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Transatlantic Dialogues and Gendered Narratives

Selected Papers from the
46th International Conference of
Spanish Association of Anglo-American Studies (AEDEAN)

Francisco Alonso-Almeida and Carmen Luján-García (Coords.)

EBOOK

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PREFACE

Hosting the 46th Annual Conference of AEDEAN (Asociación Española de Estudios AngloNorteamericanos) at the Universidad de Las Palmas de Gran Canaria from November 8th to 10th, 2023, was a remarkable occasion for our institution. This was the second time the annual AEDEAN Conference was celebrated in the Canary Islands, with the first being held in La Laguna (Tenerife) in 2017. However, it marked the first time in the history of this esteemed association that Las Palmas de Gran Canaria had the honor of hosting the event. Bringing such a prestigious conference to our city, university, and department was a tremendous privilege and an invaluable opportunity to display our dedication to advancing English studies. The organization of this conference presented significant challenges, but it also highlighted the strength and unity of our Departamento de Filología Moderna, Traducción e Interpretación, to whom we show our appreciation for the enormous support given. The success of this event was made possible by the unwavering cooperation and dedication of a committed team of some professors and students, whose efforts before, during, and after the conference ensured a scholarly event of the highest caliber.

Firstly, we extend our heartfelt thanks to the volunteer graduate and undergraduate students whose enthusiasm and hard work were instrumental in the smooth execution of the conference. Secondly, we express our deep gratitude to the AEDEAN Executive Board for their trust in our department and their steadfast support and guidance throughout the planning and organization process. We also owe a debt of gratitude to the panel coordinators and the blind reviewers who meticulously evaluated the papers presented, ensuring the academic rigor of the conference. Our appreciation extends to the sponsors who collaborated with us: the Department of Modern Languages, Translating and Interpreting and the Faculty of Translating and Interpreting at the Universidad de Las Palmas de Gran Canaria. Additionally, we acknowledge the generous support of the Town Hall of Moya, which facilitated a memorable visit for participants to this beautiful village.

Hosting an event of this magnitude fills our department with pride, as it significantly contributes to the consolidation and expansion of English studies in our country. The presence of approximately 270 attendees underscored the importance of forums like this conference, where scholars in the field of English studies can share, exchange, and enrich their research and insights.

The title of this volume, *Crossing Boundaries: Transatlantic Dialogues and Gendered Narratives*, reflects the diverse and thought-provoking nature of the selected papers. This ebook, comprising sixteen contributions, is organized into two sections: *Cultural crossings and transatlantic discourses* and *Narratives by or about women*. Despite their apparent diversity, both sections converge on cultural and gender aspects from both historical and contemporary perspectives. The selected papers encompass a wide range of topics, including identity, gender representations, social justice, mental health, transmodernity, cultural themes and intertextuality. These subjects are of enduring interest to scholars in the field of English Studies and to anyone intrigued by these compelling topics.

We hope this volume provides valuable insights and fosters further discussions among scholars and readers alike, contributing to the ongoing exploration and understanding of transatlantic dialogues and gendered narratives.

1. Setting the context for 'Crossing Boundaries: Transatlantic Dialogues and Gendered Narratives'

Francisco Alonso-Almeida and Carmen Luján-García

1.1. Introduction

The volume *Crossing Boundaries: Transatlantic Dialogues and Gendered Narratives* explores the multidimensional interactions between cultures, histories, and identities across the Atlantic, without ignoring the role of language within this entire framework. By examining a diverse array of literary and cultural texts, this collection highlights the dynamic and ongoing dialogues that transcend geographical and temporal boundaries. The volume is divided into two sections: *Cultural crossings and transatlantic discourses* and *Narratives By or about women*. Each section provides a deep introspection into the ways in which language, literature, media, and cultural expressions reflect and shape the experiences of diverse communities.

The first section, *Cultural crossings and transatlantic discourses*, focuses on the historical and cultural exchanges that have shaped the identities and narratives of different communities. By examining the impact of media, literature, and linguistic developments, the articles in this section emphasize the significance of cultural interaction and transformation in fostering a deeper understanding of transatlantic dialogues.

The second section, *Narratives by or about women*, focuses on the literary and cultural representations of women's experiences across different contexts and periods. This section follows a chronological order, beginning with historical analyses and moving towards contemporary and thematic studies. By examining how gender roles and social expectations have shaped the narratives of women, these articles provide a comprehensive understanding of the evolution of female representation in literature. Together, these two sections in the volume seek to offer a comprehensive exploration of transatlantic dialogues and gendered narratives, providing valuable insights into the cultural, historical, language and literary interactions that shape our understanding of identitarian traits.

1.2. Cultural Crossings and Transatlantic Discourses

The article "Miguel de Zárraga and the magazine La Tribuna de Nueva York" by Juan Antonio Sánchez Jiménez opens this section. This work presents a comprehensive historical account of the inception and development of *La Tribuna*, the first significant modern illustrated magazine in Spanish in the United States. One of its primary assets lies in detailing the magazine's foundational years, emphasizing its essential role in catering to the cultural and informational needs of the Spanish-speaking immigrant community in New York City during the early 20th century. The article highlights the collaborative efforts of businessperson Jaime Vilar Lago and journalist Miguel de Zárraga, showcasing their vision and determination to establish a Spanish-language publication that combined news, cultural commentary, and vibrant illustrations.

A significant contribution of this work is its in-depth biographical insight into Miguel de Zárraga's life and career. It chronicles his journey from Spain to Cuba and eventually to New York, where he became a central figure in the Hispanic cultural scene. His editorial leadership and innovative approach to journalism are underscored, illustrating how he infused *La Tribuna* with a sense of pride and unity among Spanish-speaking readers, while also introducing modern journalistic practices inspired by leading Spanish publications like *ABC* and *Blanco y Negro*. Additionally, the article places *La Tribuna* within a broader cultural and historical context, explaining how it addressed the needs of a growing immigrant community

by providing news, cultural content, and a platform for intellectual exchange. The magazine's evolution under Zárraga's direction, including its expansion in content, format, and influence, is meticulously documented, displaying its impact on the Hispanic community in New York and beyond. Moreover, the text acknowledges the broader implications of *La Tribuna*'s contributions to transatlantic dialogues and gendered narratives, positioning it as a pioneering force in the landscape of Spanish-language media in the United States. This said, Sánchez Jiménez's article stands out for its thorough research, detailed narrative, and its ability to connect the historical significance of *La Tribuna* with broader themes of immigration, cultural identity and media evolution.

Eduardo José Varela Bravo's article "Anti-Catholic Literature: Joseph Blanco White as Pretext of Authenticity in Two Escaped Nun Narratives" provides a systematic analysis of how Joseph Blanco White's anti-Catholic views were appropriated in 19th-century American nativist literature. The article's primary strength lies in its detailed examination of the reception and manipulation of Blanco White's testimony on convent life, particularly during his Anglican period (1812-1835). By tracing the references to Blanco White in various publications up to the 1880s, Varela Bravo illustrates the ongoing impact and contentious nature of his works. An important part of this article is its exploration of the ideological and literary appropriation of Blanco White's testimony in two sensationalist escaped nun narratives: Rosamond Culbertson's *Rosamond* (1836) and Josephine M. Bunkley's *The Testimony of an Escaped Novice* (1855). Varela Bravo highlights the discrepancies between Blanco White's rational and theological critiques of Catholicism and the sensationalist, often fabricated, nature of these nativist works. This contrast underscores the illegitimate use of Blanco White as a pretext to lend credibility to anti-Catholic propaganda, revealing the broader mechanisms of literary and ideological distortion.

Moreover, the article focuses on the broader implications of Blanco White's denunciations of celibacy, confession, and convent life, noting how his arguments were rooted in personal experience and aimed at rational critique rather than sensationalism. Varela Bravo's analysis positions Blanco White's works within the context of their reception by different religious and political factions, showing how his testimony was both contested and co-opted to serve various agendas. This comprehensive approach not only sheds light on Blanco White's intellectual and religious journey but also on the broader cultural and ideological battles of the time. Varela Bravo's article contributes, thus, to the volume by offering a positioned understanding of how transatlantic exchanges influenced religious and gendered narratives in the 19th century. The study underscores the importance of examining the reception and appropriation of intellectual works across diverse cultural and ideological contexts, thereby enriching our understanding of the relationships at play between transatlantic literary and religious discourses.

In the subsequent chapter, the study "The English Language of Seventeenth-Century Ireland: A Corpus Analysis of the 1641 Depositions" by Seamus Johnston, Zeltia Blanco-Suárez and Teresa Fanego provides a significant contribution to the understanding of the historical development of Irish English. The research focuses on the use of periphrastic *do* in the 1641 Depositions, a collection of witness testimonies recorded after the Irish rebellion of 1641. By analyzing a sub-corpus of these depositions, the authors offer valuable insights into the linguistic features of early Modern Irish English, particularly in comparison with British English. One of the study's primary assets is its methodological rigor. The authors employ a corpus-based analysis to retrieve and examine instances of periphrastic *do*, providing a detailed breakdown of its usage in affirmative declarative clauses. This approach not only ensures the reliability of their findings but also allows for an understanding of how this linguistic feature was used in different contexts. The analysis reveals that periphrastic *do* was not only prevalent

in early Modern Irish English but also frequently expressed habitual aspect, a feature that distinguishes it from British English of the same period.

Another noteworthy contribution of this study is its contextualization of the linguistic data within the broader socio-historical landscape of seventeenth-century Ireland. The authors discuss the impact of the English plantations and the subsequent rebellion on the linguistic shift from Irish to English, highlighting how these historical events influenced the development of Irish English. This contextualization enriches the linguistic analysis by linking it to the social, cultural, and political subtleties of the time, thereby providing a comprehensive understanding of the evolution of Irish English. Furthermore, the study engages with existing scholarship on the topic, comparing its findings with previous research on periphrastic do in Early Modern British English. This comparative approach not only situates the research within the broader field of historical linguistics but also highlights the unique features of Irish English. By identifying and analyzing instances of habitual periphrastic *do* that predate previously recorded examples, the authors add new knowledge to the field, challenging existing assumptions and opening avenues for further research. In short, the study by Johnston, Blanco-Suárez and Fanego offers a meticulously researched and contextually rich examination of a key linguistic feature in early Modern Irish English. Its findings have significant implications for our understanding of the historical development of English in Ireland and its divergence from British English.

The following chapter is Pedro Mora-Ramírez's article, “Protect Britain. Report all illegal immigrants”: Hospitality and Resistance in Alfonso Cuarón’s *Children of Men*. It provides a compelling analysis of the film through the lenses of hospitality, vulnerability, and resistance. Set in a dystopian future where human infertility leads to the United Kingdom becoming a police state, *Children of Men* explores the harsh treatment of asylum seekers and the socio-political implications of such a reality. A major strength of this article is its theoretical framework, which draws on the works of Jacques Derrida, Sara Ahmed and Judith Butler. Mora-Ramírez uses these theorists to examine how hospitality is configured in the film, stressing, therefore, the tension between unconditional and conditional hospitality as proposed by Derrida. This approach allows for a nuanced understanding of how the film portrays the acceptance and rejection of migrants based on their perceived normativity.

The analysis also benefits from an in-depth exploration of the affective dimensions of the film. By focusing on emotions such as hate and disgust, Mora-Ramírez illustrates how these feelings are used to justify hostility towards migrants. The article discusses how the national body in the film identifies certain groups as threats, thereby legitimizing exclusionary practices. This perspective aligns with Ahmed's analysis of how emotions shape social and political forces. Another major asset is the discussion of resilience and resistance. Mora-Ramírez contrasts the notions of resilience, which he critiques for being co-opted by neoliberal ideologies, with resistance, which he views as a more effective response to oppression. This distinction is crucial for understanding the actions of the characters in *Children of Men*, particularly Theo and Kee, who steer a hostile environment by developing strategies of nonviolent resistance.

The article also addresses the broader socio-political context of the film, linking its depiction of a post-9/11 world to contemporary issues of national security and xenophobia. By doing so, Mora-Ramírez situates the film within ongoing debates about migration, climate change, and global conflict, making the analysis relevant to current discussions on these topics. Altogether, Mora-Ramírez's article offers a sophisticated analysis of *Children of Men* and demonstrates how the film engages with complex issues of hospitality, vulnerability, and resistance. The use of theoretical insights from Derrida, Ahmed, and Butler enriches the discussion, providing a comprehensive understanding of the film's socio-political commentary.

This makes the article an important contribution to the exploration of transatlantic dialogues and gendered narratives in contemporary cinema.

Finally, Ángel Chaparro Sainz, Amaia Ibarraran-Bigalondo, David Río Raigadas and Jesús Ángel González López's article "The West Is the Place: New Reflections on Place and Identity in the American West" offers an insightful and multi-layered exploration of the representation of the American West in various cultural forms. By examining literature, music, cinema, and television, the authors present a comprehensive analysis that underscores the diverse and complex ways in which the American West has been depicted and understood. One of the main strengths of this article is its interdisciplinary approach. By incorporating analyses from different genres and media, the authors provide a holistic view of how the American West is represented. This approach allows for a richer appreciation of the cultural significance of the West, as each medium offers unique insights and perspectives. For instance, the analysis of Willy Vlautin's songs features the narrative and affective dimensions of Western landscapes, while the examination of Robert Laxalt's novel *The Basque Hotel* focuses on the interplay between place and identity from the perspective of a Basque immigrant family.

Another significant contribution of the article is its engagement with both historical and contemporary perspectives. The authors trace the evolution of Western representation from Frederick Jackson Turner's frontier thesis to modern revisionist readings, demonstrating how the concept of the West has been contested and redefined over time. This historical depth enriches the analysis and situates contemporary representations within a broader cultural and intellectual context. The article also makes a valuable contribution by addressing the intersection of place and identity. Each section explores how specific locations and settings influence the characters' sense of self and belonging. For example, the analysis of the Netflix series *Godless* interrogates the construction of a "feminist Western" and examines how the setting reinforces or challenges traditional gender hierarchies. Similarly, the discussion of transnational Western movies highlights how Spanish filmmakers use Western settings to explore themes of national identity and cultural memory.

Furthermore, the article's nuanced discussion of cultural hybridity and transnational influences is particularly noteworthy. By examining how Western motifs are adapted and reinterpreted in distinct cultural contexts, the authors illuminate the global resonance of the Western genre and its capacity to address universal themes of place, identity, and belonging. Its interdisciplinary approach, historical depth and focus on the intersection of place and identity provide a comprehensive and nuanced understanding of the American West. The article not only enriches our awareness of Western representation but also highlights the cultural and intellectual significance of this iconic region.

1.3. Narratives by or about women

Opening this section, Lydia Freire Gargamala's chapter, "Exploring Female Agency in Elizabeth Griffith's *The History of Lady Barton* (1771): A Study of Gender and Society," provides a nuanced exploration of female characters and their agency within the oppressive social structures of the 18th century. The study is grounded in a thorough analysis of Griffith's novel, highlighting the experiences of the protagonists, Louisa Barton and Olivia Walter, as they manage the constraints imposed by a patriarchal society. One of the article's key strengths is its critical examination of the social biases that confine women, portraying those who challenge these norms as monstrous or criminal. Gargamala neatly argues that women's resistance to conformity often leads to their depiction as mad or deviant while emphasizing how social expectations shape the representation of female characters in literature. This critical perspective is supported by detailed textual analysis which reveals how Louisa and Olivia's experiences reflect broader community anxieties about female autonomy and agency.

The article contributes meaningfully to the understanding of gender roles and social expectations in the 18th century. By focusing on Louisa Barton's and Olivia Walter's narratives, Gargamala illustrates the pervasive influence of male dominance and the severe consequences faced by women who defy social norms. The analysis of Louisa's tragic end, marked by her internalization of guilt and ultimate demise, underscores the destructive impact of patriarchal repression on women's mental and physical well-being. Similarly, Olivia's story highlights the dire consequences of being ensnared in a socially and legally invalid relationship, ultimately leading to her social ostracism and confinement. Gargamala's discussion of the convent as both a refuge and a site of repression is particularly insightful. This duality reflects the complex reality of women's lives within patriarchal societies, where spaces intended for protection can simultaneously reinforce social constraints. The chapter effectively uses this ambivalence to deepen the reader's perception of the limited avenues available to women seeking to escape oppressive conditions.

Furthermore, the article's engagement with secondary literature, including works by Jane Spencer and Ellen Pollak, situates Griffith's novel within the broader context of 18th-century literature and feminist thought. This scholarly dialogue enriches the analysis and provides a comprehensive view of the cultural and historical factors influencing the representation of women in Griffith's work. "Exploring Female Agency in Elizabeth Griffith's *The History of Lady Barton* (1771): A Study of Gender and Society" offers a critical and nuanced examination of female agency, highlighting the complex relationship among gender, social expectations and individual identity in 18th-century literature.

In the following chapter, Ivana Jocelyn Colorado Orihuela's article provides a pioneering exploration of Frances Hodgson Burnett's works through the lens of ecofeminism, positioning Burnett as a proto-ecofeminist writer. The study focuses on three of Burnett's well-known children's novels—*A Little Princess*, *The Troubles of Queen Silver-Bell*, and *The Secret Garden*—to illustrate how Burnett's narratives challenge traditional gender roles and the anthropocentric view of nature. One of the article's main strengths is its innovative approach, applying ecofeminist theory to early 20th-century children's literature. This theoretical framework, informed by scholars like Françoise d'Eaubonne, Val Plumwood and Vandana Shiva, allows Colorado Orihuela to argue convincingly that Burnett's works reflect an early understanding of the interconnectedness of gender and environmental issues. By highlighting the interdependent relationships between humans and nature in Burnett's novels, the article opens up new avenues for interpreting these texts and appreciating their ecological and feminist dimensions.

The close readings of the novels provide concrete examples of how Burnett portrays the natural world as an active, almost magical entity that interacts with the characters in transformative ways. For instance, the analysis of *A Little Princess* shows how Sara finds solace and hope in the sparrows she observes from her attic, while *The Secret Garden* is discussed as a space where Mary and Collin undergo significant personal growth through their engagement with the garden. These readings effectively demonstrate how Burnett's characters develop a profound, respectful relationship with nature, which challenges the traditional patriarchal and colonialist views of nature as a resource to be dominated. Another substantial contribution of this chapter is the examination of Burnett's depiction of gender roles. Colorado Orihuela discusses how Burnett subverts the conventional notion of women as the innate caretakers of nature by presenting both female and male characters who nurture and protect the natural world. The character of Dickon in *The Secret Garden* is particularly highlighted as an example of a new form of masculinity that is harmonious with nature. This approach not only enriches the analysis of Burnett's novels but also contributes to broader discussions on ecofeminism by suggesting that ecological consciousness is not limited to one gender.

Moreover, the article situates Burnett's work within the historical and cultural context of late Victorian and early 20th-century Britain, a time when the British Empire was at its height. By doing so, Colorado Orihuela underscores the radical nature of Burnett's ecological and feminist perspectives, as they challenge the dominant colonial and patriarchal ideologies of the time. In short, "I Didn't Own the Robin – He Owned Me": The Representation of Animals and Nature in Frances Burnett's *A Little Princess* (1905), *The Troubles of Queen Silver-Bell* (1906) and *The Secret Garden* (1911) offers a fresh and insightful analysis of Burnett's works. It demonstrates their relevance to contemporary ecofeminist thought.

In the subsequent chapter, Alejandro Nadal-Ruiz's article, "Registering the Collective Suffering of the Underdog: Embedded Trauma Narratives in Jean Rhys's *Good Morning, Midnight*," gives a profound examination of how Rhys intertwines personal and collective trauma in her writing. By evaluating Rhys's last interwar novel through the lens of trauma theory and Leigh Gilmore's notion of the 'limit-case,' Nadal-Ruiz provides a compelling exploration of how Rhys uses her narratives to depict the shared suffering of marginalized individuals. A major strength of this article consists of the insightful application of contemporary trauma theory to Rhys's work. Nadal-Ruiz deploys Gilmore's concept of the 'limit-case' to argue that Rhys's narrative blends autobiographical elements with fictionalized accounts to depict trauma authentically. This approach helps to reveal how Rhys's writing transcends the introspective focus of modernist literature by turning personal introspection into a broader relational testimony that connects her own experiences with those of other marginalized figures.

The article highlights Rhys's ability to create a multidimensional narrative that addresses the plight of the 'underdog'—a term Rhys's mentor, Ford Madox Ford, used to describe her focus on marginalized characters. By embedding narratives of various marginalized individuals within the broader story of the protagonist, Sasha Jansen, Rhys effectively amplifies the voices of the socially invisible and dispossessed. This narrative technique not only enriches the main storyline but also underscores Rhys's empathetic engagement with the suffering of others. Nadal-Ruiz's detailed analysis of the embedded narratives in *Good Morning, Midnight* further illustrates Rhys's commitment to depicting the interconnectedness of personal and collective trauma. For instance, the article examines how Sasha's interactions with characters like the bald woman, the cabaret singer Lise and the young woman working in the tabac reflect her own sense of alienation and community rejection. These embedded stories provide poignant snapshots of underdog life and underline the shared emotional and psychological struggles of those living on the margins of society.

The chapter also addresses Rhys's innovative narrative style, which blurs the lines between autobiography and fiction. By doing so, Rhys challenges traditional boundaries of genre and creates a space where the personal and the collective intersect. This narrative strategy allows Rhys to construct a more comprehensive and nuanced depiction of trauma, one that resonates with contemporary understandings of intersectional trauma theory. Nadal-Ruiz argues that this intersectionality is crucial for perceiving the full impact of traumatic experiences on individuals who face multiple forms of oppression. In conclusion, Nadal-Ruiz's paper significantly enriches our view of Jean Rhys's *Good Morning, Midnight*. By framing the novel within the context of trauma theory and focusing on the collective suffering of marginalized characters, the article provides a fresh and insightful perspective on Rhys's work. It emphasizes the enduring relevance of Rhys's writing in contemporary discussions on trauma and empathy, showcasing her ability to capture the complex interplay between individual and collective experiences of suffering. This chapter convincingly features the ways in which Rhys's work continues to inspire and inform current literary and cultural debates.

In Daniel Nisa Cáceres' "Rape Culture and Consent in Contemporary Anglophone Women's Rewritings of the Classical Tradition," the reader finds an incisive analysis of how

modern women authors reinterpret classical myths to challenge and subvert the traditional narratives of sexual violence and consent. By examining works such as Elizabeth Cook's *Achilles* (2001), Pat Barker's *The Silence of the Girls* (2018), Jennifer Saint's *Ariadne* (2021), and Natalie Haynes' *Stone Blind* (2022), the paper underscores the critical importance of these reimaginings in addressing rape culture and promoting a culture of consent. One of the article's strengths is its critical engagement with the concept of rape myths, which are pervasive false beliefs about rape that perpetuate victim-blaming and minimize the severity of sexual violence. Nisa Cáceres effectively situates these myths within the broader context of classical literature, highlighting how ancient texts often normalized and legitimized sexual violence. By doing so, a compelling framework for considering how contemporary rewritings seek to dismantle these harmful narratives is provided.

The analysis of Pat Barker's *The Silence of the Girls* is particularly illuminating. Nisa Cáceres discusses how Barker foregrounds the experiences of Briseis and other Trojan women, who are depicted not merely as victims but as individuals with agency and resilience. This shift in perspective is crucial for challenging the dehumanizing portrayal of women in classical texts and for emphasizing their humanity and dignity. Barker's narrative exposes the intersectionality of sexual violence, showing how women from all social backgrounds suffer under patriarchal oppression.

Similarly, the article's discussion of Elizabeth Cook's *Achilles* sheds light on how Cook reinterprets the character of Helen and other mythological figures to critique the systemic nature of sexual violence. By portraying Helen's rape and subsequent objectification, Cook invites readers to reconsider the long-held assumptions about her culpability and agency. This narrative strategy not only humanizes Helen but also critiques the cultural and literary traditions that have historically silenced and misrepresented her story. In examining Natalie Haynes' *Stone Blind* and Jennifer Saint's *Ariadne*, Nisa Cáceres evinces how these authors reclaim the stories of Medusa and other female characters, presenting them as figures of strength and resilience. Haynes' portrayal of Medusa, in particular, challenges the traditional monster narrative by revealing the injustices she endured and her victimization by the gods. This reimagining serves to debunk the myth that victims of sexual violence are to blame for their suffering and instead emphasizes the importance of understanding and empathy.

The paper also addresses the broader implications of these contemporary rewritings for feminist theory and cultural critique. By aligning their creative works with feminist and gender theory, these authors not only challenge androcentric representations of rape but also promote a culture of consent. This alignment underscores the transformative potential of literature to change cultural attitudes towards sexual violence and to advocate for a more just and equitable society. Largely, "Rape Culture and Consent in Contemporary Anglophone Women's Rewritings of the Classical Tradition" is a vibrant contribution to this volume, as Nisa Cáceres' article provides a methodical examination of how modern women authors use classical myths to address and subvert rape culture. By foregrounding the voices and experiences of marginalized characters, these rewritings offer powerful critiques of historical and contemporary attitudes towards sexual violence, thereby fostering a deeper understanding and appreciation of the complexities of consent and agency.

