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**revista de estudios
ingleses y norteamericanos**

miscelánea

vol. 48

2013

Volumen de literatura,
cine y estudios culturales

Miscelánea: A Journal of English and American Studies se publica con la ayuda económica del Departamento de Filología Inglesa y Alemana de la Facultad de Filosofía y Letras y del Vicerrectorado de Investigación de la Universidad de Zaragoza.

Publicación semestral (2 vols. al año) del Departamento de Filología Inglesa y Alemana de la Universidad de Zaragoza. Published twice a year by the Department of English and German Philology, University of Zaragoza, Spain.

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Please address subscriptions to:

Revista *Miscelánea*
Prensas de la Universidad de Zaragoza
Edificio de Ciencias Geológicas,
C/ Pedro Cerbuna, 12. 50009 Zaragoza
puz@unizar.es <http://puz.unizar.es>

Precio de la suscripción (anual)/
Subscription price (2 volumes):
15 euros
(IVA incluido/ VAT included)

Edición y ©:
Prensas de la Universidad de Zaragoza
Departamento de Filología Inglesa y Alemana
de la Universidad de Zaragoza

Selección de textos:
Consejo de redacción de *Miscelánea*

Vol. 48 · 2013
(Volumen de literatura, cine y estudios culturales)

Dirección, coordinación, tratamiento de textos y edición electrónica (vol. 48):
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Maquetación:
Prensas de la Universidad de Zaragoza

Imprime:
Servicio de Publicaciones. Universidad de Zaragoza

ISSN: 1137-6368
Depósito legal: Z-2811-2004

mm

**a journal of english
and american studies**

miscelánea

3

Prensas de la Universidad
de Zaragoza

2013

Departamento
de Filología Inglesa
y Alemana

Edición electrónica
Internet homepage:

<http://www.miscelaneajournal.net>

miscelánea

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Articles

**MORMON MARRIAGE
IS ALSO TERRESTRIAL:
A STUDY OF GENDER
IN PHYLLIS BARBER'S
*RAW EDGES: A MEMOIR*¹**

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Contemporary criticism encourages readers to perceive how certain cultural standards are promoted through literature. Historically, feminism has proposed a re-orientation of literary analysis to consider how certain gender roles have been both promoted and criticized in fiction. A wide variety of writers, whether in search of universal principles or dealing with specific cultures and ethnicities, have addressed the cultural and social implications of marriage in their books. In this article I aim to analyze the representation of marriage, as institution, that Phyllis Barber describes in her latest autobiography *Raw Edges: A Memoir* (2009). Specifically, how the institutionalization of marriage favours the generation of roles. To give a wider frame to my analysis, I will also make reference to some of her fiction. Many of her short stories and her novel *And the Desert Shall Blossom* (1991) serve to analyze how Barber approaches marriage in her writing. Barber is also the author of *How I Got Cultured: A Nevada Memoir* (1994), a first autobiography which covers her growing up in Las Vegas and Boulder City. There are potential connections between this autobiography and the most recent one, but *Raw Edges* deals specifically with Barber's own personal experience of marriage, whereas *How I Got Cultured* focuses on a coming-of-age story that moves away from the object of my analysis.

Barber was raised as a member of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints, better known as the Mormon Church. Thus her fiction and her autobiographies reveal an approach to certain cultural issues that will be unfamiliar to non-

Mormons. The experience of failure to meet the high standards required by the Mormon vision of what marriage entails and symbolizes, being particular and personal, may be used to draw further connections and conclusions. Obviously, my intention is to position my analysis within the context of this specific culture, the one into which this book is inserted, so that I can offer specific and appropriate conclusions which go beyond an individual book.

In any case, before I start analyzing *Raw Edges*, I think that it is mandatory to provide a context to frame my analysis. To show how, in her literature, Barber approaches questions about the production of roles within a specific culture and how this produces certain imbalances for individuals, it is necessary to know a little more about that specific culture and its long tradition of gender concern.

Maxine Hanks explains how Mormonism enjoys a long tradition of feminist studies: “Feminism has always existed in Mormonism. It makes sense that Mormon women would be feminists: within male-centered religion and discourse, feminism and feminist theology are necessary” (Hanks 1992: xi). Traditionally, Mormon feminist discourse is mainly twofold. On the one hand, Mormon feminism fights to denounce the imbalance of authority within the Church, mainly focusing on the hierarchies of priesthood but also on theological matters. On the other hand, Mormon feminist scholars and writers denounce the promotion of gender roles that help to perpetuate those imbalances. The restriction of women to nurturing and mothering roles is basic to the understanding of Mormon society as patriarchal. Many women are satisfied with what many others qualify as unequal circumstances, due perhaps to the strong spiritual bonds that the Church has articulated in connection to their roles as mothers and wives. The Mormon notion of gender, from a social perspective, is rooted in the theological philosophy created by Joseph Smith. His ideas about progress and exaltation became operative through projects called the “Plan of Progression”, “Great Plan of Happiness” and “Celestial Marriage” that had as their objectives the exaltation that elevates a man from manhood to godhood:

Eventually, however, it was systematized as the “Plan of Salvation”, “Plan of Progression”, or “Great Plan of Happiness”. This plan holds that every human being existed prior to birth as a spirit child of God the Father and a Heavenly Mother. These spirit children are sent into mortality in order to acquire the physical body needed for further progression. Faithful Saints were therefore urged to bear as many children as possible, in order to provide these waiting spirits with both bodies and righteous homes that put them on the path to achieving their own exaltation. (Miles 2007: 5)

One of the key points that must be considered when talking about gender roles in a Mormon context, therefore, is the fact that they are more than mere cultural

constructs. As Thomas O’Dea wrote in 1957, “women are dependent upon men and upon marriage for exaltation in the afterlife and are subordinate to men on this earth within the family” (222). This establishes a pattern in which not only does women’s status depend on men for the social or economic aspects of earthly life, but their salvation and promotion in the hereafter, as understood within their religion, are also determined by their relationships to men. Motherhood as a role is sustained by an ideological discourse that promotes a certain division of duties and authority within Mormon culture:

From the 1950s to the early 1980s, equal citizenship for women was replaced by glorification of motherhood, ignoring both single or childless women and fatherhood as the equivalent of motherhood. Limiting the definition of priesthood to chiefly ecclesiastical and administrative functions has tended to limit the roles of both sexes. Anything traditionally considered “male” has come to be attached exclusively to priesthood, and this emphasis stresses —even magnifies— the differences between the sexes rather than expanding the roles of both. (Newell 1992: 42)

Those roles, apart from determining a set of activities and responsibilities for a group of people, also determine those they cannot aspire to. In consequence, as Margaret Toscano puts it, they “create different concepts of self-worth for men and women” (2007: 24). In Mormonism, those roles circle around the idea of motherhood and wifehood, as can be easily seen by taking a look at the proclamation that the Church published in 1995:

Successful marriages and families are established and maintained on principles of faith, prayer, repentance, forgiveness, respect, love, compassion, work, and wholesome recreational activities. By divine design, fathers are to preside over their families in love and righteousness and are responsible to provide the necessities of life and protection for their families. Mothers are primarily responsible for the nurture of their children.²

This is not a sudden apparition. These ideas have been present in the Church since Parley P. Pratt published his “Duties of Women” in the *Latter-day Saints Millennial Star* in 1840. In the second half of the century, authorities such as Harold B. Lee, Hugh B. Brown or Joseph Fielding Smith wrote essays and delivered speeches defending similar ideas (Arrington 1979: 16). Toscano expresses the view that these positions help to clarify role marking: “If one partner always presides, even in love and righteousness, the other is still subordinate, at least in rule, if not also in rank” (2007: 21). This idea is based on a distinction between two different sets of responsibilities for women and men so characteristic in Mormon culture: women taking the role of motherhood, and men, the role of priesthood. An apparently equal balance based on gender essentials that do not take into account the personal agency to choose. Motherhood aids women to exercise their instrumental agency within the Church because it is perceived as prompting the same grade of

responsibility that priesthood bestows upon men. This division helps to define spaces, reproducing the distinction between the private and the public sphere.

In debating the origins of the historical social division of labor, Carrie Miles says that Mormons before the Industrial Revolution, whose economy was based on agrarian resources, “were subject to the same forces shaping the family as their more conventional neighbors” (2007: 2). Miles states that “in retrospect it is clear that in the latter half of the twentieth century, marriage, family, and gender relations underwent their most significant changes in human history, causing problems not just for the LDS Church but for the entire developed world” (1-2). Consequently, in the twentieth century, Church authorities reinforced the idea that motherhood was holy and it was equal to men’s priesthood in that it was the path to exaltation laid down for women. Linda P. Wilcox gives a precise date for this development in doctrine: “In the 1920s and 1930s there seemed to be an emphasis on the idea of ‘eternal’ or ‘everlasting’ motherhood. It seemed important to emphasize that motherhood was as ongoing and eternal as godhood” (1992: 9). If motherhood is “eternal” and “everlasting” then, as Aaltje Baumgart summarizes, the roles that the Church promotes when it limits women’s spheres to the home and the family are “eternal patterns and not secularly influenced” (2003: 2). As a consequence, for Mormons, the idea that motherhood is a woman’s only task belongs to the theological realm. Motherhood becomes thus mandatory to attain membership: “to join the Church today, the potential member, especially a woman, has to obtain not just a testimony of the truthfulness of the Church, she must also develop a testimony of the eternal and earthly importance of motherhood” (Miles 2007: 36-37).

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In any case, both the Mormon man and the Mormon woman seem bound to get married. As Howard W. Hunter says, “it is not good for man nor for woman to be alone” (1994: 49). Marriage is understood as the basis of family and families are central to the Church: “Mormon history suggests that the combination of the doctrine of eternal marriage and the law of eternal progression requires equal emphasis on the development of the individual and on the strength of the family and community”, says Arrington (1979: 17). The Mormon concept of family and marriage must be viewed from this perspective: it ought to be valued in accordance with its signification within Mormon culture. In consequence, family, as a whole, becomes an important tenet in Mormon culture. Wallace Stegner states that “the family is so important in the Mormon religion that without it, the religion would hardly exist” (in Stegner and Etulain 1996: 112). And Claudia L. Bushman confirms this notion when she states that, in the Mormon Church, “the basic unit [is] the family rather than the individual” (2008: 176). The link that binds family and Church is not a literary device.

Mormon scholar Bruce W. Jorgensen, in fact, proposes an analysis of marriage as a method of applying literary criticism to Mormon fiction from a different perspective. In his study, Jorgensen examines a number of short stories by Mormons in which marriage plays an important role. But before doing so, he attempts to define Mormon marriage:

There is no ideal or archetype or model of a modern Mormon marriage, even if all or most of them might share certain minimal traits or conditions. We can suppose that they will all be (as “The Family: A Proclamation to the World” describes or prescribes) heterosexual and monogamous; yet we can’t suppose that all will be temple marriage (though clearly the Proclamation would prefer that). And however “eternal” they may be in wish, or sanction, the ones we can watch and write about, here and now, will be temporal, however long they last. (2004: 36-37)

In conclusion, the role that family and marriage play in Mormon culture is visibly fundamental. And Mormon feminism reveals a long tradition of continuous debate about the role played by women within the instrumental capacity that these institutions display in Mormon community and culture. As Glen Lambert states, Mormon “theology emphasizes free choice, direct inspiration, choosing our path” (2004: 26), but Mormon society is, in truth, highly hierarchical. Barber’s personal approach is mainly focused on the second historical concern of Mormon feminism, that of gender roles. Roles are understood as the historical products that encapsulate the expectations and demands placed upon women in a male-centred community. Barber explains the matter of personal responsibility while at the same time admitting that responsibility may be reduced by the exercise of cultural and group pressure. This discussion of the roles of gender and the institution of marriage is always present in her work, in the autobiographies as well as in her fiction, because it is rooted in her involvement in the act of writing.

Before turning an analysis of her second autobiography, it is necessary to show how these topics are explored by Barber when writing fiction. In her fiction, as it happens in Mormon faith, family and the Church are closely connected: “for a Mormon, the distinction between family and church is one of scale” (Clark 1986: 22). In her novel *And the Desert Shall Blossom*, Esther Jensen, the main character, turns to the Church to look for “comfort”, but she knows that she is expected to fulfil certain conditions. This concern is enlarged by her own conception of virtue framed by Mormon ideals on family, an example of the stereotyped virtuous Mormon household; conforming at least, to the way Wallace Stegner conceives the essential virtues of a Mormon family: “hospitality”, “familial warmth” and “a degree of community responsibility” (in Stegner and Etulain 1996: 102). Not fulfilling those conditions leads to a sense of “estrangement” (Lambert 2004: 25), a sense of losing one’s identity that comes with the feeling that one does

not fit into an established category. Mormon emphasis on family threatens with that *estrangement* even if one sets out to reinforce faith in times of failure. Linda Sillitoe's main character in *Sideways to the Sun* (1987) shares with Esther in *And the Desert Shall Blossom* those same feelings about finding a proper niche in the Church when her marriage fails. The Church is not a welcoming place for "halves, quarters, and shared bits of families" (Barber 1991: 145). Besides, while Esther suffers from her own failure to fulfil the basic requirements of her marriage, Barber finds fault with the marital standards of her 'other half', her husband Alf Jensen. The main intention of the writer is to portray how those ideals provoke tension when they need to be fulfilled or how they are the source of conflict when both members in the marriage try to reject them. At the end of the novel, when they try to play their respective roles again, the situation is described with irony:

The model mother. The model wife. Alf was also a model husband, home on time, attentive to the children, mild mannered. They almost convinced each other that theirs was a settled, genteel home life, except at night Esther tossed and pulled the covers and tried not to scream and Alf curled into a solitary ball of himself, and they both mentioned how their jaws hurt when they woke in the morning. (1991: 208)

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In his survey of marriage in Mormon fiction, Bruce W. Jorgensen names Barber among those Mormon writers with increasing concern about marriage in Mormon culture. He refers to two stories from Barber's collections of short stories: "Ida's Sabbath" from *Parting the Veil: Stories from a Mormon Imagination* (1999) and "Almost Magnificent" from *The School of Love* (1990). Jorgensen proposes Barber as an example of "afters", those stories that show how "an ended marriage still intrudes its ghostly presence, welcome or not" (2004: 39). Barber, and Jorgensen is right, focuses on conflict and on the consequences of that conflict. She elaborates on topics depicting the thin line between success and failure. In Barber's fiction, female characters are the victims of their own expectations —the hope that they pinned on their marriages. Barber suggests that the explanation to this fiasco is sometimes found in the sexual and social training of these women. Especially, if self-awareness activates the clash between the expectations of the individual and those of society. Many of these female characters facing challenge in her books reach that situation after feeling that their marriages have failed. Reading Barber's fiction, one comes to the conclusion that marriage is not ill-designed but it needs solid bedrock to endure. Barber does not assign guilt or responsibilities but portrays the circumstances a failed marriage leads to.

Those references in her fiction anticipate Barber's subsequent treatment of marriage in her autobiographical pieces. In *How I Got Cultured* marriage is only touched upon when she recollects her parents at home. Barber's family figures as the main site of conflict in a consideration of submissiveness and pride, both

of which are tested and measured from a Mormon perspective. In *Raw Edges*, in contrast, Barber explores sexual and marital tensions as fundamental elements of her own intricate and compound identity. Here, she herself is the mother and the one expressing the role of motherhood, but she does so with references to her mother as a connection to the past that leads to the delineation of a timeline. In her fiction, her reflections on the role of women are open to discussion since the disguise of fiction invites potential readers to understand those fictional portrayals as general statements going beyond a singular reference. In Barber's latest autobiography, the context and the circumstances seem to determine that her perspective is personal and singular. Her references to Mormonism open up the possibility of a straightforward, broad analysis but the intersection with her candid and intimate voice sets up a complex and enigmatic scenario. Her experiences are personal but they help the reader towards a general interpretation of those issues mentioned above as contextualizing the specific culture in which she was raised.

The consequences of the genre change, from novel to autobiography, are notable. Autobiography helps the first person narrator to take a clear stand in the text, more committed than in fiction. Especially, when, in this case, Barber herself reveals that she is about to approach inner places that so far have remained untouched by confession:

It's probably a darker book from anything I've written before. I am dealing with the shadowed side of my usually upbeat personality and with some very real pain. It's also a no-holds-barred book in which I tried not to shy away from the aspects of the story that wouldn't present me in the most favorable light. (In Masters 2008)

The recent upsurge of autobiography has opened up a different perspective on the nature and possibilities of the genre. Valerie Holladay has registered these changes in a Mormon context, and finds that there is a considerable critical effort on the part of authors who depart from the conventional nature and structure of autobiography to develop this genre into an exercise of self-analysis that involves a conscious exploration of the social context: "the goal of autobiographical writing becomes 'truth-seeking', rather than 'truth-telling'" (Holladay 1999: 89).

The traditional view of the genre poses an approach which takes a retrospective and evocative stance in order to state or revisit a specific life experience. George Gusdorf, who had a very conventional concept of autobiography, defines it as "a second reading of experience" (1980: 38). He explained that writing autobiographical acts requires a distancing from oneself in order to focus on a "special unity and identity across time" (35). This theory envisions identity as a given, a starting point rather than an object. In Barber, that unity of time and identity is broken into a meaningful complexity in which the signification is derived from a complex double figure in between the writer and the author. James Olney says that "in

effect, the narrative is never finished, nor even can be, within the covers of a book” (1980: 25). This comment fits Barber to an extent that Olney himself probably did not envision; Barber’s self is represented in her autobiographies as unfinished and in process, coming to terms with Olney’s theory that “by its very nature, the self is (like the autobiography that records and creates it) open-ended and incomplete; it is always in process or, more precisely, is itself a process” (25).

The search for identity through the recapitulation of the individual experience offers different tones, making it necessary to revise the genre in a variety of approximations, enriching its prospects and expertise. In Barber, the influence of new literary movements and the assumption of postmodernist traits transform the genre into an undefined and ductile exercise. Barber’s approach to the genre is unconventional and bountiful, complex and multilayered. The use of different perspectives and voices, the participation of secondary characters, the fragmentation of the recollection or the undefined progression of time are only some of the devices that seem to belong to fictional resources and not to the traditional approach to autobiography. Barber faces the autobiographical act by committing herself to frankness and openness. She is aware of the limitations of telling the truth. In fact, she confesses to an awareness of her perspective and relies on experiences which she approaches in a hesitant and revisionist spirit. Barber’s own comments on the writing of autobiography make it clear that she favours a “candid” or “confessional” stance (Barber 2012: 141). The performance of her identity relies on an invitation to share her inner turmoil and participate in her redeeming articulation of the creative act of confession. She proposes candour as an ethical base from which to launch her elaborated attempt to balance personal experiences that run the whole gamut from failure to achievement: “though there is an element of personal revelation in both words —‘confessional’ and ‘candid’— the word ‘confession’ more fully implies one’s wish to be forgiven or to make amends” (2012: 142).

In *Raw Edges*, Barber revisits the years after, before and during her first marriage. She frames this journey back to her marital experience through the recollection of her trip on bicycle across the United States. Even before publishing *Raw Edges*, Barber published “Body Blue: Excerpts from a Novoir” in *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* in 2003. “Body Blue” is a small sample of what was to come in *Raw Edges*. In a footnote reference in this short story, Barber tells about her marriage to David Barber which will be fictionalized in her autobiography and it is slightly fictionalized in this text:

David and Phyllis Barber, married for 33 years and divorced for six, are devoted friends. This is not a ‘kiss and tell’ or ‘here comes the judge’ account, but rather a recognition that there are many whose idealism gets caught beneath the intersecting

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wheels of Mormonism and of contemporary life. It is also a willingness to share this struggle to pull free again with others who may have been in a similar place. (Barber 2003: 68)

This will be later expanded in *Raw Edges*, where Barber talks honestly about her marriage. As Elizabeth Breau summarizes in her review of *Raw Edges*, Barber recollects her experience of this long relationship in relation to her faith: “Barber’s earnest efforts to accept the beliefs of the original tenets of Mormonism is testament to her belief in her marriage vows” (Breau 2010). As I have emphasized above, marriage is central to family and family, and as Howard W. Hunter states, is “the most important unit in time and in eternity” (1994: 51). If Boyd K. Packer said that “the family is safe within the Church” (1994: 22), it would follow that people are in danger without the family. That is the main explanation of Barber’s revelation, at the beginning of the book, that she is embarking on the telling of her “seven lean years of being lost” (2009: 3) and her need for understanding, “if not by no one else but myself” (2). In the blurb to the first edition, there is a sentence that attracts attention: “she had to redefine herself as a woman, mother and artist” (2009).

Barber’s literary production in general could be summarized as a literary search for identity. In Barber’s autobiographies, identity is not a given to be reassembled. Just the opposite, it is an on-going process, an attempt to construct and discover some degree of certainty around the concepts of self. Her identity will be revealed as a composite of different elements, tensions and conflicts which need to achieve a very complex balance. She does not really claim multiple identities but a holistic identity that is made up of multiple parts. The poles, the dichotomies, the duality are confronted and challenged to reveal the construction of an identity. This is complicated by the fact that Barber allows not only for disruption and heterogeneous contexts but also for a psychologically, physically and socially complex process of search. Barber’s autobiographical effort condenses a representation of identity that relies on these complexities, on a self which is refined by different representations and performances in progress, under construction; an identity which is never achieved as a complete whole.

In this autobiography, Barber explores her identity. She gives an unconcealed and personal chronicle of her own marriage’s failure. The generation of gendered roles within the Mormon community, especially when promoting the roles of mother and wife for women, is perfectly illustrated in her two autobiographies but, in *Raw Edges*, her role as mother and wife is specifically approached through a tangled chronology that takes the reader back and forth. Sources and consequences are exposed in a sequence that illustrates the complexity, derivations and problematic of motherhood and wifeness. Being a mother for Barber in *Raw Edges* is linked

to a part of her life in which her identity was shaped by her marriage. It was an easy, secure, understandable role that she is forced to abandon when her marriage collapses. She finds herself trying to adapt to a new situation in which she feels basically lost and fearful. *Raw Edges* maps the geography of both Barber's ordeals and good experiences when she rides her bike on a personal quest for self-definition. This journey will be sought as a potential source of reconciliation and negotiation. Her laborious attempt at defining her identity as woman and wife encompasses many different perspectives and topics. However, in this article, I have chosen two specific aspects to show how Barber expounds and examines her marriage. Both these aspects are key to an understanding of her autobiography, but they are also important topics for a study of gender issues within Mormon society. These two aspects that I will contemplate here are the body and sex.

Previously in her fiction, Barber uses body as a metaphor, with specific references to wombs to illustrate the repressive consequences of certain cultural standards. The body is central to an understanding of the conflict between spirituality and materialism. *Raw Edges* offers several demonstrations of Barber's spiritual necessity, in different churches and through different approximations to the experience of the divine or the supernatural, helping the reader to understand her strong need for that dimension, and her latent rejection of limitations. Especially illustrative is her account of a powerful experience in an African-American church where she is recognized and welcomed as a visitor and she meets an extraordinary old woman who sings a long prayer of blessings and she thanks God for earthly things such as "the lying down at night" (Barber 2009: 57). Barber relates this experience to her constant longing for abstract but compelling totality and she amplifies this spiritual, strong connection, when she is physically close to the old woman called mama. It is symbolic because this spiritual devotion is balanced at the same time by a stress on the physical:

I stood next to Mama and felt the delicate bones of her hand, a hand that had done much, that had been witness to much. Delicate, yet firm. Strong. Resolute. Unafraid. This was the hand of a redeemer, a healer, one who had seen it all and could still forgive, one who could open her arms and receive the least of her sisters. I felt her power through my fingertips. I felt electricity coursing through my hands and arms to the woman on my right. A circle. An unbroken circle. (2009: 58-59)

Moreover, in chapter six, titled "The Unpredictable Body", Barber exemplifies the spiritual importance of body when she says that "my flesh remembered" (83), establishing the importance of body in both spiritual and earthly experiences, as if both were connected. It is significant that Barber highlights the relevance that physicality has within her spiritual experiences. This seems to contradict Terry Tempest Williams' statement that in religion "it isn't your body that is valued; it is

your soul” (Austin 2006: 37). Probably, this conscious association of the physical and the spiritual operates as a model for Barber’s approach to the consequences of her failed marriage. The sexual issues unleashing the failure were defined by her faith and her spiritual education within the Church. In any case, it also works to symbolize the constant tension between different extremes that characterizes the whole autobiography. The body and the spirit are approached in an attempt to marry both dimensions. This impulse provides rich undertones for the potential meanings that the narrative triggers.

In fact, the book is backboned upon the story of a trip on a bicycle; for her, experiencing the pain of riding a bicycle across the country is the best way of going deep into her own fears, of understanding not only her physical dimension but her ethereal nature. This is illustrated in her final conversation with C.J. in the aftermath of their cycling experience, when Barber is heading back home and C.J. forces her to discuss their recent experience. They finally agree that they have been “using the physical to bust the mental” (Barber 2009: 236); and they infer that they came to the conclusion that “imperfection is perfect” (2009: 236), which is a statement that can be given as an axiom to undermine her sufferings. Thus Barber establishes a sense of completeness that encompasses both the body and the spirit.

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In the same line, she tells the story of her life, physical and spiritual, through a series of very physical events. Barber writes like she dances. For Barber, dancing constitutes something more than just the skill to keep balance and the sense of movement. Dancing is “about the joy of your body, which is a temple” (2009: 139). When she talks about the period of her life when she learned and then taught belly dancing, she feels confident and happy, relieved, because “I swirled in the twist of my veil, openly enjoying the art of the earthy feminine and the loosening of my boundaries. I loved the feel of undulation and swaying. I loved moving from the inside, feeling what it was to be a woman with a pelvis, breasts, a stomach, and a womb” (138).

All this confidence is lost when she performs in front of a group of men and she has to stop because they perceived a certain notion of danger on her dancing. They do not feel “the joy and playful innocence” (139) but the disruption and lust. This sudden disappointment contrasts with the positive connotations that dancing offers whenever Barber relates any of these experiences. Almost always, discovering her body with harmony and pleasure is connected to dancing and music, as if the body and its discovery meant electricity, spiritual energy trying to escape from being tamed:

I slipped the dress over my body. I touched my right breast. How incredibly soft a woman could be. I’d almost forgotten. I loved this softness. This was me, the woman who hadn’t cared about anything except getting out of town when she left

Fort Collins. Behind the dressing room curtain, I struck a flamenco pose, smiled a mischievous smile, snapped my fingers and stamped rhythms quietly against the floor. (Barber 2009: 229)

This last example illustrates how sexuality is confronted in the plots of Barber's stories. Barber details the repression of sex (and the sexual tension avoided) as an inescapable condition in the life of her female characters (and her own).³ Whenever they act freely or they avoid their inhibitions, they experience some sense of failure or despair; mainly because they have been deprived of a series of features that would have made them able to handle sex in those circumstances. In her stories, sex is often disturbing. The women in many of these short stories have been trained to take care of their bodies like a temple to be offered to a man in the future. This idealism hinders their discovery of sex. As Wayne Schow comments "social groups have long understood that, in order to promote stability, peace, safety, and justice, certain natural impulses need to be restrained" (2004: 117-118). Among those natural impulses, sex is a source of potential danger and disruption, thus, it needs to be controlled and harnessed for the benefit of society or community.

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Sex is thus a prime site for examining feelings of guilt and failure when womanhood is approached from a sociological point of view. Guilt is also a feature that needs to be considered when talking about marriage in *Raw Edges*. Barber has to struggle with her vows and her beliefs to handle a situation that causes her own identity to deteriorate:

I was definitely disenchanted with infinity at this point. Thirty years of marriage had been burned to a crisp despite David's and my non-blinking vow of "forever". We'd promised in the Mormon temple that our marriage would last for time and all eternity, not just "til death do we part". (2009: 19-20)

Her husband is trying to cope with an intimate tension, a sexual tension that puts their marriage in a risky situation, a tension that threatens to pull down all her beliefs: "Mormonism had always been like my shoes and socks, my hat and gloves, the warp and weft of my being" (47). Mormonism determined her marriage and partially her relationship towards her husband, in consequence, after hearing that confession, and experiencing the failure of her marriage, her life was in a certain disarray:

I listened intently. I'd lost the most valuable thing a wife could have —the honor of a faithful husband. In my thinking, I was no longer a treasured woman, a valued partner, a respected member of any community, let alone the Mormon one. I needed to make the world fit together again. (119)

The failure of her marriage, as described in her memoir, implicates a redefinition. The code of interpretation that she had used to design her life and define herself

within a community is no longer of any use. In that redefinition, her involvement with Mormonism seems to be in danger. The Mormon Church is made for families:

Sunday mornings when I hauled the children to church by myself, sat on the long bench without a husband, and watched other women and their husbands and their children. Church became a lonely place where I sat and stared at what I thought I didn't have. (261)

In that trip to darkness or experience to which she was led after the failure of her marriage, that sexual tension turns into an experience of adultery that is wrapped in words such as “falling”, “betraying”, “dark hole”, “initiation”, “darkness”, “shattering” and “sacrifice” (144-147). But there, we see the birth of consciousness. This experience sparks off the relative problem in her head. The conflict between what she was and what she wanted to be is poetically but painfully summarized as a call to reinvent herself: “the shattering of my vows, my promises, my ethics, my loyalty” (147). She is no stranger to the powerful awareness of a possibility of rebirth, an initiation in a world that, while desperate and dark, keeps a light burning steadily, a world where the church bells summon not only to duty but to experience-based dreams, still under lock and key: “*But maybe, just maybe, you are someone who is incredibly brave to break yourself to put yourself back together again*” (174). The prospect of freedom does not only resound with positive promises but Barber seems to have embraced the potency of risk as a nurturing balance to reconstitute her own identity.

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The avoidance of happy endings is a constant in Barber's literary production. In fact, Barber naturally rejects dichotomies, extremes and conclusive epilogues. In consequence, the ending of *Raw Edges* does not help the reader to derive any rigorous conclusions from her portrayal of marriage. Barber's portrayal of marital failure belongs to (but goes beyond) the long tradition of Mormon feminist writing. Glen Lambert states that “women seem to feel more deeply, particularly in Mormon culture, because marriage is so emphasized as a solution to life's problems” (2004: 23). Mormon orthodoxy still encourages a tendency to promote stereotypes that prioritize women's role in society as begetters of children and home-makers. As Linda Sillitoe puts it: “motherhood is the most valued status women attain in our society” (1980: 50).

Barber's testimony is personal and committed but unfinished and flexible. Barber closes the book with the same pain and longings but with a determination to survive. She is convinced of her unconscious strength, even though she cannot avoid the realization that life is pain just as it is relief. Probably, a definition that can also be applied to marriage. The imposition of standards and roles attempts to allay that uncertainty about the institution of marriage but the consequences are perfectly described in Barber's book. In conclusion, Barber develops these gender

issues from a very personal bias and through a candid but insightful perspective, always managing to address a wider spectrum of readers. Approaching Mormonism and Mormon literature from a feminist viewpoint helps to reveal a penetrating but faithful dimension of Mormon culture. Mormon culture and literature seem to stand at a far remove from mainstream academia, but critical attention may offer different angles and perceptions of interest to gender issues.

Notes

1. The research carried out for the writing of this article is part of a project funded by the Spanish Ministry of Economy and Competitiveness and the European Regional Fund (code FFI2011-23598)

2. President Gordon B. Hinckley read this proclamation as part of his message to the General Relief Society Meeting held in Salt Lake City, Utah in 1995. As Miles states, the proclamation, even if it has not been officially canonized and has not the weight of scripture, "appeared as a new and unique form of communicating God's will to church members" (2007: 33). The present quotation

has been taken from the text published by The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in their official website.

3. Laura L. Bush places this tension in the clash between Mormon training and western cultural training: "the strained position twentieth-century Mormon women find themselves in with regard to their sexuality, alternately working to achieve the Victorian-Mormon ideal of women's chastity, while also shaping themselves to become the object of men's desire and, at times, the survivors of men's sexual exploitation" (2004: 28).

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Received: 22 May 2012

Revised version: 27 November 2012

“WHATEVER HER FAITH MAY BE”: SOME NOTES ON CATHOLICISM IN MARIA EDGEWORTH’S OEUVRE

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1. Introduction

Maria Edgeworth was the daughter of an Anglo-Irish landlord who returned to the family county home in Longford in 1782. Thanks to his contacts on the Continent and his enlightened views —Richard Lovell belonged to the Lunar Society—, he provided his eldest daughter with a very solid formation in economics, sociology and history, and personalities such as Erasmus Darwin or Josiah Wedgwood frequented the Edgeworth household. After the success of *Castle Rackrent* (1800), the authoress travelled around Europe and developed a more elegant style in her writings which were admired by Walter Scott. Edgeworth became popular in the French-speaking world thanks to the translations of her Swiss friends Charles and Marc-Auguste Pictet in *Bibliothèque Britannique*, so versions of Edgeworth’s works circulated all around the Continent. Along with pedagogic literature (*Practical Education* [1798], *Essays on Professional Education* [1809]), she composed novels of manners (*Belinda* [1801] and *Helen* [1834]) and epistolary fiction (*Leonora* [1806]) of remarkable merit. Edgeworth enjoys a considerable status since it was she who gave literary form to Hiberno-English and she inaugurated the Anglo-Irish novel and the Big House novel, a genre followed by Maturin (*Melmoth the Wanderer* [1820]), Charles Lever (*The O’Donoghues* [1845]), and William Carleton (*The Squanders of Castle Squander* [1852]).

Though the Edgeworths were not estranged from Catholicism and they even had Catholic ancestors,¹ Edgeworth is still regarded as a representative of the Protestant Ascendancy, the social group who had long dominated Ireland, and an inmate of the Big House. It is precisely due to their ideology that the Edgeworths became unwelcome objects of some critical studies of Irish literature and even English literature. Scholars have analysed Edgeworth's uncomfortable position as both agent and subject of patriarchal colonial rule (Gilbert and Gubar 1984: 147-148; Corbett 1994b: 397). Suffice it to say that Virginia Woolf featured Richard Lovell as a bore and a tyrant to his five wives (1942: 151-154) and that Irish nationalism despised Edgeworth because her patriotic feelings did not refer to the Catholic struggle to free themselves from the Protestants which attracted Romantic authors (Wolff 1978: xxiv). Marilyn Butler, Edgeworth's biographer, cites more criticisms against Edgeworth, namely, her inability to reproduce Ireland physically and the fact that intellectually she belonged to the generation previous to the French Revolution and wanted to prove not that the Irish were unique, but rather that they were worthy of equality (1972: 391).

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Since the 1990s, scholars from the fields of postcolonial and gender studies have turned their attention to Edgeworth. Her Irish works (*Castle Rackrent* [1800], *Ennui* [1809], *The Absentee* [1812] and *Ormond* [1817]) represent only one field of interest. Both the recent work edited by Heidi Kauffman and Chris Fauske (2004) and the anthology prepared by Julie Nash (2006) confirm the vitality and variety of Edgeworth Studies and illuminate the political, historical and cultural context of a prolific writer who dealt with educational issues, cultural stereotypes and the relationship between Ireland and Britain. Butler has claimed that Edgeworth wished for "a change of heart in individuals rather than a change of national status for Ireland" and her efforts "showed more political insight than anything else written in fiction in her generation except the novels of Scott" (Butler 1972: 392-393).

In a recent article, Butler insists on one of Edgeworth's achievements in particular. By using a variety of narrative techniques, she fused mythical echoes and realism in texts which are equally indebted to the French moral tale, the Scottish Enlightenment and popular culture: "Maria Edgeworth's register was hardly aristocratic; her distinctive feature was her detailed, focused attention to the language, manners, and daily lives of the Irish masses" (2004: 47). This critic maintains that Edgeworth did not mean to portray Ireland as unique, but as a place similar to England. Furthermore, the idea that Edgeworth was committed to Britain or England rests on presuppositions rather than on a close reading of texts and political contexts since her Irish works advance a "localized, hybrid, an ideal society mutually tolerant and harmonious with itself" (Butler 2004: 50). According

to Butler, the Edgeworths were fascinated by the rural Catholic peasantry and tenantry. The authoress identified the Irish nation as a cultural formation with very strong local roots though she consistently avoided identifying the Irish nation with any nation-state and its institutions (Butler 2004: 48; see also Dabundo 2006: 193-198).

