cultivó principalmente el relato corto. Mansfield compuso una obra breve pero intensa en la que vida y literatura se entrelazaron y retroalimentaron. La falta de comunicación con el ser amado, las contradicciones existenciales, el conflicto con la maternidad, la escritura como conjuro frente a la muerte son algunos de los temas universales que la autora aborda en sus escritos y que Rodríguez Salas disecciona y examina a la luz de las teorías comunitarias más recientes.

Rodríguez Salas expone a lo largo de cuatro capítulos la perspectiva comunitaria que, según él, permea el conjunto de los escritos de Mansfield. En el primer capítulo presenta todo el andamiaje teórico que sostiene su argumentario y en los tres capítulos siguientes desglosa e ilustra con ejemplos los tres tipos de agrupaciones que, a su juicio, están presentes en la obra de Mansfield y que él denomina asociaciones afectivas. Así pues, el libro presenta, en primer lugar, una síntesis de los estudios sobre el modernismo literario en lengua inglesa, así como un recorrido por las teorías comunitarias actuales, para, a continuación, explorar los modelos de comunidad vigentes en el conjunto de la obra de Mansfield. Basándose en las palabras textuales de una de las últimas cartas escritas por Mansfield en las que afirmaba que “vivir sola es morir”—cita que da título a esta sugerente publicación—, Rodríguez Salas cuestiona la visión modernista tradicional, que considera al sujeto como asocial o solitario, y pone de manifiesto los rasgos comunitarios presentes en la narrativa de la autora neozelandesa mediante numerosos ejemplos extraídos de sus relatos.

El trabajo aborda con el máximo rigor académico las distintas tendencias del modernismo literario y explora las diversas definiciones de

comunidad asociadas al modernismo artístico con una profusión de citas y notas a pie de página, así como una completa bibliografía, para aquellos interesados en consultar las fuentes o ampliar la información. Todas las citas extraídas de los escritos, diarios, notas o relatos de la autora van acompañadas de su versión en inglés, lo cual permite saborear el estilo y disfrutar de la cadencia del texto original.

En el primer capítulo, Rodríguez Salas explica que, frente a los estudios modernistas de finales del siglo XX que consideraban el modernismo literario más despegado del contexto social, la crítica más reciente reivindica un modernismo de tendencias poscoloniales, más feminista y una clara dimensión social y comunitaria. Con toda probabilidad, la trascendencia de escritoras como Mansfield o Wolf no sea totalmente ajena al proceso de feminización del modernismo que presagia el posmodernismo. El modernismo comunitario de Mansfield se manifiesta en su preferencia por pequeñas comunidades o asociaciones afectivas que se corresponden con tres modelos—amantes, círculos literarios y relaciones fraternales—que son recurrentes en su obra.

El segundo capítulo aborda la dimensión comunitaria de los amantes en la obra de Katherine Mansfield. Los personajes de Mansfield se caracterizan por su aislamiento existencial y falta de comunicación con el otro, sienten la presión y el encorsetamiento social, pero no logran superar estos obstáculos por medio de la comunicación. Los amantes experimentan una tensión permanente entre el aislamiento emocional y el deseo de fusión con el ser amado. La incomunicación que padecen sus personajes en la mayoría de sus relatos bien podría ser el reflejo de sus propias vivencias amorosas. “El veneno”, que da título a uno de sus relatos cortos, es una metáfora perfecta de lo que las relaciones de pareja representan para esta autora.

El tercer capítulo dedicado a los círculos literarios, en su calidad de agrupación comunitaria, nos describe su tempestuosa relación con las sociedades artísticas de la época (Bloomsbury y Garsington), que podría caracterizarse como una mezcla de admiración y rechazo mutuos. Mansfield es un espíritu libre e independiente que mantiene vínculos controvertidos y ambiguos con el mundo intelectual de su época. Rechaza el esnobismo intelectual de las sociedades literarias, pero al mismo tiempo reconoce la necesidad de pertenencia a una comunidad artística, de explorar dentro de un marco común nuevas formas de expresión. Se debate entre la rivalidad profesional con Virginia Woolf y la sororidad en un período de incipiente sufragismo.