In the article "Life as Ritual in Inga Simpson's *Nest,*" Bárbara Arizti Martín presents an in-depth analysis of Simpson's novel, focusing on how the narrative invokes life as ritual through the protagonist's interactions with nature and community. By examining the novel through the frameworks of Byung-Chul Han's reflections on rituals, the ethics of attention, and Dacher Keltner's studies in awe, the article highlights the transformative power of attention and awe in elevating everyday activities into meaningful rituals. One of the article's primary assets lies in its interdisciplinary approach by drawing on diverse theoretical perspectives to enrich the analysis of Simpson's work. By situating *Nest* within the context of Han's critique

of modernity's erosion of rituals, the author argues that the novel exemplifies a transmodern sensibility that re-enchants the world and restores communal bonds. This perspective is particularly valuable in understanding how contemporary literature can offer new ways of thinking about community, nature, and personal well-being.

The analysis also focuses on the character of Jen, a middle-aged wildlife artist who embodies the novel's themes of attention and awe. The chapter explores how Jen's artistic practices and her deep connection to nature serve as a counterpoint to the instrumentalizing gaze of modernity. This connection is articulated through the protagonist's meticulous observation and portrayal of birds, which transform her everyday actions into acts of ritual and care. The focus on Jen's relationship with her surroundings highlights the novel's ecological dimension and its critique of the traditional nature-culture divide. The examination of the role of community in the novel represents another prominent contribution. By underlining the various personal and collective rituals that Jen engages in, the author shows how these practices foster a sense of belonging and stability. The ritualistic quality of everyday activities, such as art classes with Henry and the preparation of food and drink, underscores the importance of care and hospitality in building communal bonds. This analysis aligns with Han's argument that rituals create a sense of home and order in life and offers a framework for understanding how Simpson's novel addresses contemporary social issues.

The article also addresses the theme of awe, as discussed by Keltner, and its connection to ritual in the novel. Through moments of awe experienced in nature and art, *Nest* portrays the transcendental dimensions of life that can be accessed through deep attention and ritualized practices. The communal rituals depicted in the novel, such as the mourning ceremony for missing children, illustrate how collective experiences of awe can foster empathy and solidarity, extending the sense of community beyond the immediate setting of the novel. In conclusion, "Life as Ritual in Inga Simpson's *Nest*" offers a comprehensive evaluation of how the novel employs themes of attention, awe, and ritual to explore the intersection of nature and culture. The interdisciplinary approach enriches the understanding of Simpson's work and highlights its relevance to contemporary discussions on ecology, community, and transmodern sensibility. This article demonstrates how literary texts can engage with and contribute to broader cultural and philosophical debates.

In the following chapter, Marta Bagüés Bautista's article "Unveiling the Palimpsest: Art and Intertextuality in Ali Smith's *Seasonal Quartet*" offers an insightful examination of how Ali Smith's novels integrate art and intertextuality to create a layered and interconnected narrative structure. The article explores Smith's use of the palimpsest, a concept defined by Sarah Dillon as "an involuted phenomenon where otherwise unrelated texts are involved and entangled intricately interwoven, interrupting and inhabiting each other," to demonstrate how her works reflect and critique contemporary society. A key strength of this analysis is its detailed examination of how Smith employs art not only as a thematic element but also as a structural device. By interweaving references to visual arts, music, and popular culture, Smith constructs a mosaic of quotations and allusions that enrich the reader's experience and understanding of her novels. The paper effectively argues that this intertextual approach allows Smith to blur the boundaries between different time periods, creating a narrative that is both timeless and deeply rooted in the present.

The exploration of the role of art in the *Seasonal Quartet* is another significant aspect of the article. Bagüés Bautista highlights how each novel in the Quartet—*Autumn* (2016), *Winter* (2017), *Spring* (2019), and *Summer* (2020)—incorporates various forms of artistic expression to explore themes of temporality, vulnerability, and borders. For example, *Autumn* features the pop-art painter Pauline Boty, while *Winter* integrates the sculpture of Barbara Hepworth. These artistic references are not merely decorative; they serve as crucial elements of the plot and contribute to the novels' exploration of the functions of art in society. The article

also addresses the concept of ekphrasis, the literary description of visual art, as a tool that Smith uses to slow down the narrative pace and create moments of reflection within the novels. This technique allows Smith to focus deeper on the themes of memory and history, illustrating how art can bridge the gap between the past and the present. The detailed descriptions of artworks within the novels provide a rich tapestry of intertextual connections that enhance the reader's engagement with the text.

Furthermore, Bagüés Bautista emphasizes the socio-political implications of Smith's work. By recovering the voices of marginalized artists and critiquing the traditional canon, Smith's novels challenge the dominant cultural narratives and promote a more inclusive understanding of art and history. This critical perspective affiliates with the broader goals of feminist and postcolonial literary studies. It additionally highlights the transformative potential of literature to effect social change. In brief, "Unveiling the Palimpsest: Art and Intertextuality in Ali Smith's *Seasonal Quartet*" offers an investigation of Smith's use of intertextuality and art. The article demonstrates how Smith's novels function as palimpsests, creating a complex network of relationships between different forms of artistic expression and historical periods. This approach both enriches the reader's understanding of the novels and underscores their relevance to contemporary discussions on art, culture, and society. The article effectively showcases how Smith's innovative narrative techniques reflect and critique the complexities of modern life.

Juan Carlos Ontiveros Gómez's article "Crafting Curses and Preaching Sermons: Magic and Religion in Afia Atakora's *Conjure Women* (2020)" provides an insightful analysis of the interplay between magic and religion in Afia Atakora's debut novel. The paper focuses on how these elements shape the African American community both during and after slavery, focusing on the contrasting roles of the conjure woman, Rue, and the preacher, Bruh Abel. This exploration is situated within the broader historical context of how magic and religion have been perceived and utilized within African American traditions. One of the article's notable strengths is its use of historical and cultural frameworks to analyze the dichotomies presented in the novel. Ontiveros Gómez employs Michel Foucault's concept of "subjugated knowledge" to explain how magic, often viewed as primitive and dangerous by Western thought, contrasts with the more institutionally accepted and public practice of Christianity. This theoretical grounding enriches the understanding of the power relationship among Rue's private, solitary conjuring practices and Bruh Abel's public, communal religious activities.

The chapter also highlights the thematic importance of these dichotomies in illustrating the cultural heritage and identity of African Americans. Ontiveros Gómez discusses how Rue's role as a midwife and healer, inherited from her mother Miss May Belle, places her at the intersection of personal and communal spaces. This dual role emphasizes the importance of African spiritual practices in providing both physical and spiritual support within the community. The analysis underscores the marginalization of conjure women, who, despite their significant contributions, often remain on the periphery of social structures due to their perceived distinctiveness and the secretive nature of their practices. Another important aspect of the chapter is the examination of the conflict and eventual cooperation between Rue and Bruh Abel. Ontiveros Gómez explores how their differing approaches to community well-being—Rue's reliance on conjuring and Bruh Abel's preaching—initially create tension but ultimately converge in their mutual goal of saving the community. This narrative arc highlights the resilience and adaptability of African American cultural practices and also critiques the historical subjugation and dismissal of non-Christian spiritual practices.

The detailed analysis of key scenes, such as the baptism ritual where Bruh Abel exerts control over Rue, provides a poignant illustration of the forces at play. This examination reveals how religious rituals can function as mechanisms of domination and control, reflecting broader themes of power and subjugation in the African American experience. The article argues that

through this blending of magic and religion, Atakora portrays a unique African American identity that incorporates both ancestral knowledge and adapted religious practices. Ontiveros Gómez's use of interviews and critical studies further enhances the analysis. By referencing Atakora's own reflections on the novel, as well as scholarly works on African American religious and magical traditions, the article situates *Conjure Women* within a rich tapestry of historical and cultural narratives. This approach underscores the novel's relevance to contemporary discussions on race, identity, and cultural heritage. In summary, "Crafting Curses and Preaching Sermons: Magic and Religion in Afia Atakora's *Conjure Women*" reveals an examination of the intersections between magic and religion in African American culture as depicted in Atakora's novel. Ontiveros Gómez's elegantly emphasizes the novel's exploration of cultural identity, historical trauma and the enduring legacy of African American spiritual practices.

In Alberto Lázaro's paper "The Depiction of the Spanish Civil War in British Young Adult Fiction: Lydia Syson's *A World between Us,*" a full examination of how Lydia Syson's novel for young readers portrays the Spanish Civil War is given. The chapter situates Syson's work within the broader context of British historical novels that use this tumultuous period as their backdrop, highlighting its appeal to teenage audiences through a blend of adventure and historical insight. A remarkable strength of this analysis is its exploration of the didactic and moral imperatives inherent in young adult fiction, particularly when addressing the harrowing themes of war and violence. Lázaro steers this complex terrain by engaging with Peter Hunt's framework for analyzing war stories, which includes questions about what should be presented to young readers, how it should be conveyed, and the potential educational value of such narratives. This approach provides a structured lens through which to evaluate Syson's novel.

The paper excels in detailing how *A World between Us* embeds the Spanish Civil War deeply into its narrative, making the historical conflict an integral part of the characters' experiences. Lázaro highlights the protagonist Felix's journey from London to Spain as a volunteer nurse, underscoring the realistic depiction of the war's brutality through her interactions with wounded soldiers and her survival of enemy attacks. This narrative choice educates young readers about the historical events and also humanizes the conflict by focusing on personal stories of courage and resilience. Another feature of the analysis is the discussion on the balance between depicting the harsh realities of war and maintaining a sense of hope. Lázaro points out that, while Syson does not shy away from portraying violence and loss, the novel ultimately offers a hopeful resolution with Felix and Nat's survival and subsequent marriage. This element of hope aligns with Hunt's assertion that young adult war narratives should not be solely pessimistic but should also inspire and engage readers.

Lázaro also addresses the potential challenges young readers may face in fully grasping the historical intricacies of the Spanish Civil War. The chapter acknowledges Syson's efforts to provide historical context through authentic events, locations, and figures, which helps to ground the narrative in reality. However, it also notes the simplifications and omissions that may arise from the novel's focus on a clear moral dichotomy between the heroic protagonists and the villainous antagonists, which can sometimes obscure the war's complexities. The examination of character portrayals, particularly the stereotypical depiction of Dolores as a treacherous nurse, and the simplification of the Guardia Civil's role, further illuminates the potential limitations of the novel's historical representation. These elements highlight the necessity of presenting a balanced view that acknowledges the multifaceted nature of historical conflicts. In conclusion, Lázaro's article provides a thorough and insightful critique of Lydia Syson's *A World between Us*, highlighting its contributions to young adult literature and historical education. By offering a vivid portrayal of the Spanish Civil War and engaging with moral and ethical questions, the novel serves as an important educational tool while also inviting readers to reflect on broader themes of justice and human suffering. This analysis

makes a valuable addition to the volume and puts in evidence the role of historical fiction in shaping young minds and fostering a deeper understanding of past conflicts.

Elisa Fernández Rodríguez's article "In Out and In-Between: Space in Joseph Cassara's *The House of Impossible Beauties*" offers a profound analysis of the spatial dynamics within Cassara's novel, focusing on the intersectional experiences of its queer, Latinx characters during the HIV crisis in New York City. By examining how these characters handle and are marginalized by their environments, the article provides a view of space as both a physical and metaphorical construct that shapes and reflects their identities. Its intersectional approach integrates perspectives on gender, sexuality, ethnicity, and class. This framework is essential for exploring the multifaceted oppression faced by the characters, who are not only marginalized due to their queer or transgender identities but also because they are Latinx and economically disadvantaged. The analysis captures how these intersecting identities interact with spatial dynamics to further alienate and disenfranchise the characters.

The paper effectively categorizes space into three interconnected types: indoor, outdoor, and in-between. The discussion of indoor space, particularly the house, challenges traditional notions of home as a nurturing sanctuary. Instead, it reveals how the characters' experiences with domestic spaces are often marked by trauma and displacement. This redefinition is in line with Gaston Bachelard's concept of the house as a site of memory, while also critiquing his male-centric perspective by highlighting the different realities faced by queer and marginalized individuals. In exploring outdoor spaces, Fernández Rodríguez examines New York City as a microcosm of diversity and segregation. The analysis highlights how the characters can manage the city's various boroughs, confronting economic disparities and social exclusion. The detailed descriptions of the city's geography and the characters' movements through it underscore the broader social structures that marginalize them. This section also draws on Judith Butler's theories to discuss the performative aspects of gender and the limitations of passing and realness in achieving acceptance.

The concept of in-between spaces, such as cars and subways, adds a dynamic layer to the analysis. These spaces, characterized by their transitory nature, reflect the precarious existence of the characters. The paper illustrates how these in-between spaces can provide temporary solace and connectivity but also expose the characters to danger and exploitation. This duality underscores the constant tension in their lives, as they seek places of belonging within a hostile environment. Fernández Rodríguez's use of real-life parallels, such as references to the documentary *Paris Is Burning*, enriches the analysis by situating the novel within a broader cultural and historical context. This connection highlights the ongoing relevance of the issues depicted in the novel and their impact on contemporary considerations of space and identity. In short, "In Out and In-Between: Space in Joseph Cassara's *The House of Impossible Beauties*" underscores the importance of considering multiple dimensions of identity in discussions of space and highlights the resilience and perseverance of those who are within these thought-provoking environments.

The following chapter in this volume, *The Female Figure in David's Story,* by Gutiérrez González examines the female figure in Wicomb's oeuvre providing those voiceless South African women with a powerful voice that offers an analysis from a feminist perspective in the 20th century. This paper is a valuable contribution not only in the area of feminism as represented in the last century literature, but it also reveals the role of black women. The author states clearly the condemnation of the perpetual male view and the physical representation of colored women in South Africa associated with a deeply-hearted feeling of shame. Finally, in "Mental Health and Community in Giles' *Rain to Swell the Olives* (1994) and Tsoulis' *Between the Ceiling and the Sky* (1998)," Catalina Ribas Segura studies the intersections of mental health, migration, and community through the lens of Greek-Australian literature. One of the assets of this chapter lies in its focus on how migration,

with its inherent dislocation and estrangement, profoundly affects the mental well-being of female characters in the selected texts. Both Giles and Tsoulis highlight the emotional isolation experienced by their protagonists, offering readers a nuanced understanding of how psychological trauma, community detachment, and cultural dissonance shape their lives. Through detailed literary analysis, Ribas Segura effectively argues that the narratives not only depict individual suffering but also reflect broader social issues concerning migration, gender, and mental health.

1.4. Conclusion

As evinced in this introductory chapter, *Crossing Boundaries: Transatlantic Dialogues and Gendered Narratives* represents the intricate ways in which language practices, literature and cultural narratives cross boundaries and engage in dialogues that reflect and shape identities across the Atlantic. Through the examination of various texts and contexts, the papers within this volume collectively highlight the vivid relationship among historical events, cultural practices, and literary expressions. The analyses presented underscore the importance of understanding cultural productions not as isolated phenomena but as interconnected narratives that transcend geographical and temporal boundaries. By embracing themes of immigration, gender, identity, and social justice, the authors enlighten the ways in which language and literature serve as powerful media for reflecting and challenging social and cultural norms and historical contexts.

One key insight from this volume is the recognition of the multifaceted nature of identity and how it is constructed and negotiated through cultural, linguistic and literary expressions. The intersective approach taken by many of the articles highlights the complex and often overlapping dimensions of race, gender, class and sexuality, providing a more nuanced vision of the lived experiences of marginalized communities. In this sense, the exploration of transatlantic dialogues has also revealed the significant role of cultural, linguistic and literary exchanges in shaping collective memories and identities. The analyses of historical and contemporary texts demonstrate how narratives from different periods and regions inform and influence each other, therefore creating a rich body of cultural discourse that is both reflective and transformative.

Moving forward, several avenues for further research can build on the foundations laid in this volume. One potential direction is the continued exploration of underrepresented voices and narratives, particularly those from marginalized communities. This involves examining lesser-known texts, authors and cultural practices to uncover new insights and perspectives. Another promising path is the examination of digital and multimedia narratives in the context of transatlantic dialogues. As technology continues to evolve, the ways in which cultural and literary exchanges occur are also changing. Exploring how digital media, social networks, and other technological platforms facilitate and shape these dialogues can provide valuable insights into contemporary cultural forces. Additionally, interdisciplinary approaches that integrate perspectives from history, sociology, anthropology and other fields can further enrich our view of cultural crossings and transatlantic discourses. By drawing on diverse methodologies and theoretical frameworks, researchers can develop more multidimensional analyses that capture the intricacies of cultural interactions.

In conclusion, the articles in this volume come to cooperatively demonstrate the power of language, literature and cultural narratives in crossing boundaries and fostering dialogues across the Atlantic. By highlighting the interconnectedness of cultural productions and the multifaceted nature of identity, the contributions have provided valuable insights into how linguistic practices and literature reflect and shape established and evolving norms, historical contexts and individual experiences. These findings underline the importance of continued research in this field, with an emphasis on inclusivity, interdisciplinarity and the exploration of new and emerging forms of cultural expression.

Cultural crossings and transatlantic discourses

2. Miguel de Zárraga y la revista *La Tribuna*, de Nueva York

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Abstract

Two Spaniards, the businessman, Jaime Vilar Lago, and the journalist and author, Miguel de Zárraga launched the first important modern illustrated magazine written in Spanish in the United States: *La Tribuna*, created in 1919. Miguel de Zárraga became co-owner and passionate editor of the weekly in its first years. This text shows the evolution of *La Tribuna* from its beginning to the year when Miguel de Zárraga resigned from his position as editor of the magazine (1919-1921).

Keywords: Miguel de Zárraga, La Tribuna, periodismo español, Estados Unidos

1. Introducción

La segunda y tercera décadas del siglo XX fueron cruciales en términos de la creación y desarrollo de la prensa moderna en español en EE.UU. Este proceso fue impulsado por una serie de periodistas y empresarios nacidos en España, que han caído en el olvido en nuestro país. Existen datos relevantes, como el hecho de que la primera publicación periódica contemporánea importante en castellano en Nueva York (primero como semanario y después como diario) fuera fundada en 1913 por el canario Rafael Viera y Ayala (Fuerteventura, 1880-1972). Se trató del periódico *La Prensa*, que otro español, José Camprubí compró en 1918/1919, potenciando notablemente su difusión.[1] Este rotativo es el ancestro de *El Diario La Prensa*, el periódico más leído hoy día en NY, tras su fusión en 1963 con *El Diario de Nueva York*, fundado en 1947.

Fig. 1. Miguel de Zárraga.

Un madrileño de la misma generación de estos dos emprendedores, Miguel de Zárraga (Madrid, 1882 – Los Ángeles, 1941), también fue el principal gestor de otra publicación neoyorquina, *La Tribuna*, que se convertiría en el semanario ilustrado en español más importante de principio de los años 1920s en EE.UU. Miguel de Zárraga (Fig. 1.) fue un escritor y dramaturgo que trabajó como periodista en España y Cuba (*Diario de la Marina*) antes de convertirse en corresponsal del diario *ABC* en Nueva York. En esta capital estadounidense, Zárraga ejerció como un dinamizador de primer orden de la vida cultural de la colonia hispana en la Gran Manzana. Miguel de Zárraga fue nombrado durante cierto tiempo redactor jefe de la versión española de la revista neoyorquina, *Pictorial Review*, dirigida por el escritor español, Rómulo Manuel de Mora. Textos de ficción redactados por Miguel de Zárraga aparecieron en revistas tales como *Cine Mundial*, versión en español de la *Moving Picture World*. Zárraga también llegó a ser director de *La revista del mundo*, la edición española de la prestigiosa, *The World´s Work*. En 1919 se lanzó a una nueva aventura periodística: la dirección de la revista *La Tribuna*.

[1] Camprubí, hijo de catalán, nació en Puerto Rico en 1879, cuando la isla era todavía parte de España. En 1880 se trasladó con su familia a vivir a Barcelona. A partir de los 18 años estudió en los Estados Unidos, formándose como ingeniero en la Universidad de Harvard. José Camprubí era hermano de Zenobia, que contrajo matrimonio con el poeta, Juan Ramón Jiménez.

2. La revista *La Tribuna*

A principios del siglo pasado se formó una importante colonia de españoles e hispanos en Nueva York. La crisis e inestabilidad política y económica que caracterizaron todo el siglo XIX en España, no se resolvió con la restauración borbónica en las figuras de los monarcas Alfonso XII y, posteriormente, Alfonso XIII. Miles de inmigrantes españoles se trasladaron a NY. Muchos se instalaron en los alrededores de la calle 14, creando el vecindario conocido como "Little Spain". Nació allí una comunidad, con sus correspondientes necesidades sociales y culturales. Para satisfacer éstas, se abrieron comercios en español: peluquerías, tiendas de fotos, restaurantes, librerías… Alejados de España, también surgió la necesidad de crear medios de información que suministraran a la nueva colonia hispana noticias locales, de sus patrias y del panorama internacional, analizadas desde la perspectiva de sus respectivas naciones.

Fig. 2. Niño leyendo *La Tribuna* en 1921.

2.1 Fundación y primera etapa

Jaime Vilar Lago (1889-1959), un gallego que había emigrado desde Mugardos (comarca de Ferrol, La Coruña) a EE.UU., fue uno de los primeros empresarios en darse cuenta de estas carencias de la nueva colonia de inmigrantes, así como de la oportunidad para hacer negocio. Así que en 1918 alquiló unos locales en la calle 14 y fundó el primer banco 100% español en Nueva York, el Banco de Lago. Creó también una sociedad de beneficencia o seguros, el Centro Hispano Americano, para proteger económicamente a sus conciudadanos en caso de enfermedad o fallecimiento. El instinto comercial de Jaime Lago lo llevaría a abrir incluso una librería española. Pero hacía falta algo más: ¿por qué no fundar un medio de comunicación propio para los españoles e hispanos de Nueva York?

Con objeto de hacer comunidad y tener un respaldo para sus propios negocios, Jaime V. Lago decide lanzar una publicación en blanco y negro de 4 páginas al coste de 5 centavos: el primer número de *La Tribuna* (Fig. 2.). Entendemos que el primer ejemplar de la revista debió publicarse alrededor de junio de 1919.[2] Muy pronto Lago sumó a la causa al avezado reportero, Miguel de Zárraga, que se convirtió en copropietario y director en la sombra de la publicación, aunque nominalmente Pedro H. Briz figurase reseñado en sus páginas con este cargo.

Desde sus céntricas oficinas de 47 W de la calle 42, en el Midtown de Manhattan, se elaboraba esta publicación que se autoproclamaba en portada como "Revista Semanal Defensora de la Raza Hispana". Siempre al servicio de una comunidad española neoyorquina, y con señalada pulsión nacionalista, la revista incidía en la necesidad de la recuperación del orgullo de ser español. Al mismo tiempo, quería servir de puente de unión entre todos los países de habla hispana. Una vez perdidas todas las colonias americanas durante nuestro catastrófico siglo XIX, autores de la generación novecentista como Zárraga trataban de zanjar viejas rencillas e incidir en la formación de una nueva comunidad cultural hispana transnacional.

[2] Los ejemplares de *La Tribuna* son muy difíciles de encontrar. Nosotros basamos nuestra investigación en el conjunto de revistas conservadas en microfilm en la New York Public Library, que solo se pueden consultar en la propia biblioteca. Esta colección comienza con el número 16 de este semanario, publicado el 20 de septiembre de 1919. El último número es el 112, del 6 de agosto de 1921, después de que Miguel de Zárraga abandonara *La Tribuna*.

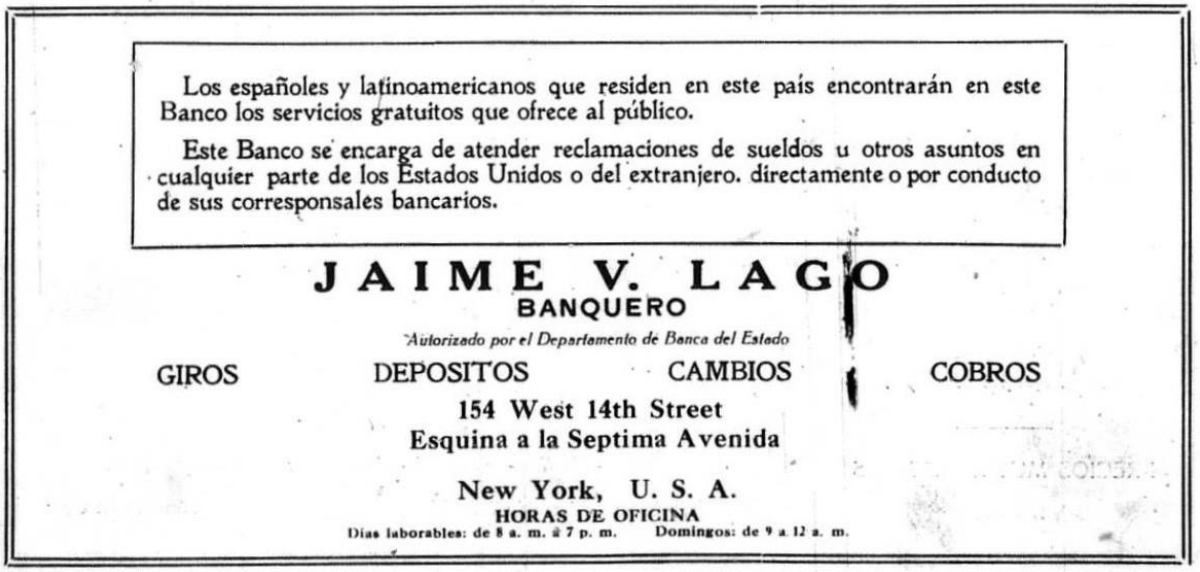

Fig. 3. Anuncio del Banco de Lago en *La Tribuna*.