The critical shift articulated by Butler is very significant since other scholars, such as Julian Moynahan, still argue that the distance from the Irish pervades Edgeworth’s writings: the Edgeworths’ concern with Ireland “mingles objective curiosity with ethnic prejudice, affection with fun that may in unsettled times become terror, real familiarity with the wonder that grows from a sense of unbridgeable difference” (Moynahan 1995: 17-18). Drawing on Butler’s idea that Edgeworth understood Ireland as a single hybrid society, the present article provides a new approach to the debate on the role of Catholicism in Ireland and its relation to literature as reflected in Edgeworth’s oeuvre. We will resort to Homi K. Bhabha’s ideas on colonial representation and enterprise, which in Ireland is characterised by the assimilation to Protestantism and the suppression of local features.² This article also aims to enlarge Susan Manly’s thesis that Edgeworth engaged with Edmund Burke’s pleas for religious toleration and drew on arguments about tolerance, prejudice and toleration, showing an anti-aristocratic and cosmopolitan vision (2000: 154; see also McLoughlin 2002; Kim 2003; Fernández 2009). As will be argued, Edgeworth never stayed clear of the religious issue in the context of Pre-Victorian Ireland and proposed two strategies to achieve the integration of the Catholic Other with the Protestant Self.³ Whereas the Edgeworths sustained that Catholics must be given the same educational opportunities as Protestants; marriage and motherhood are regarded in Edgeworth’s fiction as the means of reconciling the Catholic population with their Protestant landlords, which is accomplished through the heroines. Robert Tracy has already pointed out that the plot device of intermarriage is employed to insist on the need to endorse Irish tradition and identity (1985: 9),⁴ but here it will be argued that these unions also advance a view of Ireland as a prosperous land.

2. Writing on religion in a divided country

In order to study Edgeworth’s views concerning religion, certain factors must be borne in mind. To begin with, the conquest of Ireland in the Middle Ages transformed the island into a palimpsest where two languages and two religions were intermingled and established the beginning of a social divide and an intricate relationship between the Protestant Anglo-Irish—the people of English ancestry living in Ireland—and the Roman Catholic Irish. At the level of national discourse,

the former were clearly identified as the settler landed class with better prospects, better education and possessing larger landholdings which their ancestors had seized from the conquered native population. For Bhabha, in this process of interaction characterizing cultures, meanings are vicariously addressed to an Other—in this case Ireland—, which enables the cultural to be signified as a linguistic, symbolic and historic reality (1994: 52, 58-59). Historically, the end of the eighteenth century coincided with the English struggle to reinforce national security in the face of the threat from Ireland—a colonised inferior Other—, but also from France—the world’s foremost Catholic power— while Burke insisted on the primacy of imperial interest in his *Reflections on the Revolution in France* (1790).

Another point to consider is that, though most Anglo-Irish literature was produced by colonisers who rejected the colonised, the importance of the Protestants in Irish literature is incontestable due to their national consciousness and determined interest in Ireland. Many remarkable authors were of Protestant stock and the Dublin Society and the Royal Irish Academy were inspired by a sense of national responsibility and identity. As Butler has pointed out, Anglo-Irish writers had their audience outside Ireland and King George III admitted that after reading *Castle Rackrent* he had learnt something about his Irish subjects (Butler 1972: 359). Moreover, Irish life did not become a literary topic until the consolidation of the middle classes. This circumstance coincided with the spread of agrarian disorder fomented by secret societies and with the image of the Roman Catholics as a menace to the Ascendancy due to the Reform Act of 1832 which increased their voting strength.

In the Edgeworths’ works there is neither a concern with the spiritual dimension of religion nor a defence of Protestantism. Curiously, in other European literatures Edgeworth’s reception depended on her image as a moral writer, even as one who reflected Catholic values. The Spanish educationalist Mariano Carderera emphasised that Edgeworth was not unfamiliar with the living force of faith and her mistakes sprang from feminine reserve and her scrupulous rectitude (Carderera 1855: 159; Fernández 2010b: 28-29, 33). The absence of explicit religious references brought about Edgeworth’s decline and condemnation by British reviewers, who attacked the “striking and much-to-be-lamented deficiency in every thing like religious principle” (Rees 1819: xix). Unable to appreciate the religious dimension of *Practical Education*, critics considered Edgeworth a better novelist than Austen but a worse Christian (Butler 1981: 96-7).⁵ As a woman, Edgeworth was also in the ambiguous position of a disenfranchised member of the Protestant Ascendancy,⁶ and the conservative John Wilson Croker in *Eclectic Review* accused her father of being irreligious and morally corrupt to the point of launching an attack on the basis of Edgeworth’s gender. By featuring religion as a feminine

grace, Croker condemned those women who enter the public realm as irreligious because “[it] cannot be otherwise than painful, must be felt as derogating from the first character [women] have to sustain —the character of the sex, to the proprieties of which, talent can offer no indulgence” (Rev. of *Tales of Fashionable Life, Second Series* 1812: 979-1000). Croker’s reaction was in consonance with the tendency to associate the nation with woman.⁷ Robert Hall, a Baptist, held that in Edgeworth’s writings virtue was possible without religion, so he severely criticised her productions (Grey 1907: 297), while the *North American Review* simply praised Edgeworth: “whatever her faith may be, it is but just to say that her works have done more good than all the professedly religious novels that have been written since the creation of the world” (Rev. of *Helen* 1934: 170).

The Edgeworths had firm enlightened ideas: their attitude was invariably critical to the point of making reason and integrity prevail over religion. In *Professional Education*, they disapproved of the recluse education of the Roman Catholic clergy: “which, from childhood, separates them from the rest of society, tends to make a dangerous division of interests between the clergy and the laity; to excite suspicion and jealousy on the one side, and on the other, a spirit of mystery and priestcraft” (Edgeworth 1994a: 77). Likewise, on another occasion, Edgeworth alluded to her father’s illness in the following terms: “Half the people who make a prodigious show of their religion have not so much true religious feeling, so much resignation —submission, gratitude as he [my father] has— as he has shewn [sic] in the hour of most severe trial” (Häusermann 1952 : 76 [Letter to Mrs. Marcet, 30 May 1814]).

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Finally, the Anglo-Irish writer did not consider all religious practices in the same way. She showed manifest sympathy for certain religious communities, such as the Jews or the Catholics, who were debarred from the ownership of the land and full citizenship and were constantly under suspicion as potential destroyers of political stability. These groups are handled positively and related in Edgeworth’s works. *Harrington*, for instance, depicts the anti-Catholic Gordon Riots in 1780 and the behaviour of the Jews in this story compensates the negative portrait in previous tales (Fernández 2009). At that time, the Jews were seen in England as a menace, and, in Edgeworth’s texts, the perception of Catholics mirrors that of the Jews (Felsenstein 1995: 194).

Undoubtedly, it was prejudice that Edgeworth most strongly opposed, and she used humour to criticise intolerant attitudes. In a long letter to her Swiss correspondent Étienne Dumont, Edgeworth explained about Methodists: “Since the days of Urbain Grandier there were never such convulsionists [sic] as these Methodist possédés —It is scarcely possible to believe that the scene is England & the time in ‘our enlightened days’ (Häusermann 1952: 112 [Letter to Étienne Dumont, 19

March 1821]). Similarly, *Belinda* (1801) —a domestic story about women entering fashionable life—, describes the execrable effect of Lady Delacour’s methodist readings (Edgeworth 1994b: 270). The chapter on the education of country gentlemen in *Professional Education* also contrasts the conduct of the Methodist South Sea Missionaries with that of the Quaker missionaries towards the North American Indians. The Quakers showed the Indians how to use the plough or build houses with shingled roofs and stone chimneys, among other improvements. However, in their attempt to civilise people, the Methodist missionaries spoke of things beyond the poor savages’ grasp, so their listeners replied “Massa [sic] give us great deal of good talkee [sic], but very little of knives and scissors” (Edgeworth 1994a: 270).

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In *Ormond* (1817) —a *Bildungsroman* set in Ireland and the Continent and containing multifarious political references—, Evangelism is identified with Mrs. M’Crule, formerly Miss Black. Edgeworth’s “orphan book”⁸ features the Catholic boy Tommy O’Shaughlin who aspires to be educated and faces the opposition of middle-class Protestant bigots, especially the hateful Mrs. M’Crule. This lady rejects Catholics and claims Ireland would be positively ruined if Tommy was admitted in a charity school since Catholic children cannot become good Protestants (Edgeworth 1972: 287). By resorting to irony, the narrator insists on her incapacity to see “the ridicule to which she might expose herself, by persisting in sounding so pompously a false alarm” (Edgeworth 1972: 290) while Mrs. M’Crule maintains that the errors of popery are wonderfully infectious (Edgeworth 1972: 291) and opposes Lady Annaly’s idea that “if you cannot make them [Catholic children] good Protestants, make them good anythings” (Edgeworth 1972: 291). At the end of the episode, Florence Annaly invites Mrs. M’Crule to partake of some goose pie symbolically standing for the desired political balance (Edgeworth 1972: 290).

Edgeworth did not ignore the other side of the story, how the native Irish attacked the English, as her plays reveal. In spite of Edgeworth’s unwillingness to be seen as a dramatist (Butler 1972: 278-279, 301), her *Comic Dramas, in Three Acts* saw the light with a preface signed by Richard Lovell Edgeworth. This paratext clearly distinguishes between Edgeworth’s previous productions or tales and the comedies, where “the characters must be shewn by strong and sudden lights, the sentiments must be condensed; and nothing that requires slow reflection can be admitted. —The audience must see, hear, feel and understand at once” (Edgeworth 1817: vi). *Comic Dramas* had its origin in amateur home theatricals and contains three plays —*Love and Law*; *The Two Guardians* and *The Rose, Thistle and Shamrock*— thematically related to prior works. The first deals with the love story of the Protestant Honor M’Bride and the Catholic Randal Rooney

whose families are involved in bitter feud over the bog of Ballynascraw which Cathy Rooney claims to be hers. In this play, proud Catty Rooney’s insults — symbolising the Catholic native resistance—, are directed against the M’Brides accused of being “Cromwellians at the best” and “not Irish native-at-all-at-all” but “people of yesterday, graziers and mushrooms —(mushrooms)— which tho’ they’ve made the money, can’t buy the blood” while Catty’s ancestors sat on a throne (Edgeworth 1817: 45-46).

As mentioned above, the Anglo-Irish writers were not at all indifferent to religion. The problem was that neither she nor her father took up a clear position regarding the established Anglican Church. Rather, the Edgeworths were more concerned with elaborating a utopian educational programme based on inclusion and contributing to the participation of the Catholic masses in the development of their country.

3. A want of culture

Education is probably the most variously approached issue in Edgeworth’s oeuvre. Persuaded that education was a synonym of individual and collective happiness, the Edgeworths embraced paternalism and relied on perfectibility, on a rational reform implying an industrialised and capitalist society. Therefore, as Edgeworth explained to an American friend, the Jewess Rachel Mordicai, Ireland was on “the eve of a very great national benefit” (MacDonald 1977: 74-75 [Letter to Rachel Lazarus Mordecai, 2 May 1825: 74-5]). From her point of view, Catholic emancipation would imply the promotion of “punctuality, order, economy, virtues and happiness which have been for centuries unknown to the despairing, oppressed Irish population” (MacDonald 1977: 74-75 [Letter to Rachel Lazarus Mordecai, 2 May 1825: 74-75]). She concluded by acknowledging that the new legislative measures “come home to every family, every cabin, every heart” (MacDonald 1977: 74-75 [Letter to Rachel Lazarus Mordecai, 2 May 1825: 74-75]). The Edgeworths naively dreamed of an educated Ireland. Edgeworth’s father established schools on the estate where Catholic and Protestant children were educated together, with periods for separate religious instruction, and he supported Catholic emancipation as well (Moynahan 1995: 16).⁹ Yet, as Terry Eagleton argues, despite Richard Lovell’s insistence in the parliamentary debates that the force of education was greater than the power of the sword, he was wrong to imagine that religious conciliation could prove effective (1995: 76).

After the Reformation, Irish Catholicism became historically linked to the denial of patrimony and to the Penal laws segregating the Catholic aristocracy and gentry

from the land and its people. The first decades of the nineteenth century witnessed the rise to political consciousness of the Irish peasants and the Catholic middle class. Nevertheless, the Act of 1704 had excluded Catholics from direct political representation and office, that is, “from all the institutions that helped to produce and shape the masculine ideal of the landed gentleman” (Corbett 1994a: 888; Ryan 2006: 178-179). Even though public employment and the legal profession were closed to them until the Catholic Relief Act (1779), trade was open, and, by 1750, there was a growing class of prosperous Roman Catholic merchants (Ryan 2006: 179). Yet, there was a significant difference between the Protestant and the Catholic community. Advancements up the social scale strengthened the coherence of the Protestants and was an essential characteristic of the Ascendancy: as Beckett explains, a Protestant boy, however humble his origin, might hope to rise, by some combination of ability, good luck and patronage, to a position of influence from which a Roman Catholic however well-born or wealthy, would be utterly excluded (Beckett 1976: 44-45, 65). This is precisely what the Edgeworths denounced in *Essay on Irish Bulls*. This text, which was jointly authored, defends the Irish as a single hybrid society. The Edgeworths eschew mention of the Catholic/Protestant opposition again but continually highlight the ability of the Irish to achieve great objectives regardless of their religion.

Partly written as an apology for *Castle Rackrent*—which had been taken by some readers as a satire on Irish manners—, *Irish Bulls* (1802) aimed to combat racism and to defend Irish idiosyncrasy by extolling the eloquence of the Irish (Manly 2006: 2). Edgeworth’s intellectualism and rationalism are filtered through the numerous anecdotes, quotations, and popular expressions she employs to define what an Irish blunder is. The conclusion is that blunders appear in all types of literature—ranging from great English authors to the preface to the dictionary of the French Academy—, and that most of them are basically linguistic inaccuracies. If they are systematically associated with Irishness, it is because the Irish employ comparatively more metaphors and witty remarks than the English, and the brogue—or Irish accent—produces a comic effect (Edgeworth 1967: 184). What is more, without bulls, social intercourse would end. An attempt to give a linguistic account of the English spoken in Ireland as Elizabethan English, *Irish Bulls* offers a historical outline of its development (Edgeworth 1967: 150-151). The final anecdote is about the Czars of Russia, who put the cap and bells of their fool on the head of the subjects they wanted to disgrace. The question posed by authors—“Would it not be a practical bull to place the bells upon her own imperial crown?” (Edgeworth 1967: 187)—erases polarities and refers to previous works.¹⁰

Together with “The Hibernian Medicant”, “Bath Coach Conversation” and “The Irish Incognito”; “Little Dominick” is one of the four chapter-length prose

national allegories in *Irish Bulls*, where the Edgeworths weaken the political allegory by introducing a Catholic child’s experiences in a boarding school, based on those of Richard Lovell Edgeworth himself (Butler 1999-2003: 327-328, vol. I note 74).¹¹ At the end of the story, Little Dominick’s English proves to be better than that of his master. Still, he remains loyal to his identity and, with his good friend and schoolmate Edwards, he retains his “ould Irish brogue” (Edgeworth 1967: 111).

Formal education does not only concern Catholics and men. Many Protestants undergo a process of education and reform, and female education is unconditionally promoted in Edgeworth’s texts written after *Letters for Literary Ladies* (1798). Therefore, the hero in *Ennui* will not obtain Cecilia Delamere’s hand unless he is fit for a profession, as Lord Y__ explains to him (Edgeworth 1967: 387). *The Rose, Thistle and Shamrock* deals with the management of a new inn. In the play, the schooling of the Catholic boy Owen Larken is accomplished thanks to the generosity of an Anglo-Irish landlord, Sir William Hamden, so that the boy’s education “not be left half done” (Edgeworth 1967: 380). Until his father died, Owen went to school and got good results, but later he had to help Widow Larken. Aware of the importance of education, Mabel emphasises before the Scot Andrew Hope that “it’s with the head, as my father used to say, he’ll make more than the hands” (Edgeworth 1967: 338-339), and the Larkens plan to get a post as a clerk or as a teacher for Owen.

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Orlandino (1848), Edgeworth’s last tale, was composed to collect money for the Irish poor after the Famine. Mitzi Myers has defined this work as a text structured around colonialism and community; it deals with orphanage, estrangement and famine (1995: 201). The Anglo-Irish authoress was personally involved in raising funds for famine relief and at the same time composed a moving story about perseverance which satisfied Walter Scott’s request in 1827: “shew us how the evils which prevent them [the lower classes in Ireland] rising in the scale of society possessed as they are of so much that is amiable and excellent [...] I think you could do so much for us in shewing us how to mend the worst part of our British machine” (Butler and Edgeworth Butler 1928: 291). *Orlandino* centres on a mysterious young man who left Ireland and his family in search of adventures and who, on his return, reforms with the help of a Protestant family. Once he has assumed a new character, Orlandino periodically sends his sister Mary a pound so that she can pay a girl to do the housework and have some time for her own improvement and attendance at school: “she was thus instructed in all which her mother’s fallen fortune had prevented her hitherto from having time or opportunity to learn” (Edgeworth 1848: 136). As a result, the girl is prepared “for any change in their circumstances which might take place” (Edgeworth 1848: 136).

Another pervading trait in Edgeworth's oeuvre is the centrality of women, which is as remarkable in her Irish tales as in the work of other contemporary authoresses, such as Lady Morgan (*The Wild Irish Girl* [1806]). According to Robert Tracy, ancient Irish literature —aisling poetry, for instance— contains many references to symbolic matings which give a chieftain legitimacy over a local area (1985: 21). In fact, marriage became one of the dominant metaphors for representing England's complicated relationships with its partners/possessions within the British Isles and it also had a long tradition on the Irish stage, such as in Charles Shadwell's *Irish Hospitality* (1718), Thomas Sheridan's *The Brave Irishman* (1755), Charles Macklin's *Love à la Mode* (1759) or John O'Keeffe's *The Shamrock; or St. Patrick's Day* (1777) (Fernández 2012: 36). Butler explains that Irish women in Edgeworth's oeuvre have a more significantly political part in the narrative than in the tales set in England and are related to political consciousness: "The imagined community and the empowered woman tend to appear in a symbiotic relation, each needing the other as a condition of existence" (1992: 50). We will try to show that Catholic women in Edgeworth's tales not only introduce the past in the story, but also discover their true identity in the middle of narratives helping to bridge the gap between the Catholic and the Protestant Self.

4. Tales of love and restoration

The two series of *Tales of Fashionable Life* (1809, 1812) contain several feminocentric fictions in line with Jean-François Marmontel's *contes moraux*.¹² Throughout Edgeworth's lifetime, *Ennui* was almost always named among her finest productions. It focuses on the Earl of Glenthorn's adventures in Ireland, where he meets the Irishwoman Ellinor O'Donoghue. Her sincerity and authenticity work as a spell on the protagonist, boosting the ennuyé's self-esteem and creating a fiction with very positive consequences (Fernández 2008: 311-313). Through Ellinor, the Anglo-Irish landlord discovers Irish customs and stories and is aware of how his family became Protestant, for she remembers "[...] all the insults, or traditions of insults, which the Glenthorns had received for many ages back, even to the times of the old kings of Ireland" (Edgeworth 1967: 230-1). She also regrets that the family "stooped to be *lorded*" (Edgeworth 1967: 230-231) and changed their Gaelic surname, O'Shaughnessy.

Ellinor is associated with secrecy, and, interestingly, the hero's anagnorisis takes place after Glenthorn's refusal to save Christy from being arrested during a rebellion. In one of the most moving love scenes ever penned by Edgeworth, Ellinor reveals that Glenthorn, and not Christy, is her real son and is a Catholic who had been switched at birth (Edgeworth 1967: 352). For Mary Jean Corbett,

Ellinor subverts the very system on which masculine fictions of identity depend through an act of misrepresentation (2002: 321). The substitution of Glenthorn for Christy demonstrates the fictional status of the Self and its properties, denaturalising both, so as to shift the grounds of entitlement from birth to merit. On a different level, Glenthorn is attracted by the witty Lady Geraldine, who, devoid of feminine shyness, is quite determined and not at all interested in Glenthorn, a misogynist afraid of a second marriage. The young lady distorts reality and laughs at the English, who would avidly study Mr. Graiglethorpe’s book as a *New View of Ireland* (Edgeworth 1967: 288) and is based on the pack of lies she has told the gentleman about this country. Lady Geraldine affirms Irishness by bravely encouraging Irishwomen “let us never stoop to admire and imitate these second-hand airs and graces, follies and vices. Let us dare to be ourselves” (Edgeworth 1967: 302). As a consequence, and after asking him if Lady Hauton and Mrs. Norton’s remarks about Ireland are relevant, Glenthorn realises that “I had a soul and that I was superior to the puppets with whom I had been classed” (Edgeworth 1967: 303). Eventually, the hero prefers Cecilia Delamere’s softness to Lady Geraldine’s vivacity, and his marriage means a second rebirth since he is reconciled with the Old English —and Catholic— past alluded to in the surname Delamere.

The importance of female reputation —and especially the reputation of Catholic women— is remarkable in Edgeworth’s national tales. Also, in the play *Love and Law*, where Mr. Gerard O’Blaney, a distillery owner who does illegal business, plans to marry Honor M’Bride and tells his servant, Pat Cox, to sully Honor’s reputation around town and expose her until Catty Rooney retorts: “this is the saint, that Honor M’ Bride would be passing herself upon us for —And all the edication [sic] she got at Mrs. Carver’s Sunday school. —Oh, this comes of being better than one’s neighbours” (Edgeworth 1817: 51-52). Fortunately, Mrs. Carver, the Justice of Peace’s wife, solves the situation by explaining that the girl was with her, so Catty eventually grants her permission and the couple marries.

The Absentee, a story praised by Sir Walter Scott in the preface to *Waverley* (1814), portrays two girls with the revealing name of Grace. One is a poor Catholic girl living with Widow O’Neill (Edgeworth 1994c: 191), and the other is Grace Nugent, a symbol of Catholic resistance attacked by many reviewers (Butler 1999-2003: xxx-xxxi, vol.1). An orphan brought up by Lady Clonbrony, Grace Nugent is closely related to the hero Lord Colambre and she has refused several offers of marriage with “a tincture of Irish pride” (Edgeworth 1994c: 149). Lady Dashfort reveals to the hero that Grace Nugent’s mother was a St. Omar (Edgeworth 1994c: 72) a name associated with French Catholicism, and an exception in a family of women *sans reproche*, which intrigues Colambre (Edgeworth 1994c: 149). Like

the Delameres, the Nugents were Old English settlers from the medieval period and Catholics.¹³ It seems that Grace's mother kicked over the traces and had an affair with Captain Reynolds. She brought a child to England and met Nugent there. Count O'Halloran, significantly epitomising the Wild Geese—that is, the Irish Roman Catholic aristocrats who had been dispossessed and excluded from politics and were residing on the Continent—, clarifies the situation and facilitates the restoration of the mother's reputation: Reynolds and Miss St. Omar were privately married though the former did not acknowledge the union until he was dying (Edgeworth 1994c: 243).

The epitome of Gaelic nobility and Catholicism in *Ormond* is King Corny whose daughter is courted by Black Connal. No matter how eagerly the latter tries to make Dora a woman of fashion, the young lady retains her Irish character. When the protagonist reencounters Dora, he realises that she is no longer his playmate on the Black Islands. In the past, Dora insisted that young Irish girls are not “cyphers” (Edgeworth 1972: 156) and she was quick to attack men who said one thing and meant another—“a woman might as well listen to a fool or a madman” (Edgeworth 1972: 120). Now, though Dora prefers *le grand monde*, Ormond is happy to see that she has not adopted loose morals: “she did honour to Ireland by having preserved her reputation; young, and without a guide, as she was, in dissipated French society, with few examples of conjugal virtues to preserve in her mind the precepts and habits of her British education” (Edgeworth 1972: 397).

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In conclusion, religion repeatedly appears in the works that Edgeworth produced alone and in collaboration with her father.¹⁴ Edgeworth's critical attitude towards the Ascendancy was totally misunderstood and provoked condemnation from reviewers. Despite the difficulty of reconciling her sensitivity to the dispossessed Catholic Irish with her position on the family estate, she was committed to Ireland and deeply aware of the evils produced by the split between Catholics and Protestants. Edgeworth's national tales reveal an enlightened reliance on individual worth, self-control and justice, as well as a disapproval of fanaticism. As an inheritance of her father's unionist thought, she regarded the incorporation of the Catholic Other as something positive and the best way to achieve a reconciliation with the Protestant identity without denying or suppressing the Catholic alterity. It is, rather, the conversion to Protestantism that implies unhappiness and destruction, as can be found in *Castle Rackrent*, enacting family and political decay. In Edgeworth's oeuvre, local attachment allows for multiple national allegiances, a plurality which implies national improvement rather than national weakness and can be articulated through education and the discovery of the past. For Edgeworth, the Union meant taking advantage of the shifting forces and fixities of colonial power described by Bhabha. In this regard, Edgeworth deserves to occupy an outstanding position in

British literature for her defence of the individual and the consequent amelioration of the community. Such insistence on Anglo-Irish hybridity and cultural contrast is very striking in a Protestant authoress who called into question Britishness and urged the English to become aware of the alien country they ruled.

Notes

¹. On the other hand, the Abbé Edgeworth was Louis XVI's confessor, and Richard Lovell Edgeworth was nearly lynched in 1798 when mobs considered him a French spy or a United Irishman, an event repeatedly fictionalised by his daughter (see Butler 1972: 196; Butler 1999-2003: xxvi-xxvii, vol 1; McCormack 1985: 104; Dunne 1991).

². In Bhabha's theory, this process is linked with the disturbing questioning of the images and presences of authority, which, instead of resolving the tension between two cultures, creates a crisis for any concept of authority (1994: 52, 114).

³. Integration is a key word understood here as the inclusion in a large unit—the nation—which ideally respects the Self and contributes to the creation of an ideologically hybrid multicultural community (Fernández 2010a).

⁴ See also Fernández applying O'Shaughnessy's analysis to *Ennui* (2008: 310-313).

⁵. On Austen's religious views, see Michael Giffin (2002). Peter Knox-Shaw criticises Butler's ideas by insisting on Austen's relationship with [the] Anglo-Scottish Enlightenment. In an attempt to justify Austen's centrist politics, he places her as an Anglican Erasmian rather than as an Evangelical (2004: 5).

⁶. In Edgeworth's letters there is a pervading tendency to associate herself with Rosamond, a character in her children's stories, and with Irishwomen, as she once wrote to a relative (Colvin 1971: 286 [Letter to Honora Edgeworth, 5 December 1820]), and who "have a part in a narrative itself

more significantly political than the tales set in England, and because their symbolic roles [...] have to do directly or implicitly with national consciousness" (Butler 1972: 50). Furthermore, for Eiléan Ní Chuilleanáin, women in Edgeworth's national tales are victims, predators or objects desired by the hero and offstage until they finally join him. In the seminal *Castle Rackrent*, for instance, failed marriages symbolise the failure to grant Catholic emancipation (Ní Chuilleanáin 1985: 120).

⁷. Hannah More believed that "the well-being of those states, and the virtue and happiness, [...] the very existence of that society" (Kelly 1992: 118) depended on women's behaviour, and James Fordyce's sermons usually related the "daughters of Britain" to morality (Kelly 1992: 110-111).

⁸. Edgeworth used to refer to *Harrington* and *Ormond* in this way because they were published in the same volume after Richard Lovell's death on 13 June 1817 and therefore appeared without his imprimatur (Butler 1972: 278).

⁹. For Tom Dunne, however, Richard Lovell's support of Catholic emancipation was interested: "among those most active in the Catholic cause in the area were a Nugent and several O'Ferralls—members of the original Old English and Gaelic Irish families whose dispossession was the basis of the Edgeworthstown estate" (1991: 116). The idea of mixing Catholics and Protestants at school appears in *The Absentee* with excellent results (Edgeworth 1994c: 166-167).

¹⁰. "Did the Warwickshire militia, who were chiefly artisans, teach the Irish to

drink beer? or did they learn from the Irish to drink whiskey?" (Edgeworth 1994c: 6); "They [People] say that the American dogs did not know how to bark, till they learnt it from their civilized betters" (Edgeworth 1967: 429).

¹¹. When Richard Lovell was eight, he was similarly bullied at school in Warwick (Dunne 1991: 102-103).

¹². The first series comprised *Ennui*, *Almeria*, *Madame de Fleury*, *The Dun* and *Manoeuvring* while the 1812 series included *Vivian*, *Emilie de Coulanges* and *The Absentee*.

¹³. Two critics offer excellent accounts of the importance of women's surnames in Edgeworth's national tales: Mitzi

Myers (1996) and Butler (2001). For more information about the Nugents, see Dunne (1991: 97), and McCormack and Walker (1988: ix-xii).

¹⁴. It was at the end of her career—and after Richard Lovell's death—that Edgeworth's ideas evolved as a consequence of the hard times that Ireland faced towards the mid nineteenth century, and she wrote to her brother about her inability to recreate Ireland: "[...] realities are too strong, party passions too violent to bear to see, or care to look at their faces in the looking-glass, and curse the fool who held the mirror up to nature— distorted nature, in a fever" (Butler 1972: 452 [Letter to Michael Pakenham Edgeworth, 19 February 1834]).

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CHICANO GANGS/CHICANA GIRLS: SURVIVING THE “WILD BARRIO”¹

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1. The sociospatial context. The Barrio

Most contemporary US cities are spatially arranged around ethnohierarchical borders which situate those of a “non-standard middle-class” socioethnic origin in “ghettos” and peripheral milieus. The massive growth of cities during the twentieth century, following no systematic urbanization processes, favored an urban layout which adhered to obvious segregation patterns, and located the “different”, the newcomers, in remote spaces, far from the most privileged, affluent areas. Chicano/Latino *barrios* are a clear example of such hierarchically sociopyramidal planning, creating a vicious circle leading to widespread discrimination and hence, segregation. David Díaz explains that

numerous *colonias* developed adjacent to local employment centers, railroad yards, manufacturing districts, and in agriculture zones on the urban fringe. These “livable spaces” ranged from substandard homes to tents and shanties constructed from a potpourri of local materials. The sordid conditions of these urban residential zones established the negative and racist characterizations of Chicanas/os in urban space. Locked into substandard, deteriorating conditions, Euro-Americans viewed the *colonias* as a repository of marginalized families with limited desire for self-improvement (García 1975). Regressive ethnic stereotypes reinforced a racist ideology that posited Chicana/o culture as debased and therefore deserving of segregation. (2005: 32)

The middle decades of the century provided no big changes in the configuration of *barrios*, and the *Bracero Program* and further waves of immigration favored the massive overcrowding of these quarters. It was not until the Sixties, the era of Civil Rights Movements in general and the *Movimiento Chicano* in particular, that a relevant transformation of the concept of the *barrio* occurred and the political and cultural “conscientización” of the workers paved the way for its conversion, not only into a place, but a cultural space, a “state of mind”, which “symbolized the cultural lineage of Chicana/o social and political history. [...] the *barrio* was transformed into both a spatially defined location and, just as importantly an essential resource of cultural memory, identity and pride” (Díaz 2005: 56). The *barrio* was described in most of the cultural and artistic manifestations emerging from it as a safe haven, the shared space where the defense and development of an incipient communal identity could be performed, providing it with manifest positive characteristics. However, as expressed by Griswold del Castillo (1979) and rewritten by Homero-Villa, the ambivalent nature of the *barrios* as “the basis of a dynamic cultural updwelling”, and “a place of poverty, crime, illness and despair”, [...] avoids

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shining a singularizing idealizing light upon *barrio* culture that would render its expressive manifestations as always necessarily positive or politically contestative. Nevertheless, many of the cultural practices produced and exercised in the *barrios* have tended toward positive articulations of community consciousness, which contribute to a psychologically and materially sustaining sense of ‘home’ location. (2000: 5)

Taking as a starting point Griswold del Castillo’s description of a less “romanticized” *barrio*, as a place where poverty, crime, illness and despair occur, this essay examines how Yxta Maya Murray and Mona Ruiz have deployed this communal space from a feminine perspective, the former through the creation of a fictional *barrio*, and the latter using an autobiographical statement. Literary representations like these concur with numerous sociological reports, conducted by both members of the community and outsiders, which demonstrate the hazards of everyday life in many US *barrios*, as well as their inherently hierarchical gender structure. For instance, Maxine Baca Zinn’s has described women of color as “outsiders within” —marginal intellectuals whose social locations provide them with a particular perspective on self and society” (1997: 18).

The portrayal of *barrio* life in the body of Literature that emerged with the Chicano Movement in the Sixties deployed the disrootedness that the movement from the rural areas to the urban ones caused, as well as the fragmentation that the arrival to the city and the *barrios* brought about within the established gender structure. In this sense, many were the authors who described communal and family life as

overtly gendered. Rudolfo Anaya, to name just one such author, endeavored to portray in his novel *Heart of Aztlán*, and others, the reality of Chicano life, both rural and urban (with its clear male-dominated set of beliefs) by revealing the negative influence of urban, *barrio* life, on the cohesion of the nuclear Mexican family. In the story, the forced migration of the protagonist's family from the *pueblo* to the city brings with it the dismantling of this unity as it is understood traditionally, as its younger members (both the boys and the girls) embark on a life outside the safe haven, the controlled, gendered space that the family home represents. The desire of the daughters to live their life "outside", that is, to "live" the *barrio*, work, and have money of their own, is met with absolute rejection and rage on the part of Clemente, the father, as the following passage from the text illustrates, when Juanita, his daughter says:

"I'm the one that's working, and that gives me the right to..."

[...]

"Juanita!" Clemente commanded, "¡Respeto a tus padres!"

And because she could find nothing else to say she shouted in his face, "And don't call me Juanita! I hate that name! Call me Jan! All my friends call me Jan—"

He struck out and slapped her. The blow sent her reeling. "Your friends!" He shouted. "You mean those pachucos and marijuanos you spend time with!"

[...]

But Juanita challenged him again. "It's about time I had something to say about the things around here! I work too! I have my own money! So I will come and go as I want, and nobody will rule me!"

[...]

"Válgame Dios", Adelita groaned. "What is happening to us?" She asked her husband in disbelief. (1976: 37-38)

This exchange addresses a number of issues that were prominent in the Chicano Literature of the first generation of authors, such as migration to the city, the difficult working conditions in the *barrio*, the assimilation of the Anglo culture by the younger generation with the subsequent supposed break with the communal tradition, increasing awareness by the female characters of their position within their group and the social fabric in general, the disintegration of the family unit and its inherent gendered role division and the challenge to the patriarchal dominance and masculine supremacy, among others.

In this same light, Esperanza's account of female life in the *barrio* in *The House on Mango Street*, considered by many one of the foundational texts in the body of Chicana Literature, illustrates the traditional definition of the house as a female domain and the *calle* as a male one. The young narrator's innocent gaze and narrative tone, describes how most of the women in her *barrio* are trapped inside the confines of their home and look through a window that offers them a distorted

image of reality and public life, and concomitantly, of a place outside where they do not belong and to which they have no access. She says about her grandmother:

[...] a wild horse of a woman, so wild she wouldn't marry. Until my great-grandfather threw a sack over her head and carried her off. [...] And the story goes she never forgave him. She looked out the window her whole life, the way so many women sit their sadness on an elbow. I wonder if she made the best with what she got or was she sorry because she couldn't be all the things she wanted to be. Esperanza. I have inherited her name, but I don't want to inherit her place by the window. (1989: 10-11)

The novel stands out, even today, as a denunciation of the gendered division of Mexican/Chicano society, the imposed politics of location in which it is based and finally, as a plea to women to obtain a voice and a place of their own with the acquisition of a proper education.

The two works which are the core focus of this essay, however, deploy a more contemporary vision of *barrio* life, and describe not only this communal shared space, but also another more marginal street "institution" which is becoming increasingly stronger among the teenagers, the gang or *clicka*.

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2. The barrio gangs: the girls in the gang

Some decades after several of the demands of the Chicano and the Feminist Chicana Movements were met, many US *barrios* are still defined as having obvious substandard social, economic, cultural and educational resources. A great part of the contemporary *barrio* youth, particularly the women, dwell in precarious conditions which they have assimilated as inherent to life in these deprived areas of cities, and are forced to develop survival strategies that often lead them to marginality and criminality. The proliferation of gangs in US Latino quarters came to the fore after the first groups of organized Latino youngsters, the *Pachucos*, appeared in the fifties, in response to the difficult living conditions in the *barrios*. As explained in the *Juvenile Justice Bulletin* published by the US Department of Justice, "[j]oining a gang can be an assertion of independence not only from family, but also from cultural and class constraints" (2001: 3).

Today, the gang system in the Latino districts has adopted new, more sophisticated forms and aims, and many young Chicanos choose to join the "wild life" as a source of economic income and a means of developing a personal identity within the micro-society that the gang represents. In contrast to the first *Pachucos*, many of the gangs or *clickas* today are highly violent, and drug and arms dealing has become the basis of their economic resources as well as the indicator of social

control and empowerment. In such a highly hierarchical and male dominated social microstructure, the role of women is the traditional one, perpetuated down through generations and reinforced by popular culture in general. Thus, the women in the *clicka* have become voiceless companions, whose only role is to pamper his pretentious macho image, as well as to keep him "happy" in terms of his sexual needs (Campbell 1990). This generally ends up with teenage pregnancies, which are regarded as the most formidable proof of a boy's manhood, and a girl's womanhood. The roles well-defined and assimilated, these young Chicanos are reproducing the most basic limitations to female empowerment that the Chicana Movement endeavored to target.