En el cuarto capítulo sobre las relaciones fraternales, se describe una dimensión comunitaria inspirada por un amor puro, no sexualizado, que se encumbra por la proximidad de la muerte. Este tipo de asociación afectiva se basa en la especial relación que Mansfield mantuvo con su hermano Leslie, muerto prematuramente en la Primera Guerra Mundial. A partir del momento en que se la diagnostica de tuberculosis, Mansfield entabla un proceso creativo que la lleva a sacralizar la muerte de su hermano como manera de reconocer y enfrentarse a su propia finitud.

En definitiva, este libro, que es el colofón de una fructífera labor de investigación desarrollada a lo largo de casi 25 años, no solo constituye una valiosa invitación a descubrir a esta autora, sino que facilita alguna de las claves que permiten entender el complejo mundo sensorial y emocional que inspiró a una de las maestras del cuento. Además, el sutil análisis de algunos de los relatos nos aporta las claves para descodificar los comportamientos y actitudes de los personajes y descifrar la simbología lírica que adereza su prosa. El estudio puede resultar, por momentos, un poco críptico para el lector poco avezado, pero aporta información esencial y actualizada para entender y disfrutar de una escritora injustamente desconocida hasta hace bien poco.

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Zenón Luis-Martínez, editor. *Poetic Theory and Practice in Early Modern Verse: Unwritten Arts*. Edinburgh UP, 2023. Pp. 352. Hardback £95.00, ebook £0.00 ISBN: 9781399507844.

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This excellent collection of eleven original essays on the interconnections of early modern theory and practice evolved from presentations at the University of Huelva's 2019 international symposium "Unwritten Arts: Keywords in English Sixteenth-Century Poetry and Poetics." Its contributors, editor Zenón Luis-Martínez states, "shared an assumption that the creative impulse that animates Renaissance writing of and about poetry grew out of Renaissance poetics but also outgrew the scope of what came to be systematised in the form of norms and precepts" (1).

Rosalie L. Colie's phrase in the subtitle suggests that it's the makers' take they endeavour to unpick while "explor[ing] ways in which texts of various kinds emerge as *unwritten arts* complementing and/or contesting the period's formally written poetics" (2). The focus may well be on the implicit but it is not to the detriment of the normative. This distinction is relevant as, besides an official-canon-building poetics, the term "normative" may also denote the fundamental problems individual writers face and must ultimately resolve to produce a text, that is, the kind of "active thinking about matter, forms, and functions of poetry as that thinking is generated in practical writing" (2). This is not negligible when considering vernacular literature against the humanist curriculum and classroom strategy, namely the prevalence of imitation, whether as interpretation, translation, or invention—ultimately, the selection and reworking of given models as resources of style and subject-matter. Examining how these models, which chiefly emerged from classical discourses, were essayed and assumed, also means assessing the vitality of poetry in one's own tongue and, in turn, its potential to generate new models that are appropriate for the concerns of a common quotidian experience and memory—lenses to perceive (and act upon) the world.

The classification of poetry among the arts, made it both permeable to and a vehicle for other disciplines' discourses and aims. Stemming from traditional teachings on oratory, as in Quintilian and Cicero, infused with Horatian instructive and sweet decorum, and adopted to serve Christian

tenets, the triad that came to define the period's ways of poetry—to delight, to teach, to move—was on a par with “the culture of teaching that was English humanism [and had] moved poetry and pedagogy to new prominence in intellectual life and pressed them closer together than ever before” (Dolven 2). Conversely, the stress on the importance of poetry's effects upon the reader occasioned changes in the figure of the poet, prolonging further age-old debates, amongst them, the nature of “poetic inspiration” and the recognition of the performative dimension of the poetic voice. Philip Sidney attended to these matters and acknowledged the need to nourish a given talent by patiently exercising learnt skills according to the poet's true conscience and discernment, as the passage, reminiscent of Ramus, from *An Apology for Poetry* indicates:

Marry, they that delight in Poesy itself should seek to know what they do, and how they do; and especially look themselves in an unflattering glass of reason, if they be inclinable unto it . . . Yet I confess I always that as the fertilest ground must be manured, so must the highest-flying wit have a Daedalus to guide him. That Daedalus they say, both in this and in other, hath three wings to bear itself into the air of commendation: that is, Art, Imitation, and Exercise. But these, neither artificial rules nor imitative patterns, we must cumber ourselves withal. Exercise indeed we do, but that very fore-backwardly: for where we should exercise to know, we exercise as having known; and so is our brain delivered of much matter which was never begotten by knowledge. For there being two principal parts—matter to be expressed by words and words to express—in neither we use Art or Imitation rightly. (Sidney 132–33)

The essays in *Poetic Theory and Practice* address these issues, steering close to the poems and their umpiring texts—comprehending the differences between and the occasions for that which is derivative, competent, and revolutionary. They raise questions involving memory and learning, the pressures of instruction and of civil duties, the difficulties in reconciling dignity and gratification, transmission of knowledge (coterie or broader readership)—and thus, the place of poetry and poets in Reformation England. The vast number of coeval critical sources drawn upon include Philip Sydney's *Defence*, George Puttenham's *The Arte of English Poesie*, Thomas Wilson's, *Rule of Reason*, William Scott's *Model*, William Webbe's *A Discourse of English Poetry*, and Abraham Fraunce's *Shepherd's Logic*. The generous Introduction contextualises the project

and includes two distinct stances of poetry assuming art's role: the poems of James VI and Aemilia Lanyer, closely read by the editor.

The intriguing pair, “unwritten arts,” at the core of the collection encompasses aims, methodology, and materialisation of this project. The “inherent polysemy” of the word “unwritten”¹ points toward “unformulated critical assumptions outside official theory.” Luis-Martínez notes its frequent occurrence in sixteenth-century

legal and religious contexts, mostly in reference to the oral traditions of the English common law and Catholic Doctrine. Phrases such as “unwritten verities” and “unwritten traditions” . . . repeatedly signalling the distrust towards what is admitted by mere consensus against the authority of the scriptures and underlying the “new literalism” of Protestant culture. (10)

One is also reminded of “the blank surface that admits—palimpsest-like—unexplained, marginalised or novel meanings” (10). The word “art” encapsulates both poetry and poetics—the activity and the precepts that govern it—blurring the lines between theory and practice. Throughout the volume, besides “art,” selected words—such as “grace,” “blood,” “habit,” “atom,” “sublime,” “eloquence,” “Muse”—acquire the status of keywords conceived “primarily as windows into the critical discourse on poetry in early modern England . . . their relevance is gauged by their capacity to identify, contextualise or explain a specific question in relation to early modern poetry” (16).

Notwithstanding the indebtedness of this kind of approach to Raymond Williams’ work in the field of cultural studies, Roland Greene’s critical semantics, or Ita Mac Carthy’s new philology,² these ‘complex words’ do not determine the book’s structure. Instead, bearing in mind their functions across discursive fields, verse by James VI, Spenser, Philip Sidney, Fulke Greville, Aemilia Lanyer, Marlowe, Shakespeare, Barnabe Barnes, Henry Constable, Lodge, and Chapman is multifariously analysed throughout chapters grouped into three thematic blocks found to be major concerns across contemporaneous treatises: Origin, Style, and Poetry.

¹ “Not committed to writing; left unrecorded; ‘Of laws, etc.: Not formulated in written codes or documents; not reduced to writing; oral.’ Not written *of* or about.; 2. Not written upon. Also with *on*” (“Unwritten”).

² Their work and an array of other scholars’ with different approaches, including Catherine Bates, Clark Hulse, S. K. Heninger, Rosemond Tuve, and Lynn Enterline, is, of course, acknowledged throughout the collection.