Esta era precisamente una de las metas de *La Tribuna*, la primera gran "revista ilustrada" en castellano fundada en los EE.UU. Zárraga, periodista español, conocía muy bien este tipo de publicaciones, que se habían convertido en un elemento clave de información y divulgación cultural en unas décadas en las que aún no existía ni TV ni radio. Miguel de Zárraga y Jaime V. Lago fueron inspirados por modelos periodísticos españoles como *ABC* o la revista ilustrada, *Blanco y Negro*, que combinaban texto con atractivas imágenes (en un principio grabados, luego fotografías), para configurar *La Tribuna*.

Como en las publicaciones mencionadas, una sola imagen ocupaba la portada del semanario de NY. Por ejemplo, un personaje de moda o un miembro de la colonia hispana (Fig.4.). En el interior se diseñó una maquetación a tres columnas con artículos de opinión y análisis. *La Tribuna* fue una revista moderna en forma y planteamiento que ofrecía información y reflexiones sobre temas actuales de interés para el colectivo hispano neoyorquino. En su primera etapa iba especialmente dirigida a la colonia de españoles de NY.

LA TRIBUNA

REVISTA SEMANAL DEFENSORA DE LOS INTERESES DE LA RAZA HISPANA

Entered as second-class matter August 23, 1919 at the Post Office at New York, N. Y. under the Act of March 3, 1879.

Dirección: 47 West 42nd Street

Tomo II.—No. 22 NEW YORK, NOVEMBER 1, 1919 Precio: 5 centavos

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TORTOLA VALENCIA, MARQUESA

Si Raquel Meller, la popular tonadillera, se ha casado con el exquisito literato Enrique Gómez Carrillo, Tórtola Valencia no ha de ser menos: se casa—así lo asegura—con el brillante novelista Antonio de Hoyos y Vinent, Marqués de Hoyos . . .

Fig. 4. Portada de *La Tribuna* del 1 de noviembre de 1919, con una imagen de la bailarina, Tórtola Valencia.

Miguel de Zárraga sumo firmas de prestigio a la lista de colaboradores. No solo figuras respetadas de la escena neoyorquina como el Profesor de la Universidad de Columbia, Federico de Onís. Sino autores hispanos contemporáneos punteros. En *La Tribuna* aparecieron textos de, entre otros, Azorín, Jacinto Benavente, Pardo Bazán, Julio Camba, Enrique Gómez Carrillo, Ramón Pérez de Ayala y Menéndez y Pelayo.

La revista contribuía así a expandir las fronteras intelectuales y a saciar el ansia de noticias de los "latinos" de Nueva York, compitiendo de forma explícita (más o menos amistosa) con la otra gran publicación del momento, *La Prensa*, y su gestor, José Camprubí, presidente de la Sociedad *Unión Benéfica*, que también era competidora del "Centro Hispano Americano", afecto a *La Tribuna*.

Por otra parte, en términos prácticos, *La Tribuna* proporcionaba un servicio directo a la comunidad española ofreciendo espacio para anuncios de comercios y empresas de habla castellana (y luego, crecientemente, también de habla inglesa). Obviamente, Jaime Vilar Lago supo aprovechar el semanario para publicitar sus actividades y proyectos empresariales (Fig. 3.).


ABRIL 10, 1920] LA TRIBUNA 9

Foto. Brucker & Co.

GRUPO DE CONCURRENTES AL BAILE DE "LA TRIBUNA"

EN la imposibilidad de tomar una fotografía de todos los concurrentes a nuestra Fiesta, pues pasaban de mil doscientos, nos limitamos a publicar esta vista de los que tomaron parte en la Marcha, contemplada desde los palcos y galerías contiguos por el resto de los asistentes. Ampliaciones de la presente fotografía pueden obtenerse en nuestra Administración: 156 West 14th Street.

Fig. 5. Baile hispano organizado por *La Tribuna* el 3 de abril de 1920

2.2 Miguel de Zárraga, director de *La Tribuna*.

La Tribuna mantuvo una exitosa trayectoria durante el primer año de su andadura, incrementándose consistentemente el número de lectores y de ejemplares publicados. A partir de marzo de 1920 se duplicaron las páginas de cuatro a ocho y Miguel de Zárraga decidió asumir de forma expresa la dirección de la publicación. La asertiva personalidad de Zárraga se puso de manifiesto pronto en las páginas de *La Tribuna*, asumiendo decisiones transcendentes,

firmando colaboraciones e introduciendo semanalmente sus propios cuentos o novelas "dialogadas" (que combinaban su perfil de escritor de ficción y hombre de teatro).

Los textos de periodistas y autores contemporáneos españoles (hoy día, mal conocidos y olvidados) siguieron dándose cita en las páginas de la revista: Federico García Sanchiz, Alfonso Hernández Catá, Carlos Caamaño, etc. Zárraga fichó asimismo a ilustradores de prestigio en España, como Méndez Bringa, colaborador de *ABC*.

Un episodio de interés en esta etapa fue el conflicto que Zárraga mantuvo con Vicente Blasco Ibáñez, autor de máxima fama en aquel tiempo en EE.UU. tras la traducción y conversión en película de novelas suyas como *Los Cuatro Jinetes del Apocalipsis* (que lanzó la carrera de Rodolfo Valentino). El periodista y el escritor habían iniciado una asidua amistad. Pero a raíz de una serie de artículos sobre México que Blasco Ibáñez escribió para el *New York Times*, esa relación se resintió. Zárraga acusó públicamente al autor valenciano de menospreciar al pueblo mexicano, y, por lo tanto, desdeñar a uno de los países de la Raza. Pese a las disculpas de Blasco Ibáñez, incluidas en *La Tribuna*, en el semanario se siguieron cuestionando los textos publicados por el novelista español sobre el país azteca.

Fig. 6. Ellis J. Gomez

En cualquier caso, Miguel de Zárraga continuó con su frenética carrera creativa (como periodista para España y USA, escribiendo ficción, obras de teatro…) y, a la vez, desempeñándose como buen gestor cultural desde *La Tribuna*. Incorporó a la revista la actualidad española y latina de gran vigencia. Por ejemplo, la actuación de la notable generación de cantantes de ópera españoles de principios del siglo XX en Nueva York (Lucrecia Bori, Hipólito Lázaro, María Barrientos, etc.). Incluso se organizaron fiestas y banquete desde el semanario neoyorquino (Fig. 5.).

La Tribuna no dejaba de crecer. En abril de 1920 ya tenía 16 páginas y una tirada de 25.000 ejemplares. Se introdujo el color en la portada. Desafortunadamente, Jaime V. Lago se vio obligado a dejar el proyecto en junio de 1920 por razones personales y profesionales. Vendió su parte de las acciones a otro empresario español, que había empezado a anunciarse en *La Tribuna* semanas antes, Ellis J Gomez (Fig. 6.).[3]

Nada cambió. La revista siguió imponiéndose como realidad mediática en la comunidad española y latina. Se incrementaron las páginas hasta 20 y se subió el precio a los 10 centavos. Poco a poco Zárraga iba incluyendo más debate y artículos sobre otros países latinoamericanos, inaugurando nuevas secciones como "México al Día".

No obstante, las ambiciones del periodista madrileño eran mucho más altas. Se había propuesto convertir *La Tribuna* no solo en la revista en español más importante de EE.UU. sino de toda América. Pero una aventura de tales dimensiones necesitaba fondos. Así que decidió junto a Ellis J. Gómez lanzar una ampliación de capital. La revista se convertiría en Sociedad Anónima. Se publicitó la necesidad de captar fondos con el objetivo de recaudar 150.000 dólares (unos 2.500.000 dólares de hoy día) y revisar los objetivos y la estructura de la publicación.

Esto fue el principio del fin.

Circuló, efectivamente más dinero, pero Miguel de Zárraga vio limitada su capacidad de intervención. Entre otros cambios, entró en escena un nuevo "Vicepresidente", Emeterio de

[3] Nacido en Miera, Cantabria, en 1892, Eliseo Gómez se había convertido con tan solo 27 años en un competente hombre de negocios. Fue gerente en Nueva York de empresas tales como la "Texas United Oil Company".

la Garza, un hombre de negocios y exdiputado mexicano, que había sido Representante del Gobierno del Presidente Huerta en Washington.

2.3 Dimisión de Miguel de Zárraga. *La Tribuna* mexicana.

En la cervantina fecha del 23 de abril de 1921 apareció en la tercera página de *La Tribuna* una carta de dimisión de Miguel de Zárraga. Todos los sueños de convertirse en un gran "self-made man" estadounidenses se esfumaron (el periodista había abierto recientemente incluso una sección, "¿Quiere usted ser rico?", dedicada a biografiar la vida de hombres de negocios que habían hecho su fortuna a partir de cero en USA). En su carta, Zárraga declaraba que se negaba a que *La Tribuna* se utilizara con fines políticos particulares (Fig. 7.)

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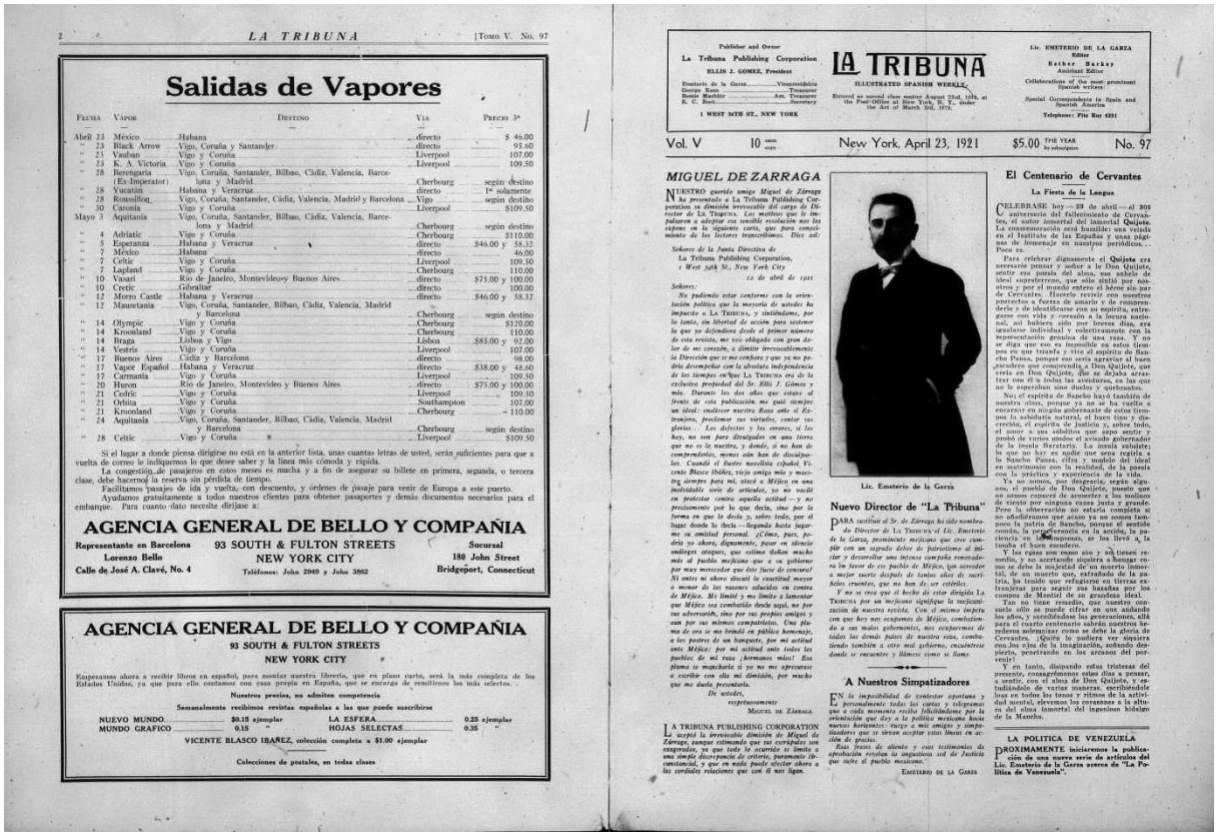

Fig. 7. Páginas interiores de *La Tribuna* de 23 de abril de 1921, que incluye la carta de dimisión de Miguel de Zárraga.

Se produjeron entonces una serie de cambios. Ellis J Gomez se mantuvo en el proyecto unas semanas más. Pero cambiaron todos los cargos en la revista. Se nombró "Presidente" a Herbert Philip Coats, abogado y político estadounidense que años después sería elegido "Fiscal General" de Puerto Rico.

Y, sobre todo, Emeterio de la Garza escaló a la dirección ejecutiva de la publicación ("Editor in Chief"). Este hombre público transformó progresivamente *La Tribuna*. Los contenidos sobre México aumentaron sustancialmente. Más que España el referente en términos artísticos fueron entonces los Estados Unidos. Las fotos de actores y actrices eran norteamericanas y no latinas. Se introdujeron más textos en inglés. Pero, sobre todo, de la Garza politizó notablemente *La Tribuna* y la convirtió progresivamente en un órgano de propaganda

y de campaña personal en contra del General Álvaro Obregón, Presidente de México, al que acusaba del asesinato de exmandatario Victoriano Huertas.

2.4 La nueva *Tribuna*

Sin anuncio previo, a partir del número 109 de *La Tribuna* (16 julio de 1921), Emeterio de la Garza desaparece misteriosamente de la escena. Toma las riendas de la revista, Gerardo Rivero, que hasta ahora había estado subordinado al político mexicano.

Se produce un giro copernicano. Vuelven las firmas de calidad a la revista. A partir de entonces habría una mayor variedad de voces de autores de toda Latinoamérica. La publicación mejoró sensiblemente y se convirtió por fin en lo que Miguel de Zárraga había soñado: un portavoz mediático de todos los países de Hispanoamérica y un punto de encuentro entre todas las naciones de habla española. Pero, para entonces, el periodista madrileño ya se había desvinculado de la publicación.

3. Conclusión

Hay que atribuir la creación de *La Tribuna*, primer semanario ilustrado moderno en español de Estados Unidos a la labor conjunta de dos hombres de iniciativa: Jaime V. Lago y Miguel de Zárraga. Zárraga fracasó en sus aspiraciones personales de vivir su particular sueño americano y convertirse en emprendedor de éxito gracias a sus ideas. Durante los años 30, se trasladó a Hollywood donde destacó como creador de películas en español (por ejemplo, ayudó como guionista en el filme de culto, "Verbena trágica", 1939). Como otros tantos españoles que trabajaron en Estados Unidos, murió, olvidado, en California.

En los pocos más de cien años que han transcurrido desde la publicación del primer número de *La Tribuna*, otras revistas españolas han surgido en EE.UU. Desgraciadamente, no existen textos académicos que recojan esta particular historia. Hoy día el panorama de los medios de comunicación ha cambiado. Así como *La Tribuna* fue revolucionaria al introducir el concepto de "revista ilustrada" independiente castellano en Estados Unidos, en la actualidad las noticias escritas se consumen online: diarios, blogs, redes sociales, etc. Hasta las grandes empresas medios de EE.UU. intentan captar al público hispano con versiones en español de sus productos, como *The New York Times* o *People*.

No obstante, es necesario acreditar a La Tribuna como revista decana en español creada por latinos en los EE.UU. Así como reconocer el incuestionable mérito de la fundación y dirección de Miguel de Zárraga de esta publicación durante sus primeros años de existencia.

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3. Anti-Catholic Literature, Joseph Blanco White as pretext of authenticity in two escaped nun narratives

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Abstract

This paper studies the reception of Joseph Blanco White's anti-Catholic views on confession, nuns, and convent life during his Anglican period (1812-1835). His testimony was always authenticated with his familiar and personal experience as a priest in Spain.
His comments appeared in some Anglican publications that used them as true evidence against the evils of Romanism. They were virulently contested by the pro-Catholic circles of the time. Echoes and references to Blanco's work can be traced up to the 1880s.
Besides theology, his testimony was also used as reference in two escaped nun narratives composed by nativist religious activists from antebellum America: Rosamond Culbertson's Rosamond (1836) and Josephine M. Bunkley's The Testimony of an Escaped Novice (1855) in what, despite superficial similarity, seems a clear instance of unfair pretextual appropriation of the Anglo-Spaniard's religious and intellectual figure, something not unusual in his case.

Keywords: Joseph Blanco White, anti-Catholic literature, confessional, escaped nun narrative, pretext

1. Introduction

This study focuses on Joseph Blanco White's reception of his anti-Catholic testimony on convent life in British and American religious circles of opinion and activism during his lifetime and after his death until the 1880s.
In the 1820s, the Sevillian self-exile converted to Anglicanism earned considerable prestige in England due to his political, literary, and religious publications, to highlight: Letters from Spain (1822), Practical and Internal Evidence against Catholicism (1825) and The Poor Man's Preservative against Popery (1825 and 1834).
He was compensated by the Foreign Office for his activity as editor of the pro-British journal El Español (1810-1814) with a yearly grant of 250 pounds taken from secret funds and by the Oxford Academic authorities with an honorary M.A. degree and a fellowship at Oriel College in 1826. In Provost Coplestone's words (in Murphy 1989, 138)

> […] in consideration of his eminent talents and learning, and of his exemplary conduct during his residence at Oxford, but more especially on account of those able and well-timed publications by which he has powerfully exposed the errors and corruptions of the Church of Rome.

Besides contributing to filling up a gap in his intellectual and religious biography regarding his heterodox religious views, which were the object of strong controversy at his time, this paper also explores the black and white reputations of this Sevillian heterodox with respect to the character and scope of his testimony.

From a broader perspective, it interrogates the legitimacy of some mechanisms of literary and ideological appropriation for purposes that seem not to correspond to those intended by the original author.

2. Objectives and methodology

This study went through different phases. The first one consisted of a textual analysis of Blanco White's anti-Catholic main works from his Anglican period (1822-1834), and of his later comments on confession and conventual life, his posthumous autobiography (1845) in particular. Secondly, all the publications traced online on these topics that mentioned him as evidence were listed and classified by year, content and religious orientation.
During the study, two escaped nun narratives from antebellum America deserved special attention: Rosamond by Rosamond Culbertson (1834) and The Escaped Nun by Josephine M. Bunkley (1857).
As these nativist and sensationalist literary products did not match Blanco's religious and literary ideas beyond superficial similarity, they were interrogated about the legitimacy of their pretextual purpose following Widdowson's (2004) views on text, context and pretext. While they use Blanco as a pretext to support their views, any reader familiarized with his life and work immediately perceives clear differences in the handling of the topic and in the message. A discrepancy arises. According to Widdowson (2004, 81):

[…] problems arise when the pretext that informs the design of a text does not correspond with that which readers bring to their interpretation of it. The writer may have pretextual presuppositions, which, for one reason or another, may not be ratified in the reading.

Blanco publicly adhered to the Unitarian principles in 1835. Keeping chronology, and historical context in mind, it seemed legitimate to question whether using his Anglican works as evidence in these publications could be considered an attempt to discredit or taint his prestige among the Unitarians and other progressive dissenters, blurring the real nature of his message and the sincerity of his religious conversions. Finally, it was considered relevant to tackle this instance of literary and religious manipulation with terms such as "cannibalism" (Loureiro, 1998) and "distortion" (Durán, 2010), which have been used to explore other instances of appropriation of heterodox Blanco White.

3. Blanco White on priests, nuns and convent life.

Blanco's denunciations of celibacy, confession and convent life are central in his radical anti-Catholicism. They are clear instances of the spiritual and structural evils of Romanism as a religious system that postulates a kind of spirituality based on an unnatural and cruel way of life.
His arguments rest on his personal experience as a priest in Spain and, crucially, on the story of his family. He is especially critical of the way abusive and venal priests control the minds of young women, encouraging them to become nuns to increase their power and prestige. Blanco is particularly interested in the mechanisms of mental submission and domination that can be exerted by means of religious influence. His criticism seems to anticipate the contemporary feminist treatment of this topic (Bernstein 2000).
However, it must be stressed that the Sevillian heterodox had no literary inclination either for Gothicism or for sensationalism, and that his descriptions characterize for being perceptive, subtle and realistic. His purpose is to criticize convent life in theological and rational terms, not to write sensationalist literature. In Letters from Spain (1822, 255) he writes:

My only object is to expose the absurdity and unfeelingness of a system which, while it surrounds the young recluses with strong walls, massive gates, and spiked windows, grants them the most intimate communication with a man −often a young man− that can be carried on in words and writing.

4. Blanco's reception (1822 to 1879)

The 39 publications found until now that mention and quote Blanco White on the nun and nunneries controversy cluster around three phases: the first and second one cover his Anglican and Unitarian periods, while the third stretches from his death up to 1879:

Table 1. Reception during Blanco's Anglican period.

A. ANGLICAN 1822-1834			
Original works	Reception	Protestant	Catholic
Joseph Blanco White: 1822 (1825). *Letters from Spain* 1825 *Practical and Internal Evidence against Catholicism* 1825 *The Poor Man's Preservative against Popery* 1827 *A Letter to Protestants converted to Romanism* 1833 *Second Travels of an Irish Gentleman in search of a Religion* 1834 *The Poor Man's Preservative against the Errors of Romanism*		 1824, 1825 (2) 1826, 1827 1828 1834	 1826 (2) 1827 1830
Reception: TOTAL	11	7	4

Table 2. Reception during Blanco's Unitarian and Rational Deist periods.

B. UNITARIAN and RATIONAL DEIST 1835-1841				
Original works	Narratives	Reception	Protestant	Catholic
Joseph Blanco White 1835. *Observations on Heresy and Orthodoxy* 1841. Blanco White's death	 [1835. (Rebecca Reed. *Six Months in a Convent* 1835. Maria Monk. *Awful Disclosures*] 1836. Rosamond Culbertson. *Rosamond or, a Narrative of the Captivity and Suffering of an American Female under the Popish Priests, in the Island of Cuba*		1837 1838 (2) 1839 1840	
Reception: TOTAL		6	6	0

Table 3. Reception after Blanco's death.

C. AFTER DEATH (1841-1879)				
Original works	Narratives	Reception	Protestant	Catholic
1845. *The Life of Joseph Blanco White written by himself.* J.H. Thom, editor 1851. J. H. Newman. *Lectures on the Present Position of the Catholics in England.*	1855. Josephine M. Bunkley. *The Escaped Nun from the Sisterhood of St. Joseph, Emmetisburg, Maryland*		1842 (2) 1844 1845 1847 (2) 1849 1851 1852 1853 1854 1859 1860 1861 1862 1863 1865 1868 1875 1879	1849 1879
Reception: TOTAL		22	20	2

These dates and his religious evolution strongly suggest that while the Sevillian heterodox would not object to the anti-Catholic works published in his Anglican period, he could not have felt comfortable with many of those published in the second and third periods. Since 1835 he was miles apart from the religious and literary world of the American nativist publications.
The pro-Catholic works of the first two periods attacked the sincerity and morality of his testimony. In 1851 Newman used a much more powerful argument that became very popular: his former friend's evidence, although true, was limited to his personal experience and did not reflect the situation of Catholicism as a whole (Murphy 1984).

5. Escaped nun narratives, a brief overview

The Escaped Nun Narrative is an anti-Catholic nativist subgenre that arises in antebellum America. It reflects a Protestant (Calvinist) hostility to Catholicism and Popery depicted as a conspiracy that threatened the religious, racial and political health of the United States on a very sensitive theme: the religious seduction of Protestant (usually Episcopalian) young girls by Catholic nuns and priests to profess in a convent (Pagliarini 1999).
These popular products are relevant, not only to historical and social studies, but also to gender and feminist research, as they focus on the American female protestant psyche with respect to confession and convent life. However, from the point of authorship and veracity, these narratives were usually editorial fabrications, being male authors from religious and patriotic societies their actual composers. The stories were sensationalist accounts that pursued editorial success and political action (Yacovazzi 2018).
The main divergences between these narratives and Blanco's testimony can be summarized like this:

1. Blanco's evidence is biographically true, not a fabrication.
2. These popular works pursued the confrontation between the Protestant and Catholic communities while Blanco always preconized tolerance and an education free of dogmas and superstition.
3. Often, these narratives indulge in the bleak and gothic details that the Spanish heterodox only mentions in his writings.
4. Despite their apparent care and empathy for the condition of women in nunneries, these narratives transpire sexism and a patriarchal mentality.