However, several reports are today challenging the stereotype of the female in the gang as just a "sex object or tomboy" (Moore and Hagedorn 2001) and are describing the increasingly more active female role within these groups or in the formation of female gangs. As explained by James Diego Vigil,

like young males, many female youths are subjected to: culture conflict, poverty, and associated family and school problems. In addition, they are apt to undergo personal devaluation, stricter child-rearing experiences, tension-filled gender role expectations, and problems of self-esteem stemming from all these forces. Sexual abuse and exploitation experiences, initially with male relatives and later male street peers can lead to pent-up rage. Not surprising, some young females are now channeling that rage into holding their own in the violence of the street gang world. (2003: 227)

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The number of female gangs is fast increasing, as is the involvement of girls in gangs, providing a "way out" from "poverty, crime, illness and despair" (Griswold del Castillo 1979) for many young women whose socioeconomic and cultural resources are scarce. Many factors may be behind the decision to join a gang. C.J. Walker-Barnes and C.A. Manson mention "peer pressure, the desire for group affiliation, excitement, and moneymaking opportunities" (2001: 313), "the need for protection and living in a high crime neighborhood" (2001: 317), and "the affective characteristics of the family" (2001: 319), amongst others. This involvement in the *vida loca*, however, poses questions about the "liberating, emancipatory" effects that it may provide for its protagonists. On the one hand, joining a gang may imply a certain degree of self-assertion and agency/empowerment, as the woman in the *clicka* acquires an active role within this micro-organization, and thus challenges her role and fate as a woman. On the other, some argue that joining a gang "is a turning point and a gateway to a life offering very little chance for a socially acceptable career" (Moore and Hagedorn 2001). In other words,

En lo que se refiere al papel de las mujeres en las pandillas, dentro de la investigación con orientación feminista existen dos hipótesis opuestas: la primera supone que el

hecho de pertenecer a una gang facilita que surjan efectos emancipatorios en las muchachas (*liberation hypothesis*, Taylor, 1993). La segunda supone, en cambio, que en las muchachas pandilleras predominan, al final, las ‘heridas sociales’ (*social injury hypothesis*, Chesney-Lind, 1993). (Liebel 2005: 136)

This essay looks at the way two works, the fictional *Locas*, and the autobiographical *Two Badges*, deploy gang activity from a female perspective and examines whether being part of a gang puts their central characters in a liberating or constraining position.

3. The girls in the gang: two examples in literature

Yxta Maya Murray’s *Locas*, first published in 1997, recounts the story of Lucía and Cecilia, two women whose fate is inevitably linked to the Los Lobos gang and its leader Manny, Lucía’s boyfriend and Cecilia’s brother. The gang controls the gun and drug trade in Echo Park and the surrounding area, and the relevance of both women is focused only through their relationship to Manny. However, Lucía is presented from the outset of the novel as a highly ambitious and self-aware woman, who is becoming acquainted with the financial organization of the gang, and, when Manny is betrayed and sent to jail, does not hesitate to try to supplant his power by creating her own all-female gang, *Las Fire Girls*. Lucía’s aim ever after is to create, no matter how, a stronger and more powerful gang than *Los Lobos*, as well as to prove her total independence and control over her own life. Cecilia, however, after a miscarriage and falling in love with another woman, consciously retires from gang and even public life and seeks shelter and comfort in totally devoted service to the Catholic Church.

The novel presents a group of women, personified by Lucía, (focus of the following analysis) who, acknowledging their situation, in a highly transgressive and even defiant way, opt to “live” the street and reclaim a space and a voice of their own in the traditionally male setting that the *barrio* represents. Lucía not only crosses the domestic, female space, which implies submission and personal defeat for her, but desires to control male territory, the streets, as the most ruthless, aggressive, power-thirsty gang banger would do, in an attempt to show her power to rule on the one hand, and on the other, her power to survive in a clearly hostile personal and social environment. Her shift towards criminality is clearly vengeful and full of hatred and implies a denunciation of the clear-cut gender roles that mark life in the *barrio*, as well as a means of gaining the personal and social recognition that the community deprives women of. She says:

It was a big crew doing good business dealing out Manny’s guns, and there was so much fire in the Park that I saw police driving down the streets looking different, looking almost nervous. The Lobos were getting tough enough to maddog the

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cops, howling cusses and sticking out their bony boy chests and making macho faces at the big blue suits. [...] With all those boys came the women. Hustler girls like me with our sprayed-out hair and our faces painted up glamour shiny, dark red and frosty brown on the eyes and cheeks, mouths like stoplights. The deal we made was to sex the boys hard, any time they wanted, and in return they'd take good care of us on the money end. They called us sheep, “good for fucking”, was what they said. The more the money came rolling in, the tougher the vatos got, and you had to make like you love begging or else you wouldn't get a dime. (1997: 31)

While the hierarchical, gender organization and arrangement of the *barrio* and the gang is made obvious from the outset of the text, the writer sets out clearly the difference between the younger generation and their forebears, who, like the women in *The House of Mango Street*, have assimilated their forced entrapment within the realms of domesticity. The young women, though, have taken a seemingly rebellious and transgressive step by choosing to move towards the street, where they relate to each other. However, this decision could be defined as a conscious adaptation of their traditional, patriarchal role to contemporary times, as most of them “choose” to become, like their mothers before them, silent companions and mothers as a means of survival. The difference between the two generations lies in their mothers' passive stance in the face of such a choice. Their mothers assimilated it as their moral and social duty, which contrasts with the active, conscious attitude of the new generation, for whom motherhood is perceived to be their only means of economic sustenance.

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In this town a woman doesn't have a hundred choices. Can't make yourself into a man, right? Can't even pick up and cruise on out of here just because you get some itch. And even though people talk all about doing college, that's just some dream they got from watching too much afternoon TV. No. A woman's got her place if she is a mama. That makes her a real person, where before she was just some skinny or fat little girl with skin like brown dirt, not worth a dime, not anybody to tip your hat to. (1997: 61-62)

This apparently contradictory situation might make us think that the two hypotheses mentioned earlier—the “liberation” and “social injury” one— have become one and the same in the case of these women: they need to stick to their socially and culturally imposed roles merely to survive, as the socioeconomic reality in which they are born (with all its implications) marks their fate and leaves them “choiceless” in terms of individual and personal development and empowerment. The utter lack of desire for personal growth conveyed in the above passage proves that, regardless of the obvious achievements of the Sixties, the reality of young people from the most underprivileged areas of cities (which are mostly those of the ethnic minorities) is light years away from the attainment, not only of the fictional American Dream, but of a real decent life. It is interesting to note at this point

Mary Pat Brady's notion of the production of a space as not only involving the physical configuration of the place per se, but

[...] the processes that shape how these places are understood, envisioned, defined, and variously experienced. The processes of producing space, however quotidian or grand, hidden or visible, have an enormous effect on subject formation —on the choices people can make and how they conceptualize themselves, each other, and the world. (2002: 7-8)

The inherent conditions of these personal/communal spaces condition their dwellers' individual practices, and as wittily shown by Mary Pat Brady, turn people's choices into the only choices people can make. In this situation, each of the characters/protagonists of these works and the reality portrayed in them, becomes the victim of the space where they grow up, which conditions their biased life choices.

Lucía's abhorrence of the female role and destiny in the *barrio* is the source of her greed and need to "succeed" in such a markedly patriarchal microworld. However, her motivations are far from being those of one who has an intellectual personal desire to become a voiced woman capable of choosing her own destiny. Instead, she presents a strong need for revenge and hatred towards all the members of her community, both male and female, which she will attain through the punitive and indiscriminate use of violence since, "because their behavior is under scrutiny by both males and other females, girls may act aggressively to demonstrate 'heart' and gain respect" (Peterson 2012: 75). This destructiveness and uncontrolled need for power and money, seems to come naturally to this woman, whose movements are Machiavellian and ruthless from the beginning. Thus, the creation of her *clicka*, far from striving to liberate women from the constraints of the gender based rules which hold sway in the *barrio* in general and the gang system in particular, reproduces the most vicious and violent features of these microcommunities. Lucía chooses her own "soldiers", whom she treats from the beginning as her subjects, and tries to mould them according to her own expectations of power and control. Monica Brown sums up the result like this: "these gang members appear to reject victimization in favor of narratives of aggression and violence actively initiated by them" (2002: 88). The hierarchical organization of the band is obvious and she stands out as the person in total control. In this regard, Lucía's choice responds accurately to Luis Rodríguez observation on gang involvement, in which he states that

[y]ouths [...] aren't in gangs to be criminals, killers, or prison inmates. For them a gang embraces who they are, gives them the incipient authority they need to eventually control their lives, the empowerment that other institutions —including schools and families— often fail to provide". (2001: 25)

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In this light, Gini Sikes’ “as-told-to” story, *8 Ball Chicks* is an example of fact being stranger than fiction, addressing an even more brutal reality than that found in Murray’s work. Sikes spent two years living and talking to Latina female gang members in Los Angeles, San Antonio and Milwaukee, and collecting their life stories. The true story of TJ, one of the protagonists of her text, portrays the inevitability of joining a gang as the only means of gaining comfort, recognition and the family they often lack, due to the disruption in their family environment. In TJ’s case, as in almost all of the other cases, the failure of the education system to provide these kids with a continuation of their educational and personal formative process is portrayed as being an underlying factor in the deviation of these adolescents’ conduct. Joining a gang, as Brady states, is the only choice these girls can make, which, in Luis Rodríguez’s words, turns them into “criminals of want” (1993: 10). TJ’s story reads like this:

Since childhood, TJ wanted to be something more than a wife or mother, the traditional aim of many Latina girls in her neighborhood. [...] In TJ’s new neighborhood, girls faced the same risks as guys —poverty, drugs, unemployment, violence. Most of their mothers had been teenagers themselves when they gave birth, and without strong female role models to emulate, their daughters looked to the boys. In this world, the strongest cholo, the one ‘crazy’ enough to take the dare —snipe at the cop, deal the big bucks, wipe out the enemy— survived. So you found a guy who was crazy or became crazy yourself. (1997: 20-21)

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Similarly, the case of Mona Ruiz, portrayed in the autobiography entitled *Two Badges, The lives of Mona Ruiz* (1997), presents the life of a “*barrio* girl” who has been immersed in gang life like Lucía, but whose life and goals change drastically when she becomes a policewoman. The memoir begins with Mona participating in a police arrest in her neighborhood of a member of her former *clicka*, and following the circular structure of the narrative, the protagonist gives a testimony of her life story since she became a gang member. The narration of Mona’s life is an accurate and true-to-life account of the fictionalized version of life in the *barrio* as portrayed in Murray’s novel, and shows a much harsher reality than the one presented in *Locas*. Violence acts as the axis around which Mona’s life revolves and is presented as intrinsic to the life of this woman in particular and the *barrio* in general. The situation in the *barrio* is violent *per se*, and, regardless of the discrimination and aggressions its dwellers experience from the outside world, this violence actually stems from within the community. It is the gang members, unadapted youngsters who turn their wrath against their own community, exerting it upon its residents. Mona describes it in the following terms:

Most of the houses on Wood had grate fences and barred windows, barricades that residents hoped would protect them from the burglaries that supplied the gangs with income. Santa Ana was a small quiet town, rows of woodframe houses dotted

by orange groves and surrounded by clear skies when I was born, but by the 1980s, whole strips of the city looked like a Third World country. Crime was a daily part of life and the gangs were a problem in nearly every school. (Ruiz 1997: 12-13)

The image she provides of the neighborhood is absolutely devastating and illustrates the complexity of the difficulties of life within it, which come from different sources. On a more personal level and concentrating on Mona's life, this social violence that the setting of the *barrio* implies is reinforced by the violence she suffers from her husband Frank, a young gang member who represents the uneducated, violent, stereotypically *macho* gang member, who uses his wife and children to reaffirm his masculinity, personal and social relevance and superiority. It is thus no coincidence that the first time he hits her, he does so in front of his friends, who have turned Mona's apartment into the place where they meet and get drunk and high on PCP. In Vigil's words,

Girls face further marginalization due to gender discrimination. They turn to the gang to seek refuge from this marginalization, rejecting traditional definitions of their roles in the process. Although seeking refuge in the gang from an alienating society, denying mainstream values and lifestyles, girls continue to be discriminated against by their male counterparts due to their gender. Girls turn to the gang for protection or to learn survival skills yet are abused both emotionally and physically by male members. (2008: 70)

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Mona's life and destiny is undoubtedly marked by the effects (both positive and negative) of diverse types of interaction with different men. Frank, father of her three children, thus, symbolizes and re-enacts the most extreme form of female subjugation and embodies the worst characteristics of a patriarchal, male chauvinist attitude, which for Alfredo Mirandé imply exaggerated masculinity: authoritarianism; violence and aggressiveness and self-centeredness (1997: 69-71). Frank's negative influence will lead Mona to restructure her life and start anew with her children, with a goal of her own. Her desire to be an educated woman and become a member of the L.A.P.D. in order to work for the sake of her community is the result of her father's absolute loathing of and disregard for gang members, whom he considers betrayers of the community. She says:

My father's hatred for the gang members was driven by his belief that they were lazy, disrespectful and shamed our people. The gangs flew in the face of his strong ethic and love of tradition. He proudly detailed his family history, his roots spreading back to Spain. He spoke with admiration of simple people who through sweat and dedication made their dreams come true for themselves and their children. History was sacred to him, and the gang members, the *vatos*, were all about today, the satisfactions of the desire of the moment, be it for beer or drugs or rowdiness. [...] If his dream for me was to become a police officer, then his greatest fear was certainly

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that I would fall into the gang scene. It is ironic, I suppose, that both of these visions would come true. (Ruiz 1997: 27)

Her father’s expectations for her, then, are frustrated when she joins the gang, starts going out with a *vato*, and finally becomes pregnant, and his reaction is to throw her out of the family house. The paternal figure that she loses at that moment will be somehow replaced by Osuna, one of her colleagues at the Police Department. After Mona has given up her administrative job at the Department because she is pregnant, Osuna, aware of her situation, accompanies her to a women’s shelter to abandon Frank and later encourages her to attain an education, study and fight for her dream. The end of the memoir, which connects with the first chapter where she is in the streets trying to fight gang violence and shows herself to be a woman who is absolutely devoted to working to improve the situation of her *barrio*, conveys an unmistakably didactic and philosophical tone, which arises from her intense life experience.

What have I learned? When I speak to the school classes or neighborhood groups, I tell them that the streets are the toughest school in the world, and that you have to learn if you ever want to make it to a saner life. I learned that people can’t be judged by where they are from, what they look like, or the uniform they wear —whether it is police blue or gangbanger baggy. I also learned that prejudice is part of our culture, and to deny it defeats any chance of changing it. I know that many cops and gang members are more alike than either would like to admit, each sharing a thirst for action and an expectation that they deserve something more than the people who share the streets with them. I have learned, sadly, that women are the first to be victimized in our society, and, even more tragically, many of them pass on the pain and abuse to their children. I have learned what death smells like, but I have also seen my three beautiful babies come into the world. I have felt love and trust, but I know those feelings fade in the face of betrayal. I have learned that no street, *barrio*, or gang is worth dying for, but that sacrifice is worthy in the name of justice and family. (Ruiz 1997: 287)

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4. Conclusion

The end of Mona Ruiz’s account of her life acquires a strong didactic tone, and serves as a conclusion. Both works, regardless of the differences in their nature, draw a fictionalized but true-to-life picture of what US Latino *barrios* are for many uneducated youngsters today. Scarce educational resources, high rates of unemployment and seemingly inherent violence —the source of which is the socioeconomic situation itself on the one hand, and the crudity of the youngsters who join gangs and direct their loathing towards their own community on the other— characterize the everyday life of Chicano/Latino quarters. This social

violence is reproduced in a circular way within the domestic sphere of life, and the strong hierarchical divisions and blatant male supremacy result in tremendous brutality on the part of the males towards the women, who are mistreated socially, psychologically and physically. In an extremely interesting way, both works portray the idea of the “natural” superiority of men over women and the submissive, docile way in which the women accept their role, duty and destiny. In this sense, the aim of both works is to present an escape route for these young women and present them with different choices and paths in their quest for personal empowerment. Each work presents an escape route for these young women protagonists but the two solutions are quite different from each other, though at the same time both may be described as extreme. Both women reject “regular life choices” in their search for a personal voice. Lucía opts for a life on the fringes of the already marginalized, whilst Mona, in contrast, chooses to be part of the mainstream system in order to utilize it in favor of her community. We could conclude that a middle choice that comes from education and opting for personal self-development is the only way to release these young women from the situation they live in, which is far from the postulates the Chicana Feminists of the Sixties defended, because, as explained by Monica Brown,

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[t]he conceptual anomaly of the girl gang member challenges and complicates the traditional relegation of woman to the private sphere. [...] Despite participation in the public sphere —the streets and the glare of media spectacularization the representation of female gang life still sustains many aspects of traditional femininity [...]. (2002: 85)

Or, in other words, for a young woman, joining a gang is both liberating and constraining, if we follow Taylor and Chesney-Lind’s hypothesis and concepts.

Both Murray’s fictional portrayal of *barrio* life and gang participation, and Mona Ruiz’s deployment of real female gang bangers’ lives, demonstrate that a poverty-stricken socioeconomic background and poor education in the most deprived *barrios* bring out the survival instinct in the youth of the community which leads to their incursion into the wild life. In these *barrios* they find

[...] a segmented labor force, limited access to all but minimum wage work, lack of subsidized child care, inflexible and overburdened schools, chronic economic hardships that contribute to increasing stress and violence within their homes, and a social welfare system that is overburdened, underfunded, and disorganized. (Dietrich 1998: 157)

This life choice, however, which is primarily personal, stems from a structural sociopolitical deficiency, and therefore, as Sikes says, it takes a concerted political effort and far-reaching commitment to save these kids from it.

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As I write this, the likelihood is there will be no rehabilitative programs, education, or jobs for troubled youth in the foreseeable future. It's simply not on either party's agenda. Instead the gang girls who manage to go straight through their own personal strength will most likely face careers of unsatisfying minimum-wage work, without benefits or opportunity for advancement for themselves or their children. It is no wonder that many children today are given to the very unchildish apprehension that life is a dead end. For them, there is little reason to adhere to the sustaining tenet of the American dream; that the way to happiness is through hard work and sacrifice. (Sikes 1997: 271)

On the other hand, the gang structure not only provides them with economic resources, as drug dealing is their main source of income, but also with some kind of emotional stability. It replaces the role of the traditional family, and utterances such as “[m]y gang is like a family to me”, “[b]eing in a gang makes me feel like I really belong somewhere”, and “[b]eing in a gang makes me feel important” (Esbensen et al. 1999: 45), prove so. As opposed to Murray's fictional, constructed, type-like characters, Ruiz's autobiography is an example of real people, whose emotional and life contradictions are symbolic of the *cul de sac* that their life signifies. Adolescent mothers with numerous kids, previously involved in drug use and abuse, who cohabit with a tremendous degree of violence, both in the streets and in their domestic space, whose bodies and lives belong literally to the gang once they “jump in”, delineate a reality that is dramatic and horrific and shows absolutely no tangible improvement in the lives of a very large number of “ethclass” minority youngsters. The texts portray a space, the *barrio*, which becomes symbolic of Anzaldúa's conceptual definition of the *frontera*, as a site of violence, oppression and discrimination and, in a parallel fashion, a place of reunion, sense of community and the only space where its members feel they belong and have a voice. In this respect, works such as these are essential to remind us of the fact that there is still a third world within the first one and as Sikes states, “We need to know these girls. Once we see them as individuals, we might become more determined to find the money, time, and people to help them [...]. But first we have to listen” (1997: 272).

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Notes

1. This essay is part of a project financed by the Spanish Ministry of Economy and Competitiveness (code: FFI2011-23598) and the European Regional Fund (ERDF). It was also completed under the auspices of the research group REWEST funded by the Basque Government and the Universidad del País Vasco, UPV/EHU (UFI 11/06).

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Received: 31 May 2012

Revised version: 13 December 2012

MIDWINTER SPRING, THE STILL POINT AND DANTE. THE ASPIRATION TO THE ETERNAL PRESENT IN T.S. ELIOT'S *FOUR QUARTETS*

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1. Four Quartets. Preliminary remarks

As T.S. Eliot explained in the *New York Times Book Review* in 1953, he did not set about writing *Four Quartets* following a premeditated design. The poem that opens the sequence, “Burnt Norton” (first published, on its own, in 1936), grew out of singularly reflective fragments that, being considered unsuitable for the stage, were excised from the manuscript of the commissioned pageant play *The Rock* (1934). At the time, Eliot “thought pure unapplied poetry was in the past” (Bergonzi 1969: 23) and was willing to further explore the possibilities of drama. The difficult circumstances of World War II, however, forced a retreat into meditative verse that resulted in “East Coker” (the second of the quartets, which appeared in 1940) and ultimately in the project to complete the sequence with “The Dry Salvages” (1941) and “Little Gidding” (1942).¹

When Eliot’s poetic work is examined chronologically, it seems inevitable to consider *Four Quartets* the resolution of his poetic quest, as well as the acme of his craft: “it would not be too much to say that all of his previous work has lead him to this point [...] Certainly the sequence is the most elaborately and intricately shaped of all his poetry” (Ackroyd 1984: 270). In a letter of 1931, Eliot told Stephen Spender that Beethoven’s later quartets struck him as “the fruit of reconciliation and relief after immense suffering”, and added: “I should like to get something

of that into verse before I die” (Spender 1975: 133). These words describe with premonitory precision how Eliot’s own quartets have come to be perceived. They reflect not only the author’s creative maturity, but also the peace of mind that put an end to years of religious disorientation and the rewards of his determined efforts to consolidate belief.² As David Perkins claims, “the protagonist of the *Four Quartets* finally achieves a deeper experience and a fuller understanding of his Christian faith” (1969: 254).

The significance of the four poems (first published together in 1944) has been explained in terms of Eliot’s career and spiritual life, but also in relation to literary history. With *Four Quartets*, according to George William Rutler, Anglo-American Modernism comes to an end (2006: 7). Thomas Howard insists on the historical definitiveness of the work, which he ranks among the greatest achievements of Christian art, including Dante’s *Divina Commedia*: “*Four Quartets* stands as Eliot’s valedictory to the modern world. I myself would place it, along with Chartres Cathedral, the *Divine Comedy*, van Eyck’s ‘Adoration of the Mystic Lamb’, and the Mozart Requiem, as a major edifice in the history of the Christian West” (2006: 16).

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Howard describes the thematic core of *Four Quartets* as “the old business of being mortal, that is, intelligent creatures existing *here* and *in time*, when all the while we are profoundly dissatisfied with this dismal sequence of past, present and future” (2006: 20; author’s emphasis). Human experience of time and its transcendence become pivotal motifs in these poetic compositions, whose imagery has the complexity and allusiveness typical of Eliot’s style.

The imagery of *Four Quartets* makes Eliot’s indebtedness to Dante’s poetic imagination evident. In his essay “Dante”, Eliot praises the medieval poet’s imaginative excellence: “One can feel only awe at the power of the master who could thus at every moment realize the inapprehensible in visual images” (1932: 227). Eliot also points out that Dantean imagery is admirably coherent and, far from being ornamental, plays a central role: “Such figures are not merely antiquated rhetorical devices, but serious and practical means of making the spiritual visible” (1932: 228).

Like Dante, the Eliot of *Four Quartets* concerns himself, more intensely than ever before, with “making the spiritual visible”. The concepts of temporal neutralisation and the resulting eternal present, central to Eliot’s poetic sequence, are effectively conveyed through the images of “midwinter spring” and the “still point” —both of Dantean inspiration or influence, as we will see.³ The purpose of this paper, however, cannot be simply to confirm this influence, which was straightforwardly acknowledged by Eliot and has been thoroughly researched.⁴ The detailed analysis of these two specific Dantean images will lead to a consideration of their

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role in Eliot's practice of poetry: expressing or revealing poetic thought and, in characteristically Eliotic manner, causing the poems where they appear to contain literary tradition. In the following two sections, midwinter spring and the still point will be compared and examined in the context of *Four Quartets* and Eliot's poetic production as a whole, as well as in their links with *Purgatorio*, *Paradiso* and other canonical literary texts.

2. Midwinter spring. Eternal spring, Eternal present

The profound dissatisfaction with the “dismal sequence of past, present and future” —as Howard puts it— the anxiety produced by the weight of temporality and by inescapable mortality leads to a lofty aspiration, underlying some of the best lines of *Four Quartets*, specifically, to transcend the temporal in order to reach the timeless. The transcendence of the temporal has various imaginative translations in Eliot's work, the midwinter spring in “Little Gidding” being one of them:

Midwinter spring is its own season
Sempiternal though sodden towards sundown
Suspended in time, between pole and tropic. (Eliot 1974: 201)

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Liberation from the temporal is represented by a paradox —a season that is eternal and “suspended in time”, but also affected by the rotation of the earth and therefore becoming “sodden towards sundown”. The apparent contradiction is also implicit in the adjective chosen by the poet: as Moody points out, the adjective *sempiternal* “seems to comprehend time and eternity in the one word” (1994: 150).

A.V.C. Schmidt has linked the midwinter spring scene to William Langland's *The Vision of Piers Plowman*, completed towards the end of the fourteenth century. Schmidt laments the generalised lack of interest in this English medieval poem shown by nineteenth and twentieth century poets writing in English, but adds:

T.S. Eliot, however, who had alluded to Chaucer's *General Prologue* in the opening of *The Waste Land*, paid an appropriate tribute to Langland in the opening of his last great poem, *Little Gidding*, which recalls both the opening of Langland's *Prologue* and his ecstatic lines on the Holy Ghost in Passus XVII [...] In doing so he showed an unerring sense of the nature of poetic tradition. (Schmidt 1993: xix)

Langland's poem's stylised opening, typically medieval, rejoices in spring and summer: it was “in a somer seson whan soft was the sonne” that the Dreamer “went wyde in þis world wondres to here”; it was “on a May mornyng” that he had “a merueilouse sweuene” (Langland 1972: 1). The protagonist's adventure begins, like Dante's, in spring and in a “selva selvaggia” (Dante 1961a: 22), “in a

wilderness” (Langland 1972: 1).⁵ In Passus XVII, the power of the Holy Spirit is said to melt into mercy as the winter sun quickly melts icicles:

So þat þe holygoste gloweth but as a glede,
Tyl þat lele loue ligge on hym & blowe,
And þanne flaumbeth he as fyre on fader & on *filius*,
And meltheth her myzte in-to mercy as men may se in wyntre
Ysekeles in euses þorw hete of þe sonne,
Melteth in a mynut while to myst & to watre;
[...]. (Langland 1972: 314-315)⁶

The detailed examination of the opening of “Little Gidding” developed below will confirm that Eliot’s depiction of midwinter spring, characterised by the complementary opposition of cold and heat, is comparable to Langland’s metaphors, conveying the workings of the Holy Trinity. But the purpose here is to explore the Dantean component of the images mentioned above. Several connections between the beginning of “Little Gidding” and Dante’s great work of the mountain of Purgatory in the company of Virgil, Dante finds himself in the Earthly paradise, where the fair lady Matilda describes the place for him in the following terms:

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Qui fu innocente l’umana radice;
qui primavera sempre ed ogni frutto;
nettare è questo di che ciascun dice.
[Here the human root was innocent, here was lasting spring and every fruit, this is the nectar of which each tells]. (Dante 1961b: 370-371)⁷

Perpetual spring characterises the Garden of Eden or Earthly Paradise, at the top of the mountain of Purgatory. In *Paradiso*, Beatrice, in instructing Dante about the arrangement of the different spheres of Heaven, compares the angelic orders to the flowers of a “primavera sempiterna” (Dante 1961c: 408). In the fourth canto, she has explained to her pupil that the presentation of Heaven as a succession of hierarchically organised spheres is only a device—an objective correlative, it could be argued, to use the critical term coined by Eliot himself—used to suit human understanding, which relies on sensual impressions. Dante is to understand that all the blessed souls whom he meets in time and space on his journey through the heavenly spheres do not deserve identical exaltation, although all of them are part of the timeless, spaceless Empyrean.

The Empyrean is the last of the Ten Heavens and Dante’s final destination. The fact that it is made entirely of light reinforces the connection with midwinter spring: Perkins suggests that the lyrical speaker in this scene of “Little Gidding” finds himself in the “heart of light”, and not simply gazing at it (1969: 255). In

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Paradiso, St Benedict's description of the Emyrean as a state of blessedness rather than a physical space subject to the changes of the natural year, also bears some resemblance to Eliot's midwinter spring, which can be taken to represent the non-spatial and non-temporal condition of spiritual fulfilment —“very close to the final state of Christian beatitude”, Perkins argues (1969: 257). From the Sphere of Saturn, St Benedict says about the Emyrean:

Ivi è perfetta, matura ed intera
ciascuna disianza; in quella sola
è ogni parte là ove sempr'era,
perchè non è in loco, e non s'impola.

[There all we long for is perfect, ripe and whole. In it alone each part is where it always was, for it is not in space and does not turn on poles]. (Dante 1961c: 318-321)

As John D. Sinclair explains, the Emyrean is the space “where there is no past and future and all time is present, where desire is one with fulfilment” (1961: 328). Beatrice refers to the eternal present of the Emyrean as well, when she tells Dante of what she has seen “là 've s'apunta ogni ubi e ogni quando” [there where every *ubi* and every *quando* is centred] (Dante 1961c: 416-417). From an examination of the possible Dantean references in Eliot's midwinter spring lines, it can be concluded that the notion of an eternal spring leads to the notion of an eternal present, an oxymoron that represents the dissolution of the temporal sequence —indeed, of time itself. An alternative to sequential time is envisaged as *Four Quartets* works toward a conclusion (in “Little Gidding”), but the poet philosopher had already pondered over the subject at the beginning of the sequence (in “Burnt Norton” I), in challengingly abstract terms:

If all time is eternally present,
All time is unredeemable.
What might have been is an abstraction
Remaining a perpetual possibility
Only in a world of speculation.
What might have been and what has been
Point to one end, which is *always present*. (Eliot 1974: 177; emphasis added)

The line of time will inevitably lead the determined quester to the timeless the point where it “is always present”. Time must be fully redeemed, until it becomes “unredeemable”; no longer experienced as past, present and future, it will be transformed into a present that “is not time, but the essence of the perceiving consciousness which expands into eternity” (Kobakhidze 2011: 54). An allusion to Saint Augustine, who thought of “the passage of time as one in a durationless instant”, has been identified in the lines above. Augustine contemplates an eternal present that liberates from the constraints of memories, prospects and speculations:

“[it] redeems the time and loosens the fetters of past and future” (Manganiello 1989: 101).

The timeless is inherent to midwinter spring, which is also defined by the pairing of antithetic concepts —the same is true of the image of the still point, as we will see. In the eternal season, the cold of winter and the warmth of spring can coincide; the ice can burn and the reign of winter kindles the spirit. The lines from Movement I of “Little Gidding”, following those quoted above, read:

When the short day is brightest, with frost and fire,
The brief sun flames the ice, on pond and ditches,
In windless cold that is the heart’s heat,
Reflecting in a watery mirror
A glare that is blindness in the early afternoon. (Eliot 1974: 201)

These conceptual and imaginative oppositions are reminiscent of the *coincidentia oppositorum*, first described as a unifying metaphysical device by the medieval theologian Nicholas Cusanus (1401-1464): “He perceived the finite world with its variety and multiplicity (opposites) as finding resolution and knowability only in a transcendent unity of truth” (Richardson and Bowden 1983: 112). Rational thought relies on discrimination and opposition; Cusanus advocates neutralising coincidence and the *docta ignorantia* as alternative avenues to the Absolute (Richardson and Bowden 1983: 112).

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David Moody explains that, in Eliot’s pairs, the emphasis is laid on the positive elements, these being fire, flames and heat —as opposed to frost, ice and cold. As far as these oppositions are concerned, “their effect is to hold in tension opposing qualities, without resolving or reconciling them, and in such a way that the negative intensifies the positive. [...] This is neither negation nor transcendence, but an intensification of what is actual, or an expansion of the actual towards the ideal” (Moody 1996: 244).

The tone becomes increasingly aspirational in the first stanza of “Little Gidding”, which ends with a rhetorical question and an image that is the logical development of midwinter spring: “Where is the summer, the unimaginable/ Zero summer?” (Eliot 1974: 201). The aspiration is to reach the ideal timeless, but through the actuality of the temporal, which is never rejected on principle (Howard 2006: 40). In the lines quoted from “Little Gidding”, the fire that coexists with the frost emanates from the Holy Spirit, as the adjective “pentecostal”, used by Eliot a few lines below, makes clear. Midwinter spring, outside time and space, is symbolic of spiritual peace:

[...] This is the spring time
But not in time’s covenant. Now the hedgerow
Is blanched for an hour with transitory blossom

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Of snow, a bloom more sudden
Than that of summer, neither budding nor fading,
Not in the scheme of generation. (Eliot 1974: 201)

With the lines analysed so far, Eliot comes back to the spring motif, some twenty years after *The Waste Land* (1922). Midwinter spring can be thought of as the reversal of the negative spring with which the latter poem famously opens:

April is the cruellest month, breeding
Lilacs out of the dead land, mixing
Memory and desire, stirring
Dull roots with spring rain.
Winter kept us warm, covering
Earth in forgetful snow, feeding
A little life with dried tubers. (Eliot 1974: 53)

Certain images can be set against each other (breed/dead land, spring/winter, rain/dried, warm/snow), although they are not combined to produce paradoxes. These lines have been associated with the conventional spring opening of the “General Prologue” to *The Canterbury Tales*; on the other hand, and as we saw, Schmidt connects Movement I of “Little Gidding” with *Piers Plowman*. The mystic vision of midwinter spring and the poet’s perceptive registering of its subtleties contrast with the cruelty of April and the gloomy negation of life with which “The Burial of the Dead”, the first section of *The Waste Land*, begins. Farahbakhsh and Habibi note that the time references in this poem are either to the literary past or to the poet’s present (2012: 35, 38) —the eternal present of midwinter spring is not an imaginative possibility yet. Stephen Spender called the “Unreal City”, where *The Waste Land* is set, “the *temporal* city of total conditioning” (1975: 90), and referred to Eliot’s decision to give his poetry a religious intent —from “Journey of the Magi” (1927) onwards— as a move “towards the city *outside time*” (1975: 123, emphasis added). “Little Gidding” is the culmination of this process; midwinter spring is beyond the temporal, not ruled by “time’s covenant” or “the scheme of generation”, and is therefore an image of the timeless.

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3. The still point. Where past and future are gathered

If midwinter spring is a case in point of the imagery of eternity or the timeless, the still point is an even clearer example. Various sources of inspiration have been put forward: Aristotle, Plato, early Christian theologians, Hinduist and Buddhist symbols, and of course Dante (Kobakhidze 2011: 55, 57). We first recognise the still point, presented in a way that anticipates the imaginative patterns of *Four Quartets*, in “Triumphal March”, one of the “unfinished poems” published

in 1931— five years before “Burnt Norton”— under the title *Coriolan*. In “Triumphal March”, the Major, a heroic figure, finds himself “at the still point of the turning world”, as the military march that he is taking part in advances. The Major seems to be enjoying a private moment of illumination, isolated from the surrounding vanity of the parade. Images of refuge and placid isolation, as well as the reiteration of the past participle “hidden”, are indicative of the spiritual peace of this introspective moment:

There is no interrogation in his eyes
Or in the hands, quiet over the horse’s neck,
And the eyes watchful, waiting, perceiving, indifferent.
O hidden under the dove’s wing, hidden in the turtle’s breast,
Under the palm tree at noon, under the running water
At the still point of the turning world. O hidden. (Eliot 1974: 130)

The still point represents the coexistence of movement and stillness, of the physical and the metaphysical, of past and future. In these pairings, neither element prevails: it is neither one nor the other, and both at the same time. Opposites are reconciled, as heat and cold are in midwinter spring, as a variety of concepts are in the so-called “garden of paradoxes”, in Movement II of *Ash Wednesday* (1930). This poem, which appeared three years after Eliot’s conversion, “describes the process of spiritual progression from a condition of despair to a point where belief is possible” (Dickens 1989: 150). Through the first wavering stages of the journey of faith, the Lady of the Garden is a reassuring presence, as well as the embodiment of the *coincidentia oppositorum* referred to earlier:

Lady of silences
Calm and distressed
Torn and most whole
Rose of memory
Rose of forgetfulness
Exhausted and life-giving
Worried reposeful (Eliot 1974: 88)

Contrary attributes, states of mind and concepts characterise this protecting female figure. Two opposites similarly coincide in the image of the still point —movement (or “the dance”) and stillness. As a representation of this coincidence, the still point has three images that could be called “satellite images”, appearing in Movement V of “Burnt Norton”. The first one is the Chinese jar, which does not move but has movement represented on its surface: “a Chinese jar still/ Moves perpetually in its stillness”. These lines, with the semantic ambivalence of *still* (both adverb and adjective) adding to the paradox, invite abstract reflection that ends with the conclusion that there is nothing but a seamless present:

Midwinter spring, the still point and Dante...