The first three chapters by Joan Corbet-Soler, Emma Wilson, and Cassandra Gorman, respectively engage grace, logical cause, atom, and Cupid to examine texts that complement or configure alternatives to treatises. Corbet-Soler considers the courtly, political, and theological implications of the term grace in poems by Spenser, Philip Sidney, Greville, and Lanyer, and the tensions that the word generates, both within the poems and in what concerns their reception. Emma Wilson draws on Agricola, Melanchton, Ramus, Thomas Wilson, and Fraunce to trace the “connections between the discursive principles set forth in pedagogical works from the period and the ways in which writers put those ideas to use in creative contexts” (50), especially, how “sixteenth-century poets used logic to inject a new kind of agency into their poetry” (49). She analyses three “love complaints” by Spenser, Philip Sidney, and Marlowe as emerging from this “culture of logical causation and invention” (50). Cassandra Gorman relies on Renaissance mythography (especially Conti) to explore the connection between the atomic particle and the influence of Cupid in poems by Marlowe, Drayton, Philip Sidney, and Chapman. Gorman finds that the “trope of the atomised Cupid develops an aetiology for its own poetics of desire . . . wherein physical elements and Cupids conjoin to create both powerful, multi-layered metaphors (that ‘pierce deep’) and natural philosophical explanations for love and lust” (76–77).

The following three chapters by Rocío G. Sumillera, David Amelang, and Sonia Hernández-Santano attend to matters of style. Sumillera investigates “the semantics of blood”; Amelang looks for the unpoetic and instances of ineloquence, drawing from treatises, poems, and dramatic texts. Hernández-Santano’s interest is the concept of eloquent bodies, connecting eloquence and emotions with a focus on Lodge’s *Scilla’s Metamorphosis* and Shakespeare’s *Venus and Adonis*.

The third part of the book is devoted to individual poets’ idiosyncratic voices. Jonathan P. A. Sell focuses on the sublime according to an aestheticised Philip Sidney. María Pérez-Jauregui compares Barnabe Barnes and Henry Constable through grace, following their respective journeys from the secular to religious lyric, one Protestant and the other Catholic, and the outcomes in terms of their careers. Cinta Zunido-Garrido draws on the concept of Muse in Lodge’s *Phillis: Honoured with Pastoral Sonnets, Elegies and Amorous Delight* and *The Complaint of Elstred* to address the period’s theories of imitation, inspiration, and imagination. Sarah Knight considers Fulke Greville and the idea of difficulty as impairment recurrent in the critical discussions of his work; Knight

perceives the intricacy of his writing as deliberate, thus an aesthetic and didactic category. The chapter by Zenón Luis-Martínez focuses on habit in George Chapman, problematises the idea of obscurity, and distinguishes the point of view of the received critical discourse and the poet's method, a discipline presumed in the reader aspiring to a communion by the text.

This collection fully succeeds in its purpose “to offer full-fledged instances of the habit of experiencing poetry and of thinking the conditions of the early modern poem from writerly and readerly perspectives” (10). It rescues neglected authors from derision and reads their works alongside that of canonical/more popular writers. Moreover, concerning the latter, the sensitive readings informed by unexpected connections, offer plenty of opportunities to realise, beyond established critique, the groundbreaking quality of their writings. It is thrilling to perceive the intricacy of this whole newly written art; although each chapter in its “radically different approach” can be read independently, there is much to profit from attending to the contributors' cross-references and acknowledgments of one another's points of view on overlapping topics. Far from accretions of redundancy, these gestures configure the venture's necessarily collaborative and transdisciplinary nature. This will no doubt elicit many rewarding readings and stimulate further research.³ There is also detailed referencing and extensive bibliography both of primary and secondary texts could certainly inspire and inform many a project's preparatory work.

That Luis-Martínez' sophisticated edition complete with an elegant afterword by Clark Hulse has been published in Open Access form makes this an occasion for double rejoicing. The proof is in the pudding.

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³ The nature and extension of Iberian influence on English literary and philosophical discourse (Juan Luis Vives, Huarte de San Juan, Antonio de Guevara), for example.

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