This suggests that the similarities are superficial and that using Blanco as pretext of authenticity can be easily put to question.

6. Rosamond, an abused widow

The actual biographical status of Rosamond Culbertson is not clear (Franchot 1994), but it is evident that the actual responsible for the text was its editor, Presbyterian Samuel B. Smith who, same as Blanco, was a Catholic priest converted to Protestantism.
Rosamond is a young, frail and licentious woman who, having gone through marriage and some love affairs in the American South, travels as a widow to Cuba, where she is seduced by a Catholic priest, Father Manuel, who makes her his concubine. She lives unbelievable stories, being abused on numerous occasions until she manages to escape from the island to find refuge in a Presbyterian congregation in New York. Spiritualism, and voodoo magic combine with seemingly Catholic religious rituals and vicious practices in the episodes.
Blanco White is used as one of the leading authorities in the appendix. However, he would not have endorsed a work of this kind. To the eyes of every reader acquainted with his writings, there is no ground, religious or literary, for any pretextual legitimacy in using him to support this rather saucy work.

7. The Escaped Nun. Pervert Newman and honest Blanco

Bunkley's narrative is a more realistic account than Rosamond's. However, the actual writers of the story were Mary Jane Stith Upshur and Charles Beale (Yacovazzi 2018). It was presented as a companion to Monk's Awful Disclosures.
There is nothing extremely salacious or sensationalist in this rather dull story, although humiliating scenes such as kissing the floor become repetitive. The heroine must accept the advances of her confessor and the mortification of penances dictated by the Mother Superior. Bad nutrition, unhealthy life habits and poor medical attention are highlighted. This work was also published in England to support the petitions presented in the British Parliament asking for the legal control and inspection of convents and monasteries (Griffith 2004).
There is a passage taken from Blanco's Evidence on the difficulties nuns and novices face to leave a convent and a significant footnote in which Newman's religious perversion and Blanco's honesty are contrasted (Bunkley 1855, 286):

> Of this writer, who had been a Roman Catholic priest for many years, Dr. Newman, the distinguished pervert from Oxford, says, while dissenting strongly from Mr. White's opinions, "I have the fullest confidence in his word when he witnesses to facts, and facts which he knew." He describes him as a person "whose honor you may depend on;" "a man you can trust."

This footnote is opportunistic and misleading. It is clearly an attack against Newman and the sharp distinction he established in 1851 between his former friend's sincere but limited and ill-founded anti-Catholicism and María Monk's religious hoax.

8. Rose Cuisack's love story. Blanco's version of an escaped nun narrative

The anti-Catholic nativists either ignored or left unnoticed Blanco's personal treatment of the seduction scheme by priests to attract young novices that appeared in his work Second Travels of an Irish Gentleman in Search of a Religion (1833).
This book of religious controversy, written as a response to Catholic Thomas Moore's work of the same title (1832), contains a love story in which Rose Cuisack, a Catholic, and angelic Irish young woman, almost falls in the trap to take the veil and abandon his lover, the Irish

Gentleman, tended by an artful priest and confessor, Father Sohan. Fortunately, there is a happy ending where love and religious rationality triumph.

In this work (II,44), older Blanco describes his ideal of a woman and the kind of love he longs for: sublime, rational and egalitarian. He is not interested in a sterile confrontation between Protestants and Catholics based on hate and prejudice and proposes a new kind of Christianity based on reason, education and tolerance:

> "My friend, my tutelar angel (said I with deep emotion) in God's name, I promise you never to trifle again with religion. I am certainly no longer a Catholic in my heart. My desire is to be a Christian. To what denomination I shall join myself, I cannot tell at present. But be sure of this, dear Rose, that the hand that I offer you shall never be sold again for the love of party applause. Will you be mine on that condition?"

This quote clearly shows the distance between his views and the world depicted in the narratives that used him as pretextual support.

9. Blanco's white and black legends. On intellectual and literary appropriation

Blanco White's white and black legends seem to respond to different levels of (potentially illegitimate) appropriation. In this respect what the nativist editors did with his evidence on convent life resembles Juan Goytisolo's adoption of the Sevillian heterodox as his alter ego for his own creative purposes. However, while Goytisolo's "cannibalism" (Loureiro 1998) is encomiastic and boosts Blanco's white legend as a valuable predecessor, these narratives cast doubt and confusion about his message, favouring his black fame. Durán (2010) when discussing Goytisolo's case, favoured the terms "distortion" and "deformation." Leaving aside now which term is most suitable to describe this appropriation mechanism, it seems undeniable that in these narratives Blanco's religious identity gets blurred.

The way the Spanish self-exile presented his evidence, naively exposing himself and his family, is surely the main reason for this phenomenon. It may also be the cause of the fascination his life and works have always exerted on intellectuals and creators of different ideologies and creeds interested in topics such as personal consequence, self-exile, and heterodoxy.

10. Main findings, first conclusions and future research

This research has brought as a first and important result the establishment of a chronology of the reception of Blanco White's anti-Catholic writings on nuns and convent life, and the analysis and classification of the references traced online until now. At his time his influence was important although controversial and subject to manipulation.

His testimony was questioned first by the Catholics against the Protestants and, later by both the Catholics and the Anglicans against the Unitarians, other dissenters and progressive thinkers. Blanco's white and black fames as a religious author rest ultimately on the presumption of his sincerity.

Keeping the chronology of his religious conversions in mind, it becomes sensible to advance the hypothesis of a vested interest to blur or discredit his testimony, even his actual identity, in nativist publications from antebellum America. The contrast between his views and the narratives that used him as pretext is clear. In this respect, it is highly symptomatic that Catholic Saint John Henry Newman felt the need to establish a sharp and clear boundary between Blanco's and Monk's anti-Catholic testimonies in 1851.

The concepts of cannibalism and distortion applied to Juan Goytisolo's personal and literary identification with the Sevillian self-exile could be instrumental to understand this case and,

presumably, other cases of appropriation of his ideas and image by intellectuals of different signs, something that deserves further research.
As Durán (2010) has noticed, Blanco's autobiographical style seems to be especially amenable to reinterpretation and recreation, which may affect and potentially deform the nature and significance of his personal and intellectual legacy, highlighting the polemical and potentially shady aspects of his personality. More studies on the reception of his works and on the religious and political milieu of his time are, therefore, necessary.

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4. The English language of seventeenth-century Ireland: A corpus analysis of the 1641 Depositions

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Abstract

This study is centred around the use of so-called periphrastic DO in the 1641 Depositions, a compilation of witness testimonies recorded after a rebellion in Ireland. A sub-corpus of the 1641 Depositions was analysed and comparisons were made with previous corpus studies. The research found some notable differences, in particular regarding the coding of habitual aspect by means of DO in affirmative declarative clauses.

Keywords: periphrastic DO, depositions, habitual aspect, Irish English, co-optation.

1. Introduction

The earliest recorded use of English in Ireland, apart from personal names, dates from 1250, in an entry in the records of the Dublin Merchant Guildsman (Irwin 1935, 28). But before the seventeenth century only a limited number of settlers were using English, most of them residing in towns along the east coast of the country (Hickey 2007, 123). A concerted effort at plantation that saw land taken from the native Irish and given to protestant settlers from England and Scotland was a catalyst for wider usage of the English language.

The plantations, along with myriad other factors, prompted a rebellion in 1641, which was ultimately quashed. In a bid to exact legal justice against the perpetrators of the rebellion, a commission was then appointed by the lord justices of Ireland charged with recording witness testimonies mainly by Protestants, but also by some Catholics, detailing their experiences at the hands of the rebels. These testimonies, known as the 1641 Depositions, document the loss of goods, military activity, and the alleged crimes committed by the Irish insurgents.

Over 2009–2010 the 1641 Depositions were digitised by historians at Trinity College, Dublin (MSS 809–841, https://1641.tcd.ie/), and were made available online. They provide a unique source of information not only on the social, cultural, religious, and political issues of seventeenth-century Ireland, but also, most crucially for present purposes, on the history of the English language in Ireland in the early stages of the gradual shift from Irish to English as the most common vernacular language, a shift which was to culminate during the nineteenth century (Kallen 1994, 148).

This study looks at the auxiliary DO in affirmative declarative clauses (so-called periphrastic DO; for this label, see Rissanen 1991), as employed in a subsection of the 1641 Depositions; usage of DO in such clauses is one of the defining features of Irish English (Kallen 1989, 3–5), when compared with British English. Section 2 thus presents a brief overview of Irish English, while section 3 looks into the development of periphrastic DO in Early Modern British English (EModE; 1500–1700). The sources of data consulted and the methodology adopted are the focus of section 4, whereas the findings of our corpus-based analysis are discussed in section 5. Finally, section 6 presents some conclusions and suggestions for further research.

2. Irish English: characterisation and overview

The variety of English spoken in Ireland has been referred to variously as *Anglo-Irish*, *Hiberno-English*, and *Irish English*, amongst others (Hickey 2007, 3–4). In line with most current research, the term *Irish English* will be used in this paper. The complex process of second language acquisition by which Ireland changed its vernacular language from Irish (a language of the Celtic family) to English started essentially in the late sixteenth century and was completed by the nineteenth century (Kallen 1994, 148). The result was a variety of English (Irish English) exhibiting distinctive linguistic features at all levels of analysis, though some linguistic levels have been affected more than others. Summarised below are some of the most common supraregional features, that is, those characteristics shared by the different varieties of Irish English that can be heard all over the island, including Ulster.

Irish English has a number of pronunciation specifics that differentiate it from Standard British English. These include differences in dental fricatives, epenthesis, lenition, metathesis, and other pronunciation variants (Hickey 2007, 11–14). For example, most speakers of Irish English use a dental stop for words containing <th>, a sound that is generally pronounced with the fricatives [θ] and [ð] in other varieties of English, so that there is neutralisation in Irish English of the *tin*/*thin* opposition (Kallen 1994, 178).

The list of morphosyntactic features distinguishing Irish English from British English is also quite extensive. For instance, the paradigms of closed-class items present notable differences, as in the case of the paradigm of determiners, with *them* frequently used as a demonstrative adjective (e.g., *in them houses*; Filppula 1999, 55), and the paradigm of personal pronouns, with *yous*/*youse* used as a plural form of *you*. Other salient features of Irish English mentioned in the literature include special patterns of topicalisation and clefting (e.g., ***It's looking for more land*** *a lot of them are*; Filppula 2004, 96), differences in subject-verb concord (e.g., *There was four boys*; Filppula 1999, 154), and a distinctive set of tense, aspect and modality (TAM) markers.

This paper is concerned with TAM markers and addresses specifically the role played by the verb DO as an auxiliary and as a carrier of aspect in the early stages of the gradual shift from Irish to English, as represented in a collection of legal depositions dated between 1641 and 1654. DO underwent dramatic changes in British English over the course of the fourteenth to eighteenth centuries (Ellegård 1953); the 1641 Depositions afford, therefore, a unique opportunity to examine the extent to which the changes affecting British English are reflected or not in Early Modern Irish English.

3. The development of auxiliary DO

As a lexical verb, DO is attested from Old English. In its use as an auxiliary, however, it is not recorded until Middle English, when it started to grammaticalise into the semantically bleached item it is today, most likely from causative DO (Ellegård 1953, 118–119). The earliest auxiliary-like uses occur in affirmative declarative clauses and date from the fourteenth century (Denison 1993, 264), as in example (1) below. To refer to this kind of usages, the label periphrastic DO has become conventional in the literature. The exact meaning and function of DO in such contexts is still in dispute, but there is general agreement that in most cases it was not emphatic and was rather an empty, colourless auxiliary. This clearly contrasts with Present-day English usage, since DO-support can now be employed in affirmative declaratives only for emphatic purposes (e.g., *I* ***did*** *and* ***do*** *take great care of it*; see Denison 1993, 266–267 and Budts 2022, 339, among many others).

(1) Toward þe stude þat þe sonne: In winter **does** a-rise
Towards the place that the sun in winter does arise
(c1300 *Sleg.Patr.Purg* (Ld) 205.191; cited from Denison 1993, 264)

The earliest examples of auxiliary DO in interrogative and negative clauses, precisely the obligatory contexts in PDE, are found only from the late fourteenth century, a little later than DO in affirmative declaratives (Denison 1993, 265). As regards these latter, Wischer (2008), based on the EModE section of the *Helsinki Corpus of English Texts* (HC, 551,000 words), shows that periphrastic DO reaches a peak around 1600, to decline quickly afterwards. These findings are in line with those reported by Rissanen (1991, 328) and Nurmi (2000, 375). By the mid eighteenth century 'colourless' DO had essentially disappeared, so that in affirmative declaratives the auxiliary was employed as today, that is, only for emphasis.

Interestingly for our purposes, periphrastic DO has sometimes been reported to express habitual aspect, as in example (2) from Wischer (2008, 148):

(2) For once in the yeere, which is the whole moneth of August, and sometimes part of September, many of the Nobility and Gentry of the Kingdome (for their pleasure) **doe** come into these high-land Countries to hunt, (HC E2 NN TRAV JOTAYLOR, 135.C1)

In contrast, Rissanen's findings (1991, 323), also based on the EModE subcomponent of the HC, do not identify "any aspectual tendency in the use of periphrastic *do*". By a habitual state of affairs we mean one which "holds true either as an inherent quality of a class of objects or due to the recurrence of particular actions, processes, etc." (Kallen 1989, 4); habituals, in other words, "describe a situation which is characteristic of an extended period of time, so extended in fact that the situation referred to is viewed not as an incidental property of the moment but, precisely, as a characteristic feature of a whole period" (Comrie 1976, 27–28). Crucially, the use of the auxiliary DO to code habitual aspect in affirmative declarative clauses is not found today in Standard British English, but is rather a salient feature of Irish English, as in (3) below.

(3) If I go in to meet a spark [i.e., electrician], I **do** find a carpenter. (M45–65 Dublin; cited from Kallen 1989, 6)

This use has been associated sometimes with substrate influence from Irish (Bliss 1979, 293). Filppula (1999, 136–144) and Hickey (2007, 218–222), instead, point out that affirmative declarative DO was prominent in the English input to Ireland carried by speakers from the south west of England. At the time of the language shift from Irish to English, such affirmative declarative uses would have been co-opted and redeployed for habitual use, examples being found from the beginning of the eighteenth century, as in (4):

(4) I **do** let de Trooparr ly wid my Wife in de bad, he **does** ly at the one side, and my self ly at de toder side, and my wife **do** lye in de middle side; (1705, John Michelburne, *Ireland Preserved*; cited from Bliss 1979, 145)

4. Data sources and methodology

As already pointed out in section 1 above, the 1641 Depositions are testimonies documenting the experiences of witnesses and survivors of the 1641 Irish rebellion. The testimonies were collected throughout the 1640s and 1650s by commissioners appointed by the Commission for the Despoiled Subject and consist of non-dialogic narrative reports taken down by scribes, in the presence of at least two commissioners (Coolahan 2010, 144).

For the present study we have selected a subset of the 1641 Depositions, specifically a batch of 206 depositions and examinations taken in County Dublin, which totals 168,809 words. The sample was obtained from the online resource of the 1641 Depositions, by using the advanced search option on the website and then converting it into a plain text file. WordSmith 6.0 (Scott 2012) was subsequently employed to retrieve all the tokens of DO from the corpus, including the potential forms and spelling variants of DO (among others, *do*, *doe*, *doth*, *dooth*, *did*), which were identified with the WordList function.

5. Findings

The search procedure described above yielded 427 tokens of DO. Out of these a number had to be discarded from the analysis, specifically the lexical uses of DO and examples of DO coding previously mentioned material, as in example (5), where the form *did* substitutes for *guard* in the preceding clause:

(5) Cantwell (called Provost Marshall) Comanded out of the said Castle a guard of some 12 musketeers, to guard himself and those men to the place of execucion: which the foresaid musketeers accordingly **did** & attended him (Deposition of John Holmsted; Dublin, 9/5/1643; MS 814 fol. 244v)

Also discarded were 86 tokens of auxiliary DO in negative declarative clauses and 4 tokens in interrogative clauses (no imperative clauses were attested). Affirmative declarative clauses featuring DO, which constitute the focus of our analysis, totalled 307 tokens, the most numerous category by far. Table 1 presents its breakdown, providing information both on non-habitual versus habitual uses and on present versus past tense reference.

	Present tense	**Past tense**	**Total**
Non-habitual affirmative declarative clauses	54 (87.1%)	220 (89.8%)	274 (89.3%)
Habitual affirmative declarative clauses	8 (12.9%)	25 (10.2%)	33 (10.7%)
Total	**62**	**245**	**307**

Table 1. Periphrastic DO in the 1641 Depositions (Co. Dublin)

Examples in the past tense, as in (6) below, constitute the majority (79.8%), as could be expected considering the fact that the depositions report events that took place in the past. From the point of view of Biber's Multi-Dimensional model of register analysis (Biber 1988, etc.), the 1641 Depositions therefore score high in terms of many of the features relevant for Dimension 2 ('Narrative vs Non-Narrative Concerns'; Biber 1988: 135–138), such as frequent occurrences of past tense verbs and public verbs (*acknowledge*, *depose*, *declare*, *make faith*, *report*, *say*, etc.), together with rather infrequent use of present tense verbs.

(6) shee the said Examinant […] saw the said Captaine Marcus Cruise and his soldiers in the said towne of Rathcline, and heard himselfe and some of his Soldiers (in raging manner) threaten and give out, that they wold kill man woman & child […], And further sayth that the same day the said Captaine Cruise <B> **did cutt** of the Nose of one James mc Conocke fferrall, (Examinations of Ellinor Farrell and Morgan Murrey; Dublin, 7/11/1653; MS 817 fol. 317r)

Turning now to the central question that has prompted this study, namely whether periphrastic DO possessed or did not possess aspectual uses in Early Modern Irish English, the information on Table 1 shows that our data indeed contain abundant evidence for habitual uses of DO. These antedate, by some fifty or sixty years, the earliest habitual examples adduced in the literature (see [4] above).

A few habitual instances of periphrastic DO in the 1641 Depositions are shown in (7)–(9) below. Example (7) suggests that the examinate used to live somewhere else before his moving to Dublin; in (8) the past habit is reinforced by the consuetudinal form *use to* within the same verb phrase; finally, in (9) the habitual sense is underlined by the presence of the frequency phrase *each weeke*:

(7) This examinett being a dweller herin Dublin […] and having some stock of cattle and other goods and monyes due to him in the Com of Roscomman where this examynett **did dwell** before his coming he there to Dublin vppon the begining of this Rebellious Inserection […] (Information of George Davys; Dublin, undated; MS 830, fol. 010r)

(8) he […] denieth that any me gentlemen of the Country **did use to resort** to the Castle dureing the time of this examinates abode there but onely unlesse Nicholas ougan of Racophy, (Examination of George Barnewall; Dublin, 6/7/1642; MS 813 fol. 77r)

(9) this Examinant deposeth that one Robert Weltch of Kinnure and also one delahide of Rush are taxed and **doe pay** (as he verily beleiveth) Tenne shillings a peece or there about each weeke vnto the Rebells Army (Part of the Examination of Daniel Berwicke; Dublin, 21/5/1642; MS 810 fol. 112r)

6. Concluding remarks

The findings in this paper represent the early stages of a larger study. In British English the auxiliary DO was undergoing dramatic changes when the 1641 Depositions were collected, changes which resulted, among other aspects, in the quick decline over the course of the seventeenth century of DO in unemphatic affirmative declarative clauses and its eventual disappearance. However, our analysis found this usage to be still abundant in Early Modern Irish English. Furthermore, we have managed to identify a good percentage of tokens where DO expresses habitual aspect, as also happens in Present-day Irish English. In light of this, a question for future research is whether such habitual uses can be demonstrated to have arisen from the substratal model provided by the markers of habitual aspect available in Irish, as claimed by Bliss (1979, 293), or rather originate in alleged habitual uses already existing in Early Modern British English; see in this regard Wischer (2008) and the discussion in section 3 above.

Acknowledgements

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5. "Protect Britain. Report all illegal immigrants": Hospitality and Resistance in Alfonso Cuarón's *Children of Men*

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Abstract

Current cinematic productions have addressed hostility and hospitality towards migrants and refugees. This essay explores notions of hospitality, vulnerability and resistance in Alfonso Cuaron's *Children of Men* (2006). Set in 2027, *Children of Men* displays how human infertility leads the United Kingdom to become a police state in which asylum seekers are persecuted, imprisoned and killed. Given situations of vulnerability, hospitality is a major concern in the socio-political system of the film, thereby accepting or rejecting guests depending on whether they are considered valid or not by the country. The methodology followed in this paper is based on a close reading of the film. Drawing from Jacques Derrida, Sara Ahmed and Judith Butler, I analyse the film from the perspective of hospitality, affect and resistance thinking. This analysis of *Children of Men* conveys how hospitality adamantly provokes situations of instability and uncertainty, and the way emotions mobilise vulnerability to resistance.

Keywords: *Children of Men*, hospitality, vulnerability, resistance, racialised oppression, emotions

1. Introduction

This essay explores the configuration of hospitality by nationalist movements and the influence of racialised vulnerabilities in resistance strategies in Alfonso Cuaron's *Children of Men* (2006). Set in 2027, *Children of Men* displays how human infertility leads the United Kingdom to become a police state in which asylum seekers are persecuted, imprisoned and killed. According to the film, migration is a consequence of infertility and climate-induced global conflict. In the movie, the government and nationalist ideology believe in controlling free movement of asylum seekers and migrants. Drawing on the scholarship by critics such as Jacques Derrida (2000), Sara Ahmed (2014) and Judith Butler (2016), this article examines Cuarón's film narrative from the perspective of hospitality, affect and resistance frameworks. To do this, I will start by exploring the theoretical approach in this research and then consider the configuration of hospitality in the film as regulated by the government. Finally, I will analyse the influence of the vulnerabilities created by such policies on resistance strategies.

Border film narratives have addressed immigration and the refugee crisis since the beginning of the new millennium. In a way, these representations seem to use the border as a regulated element of inclusion and exclusion. According to Homi K. Bhabha, nationalist discourses are split by a double narrative movement that he calls 'conceptual ambivalence' (209), distinguishing between the performative (what people do) and the pedagogical (what they learn). Given this ambivalence, he claims that "[t]he problem is not simply the 'self-hood' of the nation as opposed to the otherness of other nations. We are confronted with the nation split within itself, articulating the heterogeneity of its population" (Bhabha 2004, 212). By

differentiating some people as valuable or not, nationalist movements configure hospitality in different ways.

Hospitality as the notion of welcoming the stranger is subject to controversies. Drawing on the work of Emmanuel Levinas, Derrida differentiates unconditional hospitality from hospitality, as he claims this last one is always conditional. In fact, Derrida underlines the conditional component to hospitality, suggesting that it depends on the act of welcoming the stranger or not while considering people's background. On the contrary, it is only unconditional hospitality that enables people "to give the new arrival all of one's home, all of oneself, to give him or her one our own, without asking a name, or compensation, or fulfilment or even the smallest condition" (Derrida 2000, 77). In addition, hospitality causes situations of uncertainty and instability, such as the control of borders, when nationalist ideology accepts guests on the basis of their normativity. In this light, Derrida highlights that the ethics of hospitality is determined by the conditions of acceptability applied to guests. This is mainly because, "hospitality participates in the double nature of the border as a mechanism that welcomes or rejects the Other, the newcomer or the stranger" (Manzanas-Calvo and Benito-Sánchez 2019, 9). Therefore, the double nature of the border reveals the rejection of otherness. Hospitality is then an act of welcoming or rejecting "the Others" if they are considered normative.

Concerning this performativity of hospitality, some nationalist ideologies use the border to exclude immigrants and refugees, causing racialised vulnerabilities.[4] In the last decades, such exposure to vulnerability influences the development of resilience and resistance mechanisms. Ana María Fraile-Marcos has raised awareness of the potential of resilience for the study of narratives, highlighted that narratives are tools for creating positive socio-cultural changes in the midst of crises. As she proposes, the notion of resilience—broadly understood as the capacity to adapt and rebound from crisis—is a fertile ground to reflect on nationalist and neoliberal ideologies (Fraile-Marcos 2020, 1). In addition, Fraile-Marcos points out that the responses of resilience are mere adaptation and resistance.

Resilience, as advocated by Fraile-Marcos, may certainly facilitate adaptation and positive socio-cultural changes. However, whereas resilience only generates survival, resistance implies that individuals can achieve positive socio-cultural transformations by challenging any forms of oppression. Contrary to Fraile-Marcos' interpretation of resilience, Brad Evans and Julian Reid note that it has been appropriated by neoliberalism (Evans and Reid 2014, 6). Their critique of resilience implies that "[t]he conflation of resistance and resilience signals the absence of any self-confidence in the liberal subject's disposition towards the world" (6). In this context, resistance "is a purely reactionary impulse premised upon some survivability instinct that deems the nature of the political itself to be already settled" (6). My understanding of resistance in relation to vulnerability, however, is in line with Judith Butler. They explain that the exposure of vulnerability can mobilise to agentic practices of resistance: "vulnerability is a kind of relationship . . . where receptivity and responsiveness become the basis for mobilizing vulnerability rather than engaging in its destructive denial" (Butler 2016, 25). Thus, it could be argued that resistance, as opposed to resilience, is the only capacity to challenge the conditions of racialised oppression and change vulnerable situations into more equal realities.