Or say that the end precedes the beginning,
And the end and the beginning were always there
Before the beginning and after the end.
And *all is always now*. [...] (Eliot 1974: 182; emphasis added)

The image of the Chinese jar has been linked to John Keats' "Grecian urn", which seems to have a comparable effect on the viewer: "Thou, silent form, dost tease us out of thought/ As doth eternity" (2006: 905-906). The ideational component of the images, however, cannot be equated if "the moments of intense experience in attitudes of grace" depicted on the urn cause Keats to think of it as "the perfect correlative for his concern with the longing for permanence in a world of change" (2006: 905, 1n), the simultaneous movement and stillness of the Chinese jar suggest "ceasing to live and move in time" (Moody 1996: 194).

A second related image is that of the stairs, introduced in the last movement of "Burnt Norton": "The detail of the pattern is movement,/ As in the figure of the ten stairs" (Eliot 1974: 182). The image was most probably taken from the poetry and prose commentaries of the Spanish mystic John of the Cross, where the "figure" stands for the soul's journey, divided into ten stages that correspond to "the ten stairs" (Ruano 1974: 678-682). As Howard notes, the stairs "have no purpose at all other than movement. But they themselves are motionless" (2006: 62).

The reference to "the figure of the ten stairs" is followed by a reflection on the dissociation of desire from love, which is "unmoving" while being "the cause and end of movement" (Eliot 1974: 182). To conclude, Eliot chooses another image of the simultaneity of movement and stillness: the shaft of light, which appears to be still, but where dust slowly moves.

Sudden in a shaft of sunlight
Even while the dust moves
There rises the hidden laughter
Of children in the foliage
Quick now, here, now, always—
Ridiculous the waste sad time
Stretching before and after. (Eliot 1974: 182-183)

Before becoming an eternal present, time is "ridiculous", "waste" and "sad". The shaft of sunlight communicates a sense of circularity, as it coincides with "the hidden laughter/ Of children in the foliage" —the children who had been heard in the rose garden, in Movement I, where "the pool was filled with water out of sunlight". Interestingly, a similar image is used by Dante as one of the terms of a simile: the lights around the sparkling cross of souls —those of the "Warriors of the Faith"— in the Sphere of Mars, in canto XIV of *Paradiso*, are compared to "minuzie de' corpi" in a "raggio" (Dante 1961c: 206).

As we learn from the second Movement of “Burnt Norton”, movement and stillness, among other opposites, are to be found

At the still point of the turning world. Neither flesh nor fleshless;
Neither from nor towards; at the still point, there the dance is,
But neither arrest nor movement. And do not call it fixity,
Where past and future are gathered. Neither movement from nor towards,
Neither ascent nor decline. Except for the point, the still point,
There would be no dance, and there is only the dance. (Eliot 1974: 179)

“Past and future are gathered” at the still point, their conjunction resulting in a constant present. As a poetic image, the still point was inspired by *The Divine Comedy*. In *Paradiso*, God appears as a point of dazzling light:

un punto vidi che raggiava lume
acuto sì, che'l viso ch'elli affoca
chiuder conviensi per lo forte acume
[I saw a point which radiated a light so keen that the eye on which it burns must
close for its piercing power]. (Dante 1961c: 403)

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God is still, but causes the heavens to move and spin —what Eliot calls “the dance”, cosmic or universal harmony. Paradoxically, on the still point the movement of the whole universe depends.

In canto XVII of *Paradiso*, Dante had the privilege of conversing with his ancestor Cacciaguida —one among the heroic Christian warriors in the Sphere of Mars. Dante has Cacciaguida predict his exile from Florence and attributes his predictive power to the vision of the point of light:

così vedi le cose contingenti
anzi che sieno in sè, mirando il punto
a cui tutti li tempi son presenti
[gazing on the point to which all times are present, seest contingent things before
they are in themselves]. (Dante 1961c: 243)

Cacciaguida’s prediction of Dante’s destiny is an instance of the temporal relativity which the Italian poet skilfully takes advantage of in the *Commedia*. By making the year of his vision 1300, he is able to present past events as future happenings. These events are past with respect to the time of the poem’s composition and future with respect to the year of the vision. In other words, past and future are, if not gathered at an eternal present, relativised by the narrative technique. Dante’s future exile had already been communicated to him by the miniature artist Oderisi, a penitent in the first terrace of Purgatory (canto XI). In a previous canto of *Purgatorio* (VIII), we find a further example of these pseudo-predictions: Conrad Malaspina’s reference to Dante’s stay with his family in Tuscany.

4. Midwinter spring and the still point, their function and significance

The conclusions of the analysis of midwinter spring and the still point must again focus on their common referent —eternal present, or the timeless— as well as on their mutual reliance on paradox, which not only fuels the two images under consideration, but *Four Quartets* as a whole, as Moody argues: “The further we go into the poem the more we find that its music does not resolve its contradictions but rather becomes the music of a profound and irreducible contradiction” (1994: 142). Roger Bellin contends that contradiction and paradox, among other features of Eliot’s sequence, prevent it from reaching a definite resolution (2007: 422).⁸ The mind of the poem works largely through paradox —and the attendant device of *coincidentia oppositorum*— but this is not exceptional: according to Cleanth Brooks, paradox is of the very essence of poetry, especially when the subject matter is love or religion (1968: 1, 13).

Eliot’s use of paradox in *Four Quartets* has been identified as a clear influence from Dante (Kobakhidze 2011: 55). Connections between midwinter spring, the still point and other images in Eliot’s poetic production (the negative spring, the garden “where all loves end”, the Chinese jar, the stairs, the shaft of sunlight) have been established, and other less direct influences (Augustine, Langland, John of the Cross or Keats) considered. Eliot’s images are characteristically cohesive and allusive. Longenbach clarifies that allusion “in the later poetry” works differently in that “Eliot alludes more openly to poets whom he loved”, rather than abiding by his axiom that the best poets are those who have developed “the historical sense” (1994: 185-186).⁹ Among the poets whom Eliot loved, Dante is the one who first comes to mind: in his essay “What Dante Means to Me”, the Anglo-American poet refers to the Italian master’s poetry as “the most persistent and deepest influence upon my own verse” (1978: 125).

Considering the origins and significance of the images of midwinter spring and the still point not only confirms the influence of Dante, the poet who most vividly objectified a state of blessedness and the successive stages leading to it. As a critic, Eliot was especially sensitive to Dante’s prodigious imagination and as a poet, he followed his example of relying on imagery. Midwinter spring and the still point are examples of “the poem’s textual incarnation of its elusive meaning” (Bellin 2007: 428). They successfully reveal the theme of *Four Quartets*: namely, the spiritual urge to transcend time and reach the timeless, imagined as an eternal present. Finally, in their coalescence of various allusions, both images are highly representative of Eliot’s style.

Notes

¹ Since each of the “quartets” were originally published separately, their titles are sometimes italicised. They appear between inverted commas here (to emphasise that they are part of a sequence), except in quotes from secondary sources whose authors (e.g. Schmidt or Moody) choose to reproduce the titles in italics.

² Unitarianism, which rejects Trinitarianism and the divinity of Jesus, was Eliot’s religious background. As a young man, Eliot felt unable to relate to Unitarianism, “the religion he had come to consider as a substitute for religion”, one that “leads to skepticism rather than faith” (Spears Brooker 1994: 128). For a description of Eliot’s evolution from Unitarianism to Anglo-Catholicism, see the chapter “In Search of Faith” in Ackroyd 1984: 149-177.

³ The names of these two images will not appear between quotation marks subsequently.

⁴ Eliot overtly quoted Dante in his poems. He also wrote about his own poetry and its connections with Dante’s in two essays, “Dante” and “What Dante Means to Me”. Manganiello wrote the first monograph on the topic, *T.S. Eliot and Dante* (1989). More recently, *T.S. Eliot, Dante and the Idea of Europe* explores different facets of Dante’s influence on Eliot, but imagery is not a primary focus of attention. See “Works Cited” for details.

⁵ “On a summer time, when the sun was mild”; “wandered abroad in this world, listening out for its strange and wonderful events”; “one May morning”; “an extraordinary dream”; “an empty desert place” (Langland 1992: 1). Translations into Present Day English by A. V. C. Schmidt.

⁶ “The Holy Spirit, though, can be no more than a glowing ember, until true love bends over him and blows. When this thing happens, he flames up before the Father and the Son, making their power melt until it dissolves into mercy. You can see this happen in winter, when icicles on the house-eaves, under the sun’s heat, dissolve into liquid drops and vapour in the space of a mere minute” (Langland 1992: 204-205). Present Day English translation by A. V. C. Schmidt.

⁷ Translations into English are by John D. Sinclair.

⁸ Bellin focuses on the discursive passages of *Four Quartets* and on the paradox that they recurrently express: their voice, “the voice of argument”, complains that poetry is unsuitable as a medium to achieve the goal that the poem sets itself, i.e. reaching the timeless through the temporal. Hence, the negative theology that informs the poem is parallel with a form of “negative poetics” (2007: 427, 434).

⁹ Eliot wrote about the *historical sense* in his essay “Tradition and the Individual Talent”, published in 1919.

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THE THEME OF THE SHATTERED SELF IN TONI MORRISON'S *THE BLUEST EYE* AND *A MERCY*

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The splitting of the self is a familiar theme in Morrison's fiction. All of her novels explore, to some extent, the shattered identity. Under traumatic circumstances, the individual may suffer a severe psychic disintegration. Morrison has shown interest in different states of dementia caused by trauma which, as Clifton Spargo asserts, "has come to function for many critics as a trope of access to more difficult histories, providing us with entry into a world inhabited by the victims of extraordinary social violence, those perspectives so often left out of rational, progressive narratives of history" (2002).

In Morrison's narratives, dissociated subjectivity, like Pecola's in *The Bluest Eye*, is usually connected to slavery and its sequels and, as Linda Koolish observes, is frequently the consequence of the confrontation between the Blacks' own definition of themselves and slavery's misrepresentation of African Americans as subhumans (2001: 174). However, Morrison has also dealt with insanity caused by other emotionally scarring situations, such as war in *Sula's* character, Shadrack, or as a result of the loss of your loved ones, sudden orphanhood, as in *A Mercy's* Sorrow.

In this paper I focus on Morrison's especially dramatic depiction of the destruction of the female teenager's self and her struggle for psychic wholeness in a hostile world. The adolescent's fragile identity embodies, better than any other, the terrible ordeal that the marginal self has to cope with to become a true human being outside the Western discourse. There are two main aspects that make the

disintegration of the female teenager's subjectivity more significant than that of others. First, owing to their gender and age, the adolescent is extremely vulnerable and, consequently, more prone to become a victim in adverse circumstances. Secondly, psychic disorders in one's teens are particularly tragic and appalling, since they map out the future.

Morrison has delved in many of her novels into the impact of psychological trauma on the female teenager's selfhood. Pecola in *The Bluest Eye* and Sorrow in *A Mercy*, two traumatized girls, poignantly exemplify this impact. In *The Bluest Eye* the dissociation of the female adolescent identity stems from the colonization of Blacks by mainstream culture and the internalization of its standards of beauty, which engender self-hatred. On the other hand, in *A Mercy*, madness is a coping strategy, which helps Sorrow survive in a hostile environment after sudden bereavement. Despite their strong differences, both characters share some obvious similarities, such as their psychotic mental state, ostracism and social victimization.

Trauma, as the root cause of psychological disorders, can be described, in Freudian terms, as a wound inflicted upon the mind (Caruth 1996: 3). Psychic distress can be the consequence of a devastating event or can be the result of long exposure to humiliation and abuse, as in tyrannized minority groups. Traumatic experiences might irreparably fracture the subject's symbolic universe. The loss of a loved one produces an irreversible psychic rupture, which may cause a drastic change in personality as well as mental disorders. Bereavement entails the disintegration of the subject's protective and nurturing psychological environment, leaving him/her desolate and helpless. The individual who has suffered a traumatic death in the family might appear to be 'damaged', occupying a devalued and marginal position in the midst of the community.

On the other hand, social oppression and power dynamics are two determinant factors in the impact of psychological trauma on selfhood. In these two narratives Morrison highlights the invisible psychic wounds of people who belong to social minorities, using Maria Root's concept of 'insidious trauma', on the "traumatogenic effects of oppression that are not necessarily overtly violent or threatening to bodily well-being at the given moment but that do violence to the soul and spirit" (in Brown 1995: 107). Social and racial minorities experience insidious trauma as a result of the cruelty inflicted by the dominant group, usually the whites. Hence, they internalize feelings of inferiority and self-contempt, which are projected onto them by the patriarchal Western discourse. Systemic racism, like other types of marginalization and social exclusion, determine the forms which the transgenerational transmission of trauma takes within the family and community. Colonized members of minority groups become oppressors themselves, reproducing the values of the hegemonic group, of which they are victims.

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Trauma brings about ostracism and, finally, may lead to the destruction of the sense of self. Judith Herman writes, “the core experiences of psychological trauma are disempowerment and disconnection from others”; consequently, “traumatic events have primary effects not only on the psychological structures of the self but also on the systems of attachment and meaning that link individual and community” (1992: 133, 51). Morrison depicts these two psychologically traumatized girls as discriminated and marginalized, occupying a denigrated status in the eyes of the other members of their own community, or suffering exclusion from that community. Their trauma and ensuing isolation are associated with the fact that, in Root’s words, “a characteristic intrinsic to their identity is different from what is valued by those in power”, which encompasses a “distinct threat to psychological safety, security, or survival” (in Brown 1995: 10).

In the process of marginalization, minority individuals are reified into rejected and debased objects, which results in damaging effects for their psyches. In Julia Kristeva’s theory of abjection, the marginal subject is the Other in relationship to the self. In the act of ‘abjection’, the individual projects onto the Other everything that he/she finds objectionable, thus disturbing “identity, system, order” (1982: 4). This process is especially dramatic when the victims are teenagers, who are particularly vulnerable, since their subjectivity is not yet fully developed. Pecola and Sorrow also symbolize the difficulties that being a woman and racially marked (black and mixed-race, respectively) entail: “Womanhood, like blackness, is Other in this society, and the dilemma of woman in a patriarchal society is parallel to that of blacks in a racist society” (Davis 1990: 12). Abjection erodes their self-esteem and provokes self-loathing, destabilizing them emotionally. Trauma, self-contempt and ostracism, at a critical stage of the identity formation, might make their victims cross the border from sanity into insanity.

This article delves into Morrison’s psychotic characters, Pecola and Sorrow, from a psychosocial or emotional perspective. I intend to explore the female teenager’s shattered self, underscoring the connection between trauma and its impact on subjectivity development, with a focus on key notions such as the intergenerational transfer of racial self-loathing, the collapse of the teenage orphan’s ‘conceptual system’, marginalization or exclusion and social victimization. Pecola and Sorrow’s split self cannot be understood without a patriarchal Western society that makes the minority subject the victim of social oppression, disempowerment and disfranchisement. Yet, Morrison’s novels evince significant hopeful signs. She juxtaposes the master narrative about the victimized teenage female self and a counter-narrative — Claudia’s in *The Bluest Eye* and Sorrow’s, as a mother, in *A Mercy*— which reconstitutes women’s humanity and encourages female empowerment, thus challenging oppressive social structures.

1. Fragmentation of the self and western standards of beauty

In *The Bluest Eye*, the dissociation of identity is closely related to the racial prejudice that the mainstream white culture spreads among Blacks and how it affects their self-definition. The dominant cultural system has succeeded in the process of African Americans' mental colonization. The minority subject has internalized the ideals of the hegemonic group, the whites. This interiorization "fragments both individual psyches and the community as a whole" (Pérez-Torres 1997: 21-22) and it is life-denying inasmuch as Blacks can never live up to the standards they are being measured by. Thus, African Americans' acceptance by others and their self-worth can only be the consequence of the disavowal of their own race.

78 Through the Breedlove family Morrison draws attention to the negative impact that the dominant Western cultural system has on Blacks. Their tragedy is the result of the conflict between the ideal standard of life set by the prevailing culture and their real one. According to Michael Awkward, the Breedloves are "the very antithesis of the standardized, ideal (white) American family"; consequently, they can only be seen by the others, both whites and blacks, and themselves as utterly failing "to conform to the standards by which the beauty and happiness of the primer family (and, by extension, American families in general) are measured" (1988: 58). The Breedlove family does not only fail because they are not able to conform to the Western cultural system and, therefore, to the white paradigm of ideal family, but also because, when they eventually acquiesce to it, they start to forget their own black communal values, such as solidarity. Trudier Harris points out how "[t]he breakdown of the bonds of human caring in the novel reflects the general absence of ethics and morality" (1991: 38). Hence, the violence that the black community experiences when it is colonized by the controlling Western culture brings about its members' sense of unworthiness, as well as the loss of their value system.

According to Gurleen Grewal, "*The Bluest Eye* is an antibildungsroman" (1997: 125). Pecola Breedlove is the ultimate example of the pervasive negative effects that internalized racial prejudice has on Blacks, especially since she is only a child, and how it may lead to madness. For her, as for other members of her community, color is at the core of her sense of self: her feeling of inferiority and self-disgust. She believes that beauty and self-worth are associated with whiteness and its attributes and, consequently, she cannot construct a positive self-image. Like the rest of her family, Pecola thinks that she is ugly, an ugliness that does not belong to her, "it came from conviction, their conviction [...] they took the ugliness in their hands, threw it as a mantle over them, and went about the world with it" (Bluest: 28).¹

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In the adolescence, Laing writes, one's sense of self heightens "both as an object of one's own awareness and of the awareness of others" (1990: 106). Teenagers are especially vulnerable to the family and society's gaze. Pecola can only view herself in the mirror of other people's Look. Thus the center of this novel is her ontological 'unbeing'. The fact that, as Morrison says, "She is not *seen* by herself until she hallucinates a self" (1990: 220). Pecola remains invisible to herself until she can envision the alter ego that fits 'her' ideal of beauty. She must, as Laing claims, acquire a false self to adapt to false realities (1990: 12).²

Pecola embodies the black individual's history of oppression and exclusion. She suffers prolonged exposure to domestic and communal violence, which produces what Kai Erikson calls 'psychic erosion'. For the black girl, psychic instability results from "a constellation of life experiences" (1995: 185). In her short existence, Pecola has experienced only rejection and suffering from both her family and community, institutions which are at the root of subjectivity formation and individuation. The self-hatred that colonized Blacks have internalized destroys the social fabric of these identity strongholds. In *The Bluest Eye*, Morrison deals with trauma as a communal problem, which derives from systematic oppression and discrimination. Dysfunctional families are its outcome: parents who do not respect one another and neglect or even abuse their own children. The Breedloves' self-loathing is reflected in their relationships with each other. Pecola's family has an ironic name, as no love is bred within it. In *The Bluest Eye*, as Awkward states, Morrison deconstructs "the bourgeois myths of ideal family life", while she shows "her refusal to allow white standards to arbitrate the success or failure of the black experience" (1988: 59).

Pecola is the victim of an intergenerational transfer of racial self-loathing. Her mother, Pauline Breedlove rejects her as a consequence of her own self-contempt, which she counteracts in her role as an 'ideal servant'. Her children do not deserve her attention or love. In fact, she only teaches them to have fear, "fear of life" (Bluest: 100). Pauline has always despised her daughter. When she sees Pecola just after her birth, she remarks: "Head full of pretty hair but Lord she was ugly" (Bluest: 98). The black woman is all caring and sweet with the Fishers' infant, the family she works for. The white girl calls her Polly, while her own daughter addresses her as Mrs. Breedlove. Pauline feels ashamed of her child and abuses her, as when she attacks Pecola furiously when the girl accidentally spills a blueberry pie at the Fishers'. Many psychologists state how important the mother's Look is for the child's subjectivity development, since the "*failure of responsiveness* on the mother's part to one or other aspect of the infant's being will have important consequences" (Laing 1990: 116). The mother's Look is at the core of the child's evolving self-concept and Pecola is exposed, from her birth, to a shaming and

condemning gaze. Pauline fails utterly as a mother when she distrusts Pecola's account of the first time her father rapes her. Her disbelief prevents her from protecting her daughter, who will be sexually assaulted again.

Similarly, Pecola's father, Cholly, who has endured devastating experiences in his life, is incapable of fatherly behavior. He is neglectful and abusive with his children. As a disempowered oppressed individual, he victimizes his own daughter. In a patriarchal society, the black woman is the ultimate victim: the black man displaces his frustration and self-disgust onto her. According to Cynthia Davis, "Pecola is so far 'outside' the center of the system —excluded from 'reality' by race, gender, class, age, and personal history" (1990: 14). Pecola's rape by her own father at the age of eleven is the culmination of a series of shaming and denigrating events in her life, which will lead to the complete dissociation of her self. Both Pauline and Cholly are examples of colonized fractured psyches. They have internalized negative self-images and help transmit and perpetuate the system that has tyrannized them.

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Not only the Breedloves, but also the community are responsible for Pecola's ordeal. Like Pauline and Cholly, other Blacks, who have also internalized the outside Western patriarchal system of values, victimize each other, collaborating in their own oppression. Selfhood and worthiness are defined according to the dominant cultural paradigms, on which individual identity rests. Color is one of them: light-skinned females, such as Maureen, can feel superior to black ones; married women are better than whores, etc. Those values define you as a better person in relation to other members of the community. Claudia surmises: "All of us —all who knew her [Pecola]— felt so wholesome after we cleaned ourselves on her. We were so beautiful when we stood astride her ugliness [...]. We honed our egos on her, padded our characters with her frailty, and yawned in the fantasy of our strength" (Bluest: 163). In a colonized community, marginal subjects are condemned to despairing ostracism, which drives those acutely sensitive to the brink of madness.

Pecola, due to her 'ugliness', suffers first hand constant psychic violence from other blacks who ignore and disdain her. She becomes the community scapegoat: "Pecola will never be an insider in the black community and cannot possibly hope for acceptance beyond that community" (Harris 1991: 21). Being a child, whose position is extremely assailable, Pecola becomes an easy victim. The victimization of women, or even young girls, in a patriarchal system is seen in how people accuse them of the sexual abuse they receive, while they fail to condemn the true victimizers. In the story one woman incriminates Pecola for her father's statutory rape: "She carry some of the blame" (Bluest: 149), implying that the black girl did not fight him, despite the fact that she was only eleven. The black community's

contempt towards the black girl is dramatically transferred to her baby, whom they think will “be the ugliest thing walking” (Bluest: 149) and they want it dead. However, some members of the community, Claudia and Frieda, break this intergenerational transmission of self-contempt. They feel responsible for Pecola and experience the need for someone “to want the black baby to live —just to counteract the universal love of white baby dolls, Shirley Temples, and Maureen Peals” (Bluest: 149). Thus, the two sisters decide to change the course of events and ask for a miracle, so that the baby can live. They try to perform some magic, burying their money and planting marigold seeds.

Unlike other blacks such as Pecola, Claudia refuses to conform to the dominant culture's paradigm of beauty. Indeed, in a ritualistic act, she even destroys a white doll she has received as a present for Christmas. Unlike the Breedloves, Claudia's family, the McTeers, still keeps the communal values. They take Pecola in when she is raped, even though their economic situation is difficult. In the McTeer family, “Morrison illustrates that the values that can sustain and provide the guidelines for growth are not alien to the community” (Harris 1991: 42). Claudia herself exhibits her family principles when she defends Pecola from some boys who are bullying her or when she despises Maureen's sense of superiority at being light-skinned. Claudia and her family exemplify the ability of blacks to confront and rebel against an oppressive system.

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Pecola uses invisibility as a defense mechanism against other people's disdain. The schizoid individual may have phantasies of being invisible, as being a “seable object” means to be “constantly exposed to danger” (Laing 1990: 113, 109).³ As a reaction to the frequent family quarrels, the black girl tries to conceal herself, covering her head with a quilt and, little by little, she seems to vanish (Bluest: 33). Pecola's self-hatred is the consequence of other people's rejection, but also the result of the awareness of her invisibility in the community, of her existential nonbeing: a metaphor that has been deployed recurrently to depict the black identity in the mainstream society. When Pecola goes to the candy store of Mr. Yacobowki, a white immigrant, he denies Pecola's self: “He does not see her, because for him there is nothing to see” (Bluest: 36). According to Grewal, “Pecola's story demonstrates, the socially mandated charade of being something one is not (white) and of not being something one is (black) makes one invisible” (1997: 122). Pecola can perceive the erasure of her subjectivity, her unbeing, in other people's Look: “She would see only what there was to see: the eyes of other people” (Bluest: 35).

Pecola has fully internalized racial self-contempt and the white concept of ideal beauty, which Hollywood has spread.⁴ As Davis remarks, the black woman “is ‘the antithesis of American beauty’ [...]. Defined as the Other [...] [she] can never

satisfy the gaze of society” (1990: 12). At Claudia’s house, Pecola is very fond of the Shirley Temple cup and asks for candies with the picture of little Mary Jane. For the black girl, eating them “is somehow to eat the eyes, eat Mary Jane. Love Mary Jane. Be Mary Jane” (Bluest: 38). She starts believing that if her eyes were the blue eyes of a Shirley Temple doll, people might love her and things would be different. Maybe then, her parents would say: “Why, look at pretty-eyed Pecola. We mustn’t do bad things in front of those pretty eyes” (Bluest: 34).

Like the ugly-duckling character of the fairy tale, Pecola seeks acceptance and approval in a community that has internalized dominant white values. That is why she wants, more than anything, to be beautiful and fantasizes with having blue eyes. Pecola’s wish for blue eyes epitomizes internalized racial self-contempt. Throughout the story, the black girl goes deeper and deeper into a world of phantasy, rejecting the real world as a result of the threatening circumstances of her life. Pecola takes a definite step towards insanity when she decides to make her dreams come true and, so, she visits Soaphead Church, a sort of pedophile magician, with a unique request: blue eyes, which Pecola truly believes would change her world. As Morrison writes, even the self-appointed psychic is “wholly convinced that if black people were more like white people they would be better off” (Stepo 1994: 22). Soaphead Church, in a god-like manner, ‘grants’ Pecola her wish for blue eyes, which only she will see.

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Sexual abuse triggers Pecola’s complete identity fragmentation. Her father, who should protect her and should be an identity development model for her, becomes her sexual attacker. As Doris Brothers contends, “psychic trauma can only be fully understood as the betrayal of trust in the self-object relationships on which selfhood depends” (in Hwangbo 2004: 66).⁵ When Cholly rapes Pecola the second time, she succumbs to a mental breakdown and fully withdraws into a fantasy world, a safe universe, absolutely convinced that she has acquired blue eyes: “this eleven-year-old girl steps across commonly accepted borders of reason and speech to enter her own personal world of silence and madness. Pecola’s ‘self’ becomes so crazed, so fragmented, that it conducts conversation with itself—and with no one else” (Miner 1990: 89). Her identity dissociation is complete and irreversible. Yet, despite the ‘bestowed’ blue eyes, Pecola does not get the reward of flight. She remains imprisoned in a schizophrenic state, in a “devastating inertia [which] prevents her from achieving the flight she thought would come with the blue eyes” (Dixon 1990: 121):

The damage done was total. She spent her days, her tendrils, sap-green days, walking up and down, up and down, her head jerking to the beat of a drummer so distant only she could hear. Elbows bent, hands on shoulder, she flailed her arms like a bird in an eternal, grotesquely futile effort to fly. Beating the air, a winged but grounded

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bird, intent on the blue void it could not reach —could not even see— but which filled the valleys of the mind. (Bluest: 162)

Pecola cannot fly and will never fly, since only through self-acceptance could her soul soar.

Pecola, as Claudia states, steps “over into madness, a madness which protected her from us” (Bluest: 163). Incapable of struggling any more through her painful and frustrating life, she retreats into schizophrenia. Pecola tries to find shelter in a fantasy world, a way to carry on. Her imaginary friend is a survival strategy. That is why when she asks her alter ego why she did not come before, it answers her “You didn’t need me before” (Bluest: 154). In her dream universe Pecola can deny her excruciating experiences, especially those of sexual and physical abuse. When her split self questions Pecola about her incestuous rape, she denies that it happened: “He just tried, see? He didn’t do anything. You hear me?” (Bluest: 157). Yet, even in her schizophrenic state, Pecola is deeply concerned about achieving the beauty she needs in order to be loved. She keeps interrogating her image self about her eyes: are they blue enough? Are they the bluest ones in the whole world? (Bluest: 161). As Harris highlights, “Pecola’s society has taught her not merely to want to be beautiful but to be the most beautiful of all, for only in such supremacy can she erase the lack of affection, the constant lack of approval” (1991: 42).

Pecola’s tragedy is the dramatic consequence of the internalization of the system of values of the dominant group, the whites, which leads to the marginalization and self-contempt of the black individual. These values are perpetuated through the scapegoating of the weakest and most vulnerable members of community. At the end of the novel, Claudia realizes how both the community and themselves have failed the black girl and have been participants in her victimization: “All of our waste which we dumped on her and which she absorbed” (Bluest: 162-163). There is advancement in her recognition of their part in Pecola’s ordeal. Morrison shows Claudia’s passage to adulthood as a contrast to the unfortunate black girl’s entrapment in trauma. She is one of the true survivors of this story and, in her awareness and honesty, we can expect some hope for the future.

2. The split self and motherhood

Sorrow, the ‘mongrelized’ girl rescued by a family of sawyers from the riverbank and then acquired by Jacob Vaark, an Anglo-Dutch farmer, is reminiscent of Pecola, the schizophrenic protagonist of *The Bluest Eye*. She also creates an alter ego, Twin, to cope with trauma. However, while Pecola’s story is an anti-bildungsroman, in which she ends up in a psychotic state, Sorrow, on the other

hand, reverses that situation. Sorrow is a mentally disabled girl, whose shattered self is the consequence of her agonizing experience on the foundered ship that was her home. Hers is an identity journey that takes her from insanity to psychic wholeness through maternity.

Unlike Pecola's, Sorrow's psychosis is the result of a terrible event in her life. She epitomizes the trauma and madness of a tragedy survivor, a young girl who has suffered a sudden and devastating bereavement, which leaves her orphan and alone in a chaotic and hostile world, primeval America. To develop their subjectivity and reach individuation, children need a safe environment and someone who loves and takes care of them. Early parental loss destroys the progenitor-infant bond, which is his/her foremost source of security at that time. Hence, children's bereavement, even more if it is unexpected and calamitous, leads to mental disorders, such as schizophrenia, by reason of the infant's high vulnerability. The unexpected loss of your parents is an extremely harrowing ordeal as described by Ronnie Janoff-Bulman,

84 a liminal experience of radical deracination and calamity that brings about a violent rupture of the order on both the personal and the social level. It annihilates the sense of continuity in our lives and our self-narratives, bringing to the fore the contingency of our lives. It destroys the "fundamental assumptions" or "the bedrock of our conceptual system", which helps us to conveniently manage and confidently transform a myriad of random experiences into a certain view of our reality.⁶ (In Hwangbo 2004: 1)

A dramatic circumstance like the death of a loved one triggers psychological disintegration, which makes the victim's life meaningless and incoherent.

Unlike Pecola, who goes through a progressive deterioration of her mental faculties and does not cross the borderline into psychotic condition until the end of the story, Sorrow's is a fractured self from the very start of the novel. The onset of the orphan's dementia is dramatic and abrupt, the terrible outcome of the death of her father and of all the others she was familiar with. Hers is a complicated bereavement, as there is a tragic parental loss and a clear grieving process including PTSD, which, as J. W. Worden argues, heightens the risk of a later development of psychopathology (in Benedict 2008).⁷ As a survivor of a devastating event, Sorrow feels that the basic assumptions and expectations of her life have been destroyed and, with them, the continuing sense of self and the possibility of nurturing human relationships. Her agonizing ordeal annihilates the indispensable psychological strategy for coping with paramount experiences.

As a result, Sorrow creates an identical self that she calls Twin, her doppelganger. In her schizophrenic identity, the mongrelized girl, like Pecola, "fears a real live dialectical relationship with real live people", she can relate herself "only to depersonalized persons, to phantoms of [her] own phantasies (imagos) [...]" (Laing 1990: 77). Twin

'materializes' when Sorrow wakes up under the surgeon's hammock in the deserted and looted shipwrecked vessel, and eventually becomes her "safety, her entertainment, her guide" (Mercy: 119).⁸ Sorrow brings to life an image self to struggle with bereavement and orphanhood. According to Laing and other psychologists, schizophrenia and other mental illnesses can be understood as coping strategies used by people in order to bear an unlivable situation (in Koolish 2001: 173). Identity splitting or dissociation is a common defense mechanism in the face of trauma.

As a survival strategy of psychotic personalities, Sorrow displaces her powers of assertion into her imaginary friend: "adaptation and adjustment to changing experiences have to be conducted by the false self" (Laing 1990: 143). Thus Twin, her strong double, helps Sorrow carry on. With its company the waif overcomes her fears. Twin encourages her to search the ghost boat and, finally, to abandon it. Being only a child, Sorrow has to contend with a wholly new situation: she has never set foot on land before and she is terrified of leaving the ship. Her father, the captain, had reared her as a sort of crewman-to-be. Sorrow's rescue from the waters represents a new and uncertain beginning. On the first day in the sawyers' house, everything is totally unfamiliar for her. Sorrow has to fight with the distressing gravity, while the sawyer's wife tries to teach her simple cleaning tasks she is incapable of performing. As Susan Vega-González rightly argues, "Around the orphan coalesce [...] the chance to create something anew; the possibility of inventing oneself and ultimately undergoing an empowering rebirth" (2011: 120).

Sorrow never speaks of her past. In fact, she can hardly recall anything, except being dragged ashore by whales: "Now the memories of the ship, the only home she knew, seemed as stolen as its cargo [...]. Even the trace of Captain was dim" (Mercy: 117). The psychotic subject has no memory or knowledge of that dissociation. Recollections are pushed aside, repressed, placed in a box (Koolish 2001: 173). Consequently, traumatized individuals are usually incapable of remembering important aspects of their trauma, or like Pecola, try to beat back the haunting remembrances of their past. In *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, Freud observes that "patients suffering from traumatic neurosis" are not "much occupied in their waking lives with memories [...]. Perhaps they are more concerned with *not* thinking of it [the traumatic event]" (in Barnett 1998: 75). Therefore, as a defense mechanism in a hostile environment, Sorrow does not answer the questions of the people who find her. She does not remember some of the things she is asked and, some others, she pretends not to recall.

Unlike Pecola, Sorrow is a true orphan. Nevertheless, from the very beginning of their stories, both of them are rejected by the majority of the people with whom they come into contact. While Pecola is ostracized owing to her 'ugliness', Sorrow is marginalized as a 'damaged' girl. Besides, as Anissa Wardi indicates, Sorrow

could have Black blood, as her skin color and hair imply (2011: 27). So, her mixed-race condition may also be linked to her marginal status in the community.⁹

Thus, nobody truly accepts Sorrow. The family gets rid of her once they know she is pregnant. Then the waif joins Vaark's household. By the time she gets to the plantation, "the resident women are a united front in dismay" (Mercy: 53). Sorrow is never welcomed. Rebekka, Jacob's wife, receives her with annoyance, in spite of the fact that they need help on the farm. The Native American servant, Lina, on the other hand, does not like Sorrow, whose look "raised Lina's nape hair" (Mercy: 54). She thinks that sir and mistress would never have kept the girl who is "bad luck in the flesh" (Mercy: 53), a curse: people like her "can't help the evil they make" (Mercy: 56). Lina's rejection is motivated by superstition. First, she holds Sorrow responsible for minor domestic mischief but, later, she is certain that the early deaths of Rebekka's children "could be placed at the feet of the natural curse that was Sorrow" (Mercy: 55). When Florens, the Angolan slave, comes to the house and Sorrow makes an attempt to approach her, Lina keeps the little black girl away from her. Sorrow cannot be part of the household women, themselves victims, who go on to victimize the mongrelized orphan. Therefore, Sorrow decides to continue as before, indifferent to everyone, except Twin.