Furthermore, Sara Ahmed offers in *The Cultural Politics of Emotion* (2004) the vision that the national body identifies others as the source of what endangers the nation. In this way, multiculturalism is read as something unsafe to the nation because nationalist ideologies fear to

4 It is essential to bear in mind at this point the difference between nationalisms. There are several nationalist ideologies based on hegemonic discourses. While this type of nationalism is oppressive, there are others related to resistance, seeking independence from colonial rule. This is the case of several nations, for instance, that have sought independence from colonisation.

embrace diversity. Therefore, a gap is perceived within the national ideal, and it presents threats "to take away what 'you' have, as the legitimate subject of the nation, as the one who is the true recipient of national benefits" (Ahmed 2004, 1).

2. Affective Readings of Hate and Disgust in Times of Nationalisms

Cuarón's *Children of Men* presents a dystopic vision in which humans cannot have children. In 2027 London, the UK has become a police state in charge of detaining immigrants and refugees. Kidnapped by an immigrants rights group known as "The Fishes", former activist Theo (Clive Owen) is brought to its leader, his ex-wife Julian (Julianne Moore). They parted ways after their son died from a flu pandemic in 2008. Julian offers Theo money to get transit papers for a young black female refugee named Kee (Clare-Hope Ashitey). However, Kee later reveals to Theo that she is pregnant and tells him that she is supposed to be taken to a boat of the "Human Project", a scientific group in the Azores dedicated to curing infertility. As soon as Theo discovers that the organisation exploits Kee for their own purposes, he offers her his unconditional hospitality, trying to help her escape from the house.

The film presents a long shot where Theo is going by car to ask his cousin for transit papers. In the film, the configuration of hospitality is also brought to the forefront through the depiction of climate migration. That is, "a component of 'environmental migration,' where migration is specifically attributed to the environmental changes associated with anthropogenic climate change" (Mayer 2016, 12). Through this long shot, the viewer hears a man protesting about climate change and infertility: "Earthquakes! Pollution! Disease and famine! Your sins have incurred God's wrath and in his anger he has taken away his most precious gift to us" (Cuarón, 16:58-17:11). It is interesting to examine the impact of climate change in the movement of migrants and refugees. In fact, the crises enhanced by climate change result in increased vulnerability and accentuate social unrest that dramatically affect racialised communities and people lacking resources. Immigrants and refugees need to migrate due to environmental hazards such as floods and wildfires, both of which are a result of climate change. As a consequence, the movement of people destabilises the UK, provoking that the leading political party makes changes to control free movement. Therefore, in the film the government feels that national security needs to be reinforced, implementing measures that exacerbate hostility and racialised vulnerabilities caused by climate change.

<The performativity of hospitality in the film can also be analysed through an affective reading of hate and disgust when the government direct their animosity to the Other. In this respect, the nation portrayed in the film may lead the viewers to interpret that bodies are hated on the basis of the "*physicality of movement*; bodies are disorganised and re-organised as they face others who are already recognised as 'the hated'" (Ahmed 2004, 54). Such a reading of hate suggests that the nation identifies 'we' as the true representative of the nationalist identity, and 'them' as the figure of hate. The film offers such a perspective when a deeply biased nationalist discourse is played on the radio of a bus: "She's my housecleaner. He's the plumber. He's my dentist. He's the waiter. She's my cousin. *They are illegal immigrants*. To hire, feed or shelter illegal immigrants is a crime. *Protect Britain*. Report all illegal immigrants" (Cuarón, 23:03-23:20 emphasis added).

In addition, this construction of migrant bodies as hateful is also supported by the relation between the performativity of disgust and the separation "from the thing, which paradoxically becomes a thing only in the act of distantiation" (Ahmed 2004, 94). Indeed, as Ahmed proposes, naming something as disgusting implies the creation of proximity to what disgusts. In other words, the disgusted subject is an effect of what repulses. This is quite explicit

in the film when a Bexhill Immigration Officer tries to arrest Kee and Theo when he sees that Kee has urinated: "You fucking people disgust me" (1:09:49-1:09:51). His disgust is actually based on the fact that the officer considers them inferior due to their class and skin colour. Here, the disgust reaction also generates the figures of others as hateful and abject.

The film also serves as an example of how free movement of immigrants and refugees is denied due to emotions such as hate and disgust. Cuarón's depiction of London has been analysed as a post-9/11 city because, as Jenny Kijowski points out, it "can only resuscitate the ghosts of horrors past . . . and as it does so it becomes symptomatic of a traumatized social body that is compelled to reenact the very same horrors that brought them to this state" (Kijowski 2017, 207). Similarly, Barbara Korte underlines the fact that the film serves as a "revival of apocalyptic cinema that began with the approach of the new millennium and experienced a further upsurge after 9/11" (Korte 2008, 316). Thus, this narrative suggests that the government prioritise national security at the expense of the most vulnerable.

It becomes important to analyse the film's depiction of terrorism and the post-9/11 society in comparison with hospitality. Cuarón's *Children of Men* clearly represents his vision of London to introduce a "post-9/11 condition of fear-induced social paralysis that is the true infertility . . . bombarded by messages of xenophobic nationalism" (Kijowski 2017, 201). Thus, by applying a long shot, the director is illustrating two main problems: infertility and terrorism. On the one hand, Theo gives Kee unconditional hospitality by taking her to a safe place because she triggers his empathy the moment she reveals that she is pregnant. On the other hand, they also experience hostility when they are in this house with Fishes member Luke (Chiwetel Ejiofor). He tries to convince Kee to stay at the house: "But I don't think it's safe to try and reach the coast now. You could stay here, Kee. It's a safe place for you to have your child" (Cuarón 0:39:18-0:39:26). Luke, however, later informs the Fishes that they want to kill Theo so that he does not interfere with their plans of using Kee and her baby for their political benefit. After discovering this, Theo takes Kee to the house of Jasper (Michael Caine), who also offers unconditional hospitality by welcoming them in his house. Consequently, this depiction of spaces reflects moments of transit, which prepare them to develop resilient strategies. According to Domingo Hernández-Sánchez's analysis, the film is "the verification that, when time is of the other, space is transit" (Hernández-Sánchez "A. Cuarón, *Children of Men*"). Therefore, Cuarón uses cross spaces to show the difficulties that refugees and immigrants face when they move from one place to another.

The configuration of hostility by the government and the Fishes accentuates racialised and social vulnerabilities, which ends up having an influence on resilient strategies in the midst of adversities. The experiences of pain Theo feels after the death of his son and his ex-wife prompt his adaptation and resistance to the infertility crisis. He meets Kee in a vulnerable moment after having lost his ex-wife Julian. But vulnerability and its conditions mobilises people to resistance (Butler 2016, 25).

3. From Fear to Allyship: Nonviolent Resistance in *Children of Men*

Indeed, when Theo discovers that Kee is pregnant, he starts developing resistance by being exposed to vulnerability and changing his mindset to mobilise against the difficulties the Fishes impose. This vulnerable moment prepares Theo to resist non-violently "as a deliberate mobilization of bodily exposure" (Butler 2016, 26). He directs his exposure to vulnerability to agentic forms of resistance because he empathises with Kee and wants to help her. In fact, empathy is necessary for a construction of resistance. Perhaps, Theo develops strategies to resist

that mobilise his vulnerability to nonviolent resistance "for the purposes of asserting existence, . . . equality, and opposing violent police, security, and military actions" (Butler 2016, 26).

His empathy moves Theo into embracing agency and his own vulnerability. He wants to help Kee give birth after he has lost his son. His vulnerable position mobilises him to nonviolent resistance, since he believes a better future is possible and that human infertility can be eradicated. The procedure of getting the transit papers to help Kee becomes, for Theo, an attempt to heal the death of his son by helping her. Involved in several betrayals and dangers, Theo, Kee and her daughter are captured by the Fishes. However, Theo goes to rescue them by putting himself at risk in the middle of a fight. He manages to save them and tells Kee to go out of the building when her baby is crying. The fact that the baby cries stops the shooting, which could be read as hope for a future in which infertility can be solved.

As a result, resistance in the film is built as nonviolent and grounded in social bonds. Theo wants to help Kee thanks to his ethics leading him to act according to what is right. His strategy to adapt to adversity serves their survival and the development of nonviolent resistance. After all, it is his resistance that helps them withstand both the nationalist policies and the Fishes. The result of his resistance is that Kee and her daughter survive. The viewer is presented with a final scene where Theo, who was a dad, teaches Kee how to calm her daughter. This moment has been read as hopeful because Kee learns how to take care of her daughter before Theo's death. Kee even ends up getting into a boat called "Tomorrow", offering the view that survival underlying processes of resistance—whether violent or not—is possible through allyship. Indeed, it is quite interesting to examine the role of Kee as a refugee woman in the film because it suggests that she "might guarantee a future for Britain and the whole world … [and that] migration . . . is offered as salvation to a society unable to regenerate itself out of its own resources" (Korte 2008, 322-3).

4. Conclusion

To conclude, I argue that the film uses nationalist policies to foster hostility through hate and disgust, adamantly provoking situations of instability and uncertainty and causing racialised vulnerabilities. Vanquishing all types of setbacks, Kee, her daughter and Theo are able to escape from the hostile environments on a boat. I propose that nonviolent resistance is key to the survival of Kee and her daughter, which could be considered a symbol of hope. Their destination is not mentioned in the film, but the viewer is presented with a black screen with children's laughter, suggesting that new futures are possible when racialised communities are not persecuted but integrated and valued.

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6. The West Is the Place: New Reflections on Place and Identity in the American West

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Abstract [round table]:

This article offers new perspectives on the exploration of place and its representation in culture when dealing with the American West, both as a region and as a myth. The authors in this essay explore the representation of the American West in movies, literature, music and TV series. The approach is thus diverse, both because they examine different genres and because the analysis proves that the West as place is also represented in varied ways.

Keywords: Western American literature; place; music; cinema; television.

1. Introduction

The American West is place and more than place. The American West is geography and imagery. From Frederick Jackson Turner's inward-looking perception of the nation's westward expansion to the fluid approach implemented by contemporary revisionistic readings, the American West has always been contested as a region. The representation of the American West in art and culture was responsible, in part, for how the region became subjected as the revelatory exposition of certain values.

The four authors in this article voice previous discussions in arrangement with new nuances or fresh materials. One different angle, for instance, comes from the fact that each section offers variations on the object of study, moving from literature to music, from movies to TV shows.

2. The American West in Willy Vlautin's Songs

Music, as an object of study, has been usually neglected in Western American studies, as David Wrobel has affirmed (2000: 83). Historically, the research exploring the relationship between music and the American West has been focused on soundtracks and folk songs. Recent research has undertaken other perspectives, vindicating the possibilities that popular music offers.

Willy Vlautin's lyrics become a paradigmatic example. Vlautin is a contemporary fiction writer from Nevada, who is also the songwriter for the Oregon-based bands The Delines and Richmond Fontaine. Vlautin's songs, as Neil Campbell has put it, "chart a related territory of blue-collar Western landscapes, with a strong emphasis on narrative and affective soundscapes" (2018: 1).

Thirteen Cities is one of his albums. It puts forward an examination of the interaction between place (the American West) and identity (a varied range of characters). With a number of extra songs, Richmond Fontaine recorded a second work which, under the title *$87 and a Guilty Conscience that Gets Worse the Longer I Go*, expanded on the topics and landscapes

introduced in the first one. The song "The Water Wars," for instance, explores in depth the interconnection between an individual story and a sprawling urban West that suffers the lack of water. Vlautin's music provides a different approach to Western imagery and fantasies, with a realistic touch and a critical eye.

3. The American West in *The Basque Hotel*

The interaction between place and identity in Robert Laxalt's *The Basque Hotel* (1989) is pretty significant. The novel, set in the 1930s, shows the story of a Basque immigrant family through the eyes of an adolescent whose maturation process becomes the main thematic trend of the book. The protagonist's subjective perceptions of geographical space play a pivotal role in the construction of his identity.

Place is experienced as a fundamental event in Laxalt's novel, a story where modern American ways and Basque ancient values often clash. The novel illustrates the inseparability of public and private spaces due to the collapse of the traditional boundaries between these two spatial dimensions. The hotel becomes "a space that at once exemplifies the flux and chaos of modernity in the early twentieth century, as well as the rationalization of space that was taking during the same period" (Short 2019: 1). The interaction between place and identity is also perceptible in other iconic places in this novel. Their connection to the main character's ethnic identity is worth analysing. Place participates in his integration process into American society as well. Besides, Laxalt's novel works as an insightful tool to approach issues such as place attachment, rootedness, and their relationship with the immigration experience. The novel reveals the malleability of place and the unstable condition of tropes like home, "a source of comfort in a world otherwise replete with tension and conflict, and the only environment in which individuals can function as autonomous agents" (Sibley 1995: 93). After all, as Doreen Massey has claimed, "the identities of place are always unfixed, contested, and multiple" (1994: 5).

4. The American West in *Godless*

This section studies the possibility of the existence of a "feminist Western" by analysing the 2017 Netflix production, *Godless*. Starting from the premise that the Western responds to a formula (Cawelti 1984) which defines its plot, setting and characters as well as the use of violence, this section addresses whether the construction of the setting in the show turns it into what can be considered a "female/feminist" Western.

Godless, set in the New Mexico in the year 1880, tells the story of an "only-women" town, whose men have all died after an accident. The sudden appearance of a solitary man responds to a standard plot within the Western genre: the forces of good and evil destabilize the status quo, stability needs to be regained, and violence is brutally used for this purpose.

Mostly for the relevance of women as the allegedly main protagonists, *Godless* has been considered by many a "feminist" Western. In a genre where women have traditionally represented the silent (but always present) secondary characters, women "have had" to rule their lives without the/ir men. However, a more reflective reading of the series proves that the male/female gender hierarchy is still prevalent.

The question to raise is if the setting responds to the classical, "masculine" construction of the Western genre or if it redefines it as a feminine/feminist one. Both the town and the geographical area in which it is set respond to the "classical" imaginary of a Western movie setting. The arrangement of the gender-based division of the private/public spheres is

maintained, regardless of the fact that the town is populated with women only (almost). The show, feminist in the surface, remains "classically male" and patriarchal, reproducing the traditional formula.

5. A Transnational Perspective on Western Movies

The last section considers the interaction between place and identity from a transnational perspective, looking at the different spaces that Spanish Western and post-Western films have used to reflect about Spanish identity. Although Westerns started as a regional genre, they soon became a transnational phenomenon (Miller and Van Riper 2014). Once Westerns disappeared (with a few notable exceptions) from mainstream cinema, post-Westerns exploiting their heritage appeared all over the world. The case of Spanish post-Westerns is particularly interesting, not only because Spain has had a close relationship with the American West, but also because it later became the prototypical location for "spaghetti Westerns".

Places that recent post-Westerns have used as the setting for their stories are many: from the Almería sets in Álex de la Iglesia's *800 balas* (2002) to the nearby deserts in Granada used by Benito Zambrano in *Intemperie* (2019); or from the Ronda mountains where Curro Jiménez fought against the French troops to the northern mountains where *maquis* took refuge in *Sordo* (Alfonso Cortés-Cavanillas 2019). These different spaces have been used to articulate a discourse about Spanish national identity, whether they are the contrast between "orientalism" and "occidentalism" described by Gabilondo (*800 balas*), or the foundational myths in the Spanish War of Independence (*Curro Jiménez*) or in the Spanish Civil War (*Sordo, Intemperie*). In the end, the relationship between place and identity is as close in transnational post-Westerns as it is in the original American genre.

6. Final Remarks

The elucidation of this fourfold study shows how our personal and collective understanding of the American West reveals the relevance of place in identity construction. Culture intervenes as the territory in which that negotiation takes place, whether it is through music, words and/or images that provide a determined representation of place, in this case, the American West.

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Narratives by or about women

7. Exploring Female Agency in Elizabeth Griffith's *The History of Lady Barton* (1771): A Study of Gender and Society

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Abstract

This paper delves into the exploration of female characters in Elizabeth Griffith's novel, *The History of Lady Barton* (1771), amidst the backdrop of societal biases that confine women within oppressive boundaries. The central argument revolves around the conception that women challenging conformity are often depicted as monstrous, embodying madness or criminality as they seek to escape patriarchal constraints. To support this argument, this paper will examine the manifestations of female agency as depicted through the experiences of protagonists in Elizabeth Griffith's *The History of Lady Barton*, focusing particularly on Louisa Barton and Olivia Walter. Influenced by their traumatic encounters with male figures, these characters defy social norms while exhibiting a profound inclination towards embracing death and exile as preferable alternatives to enduring the suffocating grip of societal conventions. Therefore, their choices signify a fierce determination to escape the constraints imposed upon them, serving as a testimony to their indomitable spirit.

Keywords: ecofeminism, Elizabeth Griffith, female agency, The History of Lady Barton

1. Introduction

This study delves into Elizabeth Griffith's novel *The History of Lady Barton* (1771) to uncover the intricate relationship between the portrayal of female characters and the prevailing norms of the time. It revolves around the contention that the fear surrounding women's perceived ability to disrupt social conventions and their association with unconventional behavior is intrinsically linked to their gender identity. Women of Griffith's era found themselves ensnared in a web of stifling repression and patriarchal ideologies, perpetuated by authoritative societal structures. Stripped of agency and independence, women who dared to defy conformity were often depicted as monstrous, mirroring the sentiments of their contemporary society. These female characters frequently assumed peculiar roles such as madwomen or criminals, desperately seeking escape from the shackles of patriarchal constraints, and, in many instances, opting for madness, death, or exile rather than submitting to unrelenting repression. This paper seeks to unravel the complex web of relationships that intertwine gender, societal expectations, and individual identity within Griffith's literary landscape, offering a fresh perspective on the representation of women in eighteenth-century literature.

2. Exploring Female Agency in Elizabeth Griffith's *The History of Lady Barton* (1771)

The narrative of Lady Barton is comprised of a collection of letters exchanged between several characters, including Louisa Barton and Olivia Walter. The central plot revolves around Louisa's evolving affection for Lord Lucan and her discontent with her husband, Sir William Barton. Despite Lord Lucan's reciprocation, Louisa remains faithful to Sir William, yet her sense of guilt gradually erodes her mental and physical well-being. Suspecting foul play, Sir William accuses Louisa of adultery and confines her to their home until Louisa's name is

cleared, and she is released from her confinement to tragically end up dying. In parallel to Louisa's narrative, the correspondence also details Olivia D'Alemberg's courtship and eventual marriage to Colonel Walter. The confluence of Olivia's relative youth, limited knowledge of the world, and the early loss of her paternal figures coalesce to shape her into an innocent individual. Finding herself caught up in the Colonel's attentions, his flattery, and his professions of love, Olivia soon becomes enamored and willingly engages in clandestine meetings with him. As their romance intensifies, the Colonel proposes her to leave home with him. Blinded by her affection, she acquiesces, forsaking her family and disregarding the potential consequences. They go to Embrun, marry without witnesses, and she adopts the pseudonym "Olivet" for the Colonel. They move to Marseilles, and their happiness gradually diminishes as the Colonel's demeanor changes, ultimately culminating in his abandonment of Olivia. This abandonment exposes her to a series of harrowing predicaments where her virtue and honor are persistently called into question. Ultimately, her husband rejects her, and she is confined to a dismal attic, where her survival depends on the servants.

Thus, a simple examination of the storyline vividly highlights the striking resemblance between the experiences of Louisa and Olivia in their encounters with male dominance within the novel. These characters embody a spirit of rebellion and resistance against the established societal norms, primarily driven by the traumas they endure at the hands of male figures in the narrative. Through their unwavering actions, both Louisa Barton and Olivia Walter demonstrate a profound inclination towards embracing death and confinement, respectively, as preferable alternatives to enduring the oppressive shackles of conformity imposed by society. Their choices serve as a powerful testament to their unyielding determination to break free from the constraints placed upon them, underscoring the indomitable spirit that resides within them, an assertion that will be further supported through a parallel analysis of the life journeys of these female characters.

Beginning with Louisa Barton's story, it unlocks the silence traditionally covering particularly feminized experiences of women denying their status as property by refusing to be contained. According to Jane Spencer, the character of Lady Barton serves as a criticism of prevailing materialistic and superficial matrimonial practices through her "desperate cry of protest against the bonds of marriage" (Spencer 1986, 124). Louisa finds herself bound in marriage to a man for whom she harbors no genuine affection, only to discover the true essence of love with another man, namely Lord Lucan. Considering the societal expectations and gender conventions that were prevalent at the time, as we previously analyzed, this was a highly problematic topic. For centuries, including the eighteenth, society maintained a double standard permitting men to pursue multiple sexual partnerships while restricting women from the same freedom. Towards the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, there was a notable decriminalization of adultery for men, granting them enhanced legal authority to penalize their adulterous wives while their indiscretions remained unpunished (Pollak 2016, 55-56). Such discrepancy becomes apparent when examining the marital dynamic between Lady Barton and Sir William in the novel. In the initial pages of the novel, the reader is introduced to Lady Barton, whose presence serves to elucidate the underlying tenets that underpin her marital union and her husband's doctrinal perspectives concerning the fairer sex, with a specific focus on his own wife.

Sir William is a misogynistic man who asserts that women should be treated like criminals and completely denied access to writing. He disparages those who enjoy writing, claiming that they are unfit for anything else, and he also questions female friendship. As he says at the very beginning of the novel,

> women should be treated like state criminals, and utterly debarred the use of pen and ink—he says, that those who are fond of scribbling are never good for any

> thing else; that female friendship is a jest and that we only correspond, or converse, with our own sex, for the sake of indulging ourselves in talking of the other. (Griffith 2018, I, 2-3)

His dismissive attitude towards female friendship and his claim that women's primary activity is to gossip about men are a clearly chauvinist view of women's capabilities and interests. Such an unfortunate comment about women is peculiarly followed by Louisa sighing the words "love, honor, and obey," emphasizing the word "obey" and declaring that the latter only, rests on me," referencing the traditional expectations of a wife's role in marriage, which was to be subservient to her husband, a role that our heroine is determined to perform as "part of the covenant" (Griffith 2018, I, 4).

Sir William's chauvinist nature is also noticeable in a scene in which an abandoned infant is found in a garden with a paper pinned to its breast, which said, this child has been baptized by its father's name, William, suggesting it is Sir William's illegitimate child. The *disconcerted* Sir William asseverates his innocence, determines to prove his guiltlessness, and orders that the child must be again left in the garden where it was found, until the parish officers should come to take charge of it. He also commands a strict search to be made for the mother, so that she is punished according to law. There are many problematic aspects regarding this passage. On the one hand, Sir William's act of shifting blame onto a woman, echoes the societal bias of the time, that places the burden of morality and virtue solely on women while excusing men's behavior. Indeed, Sir William's attempt to shift blame serves as a stark reminder of how women were often scapegoated or held responsible for men's indiscretions. On the other hand, the fact that "the whole company smiled, as they knew that he had been above a year out of the kingdom" (Griffith 2018, I, 139) can be seen as a reflection of the complicity and tolerance of male privilege within the social framework. This double standard speaks to the normalization of men's misbehavior and the willingness to protect their reputations at the expense of women's honor.

Hence, "chasing under the yoke of marriage to a misogynist" borrowing Spencer's words (Spencer 1986, 125), Lady Barton turns her affection towards Lord Lucan, who, unlike her husband, holds a high opinion of women. However, the ramifications of Lady Barton's divergence from societal expectations lead her to constant judgment from society, her own husband, and even herself, as she articulates:

> Wretched Louisa! strive no more to varnish o'er thy faults—Thou wert a criminal, in the first act, who wedded without love; and all the miseries which proceed from thence, too justly are thy due. (Griffith 2018, II, 110)

Perceiving herself as a criminal and consequently internalizing the gender-biased societal norms imposed upon her, which demanded adherence to and embodiment of an unblemished moral character that make it impossible for her to have any kind of romantic feelings for another man outside her marriage; even in the absence of any adulterous transgressions, Louisa finds herself ensnared in the ceaseless turmoil of her psyche. Such turmoil is increased as the narrative evolves, and Colonel Walter, who also harbors a romantic, or rather sexual, interest in our female protagonist, adds complexity to the situation. Walter's reaction upon being rejected by Louisa further underscores the underlying power dynamics and societal patriarchy at play, when in a vindictive manner, he accuses Louisa of infidelity with Lord Lucan. This accusation not only serves to vilify Louisa but also exposes the perilous consequences of women's agency in resisting advances and maintaining autonomy over her own desires. Even in the absence of concrete evidence of her infidelity, the mere suggestion of it becomes a heavy burden for Louisa to bear, as Sir William — favoring male's authority and opinions over those of women — does not grant his wife any credibility condemning her as

"[the] vilest of women" (Griffith 2018, III, 282) and threatening with locking her in an asylum or simply abandoning her.

Despite managing to restore her image in the eyes of society and her husband; as a means of fulfilling her penance for deviating from societal expectations surrounding idealized wifely conduct, the novel portrays her graceful demise at the narrative's end when

> her gentle spirit took its flight to heaven, while these fond arms in vain endeavoured to support the feeble frame from whence it parted—She sunk upon my [Fanny`s] bosom and expired! nor sigh nor groan gave warning of her death, she closed her eyes, and slept for ever! (Griffith 2018, III, 308)

Therefore, Louisa Barton's journey illustrates the profound impact societal expectations and repression can have on an individual's psyche, particularly in the context of gender roles and expectations. Despite managing to reconcile her image, Louisa's inner turmoil persists, fuelled by the dissonance between societal norms and her own desires. Her graceful demise at the narrative's end serves as a poignant commentary on the toll of repression and the limited avenues for escape available to women in her time. Throughout the novel, Louisa Barton emerges as a figure who embodies the virtues expected of women in her society—she is gentle, patient, and dutiful to her husband. However, beneath this façade lies a woman stifled by the constraints of her time, yearning for autonomy and self-expression. Despite her sensitivity and quiet rebellion against societal norms, Louisa is ultimately unable to fully assert her rights or challenge the status quo due to the overwhelming pressure to conform. Louisa's inability to find a sense of fulfilment within the confines of her prescribed roles is exacerbated by her suppression of her sexual instincts and the longing to reconnect with her authentic self. The novel portrays her as a woman grappling with inner conflict, torn between the expectations placed upon her and the desire to break free from societal constraints. Despite her efforts to navigate these tensions, Louisa ultimately finds herself unable to achieve a sense of resolution or peace.

In this context, Louisa's death becomes a tragic yet inevitable outcome of her struggle against repression—a final assertion of her autonomy in the face of overwhelming repression. In choosing to depart from the world on her own terms, Louisa seizes control of her narrative and rejects the roles and expectations that have long confined her. In this context, Louisa's death becomes a symbol of transcendence, a means of escaping the confines of a world that denies her agency and autonomy. It is through her departure from this world that Louisa achieves a form of liberation, breaking free from the shackles of societal expectations and reclaiming her autonomy in death, if not in life. While her demise may be viewed as tragic, it is also imbued with a sense of defiance and empowerment—a final act of resistance against the forces that seek to oppress her. In choosing to depart from the world on her own terms, Louisa asserts her agency and refuses to be defined by the limitations imposed upon her.

Similarly, in the novel, Olivia Walter serves as another cautionary character, much like Louisa Barton, both embodying the societal expectations of how women should not behave themselves in accordance with prevailing moral and ethical standards of the period. Her innocence and inexperience led her to become the other woman: ensnared in a clandestine and legally meaningless nuptial union with a man who was already bound in matrimony with another women named Nanette; Olivia finds herself bearing an illegitimate child, thereby subjecting her to the harsh judgmental gaze of society, and ultimately, consigned to a life of seclusion, relegated to the confines of an attic and eventually of a convent.

Solely assessing her goodness as the catalyst for all her misfortunes, Olivia emerges as one of those women at the margins of conventional norms, engaging in transformative and ontological acts that challenge established boundaries and disrupt the prevailing social order. Once her status as the other woman is discovered by those who surround her, especially her servants, they begin to treat her

> with less respect than usual (…) The physician and apothecary who attended her, divulged the tale abroad, and [she] was looked upon by the whole city of Marseilles, as one of the most abandoned wretches. (Griffith 2018, I, 247)

While acknowledging that Olivia bears no responsibility for her predicament, for she too has fallen victim to deception, she emerges as the one unduly burdened by the repercussions of the actions perpetrated by a man. She alone finds herself cast as a social pariah, whereas Colonel Walter, by contrast, remains unburdened by any obligation to atone for his deeds. Indeed, in the absence of punitive consequences, he even exhibits an unbridled intent to persist in his adulterous conduct, as our previous observations attest in the case of Louisa Barton.

Olivia initially thought her situation had improved when she found shelter with the Marchioness de Fribourg. However, her hopes were soon crushed when she realized that her own damaged reputation, tainted by accusations of adultery and wicked behavior, began tormenting the marchioness. As a result, the marchioness saw Olivia as a seductress, fearing she was trying to lure her husband, Monsieur de Lovaine. Being labelled as "the most ungrateful of her sex" (Griffith 2018, II, 12), Olivia finds herself once again unprotected with an infant. Contemplating death as her sole escape, yet consumed by thoughts of her daughter's future, Olivia, in her naivety, embarks on a quest to locate Colonel Walter in search of protection. Her quest leads her to a grim fate, as she finds herself confined to an attic. In her dire circumstances, her only perceived path to happiness is to take refuge in a convent.

It is not a coincidence that Griffith chooses to present the convent as the sole feasible solution for this unconventional heroine. As previously discussed, these seemingly amoral women, portrayed in Gothic literature as insane, criminal, or rebellious figures, endeavor to challenge or escape the restrictions of a patriarchal society, suggesting that confinement or death are preferable alternatives to enduring repression; as in these narratives, achieving a traditional happy ending may not be a realistic possibility. During the eighteenth century, it was customary for women to enter enclosed convents, with some doing so temporarily until they were married, while others committed themselves for a lifetime. Many chose this path willingly, but convents also served as a convenient destination for unwanted wives and women deemed sexually uncontrollable. The undeniable reality, however, is that once one had taken permanent vows, they were typically confined for the remainder of their lives. Nonetheless, what makes Griffith's novel remarkable is the attempt to present the convent as a positive solution. Louisa Barton herself claims

> I see no asylum, except a convent, where her youth and beauty will not subject her to a thousand misfortunes.— (…) An asylum for unhappy women to retreat to—not from the world, but from the misfortunes, or the slander of it—for female orphans, young widows, or still more unhappy objects, forsaken, or ill-treated wives, to betake themselves to, in such distresses (…). Here women might enjoy all the pleasures and advantages of living still in the world, have their conduct reciprocally vouched by one another, and be screened from those artful and insidious essays, which young or pretty women, when once become helpless adjectives of society, are generally liable to. (Griffith 2018, II, 55-58)

Presenting the convent as both a sanctuary for women seeking respite from the external adversities and as a mechanism of societal repression enriches Griffith's narrative with intricate layers of complexity, imbuing it with a nuanced sense of ambivalence.

On the surface, the convent appears as a refuge for women, offering a semblance of autonomy and fostering camaraderie. It provides a haven where women can find solace away from the patriarchal constraints imposed by society. Women are not merely shielded here; they

are encouraged to take control of their lives, to discover their abilities, and to pursue their dreams free of male dominance. Sisterhood flourishes within these walls, fostering deep bonds of support and understanding. Shared experiences and collective goals knit these women together, creating a network of solidarity that extends far beyond physical boundaries. Women find solace and strength in each other's presence, knowing they are never alone in their journey. The convent becomes a beacon of hope in a world often overshadowed by patriarchal norms and injustices, a place "to guard them from rudeness or censure." (Griffith 2018, II, 57)

Nonetheless, another plausible interpretation arises when considering Griffith's frequent use of subtle strategies to convey her proto-feminist ideas. Depicting the convent as a refuge for women seeking liberation from patriarchal constraints, instead of representing a progressive and empowering notion, can serve to underscore the confines of women's societal experiences within a male-dominated world. It could be argued that the notion of the convent as a sanctuary is rooted in a patriarchal framework that implies that women who did not conform to the established norms could only be safe or free when removed from society, suggesting that genuine liberation remains unattainable within the confines of patriarchal structures. Through retreat into the convent, women like Olivia are compelled to surrender their agency and conform to the institution's authority. In this way, the convent operates as a microcosm of patriarchal structures, perpetuating the same power dynamics and expectations that exist in the outside world.

Therefore, if we adopt this interpretation as the prism trough which to read Griffith's narrative, a more complex understanding of the convent's role emerges. By exposing the limitations inherent in seeking liberation through withdrawal, Griffith would invite readers to question the underlying presumptions and power dynamics that shape women's lives, forcing them to exile in order to subsist.

3. Concluding Remarks

In conclusion, the remarkable journeys of Louisa Barton and Olivia Walter serve as poignant testimony to their unwavering determination to break free from the suffocating constraints of societal norms. Their lives and resolute choices underscore the indomitable spirit that resides within both women, an unwavering courage to challenge a world that sought to confine them within predefined roles and expectations. Their stories resonate not only as personal narratives but as symbols of the broader struggles faced by women during their time. In embracing death or exile over submission, Louisa and Olivia symbolize the enduring struggle for women's autonomy and their refusal to conform to roles prescribed by a patriarchal society. In summary, their stories serve as a reminder that, even within the confines of eighteenth-century society, women depicted in literature need not be relegated to passive roles or mere conduits for male-driven narratives. Instead, they can emerge as intricate, multi-dimensional individuals who, although they might not overtly proclaim their defiance as some subsequent narratives do, subtly challenge established gender norms, and ardently advocate for women's autonomy.

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8. "I didn't own the robin– he owned me": The Representation of Animals and Nature in Frances Burnett's *A Little Princess* (1905), *The Troubles of Queen Silver-Bell* (1906) and *The Secret Garden* (1911)

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Abstract:

Frances Hodgson Burnett (1849-1924) could be considered as a pioneer of ecofeminist philosophy; her works are characterized by a different narrative concerning the interactions between the natural world and humans. Framed in the aforementioned notions, the following paper discusses three of Burnett's works: *A Little Princess* (1905), *The Troubles of Queen Silver-Bell* (1906) and *The Secret Garden* (1911), through the lens of ecofeminism. These novels provide examples of an interdependent relationship with the natural world, which is only possible by the construction of the ecological self. Also, they challenge the idea of women being the innate caretakers of nature; in the context of this discussion, Burnett's depiction of a new form of masculinity in communion with the natural world, becomes of particular interest. Thus, this analysis will provide a necessary insight of Burnett's corpus, reflecting on how a fair relationship between humans (nonwithstanding their gender) and non-human beings is achievable.

Keywords

Ecofeminism; ecocriticism; animal studies; children's literature; nature.

1. Introduction

Frances Hodgson Burnett (1849-1924) is well known to those familiar with children's literature. Her works have been of great relevance in this genre, with Burnett being one of the Late Victorian authors who decided to change the narrative of childhood in English literature. Among her achievements as a writer of children's literature, it would be possible to mention Burnett's representation of the natural world, which is essential for the development of her fiction. Without always resorting to anthropomorphism as in a more traditional fable, the natural world gains symbolic and evocative power, recalling some of the overall themes of her novels: healing, restoration, or forgiveness.

Furthermore, human and non-human beings are portrayed as coexisting in harmony and have a relationship based on respect and equality. Framed in the aforementioned notions of Burnett's subversive portrayal of her characters' communion with nature, the following paper will discuss three of her works: *A Little Princess* (1905), *The Troubles of Queen Silver-Bell* (1906)

and *The Secret Garden* (1911), through the lens of feminist ecocriticism. The latter two are of special relevance because in both, birds are well constructed main characters[5].

The purpose behind this close reading is to identify if Burnett's children's books could be regarded as proto-ecofeminist literature: one that questions the supposed role of women as caretakers of nature (as well as their undeniable connection with it) and avoids the objectification of the natural cosmos. Acknowledging this aspect of her literature is worthy of attention when considering the time of its publication[6]. Great Britain was a powerful empire in possession of several foreign lands and people. Thus, the fact that a writer–specially a woman–dared to represent animals and nature (and others seen as intellectual inferiors, e.g., children and Indian people) as living beings who could not be owned by humans was a challenge to coeval discourses on the superiority of the white male colonialist (Shiva 25; Warren 26).

Burnett's incorporation of ideas and concepts that are nowadays part of the ecofeminist philosophy is outstanding. This current of thought emerged in the mid 1970s when the French feminist Françoise d' Eaubone coined the term ecofeminism: "to describe this more holistic understanding of liberation" (Hinsdale 198; Warren 21). Such approach to nature was crucial after the rise of deep ecology, a movement introduced by the Norwegian philosopher, Arne Naess. Deep ecology is mainly rooted in the notion of the ecological self (Drengson and Devall 2008: 14), who is aware of her/his dependance on the natural world and dissociates from a culture built on an anthropocentric framework of the universe which promotes not only the domination of humans over nature, but that of humans over other humans (Hinsdale 197).

Here, ecofeminism digs deeper, stating that the first instance of domination and later oppression began when a patriarchal hierarchy began to rule society: men dominating women and later nature (Opperman 21; Plant 18). Also, some ecofeminists observe that the domination of nature relates to women because both hold nurturing characteristics (Ortner 43). The creation and sustainment of life (in all its forms) could be considered a valuable quality to appreciate nature and women. Nevertheless, according to ecofeminist philosophy, men have responded in fear or apprehension towards this power. Therefore, the natural world becomes a force that needs to be controlled, approached as a passive object rather than an active one (King 22).

Such perception of nature gives total freedom to men (in this case) to use it without any concern. Objects are meant to be possessed, owned by others who give a function and meaning to them. Going back to the relationship between "Mother Earth" and women, the latter ones are also conceptualized in terms of domination: women are destined to satisfy the needs and desires of men (Plant 1), and thus, conquered, penetrated, and subjugated. This kind of framework reinforces dualistic perspectives by separating men from nature (Ruether 148; White 8-9):

> The inferiorisation of human qualities and aspects of life associated with necessity, nature and women–of nature-as-body, of nature-as-passion or emotion, of nature as the pre-symbolic, of nature-as-primitive, of nature-as-animal and of nature as the feminine–continues to operate to the disadvantage of women, nature and the quality of human life. (Plumwood 21)

[5] In 1912, Burnett published *My Robin*, a brief work in which she answered a reader's question concerning the keen portrayal of the little robin in *The Secret Garden.* Burnett shares about her friendship with the bird that inspired the character and explains how this bond made her consider the robin as a brother, a soul to whom she felt connected with.

[6] Bringing birds into her writings echoes the preoccupation of many Victorian women that decided to step out of the domestic sphere to defend nature and animals, such as Mabel Osgood Wright (1859-1934) or Olive Throne Miller (1831-1918).

Challenging the concept of nature as a passive object, Burnett's works present the natural world as an active and even magical entity in the universe (Shiva 34). In *A Little Princess*, Sara's imagination is captivated by wonderful tales about India and her life back there (Burnett 24). However, her oppressive reality (as a servant) begins to eclipse the comfort she once felt by recalling these stories. Sara is overwhelmed and frustrated until she discovers the beautiful views from her dusty attic:

At least it seemed so to Sara, and nothing had ever been quite so beautiful to her as the things she saw as she stood on the table–her body half out of the skylight–the sparrows twittering with sunset softness on the slates. The sparrows always seemed to her to twitter with a sort of subdued softness just when these marvels were going on. (Burnett 112)

Even in the gloomy London, Sara feels close to nature through the breath-taking sunsets that no one else takes time to see. In this solitude, Sara's heart finds comfort, with the sparrows being a reminder of hope and freedom.

Moving on to *The Secret Garden*, Mary is also familiar with fantastic stories about flora and fauna, which awaken her desire for a garden. This opportunity is not possible for her in India; every time she tries to cultivate one, Mary ends up destroying it (Burnett 2). For Mary "quite contrary", nature is something she can use without much care or respect–it belongs to her. Besides, in contrast to the beautiful places told in her Ayah's stories, the India known by Mary is no longer free and full of life (or magic) but rather one dominated by the English Empire. Her father (like Sara's) is a colonel living in a village almost wiped out after a cholera outbreak.

Yet, nature stops being an object and mere resource when Mary arrives in Yorkshire. Thanks to her maid, Marta, Mary's contact with the natural cosmos is altered through her exploration of the moors around the mansion. Here she meets her first ever true friend, a robin who guides her into a mysterious garden that has been dying for a decade. Finally, the girl's desire comes true, and she begins to experience the joy of nature:

She went from place to place, and dug and weeded, and enjoyed herself so immensely that she was led from bed to bed and into the grass under the trees. The exercise made her so warm…and without knowing it, she was smiling down on the grass and the pale green points all the time. (Burnett 70)

Although *The Troubles of Queen Silver-Bell* is characterized by Burnett's use of anthropomorphism, the representation of animals and nature continues to be worth observing. In this compilation of short stories, a child named Winnie finds herself constantly admiring the rooks that live in her front yard. The fairy Queen Silver Bell notices Winnie's curiosity and realizes that she can be trusted with an important task (Burnett 50-51). Due to this, she is chosen to help hatch some rooks' eggs:

"They won't get cold now." she said. "I'll love them and love them until they think I am their real mother." All the Working Fairies crowded round in their little hammers and picks over their shoulders and looked at her. They kept nudging each other and smiling delightedly. They had never seen a little girl sit on a nest before. (Burnett 53)

Winnie is needed to protect the birds after a boy (who wanted to steal the eggs) scares mother rook from the nest (Burnett 44). A contrast between preservation and destruction seems to reinforce the idea of women being closer to nature, especially when Winnie embraces motherhood without difficulty (Warren 53). The same happens with Mary, who finds her once

lost self in the garden and through unconscious gratitude, becomes a dedicated gardener motivated by the vision of bringing life back to her new green home.

In the case of Sara, she shows an almost innate chase of the casual magic around her; she is the only one opening the attic window to contemplate the marvelous ending of a hard day in industrial London[7]. Adding to this, Sara also finds a friend in Melchisedec, a large rat that makes her feel less lonely and somehow, understood (Burnett 93). Faithfully, Sara brings food to her friend, and such is their bond, that she distinguishes his squeaks from the ones of other rats.

However, despite the reflections provided by these women/girl-nature relationships, there might be some doubts about "whether such connections are potentially liberating or reinforcing of the inferior and subordinate position of women" (Hinsdale 199). According to Opperman, this current of thought is quite promoted by cultural ecofeminism (21) and has led some feminist to discard ecofeminism as a movement that emphasizes female empowerment. Others, like Val Plumwood, look out for a better dialogue by cultivating an analysis of these connections, identifying the dualisms that construct them (39), and thus proposing integrating notions (36).

Concerning this aspect, Burnett's works also advance the conversation about gender roles and their interaction with other non-human beings. Girls do have a special union with nature and animals, nevertheless, Burnett constructs a different form of future masculinity, far from the colonizing and urban Victorian ideal. Both girls and boys understand that they are not conquerors of the land, neither superior to each other or the animals (Mies and Shiva 16), but rather visitors and then fellow inhabitants: it is only when the little robin guides Mary to the garden that she is granted access to it and the fairy queen chooses Winnie to become a mother rook.

Examples of this new boyhood are mainly found in *The Secret Garden*, with Dickon, a boy who surprises Mary in all ways possible:

She quite caught her breath as she stopped to look at it. A boy was sitting under a tree, with his back against it, playing on a rough wooden pipe…And on the trunk of the tree he leaned against, a brown squirrel was clinging and watching him, and from behind a bush nearby a cock pheasant was delicately stretching his neck to peep out, and quite near him were two rabbits… (Burnett 83)

Dickon's description embodies the mythical figure of Pan: the ideal harmony between humans and nature (Bixler 41). His friendship with animals and knowledge of plants and flowers turns him into the best companion for Mary. Working hand in hand, the children transform the abandoned place, and when this happens, Mary ponders about giving the news to her depressed and hypochondriac cousin Collin.

Aware of her cousin's possessive character, she worries that Collin might want to have the garden all for himself. Against all odds, he never thinks of this, and the secret garden becomes a source of healing and restoration for both Collin and Mary: they are given the opportunity of recovering the lost years of their childhood, learn to have fun, and to establish bonds between them, and mostly, to appreciate nature (Burnett 217). Then, Collin learns that the garden belonged to his deceased mother; knowing this gives him back a part of her to which he had been denied access by his father.

Springtime comes and an air of new beginnings fills the secret garden: the robin has found a mate and their nest is ready. In a very solemn way, Dickon takes care of the eggs and

[7] This continues to be until the day that Sara meets Ram Dass, an Indian man that has been taken to England as a servant. Like Sara, he escapes to the attic window and finds comfort in the sunset. Soon, they become friends, with Ram Dass doing everything he cans to help Sara out of her difficult situation.

protects them from any harm. He redeems the boy from Winnie's story, with the robin feeling safe with him around Mary and Collin, who follow Dickon's guidance:

The first moment he set his dew-bright black eye on Dickon he knew he was not a stranger but a sort of robin without beak or feathers. He could speak robin (which is quite a distinct language not to be mistaken for any another). To speak robin to a robin is like speaking French to a Frenchman. Dickon always spoke it to the robin himself, so the queer gibberish he used when he spoke to humans did not matter in the least. The robin thought he spoke the gibberish to them because they were not intelligent enough to understand feathered speech. (Burnett 228)

Recalling Burnett's words in *My Robin* (1912*)*: "I did not own the robin–he owned me–or perhaps we owned each other", gardens, birds, and human beings are seen as a whole entity that loses its balance when lacking a state of interdependence and mutual companionship.
To conclude, the thought of regarding women as the only ones responsible for a good relationship with nature (Maathai 26; Mehta and Leach 35) and the idea of the natural cosmos as a mere resource is more than disregarded in Burnett's ecofeminist narratives. Neither girls, nor the magic of nature is constricted to a fixed role or connection, and it is from this point that a new understanding of the universe and social order begins. Adding to this, boys and girls experience a meaningful and deep connection with nature, something sublime that affects the inner self of Sara, Mary, and Collin, who discovers that there are powerful forces emerging from the garden, ones that somehow brought him out of his dark and miserable cave back into life:

"Then I will chant", he said. And he began, looking like a strange boy spirit. "The sun is shining–the sun is shining. That is the Magic. The flowers are growing–the roots are stirring. That is the Magic. Being alive is the Magic–being strong is the magic. The Magic is in me. It's in every one of us…Magic! Magic! Come and help! (Burnett 211).

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9. Registering the Collective Suffering of the Underdog: Embedded Trauma Narratives in Jean Rhys's *Good Morning, Midnight*

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Abstract

In her interwar novels, Jean Rhys used writing to make sense of her traumas in relation to the suffering of other outcasts. This endeavour enabled her to transcend modernist solipsism and turn the introspection of the self into the groundwork for a relational testimony of trauma. Relying on Leigh Gilmore's notion of the 'limit-case', this paper addresses Rhys's last interwar novel, *Good Morning, Midnight* (1939), as a potentially representative trauma narrative that blends autobiographical accuracy and fiction to suitably depict trauma while relying on the need to link the experience of the autobiographical subject to that of the 'underdog'. The result of bringing together the emotional wounds of the 'Rhys woman' and those of other destitute subjects is a series of embedded narratives that lay bare the potential of Rhys's writing as a testimony of trauma aimed at the regeneration of intersubjective empathy in the aftermath of the manifold crises of modernity.

Keywords: modernism, trauma, the 'underdog', limit-cases, intersubjective empathy.

1. Introduction

Over a career spanning nearly five decades, Jean Rhys wrote a timeless testimony of some dark areas of human experience. Her depiction of gender and cultural oppression and the ensuing fracture of the heroine's mind are major themes that reflect very present concerns. In line with the relational and polycentric dialogue advocated in our times, Rhys's work has been recently revisited through twenty-first-century approaches focusing on its *trans-* dimension. Hence, Juliana Lopoukhine et al. (2020) delve into the transnationality lying at the core of her writing, while Laura Oulanne (2021) pays attention to the fluid dialogue between the self and non-living matter in her short stories.

Along similar lines, my paper brings to the fore the dialogic quality of Rhys's works, in this case her modernist novels, by digging deep into the inextricable link between individual and collective narratives of trauma. Hence, I analyse her last interwar novel, *Good Morning, Midnight* (1939), as the culmination of a process through which she used writing to struggle for self-discovery, managing to get a fuller grasp of her traumas as she read them against those of others. It is the aim of this paper, then, to unveil the intimate relation between the personal and the collective in her novel as a way of articulating her experience of trauma as well as displaying empathy with other shattered subjects. Thus, I approach Rhys's novel as a multilayered trauma narrative where the larger testimony of the autobiographical subject—the so-called 'Rhys woman'—coexists with minor stories of helpless people she identifies with.

2. Representing the 'Case of the Underdog'

The link between the Rhysian heroine and those invisible people pushed to the margins of the interwar metropolis features prominently in her modernist novels and short fiction. In the introduction to her short story collection *The Left Bank*, her literary mentor, Ford Madox Ford,

underscored "a terrific—and almost lurid—passion for stating the case of the underdog" (1927, 24). Her penchant for making prominent the misery of this multifarious social group stems from her identification with them. As an outsider who never fathomed a sense of belonging, she was well aware of what it meant to be neglected by those who met the social standards of the interwar European city. In stating the muffled story of the underdog, she is advocating the reconsideration of unattended voices that have a story to tell.