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Both Pecola and Sorrow become scapegoats of their communities. Their sundered psychological world is the result of a defense mechanism, scapegoating, of communities that live in a situation of violence. Both girls are extremely vulnerable because of their age and the fact that neither of them receives the necessary nurturing, Pecola, as a consequence of her dysfunctional family, and Sorrow, as an orphan. Nobody provides for their true needs. As Magdalena Vallejo writes, quoting Erich Neumann, it is socially underprivileged and marginalized groups that are more likely to become scapegoats (1998: 158).¹⁰ Their communities, which have already been victimized, emerge as their victimizers. Scapegoating, Vallejo further claims, is the outcome of the individual's and/or the community's need to get free of their feelings of guilt, or their failure to achieve recognition of their values (1998: 157). In a process of displacement, the community projects their own fears, frustrations, hostility, hopelessness, insecurity, etc. onto their most weakest and helpless members. Sorrow's only social relationship is with her self-image. Nobody truly accepts her for herself. Laing writes that the psychotic individual,

in order to develop and sustain its identity and autonomy, and in order to be safe from the persistent threat and danger from the world, has cut itself off from direct relatedness with others, and has endeavoured to become its own object: to become, in fact, related directly only to itself. (1990: 137)

As long as Sorrow lives within her trauma, she can only be a pariah. She has no identity in the community. That is why Twin is the only one who knows her real

name, the name her father used. Likewise, only Pecola's imaginary friend can see her blue eyes, the feature that defines her new being. Sorrow devotes most of the time to her doppelgänger. At her call, she "[quits] any chore and [follows] her identical self" (Mercy: 116). Sorrow only talks to Twin, who tells her stories. Her favorite tale is about a school of fish girls riding the backs of a fleet of whales, perhaps, a fictionalized and beautified version of her flight from the foundered ship. Being a marginal self somehow frees Sorrow from social constraints. As Laing claims, "the imagined advantages" of the schizoid person "are safety for the true self, isolation and hence freedom from others, self-sufficiency, and control" (1990: 75). Sorrow does not follow any social convention, as when she relieves herself in the yard without any concern for other people. She is "uncultivated, uncontrollable and unrestrained" (Wardi 2011: 27).¹¹

Both men and women victimize Sorrow and Pecola. The two young girls endure rape and sexual abuse, which are the most terrible and gruesome part of a woman's victimization. Due to her emotional disability, Sorrow, who has never been coached by other women, becomes fair game for men. For them she is 'an easy harvest'. She has just had her period when both the Sawyers brothers rape her. As a result of her traumatic and shattering sexual experiences, Sorrow cannot imagine any connection between sex and love or tenderness. She is amazed when she sees Florens and the blacksmith make love. Unlike the Angolan slave, Sorrow has always had quick and submissive sex in hidden places while the black couple seems to be dancing and Florens is actively participating. However, what surprises Sorrow the most is that, once sex is over, the blacksmith kisses Florens' mouth and nobody has ever kissed hers. She realizes that none of her 'lovers' has ever loved her. Notwithstanding her extensive sexual experience for a girl her age, Sorrow has never experienced such affection.

Maternity is, for both Pecola and Sorrow, the aftermath of abuse and rape. And yet, it has a different effect on them. In *The Bluest Eye*, Morrison suggests that the baby's death is at the root of Pecola's withdrawal from reality. On the contrary, in *A Mercy*, the author focuses on motherhood as a holistic healing agent. Like Pecola, Sorrow lives an excruciatingly traumatic experience with her first baby, which Lina takes from her, just after it is born, and lets it drown in the river. Its death worsens her schizophrenic state, relying on Twin more than ever. Nevertheless, when Sorrow gets pregnant again, she is very happy at the thought of a person growing inside her. The desire to become a mother gives her strength and determination to save her baby. She knows Mistress is not well enough to help her with the delivery and she does not trust Lina, who thinks that, unfortunately, "this one would not die" (Mercy: 56). Therefore, Sorrow goes to the riverbank where Will and Scully, the indentured servants, assist her during labor.

Sorrow's maternity has a therapeutic effect on her.¹² Until that moment she is believed to be mad because of her strange and erratic behavior. However, the indentured servants observe that "[t]o dismiss Sorrow as 'the odd one' ignored her quick and knowing sense of her position [...]. When pregnant, she glowed and when her time came she sought help in exactly the right place from the right people" (Mercy: 152). Maternity sets in motion a process that puts an end to her hallucinated self. The first sign of this process is that, when Sorrow is making preparations for childbirth, Twin seems absent and strangely silent or hostile. At that moment Sorrow is capable of deciding by herself, without her false self's help, how to deliver her baby. Sorrow believes that, by doing this, she has accomplished something important on her own, which shows clearly that she does not need her imaginary friend any more. So, after her baby's birth, Twin vanishes and Sorrow stops wandering. Her new responsibilities as a mother make her embrace all parts of her self and she finally bids goodbye to her split self.

The sawyer's wife gives Sorrow her name, which depicts her as an emotionally crippled orphan.¹³ Yet, after her delivery, she is ready to rename herself: "She had looked into her daughter's eyes [...]. 'I am your mother,' she said. 'My name is Complete'" (Mercy: 134). As her new name prefigures, Sorrow has finally found fulfillment in her role as a mother, which "enables her to confirm her sense of self, to settle down, to achieve wholeness" (Gallego-Durán 2011: 109). From then on she devotes herself to her baby girl: "She is a mother. Nothing more nothing less" (Mercy: 159). As part of her process of self-invention, Sorrow develops a need to trust herself. That is why she does not let anyone take care of her baby, not even Willard or Scully, her godfathers.

At the end of the story, Sorrow's identity development contrasts with that of the other women, Rebekka and Lina, who have always looked down on her. When Mistress wants to give her away, Sorrow realizes that servants, despite their care and devotion, do not matter (Mercy: 129). She demonstrates her improvement by deciding to flee and take Florens with her. Through motherhood Sorrow reconstructs her fractured self. Unlike Pecola, she seems to have a future: her "unblinking eyes" "were not blank, but waiting" with a "lying-in-wait look" (Mercy: 152), showing her conviction and hope.¹⁴

In conclusion, both Pecola and Sorrow retreat into a schizoid state but for different reasons. Pecola has suffered from a prolonged exposure to rejection and abuse, while Sorrow is the lone survivor of a shipwreck. Yet, in both situations, the formation of their subjectivity is compromised by repudiation and ill-treatment at the hands of others. Their dissociated personalities unveil the fissures of a patriarchal order that tolerates the existence of denigrated subjects, disempowered victims of social oppression. Victimized communities victimize some of their members, especially

when they are helpless female adolescents who have suffered sexual abuse. As rape victims, the two girls are stigmatized and seen as 'damaged' by society.

Both Pecola and Sorrow create an alter ego as a strategy "to defend [themselves] against the dangers to [their] being that are the consequences of [their] failure to achieve a secure sense of [their] own identity" (Laing 1990: 108). There cannot be a healing process for Pecola if she does not learn to accept and love herself. Like the marigolds Claudia and Frieda plant, she cannot grow. Throughout the novel Pecola does not gain awareness of the psychological origins of her split-off self. Morrison clearly states that an individual or community identity cannot be acquired as long as those individuals and communities acquiesce in and conform to the oppressive definitions of the mainstream culture. Pecola is one of Morrison's irreversible lunatics, such as Halle in *Beloved* or Shadrack in *Sula*, who cannot take any more. They go crazy because the inhumane situations they have to live finally break them. On the other hand, Sorrow, who reverses Pecola's process of psychological dissolution, is finally able to reconstruct her splintered self through motherhood, undergoing a substantial improvement. Through Sorrow, Morrison reveals that mental instability, besides an outward expression of inner pain, may also be part of a healing process, which tells us of the human beings' power and courage to carry on. Thus, in the Morrisonian fictional world, 'madness' is not a sign of weakness or failure but, as Laing and other psychologists contend, an act of resistance and survival: a brave attempt to face an unfair and terrible ordeal (in Koolish 2001: 173).

Morrison's novels *The Bluest Eye* and *A Mercy* restore humanity to trauma victims by showing that their 'insane' behavior is the result of the dramatic and appalling circumstances of their existence, while providing counterpoints in Claudia who, unlike Pecola, rejects the values of the dominant culture and Sorrow, who becomes complete in her new role as a mother. Through her traumatized characters, Pecola and Sorrow, Morrison engages in a counterdiscourse, rendering an alternative vision of society from the marginal self's point of view, that of a female teenager.

Notes

¹. Toni Morrison. 1970. *The Bluest Eye*. New York: Holt, Rinehart, and Winston (all subsequent quotations from this edition will be identified by the abbreviated title of the book 'Bluest' and the page number included in parentheses in the text).

². Preface to *The Divided Self*.

³. Laing uses, in a phenomenological and existential sense, the term schizoid for the sane individual, while schizophrenic is used for the insane one.

⁴. Earle says that "Hollywood had inundated (and continues to inundate) people's lives with artificial and entirely white images of feminine beauty" (1997: 30).

⁵. See Brothers 1995: 55.

⁶. See Janoff-Bulman 1992: 5. According to Charles Robins, who treated many survivors of the tragedy of September 11, 2001, not feeling like oneself due to a sudden, violent change is the “hallmark of being traumatized” (in Hwangbo 2004: 1). See Robins 2003: 14.

⁷. See J. W. Worden 1996.

⁸. Toni Morrison. 2008. *A Mercy*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf (all subsequent quotations from this edition will be identified by the abbreviated title of the book ‘Mercy’ and the page number included in parentheses in the text).

⁹. In her reading of *A Mercy*, Wardi interprets “Sorrow’s ambiguous identity construct [...] As an embodiment of the trans-Atlantic journey” (2011: 27).

¹⁰. See Neumann 1969.

¹¹. Wardi points out Sorrow’s elision with the sea, “as the sea has historically been characterized as a ‘lawless’, antithetical ‘other’ lying outside the rational organization of the world, an external space to be feared,

used, crossed or conquered but not a space of society” (2011: 27). Wardi further contends that Sorrow is “not merely of the water”, but “cast as a water body” (2011: 27), highlighting her strong connection to water all throughout the story.

¹². Despite the fact that pregnancy has frequently been depicted as an experience of identity dissociation, it enables Sorrow to work her trauma through: “Pregnancy serves as an almost perfect metaphor for the psychic metaphor of multiple personality, for a pregnant woman carries not self and other, but self and an other which is in fact experienced as an aspect of self within her own body” (Koolish 2001: 181-182).

¹³. As Mar Gallego-Durán argues, at this point of the novel, Sorrow cannot even claim her own name.

¹⁴. Justine Tally suggests that Sorrow, in her ‘mongrelized’ condition, represents hopeful future, which “lies in the ‘mixture of races’” (2011: 77). She comments that ‘racial mongrel’ was the word used to discredit Barak Obama during the presidential campaign (2011: 77).

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POWER AND VIRTUE IN ELKANAH SETTLE'S IBRAHIM

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So very often, when European authors, both historians and literary writers, fix the spotlight on Oriental states, they tend to attribute despotism as the major characteristic of the Oriental ruler. Typically portrayed as a lusty tyrant, he acquires his position and maintains his power through violence, ruling his subjects with a sword in one hand and a whip in the other. In his relations with the non-Muslims, he, as Mita Choudhury observes, is depicted as “the holy warrior” who shoulders the obligation of warfare against the “infidels”, who are “for the most part, Christians” (2000: 70). Although the Oriental ruler is shown as harboring strong animosity to Christian nations, he is, paradoxically, infatuated with a Christian woman. This infatuation mainly poses a threat, if not to the life of the woman in question, at least, to her exercise of free-will and her chastity. The goal of this “facile and stereotyped tableau”, as Geoffrey Marshall points out, is to establish the assumption “that Christianity is heroic” (1975: 64).

Even though the Orient is present in several Renaissance plays, Renaissance dramatists did not devote a whole play to the Orient, except for Christopher Marlowe's *Tamburlaine the Great* (1587) in which Bajazeth, the Turkish sultan, is depicted as a staunch Muslim ruler and conqueror of Asia, Africa and Europe. However, the stereotypical portrayal of the Oriental ruler is particularly evident in travel accounts like those of Dr. Leonhart Rauwolf, Master Thomas Dallam, George Sandys, Jean Dumont, and Paul Rycaut. Restoration and eighteenth-

century playwrights who chose to set their plays in the Orient drew heavily on these accounts. To take random examples, Sir William Davenant's *The Siege of Rhodes* (1663), John Dryden's *The Conquest of Granada* (1672), and the Earl of Orrery's *The Tragedy of Mustapha* (1668) all depict the ruler as a holy warrior. On the other hand, Aphra Behn's *Abdelazer; Or, The Moor's Revenge* (1693), Mary Pix's *Ibrahim, The Thirteenth Emperour of the Turks* (1696), and Joseph Trapp's *Abra-Mule; Or, Love and Empire* (1704) focus on the role of lusty tyrant. The rulers who appear in Samuel Johnson's *Irene* (1749), Aaron Hill's *Zara* (1760) and Hannah Cowley's *A Day in Turkey; Or, The Russian Slaves* (1792) combine the two traits, the holy warrior and the lascivious tyrant. Such portrayals should not come as any surprise since they reflect the contemporary view of the Orient, based on a body of writing covering two hundred years.

Elkanah Settle, in his play *Ibrahim, The Illustrious Bassa* (1676) challenges the standardized image of the Oriental court by presenting an inherently good-natured Oriental ruler. In the play, the ruler conducts his dealings with his family members and his subjects with a sense of solidarity and kindness, something that is reflected in the dealings of the subjects with each other. Solyman, the Turkish ruler, is a loving husband, caring father, and just ruler. His inherently good temperament obliges the people around him not only to love him in his days of glory, but also to remain loyal to him when he deviates from the track of righteousness and unwillingly inflicts suffering on them. This positive portrayal was probably one of the reasons why Mr. Dibdin describes Settle as a person who "wrote and acted in defence of every species of contradiction" (1800: 187). Mr. Dibdin plainly characterizes Settle as an anomalous or intellectually confused man, overlooking the fact that Settle lived in the Restoration period, that is to say the period in which England had been witnessing a significant transformation in all aspects of life. Embracing the principles of the new era, Settle was not overwhelmed by the cumbersome inheritance of a long succession of negative portrayals of rulers of the Orient.

Settle does not portray Solyman in *Ibrahim* as Oriental rulers are popularly portrayed —sensual and Machiavellian males who rely on violence to have their orders and desires executed. Rather, Solyman appears as a ruler who employs kindness in his interaction with his family members and his subjects as well. Solyman does not misuse his patriarchal power in its two dimensions: "the power of a parent over his children and the power of a husband over his wife" (Weil 2001: 108). These two manifestations of patriarchal authority are not brought into action in the play. They are replaced by the power of love and solidarity. In the early scenes of the play, Settle impresses on the audience the idea that Solyman is a loving husband. Roxolana is a proud woman, for she is a wife to the Sultan, not a

concubine, as was the Turkish tradition, and “sharer in a Throne”, something, as Solyman says that “[t]o all my Predecessors was unknown” (2, 38). Her social role as a wife and political role as a queen are equally important to her; she is depicted as exercising monarchic power. She gives equal weight to her concern for her political status and the health of her marital life. When Ulama, the captive Persian prince, seems to mourn her fading glory, she asks, “Is *Roxolana*’s power/ Disputed?” (2, 23), wondering why he talks about her this way. Settle here projects on the Oriental woman what the Englishwoman of the period was starting to consider to be important. James G. Turner points out that the “prospect of women speaking their political ambitions, and acting on their theories by assuming power, seemed real enough in the mid seventeenth century” (2002: 102). Secondly, Solyman is characterized as a caring father, lending his support to his daughter Asteria in her love for Ibrahim. The offer he makes to Ibrahim —“she shall call you Lord” (1, 7)— is by no means a “commodification” of Asteria or an attempt to “scapegoat” her for personal gain. It is a move from a caring father to help his daughter wed the man she is deeply and secretly in love with.

The autonomy the Sultan secures for Roxolana and Asteria is also apparent in their bold confrontation of Solyman when he deviates from the track of honor. Their freedom to challenge his course of action is remarkable. Their confidence in his love for them allows them to challenge him, and to try to dissuade him from pursuing his ignoble love for Isabella, and when he insists on his resolution, they chide him. Asteria asks him to “Summon” his “Vertues” to overcome his passion and revoke his decision to kill Ibrahim, his general and rival. When he describes Ibrahim as a criminal, she says, “Your passion is that Criminal, not he” (4, 52). Roxolana, for her part, reminds him of his “Sacred Promise” and of his “bright Vertue” (2, 38); when he persists, she feels bold enough to describe him as a “false King” (4, 52) and “despicable King” (4, 55). Both characters here gain the admiration of the audience and the confrontation in itself is an attempt, on Settle’s part, to liberate the female discourse from the traditional codes of patriarchal privilege. Roxolana and Asteria, like Isabella, become two forces that attempt to pressure the deviant Solyman into honor and rationality. Solyman makes no attempt to use rank to refute their arguments. By representing Roxolana and Asteria as challenging and questioning Solyman’s behavior, the playwright brings to the surface the clemency of the Oriental ruler as well as the autonomy of the woman in the Orient. He dismantles the stereotypical image, leaving it vulnerable to audience critique. Settle here defies Edwards Said’s argument that “Orientalism is more particularly valuable as a sign of European-Atlantic power over the Orient than it is as a verdict discourse about the Orient” (1979: 6) and supports Srinivas Avaramudan’s argument —in her book *Enlightenment Orientalism*— that Orientalism “also aimed at mutual understanding across cultural differences” (2011: 18).

In Britain, the philosophy of John Locke, as Lois G. Schwoer argues, “had the effect of weakening in theory the notion of the subordinate role of women in the family” (in Evans 1996: 152) and thus made it possible for characters such as Roxolana and Asteria to appear on the stage. Generally speaking, the civil war had contributed to transforming the role of the English woman. “During the 1640s and 1650s”, as Kevin Sharpe points out, “women emerged as petitioners and lobbyists to the Parliament, as fighters and preachers” (2007: 15). The freedom Isabella, Roxolana, and Asteria are granted in talking to Solyman reveals the clear connection, made by the English people, between “women’s freedom and political liberty in general” (Browne 1987: 19) in Restoration and eighteenth-century England. Susan Staves in *Players’ Scepters* maintains that toward the end of the seventeenth century “the hierarchical ideals had been too seriously weakened” and that “the new orthodoxies were accepted [...] by the new generation” (1979: 42).

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In addition to being a magnanimous husband and father, Settle’s Solyman is close to his subjects, undermining the Hobsian justifications of absolutist monarchy. From the outset, the relationship between Solyman and Ibrahim, his Christian general, is portrayed as ideally one of open friendship. The joy of victory does not blind him to the “sullen Cloud” (1, 5) visible on Ibrahim’s brow. He correctly identifies his psychological condition and encourages him to disclose the “killing sorrow in his Eyes” (1, 5). He talks to him as a “Friend”, not as a sultan to his subject. The Sultan’s sensitivity leads him to search for the cause of Ibrahim’s sadness among his own actions, thinking that he might not have rewarded him adequately for his victories or perhaps unintentionally offended him. Ibrahim tries to lay rest to each of Solyman’s suggestions, saying, “Give not a Loyal heart so deep a wound” (1, 5), assuring him that his sadness has nothing to do with Solyman. Even in Solyman’s anger, later in the play, Ibrahim does not fear tyrannical retribution from Solyman. He tells his sovereign that he has “reverence, but no fear” (1, 15) when the latter asks him if he trembles upon seeing him.

The Sultan’s kindness in dealing with the people he interacts with extends to his enemies. Ulama, the son of the Sophy, Solyman’s “most pow’rful Foe” (1, 4), is grateful to Solyman because he has been brought to serve in his court, something that makes the Persian prince “Heav’ns blessings call” (1, 5), being fully aware that his fate would be much worse at the hands of a vindictive captor. His commendation of the Sultan indicates that Solyman merits the throne by worth as well as by birth. Therefore, Ulama views his captor’s victories as Heaven’s recompense to this man for his virtues.

It is clear from his treatment of all those around him in the early part of the play that Solyman is inherently good. The pain he later inflicts on his loved ones is unintentional, a product of his all-consuming passion for Isabella. He makes a

sincere attempt to keep his love for her as that of a father for a daughter, but as she draws physically closer to him and praises his "conquests" (2, 17), he realizes that his passion has become "resistless" (2, 17), that he has promised more than he can fulfil. He tries to limit contact with her so as not to "enlarge the wound" (2, 18) her eyes have made in his heart. To put an end to his rising passion, he asks Isabella to stop talking, gives her to Ibrahim, and bids them to leave "whilest", as he says to them, "I have power to bid you goe" (2, 18). His struggle with his passion is particularly blatant when he says to Ibrahim "Quick, flye with your rich prize, lest you delay,/ Till that storm rise, will drown you if you stay" (2, 18). Aggression, which is usually an essential part of the stage-Eastern ruler, is absent from Solyman's character. His errant behavior is due to what he acknowledges to be "an impious and devouring flame" (2, 19) that eclipsed the good things in him. What happens to the Sultan is in line with the prevailing trend in the genre: "the chief effect of love in Restoration serious drama", is that it "takes men and women out of themselves" (Marshall 1975: 58). His feelings of his greatness and honor are now replaced, as he puts it, by "Torments and Hell" (2, 19).

Thus, he is not a lascivious villain, but a protagonist who maintains the audience's admiration as well as sympathy throughout most of the play. He is transformed into a love-crazed man who must be judged not by the traditional standards of love and honor that define Ibrahim and Isabella, but by his own code of love. According to him, his pledge of constancy to Roxolana is a pledge to all women, not to her individually: "When to those eyes I swore I would be true,/ 'T was to the Worlds Variety in you" (3, 38). This adoration of the gentle sex, in the persons of Roxolana and Isabella, proves unique in Oriental plays where Eastern rulers usually view women simply as objects of pleasure. The lack of any wicked intent is clear when he says to his wife:

Why is your Fall and Death by Solyman wrought?
By Heav'n I've no such malice in my thought.
My thoughts flow purer: No black stream runs here. (3, 37)

It is also apparent that he is unable to do anything other than pursue Isabella, even though he is aware that he is in error, and this makes him a pathetic figure. His sense of pollution as opposed to his wife's confidence in her continuing purity weighs heavy on him. He can find no moral justification for his actions and desperately seeks advice from Ulama and Morat, his Bassa, about how to enjoy this new love without the taunting feeling of guilt. This is how Solyman asks for help:

O tell me how
I may my Love without a Crime pursue;
Soothe me, and flatter me, deceive me, do:
Hide all those stains that make it an offence,
And cheat me with a glimpse of Innocence. (2, 9)

Staves argues that serious Restoration “plays are often intensely political” (1979: 47), reflecting the prevailing political ideology. She demonstrates how the Tories, at the beginning of the Restoration, when they manipulated Parliament, “attempted to promote a doctrine of divine right kingship” (1979: 44), a doctrine that deprived the subjects of their right to question their sovereign. When they replaced the Tories in Parliament toward the end of the seventeenth century, the Whigs, stressed the “rights of the subject against his sovereign” (1979: 44). Settle in *Ibrahim*, presents a compromise of the two ideologies as the ruler willingly seeks his subjects’ advice and grants them the right to criticize him and assess his behavior.

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Sultan Ibrahim in Mary Pix’s *Ibrahim, The Thirteenth Emperour of the Turks* kidnaps and rapes Morena, the Mufti’s daughter, when she refuses to marry him; Sultan Ibrahim commands his slaves, “I am all on fire! Drag her to yond Apartments” (3, 24). Morena is sent back to her parents lamenting her “violated Honour” and seeking “Death” (4, 26) to rid herself of the shame the lustful Sultan has inflicted on her. Unlike Pix’s Ibrahim, who engages in a violent prolonged sexual pursuit, the notion of raping Isabella never crosses Solyman’s mind even though he is, like Pix’s Sultan, in a position of power which would facilitate rape if he so chose. Rather, he insists on having Isabella’s consent for the marriage and intends to elevate her to the status of a queen; “I’le take the Crown from Roxolana’s Head” (4, 45) he tells her to assure her that he loves her whole-heartedly. Settle is not interested in presenting what Jean Marsden calls “[s]cenes of rape, carefully staged and lovingly detailed” (1996: 185). Even when Settle employs rape, as in *Love and Revenge* (1674), he does not employ it for titillating ends; rather, it is, as Derek Hughes urges, “presented as a problem”, meant to emphasize “the problems of attaining justice in an absolute monarchy” (2005: 228).

Solyman’s intentions toward Isabella are honorable; he wants to marry her and make her a queen. To enjoy her physically against her will would degrade his love and his own character. This nobility of soul leads him to reject Morat’s advice to pursue his love regardless of the consequences, saying to him that “though all that you have said in my defense”, the reasons you present are “remov’d from Truth and Sence” (2, 20). He refutes Morat’s point about the Prophet Muhammed and free sex saying

[...] our Prophet does ordain,
Monarchs with Honour should their Joys obtain:
And when that Rock stops our forbidden way,
Pow’r must not climb where Vertue bids us stay. (2, 20)

Settle here, through Solyman, corrects a misconception about the Prophet (which has been exploited by Eastern rulers in other plays), that he encourages

free sexuality, for Morat has mentioned that his sovereign would be wronging the “Prophet” of Islam if he yielded to “grief” and did not pursue his “joys” (2, 18). Like other sensible characters in the play, the Sultan here gains the admiration of the audience.

Things come to a crux when Solyman finds Asteria instead of Isabella in Isabella’s chamber. Before his daughter he feels “all my Guilt and Infamy expos’d” (2, 35). His vulnerability is raw and through it he hopes to be excused and to ease the impact of the shock on his loving wife. Solyman also shows his vulnerability to Ibrahim:

’Tis true, I’m led by passion to disclaim
My Vertue, wrong my Friendship, stain my Fame:
I see the Precipice, but cannot stay. (4, 43)

The Sultan’s ability to admit wrongdoing and his weakness make him an admirable character. Laura Brown contends that English serious drama in the 1670s “prefers pity to admiration” (1982: 432), but the five major characters of Settle’s *Ibrahim* challenge her assertion. They all show traits that summon up the audience’s admiration; Solyman, in particular, evokes a balance of both pity and admiration.

Settle breaks new ground in this play, giving us an Oriental ruler who is comfortable in his own milieu and is essentially good, although with a tragic flaw of weakness with regard to Isabella. His benevolence is a natural part of his character. Other playwrights visibly contrive to build in an element of goodness with their Eastern characters. For instance, Davenant’s Solyman, in *The Siege of Rhodes*, is “civil” (part 1, 311), but he is civil as Solyman, not as a prototype. The people around him are prototypes of Easterners: not benevolent, but rather conspiratorial and aggressive. Davenant’s Solyman has to detach himself from his people and culture to be eligible for this praise. He describes Easterners as people prone to violence and chaos, something he himself is compelled to cope with. As Joshua Scodle remarks, “Davenant had his Turkish sultan Solyman lament his need for ‘new Towns to Sack, new Foes to Kill’ as the ‘accurs’d diversion’ of his belligerent people who would, if not so engaged, destroy ‘peace [...] at home’” (2001: 207). In Cowley’s *A Day in Turkey*, Mustapha is depicted as a considerate person since he tries to protect the Russian captive, Alexina, from the lecherous Bassa Ibrahim. But in return, he has to proclaim what Choudhury calls “self-condemnation” (2000: 71); he says that “Turks” are different from other nations, for their conception of “a woman’s virtue [...] is to CHARM, and her religion should be LOVE” (1, 12). Settle’s *Ibrahim* is not a villain-centered play with a blatantly wicked antagonist (ruler or Bassa) —as is the case in other Oriental plays— to be overthrown in the end. The wicked antagonist is the overwhelming passion that temporally takes

hold of the virtuous Solyman and escalates into an uncontrollable passion. The passion is eventually overthrown and virtue emerges triumphant. Morat could be constructed as wicked if judged by his suggestions to Solyman (to ask Ibrahim to give him Isabella, to force Isabella to marry him, or to kill Ibrahim), but when we view his character as a whole, surely these are misguided pieces of advice meant to please his master. No personal motive of this can be detected in the downfall of any of the characters. The furious swordfight that results in killing Asteria is initially triggered by Ibrahim; it has been imposed on Morat. Ibrahim, while drawing his sword in Morat's face, asks him to choose between helping them (Ibrahim and Isabella) to escape and fighting for his own life. Seeing such a help as a "Crime" that will eventually result in his death at the hands of his master, he chooses to fight, saying to Ibrahim, "though your Arm is so renown'd, I'll try/ My chance for Life" (5, 63). After receiving a mortal wound from Ibrahim, Morat kills Asteria for supporting Ibrahim against him. His killing of Asteria must have surprised the audience, for no earlier quarrels or disputes had taken place between the two. That is to say, it comes more as a genre necessity than as a convincing development of the plot. Because there is no actual villain in the play, the sympathy of the spectator extends to encompass Solyman who might appear, to some, as a quasi-villain. Nevertheless, his aberration is punished, and keeping with the principles of the genre, the punishment is a severe one.

In other Oriental plays, envy is usually the driving force that controls the wicked Bassas and leads them to plot against the successful ones or those favored by the Sultan. Villainy is conspicuous in the words and actions of such Bassas. The two Bassas, Haly and Cuproli, in Joseph Trapp's *Abra-Mule* (1704), are envious of Pyrrhus whom the Sultan has favored by promoting them to a higher position; each believes himself to be worthy of that position. They conspire to ruin Pyrrhus by secretly informing their country's enemy of Pyrrhus's battle plan which virtually results in his defeat. After he has lost the battle Pyrrhus says,

[...] I was betray'd
By hidden Treach'ry, and some envious Bassa,
To whom in Council I reveal'd my thoughts
Kept secret Correspondence with the Foe,
And gave intelligence. (1, 23, 24)

They also plot to overthrow the Sultan and replace him with his brother Solyman in order to obtain the positions they aspire to; Haly says to Solyman, to encourage him accept the offer, "'Tis no new thing / To see a Sultan tumbled from the Throne" (2, 32). The same thing happens in Thomas Southerne's *The Loyal Brother* (1682) where Ismael and Arbanes conspire against Tachmas, the Sophy's brother, and his captain Osman. The motive is the same, the bravery of the young

prince and his captain has eclipsed the fame of Ismael and Arbanes. Therefore they team up to destroy them. Ismael declairs,

'Tis *Tachmas*, baneful name to all my hopes,
Who by Giant weight of his deserts,
Presses my fate, and keeps it struggling under. (1, 9)

And Arbanes replies,

Once I was great; my hopes as flourishing
As now declined; my fate erected high
As victory could raise it; till the Prince,
That boy, my Scholar in the trade of Arms,
By treachery despoil'd me of those plumes. (1, 19, 20)

They convince Seliman, the Sophy, that Tachmas is a "Traitor to the State" (3, 42) and set up Tachmas and Seliman as rivals for the love of Semanthe. Cali Bassa, in Samuel Johnson's *Irene* (1749), corresponds in secret with the Greeks, Sultan Mahomet's foes, to bring about the defeat of the young Sultan because he does not look favorably upon the Bassa as his father had done. Looking at a letter intercepted from Cali to the Greeks and deeply disturbed by the crime, Sultan Mahomet says:

His correspondence with our foes of Greece!
His hand! His seal! The secrets of my soul
Conceal'd from all but him! [...]
Our schemes forever cross'd, our mines discover'd
Betray'd some traytor lurking near my bosom. (2, 141)

These examples are stereotypical of the relationship between the Bassas themselves and the Sultan and his Bassas. Hence, Settle's Solyman in his dealings with his subjects emerges as a unique stage-Oriental ruler.

Another outstanding aspect of Settle's *Ibrahim* is that the interaction between the characters is also an interaction between three different cultures: Solyman and his family members are Muslims, Ibrahim and Isabella are Christians, and Ulama is a Shiite. Their lives intertwine, flowing naturally with their ups and downs. Solyman is comfortable with Ibrahim as the general of his army and Ibrahim finds no problem in fighting valiantly for Solyman's cause. Their easy relationship is presented in the scene showing Solyman and Ibrahim coming back from Persia with Solyman commending Ibrahim's bravery, for he, with a small force, has defeated the Sophy, the king of Persia and Solyman's stubborn enemy. "His wondrous Arm such Miracles had done" (1, 4) Solyman tells his wife. Ibrahim is not merely a soldier to Solyman, winning him victories; he refers to him as "my best *Ibrahim*" (1, 6) and my "Friend" (1, 7) and plans to seal the bond by making him his son-in-

law. Ibrahim's being a Christian does not seem to be an impediment for Solyman or any of the members of his family. Asteria herself is deeply in love with Ibrahim. She reveals this love to her parents even before she learns what is in Ibrahim's mind and that is why she says to him that for his sake she "Transgress the Laws of modesty" (1, 9) in her love for him. This would be no forced arranged marriage; Asteria wishes to enter into the union, supported and encouraged by her father, the Sultan. It is only Ibrahim's commitment to Isabella that stands as an obstacle to his becoming Solyman's son-in-law.

The religious rhetoric goes beyond toleration to expressions of solidarity and integration. This rhetoric appears for the first time when the sultan, upon seeing Ibrahim sad, asks him if he unknowingly has "done injury to Christendom" (1, 6) or any of his armies "wrong'd those Altars where you kneel" (1, 6). It is unusual for a powerful Easterner in an Oriental play to concern himself with a Christian's religious sentiments. Ibrahim, for his part, expresses his passion for his faith freely, with no reservation. He does, however, fear to tell Solyman the true cause of his sorrow. He admits to Ulama that the refusal of Isabella's father to consent to their marriage has cast a cloud over him, but does not reveal this to his sovereign whose kingdom he thereby protects, for he knows that Solyman would avenge the wrongs done to him by fighting the prince and he does not want to be "false to Christian cause [...], Nor take such Vengeance" (2, 12). In character, the sultan is charismatic, but obviously not dogmatic. In the end, to reward him for his services and loyalty, Solyman offers Ibrahim the opportunity to "choose [him]self a throne" (5, 74) from among his kingdoms, showing that he believes in the integration of the two religions (Islam and Christianity) in one state. Ibrahim again declines his master's offer and unabashedly says "now/ A Christian Coronet best fits my brow" (5, 74). Solyman respects Ibrahim's choice and does not seem perturbed by such a response.

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Unlike Turkish sultans depicted in other Oriental plays, Solyman does not talk about the need for Isabella to convert to Islam in order to marry him and does not exert any pressure on her to apostatize. In contrast, in Samuel Johnson's *Irene*, Sultan Mahomet puts Irene, his Greek captive, under tremendous pressure to abandon her faith in order to become his wife; Cali reports to Demetrius, "he bad the conqu'ring fair renounce her faith, and be the Queen of Turkey" (1, 123). Unlike Johnson's Mahomet, Solyman assures Isabella that he does not at all mind her keeping her religion while being his wife; "You shall be mine, a *Christian* [emphasis added], and a Wife" (4, 45) Solyman entreats Isabella. Neither Isabella's will nor her cultural identity is violated. Isabella, a heroine with a strong personality, defies Laura Brown's conclusion in *Ends of Empire* that the heroine, in what she calls the she-tragedy, is victimized in order to "provide the essential material of the plot" (1982: 65).

Settle indeed was preceded in such ideas by Slingsby and Owen, who had advanced arguments of religious toleration and liberty of conscience. This concept had a tangible impact on English society, for religion transformed, in England, from “a religion of social cohesion to one of private individual belief” (Wordon 2001: 22). As Gary De Krey remarks, “[t]hat God might lead Christians in different directions within the same state and society was an idea that accorded with recent English experience” (2001: 84). Reflecting the spirit of the period, Sir Heneage Finch went even farther than this to argue, in a lecture in the House of Commons, that joint interest was what brought people together and secured harmonious life among them, not religion: “Joint interests have often secured the peace of differing religions [...] religion never united those whose interests were divided” (in Pincus 2001: 286). Wordon argues convincingly that England witnessed “a growing sense that religion should be what civilizes us, that it should have less to say about salvation and more about integrity in our dealings with ourselves and others” (2001: 32). What Settle does in *Ibrahim* is to apply this concept, not to a Western country, however, but to the East where religious tolerance, according to many Westerners, was stagnantly at its ebb.

Ulama, a Shiite, is another noble character in the play that transcends the limitations of the culture. Being in the court of a just and tolerant ruler, he falls in love with Roxolana, not allowing his faith to stand in the way of his heart. But when he realizes that Roxolana’s “Constancy” for Solyman is unshakable, he curbs his passion and promotes her interests at the expense of his own happiness. He seeks nothing in return for his love and strives to reconcile Roxolana to Solyman, expressing his adoration for her constancy: “Be Constant still, and all my pride shall be,/ To Reconcile thy Faithless Lord and Thee” (4, 41). Ulama’s self-alienated conception of his identity leads him to behave against the inclinations of his heart. As Will Pitchard contends, “When behavior is the measure of identity, one can only and need only act appropriately” (2000: 38). One might expect Ulama, a captive in Solyman’s seraglio, to seek revenge on Solyman and his family like Abdelazer in Aphra Benn’s *Abdelazer; Or, The Moor’s Revenge* who, to avenge the loss of his father’s kingdom, corrupts the Queen of Spain, Elvira, leading to her killing her king and abandoning her virtue.

Yet, Ulama does not try to exploit the situation to his own advantage. Rather, the Sultan’s kindness turns him into a counselor to the Sultan himself as well as to Roxolana. First, he makes clear to the Sultan the social bonds he violates by his love for Isabella and the detrimental impact of such violations on his image if he insists on pursuing that passion:

For his, for hers, for your own glories sake,
Some care of your declining Friendship take.

Her, by your kingly promise, you have made
You Daughter, him your Son; Rights which t'invade,
Will so much stain your worth, eclipse your light. (2, 19)

Failing to dissuade Solyman, Ulama warns Roxolana, out of his love for her, hoping that she can speak in defense of her marriage. Although we could charge Ulama with being false to Solyman's "Trust" in him, we should accept that he acts out of noble intentions: "The early knowledge of this dang'rous Love;/ May give her means her dangers remove" (2, 21). He truly conveys the actual psychological state of his master, asserting that rather than finding solace in his love he suffers deeply: "And that which does his pains increase,/ Is, that this fair Invader of his peace/ Calls *Ibrahim* Lord" (2, 23). Ulama assures Roxolana that he does not try to "stain" the "Fame" of her husband and that what Solyman has done is just "a frail thought" (2, 24) that could be corrected with little loss. Even though Roxolana does not believe him in the beginning and abuses him, he continues to be not only her honest servant but also an honest counselor to her husband.