The rescue of these little stories from oblivion to ultimately place them at the centre of her work runs parallel to her relationship to writing: during the WWI years, Rhys just scribbled her distress in notebooks that she kept to herself; by 1939, however, she had managed to flesh out her traumas and make them tangible through the completion of four novels and an array of short stories. The 1930s were crucial for the development of Rhys's perception of herself in relation to her surrounding world. As biographer Carol Angier (2011, 224) highlights, the "real story" of Rhys's life during this period was her endeavour to go over her life story and turn it into writing. As Rhys acknowledged later in "The Trial of Jean Rhys", a short piece appended to her autobiography *Smile Please*, her writing responded to an urge to express her emotions, one of them being "a great love and pity for others […], especially for the poor and the unfortunate" (Rhys, 1979, 162). In this sense, writing offered her a framework to articulate her otherwise inscrutable traumas and ultimately create a relatable testimony of trauma. In widening the scope of her stories to include the ordeal of other underclass subjects, Rhys is engaging with a practice that, as Leigh Gilmore explains in the updated preface to *The Limits of Autobiography*, is at the core of contemporary outlooks on life writing: "[A] recent openness to *I*'s that are […] experimenting with the limits of truth telling about traumatic material" (2023, 3).

Rhys was not interested in sticking to factual accuracy, as traumatic experiences are by nature elusive. What she exploits in her work—and *Good Morning, Midnight* is a case in point—is the intersection of the autobiographical subject's social disengagement and its attention to the suffering of characters that are clearly fictional. The interplay of fact and fiction is concomitant with an advocacy for the testimonial rather than the confessional, and this is suggestive of the 'limit-case', a term coined by Gilmore (2023) to refer to self-representational trauma narratives aimed to unsettle the core limits of autobiography. The rupture of boundaries Rhys offers is epitomised in the figure of Sasha Jansen, the leading figure of *Good Morning, Midnight*. At the outset of the novel, she recognises herself as "a bit of an automaton" (Rhys, 2000, 10). Her enduring exposure to society's contempt for misfits and her lack of supportive figures seem to have crystallised into disengagement from society. Yet, the narrative shows that her trial has also enhanced her attention to the suffering of others. Like Rhys, Sasha capitalises on both her knowledge of the underdog world and her role as storyteller to draw attention to the suffering of those who, like her, remain invisible to society. Her sensibility to the case of the underdog leads to the punctual embedding of little narratives in which she reimagines their untold stories. The four embedded narratives to be discussed below evince that the heroine, as representative of the underdog, is a solid human being that can relate to others through the dialogue between histories of trauma.

3. **Snapshots of Underdog Life: A Move Towards Representativeness**

The first of the embedded little stories on underdog life can be found in Sasha's narration of her experience as a receptionist in a boutique. As her employer calls her a "hopeless little fool" (Rhys, 2000, 24), she recalls a bald woman whom she has seen trying hats. This memory triggers Sasha's compulsion to cry as she remembers the disapproval of the customer's

daughter: “Well, you have made a perfect fool of yourself, as usual” (20). Such a reprimand runs parallel to that of her line manager, and positions both her and the bald woman as emotionally helpless people to be repudiated and reminded of their difference, as the narrator suggests: “I cry for a long time—for myself, for the old woman with the bald head, for all the sadness of this damned world, for all the fools and the defeated” (25).

Sasha also bursts into tears after interacting with Lise, a cabaret singer she alludes to in one of the major analepses in the novel. Sasha’s attachment to Lise is strengthened when Lise affirms that she would like another war to start, her justification laying bare a sense of self-defeat: “Yes, I do. I might have a bit of luck. I might get killed. I don’t want to live any more, me” (111). Lise’s is a fractured psyche that continues being subject to insidious trauma, and this can be seen in the narrator’s effort to fill in the gaps of her acquaintance’s story: “Then she’s off. She has nobody. She doesn’t think anybody likes her. [...] She will once more have to try for a job as a brodeuse” (111–112). Though highly fragmented, the short sentences comprising this little story reflect Sasha’s awareness that what life has in store for Lise is the repetition of a cycle of hopelessness and self-defeat. Her report of Lise’s misery evinces her empathy with this underdog character. Indeed, not only does she speak for the young artist, but also touches on aspects that mirror her own experience, from her lack of friends to the fear of rejection. Remarkably, before Sasha and Lise start crying, the voices of the narrator and Lise merge in an account of an event that brings to mind Rhys’s edgy relationship with her mother: “She is afraid of her mother. When she was a little girl her mother beat her. […] She likes to make me cry. She hates me, my mother” (112). The interspersion of both narratives is another hint at the relatability of the stories of underdog life foregrounded by Rhys, both in terms of the larger testimony and the embedded stories. By making Lise’s narrative heard, both Rhys and Sasha revisit some key traumatic events of their life while making a tentative reconnection with the very few people that they can relate to.

Sasha’s position at the crossroads of the centrality given by her role as storyteller and her unbelonging is made prominent as the protagonist enters a *tabac* in Paris. The “sly” (87) gaze of the owner and the glare of a female customer remind her of the “misery” (87) she cannot get rid of even in the shabby places she frequents. Still, Sasha foregrounds the unnoticed presence of a young woman that, as she maintains, “does all the dirty work and gets paid very little for it” (87). Sasha underlines how the employee avoids eye contact as she passes her, probably to hint at a shared pain of rejection. As she broods on the young lady’s poor working conditions, she wonders whether she should feel sorry for her (87), and the next lines corroborate that, more than sympathise with her, she is moved by her resilience: she alludes to her “sturdy legs” (87) and points out that she is singing the Marseillaise (88). In so doing, she is pointing to a respectability that Sasha craves to gain back, as her interior monologue reflects: “I am a respectable woman […] on her way to the nearest cinema” (88). At the same time, she is bitterly laying bare that, no matter how hard these underdog subjects try to put on a mask of uprightness, the system will not offer them room for a sense of belonging: “The hands that sing the Marseillaise, the world that could be so different—what’s all that to me? What can I do about it? Nothing. I don’t deceive myself” (89).

Sasha’s realisation of the underdog’s helplessness suffuses the last embedded story to be discussed. The narrator reports a story told by Serge Rubin, a Jewish Russian painter she gets to know during her layover in Paris. The narrative revolves around the misery of a mulatto woman from Martinique who barely leaves her house because she is constantly subject to the hateful looks of Londoners. She feels that “she was at the end of everything” (80), and this hints at a trauma caused by structural oppression. Her despair ties in with that of Sasha and the underdog she relates to, and this is strengthened by the intrusive comments Sasha makes as

Serge is telling the story. In the first one, she reacts to Serge's remark that the Martinican woman was "no longer quite human, no longer quite alive" (80) by speculating that he must have been kind to the stranger. In this respect, she may be eliciting Serge's compassion with another woman that has turned into an automaton: herself. In the following ones, she dwells on the ruthlessness of people, which she describes as "that rosy, wooden, innocent cruelty" she knows well (81). Both women are rejected for not fitting the mould, and in this case the problematics of cultural identity, which is more salient in other novels by Rhys, brings to light the multiple layers of these subjects' oppression. Such an amalgam of traumatic stressors, which is in keeping with the relational story pattern tackled in this paper, reveals that the narratives of trauma Rhys articulates in this novel can be said to be intersectional. Indeed, as Kaisa Ilmonen argues in her recent contribution to *The Routledge Companion to Literature and Trauma*, "intersectional trauma theory asks *how* traumatic situations take effect, rather than *what* traumatises an individual" (2020, 179). It is the 'how' of this process that leads Rhys to envisage a multidirectional webwork of emotional bonds between underdog subjects. Whether they are rejected on the basis of class, gender or ethnicity, Rhys's underdog characters belong to a set of interconnected relationships strengthened by the commonality of their traumas.

4. Conclusion

In brief, the analysis of the embedded substories in *Good Morning, Midnight* has shown that it is the recognition of a shared experience that offers the Rhysian 'underdog' a way out of the negative inertia provoked by their trauma. Rhys gives pride of place to this encounter by blurring the boundaries between her life story and that of Sasha while breaking down the walls of alienation. Sasha's narration evinces that, as the protagonist moves out of her estrangement, she relights her attention to people going through similar trials and makes her testimony relatable by acknowledging these characters' plight. The dialogic quality that this novel takes brings it into conversation with present-day debates and reassessments of the modernist period that embrace a move towards the planetary or the search for new forms of intimacy. Jean Rhys is, therefore, a writer that still matters, and her work will continue promoting debate in the years to come.

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10. Rape Culture and Consent in Contemporary Anglophone Women's Rewritings of the Classical Tradition

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Abstract

Sexualised violence is one of the central mythemes in Homer's *Odyssey* and *Iliad*, Virgil's *Aeneid* and Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, as both gods and men predate lesser female divinities and female mortals, regardless of their age. Downplayed, taken for granted, normalised, or even sanctioned and legitimised under the male-centred auspices of the classical tradition, unconsented sex, sexual assault and rape have recently found their way into a plethora of female-authored reimaginings which not only provide an unheard-of centrality to marginal female characters and myths with hardly any previous voice or visibility, but also revise and undermine unexamined paradigms of (un)acceptable (wo)manhood. It is in this light that this paper reads Elizabeth Cook's *Achilles* (2001), Pat Barker's *The Silence of the Girls* (2018), Jennifer Saint's *Ariadne* (2021) and Natalie Haynes' *Stone Blind* (2022) through the critical lens of rape myths, rape culture and consent culture.

Keywords: Contemporary women's rewritings, rape myths, rape culture, consent culture, sexualised violence

1. Introduction

Rape is not precisely elusive as much as ubiquitous in classical Antiquity and its reception. Classical literature is characterised by what Rosanna Lauriola refers to as "'Heroic' Rape" or "Abduction" (2022). For her, Zeus is the "Master" rapist, a symbol of undisputed male power, but he is not the only one. Besides, it is evident that Greek mythology fails to sympathise with the victims of sexual assault. It is along these lines that Anna Everett Beek points out that it is time to stop accepting them as "realistic because they are constantly repeated and infrequently questioned. Most destructively, these ancient myths about rape fuel the modern rape myth, a body of common misconceptions about rape that affect how real-life survivors of sexual assault are treated" (2016, n.p.).

Contemporary women-authored rewritings of the classical tradition raise relevant questions about not only the relationship between the woman writers and the "underlying ideology" (Karakantza 2004, 30) that governs the classical canon, but also about the ways in which restrictive representations of gender can be subverted, appropriated and adapted to current sensitivities. These gender-sensitive narratives are intent on debunking the discourses and narrative constituents of rape culture, that is, "a milieu that normalizes aggressive heterosexual male violence towards women", by reinscribing them into tenets of consent culture, which "prioritises balance, respect and mutual consent in sexual dynamics and relationships" (Kessel 2022, 131). Non-fictional rape and sexual assault are crimes, "legally defined as involving the absence of sexual consent" (Willis and Marcantonio 2021, 84). One of the main obstacles encountered by survivors when disclosing the incidents and seeking help are the so-called rape myths. Understood as a set of false assumptions widely accepted or taken for

granted when it comes to telling apart what is rape/sexual assault from what it is not or playing down its consequences, rape myths are only second in danger to the crimes themselves, as they hide the truth and leave many people who have suffered all kinds of sexual abuse to cope with the rape in silence. As pointed out by Blue Sky Centre,[8] an NHS referral centre for rape and sexual assault victims in the UK, myths about rape are all about moving the responsibility for the crime from the perpetrator to the victim. Rape and sexual assault are about power and violence, not sex. Another major rape myth is debunked by the fact that the majority of sexual assaults are planned carefully and are not committed because of uncontrollable sexual urges.

Given that an imbalance in power politics is at the core of rape and other traumatic and intersectional forms of sexualised violence, instead of cancelling them and their perpetrators in these feminist revisions, it is victims and survivors that receive the main narrative focus, becoming empowered in the process. In contrast with their canonical counterparts, these recent iterations of Briseis, Cassandra, Circe, Helen of Sparta/Troy, Medusa, Ariadne or Atalanta, amongst others, tell their own stories from their own perspectives and even, more often than not, have a say in them, acquiring agency into the bargain and establishing cognitive bridges that strengthen emotional ties with readers. Therefore, centred as it is on the reception of contemporary women's reimaginings, this paper applies the critical framework constructed by Cox (2011), Liedeke (2011), Cox and Theodorakopoulos (2018), Hauser (2019), Nikolaou (2020) and Nisa Cáceres and Moreno Soldevila (2023) to the broader narrative contexts of four novels: Cook's *Achilles* (2001), Barker's *The Silence of the Girls* (2018), Saint's *Ariadne* (2021) and Haynes' *Stone Blind* (2022). Through close analysis of a selection of relevant extracts, a special emphasis is placed on problematising this specific form of violence against women, as well as demonstrating how these novelists debunk rape myths while promoting, directly and indirectly, the culture of consent.

2. Breaking the girl: Briseis in Barker's *The Silence of the Girls* and Helen of Sparta in Cook's *Achilles*

In *The Silence of the Girls* (2018), Pat Barker departs from the assumption—indeed a rape myth—that only women get raped and then only certain types of women, bringing in intersectionality as a levelling factor: all Trojan women are enslaved and become objectified versions of their former selves regardless of their age, skin colour or social origins. Sharing a common precipitous decline in humanity and dignity, some are not of low birth. Briseis is a young local princess who forcefully becomes Achilles' sex slave after witnessing him butcher her own family: "What can I say? He wasn't cruel. I waited for it—expected it, even—but there was nothing like that, and at least it was soon over. He fucked as quickly as he killed, and for me it was the same thing. Something in me died that night" (2018, 28). Everything goes when it comes to mapping those unfilled spaces of grievability, as Briseis confesses that a "slave will do anything, anything at all, to stop being a thing and become a person again" (2018, 93). Most of the other Trojan women come from much lower echelons of a now-extinct society, but all together are ironically left alone with the corpse of Myron, a Greek responsible for the maintenance of the ships and the upkeep of the compound. He had "driven them [slaves] hard and made use of them sexually too" (2018, 86), which is conducive to a vengeful spree of sorts where the remains of their rapist are grotesquely desecrated.

[8] All references to rape myths have been taken from Blue Sky Centre, being hereafter used for analytical purposes.

Apart from meditating on gender-bending and the transitional nature of bodies and texts by representing the hero's "girlhood" (Nisa Cáceres 2024, 14-15), Elizabeth Cook also departs from conventional literary narratives of Helen's culpability in *Achilles* (2001). In a complex blend of narrative past and present, Cook merges her rape as a child by Theseus with the sack and destruction of Troy. Therefore, the readers' attention is not directed to elucidate whether she was abducted or went to Troy willingly, but to witness how Helen's age-long tribulations in a men's world have distortedly shaped her life. Less frequently represented in order to avert the ethical questions it poses on the hero's status as a rapist, this narrative of child abuse punctuates the other chronotopes of sexualised violence and accountability that Cook reimagines in the novel—especially Peleus' harrowing rape of Thetis, while formulating the systemic tenor that facilitates their interpretation. Two main rape myths provide the epistemic as well as moral background to their story, namely "A victim of rape will scratch, fight and scream" and "Women say 'no', but they mean 'yes'":

> How *do* you mate with Thetis, the sea-nymph that the gods desire?
> 'The main thing,' says Chiron, 'is not to let go.'
> He too would like to pin her under his hooves.
> What would it be like?
> 'She will do everything she can to throw you—buck, kick, bite, *dissolve*, shrink and grow thorns. You like them lively? This one is flame of life itself. If you want her—and you must, Zeus requires it—you have to hold fast, even to flame.
> 'You'll be burnt, and it will be worth it.' (2001, 13)

The feminist undertones of the critique are eloquent, all the more so when two other male figures not precisely exempt from rape associations—Zeus and a centaur—are thrown into the equation, while Thetis' epic resistance resorting to all her metamorphic powers as a lesser divinity is presented as nothing short of futile:

> So he stalks her […] So he stalks her […]
> Peleus waits and watches; getting to know the shape of her, the edges of bone and the warm furrows. The heft of her as he'll lift her on his cock.
> […] *Now!* […]
> His right arm scooped under her back, knee wedging thighs apart. She wakes to the man covering her, darkening her like a tent, coming between her and the light (2001, 14-16).

If Thetis cannot prevent her rape, just as gods avail themselves of the same bestiality to do exactly the opposite, it stands to reason to question to what extent can Helen be blamed for her life-long objectification as a matchless, allegedly helpless beauty, let alone for being raped in her infancy. Similarly, Cook's deconstructs Helen's narrative to reflect on whether agency or the absence of beauty was even contemplated as a possibility. Helen would fit in the rape myth taking for granted that women "'ask for it' and are to blame if they are drunk, flirting or dressed provocatively":

> When Theseus broke in she silently slipped out; back into the shell she could summon from that instant. It became a bivouac she could watch from. What she watched that first time was a big man with gleaming eyes and a red, wet mouth at the heart of his beard. He came up to her from behind to seize the proud bones that rose like little hills at each side of her belly. Then his hands grasped lower, tugging her apart like the halves

> of an apricot. Then not his hand but the blind brute of his penis, cramming itself in wherever it could […]. (2001, 72)

Helen voice stresses the imperviousness of her own body to violence, trauma, bodily pain, universal hatred and victim blaming. Readers are presented with a version of Helen that collides with the commonly-held belief that those "who rape are sick or not normal", considering that rape in the classical tradition is institutionalised as the natural exertion of power by those in a position of male authority:

> Maybe the albumen did it. Or having Zeus for a father. The fact is that nothing that happens—nothing that has happened to her—shows.
>
> And that is enough to make them hate her. Her beauty is like a smooth wall which resists all impressions. Paint will not stick to it, neither will mud. You cannot hack into it to make your mark. It makes you feel like you don't exist.
>
> […] And they hate her for that too: for the terrible things she leads them to think of.
>
> Theseus.
>
> Menelaus.
>
> Paris.
>
> Each more inventive than the last in his futile attempts to mark her. (2001, 74)

While Zeus, Menelaus or Theseus, male figures of divine or heroic proportions, qualify as normal or entirely sound, Cook mobilises to effect change by delving into Helen's traditional misrepresentation as the odd woman out.

3. Reinscribing Medusa: Haynes' *Stone Blind* and Saint's *Ariadne*

Natalie Haynes arguably explores this behavioural framework in the relationship between Dictys and Polydectes in *Stone Blind* (2022). As the older brother and rightful heir to the throne, Dictys has renounced his rights, preferring instead a quiet life as a fisherman. It was he who rescued Danaë—another survivor of rape—and her baby, adrift in the sea, being now respected as a functional father-figure, the inverted mirror reflection of Zeus, Perseus' biological parent and rapist. Dictys' brother, King Polydectes of Seriphos, clearly stands for the tenets of rape culture, whereas Dictys opts for consent:

> 'You are a disgrace,' said the king. 'To have a woman like this in your house and take no pleasure from her.' He shook his head in disgust.
>
> 'I don't take pleasure from anyone unless they offer it freely,' said Dictys.
>
> 'You have always been weak.' (2022, 108)

Nowadays, the situation has not improved; indeed, similar presuppositions or scripts keep feeding rape culture. However, this secularly undisputable support of power structures is being gradually eroded by culture tenets where consent is unequivocally understood as a *sine qua non* condition. Sexualised violence and rape therefore are not "a crime of sexual needs or uncontrollable urges", as men can rationally learn to control not only their urges, but also their thirst for power.

While being concerned with Dictys' consent-oriented masculinity, Haynes also goes to enormous lengths to render young Medusa and her Gorgon sisters before and after their existence comes across that of Perseus. This is undertaken to the detriment not only of the hero's perception as such, but also of Athena's moral integrity in her objectionable motivations to harshly punish a sixteen-year-old girl for being raped by Poseidon, her own uncle. In so doing,

while contesting the goddess of wisdom's ironic reliance on nonsensical victim-blaming arguments, Haynes equally undermines the false notion that survivors of rape "will report it straight away"—as it takes three days (2022, 60) for Medusa to tell her sisters:

> 'Did the snakes just appear?' asked Sthenno.
> 'No,' Medusa said. 'She made them.'
> 'Who?'
> 'I'm not sure,' she replied. 'A goddess. She was here in the cave. She was angry with me. It might have been…' Her voice died.
> 'We know who it was,' Euryale said. 'Vengeful and cruel, always blaming women for what men do to her. She has always been like this. You know she has.' (2022, 138)

In Jennifer Saint's *Ariadne* (2021), its eponymous protagonist's sense of determination counters the ramifications of rape culture by resignifying her handmaiden's cautionary tale of Medusa. Far from being the monster she had identified her with, she realises that the "stories of Perseus did not allow for a Medusa with a story of her own" (2021, 16-17). Similarly to Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's "The Danger of a Single Story" (2009), Ariadne denounces the "suppression" (Shumpert 2018, n.p.) of the Gorgon's multi-layered story of injustice and the dangers implicit in one-sided assumptions and generalisations:

> I took the story with me in the coming days and turned it over, like the stone in a ripe peach: the sudden, unexpected hard shock in the centre of everything. I could not fail to see the parallels between Medusa and Pasiphae. Both paid the price for another's crime […]
> I would be Medusa, if it came to it, I resolved. If the gods held me accountable one day for the sins of someone else, if they came for me to punish a man's actions, I would not hide away like Pasiphae. I would wear that coronet of snakes and the world would shrink from me instead (2021, 16-17).

Ariadne is no longer undaunted by prospects of slut-shaming and those malicious or uncontested prejudices that have relegated Queen Pasiphae, her own mother, to a state of public disgrace and subsequent nonexistence—just like Cook's Helen (2001, 74)—as a direct consequence of her rape. Instead, she pledges her firm commitment to become an empowered Medusa under similar circumstances. Paying the price for a man's criminal actions is no longer an option, which is not precisely a false premise to start from in view of Theseus' ulterior betrayal of Ariadne by abandoning her on Naxos.

4. Conclusions

Rape myths—targets of contemporary feminist activism and wider sociological critique—are held up to critical scrutiny and problematised in these novels. Time-sanctified misreadings of rape and sexual assault are eloquently rectified via the female voice. As a proliferating mode, female-authored mythic reworking can play a major social role in assisting to "change cultural attitudes over time" (Freitas 2019, n.p.), since women's mythos "offers empowering paradigms for our collective and individual presentations, analyses and transformations" (Sellers 2001, viii). Considering the relevance of current debates on the prevention and eradication of sexualised violence, authors such as Elizabeth Cook, Madeline Miller, Natalie Haynes, Pat Barker, Jennifer Saint or Emily Hauser bring their creative concerns in line with feminist and gender theory, refusing to perpetuate androcentric representations of rape and rape myths while forging and nurturing a culture of consent.

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11. Life as Ritual in Inga Simpson's *Nest*[9]

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Abstract

Nest invokes life as ritual by highlighting the interconnected role of attention and awe through the protagonist, a middle-aged bird artist who resettles in the Australian village where she was born. Simpson's novel is analysed at the intersection of three theories: Byung-Chul Han's reflections on rituals, the ethics of attention and Dacher Keltner's studies in awe. In *Nest*, attention and awe have the power to transform everyday actions into meaningful activities, elevating them to the category of small ceremonies. Attention, awe and ritual are also approached alongside the continuum nature-culture to demonstrate that *Nest* acknowledges the continuity of the traditional divide while respecting the specificity of the two realms. In this, as well as in its concern with the restoration of communal bonds through ritual, Simpson's novel is representative of the emerging transmodern paradigm.

Keywords: ethics of attention, ethics of care, awe, nature-culture, transmodernity.

1. Introduction

Nest, published in 2014, is the second novel by the Australian fiction and nature writer Inga Simpson. It recounts the story of Jen, a middle-aged wildlife artist and former teacher who, after breaking up with her partner, resettles in the village where she grew. There, at a cottage among trees, she paints the local birds, looks after the vegetation and tutors a teenage boy, Henry. From the very beginning, the narrative is marked by circularity, repetition and a sense of recurrence. It is not just that the protagonist has circled back to her home town. Tragic events also seem to repeat themselves. Jen's memories of her school friend Michael, who went missing at 12, and of her father's abandonment at roughly the same time are painfully echoed by the sudden disappearance of a girl in Henry's class. Despite these dramatic events, Simpson's story puts the spotlight on a different cadence: the rhythms of everyday life at the small community, punctuated with the occasional trip to nature and encounters with relatives, friends and acquaintances.

My main point in this paper is that in *Nest* Simpson invokes the idea of life as ritual by highlighting the interconnected role of attention and awe through the protagonist. I argue that attention and awe have the power to transform everyday actions into meaningful activities, elevating them to the category of small ceremonies. This ritualisation of life both in ordinary and extraordinary times has a therapeutic effect on Jen and the surrounding community that will be studied in the light of the transmodern sensibility. By transmodern sensibility I mean the emerging mentality that promotes an ethical engagement with people and the environment outside the superseded normative systems of modernity, while

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circumventing postmodern radical scepticism. Marc Luyckx has pointed out the following traits, all relevant for the study of *Nest*: "respect for Mother Nature, care for communities, for family relations, for internal growth, for other cultures" (Luyckx 2010, 40). He also defends that transmodernity is defined by a re-enchantment of the world, a revaluation of the numinous dimensions of existence challenged by modernity's enthronement of reason (2001). In the opinion of Charles Taylor, in modernity "the material cosmos is drained of meaning and animate vitality, available to be managed by the forces of instrumental reason and technological control. The human person herself is reconceived as a mechanism to be disciplined and policed, part of a social machinery that thrives on efficiency, homogeneity, and prudent calculation" (Crawford 2020). This paper shows that the ritualisation of life in Simpson's novel owes much to the transmodern re-enchantment of reality because it fosters a conception of the individual away from the mechanistic, instrumental perception of modernity.