The environment of toleration and forgiveness that Solyman promotes in his court makes Ulama extend his friendship to Ibrahim despite the fact that Ibrahim has captured him and defeated his father. Ibrahim reveals to him the story of his love for Isabella and that it was the undisclosed reason for declining Solyman's offer—to marry his daughter—that created the conflict with Solyman. Ulama, for his part, works sincerely to reconcile him to Solyman; he hastens to Solyman to defend Ibrahim and justify his behavior: "With this just Love, to *Solyman* I'll go,/ And try what Reason, joy'n'd with Pray'rs can do" (2, 12).

Encouraged by the same truth-telling atmosphere, Asteria and Isabella transcend their rivalry and show respect for one another. They indulge in mutual praise, each extolling the beauty of the other. Isabella offers consolation to Asteria by telling her that she has won Ibrahim not because she is more beautiful than her, but simply because she met him before she did:

The fault's in Fortune, not your want of pow'r:
I saw him first, and in the luckiest hour:
You only came too late to gain that heart. (2, 30)

Asteria, for her part, shows that she would not build her happiness on the misery of Ibrahim—"But know I'd ne're cloud him to make me shine;/ I would not shake his peace, though to crown mine" (3, 30)—and displays great courage and self-sacrifice when she puts her words into action and formulates an escape plan for the couple.

I have argued that *Settle in Ibrahim* does not follow the typical pattern of the English plays set in the East: no lusty rulers surrounded by subjugated women, no

royal brothers feuding for the throne, and no envious Bassas plotting against the court favourites. Revenge and rivalry are banished from this Oriental court and have been replaced by a set of values epitomized equally in the major characters. They all refuse to accept the codes of revenge and deadly rivalry and meet on terms of solidarity and friendship. The ruler who temporarily goes astray is reinstated in the code of love and honor by the love and trust of those surrounding him. Moreover, Settle displays a natural intermingling of three different cultures represented in the major characters. It is a phenomenon which Choudhury calls 'multiculturalism' where each culture retains its identifying chart while interacting with other cultures as distinct from 'interculturalism' where the meeting of different cultures results in a 'melting pot' (2000: 19). Equally important, Settle wittily manipulates and even subverts the stereotypical cultural attitude toward the Orient. He concerns himself with human nature, leaving his characters—Easterners and Westerners—to behave naturally, separating the action from the prejudices of cultures.

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Received: 18 June 2012
Revised version: 18 November 2012

HE STOOPS TO CONQUER: FIELDING AND ENGLISH SONG

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As the author of some of his era's best-loved airs, Fielding's skill as a songwriter is beyond dispute. In fact, so quickly did he establish himself as a lyricist that in 1731 no fewer than four works by the 24-year-old were featured in John Watts' *Musical Miscellanies, Being a Collection of Choice Songs [...] by the Most Eminent Masters*. In the face of this achievement, however, two puzzling issues arise. First, how could he prove so successful with musical verse when it has long been acknowledged that his poems are less than impressive? Indeed, F. Homes Dudden dismissed them as no more than "average examples of uninspired eighteenth-century verse" (1966: 414-415) while Henry Knight Miller termed poetry "a mode essentially alien to him" (Fielding 1743a: xxvii). It might be added that they had good authority for doing so since Fielding himself frankly admitted, "my Talents [...] lie not in Versification" (1993: 24).

Secondly, why did he become so immersed in a genre that he spoke of dismissively, with him placing balladeers on a par with "Tumblers" (1732: 234)? It is true that some in Fielding's classically minded age tried to counter the idea that ballads were of lesser stature by arguing that they had roots in antiquity. For example, the editor of a 1723 collection of songs attempted to claim that the form could trace its origins back to authors like Homer (Aspden 1997: 28-29), but Fielding resolutely and repeatedly rejected that position (1742a: 91; 1743d: 37-38; 1749: 399). In fact, when later in life he was proposing legal reforms, he classed balladeers with gamblers, prostitutes, and drunkards as suitable targets for arrest (Battestin 1989: 709).

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Given their importance to an understanding of Fielding's musical achievement, it is surprising that these issues have never been fully addressed, but the timeline of events on the London stage suggests at least why Fielding initially became so involved with the 'lowly' ballad. On January 29, 1728, Gay's innovative *Beggar's Opera* opened and met with monumental success. Two weeks later on February 16, Fielding's far more conventional first play appeared, only to close after four performances. Gay's ballad opera, on the other hand, went on to have the longest run yet seen in London. The often impecunious Fielding took note and, referring to Gay's heroine Polly Peachum, wrote:

A Bundle see beneath her Arm she brings
New Ballads that to former Tunes she sings
You too might hear the Soft enchanting sound
Were not its murmurs in applauses drown'd. (1972: 52)

His brother Sir John Fielding would later go on to attack *The Beggar's Opera* as an encouragement to crime (Fiske 1973: 402), but he himself proceeded to embrace the genre it spawned with such gusto that he became the country's most prolific composer of ballad operas.¹

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Tellingly, his first foray into the form centers on a cash-strapped playwright whose first name is Henry and who authors a musical entertainment simply to pay his bills, with one of the songs beginning, "How unhappy's the Fate/ To live by one's Pate,/ And be forc'd to write Hackney for Bread?" (1734a: 324).

There were, however, also less mercenary reasons for Fielding's attraction to Gay's new genre. Prominent among them was the fact that *The Beggar's Opera* represented a homegrown response to Italian opera, a genre that Fielding himself frequently attacked on nationalistic grounds (Trainor 2009). In fact, the lyrics to his most famous song stand as testament to his outspokenly jingoistic stance:

When mighty rost [sic] Beef was the *Englishman's* Food,
It enobled [sic] our Hearts, and enriched our Blood;
Our Soldiers were brave, and our Courtiers were good.
 Oh the Rost Beef of Old *England*,
 And Old *England's* Rost Beef!
Then, *Britons*, from all nice Dainties refrain,
Which effeminate *Italy*, *France*, and *Spain*;
And mighty Rost Beef shall command on the Main,
 Oh the Rost Beef, &c. (1734b: 42)

That Fielding favored the traditionally English in matters musical as well as culinary is clear from a singing competition that he stages in *Miss Lucy in Town*. Vying for the heroine's favors, the patriotic Mr. Ballad warns his Italian rival Signior Cantileno,

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Be gone, thou Shame of Human Race,
The Noble *Roman* Soil's Disgrace;
Nor vainly with a *Briton* dare
Attempt to win a *British* fair.
For manly Charms the *British* Dame
Shall feel a fiercer nobler Flame:
To manly Numbers lend her Ear,
And scorn thy soft enervate Air.

Needless to say, Mr. Ballad triumphs and leaves Signior Cantileno cursing “dat dam *English* Ballad-singing Dog” (1742b: 488, 490). If Fielding once claimed he was uncomfortable with verse since his muse was “a free born Briton & disdains the slavish Fetters of Rhyme” (1993: 24) in the service of ballad opera his verse reinforced his standing as a Briton.

Another reason that *The Beggar's Opera* would have attracted Fielding involved the way in which Gay used his ballads. At the conclusion of Fielding's very first theatrical air, a character comments, “the Song is not without a Moral” (1728: 96), and he in fact was a firm believer in the neoclassical precept that art should improve and educate; he notes that Plato “considered the Application of [music] to Amusement only, as a high Perversion of its Institution; for he imagin'd it given by the Gods to Men for much more divine and noble Purposes” (1745-1746: 166).

This was a score on which Fielding believed that many popular entertainments failed. For example, in *The Author's Farce*, he has Witmore tell the poverty-stricken playwright, “when Learning is decried, Wit not understood, when the Theatres are Puppet-Shows, the Comedians Ballad-Singers: When Fools lead the Town, [...] If you must write, write Nonsense, [...] write Entertainments, [...] and you may meet with Encouragement enough” (1734a: 234-235). Gay's play, on the other hand, featured a number of ballads that had a satirical edge and brought home a social message, and this was a model Fielding wholeheartedly embraced.

For example, his *Grub-Street Opera* features a comic air that catalogues the groups that take pleasure in a pipe. A typical stanza says of the medical profession,

The doctor who places
Much skill in grimaces,
And feels your pulse running tick-tack-o;
Would you know his chief skill?
It is only to fill,
And smoke a good pipe of tobacco. (1731b: 109-110)

However, after five lively verses filled with Fielding's characteristic humor, the song ends by explaining why one group avoids rather than enjoys a pipe. Referring

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to those who practice politics, or as he labeled it elsewhere “Pollitricks” (1741: 190; 1743c: 67), Fielding concludes,

The courtiers alone
To this weed are not prone;
Would you know what 'tis makes them so slack-o!
'Twas because it inclin'd
To be honest the mind,
And therefore they banish'd tobacco. (1731b: 110)

Indeed, while many writers of ballad operas gradually moved away from incorporating a social message, Fielding maintained that focus so strongly that two of his efforts may have been suppressed by political pressure from above,² much as Gay's sequel to *The Beggar's Opera*, *Polly*.

Consequently, while Fielding may have regarded ballads in general as a lesser genre, Gay's method of using them would have had a distinct appeal for him. However, if that helps explain his involvement in this 'inferior' form, the overriding question remains: how could he have succeeded so well in setting verse to music when by his own admission the kindest word for his non-musical verse was “tolerable” (1743a: 3)? The answer has its roots in Fielding's musical aesthetic.

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While the musical knowledgeability of other eighteenth-century English writers has sometimes been questioned,³ Fielding's is undeniable. He collaborated with accomplished singers like Kitty Clive and John Beard, and his closest friend was James Harris, the leading musical theorist in England. In fact, Fielding read his treatise on the subject in manuscript, even inviting Harris to come to his residence to complete it while he himself worked on *Tom Jones* (Probyn 1991: 115). A close examination of his songs, combined with his comments on the topic, reveals some of Fielding's guiding principles and provides insight into why his musical verse proved superior to his poetry.

Since the Renaissance, the neoclassical position had been that music was “the handmaiden of poetry” (Phillips 1953: 2),⁴ and although by the eighteenth century this belief was fading on the Continent, many in England still clung to it. This included James Harris, whose treatise contended that “*Music*, when alone, can only raise *Affections*, which soon *languish* and *decay*, if not maintained and fed by the nutritive Images of Poetry. Yet must it be remembered, in this Union, that *Poetry* ever have the *Precedence*” (1744: 102).

Fielding shared his friend's faith in the supremacy of words over “Musick for soft Brains” (Fielding 1731a: 106), and his references to musicians repeatedly stress the verbal aspect of their craft. For instance, when in one play an opera singer is awarded a court position, the title he assumes is “Arch-poet”; and in *The Champion*, the Ptfghsiumski show their contempt for poetry by placing a fool's

cap on the head, not of a poet as one would expect, but of “the worst Ballad-Singer who could be found” (1734a: 350; 1739-1740: 429).

Consequently, it is not surprising to find that in his own songs, the focus is on the lyrics with the meaning of individual words often buttressed by the notes with which they are paired. This was very much in line with Harris’s belief that the singing of poetry afforded “a *noble Heightening of Affections*” that enabled listeners “to enter into the Subject with double *Energy and Enjoyment*” (1744: 101), or as George Lillo poetically put it, “with sweet, but simple Notes, good Sense convey’d,/ Loses no Force, but is the stronger made” (1730: 33).

If this was the neoclassical ideal, it was one that Fielding realized in his songs, and in doing so, he added a dimension to his lyrics unavailable to his poetry. For example, in an air from *The Intriguing Chambermaid*, Valentine expresses his love for Charlotte by comparing the two of them to turtledoves:

Thus when the Tempest high,
 Roars dreadful from above,
The Constant Turtles fly
 Together to the Grove:
Each spreads its tender Wings,
 And hovers o’er its Mate;
They kiss, they cooe [sic], and sing,
 And love, in spite of Fate. (1734c: 615-616)

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In this air Fielding’s use of word-painting is striking, as both the word “high” in the first line and “fly” in the third come at the end of an identical series of rising notes. Similarly, when the birds go “Together to the Grove”, the phrase is set to beamed notes reflecting their union while each “hovers o’er its Mate” in a sequence of slurred notes in which the first is always higher than the second, suggesting a fluttering motion. In fact, if the penultimate line speaks of the doves’ cooing and singing, the air as a whole is filled with melismas and rising and descending musical gestures that give it a flowing and mellifluous tone.

It should be added, though, that if Fielding did place primary emphasis on the lyrics, it was not merely out of principle; it was out of practicality as well. The “most extreme” among the early musical humanists had sought to “return to the naked monody which had been the Greek norm” (Winn 1981: 174), thereby enhancing the audibility of the text, and Fielding himself was well aware that excessive musical embellishment could render words unintelligible. Thus, in *Jonathan Wild*, he jokingly refers to the fact that when too many women speak simultaneously with their “delicate but shrill Pipes, [...] all is Sound only, the Harmony entirely melodious, but conveys no Idea to our Ears” (1743c: 170).

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In some ballad operas this might not be especially problematic given Edmund Gagey's assertion that the genre employs music simply as "décor", sprinkling tunes, "like so many raisins, into the text" (1965: 100). Such a statement, however, does not do Fielding justice. As the most successful playwright of his era, he had a strong theatrical sense, and if his songs are often more successful than his poems, one cause of this is their dramatic force, which is as evident in much of his music as it is in his dialogue. Indeed, many of his songs *are* dialogue and, as such, must be understood since they are integral to the action.

For instance, in *The Grub-Street Opera* Robin the butler challenges William the coachman to combat. However, when the latter instantly accepts and urges that the fisticuffs begin, Robin backs off and shows himself more inclined to sing than to spar, extending his characterization and confirming the play's assertion that "your heroes in words are never so in deeds" (1731b: 106). The coachman begins the air:

WILL	Robin, come on, come on, come on, As soon as you please.
ROBIN	Will, I will hit thee a slap in the, Slap in the, slap in the face.
WILL	Would, would I could see it, I would with both feet, Give thee such a kick by the by.
ROBIN	If you dare, Sir, do.
WILL	Why do not, Sir, you.
ROBIN	I'm ready, I'm ready.

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Robin, however, proves anything but ready, leading an exasperated on-looker to exclaim, "you must fight to some other tune, or you will never fight at all" (1731b: 96).

In point of fact, Fielding chose the tune with care. While he supplied new words for his airs, most of the melodies he borrowed from existing songs, a practice that was hardly original. Rather, in putting new lyrical wine into old musical bottles, he was simply following in the well-worn footsteps of the broadside ballad, the culturally vital tradition from which John Gay created the ballad opera. Indeed, in Pat Rogers's words, the defining characteristic of that dramatic genre was "the fitting of new words to existing music" (1979: 46).

This technique played directly into one of Fielding's great strengths. Throughout his career he was highly aware of and sensitive to audience reactions. For example, in *Tom Jones*, he takes the hackneyed comparison of the world to a stage and breathes new life into it by directing our gaze not at the actors but at the spectators instead, and then elaborating on how the galleries, the pit, and the boxes would each respond to the action his novel has placed before them (1749: 325-6).

Fielding was not only conscious of his audience's reaction but also eager to guide it, as is apparent in his novels with their intrusive narrators and even in his plays, which repeatedly feature on-stage observers who supply a running commentary on the unfolding scene (Hassall 1967: 4-18). The broadside tradition offered him a similar opportunity to steer his spectators' response since its practitioners would routinely select a well-known melody with an eye to its accrued meanings. In this way, they would place their lyrics in an interpretive framework, connecting musical texts to provide context as people in different settings were "literally, singing the same tune" (Dugaw 2001: 170-171). Fielding proved particularly adept at this, setting his air on the pleasures of tobacco, for example, to "The Free Mason's Tune", a ballad that celebrates male conviviality and so reinforces the spirit of his song.

In choosing the melody for Robin and William's failure of a fight, his intent was to provide not a reinforcing parallel but an undercutting contrast. For the tune, he chose Henry Purcell's "Britons Strike Home". In this song from John Fletcher's *Bonduca*, the warrior queen battles the Romans as the Druids urge her people on, and in the eighteenth century it was played on British warships as they sailed into battle. The result for the knowing listener was an ironic interplay that heightened the humor as the audience juxtaposed the song's heroic associations with Robin's halting words.

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Moreover, the significance of Fielding's choice of melodies runs deeper still. *The Grub-Street Opera* is a political allegory in which Robin represents Robert Walpole, the prime minister.⁵ The coachman is William Pulteney, the leader of the Opposition, which regularly attacked Walpole for pursuing a pacifist foreign policy. Indeed, if the coachman in the play bluntly asks the butler, "whence does your peace-making arise, but from your fears of getting a black eye or a bloody nose?" (1731b: 100) the Opposition equated Walpole's tactics with political cowardice. Consequently, the implied contrast between Robin's empty bluster and the original's patriotic fervor provided not merely comedy but commentary on how far the current leadership fell short of the nation's traditional ideals.

Clearly, whether through word-painting, dramatic force, or musical associations, Fielding took full advantage of the opportunities that ballad opera afforded him to enhance the power and complexity of his verse. Consequently, while his poetry may be less than impressive, his songs include some of the most famous of the age. "The Dusky Night Rides down the Sky", for example, with its refrain of "a-hunting we will go" achieved widespread popularity while "The Roast Beef of Old England" approached the status of a national anthem. It was regularly demanded by eighteenth-century theater audiences before the curtain was raised and, in some units of the British military, is still played in the officers' mess before the visitors'-night meal (Baldwin and Wilson 1985: 205, 207).

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It might be added that if his ballads were loved by the public, some of Fielding's characters also show a strong partiality for native airs. In *Tom Jones*, for example, he tells us that

It was Mr. *Western's* Custom every Afternoon, as soon as he was drunk, to hear his Daughter play on the Harpsichord: for he was a great Lover of Music [...] [although] he always excepted against the finest Compositions of Mr. *Handel*. He never relished any Music but what was light and airy; and indeed his most favourite Tunes, were *Old Sir Simon the King*, *St. George he was for England*, *Bobbing Joan*, and some others. (1749: 169)

Fielding himself employed "Bobbing Joan" in *The Author's Farce*, but the fact that the squire calls for his songs in a daily state of post-meridian intoxication must give the reader pause. In a contribution to his sister Sarah's volume of *Familiar Letters between the Principal Characters in David Simple*, Fielding declared, "there is a strict Analogy between the Taste and Morals of an Age; and Depravity in the one always induces Depravity in the other" (1747: 484). Consequently, with the squire's appreciation following hard on the heels of inebriation, there is a suggestion, if not of depravity, then at least of a certain debasement of musical judgment.

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In point of fact, if Fielding regarded popular ballads as an inherently lower form, this passage provides the ultimate proof. He continues:

His Daughter, though she was a perfect Mistress of Music, and would never willingly have played any but *Handel's*, was so devoted to her Father's Pleasure, that she learnt all those Tunes to oblige him. However, she would now and then endeavour to lead him into her own Taste, and when he required the Repetition of his Ballads, would answer with a "Nay, dear Sir", and would often beg him to suffer her to play something else. (1749: 169)

If Sophia is able to discern the superiority of Handel's sophisticated works to simple English tunes, so was Fielding. Especially after that composer moved away from Italian opera and toward English oratorio, Fielding became outspoken in his praise of "the greatest Master in *Europe*", and it is "the immortal Handel" (1739-1740: 237; 1752: 334) whom Fielding's best characters cherish, with Amelia even arriving at one of his oratorios a "full two Hours" early (1751: 189).

However, if Fielding did not regard popular songs as high art, that very fact may ironically have contributed to his success in the genre. A number of Fielding's attempts at non-musical verse suffer from the stiff and stilted style that he all too often assumed when he applied himself to serious poetry. Take, for example, these lines warning against a marriage made for the wrong reasons:

Marriage, by Heav'n ordain'd is understood,
And bounteous Heav'n ordain'd but what is good.

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To our Destruction we its Bounties turn,
In Flames, by Heav'n to warm us meant, we burn.
What draws Youth heedless to the fatal Gin?
Features well form'd, or a well polish'd Skin.
What can in riper Minds a Wish create?
Wealth, or Alliance with the Rich and Great. (1743e: 43)

With its tortured syntax and mechanical rhymes, this stanza leads one to concur with Fielding's own self-assessment: "so may you conclude that I am no Poet" (1993: 25).

When he turned to writing songs, on the other hand, the labored diction disappears. Popular music routinely employs the vernacular, and he embraced the form's use of everyday language energetically. For example, like the earlier poem, his lyrics to the opening air in *The Intriguing Chambermaid* advise against an ill-conceived match. As a woman is pressured to marry a rich older man rather than the young one she loves, the song warns:

When a Virgin in Love with a brisk jolly Lad,
You match to a Spark more fit for her Dad,
'Tis as pure, and as sure, and secure as a Gun,
The young Lover's Business is happily done:
Tho' it seems to her Arms he takes the wrong Rout,
Yet my Life for a Farthing,
Pursuing
His Wooing,
The young Fellow finds, tho' he go round about,
It's only to come
The nearest way home. (1734c: 587)

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It is as if the perceived lowness of popular song frees Fielding from constraint, and he no longer strives for elevation but relaxes into a colloquial and far livelier style. The result may not be great poetry, but it swings with a spirited rhythm that sweeps the listener along.

While Fielding understood that his songs were no match for Handel's oratorios, his airs—written without airs—nevertheless have charms of their own. Indeed, when he introduces the Handel-loving Sophia in *Tom Jones*, it is not that composer that he asks to provide the accompaniment. Rather, he beseeches the birds, "the feather'd Choristers of Nature, whose sweetest Notes not even *Handel* can excel, [to] tune your melodious Throats, to celebrate her Appearance" (1749: 154-155). Popular song may likewise be unsophisticated in its natural simplicity, but Fielding's achievement in it is nonetheless worthy of note. Embracing the freedom offered by its easy informality and capitalizing on the opportunities ballad opera afforded to frame meaning with melody, to reinforce words with music, and to incorporate

a sense of the dramatic, he met with a success that eluded him in poetry. If English song was a 'low' form, it was by stooping that Fielding conquered.

Notes

1. On Fielding's ballad operas, see Morrissey 1971; Roberts 1961; Roberts 1972; and Rogers 2008.

2. For the suggestion that *Deborah* was suppressed, see Battestin 1989: 164-165, and on the possibility that the same may have happened to *The Grub-Street Opera*, see Lockwood's introduction to Fielding 1731b: 18-22.

3. For instance, on Addison and Steele's lack of musical knowledge, see Betz 1945: 328-330, and on Pope's "alleged insensitivity to music", see Ness 1986-1987: 175, note 4.

4. To quote Dean Mace, "Poetry reigned supreme in the hierarchy of the arts, because the word was assumed to be synonymous with reason, and the most significant human experience was thought to be in some sense rational"; contrastingly, it was thought "that music is incapable of appealing to the understanding and is therefore merely a sensual art" (1970: 2-3, 23). For further discussion of the neoclassical view of music as subordinate to words, see Loftis 1950, Yates 1989, and Walker 1941-1942.

5. For the political background, see Lockwood's introduction to Fielding 1731b: 1-11.

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Received: 29 June 2012
Revised version: 16 January 2013

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INTIMATE EXPLORATIONS: READING ACROSS DISCIPLINES

Alejandro Cervantes-Carson and Beatriz Oria, eds.

Oxford: Inter-DisciplinaryPress, 2009.

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Published in e-book format and under the auspices of the *Inter-disciplinary. Net¹*, the edited volume *Intimate Explorations: Reading Across Disciplines* is a compilation of papers presented at the 2007 global conference on the *Persons, Intimacy, Love* project, held in Salzburg, Austria. The book has a strongly interdisciplinary character, readily accommodating pieces of research from different fields and with different perspectives, all harmoniously brought together to unravel the multifaceted concept of intimacy. In this sense, it remains faithful to the premises of the *Persons* project, and earns a place in the growing bibliography of interdisciplinary research in Humanities. The volume is divided into four thematic sections, according to the main focus of the papers; there is, however, a strong cohesive tie consisting in recurrent ideas, methods and approaches.

The guiding principle of the papers in the opening section is a theoretical approach to the concept of intimacy, and related notions. Thus, the first two contributions revisit the question of what intimacy is and offer an informed survey of the existing literature. Both Johnson and Mjöberg pursue a redefinition of intimacy taking into account the theoretical pitfalls in recent research and conclude by acknowledging the elusive nature of intimacy as a social concept. Mjöberg's phenomenological approach to the concept of intimacy could have been placed first, serving as a comprehensive introduction to the section. In any case, the next paper by Weaver and Wollard, ties in well with the preceding ones, picking up the discussion on

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intimacy from erotic love, indirectly touched upon by Johnson; the authors then proceed by questioning the widely uncontested value of monogamy through a well-developed rationale, eschewing ideological biases. In a slightly different vein, Cristaudo's chapter offers an interesting review of key figures and shifts in the history of philosophical thinking and analyzes a real-life love story as a narrative about love being stronger than death. On the other hand, Flick's empirical study on self-care and subjectivation of work is a very timely contribution to the ongoing research in industrial sociology—mostly though not exclusively undertaken by German scholars, after the subjective turn in labor—and especially at its interface with gender studies (see for instance Rau 2013; Peitler 2010).

The papers in the second section place the theoretical explorations in context—indispensable for tracing the links between personal experience of intimacy and social structure. The inclusion of diverse contexts (geographical, social or temporal) is very timely and, throughout the papers in this section, crucial factors such as geographical location, cultural tradition, class, economic status and gender engage in a constant interplay on the intimate encounters terrain. In the opening paper, Shuzhen makes insightful observations regarding the changes in the role and identity and the conflicts of Singaporean women, which are probably relevant in other contexts around the world. Drawing on gender studies but this time with the focus shifted to masculinity, Hanlon's contribution explores the ways in which Irish men relate to the "highly gendered practices" (73) of love and care labor. The reference to affective inequality is noteworthy: it is an aspect which has only recently caught scholarly attention (see for instance, Lynch et al. 2009). Two of the remaining papers of the section (Gilfillan, Savage and Mancy), discuss critically the sex education policy in contemporary Scotland, taking into special consideration the actual stakeholders and the empirical evidence available. In Gilfillan's contribution, the reality of inequality (racial, gender, socioeconomic and sexual) comes to the fore, only to further complicate an already thorny matter or, in Fields' words, a "risky but necessary task" (2008: 67). Also focusing on inequality, Castro-Pérez explores the often dramatic experiences of intimacy among Mexican low-income women, in stark opposition to middle-class clichés about romance, love and marriage. The section does not fail to include a most welcome cross-contextual, comparative study of the ways economic transformation affects intimate social values across different societies and generations during eras of transition (Swader). As the author himself acknowledges, further research on the issue should include the gender—and, in our view, class—variable. Finally, Love's cross-cultural exploration of "love laws" in Arab and American couples through the use of scripting theory constitutes an interesting proposal for intercultural communication studies.

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The third section of the volume comprises six studies on the representation of intimacy, with film being the chosen medium in five of them. The sixth paper (White) is a notable exception, since correspondence is the medium chosen and, more importantly, because it offers a fresh perspective on distance in space and time as a defining but also as a favoring condition in relationships. That being said, the choice of cinematic fictions seems appropriate, since they too, just like literary fictions, “inevitably bring into play everyday assumptions not only about space and time but also about social and cultural relationships” (Stam 1992: 218). As a relatively new medium appealing to a mass public, film easily lends itself to sociological and philosophical reflections on human relationships. Once more context becomes central in the analyses and so do essential aspects of identity: gender, class, race and culture. Across the chapters, these recurrent themes become manifestly or subtly intertwined. From Butler’s analysis of contemporary cinematic adaptations of the Bluebeard tale to Oria’s and Pérez-Villalba’s contributions, the concepts of ambiguity, subjectivity and, of course, gender are crucial, whether the focus is on the challenges and frustrations of contemporary heterosexual relationships (Oria) or the interplay between class/power relations and gender in Victorian times (Pérez Villalba). Oria’s conclusions, in particular, serve as an excellent starting point for critically revisiting both Woody Allen’s work and Giddens’ (1992) theory on intimacy (see Jamieson 1999 and Layder 2009 for further discussion on the latter). In Oliete’s analysis, race, national identity and intimacy against a post-colonial background gain protagonism, through the representation of intercultural relationships in Indian and British films. Race and interethnic conflicts, as represented in a multi-protagonist film, are also the focal point in Seco’s contribution; an engaging analysis of the struggles and clashes that persist in today’s multiethnic American society.

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The last section is a fitting peak for the intellectual crescendo built up by the preceding chapters. It justifies the organization of the book and also does justice to the complexity and multifariousness of intimacy in a very conspicuous way. What all the cases studied here have in common is their peculiar nature, oscillating between unconventional and downright deviant. And therein lies the challenge, as it is precisely attributive dichotomies such as normative/normal versus non-normative/deviant/strange that are called into question. The reader then is prompted to reconsider the validity of preconceived assumptions about intimacy, through an assortment of intriguing and, at times, shocking cases in point. Strangeness becomes a negotiating strategy for teacher-student relationships under the cloud of repeated incidents of sexual harassment (Mitsuko) and strangers create family bonds in an unconventional and marginal context (Brown). The latter study builds on previous research on the topic but also provides new insights into the formation of “fictive kin” (Pippert 2007: 128). With a view to defying taboos,

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both Wolf and White bring up animals in the discussion. Wolf's philosophical reflection on intimate behavior among and towards animals, interspersed with personal anecdotes is witty but not at all frivolous; rather, it stimulates a serious reconsideration of the ideas discussed. As potentially provocative and disturbing as it is lucid and rational, White's contribution points to the importance of acknowledging love in paraphilia in order to address it more effectively. Sexuality is also a central issue in the chapter by Yu Ding, where the experiences of *xiaojies* in China reveal alternative, 'deviant' intimate and sexual encounters as means of personal transformation and, ultimately, gender role subversion. Similar interior struggles and uneasy negotiations of intimacy relocate to a different domain in the concluding chapter by Cervantes-Carson, a gripping account of how the uninvited presence of intimacy can give rise to multiple interior crises—subjective, moral and ethical—and how these crises can in turn shed new light on the possible links between evil and intimacy.

Overall, the volume succeeds in its venture to open up new paths for exploring interpersonal intimacy in multiple forms and expressions, as well as to engage in a fruitful dialogue across disciplines and approaches—in line with the current academic trend of interdisciplinarity and its proposed “denaturalization of knowledge” (Moran 2002: 187). Well-structured and engrossing, the book invites readers with different backgrounds to reconsider, question and reflect upon the universal intricacies and complexities of intimacy.

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Note

¹. For more information on the project : <http://www.inter-disciplinary.net/> accessed August 31, 2013.

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Received: 31 August 2013
Accepted: 5 September 2013

**WHITMAN'S QUEER CHILDREN:
AMERICA'S HOMOSEXUAL EPICS**

Catherine A. Davies

Continuum: New York, 2012

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Long regarded as a repository of mythic quests, divine interventions, Manichean battles and other derring-do, the epic poem underwent a severe transformation in modern times. The stuff it was made of became the stuff of ordinary, everyday life. Telling “the tale of the tribe”, which Ezra Pound saw as the goal of the modern verse epic, no longer meant fixating and extolling some foundational past, but accommodating also the complexities of the present and the personal (1970: 194). In due course, ostracized homosexual writers assimilated the epic mode to their own needs and ends. This assimilation elicits Catherine Davies’s analysis, in *Whitman’s Queer Children*, of several modernist and postmodern epic poems that look at the US ‘tribe’ through queer lenses.

Queering epic poetry is a worthwhile provocation. Indeed, most Western epics do not only celebrate larger-than-life characters and situations; they also instill a set of heteronormative values (embodied by exemplary macho types like Odysseus or *El Cid*) that still permeate the institutional homophobia of contemporary nation-states. In the United States, Walt Whitman’s outsider —yet central— status as a queer member of the American polis as well as his omnisexual bravado in *Leaves of Grass* anoint him as the key precursor of the homosexual epic. Thus, Davies charts a useful genealogy between Whitman and four twentieth-century poets: Hart Crane, Allen Ginsberg, James Merrill and John Ashbery. Like their Good Gray predecessor, these poets strove “not only to liberate the homosexual from

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the Wildean role of outsider, stranger and martyr, but also to place him at the very centre of America, as citizen and spokesperson” (2012: 24).

What follows in this volume does not map out an anxiety of influence between Whitman and his “children” as much as an influential anxiety passed down by the American bard to those homosexual poets who, to borrow a line from Langston Hughes, too, sing America. Whitman himself was not unaffected by this anxiety, as he struggled to reconcile his outcast “barbaric yawp” with his democratic credentials to absorb his fellow citizens “en masse” (2002: 709, 679). Each of the poets examined in *Whitman’s Queer Children* inherits this ambivalent embrace of US nationhood, although in myriad ways. As Davies conveniently explains, these poets interpret the Whitmanian call differently due to “the ideological constraints of being a homosexual subject at different points in American history” (2012: 32). Indeed, ranging from Crane’s coy homosexuality in *The Bridge* to Ginsberg’s scatological self-disclosures, from Merrill’s anxiety about his non-reproductive liaisons to Ashbery’s postmodern refusal “to let his sexual identity define his writing” (182), Davies’s subject matter is far more capacious and gnarled than the orderly genealogical tree the book initially suggests.

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Davies’s ambitious scope and historicization prove to be the volume’s biggest virtues as well as its main flaws. On the positive side, sparks fly between different chapters. Such is the powerful friction that Davies produces in the comparative interstices between poems as diverse in form and content as *The Bridge*, *Howl*, *The Changing Light at Sandover* and *Flow Chart*. The poets behind these titles configure a homosexual collective that—at times unconsciously, other times quite willingly—polemicized against each other about the most optimal means of queering the American epic. On that note, and probably because Crane’s individual conflict exemplifies the larger contending forces at play in the book, Davies’s chapter on *The Bridge* outshines the rest. In Davies’s words, “Crane set out to write a poem that would give expression to the modern industrial age”; nonetheless, as she solidly demonstrates, it was in “passages of homoerotic primitivism, that the poet could imagine himself at the very heart of the American myth” (76). With this elegant and cogent statement, Davies keys Crane’s dilemma to Whitman’s struggles to situate homoeroticism at the heart of American life.

Given Whitman’s centrality, devoting a single chapter to him would have helped Davies (and us) organize the several affinities and dissonances between these homosexual poets and their respective appropriations of Whitman’s personal/national epic. Davies contends that, thanks to *Leaves of Grass*, “[t]he American epic differs from those of the European tradition by being about prospective nation-building, rather than retrospective celebration of the founding of an Empire” (43). Helpful as they are, these insights into Whitman’s prophetic queer

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vision of America (cf. 26, 52-53, 108) need more room to breathe and acquire full persuasive force. Instead, they randomly crop up in sections about other poets, poets whose redefinitions of *Leaves of Grass*' sexual politics easily escape us if we lack a proper examination of their antecedent. Regrouping her observations about Whitman before jumping on to his twentieth-century disciples would have allowed Davies to present her case more clearly. It would have been additionally helpful to have condensed each chapter's excessive number of subsections into a more cohesive, reader-friendly structure.

As a consequence of not doing so, some chapters lack the forceful connections at work in the analysis of Crane. The ones on Ginsberg and Ashbery, for instance, read at times like a literature review, too derivative to offer anything beyond a comparative summary of previous criticism. Embedded in Davies's efforts here lies an unasked question: in what stage(s) of the literary process —composition, publication, reception, canonization, etc— does a poem become 'epic'? Eschewing this important question leads to another drawback, as Davies pays too much attention to the original reception of these queer epics. Furthermore, she alternates this info with digressive biographical data about the poems' composition. Consequently, we are left wondering what exactly makes these poems epic: is it the authorial intention behind them or their ulterior cultural impact? Overall, Davies's fidgety combination of close-reading, reception studies and biographical criticism scatters her analysis, advancing her argument as a cavalcade of personal correspondence, original reviews, and contemporary criticism.

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On a related note, how much can the formal and thematic boundaries of the epic poem be strained? Is it possible that, rather than turning the epic poem on its head, some of these poets simply do away with it altogether? Such a possibility emerges in full force in the Merrill chapter, as Davies herself acknowledges that "Merrill's literary affiliations certainly lie more with Proust, as illustrated by his claim that 'psychological action' has dethroned the epic" (142). This dethronement of the epic raises questions about Davies's choice of Merrill in the first place, since she could have devoted a chapter to other queer poets like Essex Hemphill. The issue of representativeness is not to be taken lightly in a study whose author shows an acute preoccupation with the vexed "representability" of the traditional epic poet, a category denied to homosexual poets on the grounds of their "outsider status" (1). Yet, Davies's own "representative" sample congregates five white male homosexual poets, a gesture that forces the critic to exclude too much and too many. Of course, any scholar has to delimit his or her field of inquiry for practical purposes, and, although Davies warns us that she aims for a "representative selection" rather than for "an encyclopaedic approach" (13), the criteria governing her selection leads to a suspiciously neat and convenient chapter organization.

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In addition to this imposed framework, the book's most confusing move is its muddled use of the 'queer' category. Davies assures us in the introduction that she "has rejected the term 'queer' as both too inclusive of various homo-, bi-, trans-, inter- and asexual communities, and as having too many socio-political connotations" to be contained in one single monograph (6). Nonetheless, Davies's adherence to the term in key places like the book's title contradicts her initial rejection. In my opinion, the subversive task of queering the American epic holds too much promise to be cast aside. Such an embrace would put Davies more in conversation with recent queer theory, since there are critical omissions here like Lee Edelman's *No Future: Queer Theory and the Death Drive*, which tackles the same angst about queer subjects and their non-reproductive culture that Merrill seems to experience in *The Changing Light at Sandover*.

Even if its contribution to queer studies and studies of twentieth-century Anglo-American poetry might fall slightly short of its intended goal, *Whitman's Queer Children* provides a useful, pedagogically sensitive toolbox for undergraduate and graduate students getting started in these fields. Advanced researchers will find Davies's bits on Whitman and Crane provocative enough to take them up in their own projects. As for the rest of the book, its shortcomings hint at important, productive gaps to be filled and negotiated by future research.

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Notes

¹. According to Judith Butler, "to queer" something entails a double task: it inquires into the historical "formation of homosexualities" in a given domain and it

tests the "deformative and misappropriative power" of the term "queer" once it has been reappropriated by the community it was meant to subjugate (1993: 21).

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Received: 28 June 2013
Accepted: 7 October 2013

**A COMMON STRANGENESS: CONTEMPORARY POETRY:
CROSS-CULTURAL ENCOUNTERS, COMPARATIVE LITERATURE**

Jacob Edmond

New York: Fordham U.P., 2012.

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Globalization, multinational capitalism and global free market, together with technological innovations have broadened the horizons of cultural exchanges in the past few decades. A change in thinking and consciousness started to develop after the Second World War and even more so, after the end of the Cold War in 1991. What seemed like an endless battle between the capitalist West and the communist East has ended with the outward triumph of capitalism worldwide. Whether it is the appropriate term or not to define our present, we are now living in a multicultural, globalized era. Cultural, social and literary studies have also taken a trans-national turn, and the discussions in the area of comparative studies have for some time dealt with the binary of social, political, historical, linguistic and cultural, sameness and strangeness.

Jacob Edmond, of the University of Otago, starts his book, *A Common Strangeness: Contemporary Poetry, Cross-Cultural Encounters, Comparative Literature*, by briefly accounting for the socio-political global changes caused by the end of the Cultural Revolution in China (1976); the fall of the Berlin Wall (1989); the collapse of the Soviet Union and the end of the Cold War (1991). He then sets out his main concerns, already palpable in the book's subtitle: Contemporary Poetry, Cross-Cultural Encounters, Comparative Literature. Edmond raises the questions which are at the bases of the vital and ongoing debate in cultural and literary studies today:

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How have these economic and geopolitical events transformed the way we think about literature and culture on a global scale? How have avant-garde poets like Perelman and their readers like Jameson participated in and responded to these historic changes? What might their responses tell us about how we have come to understand our own era as both more global and more diverse? What might they reveal about the historical and rhetorical structures that produce these poles of sameness and difference? What is the history—and what is the poetry—of this common strangeness? (2)

Extending the kaleidoscope of possibilities in the diverse comparative approaches to literature—more precisely poetry, in this case study—Edmond analyses and acknowledges different “multilateral cross-cultural referents and personal encounters” (3) between six avant-garde poets from post-Soviet Russia, China and the United States, giving the reader examples of poets who have actively responded to the historical changes “by intertwining linguistic strangeness and multiple cross-cultural engagements in ways that offer new possibilities for reconceiving literary and cultural studies” (3). The book extends the approaches of formulating a comparative study to literature and culture, going beyond the binaries of them/us, sameness/difference, local/global and East/West, presenting alternatives for the recognition of a commonplace in the difference and strangeness.

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In order to portray the trans-national and multicultural awareness which is shaping the literary canon of our present time, *A Common Strangeness* makes cross-cultural readings of the poets taking as examples and case studies six specific avant-garde poets, from countries which played key roles in the 20th century historical changes: the Chinese Bei Dao (1949-) and Yang Lian (1955-); the Russians Arkadii Dragomoshchenko (1946-) and Dmitri Prigov (1940-2007); and the Americans Charles Bernstein (1950-) and Lyn Hejinian (1941-). Although the theoretical track followed in the book can seem complex and the reader’s attention might easily be caught at first by the specific peculiarities of each poet and his poetics reflected individually, Edmond’s overall thesis, which brings together these six concrete examples, becomes clearer once the conclusions are reached. These poets’ individual peculiarities come together by means of a poetic production which addresses responses to the same historical changes: “These poets’ attentiveness to poetics, to how we construct an image of the world in language, not only leads to an acute awareness of the rhetorical structure of sameness but also offers ways of writing—and so thinking—our world differently” (6).

In chapter one, it is interesting to learn how the Chinese prose and poetry writer, Yang Lian, is accurately compared to Charles Baudelaire and Walter Benjamin, through the nineteenth century figure of the *flâneur*. While in exile in Auckland, New Zealand, Yang illustrates in his collection *Unreal City* the condition of the exile, superimposing Beijing onto Auckland. These cities are seen through the

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eyes of a walker in the city. By using the figure of the “flâneur in exile” as a figure of comparability in this encounter, Edmond suggests an interesting point of comparison: “[...] the flâneur in exile emphasizes collision, encounter, and touch, rather than models of comparison that either claim mimetic commensurability or pit global homogeneity against local particularity” (16).

In chapters two and three, Edmond examines the different encounters (correspondence, translation, collaboration) between the Russian poet Arkadii Dragomoshchenko and the American poet Lyn Hejinian. These encounters help to shape Dragomoshchenko’s book *Sky of Correspondence*, in which the different kinds of correspondences have diverse meanings: “Their collaboration takes the form of a bilingual correspondence that intermingles private letters with poetic texts and that addresses correspondences and noncorrespondences between Russian and English, between the Soviet Union and the United States, and between language and the world” (45). Particularly interesting in the sense of a comparative approach is Dragomoshchenko’s Poetics of Co-response, which “[...] offers an alternative model based on encounters among particulars or fragments that respond to one another but never unify” (49). The Language Poet Lyn Hejinian, influenced by Shklovsky’s theory of poetic estrangement, and her personal immersion in Russian culture, links in her work “[...] three kinds of estrangements: poetic estrangement, the estranging effect of her Russian experience, and the estrangements as the bases for a community that would unite Russian and US writers” (73).

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When considering the Chinese poet Bei Dao in chapter four, Edmond examines the poet’s responses to his experiences during and after the Cultural Revolution, in a moment in which globalization reached China, by turning his interest towards exploring the world and world literature. Bei Dao does not set his work within the binaries local/global or individual/collective, but by using allegory, as Edmond explains, he “emphasizes the historical flux and contested readings that gave birth to our current era” (96). Although Bei Dao’s work can be addressed in a national and local context, it also holds a strong appeal to universal literature and can be considered globally. This is also the case of the works of the Russian artist and poet Dmitri Prigov, who is treated in chapter five as a cross-cultural conceptualist. Dmitri Prigov, who mostly uses iteration in his artistic production, as Edmond comments, establishes a “global project”, putting together the national and the transnational. “Prigov’s work offers a model for reading the contemporary world that depends on neither absolute sameness nor total strangeness, on neither local difference nor global culture [...]” (163).

The last chapter of *A Common Strangeness* observes the work of the American, Charles Bernstein. Edmond points out that “Bernstein’s writing emphasizes the

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place of rhetoric in thinking comparatively and cross-culturally and in addressing the relation of literature and culture to globalization” (165). Edmond’s notes on Bernstein’s reconsideration of Ezra Pound’s poetics and thought are stimulating and worth reading as they exemplify Bernstein’s aesthetics.

A Common Strangeness is a highly recommended book for all scholars interested in comparative approaches to literature. It is notable that Edmond is fluent in Chinese and Russian, a necessary tool for conducting comparative literature studies, a tool which he has used to provide the reader with English translations of the Chinese and Russian texts. Also noteworthy are the rich end-notes, which together with the wide-ranging bibliography will be of great service to specialists in these studies. *A Common Strangeness* opens the kaleidoscope of possibilities in the academic fields and critical studies of contemporary poetics and comparative literature, demonstrating that there are diverse ways to consider poetry: universally, individually, collectively, globally, locally, transnationally, etc... “A Common Strangeness describes not just the various poetics that emerged from such encounters at a moment in historical flux, but also the comparative methods they might inspire” (198).

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Received: 1 July 2013
Accepted: 18 July 2013

A 21st-CENTURY RETROSPECTIVE VIEW ABOUT EDGAR ALLAN POE. UNA MIRADA RETROSPECTIVA SOBRE EDGAR ALLAN POE DESDE EL SIGLO XXI

Eusebio V. Llácer Llorca, María Amparo Olivares Pardo, Nicolás Estévez Fuertes, eds.
Bern: Peter Lang, 2011.

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This recent compilation of articles comprising manifold aspects of the works of Edgar Allan Poe certainly accomplishes its main objective, which is to reflect upon Poe's literary legacy and emphasise his undeniable presence in contemporary culture. It is an interdisciplinary collection of essays inasmuch as it focuses on multiple themes within Poe's universe, unfolds them by using different approaches, and presents them from different perspectives that go beyond the scope of literary studies, *stricto sensu*. This volume discusses Poe's works on issues such as the historical context in which they came to light, their intertextuality regarding other arts such as music and cinema, the metaphysical component prevailing in some of Poe's short stories, as well as the poetics and stylistic features that turned Poe into a major literary theorist. Different literary approaches are adopted, ranging from recourse to formalism, psychoanalysis and structuralism to comparative literature and cultural studies. One of the most remarkable innovations of this volume lies in the fact that some of the essays compiled come from linguists, musicologists, film historians and even physicists, in addition to specialists from literary studies. The multidisciplinary quality characterising this collection certainly reflects Poe's significant flexibility and versatility, bearing in mind the numerous genres to which his works belong, as well as his multifaceted interests as a writer, critic, journalist, poet and theorist.

The essays that make up this collection were written in the context of the two-hundredth anniversary of Edgar Allan Poe's birth, which was commemorated in the

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year 2009,¹ and even though this volume cannot be considered a direct outcome of the Poe conference held in Valencia in the same year, it does, nevertheless, contain a representative number of the papers delivered at the plenary lectures of the conference. The articles comprising this collection are presented in five sections: they discuss the relevance of Poe's works in their social context, the intertextuality between Poe and other arts and sciences, Poe's influence on the linguistic and literary codification, stylistic and literary aspects in Poe's fiction, and the influence and legacy of Poe's poetics on creativity. In the first of these sections, Daniel Ogden brings to the fore Poe's critique of American expansionism on land and sea, emphasising Poe's warning about the dangers of creating a commercial empire in the Pacific as depicted in some of his short-stories such as "The Balloon-Hoax" as well as in his only novel *The Adventures of Arthur Gordon Pym*. Subsequently, in his essay, Christopher Rollason revises some of the most important interpretations of Poe's stories within the framework of psychoanalysis —particularly those of Otto Rank, Marie Bonaparte and Jacques Lacan. Likewise, Rollason also examines the presence of the psychoanalytic imprint in Poe criticism through the perspectives of Jacques Derrida, Walter Benjamin and Hélène Cixous, arguing that, in the future, the dialogue between Poe studies and psychoanalysis will be mostly based on the notions of interrelationship and intersubjectivity. The first section of this volume closes with Emma Sopeña's article, which categorises the features of a criminal's psychology examining the discourse of criminal narrators in four of Poe's tales, through a structuralist approach.

The second section of this compilation, which addresses the possible intertextuality between Poe and other fields of expertise, opens with Pilar Pedraza's essay about the relevance that dead beauties acquired in the imagery of the eighteenth-century and the romantic period, and how these images regained importance in Jean Epstein's film *La Chute de la Maison Usher* (1928). Pedraza claims that the images of dead women as objects of art became prominent in the advent of modernity and were interpreted as both disturbing and seducing, especially for Poe, owing to the tragic death of many of his beloved women. Alternatively, Michael Duchesneau comments on the intertextual links between Poe's works and their influence on French musicians such as Florent Schmitt, André Caplet, Claude Debussy and Maurice Ravel. Duchesneau also underscores the influence that Poe's theoretical writings, in particular "The Philosophy of Composition" and "The Poetic Principle", exerted on the construction of a poetics of modern music. Finally, Poe's remarkable interest in science becomes the focus of attention of Fernando Ballesteros' article, which, through its tripartite structure, claims that Poe made considerable use of scientific elements in his stories, putting his writing at the service of science, unmasking some fakes —as happens in his tale "Maelzel's Chess Player"— and even attempting some scientific work, as in his essay *Eureka*.

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From a linguistic perspective, María Carbonell-Olivares' article inaugurates the next section on Poe's influence on the linguistic and literary codification, where she analyses the translation into French and Spanish of different contrastive connectors used in Poe's tale "The Black Cat" from a semantic and pragmatic perception. This is followed by David Ketterer's essay in which the important influence that Poe exerted on the works of renowned science-fiction writers such as Jules Verne and H. P. Lovecraft is highlighted, while also scrutinising the trace that Poe's *Adventures of Arthur Gordon Pym* left in Yann Martel's successful novel *Life of Pi*. Drawing on Poe's anti-utopian perspective in his works, Miguel Martínez underlines Poe's critique of the idea of progress and the notion of perfectibility, ultimately stating that the Bostonian writer believed that the modern world carried, inherently, the seeds of self-destruction. Peter Caverzasi draws attention to Poe's thoughts as a rationalist in his reading of Poe's masterpiece "The Fall of the House of Usher", whereby Poe intended to fight against the extended belief in animism and advocate instead the need to rely on reason to neutralise its effects.

This volume concludes with a series of articles that tackle the influence and legacy of Poe's poetics on creativity. In this respect, Jaime Siles analyses Poe's critical writings and their significant influence on subsequent theoretical principles of rhetoric and poetry. Similarly, in his essay, Alberto Chimal revises Poe's premises about the need to create dramatic tension and respect the unity of effect, claiming that Poe's aesthetic ideas are of current use in contemporary theories about creative writing. Chimal also underlines Poe's defence of the genre of short fiction inasmuch as he placed emphasis on issues such as form and structure, as well as on its appropriateness for experimentation. As a final corollary, Eusebio Llácer pays homage to Poe as master of different literary genres and highlights his undeniable legacy to contemporary world culture. Llácer also makes reference to important aspects of Poe's biography that have greatly contributed to the shaping of his legend.

Given the myriad issues it addresses, this compilation of essays has its roots in the tradition of international collections that amalgamate articles focused on different aspects within Poe studies. As one of its main strengths, this volume addresses and updates consolidated aspects of Poe studies, such as psychoanalysis or the study of Poe's detective fiction, and in comparison with other collections, it places special emphasis on issues like aesthetics, stylistics and poetics. Given its interdisciplinary nature, this volume also approaches Poe's works from innovative perspectives like linguistics and even physics. Nonetheless, it disregards other important themes in Poe studies that also deserve attention, such as some of his traditionally underestimated tales, or other works of his, such as various articles, his letters and his unfinished play. Similarly, some approaches which are particularly

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relevant in contemporary Poe studies are not mentioned, as is the case with analyses of Poe's tales from the perspective of literary discourses such as feminism, postcolonialism, postmodernism, and popular culture. A notable differentiating factor of this volume, connected directly with its origins, is the attention given in the introductory essay to the influence Poe exerted on certain Spanish writers such as Pedro Antonio de Alarcón and Fernán Caballero.

This collection of essays achieves a remarkable balance between—to use T.S. Eliot's terms—tradition and the individual talent, drawing on classic issues within Poe studies but also introducing new approaches into the field. Four years after his bicentennial, the revisions and new insights into Poe's works in this volume certainly show Poe's presence in our times, underscoring, as the Bostonian writer stated in one of his critical essays, that the soul of the reader—that is, that of all of us—still remains in the writer's control.

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¹. The publications resulting from the academic commemorations of Poe's bicentenary, edited by Luisa Juárez; Margarita Rigal and Beatriz González; and Nicolás Estévez, Eusebio Llácer and María Amparo Olivares are of particular interest.

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Received: 30 June 2013
Accepted: 21 August 2013

**MOVING ACROSS A CENTURY: WOMEN'S SHORT FICTION
FROM VIRGINIA WOOLF TO ALI SMITH**

Laura M^a Lojo Rodríguez, ed.

Bern: Peter Lang, 2012.

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This recent book offers a theoretical approach to modernist and postmodernist short fiction studied from a psychoanalytical perspective. Scholars and students interested in modernism and postmodernism as well as in literature written by women should not miss the enjoyment of reading these essays which highlight the distinctive features of the short stories written by Virginia Woolf, Katherine Mansfield, Elizabeth Bowen, Angela Carter and Ali Smith.

In the introduction Laura María Lojo Rodríguez and Jorge Sacido Romero describe this book as a manual containing analyses of the feminist canonical works which revisit Woolf's and Mansfield's modernist writing, the changing character of Bowen's short fiction and the postmodernist features in Carter and Smith. All the essays of the collection analyze the presence of the psychoanalytical perspective of philosopher Slavoj Žižek.

In Chapter one, "The Shape of Things to Come: Virginia Woolf's 'The Mark on the Wall'", by Julián Díaz Martínez and Lourdes E. Salgado Viñal offers a complete analysis of this short story from perspectives of famous modernist critics such as Slavoj Žižek, Hannah Arendt, Wilkie Collins, Terry Eagleton and Michael Whitworth. The defense of the feminist view of Woolf's short fiction in which there is strong criticism of patriarchy is clear and the expression of a modernist writing style which rejects Edwardian realist traditional writing is magnificently explained. The strongest part of this essay is the explanation of Virginia Woolf's

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feminist ideology. The famous essay “A Room of One’s Own” by Virginia Woolf is not even mentioned in the text and a brief analysis of it would have been useful to explain the situation of women who did not have the same freedom to write that exists in modern times. In Díaz and Salgado’s close reading of “The Mark on the Wall” the mock of established sexual politics of space is compared with Žižek’s idea that modernists are aware of cracks in the symbolic order. At the end of the chapter Eagleton’s connection of Woolf with phenomenology is used to explain Woolf’s exploration of identity and subjectivity in politics.

The second chapter is entitled: “‘Flying Off on Tangents’: Katherine Mansfield’s Short Stories” by María Casado Villanueva. She analyses three stories by Katherine Mansfield: “The Daughters of the dead Colonel”, “Bliss” and “The Garden Party” applying Slavoj Žižek’s approaches to modernist concepts. In the analysis of “The Daughters of the Late Colonel”, the “childish retardation” comes from the patriarchal attitude of the father of the protagonists who controls them to the point of preventing them from moving forwards. Casado states that this feeling corresponds to Žižek’s notion of the inaccessible transcendence which avoids movement. According to Casado in “Bliss” (1920) the protagonist, whose name is Bertha, is a sexually frustrated woman who desires to transgress the Law of the Father. Casado finishes the chapter with an analysis of Mansfield’s “The Garden Party” (1921) in which modernist aesthetics foreground forms of enjoyment depending upon the Symbolic. Casado concludes by emphasizing the subtle meaning of these stories in which the complexities of the symbolic are expressed through strategies which Žižek associates with modernism.

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In the following chapter Irene Iglesias Pena explores the modernist and postmodernist aspects of the transitional character of three short stories by Elizabeth Bowen: “The Happy Autumn Fields”, “Look At All Those Roses” and “The Cat Jumps”. Iglesias argues that Bowen’s short stories “The Happy Autumn Fields” and “Look At All Those Roses” weaken the authority of the father by inspecting the protagonists’ life as pre-subjects. In both stories the lost bond with the mother in infancy and the pre-self represent a modernist philosophy released from the symbolic order. However, “The Cat Jumps” anticipates the postmodernist discourse with the advent of the obscene father within the social sphere. Although the chapter deals with Elizabeth Bowen’s reflections on female sexuality there is a notable absence of feminist theory and criticism. A profound analysis of the woman condition in modernist fiction could include the theories from ‘écriture féminine’ by Julia Kristeva and Luce Irigaray.

According to Iglesias Pena, in “The Happy Autumn Fields” the woman who dreams about love between two siblings symbolizes a desire to return to the Real. In “Look at All Those Roses” the figure of the ‘anal father’ is a sign of transcendence

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to postmodern aesthetics. Finally, in “The Cat Jumps” a group of intellectuals are having a conversation and their manifestations of *jouissance* are disguised by references to modern architecture and other topics. According to Iglesias these stories reflect the changes from modernist to postmodernist aesthetics.

Chapter four is entitled “‘In Me More Than Myself’: Enjoyment at the Heart of the Symbolic in Angela Carter’s Short Fiction”. In the first place, the author, Ana María Losada Pérez, considers that Carter’s “The Executioner’s Beautiful Daughter” is an example of the co-dependence between the Name-of-the-Father and its opponent, the anal father, played by the figure of the executioner. In the second place, she compares “The Bloody Chamber” to Charles Perrault’s “Bluebeard” (1697), which is a very accurate comparison, but there are another two clear intertextual relations which the author could have been added: the Marquis de Sade, because like the protagonist of the story it was a French marquis who tortured and murdered women; and Charlotte Brontë’s *Jane Eyre* (1847), in which Rochester’s ex-lover is also hidden in a secret room. In Carter’s story the protagonist is saved from the murderer husband by her mother who knows about her daughter’s danger by telepathy. Losada contrasts the opinions of some writers who consider the story as feminist with those of others who believe that it is antifeminist. The third story analyzed includes the figure of the anal father: “The Erl King”, which Losada compares to “Little Red Riding Hood”. The story is about a man who rapes two girls, they suffer a metamorphosis and become birds and at the end of the story they are imprisoned in cages. Losada comments again on Carter’s exploration of women’s masochistic complicity in becoming objects for men. In “Wolf-Alice” a pubescent girl is suckled by wolves but then is sent to a convent where they try to civilize her. But when Mother Superior tries to convince her to give thanks to God for having rescued her from the wolves she goes wild again. At the closure of the story Alice looks at herself on the mirror and cries when she sees that she is a monster. Losada celebrates Carter’s ability to express the postmodernist idea that there is no essential authority to dictate what form the mirror must reflect. In “The Fall River Axe Murders” women’s passivity is present as in other stories by Carter and the male character represents the figure of the anal father as described by Žižek. In “Lizzie’s Tiger” the protagonist escapes from The-Name-of-the-Father. In both “The Fall River Axe Murders” and “Lizzie’s Tiger” there is a malfunctioning order in which subjects either are submissive or become monsters. Carter’s stories are postmodernist in Losada’s reading because they describe enjoyment at the very heart of the symbolic and the characters in them render the Name-of-the-Father inconsistent and split into their selves within the symbolic and enjoyment.

In the last chapter of the book Celina Sánchez García examines Ali Smith’s collection *The Whole Story and Other Stories* (2003). She introduces her chapter

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by highlighting the Scottish writer's postmodernist stylistic characteristics: fragmentation of discourses and point of view as well as intertextual and metafictional devices which reflect on contemporary social and literary debates. In this chapter she analyzes Ali Smith's postmodernist poetics as a reflection of the culmination of a referentiality crisis which started in modernism. According to Sánchez García, in Smith's opening narrative, "The Universal Story", the speaker pays attention to the necessary process of revision and change of a text that a writer has to develop taking into account those "false starts" and the unconscious nature of the text. Prof. Sánchez García praises Smith's work for establishing a relationship between text and material reality with the use of intertextual references or spatial references for the process of writing, like bookshops or libraries. For her, in Smith's collection there is balance between artifice and fragmentation with writer's choice of natural patterns. Sánchez García understands that Smith's book reflects Žižek's theory that trying to escape from reality through language games only brings us closer to reality itself.

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This book inquires into fiction written by women from the beginning of the 20th to the beginning of the 21st century. The contents of the chapters are homogeneous and solid because all the works are interpreted in the light of Slavoj Žižek's philosophical theories. The volume offers dynamic close readings of short fiction written by women in which patriarchal rules are criticized and women's desires of freedom are vindicated. To conclude, the volume contributes new critical essays of short fiction written by women which will help the readers of psychoanalytic literary criticism understand modernist and postmodernist concepts better and will complement their reading of the stories with psychoanalytical perspectives.

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Received: 2 July 2013

Accepted: 16 September 2013

STYLES OF EXTINCTION: CORMAC MCCARTHY'S *THE ROAD*

Julian Murphet and Mark Steven, eds.

London and New York: Continuum, 2012.

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Since its publication in 2006, *The Road* has generated an abundant corpus of scholarly research due to its unique narrative style and the endless cultural, ethical, eschatological, environmental, metaphorical, etc. dimensions it encompasses. *Styles of Extinction: Cormac McCarthy's The Road* (2012) is a compilation of essays dedicated to this provocative task. Whilst some of the texts may prove repetitive, or overlapping, in their theoretical framing and articulation, and in spite of a certain lack of coherence in the overall approach, the present volume provides the reader with a highly valuable, multifaceted critical analysis of Cormac McCarthy's award-winning novel. Mark Steven and Julian Murphet, the editors, have written an insightful and pertinent introduction that covers the most relevant thematic and formal aspects and situates *The Road* within the cultural and historical significance of the novel tradition. The introduction closes with a brief catalogue of the dissertations we are to encounter in the book. Surprisingly, the book's last essay is omitted from this inventory; when we reach Zournazi's personal account of her viewing of John Hillcoat's homonymous film (2009) it feels somehow out of place, perhaps precisely due to this exclusion from the aforementioned catalogue.

The first two essays in the volume stand apart from the rest in the sense that their object of analysis is much more specific: each with its own purpose, they both concentrate on stylistic strategies that are crucial to the novel's structure and identity. "The cold illucid world": The poetics of gray in Cormac McCarthy's *The*

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Road”, by Chris Danta, may ironically be the most lucid and most illuminating contribution of all, with its meticulous dissection of the paramount protagonism of countless greys in a seemingly monochromatic world. The analysis of light gradation serves Danta to explore in depth the novel’s linguistic as well as main philosophical issues. Similarly, Sean Pryor’s essay provides a remarkable scrutiny of McCarthy’s mastery of rhythm, unveiling the poetic mechanisms that operate behind the author’s characteristic prose, particularly displayed in this work, to convey its profound lyrical beauty and intensity. The essays that follow focus on *The Road*’s allegorical dimension and nature, in an approach to McCarthy’s text that is eclectic, often brilliant if at times slightly dimmed.

“Spring has lost its scent: allegory, ruination, and suicidal melancholia in *The Road*” develops the idea that the allegorical sphere in the novel functions as a means to negotiate the impact of the trauma for the characters and the narration. Applying Walter Benjamin’s concept of melancholia in art as a modern strategy for modulating the decadence of experience, Grace Hellyer analyses allegory in *The Road* on the premise that survival is not, *per se*, a reason to live. As the author points out, the mother’s suicide and her reference to her own family as “the walking dead in a horror film” emphasises “that modern condition in which life requires an argument” (2012: 54) since there is no intrinsic value in it. This idea also emerges from an exploration of the allegorical behind other resources in the novel, from the use of the word “okey” to convey several meanings¹ (or none at all) that surpass affirmativeness, to the symbol of the fire palliating the loss of the sun, or the ritualism constructed around the boy within a world that has been dispossessed of all meaning.

Like Hellyer, Mark Steven refers to the polysemy—or “semantic transfiguration” (2012: 81)—of “okay” and also draws on Slavoj Žižek’s thinking, this time supplementing it with ideas from Alain Badiou and Frederic Jameson, to configure a vision of (American) cultural postmodernism that frames the ‘wordlessness’ ideology preponderant in *The Road*. Starting from these premises, the novel depicts a sense of wordlessness for humans linked with an enhancement of animalism that reveals the lack of an appropriate space for contemporary subjectivity within a globalised, market-shaped historicism. Biological extinction affects all living creatures alike thus blurring the human category, which becomes indistinguishable from that of the animal in the dehumanised universe of *The Road*. Steven also stresses the uniqueness of McCarthy’s treatment of the apocalyptic genre in its invalidation of postmodern discourse, while suggesting that beyond this hyperbolic end or eschatology may lie a regenerative potential. This is also hinted at in the treatment of the characters’ “self-reflexive sense of being in the world” (2012: 84), particularly the boy’s, who recaptures “an older, seemingly abandoned form

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of literary subjectivity” (2012: 84) which Steven compares to the ‘lyrical-I’ voice of Whitman in *Leaves of Grass*.

Like Steven, Paul Sheehan contemplates McCarthy’s scenario as one completely deprived of *homines sacri*; whereas the former sees the characters shifting into a *homo homini lupens* paradigm in their animalisation, the second focuses on their pure *homo vivere* ascription. “Road, fire, trees: Cormac McCarthy’s post-America” reads *The Road* as a critique, rather than a warning, of the political itinerary followed by the 21st century West, especially by the USA, interpreting its religious and metaphysical tone as a testimony —“where effects are of greater import than causes” (2012: 91)—. Refugees and cannibals in the novel are the result of a void of civilization which echoes our own *uncivilised* society: one that is submerged in “the problem the worst” (2012: 92) in which the dialectics between capitalism and terrorism produce a kind of apocalypse and displacement alike. Here Sheehan makes a note of the recent resurgence of un-human figures in popular fiction, such as zombies and vampires. Parallels with the walking dead have already been drawn in this volume by Hellyer, who even alludes to George A. Romero’s *Dawn of the Dead* (1978), but Sheehan points out that that the figure of the vampire, which could be associated with capitalism, is replaced in *The Road* by that of the cannibal in a shift from artifice —the mythological scope of civilization— to nature through the “all-too-human” and “anti-capitalist” practice of anthropophagy (2012: 94, 95). In this sense, Sheehan goes beyond the environmental vindication proposed by many critics like George Monbiot (2007) and perceives an ode to nature, or an emergence of alter-nature in *The Road*. This would also serve to reinforce the idea of capitalism’s decadence: the constant ambivalence of all the imagery in the novel, from the road itself to the trees or the fire, runs parallel to the difficulty in distinguishing civilization from barbarism.

“The cave and *The Road*: Styles of forgotten dreams” brings back the concept of the refugee icon as a transposition of the geopolitical distribution generated by the USA and its war on terrorism. Like Sheehan, Julian Murphet uses Badiou’s sense of wordlessness to address this national, global and diasporic dislocation, alluding again to the ‘capitalist nihilism’ and to a failed *homo sacer*. A very interesting contribution here, drawing on this biopolitical dimension of the novel, is the analogy Murphet establishes between constitutional dialectics (State-Civil Society) and parental ones (Father-Son) disguised not only in the way the main characters interact with others but also in the very speech form each of them uses: dictatorial in the father’s constant imperatives and hopeful in the boy’s use of auxiliary/modal verbs and conditional tenses. This device has elicited different interpretations when considering the overall text, such as that of Lydia R. Cooper, who regards the use of the imperative mode in the narration as a way to permit the

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reader “to overhear the father talking to himself” (2011: 146). Murphet’s main argument is, nevertheless, the use of animals and animal expression in the imagery of McCarthy’s novel following the American tradition of the ‘animal as the sacred’, to find in the final passage, devoted to the brook trout, the major sign of “the book’s puritanical economy” (2012: 127).

Although Paul Patton also mentions the theme of September 11, his approach does not stick to the geopolitical and cultural consequences of the historical milestone, but moves on to the idea of uncertainty rooted in the realisation of a sublime event. As well as appointing fire as a symbol for endangered morals in a post-religious humanity, McCarthy’s *Fire* enhances the unpredictability that derives not from the unnamed catastrophe and its obvious effects, but from the type of humanity that might emerge as a result. The last essay in this compilation deals with John Hillcoat’s filmic adaptation of *The Road*; an afterword that indeed does move forward from the written word, to address the cinematic narrative which followed the publishing of the novel. Even though the abrupt shift of tone and register here comes, as I have already mentioned, rather unexpectedly, Mary Zournazi’s text provides a different perspective to McCarthy’s diegesis and representation, which could have made a good conclusion to the compilation. In her analysis of this desolate world’s visual portrayal, Zournazi highlights the *contemporaneity* of what she regards as an “ecological road movie” (2012: 146) and suggests that the child’s genuine kindness is an embodiment of human morals.

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In spite of the weaknesses that may commonly derive from a collective work, all in all, *Styles of Extinction: Cormac McCarthy’s The Road* stands as an inspiring contribution to the scholarly study of this masterpiece. With literary referents as varied as Beckett’s *Endgame*, Conrad’s *Heart of Darkness* or the very Quixote by Cervantes, and a critical framework rooted in Western —particularly Marxist— philosophy, the essays contained in this compilation are committed to an exhaustive enquiry of *The Road*’s hermeneutics with a laudable result. *Styles of Extinction* honours its title in the heterogeneous approaches of its texts, the profound examination of McCarthy’s own style and the allusion to an ultimate end, to the “very hyperbolic nature of the destruction” (Kearney 2012: 165) that radiates from this holistic apocalypse.

End notes

¹. An extensive and very revealing analysis of the multiple meanings of the term “okay” in *The Road* can be found in “‘Okay Means Okay’: Ideology and Survival in Cormac McCarthy’s *The Road*” by Paul D. Knox (2012).

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Received: 30 June 2013

Accepted: 5 July 2013

SHORT STORY THEORIES : A TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY PERSPECTIVE

Viorica Patea, ed.
Amsterdam and New York: Rodopi, 2012.
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Viorica Patea, the editor of *Short Story Theories - a Twenty-First Century Perspective*, is to be congratulated. Any book that brings together renowned academic specialists in the genre, such as Charles May, author of seminal works like *The Short Story: The Reality of Artifice*, and editor of *Short Story Theories* and *New Short Story Theories*, or post-modern specialist, Farhat Iftekharuddin, with a range of talented scholars mostly working in Spain, is bound to be of interest to scholars specialising in narrative. Her introduction deftly sketches the history of the growing critical awareness of the short story as a genre. She shows how, after Poe's ground-breaking essays, later theorists have resorted to making a vast range of comparisons, such as, for example, photographs, riddles and enigmas, while noting recurrent features, such as transcendental moments, epiphanies, stories with no story line. However, in doing so, she is hardly breaking new theoretical ground.

The collection is structured into four parts: on the origins of the genre and Poe's foundational theorising, on linguistic theories, on Postcolonialism, Orality and Gender approaches, and on the Postmodern short story and other varieties of short fiction.

It begins with Antonio López Santos's essay, "The Paratactic Structure in *The Canterbury Tales*: Two Antecedents of the Modern Short Story", which takes a traditional approach to demonstrate convincingly how the integration of the Wife

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of Bath's Prologue with her tale (two texts at once real and mythical) can be seen to anticipate Bakhtinian 'dialogism'.

Any panoramic view of the Short Story must include some acknowledgement of the genre's first master and theorist, Edgar Allan Poe. Of the two articles on Poe, Peter Gibian's well-written case-study, "Anticipating Aestheticism", provides an expert account of how Poe's short story "The Oval Portrait" and Nathaniel Hawthorne's "The Birth-Mark" form part of a longer dialogic exchange between the two writers, as the latter works to position himself on the question of Aestheticism. The article then traces Poe's influence on French writers, particularly Baudelaire, analysing convincingly Poe's "The Man of the Crowd" and "The Purloined Letter" and their use of the 'reader-in-the-tale' figure as "an experimental process of interaction between subjectivities that begins with the investigating subject putting himself in the place of the subject to be studied"(65). Through the aestheticized anti-heroes of longer works such as Huysman's *A Rebours* and Wilde's *Dorian Gray*, the circle of influence is closed by Gibian's final section, which demonstrates how Poe's aesthetic is once again appreciated in the American *fin-de-siècle* promotion of both Aestheticism and Decadence.

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The debt owed to Poe as the short story's original theorist is the subject of Erik Van Achter's essay. Just as the short story has struggled to establish itself as a fully autonomous genre, located somewhere between the lyric poem and the novel, so theorists have struggled to go beyond Poe's original stipulations, one of which noted that the length of the story must be sufficient for it to be read in one sitting, in order to produce the desired effect on the reader. It is here that qualitative and quantitative theories intersect, as only story that is short (quantity) will produce a short story effect (quality) on a reader. Yet, Van Achter appears unprepared to concede ground on the question of distinguishing "between a story that is merely short and a work that may properly be called a 'short story'" (80) and it is a point he returns to again and again, as he clearly resists the idea that ultimately size matters. Elsewhere he writes, "The quantitative difference, we shall see, is little more than a consequence of accepting a qualitative criterion". A reversal of the terms 'quantitative' and 'qualitative' here produces an equally satisfactory affirmation. After all, a story that is short will tend to impose certain practices on author, reader and critic alike. I suspect that when you are a short story specialist, with a vested interest in the complexities of qualitative analysis, as a way of confirming your preferred genre's place at the high table of literary culture, a simple definition that lets in the *hoi polloi* does not suit.

While Per Winther (to whom the volume is dedicated) uses Discourse Analysis, to discern framing devices, Pilar Alonso's cognitive approach provides an interesting perspective on the size question, as her critical focus is on the 'episode', arguably

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a unit common to both short story and novel. From a cognitive perspective, she concludes: “novels and short stories are not in fact so distant from one another, especially when the dense network of underlying cognitive paths that connect their respective archetypal configurations is taken into account” (124). Her observation that they are “not so distant” seems slightly contradicted by novels and short stories having “their respective archetypal configurations” (124). Alonso appears to defend the thesis at the heart of this collection, that novels and short stories are fundamentally different, while her admirable analysis draws her to conclude the difference is less obvious.

Part three begins with Carolina Núñez-Puente’s Bakhtin-influenced study of Charlotte Perkins Gilman’s *The Yellow Wallpaper*, from what she describes as a hybrid critical perspective that is both feminist and dialogical. While the blandly named protagonists of the story, Jane and John, seem to indicate a story that would move along archetypal gender lines, Núñez-Puente’s reading is alert to how the ending of Gilman’s story opens up multiple gender and Postcolonial interpretations.

Rebeca Hernández discusses the relationship between the letter as literary form and the short story, by studying a short story in the form of a letter, Honwana’s 1971 “Rosita até morrer”, a letter-poem, “Carta de um contratado” (1961) by the Angolan writer, António Jacinto, and a letter within the novel, *Chiquinho* (1947) by Baltasar Lopes. Hernández shows very convincingly how the hybrid reality of postcolonial nations finds resonance in shorter narrative forms, and how the letter form in particular allows the text to capture the sound of that hybrid reality, through the voices of protagonists whose Portuguese includes local African dialect words, and sometimes grammatical irregularities. Her own translation of a twenty-line letter from *Chiquinho* is a notable improvement on the quoted Penguin original.

Teresa Gibert’s “Margaret Atwood’s Art of Brevity: Metaphorical Conceptualization and Short Story Writing” shows plenty of sensitivity to Atwood’s superb use of metaphor in her short stories. However, Atwood’s metaphors are in evidence across the range of her fiction, so the analytical skills displayed here could be equally applied to the novels, as the author virtually admits at the end of the article.

Maria Jesús Hernáez Lerena’s “Short-Storyness and Eyewitnessing” discusses a series of Canadian short stories to highlight how short stories that focus on a present moment, or a moment lived as if forever present, often take an event out of the causal temporal chain of events that characterises so much longer fiction, and become “literature as enigma, in contrast with the novel, which is committed to literature as survey”, as John Bayley puts it (183). Her well-argued writing demonstrates the clear affinity between the short story and testimony writing.

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Enigma is the key theme in Farhat Ifterkharuddin's excellent analysis of six short stories from Isabel Allende's *The Stories of Eva Luna*. The unifying theme of this criticism is "the sublime interconnectedness that the genre and the female gender share" (246), as they both share an enigmatic quality. Enigma as a central aesthetic characteristic of this form here finds its perfect complement in the enigmas that the female protagonists of these stories represent for the male characters.

Luisa María González Rodríguez's "Intertextuality and Collage in [Donald] Barthelme's Short Fiction", establishes the author's postmodernist credentials very clearly. But, by focusing on stories anthologised in 1981, the essay seems neither to advance short story theory *per se* nor account for new work by Barthelme. Santiago Rodríguez Guerrero-Strachan's essay on Tobias Wolff's short stories provides a very competent account of the author's shorter fiction. However, after debating at length the relevance of Minimalism to his subject, the essayist appears to pass on to a discussion of Realism, without bringing the two concepts together in his conclusion.

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Lauro Zavala's article brings our awareness to a number of Central and South American authors working in a range of short fiction forms, minifictions and serial narratives, whose vibrant creativity suggests an emerging power in twenty-first century narrative culture.

Finally, Charles May's survey of the American twenty-first century short-story scene has all the hallmarks of a senior critic confident in his judgements after an academic lifetime dedicated to the study and theorisation of this genre. His criticism of Richard Ford's short fiction helps us understand why collections like *Women with Men* and *A Multitude of Sins* never came near to being a recognised masterpiece like his novel, *Independence Day*. Here, May does not choose to theorise further, but rather give us his clear-eyed take on the state of the art in the USA, recommending established and up-and-coming writers.

If I have any general criticism of the book, it is to question the limits of its coverage; it is strongly USA-centred, and while it introduces us to writers writing in Spanish (arguably taking us beyond the range of English Studies), it does not cover work from India, Australia or New Zealand, all countries with vibrant traditions in the genre. However, as it stands, this is an impressive collection of essays, three or four of which are of the first order. It is a recommendable addition to any short-story specialists' library.

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Received: 11 September 2013
Accepted: 24 September 2013

COMIC BOOKS AND AMERICAN CULTURAL HISTORY: AN ANTHOLOGY

Matthew Pustz, ed.

London and New York: Continuum, 2012.

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Year after year, the mass market leaves behind a trail of trendy and catchy products that never caught the audience's affection. Old vinyl records, not so-old CDs, obsolete cassettes, dusty psychothriller paperbacks, and tons and tons of comic books become the prey of avid and nostalgic hunters at night flea markets. When it comes to the academic consideration and analysis of comic books and graphic novels, this flea market nostalgia percolates through the words of many of the critics (Carrier 2000, Conget 2004). Many of them apologetically refer to their childhood as the main force behind their academic interest—concealed as distressing infantile obsessions— instead of presenting these texts as relevant primary sources.

Matthew Pustz, editor of *Comic Books and American Cultural History: An Anthology*, is no exception. He introduces his book by recounting how, as a kid, he was first acquainted with the old concept of history through the pages of *Marvel Team-Up #42*. Spider-Man, not a school teacher, taught him what history really is. In his introduction, Pustz labels this process “casual learning” (drawing on the concept of “collateral learning”, Johnson 2005) and explains that “there is a potential for the comics medium to teach serious topics in a way that might reach students differently and [...] more effectively than more traditional texts” (4). His aim in this book is to offer an account of comic books and graphic novels that could help in the teaching of US cultural history. To do so, the editor briefly

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introduces the book, compiles fifteen chapters and adds a further essay to the volume.

In general terms, this edited volume (which, despite its title, is not an anthology in the purest sense of the word, but a collection of brand-new essays) is a helpful companion for understanding US mainstream superhero comic books. My reservations are few and can be shortly enumerated here. For instance, the terms “comic book” and “graphic novel” are indiscriminately used throughout the book. Only one short statement is made to differentiate between these two subgenres. As the editor affirms, comic books “become respectable when they’re called ‘graphic novels’” (5). In the last five years, the debate on this topic has been huge and many proposals for distinguishing between comic books and graphic novels have been discussed (to name a few: Altarriba 1984; Eisner 2001; Gravett 2005; and Gómez 2013). The book could have benefitted from the many insights that these analyses have elicited, as they have offered a deeper understanding of the narrative iconical subgenres.

The use of comics as historical artefacts in Pustz’s volume follows the cultural materialist path of Cultural Studies heralded by Raymond Williams. In Williams’ words, it could be stated that this volume, “after analysis of particular works, seek[s] to relate them to the particular traditions and societies in which they appeared” (1998: 48). Although the anthology is titled *American Cultural History*, it only centres on North-American production, and more specifically, on US works. Works from countries like Canada, Argentina, or Mexico, American though they are, are neither considered nor mentioned in this collection. Although it may seem obvious to some readers, perhaps it could have been useful to make a small remark on the fact that only US works are analysed, and when they mention America, they refer only to the United States.

The corpus of texts analysed in the anthology comes mostly from mainstream comic books that have been published by the two biggest multinational mass media corporations in the world: Marvel Comics (currently owned by The Walt Disney Company) and DC Comics (currently owned by Time Warner Inc.). Unfortunately, in the book there is no real analysis of Underground Comix, or of the “alternative comics” movement of the 1990s (Hatfield 2005; Lopes 2009). The book provides a selective survey of the history of comic books and the cultural history of the United States, while it unwittingly supports the hegemonic and reactionary discourse of mass media corporations and their mainstream superhero narratives. In this fashion, throughout the volume, the authors employ a terminology that has been promoted by the marketing machinery of these two companies. They label the early superhero comic-book production the “Golden Age of Comics”, referring to the period from 1938 to the 1950s. Other ages follow: the Silver Age,

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the Bronze Age, and the Modern Age of Comics. It is important to highlight the fact that these ages only include superhero productions, and they overgeneralise and consider superhero themes as the sole representatives of comic books and graphic novels. This terminology has found its way into academic discussions in books like *The Power of Comics*, by Randy Duncan and Matthew J. Smith (2009), or the very recent works by Paul Levitz (2013a and 2013b).

Nonetheless, many other non-market oriented terminologies have been proposed. Paul Lopes, in *Demanding Respect*, analyses the history of comic-book production and distinguishes three periods: Early Industrial Age, the Late Industrial Age, the Heroic Age (2009). This terminology keeps in sight the cultural and historical moments when these works were created, without idealising the superhero fantasy of Marvel and DC comics. I believe that the articles included in Pustz's volume could have been greatly improved had they taken into account these other existing works.

Formally, the anthology is divided into four parts. Part I, "Doing Cultural History through Comic Books", opens with Jessamyn Neuhaus' chapter, which describes how comic books can be used as tools in the history classroom. Neuhaus, a historian, popular culture analyst and pedagogy expert, begins her article with a very unfortunate statement: "I don't find comic books—from any era— especially entertaining or enjoyable to read" (11). Fair enough, she does not enjoy reading comic books, but then I fail to understand her need to write about them. I think it is highly unlikely that a critique of a literary work or a film might start with a statement of that kind. Moreover, her claim to be familiar with all comic books, "from any era", sounds like an overstatement to say the least, especially since in her analysis she proceeds to focus only on a few US superhero comic books. Quite possibly, her opening words have been included as *captatio benevolentiae*, the oldest of rhetorical devices, to provoke a response in the reader. Besides, the author is obviously referring to those different ages of superhero comic books previously mentioned. In her text, Neuhaus offers a chapter centred on teaching practices, although she does not offer a deep analysis of the teaching value of comic books. The article proves tautological throughout, as it begins and ends with the statement that comics are "significant cultural artifacts" (20), but does not support it with any relevant empirical data.

The book's offerings improve with Chapter Two in which Bridget M. Marshall brilliantly analyses George O'Connor's adaptation of *Journey into Mohawk Country* (2006), a diary written by the seventeenth century Dutch explorer Harmen Meyndertsz van den Bogaert. Marshall's chapter not only presents the debate about the reliability of the primary sources for someone doing History; it also considers the use of peculiar combinations of words and images to construct

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new meanings. Additionally, Marshall points out the problems of re-imagining the past and the difficulties entailed in the depiction of gender, sexuality, and Native American cultures.

This first part of the anthology includes two more chapters: William Grady's analysis of *Preacher* (1995-2000), and Alison Mandaville's summary of the *Alexander Hamilton Trilogy* (2006). Grady describes how *Preacher* fits the generic conventions of the Western, while it relies on the structure of the Campbellian monomyth. A question that the chapter could have raised in the course of the description of the series' plot is why the Western genre is revamped in the form of a comic book at the end of the twentieth century.

Part Two, "Comic Books as Cultural Artifacts", is the most interesting section in the book, beginning with Martin Lund's "American Golem: Reading America through Super-New Dealers and the 'Melting Pot'". Lund discusses the creation of the most famous superhero, Superman, and argues that he stands for the values of Franklin Delano Roosevelt's New Deal politics in the late 1930s. As Lund explains, in *Action Comics #1* (1938): "Superman appears almost as a 'cartoonified' FDR [...] a hero that could translate comforting words into deeds" (89). Equally interesting, Chapter Six, by Jeanne Emerson Gardner, analyses the series, *Young Romance* (1947-1977), by Joe Simon and Jack Kirby. Simon and Kirby, creators of supercharacters like Captain America, were simultaneously instructing boys on how to be good and rightful patriots and educating girls on how to love and be loved. The works of this creative tandem are further analysed in Chapter Seven, where John Donovan describes how Simon and Kirby created another comic book series, *Fighting American*, so as to provide US society with a new superhero that could take on the fight against Communism. Although the chapter could have used the aforementioned ideas of critics like Lopes (2009), Donovan's text proves interesting to read and illuminating in its presentation of the connection between the creation of superheroes and political ideology.

The eighth chapter of the anthology tackles the issue of Chinese-American identity as depicted in the 1970s Marvel series, *Master of Kung Fu*. Although the historical background of Asiatic characters in superhero comics is thorough, Peter Lee's article superficially presents the plot at the expense of any deeper analysis. This is also the case for Chapter Eleven, where Todd Munson discusses Chinese-American identity through Gene Yang's graphic novel, *American Born Chinese* (2006). By contrast, chapters Nine and Ten convincingly analyse the "Crisis of Confidence" of the 1970s (as president Jimmy Carter described the pessimistic state of his country) and the consumerist agenda of Ronald Reagan's conservative politics of the 1980s. With regard to the latter period, Matthew Costello reflects on how Howard Chaykin's *American Flagg!* relies on a postmodernist aesthetics to depict

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the shallow commodification of sex, violence and “physical human drives” (165). Within the third part of the anthology, “Comic Books and Historical Identity”, Ben Bolling’s Chapter Thirteen deserves special mention as it offers a thorough review of the creation of the Marvel character, Northstar, one of the first—if not the very first—superhero to openly declare his homosexuality. This French Canadian mutant strikingly resembles Gaetan Dugas, the “Patient Zero” and “superspreader” of HIV/AIDS in the US. Bolling argues that Northstar, in his superhero universe, is also infected by the virus, so the world of mainstream comic books in effect would be depicting the US HIV/AIDS crisis.

Although titled “Comic Books and Contemporary History”, the last part of the book centres only on September 11, 2001. Depictions of other events that have taken place since then could have been a great contribution to this section, notably Warren Ellis and Juan José Ryp’s *Black Summer* (2007, on terrorism in the US), Kyle Baker’s *Special Forces* (2007, about the invasion of Iraq), or Kevin Greivoux and Geraldo Borges’s *ZMD: Zombies of Mass Destruction* (2008, an interplay between the trendy zombie genre and the “weapons of mass destruction” governmental discourse). From the chapters that make up this last part of the anthology, Yves Davo’s Chapter Fifteen can be highlighted as it convincingly discusses *American Widow* by Alissa Torres and Sungyoon Choi (2008) as an “autobiographical testimony, or *autographics*” (243), a graphic novel employing techniques that are proper to trauma narratives and that, therefore, invites a corresponding critical approach.

All in all, Matthew Pustz’s anthology can help readers discover many new aspects and anecdotes of US culture in relation to the mainstream superhero production. More demanding readers, however, are likely to be dissatisfied with the superficiality of the discussions it seeks to open.

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Received: 24 September 2013

Accepted: 8 October 2013

WOMEN'S IDENTITIES AND BODIES IN COLONIAL AND POSTCOLONIAL HISTORY AND LITERATURE

María Isabel Romero Ruiz, ed.

Newcastle, Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2012

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Women's Identities and Bodies in Colonial and Postcolonial History and Literature adds to the growing list of volumes of women's studies edited by María Isabel Romero Ruiz, Lecturer at the Universidad de Malaga, and arrives after *Identidad, Migración y Cuerpo Femenino como Fuente de Conocimiento y Transgresión* (2009) and *Cultural Migrations and Gendered Subjects: Colonial and Postcolonial Representations of the Female Body* (2011), both the result of her fruitful collaboration with another Universidad de Malaga scholar, Silvia Castro Borrego. Like those preceding volumes, *Women's Identities and Bodies* brings together eight essays by international scholars laying a strong emphasis on body politics and (post)colonial and transnational frameworks in their reading of contemporary women's writing. In the preface by David Walton—current President of IBACS, the Iberian Association of Cultural Studies—the collection is hailed as a sign of the growing tradition of cultural studies in Spain since 1995, and is further described as engaging with the politics of identity and representation from a broad Foucauldian focus. This general statement is further supported by the editor's own introduction emphasizing how the book addresses the analysis of the female body variously as “repositories of history and memory, as performative of gender, as the object of regulation and control, as victims of sexual exploitation and murder, but simultaneously as healing bodies, as migrant and hybrid bodies, and as maternal bodies, creating new identities for women that defy traditional essentialist ones” (2012: 1).

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Taking its cue from these guidelines, the first essay by Valerie Baisnée tackles autobiographical discourse in 1980s texts by two New Zealand authors, Janet Frame and Lauris Edmond. Drawing from Michel Foucault and Judith Butler, Baisnée reads the textualized bodies as interpellating the social order, particularly in its most conservative, repressive aspects, insofar as they attempt to impose middle-class values and *mores* on the female working-class (and therefore doubly deviant) self. Accepting such impositions, as Edmond does, results in alienation, but resisting them like Frame places her beyond the pale. Likewise, class also plays a relevant role in the approach used in other chapters in the volume, like Romero Ruiz's own study of the late nineteenth-century social purity movement in the United Kingdom, which came to redefine public spaces for the sake of middle-class values, thus either displacing the working class from enjoying these spaces or else compelling them to submit to the new models of appropriate, 'decent' behavior. Women, particularly prostitutes, were targeted by the new discourse of power that unfolded both in the form of legislation (e.g. the Criminal Law Amendment Act of 1885) as well as groups for moral improvement such as the National Vigilance Association, whose impact went beyond national borders. Similarly, class and (im)morality feature prominently in Beatriz Domínguez García's analysis of the representation of prostitution in fiction by Pat Barker and Kate Atkinson. Domínguez uses here the Kristevan concept of abjection in order to critique the process by which the 'public body' of the prostitute becomes a 'public corpse'. While the novels analysed might fall broadly under the label of detective fiction, the essay's running argument propounds that such objectification of the female body is part and parcel of the writers' aim of exposing the social stigmatization and exclusion these women suffer, whether they are English prostitutes or East European sex slaves.

Several chapters are devoted to gender in connection with race. Two strong essays by Wang Lei and Silvia Castro Borrego engage African American texts. Castro Borrego's analysis deals with the tragic mulatto stereotype, following its development throughout three landmarks of nineteenth-century black women's writing: Harriet Wilson's *Our Nig* (1859), Harriet Jacobs's *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl* (1861), and Frances W. E. Harper's *Iola Leroy* (1892). Castro Borrego addresses the issue of mixed-racedness in the protagonists as well as in two of the authors, unpacking the unsolved tensions between two opposite worlds, pointing out the strong temptation of passing for white, and suggesting the many omissions in texts that were meant for a white readership. Wang's own essay departs from insights from Jacques Lacan and Elizabeth Grosz in setting out to explore how the black female body, often scarred and tortured by the experience and legacy of slavery, may become the site of healing in Toni Morrison's *Sula* and *Beloved*. For Wang, Morrison's project entails remembering

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the body in its original, unsullied state in order to achieve a return to wholeness, a project that, of itself, challenges the pervasive commodification of black bodies in African American history.

Gendering memory in the Caribbean diaspora is the goal of Manuela Coppola's chapter, which addresses the female body as "travelling concept" in Caribbean women's poetry, reformulating at the same time Ian Chambers's notion of the liquid archive. The result is an enlightening examination of how poets such as Marlene NourbeSe Philip, Grace Nichols, Jean Binta Breeze and Lorna Goodison foreground the material woman's body in their poems so as to construct a kind of fluid bodily archive that allows them to traverse the many transatlantic routes of the historical Caribbean diaspora and so to critically relocate issues of memory by creating a 'bodymemory'. Another celebrated Caribbean writer, Jean Rhys, becomes the subject of Mariacristina Natalia Bertoli's chapter, which reconsiders her masterpiece *Wide Sargasso Sea* in intertextual connection not only with Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre* but also with William Shakespeare's *Othello*. According to Bertoli, the representation of the relationship between Antoinette and Rochester must be seen in the context of the imposition of a colonial frame of mind whereby the colonizer tames the "dark continent of female desire", ultimately turning their sexual encounter into the site of oppression, inequality, and violence. The remaining chapter in the collection takes a more positive angle in tackling another diasporan writer, Bharati Mukherjee. For stefanovici, Smaranda Mukherjee's texts acknowledge the racialization of South Asian subjects in western contexts, yet they also succeed in suggesting that there can be a fruitful dialogue in the meeting of cultures without entailing either mixing or merging. Instead, as Smaranda's reading of *A Wife's Story* proves, Mukherjee portrays a process of adaptation and transformation from outsider (racialized) to insider (bicultural), replacing a cultural collision with the cultural creation that results in a truly bicultural, and thus superior, body. On the whole, this is an exciting collection of essays and an outstanding addition to a growing corpus of feminist literary and cultural studies emerging from Spain, of which it is hoped we will see more, since all the essays provide much food for thought concerning the central role of the body in the construction of women's writing and in the process of women's/queer identity built with the help of a strong historical focus and supported by a suitable feminist methodology.

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Received: 30 April 2013

Accepted: 21 May 2013

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**MORMON MARRIAGE IS ALSO TERRESTRIAL:
A STUDY OF GENDER IN PHYLLIS BARBER'S *RAW EDGES*:
A MEMOIR**

Ángel Chaparro Sainz

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Phyllis Barber was raised as a member of the Mormon Church. In her fiction and in her autobiographies this is an important element opening realms suitable for analyzing her literature. Here I aim to analyze her contribution to Mormon feminist tradition. In her latest autobiography, *Raw Edges: A Memoir*, Barber approaches marriage as an institution, helping to illustrate the relevance that certain gender roles still have within Mormon culture. Through the confession of her own failure, Barber evokes earlier references in order to delve into topics dealing with gender issues within the Mormon culture.

Keywords: Phyllis Barber, Mormon literature, feminism, gender roles, autobiography.

Phyllis Barber creció en la cultura propia de la religión mormona. En su obra de ficción y en sus autobiografías, este factor juega un papel fundamental, ofreciendo nuevas posibilidades para analizar su obra. Aquí analizo su contribución a la tradición feminista mormona. En su autobiografía *Raw Edges: A Memoir*, se acerca al concepto de matrimonio como institución social, y contribuye a ilustrar la importancia que ciertos roles sociales tienen dentro de la comunidad mormona. A través del testimonio de su propio fracaso, Barber evoca referencias antiguas para penetrar en temas que conciernen a los estudios de género dentro de la cultura mormona.

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Palabras clave: Phyllis Barber, literatura mormona, feminismo, roles de género, autobiografía

“WHATEVER HER FAITH MAY BE”: SOME NOTES ON CATHOLICISM IN MARIA EDGEWORTH’S OEUVRE

Carmen María Fernández Rodríguez

The relationship between the Anglo-Irish writer Maria Edgeworth (1768-1849) and Catholicism has always been close and conditioned by the authoress's inscription in the Protestant Ascendancy and by her father's enlightened ideas. The intention of the present study is to reevaluate the role of Roman Catholics in the fictional and non-fictional texts some of which Edgeworth wrote alone and others in collaboration with her father. The Edgeworths were more interested in individual worth than in sectarianism and promoted the economic and intellectual advancement of Ireland, a process in which Catholics not only played an important part but also appeared in a quite favourable light. The defence and acceptance of Catholics is articulated in Edgeworth's works around the insistence on the education of the Irish Catholics and the depiction of the legitimisation of the Anglo-Irish landlord and his marriage to a woman of Catholic ancestry. It will be shown that, rather than embrace the position of a colonist, Edgeworth bravely attacked prejudice and abuses of power on the part of the English against the Irish and at the same time she foresaw a society where Roman Catholics would retain their identity and would also occupy the same social level as the rest of the British.

Keywords: Maria Edgeworth, catholicism, Ireland, colonialism, women's literature.

La relación entre la escritora angloirlandesa Maria Edgeworth (1768-1849) y el Catolicismo siempre ha sido estrecha y ha estado condicionada por la inscripción de la autora en la “Protestant Ascendancy” y por las ideas ilustradas de su padre. Este estudio pretende reevaluar el rol de los católicos en los textos de ficción y no ficción que Edgeworth escribió sola y en colaboración con su padre. Los Edgeworth se interesaban más por la valía individual que por el sectarismo y apoyaban el desarrollo económico e intelectual de Irlanda, proceso en el que los católicos jugaban un papel importante y aparecían caracterizados positivamente. La defensa y aceptación de los católicos se articula en las obras de Edgeworth a través de la insistencia en la educación de los católicos y la representación de la legitimación del señor anglo-irlandés y su matrimonio con una mujer de ascendencia católica. Se mostrará que, más que abrazar la posición de una colonizadora, Edgeworth atacó valientemente el prejuicio y abusos de poder por parte de los ingleses hacia los irlandeses, al mismo tiempo que preveía una sociedad

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en la que los católicos mantenían su identidad y se colocaban socialmente al nivel del resto de los británicos.

Palabras clave: Maria Edgeworth, catolicismo, Irlanda, colonialismo, literatura de autoría femenina.

CHICANO GANGS/CHICANA GIRLS: SURVIVING THE "WILD BARRIO"

Amaia Ibarra Bigalondo

The emergence and divulgation of a Chicana female identity is inevitably linked to the Chicana Movement, which favored the liberation and empowerment of this collective, long submitted to male dominance and social discrimination. Regardless of the obvious achievements of the Movement in the personal and communal spheres, the situation of many US barrios is still far from ideal, and Chicana adolescents are the victims of poor education resources, high teenage pregnancy rates and a still male dominated community. However, a large number of young Chicanas have opted to seek empowerment and a voice, by joining a collective that provides them with the visibility they lack among their peers and within mainstream society: the gang. The aim of this work is to show two different approaches to the same life situation, as portrayed in two contemporary Chicana novels, *Locas* (1997), by Yxta Maya Murray, and the autobiographical *Two Badges: The Lives of Mona Ruiz* (1997), in an attempt to expose the harsh situation these young women have to endure today and the possible ways out that these novels propose in such circumstances.

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Keywords: Chicana literature, adolescent girls, barrio life, gangs, violence.

Los orígenes y el posterior reconocimiento público de la identidad de las mujeres chicanas se encuentran directamente ligados al desarrollo del Movimiento Chicano Feminista, que luchó por la liberación y el empoderamiento de este colectivo, hasta entonces bajo la opresión del dominio patriarcal y una obvia discriminación social. No obstante, y a pesar de todos los logros del movimiento, la situación de un gran número de barrios norteamericanos en la actualidad dista mucho de ser la ideal, y muchas adolescentes chicanas carecen de recursos educativos de calidad, las cifras de embarazos entre las jóvenes son alarmantes, y la dominación masculina es todavía parte de su realidad. En este contexto desfavorecido, muchas deciden unirse a las bandas organizadas con el fin de buscar su voz y la visibilidad que tanto la sociedad en general como su propia comunidad les niega. El objetivo de este trabajo es el de mostrar, a través del análisis de dos novelas contemporáneas, *Locas* (1997) de Yxta Maya Murray y la autobiografía *Two Badges: The Lives of*

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Mona Ruiz (1997), dos modos de enfrentarse y afrontar esta opción, con el fin de exponer la terrible situación de estas adolescentes, así como las vías de escape que encuentran.

Palabras clave: literatura chicana, chicas adolescentes, barrio, pandillas, violencia.

MIDWINTER SPRING, THE STILL POINT AND DANTE. THE ASPIRATION TO THE ETERNAL PRESENT IN T.S. ELIOT'S FOUR QUARTETS

Dídac Llorens-Cubedo

The imagery of *Four Quartets* makes T. S. Eliot's indebtedness to Dante's poetic imagination evident. Among the images of Dantean inspiration, the "still point" and "midwinter spring" effectively express the concept of an eternal present, central to Eliot's poetic sequence. In the *Quartets*, opposites are reconciled and "past and future are gathered" at "the still point". This still point can be related to the image associated with God in canto XXVIII of Dante's *Paradiso*: a point of dazzling light. Midwinter spring, on the other hand, represents a state of spiritual fulfilment, out of time and space, and its depiction can be assumed to echo St Benedict's words in canto XXII of *Paradiso*. Both the still point and midwinter spring hint at the same referent (eternal present, or the timeless) and show that Eliot's fascination with the philosophical concept of time combines with his admiration for Dante's powerful imagination.

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Keywords: T. S. Eliot, Dante, *Four Quartets*, *The Divine Comedy*, still point, midwinter spring, poetry, imagery, modernism, intertextuality, sources.

La imaginería de *Four Quartets*, de T. S. Eliot, evidencia una clara influencia de Dante. Entre las imágenes de inspiración dantesca, "el punto inmóvil" y "la primavera en invierno" (trad. Esteban Pujals) expresan el concepto de presente eterno, fundamental en esta secuencia poética. Las oposiciones se neutralizan y "el presente y el pasado se reúnen" en "el punto inmóvil", el cual guarda relación con la imagen de Dios en el canto XXVIII de *Paradiso*: un punto de luz cegadora. "La primavera en invierno", por otra parte, representa un estado de plenitud espiritual, fuera del tiempo y el espacio, y su descripción recuerda las palabras de San Benito en el canto XXII de *Paradiso*. Las dos imágenes tienen, por tanto, un referente común (un presente eterno, o lo intemporal) y demuestran que Eliot combinó la fascinación por el concepto filosófico del tiempo con su admiración por la poderosa imaginación de Dante.

Palabras clave: T. S. Eliot, Dante, *Four Quartets*, *La divina comedia*, "el punto inmóvil", "la primavera en invierno", poesía, imaginería, modernismo, intertextualidad, fuentes literarias.

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THE THEME OF THE SHATTERED SELF IN TONI MORRISON'S *THE BLUEST EYE AND A MERCY*

Manuela López Ramírez

Throughout her fiction Toni Morrison has frequently dealt with traumatized individuals, who usually belong to minority groups, especially Blacks. The fragmentation of the self and the search for identity are pervasive themes of her novels. In *The Bluest Eye* and *A Mercy* Morrison explores the passage to adulthood of two deeply traumatized teenage girls. Victimized communities or those under the threat of violence, such as primeval America, discriminate and denigrate their weakest members. Thus Pecola and Sorrow are vulnerable victims of social oppression, scapegoats. In a critical stage of their subjectivity development psychosis becomes, for these young girls, a coping strategy to survive in a hostile environment.

Keywords: split-self, black, traumatized, scapegoat, community.

En su ficción, Toni Morrison ha tratado frecuentemente con individuos traumatizados, que suelen pertenecer a grupos minoritarios, especialmente de raza negra. La fragmentación del individuo y la búsqueda de identidad son temas omnipresentes en sus novelas. En *The Bluest Eye* y *A Mercy*, Morrison explora el pasaje a la madurez de dos adolescentes profundamente traumatizadas. Las comunidades victimizadas o aquellas bajo amenaza de violencia, tales como los Estados Unidos en su orígenes, discriminan y denigran a sus miembros más débiles. Así, Pecola y Sorrow son víctimas vulnerables de la opresión social, sus chivos expiatorios. En un estado crítico de su desarrollo psicológico, estas jóvenes convierten su psicosis en una estrategia para hacer frente y sobrevivir en un ambiente hostil.

Palabras claves: identidad fragmentada, negro, traumatizado, chivo expiatorio, comunidad.

POWER AND VIRTUE IN ELKANAH SETTLE'S *IBRAHIM*

Mohammad Ahmed Rawashdeh

Throughout the Medieval and Renaissance periods, British literary works concerned with the Orient served to underpin negative opinions about the people, and particularly the rulers, of the region. One might have expected the significant social, political and religious changes that were brought about by the Civil Wars and the Enlightenment to have altered that trend. However, uncomplimentary aspects of Middle Eastern life, as it was understood by Western writers, continued to circulate during the Restoration and eighteenth century.

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One writer stands out among the playwrights and authors of the period. In contrast to his contemporaries, Elkanah Settle extends the impact of the prevailing positive atmosphere beyond the shores of Britain and projects it into the Orient. In his play *Ibrahim*, Settle presents an Oriental ruler who shows true merit in his character, rather than the usual despotic and dictatorial traits adhered to in other plays of the genre. The ruler, Solyman, possesses a level of virtue which makes his family members and his subjects alike admire him and even allows them to criticize, and even rebuke him, when he deviates from the path of honor and virtue. Solyman has wisdom enough to seek advice, accept criticism, admit his weakness and try to redress the injuries he has caused to others by his recklessness. These are rare abilities among the rulers portrayed in Oriental plays of the period. The aim of this article is, therefore, to affirm how Settle, as a writer of a particular genre at a particular point in history, differs greatly from his contemporaries, apparently showing a much more positive face to life in the Orient.

Keywords: drama, Restoration, Orient, Elkanah Settle, *Ibrahim*.

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A lo largo del período Medieval y Renacentista, los escritos orientales sirvieron para respaldar las opiniones negativas sobre la gente, y en particular los líderes, de la región. Se podría haber esperado que los significativos cambios sociales, políticos y religiosos que fueron provocados por las guerras civiles y la Ilustración hubiesen cambiado esta tendencia. Sin embargo, durante la Restauración y el siglo dieciocho se siguieron presentando aspectos poco halagadores de la vida en el Oriente Medio, tal y como la entendían los escritores occidentales.

Hay un escritor que destaca entre los dramaturgos y autores de la época. Al contrario que sus contemporáneos, Elkanah Settle extiende el impacto de la atmosfera principalmente positiva más allá de las orillas del Reino Unido y lo proyecta en el Oriente. En su obra de teatro, Settle presenta un dirigente oriental que muestra verdadero mérito en su persona, en vez de las características despóticas y dictatoriales habituales en otras obras del género. El dirigente, Solyman, posee un nivel de virtud que hace que tanto los miembros de su familia como sus súbditos le admiren y se atreven a criticarlo, incluso a reprimirlo, cuando se aleja del camino de honor y virtud. Solyman tiene la suficiente sabiduría como para buscar consejo, aceptar las críticas, admitir su debilidad y tratar de reparar el daño que ha causado a otros con su imprudencia. Estas son habilidades raras entre los dirigentes retratados en las obras orientales de la época. El propósito de este artículo es por lo tanto confirmar como Settle, como escritor de un género específico en un momento específico en la historia, difiere en gran medida de sus contemporáneos, mostrando aparentemente un cara de la vida en Oriente mucho más positiva.

Palabras claves: teatro, Restauración, Oriente, Elkanah, Settle, *Ibrahim*.

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HE STOOPS TO CONQUER: FIELDING AND ENGLISH SONG

Charles Trainor

Given Fielding's noteworthy achievement as a songwriter, two puzzling issues arise. First, why are his lyrics so superior to his poetry, and second, why did he become immersed in popular song when he had limited respect for the form? The second question is the more easily answered: the often impecunious Fielding embraced ballad opera after noting the monumental success of *The Beggar's Opera*. Its appeal for him, though, was not simply financial as its attack on Italian opera and use of songs to make moral points also attracted him. Once underway, however, his career as a lyricist quickly revealed his talent for word-painting, as he skillfully used music to reinforce his words' meaning; and he integrated his airs so smoothly into the action that many are written as dialogue, giving them dramatic force. He also proved highly adept at setting new words to old melodies, using the previous lyrics to provide an interpretive framework for his own. Ironically, too, his limited respect for the genre contributed to his success as he abandoned the stilted and elevated style of his poetry and adopted popular music's easy informality. Indeed, if English song was 'low', it was ultimately by stooping that Fielding conquered.

Keywords: Fielding, eighteenth century, song, aesthetics, theatre.

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Dado el éxito notable de Fielding como compositor, cabe plantearse dos cuestiones desconcertantes. En primer lugar, ¿por qué son sus letras tan superiores a su poesía?, y, en segundo lugar, ¿por qué se vio tan inmerso en la canción popular cuando tenía un respeto muy limitado hacia ella? La segunda pregunta es la más sencilla de contestar: un Fielding a menudo falto de dinero abrazó la ópera de balada después de darse cuenta del éxito monumental de *The Beggar's Opera*. Sin embargo, su atractivo para él no era sólo económico, también le atraía su ataque a la ópera italiana y su uso de canciones para subrayar aspectos morales. Sin embargo, una vez que empezó, su carrera como compositor reveló su talento para pintar con palabras ya que utilizó de forma muy habilidosa la música para reforzar el significado de sus palabras; e integró sus aires tan bien en la acción que muchos están escritos como diálogo, dándoles gran fuerza dramática. También resultó ser muy adepto en poner nueva letra a melodías antiguas, utilizando la letra anterior para proporcionar un marco interpretativo para su trabajo. Irónicamente, su respeto limitado por el género contribuyó a su éxito ya que abandonó el estilo elevado y forzado de su poesía y adoptó la informalidad sencilla de la música popular. De hecho, si la canción inglesa era 'baja', fue al rebajarse que Fielding conquistó.

Palabras clave: Fielding, siglo XVIII, canción, estética, teatro.

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...following Blakemore (1987: 35),...
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NEALE, Steve. 1992. "The Big Romance or Something Wild? Romantic Comedy Today". *Screen* 33 (3): 284-299.

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

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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We would like to thank all the colleagues who, without belonging to our Editorial Board, were willing to revise and assess some of the contributions.