I analyse *Nest* at the intersection of three theories: Byung-Chul Han's reflections on rituals, the ethics of attention and Dacher Keltner's studies in awe. Han laments the loss of rituals in contemporary societies and the erosion of people and communities it has brought along. He advocates for lifestyles that favour ceremony, contemplative attention, courtesy and hospitality as an antidote against contemporary narcissism and the current obsession with work and productivity. According to Keltner, awe brings "joy, meaning, and community" and "empowers us to collaborate, to open our minds to wonders, and to see the deep patterns of life" (2023, xx). The analysis of *Nest* shows that these patterns can be best apprehended by means of ritual. However, for there to be awe, there first needs to be attention. Thus, Jen's ability to attend will be investigated as key to the experience of awe and the preservation of communal bonds, since the novel proves that attention, as Sandra Laugier believes, is intertwined with care (2015).

The fact that the protagonist is a nature artist is very relevant in that it further invites a reading of attention, awe and ritual alongside the continuum nature-culture. I propose that *Nest* acknowledges the continuity of this traditional divide while at the same time respecting the specificity of the two realms. In this, as well as in its concern with the restoration of communal bonds and its re-enchanted vision of the world, Simpson's novel is representative of the emerging transmodern paradigm. More specifically, I regard *Nest* as an instance that, in transmodernity, we are witnessing the turn to ritual that Han wishes for (2020, 35), even if only incipient.

1.1 Ritual and Attention

Nest features both personal and collective rituals, whose effect, borrowing from Han (2020, 13), is to confer stability to Jen's life and order her time. Han defines rituals as "symbolic techniques" that transform "being in the world" into "being at home" (12; my translation). Rituals, he states, help navigate life's accidents and contingencies and strengthen the sense of community.

In Simpson's novel, everyday ritual is closely associated with art. Thanks to her mother's inheritance, Jen was able to abandon her job as a teacher so as to devote herself to full-time painting. The fact that she paints at leisure and leads a simple, self-sustaining life (2014, 198) places her in a privileged position to appreciate ritual, in the light of Han's theories. Han affirms that it is the production-consumption wheel set in motion by modernity that threatens rituals with disappearance (14, 15, 16). Significantly, Jen has opted out of it. The different reactions elicited by her graduation exhibition back in the eighties and the most recent one hosted by a nearby gallery imply a change of sensibility akin to transmodernity. Her graduation exhibition prompted the label "bird lady" and her paintings of wildlife had been

eclipsed by the provocative, huge postmodern sculptures (156). Now, people appreciate her intimate portrayals of nature (233). The analysis of attention and ritual in this section discloses strong connections with the transmodern paradigm, especially an ethics of care and attention, the importance of the community, a relational view of existence that transcends the exclusively human and encompasses the natural world and an emphasis on the commonalities of existence in the form of food and drink.

Monday private art classes with Henry have a ritualistic quality. They are specially welcomed by Jen because they "cut a notch in the week": "without Henry, time tended to stretch to the point that she was no longer part of its passing. He anchored her to the world outside" (5). Henry's classes analysed as ritual very tellingly blend Jen's role as an artist with her special capacity to attend. The sessions reveal a careful way of attending to the world Jen trains Henry in and, besides, they provide an opportunity for the analysis of attention as care, since she caters for the boy's needs besides instructing him in drawing.

It is through Jen's artistic capacities that *Nest* presents attention as the hinge joining ritual and awe. Han himself has acknowledged the connection between ritual and particular forms of attention. For him, deep attention as a cultural technique is best learnt and honed through ritual practices (2020, 19). To the communicative excess of the digital era that revolves around the narcissistic individual, he opposes the practice of silent contemplation that effaces the ego (54). Rituals make communication redundant while at the same time, paradoxically, building up the community (11).

Throughout the novel, Jen is repeatedly portrayed as a careful observer who delights in the quiet, unobtrusive contemplation of nature. After four years in the cottage, she prefers silence, "or, rather, the forest orchestra of bird, frog and cicada," as she puts it (6), to any kind of music on the radio. She feels in tune with nature and the cyclical rhythm of seasons (90). Furthermore, Jen observes her surroundings with the gaze of the artist and proves very good at capturing the spirit of the natural world on the page. The fleeting moments of the birds bathing at her garden are made to endure in her paintings. Like that of ritual, "*the essence of art*," defends Han, "consists in granting durability to life" (2020, 59; original emphasis; my translation).

Jen's form of attention to nature makes it apparent that her loving regard has replaced the instrumentalising gaze characteristic of the colonial mentality and that she feels deeply connected to the natural world. There are references to colonisation in *Nest*, especially to the settlers who cleared the trees for farming and mining (20). In fact, Jen's father worked at a wood mill and she feels drawn to make amends by looking after her forest (21). The novel makes room for all the senses, breaking away with the occularcentrism germane to western culture. However, Jen is not simply an observer of nature. She also feels she is an integral part of it. At the same time, her work as an artist alongside the various rituals she takes part in—some domestic, some public—provide a meaningful anchor to culture. This is very significant because it hints at the current re-examination of the opposition between nature and culture carried out by thinkers like Donna Haraway and Rosi Braidotti. Their emphasis on the continuity of the classical divide is, indeed, to be welcomed as a way of redressing the separation of the pair in western thought and the dominance of culture over nature.

Jen's attitude, however, adds an important nuance, as she demonstrates the distinctive role of culture while not losing sight of the vital force of life that permeates all forms of existence. *Zoe* intimately connects us to animal and plant life, but *bios* provides an extra dimension of meaning to living, as demonstrated by the important role art and ritual play in the novel. As a wildlife artist, Jen strives to capture "what, to her, was the most mysterious thing, the essence of animals and plants. It was, after all, the essence of them all—though buried deep

in most cases" (218). The protagonist's attitude brings to mind the philosophy of the Australian ecofeminist Val Plumwood, who, in *Feminism and the Mastery of Nature*, writes: "There is the problem of how to reintegrate nature and culture across the great western division between them and how to give a positive value to what has been traditionally devalued and excluded as nature *without* simply reversing values and rejecting the sphere of culture" (1993, 10–11; original emphasis). I read *Nest* as vindicating through Jen a harmonious balance between nature and culture, life and art. Her self-portrait for an exhibition in a nearby gallery—half-human, half bird—is good proof of this.

Besides highlighting Jen's remarkable way of attending to nature, Henry's classes showcase the practice of attention as care and provide regular opportunities for the ritualisation of the everyday, food and drink in particular. Jen marks every occasion by baking a cake and brewing tea as a sign of hospitality and welcome. The careful preparation of food and the boy's enjoyment at eating (5, 7) become rituals in their own right. Following Han, they make a home of the world, order existence and help build the community. The ritualistic quality of food and drink is not restricted to the classes but is shown to be an indispensable element in Jen's life and that of her community. She is often described in the process of cooking and brewing tea and she grows her own vegetables. Food and drink not only provide nourishment, they also mark the rhythm of her day and help put her in a contemplative mood: "The sun had disappeared behind the mountain; it was cocktail hour at the birdbaths … . Jen took a bottle of wine … filled a glass … [and] carried it out to the back deck to join the birds" (29). Drink, especially warm drinks like tea and coffee, bring comfort to Jen in the everyday and at difficult moments (121). But, beyond self-care, they are also ritual tokens of her loving attention to others, be they relatives or simple acquaintances (37, 193). By and large, the picture is that of a community where ordinary but essential things like eating and drinking become signs of hospitality and affection.

1.2 Ritual and Awe

This section explores how ritual and awe are intimately and meaningfully connected in *Nest.* Keltner defines awe as "the feeling of being in the presence of something vast that transcends your current understanding of the world" (2023, 7). Simpson's novel is full of moments where Jen experiences awe. Often, they happen in nature. Sometimes, they are triggered by beauty in art. Always, they require Jen's deep form of attention. At the end of the novel, the finding of the remains of the two missing children provides the occasion for public mourning and ceremony. The following quotation, which comes from the religious service in memory of Michael, encapsulates collective ritual and the role of the community, the awe of art and the re-enchantment of the world characteristic of transmodernity:

> The light came in all colours through the stained glass. At the end they stood, as one, to say a prayer for Michel and missing children everywhere. All down the rows, they held hands, schoolchildren again. The words, and the warmth of the men beside her, were too much and she cried. (279)

In the colours of the stained-glass window awe is linked to art but also to a special kind of gathering, a religious ceremony, two of the most common sources of awe according to Keltner. He remarks on the important role of the community, explained by the fact that we have relational minds and a collective nature (2023, 6): "we see life patterns through our shared experiences with others, sense life's significant themes in the sounds of other's voices, and feel

embraced in things larger than the self through others' touch" (xxiv). This is precisely the experience of Jen at the service. She is part of a group of adults, once classmates and now gathered to mourn one of them, dead in tragic circumstances.

In *Nest,* awe and ritual are the gateways to the transcendental dimension of life (Han 2020, 28). The passage opposes the grief of the community to "the liturgy of me" that Han criticises in contemporary societies (30). It is the re-enchantment of the world, here embodied in the religious service, that counteracts collective narcissism (40). Similarly, Keltner states that we feel awe at things outside ourselves (2023, xxvi). As Han puts it, awe and ritual create communities of resonance (2020, 22), connected through harmony and a common rhythm.

Significantly, awe and ritual are perforce embodied in *Nest*. The physical quality of grieving is foregrounded in the excerpt through the allusion to the warmth of people's bodies, their holding hands and Jen's tears. For Han, rituals depend on the physical rapport of the community (2020, 23). It is remarkable that Keltner also highlights the crucial role played by the body and its impact on the building of the group. He analyses the bodily manifestations that accompany the experience of awe, like tears of emotion, drawing on Alan Fiske's study of acts of "communal sharing," "a way humans relate to one another grounded in the sense of interdependence, caring and sharing, and a sense of common humanity" (Keltner 2023, 46).

There is a further aspect in the quotation that is resonant with the pursuit of inclusivity characteristic of transmodernity, as well as its multidirectional conception of trauma and memory (cf. Michel Rothberg). The fact that the prayer of the congregation is not only for Michel but "for all the missing children everywhere" transforms this local ceremony of mourning into a global memorial. It is through ritual and awe that the conception of the community transcends the small Australian town and acquires a meaningful planetary meaning.

1.3 Conclusion

Simpson's novel *Nest* is evidence that transmodernity is fertile ground for the restoration of a sense of ritual in society. The novel proves that rituals, both everyday and in the form of public ceremonies, are inextricably tied to the experience of awe and depend on carefully attending to people and the environment. *Nest* makes it clear that they define humans, create bonds and help cope with loss and mourning.

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12. Unveiling the Palimpsest: Art and Intertextuality in Ali Smith's Seasonal Quartet

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Abstract:
Ali Smith's Seasonal Quartet delves into the intricacies of our present exploring temporality, vulnerability and borders and creating a portrait of our reality. The Quartet subverts the traditional constructions of time and borders and interrelates different periods not only thematically, but also through its intertextual relationships, since "any text is constructed as a mosaic of quotations" (Kristeva 1966: 37). Thus, the Quartet relies on art as one of the main themes but also as a tool for the creation of intertextual relationships and to construct a palimpsest. Drawing upon Dillon's contention that palimpsests "embody and provoke interdisciplinary encounter" (2007: 2), Smith's use of intertextuality in the Quartet extends beyond mere references to other literary works, encompassing visual arts, music, and popular culture, hence becoming the perfect example of a palimpsest. This paper aims to analyse how the novels of the Seasonal Quartet become a palimpsest, unveiling the multimodal intertextual relationships, and through the links they create between multiple forms of artistic expression, and through their exploration of the functions of art, they demonstrate how literature, art and life intersect.

Keywords: Ali Smith; Seasonal Quartet; palimpsest; intertextuality, ekphrasis

The novels of Ali Smith's Seasonal Quartet, *Autumn* (2016), *Winter* (2017), *Spring* (2019) and *Summer* (2020) delve into the intricacies of our present exploring temporality, vulnerability and borders and creating a portrait of our reality. Beyond the socio-political thematic concerns, the novels also include timeless themes that are relevant across all eras and ages, like the subject that this paper focuses on, art. In these novels, art is one of the leitmotivs that connect the instalments thematically and formally. The inclusion of art in the Seasonal Quartet is both intradiegetic and extradiegetic: on the one hand, it is intradiegetic as it is a key element of the plot of every novel, and as such it becomes a tool to depict the different roles of art beyond aesthetic pleasure. On the other hand, art is also an extradiegetic tool as the novels are built upon a myriad of intertextual references that create relations and networks within the Quartet and with other texts in art history, thus reflecting how the relational approach of these novels influences art, people and time. The novels of the Seasonal Quartet explore the different roles of art and they personify them through the protagonists of each instalment and their relationship to art: echoing several Shakespeare plays, referencing multiple Dickens novels, and featuring artists from different disciplines like painter Pauline Boty, sculptor Barbara Hepworth or authors Rainer Maria Rilke and Katherine Mansfield, the novels explore the power that art holds across different disciplines, becoming a thematic concern that underlies all the storylines woven into the Seasonal Quartet. This paper aims to unveil how intertextuality in the novels of the Seasonal Quartet becomes a formal tool for the creation of a palimpsest that blends multiple forms of artistic expression, and how, through their exploration and exemplification of the

functions of art in combination with their multimodal intertextual relationships, they blur the boundaries between different time periods and demonstrate how literature, art and life intersect.

Interrelationality is one of the main concerns that Ali Smith explores in the Seasonal Quartet, delving into the circularity of time, our current planetary condition and the nature of border-crossing. This theme is explored across these four novels that are built upon an intertextual network, which exemplifies Kristeva's claim that "any text is constructed as a mosaic of quotations" (1966, 37). Barthes also understood "the text as 'a tissue, something woven' (qtd. in Dillon 2007, 39). Or, as Ali Smith herself puts it: "Books beget books, styles beget styles" (Smith 2012). Thus, the Seasonal Quartet relies on art as a recurrent theme in its plots creating a mosaic, a multimodal intertextual experience woven from a myriad of texts that contributes to the construction of a palimpsest, defined by Sarah Dillon as "an involuted phenomenon where otherwise unrelated texts are involved and entangled, intricately interwoven, interrupting and inhabiting each other." (2007, 4). Drawing upon Dillon's contention that palimpsests "embody and provoke interdisciplinary encounter" (2), Smith's use of intertextuality in the Quartet extends beyond mere references to other literary works, encompassing visual arts, music, and popular culture, hence becoming the perfect example of a palimpsest. However, it is important to acknowledge that the power of the palimpsest lies in the fact that this network is carefully crafted. As Adorno explains: "naïvete toward art is a source of blindness" (2002, 269), hence it is important to detangle the network that Ali Smith constructs to be able to grasp the full meaning of the Seasonal Quartet.

The implicit and explicit references and allusions to artworks and artists in the four instalments are innumerable, from the quotations of classic novels and plays in the epigraphs, to fleeting mentions of TV shows like *Game of Thrones* and songs from the British singer Adele, or even complex passages that rewrite *A Christmas Carol* or detailed ekphrastic fragments. Thus, ekphrasis "enriches narrative fiction by inviting an already extant image, which has its own historical and theoretical associations" (Karastathi 2015, 95), it can act as a prop to help the novel carry its message across. Moreover,

> the insertion or inclusion within the flux of the narration of a spatial object – shield, urn, painting – spatialises narrative, and blurs the sharp distinctions producing the 'freeze-time effect'. [...] Ekphrasis slows down the pace of the text. (Louvel 2011, qtd. in Karastathi 2015, 95)

Therefore, ekphrasis becomes another tool that the Quartet has to alter the chronological order of the novels and to further experiment with their pace, alternating between plot-driven passages and other chapters focusing on an author, a painting or a film. Thus, with the inclusion of the description of the paintings on the endpapers, the bibliographical sources that Ali Smith accessed and the fragments from other novels, these multimodal novels can:

> On the one hand, be regarded as just one instance of multimodality [...]. On the other hand, because of its specificity as a literary text, it can be expected to not only mirror such social and cultural practices in fictional form, but also to reflect and comment upon them critically and in a self-reflexive manner (Hallet 2015, 644)

The role of art in these novels is not neutral, it is not just a way to add cultural value; rather, it serves as a way to recover the artists' voices and to criticise the complicit silence in the creation

of the canon, replacing it with praise and appreciation, using their works to support the Seasonal Quartet in portraying its networked and circular notion of time.

All of these multimodal intertextual allusions and references create a complex tapestry that align the Quartet with the definition of the palimpsest:

> Disciplines encounter each other in and on the palimpsest (...). [Thus], the palimpsest becomes a figure for interdisciplinarity – for the productive violence of the involvement, entanglement, interruption and inhabitation of disciplines in and on each other. (Dillon 2007, 2)

The four novels portray our current planetary condition, with all its intricacies and its relational and entangled nature, which permeates every single layer of the instalments, thematically and formally, thus making the palimpsest the ideal vehicle to explore the notions that the plot raises because "in its persistent figurative power and its theoretical adaptability it determines how we view the past and the present, and embodies within itself the promise of the future" (Dillon 2007, 9). As Adorno observes: "the truth content of artworks, on which their rank ultimately depends, is historical right into its innermost cell" (2002, 191). Thus, Ali Smith chooses to incorporate works from different time periods into her novels as a way to recover the truth content they hold within them, and to contribute to the depiction of time and history as circular and interrelated concepts, never approaching time as a flat, unidirectional continuum, but rather as a multi-faceted structure where past, present and future coexist, which makes the novel the perfect medium to explore time because of its potential for multidisciplinarity:

> The novel matters because though all the arts are family, related, and I tend to think at their best when they meet up with or cross over into each other, among them the novel is particularly versatile at this crossing-over in that it can borrow from and chameleon with and meet the other forms with immensely fruitful outcome. (Smith, 2017b)

Moreover, Ali Smith sees the novel as a powerful and versatile medium that cannot be detached from the notion of time:

> The novel matters because and so on. By which I mean that I've come to believe that all the arts are about time, but that the novel in particular is about the and-so-on of things, continuance and continuity, the continuum. The novel, as well as a creature of time, is a creature of its time. [...] I think a novel always reflects its time, the time it's written in. (Smith, 2017b)

This concern with time is reflected through her attempt to create a portrait of our present but also through the depiction of time as an unchronological entity. The Seasonal Quartet travels back and forth between the present and the past, through the fictional characters and through the real-life artists that are responsible for the ekphrastic fragments in the novels. As Kristeva claims "everything written today unveils either the possibility or impossibility of reading and rewriting history" (1986, 56). The Seasonal Quartet, through its characters and its palimpsestic nature, creates a constant dialogue between the past and the present, recovering buried memories, rescuing unanswered questions and rediscovering artists from the past whose work has something to say about our present. Thus, each instalment introduces allusions to a myriad of artists, choosing specific artists from a variety of mediums to portray the diversity and the power of their different disciplines: *Autumn* presents the work of the pop-art painter Pauline

Boty, *Winter* incorporates a sculpture of Barbara Hepworth into the plot, *Spring* examines the life of authors Rainer Maria Rilke and Katherine Mansfield through postcards and photographs, and *Summer* introduces the films of the Italian filmmaker Lorenza Mazzetti. Through each of these artists, the novels explore the power that art holds across different disciplines. Moreover, the characters also exemplify a variety of relationships with art: being an art teacher, writing music and scripts, flagging copyright infringement in audiovisual media or being the active subject that artworks need to complete their meaning. Therefore, art becomes one of the thematic concerns that underlies all the storylines woven into the Seasonal Quartet.

Autumn presents the paintings of the British pop-artist Pauline Boty. Elisabeth Demand "thirty-two years old, no-fixed-hours casual contract junior lecturer at a university in London" (Smith 2016, 17) is an art history lecturer, and the novel moves back and forth from her childhood to the present, from the beginning of her friendship with Daniel Gluck to visiting him as a 101-year-old man in a care home. Daniel was Elisabeth's neighbour, a German immigrant who worked as a musician and who instilled in Elisabeth a passion for art. In *Autumn*, art is depicted not only as a job but also as a passion, and above all as a connecting bridge between people. When they met, Elisabeth was a young child and Daniel was an old man whose only common denominator was that they lived on the same street. However, when they leave their preconceived notions behind, they realise they can relate to one another in a way that they have not been able to find in their respective peers. Their discussions about their different worldviews, their mutual support and, above all, their conversations about art and truth bridge the gap between these two seemingly disparate characters, much to the astonishment of those around them:

> [Mr Gluck] tells me about paintings, Elisabeth said. Pictures.
> He shows you pictures? her mother said.
> By a tennis player he knew, Elisabeth said. They're pictures people can't actually go and see. So he tells me them. (53)

Moreover, age does not seem to take a toll on Daniel's memory and through his descriptions, Daniel gives Elisabeth access to some of Pauline Boty's paintings that have been lost, like

> the painting of a woman sitting on a backwards-turned chair with no clothes on, who brought a government down, and all the red paint and the black smudges through the red, that look, Daniel says, like nuclear fallout. (55)

This ekphrastic description coincides with Boty's *Scandal '63*, a painting referencing the infamous Profumo Affair that took place during a tumultuous political period, thus connecting the past with our present once again in order to present time and history as circular notions. Moreover, through these ekphrastic fragments, *Autumn* demonstrates that art is a passion that Daniel and Elisabeth share: it defines their personalities, it awakens their deepest affections and fears, it informs the way they look at the world and how they treat those around them. This passion is something that she has inherited from Daniel, who opened her eyes to the immensity of art when she was young. However, even though they care about art so deeply, they both seem to share a slight animosity towards their jobs, despite being artistic jobs: Daniel recalls his past and asks himself "What has he done with the time? A few trivial rhymes. There was nothing else for it, really." (111), and Elisabeth's situation is equally frustrating, she is "living the dream, her mother says, and she is, if the dream means having no job security and almost everything being too expensive to do" (17). They both work in art-related fields, writing jingles

and teaching art history, respectively, but they do not feel the same passion for their jobs as they do about art in its purest state, the kind of art that creates connections like the one that they found in one another and is not tainted by the shadow of economic profit.

Similarly, that sly criticism of capitalism's view on art is also present in *Winter*, where Arthur (or Art) has a cold and detached approach to art in his job:

> I'm a copyright consolidator. It means I check through all forms of media, online and offline, films, visuals, things in print, soundtrack, everything really, for copyright infringement, any unlawful or uncredited quotation or usage, and report back to SA4A Ents when I find anything out of place or not credited so they can chase up rightful payment or issue the lawsuits. (Smith 2017a, 47)

Arthur views art as something to make a profit from, something that allows him to work comfortably, something he does not appreciate for what it is, but rather something to analyse in detail to flag copyright infringements to obtain a monetary reward.

Nevertheless, *Winter* not only explores this cold side of art, it also portrays a deeper meaning of art as a reflection of our inner selves. In this novel, Sophia is followed around by a mysterious floating head that gradually loses its semi-anthropomorphic shape and ends up turning into a round stone, a small part that matches the characteristics of one of Barbara Hepworth's sculptures, *Nesting Stones*:

> She didn't really know what to call it now, head? stone? It was neither dead nor head. [...]
> But she felt for it. She didn't want it to grow cold.
> She picked it up again, tucked it under her clothes on the skin of her abdomen and held it against her.
> The round piece of stone the size of a small head lay there, did nothing. The nothing it did was intimate.
> (89)

This round and mysterious entity allows Sophia to open up and be vulnerable, to experience a sense of intimacy and to care for something the way she should care for herself:

> Had what had happened to it hurt it very much?
> It hurt her to think it. The hurt was surprising in itself. Sophia had been feeling nothing for some time now. [...] How could losing so much of a self not hurt? (25)

The shape of the sculpture makes it "unexpectedly satisfying to touch" (163), and Sophia sees herself reflected on it: "It would be good to be full of holes. [...] Then all the things you can't express would maybe just flow out." (163).

Similarly to the previous instalments, *Spring* is filled with references to artists from different time periods, like authors Rainer Maria Rilke and Katherine Mansfield and visual artist Tacita Dean. The novel shows a duality in its depiction of the importance of art through the impact that these two writers from the past had on two of the protagonists. One of the storylines focuses on Richard and Paddy, who, like other characters in the Seasonal Quartet, are passionate about the transcendence of art and they incorporate it into their work lives. After Paddy's death, Richard remembers their last few months as she helped him with her knowledge

despite her terminal illness in the process of writing a script for a film about the time that Rainer Maria Rilke and Katherine Mansfield spent in Switzerland. Thus, *Spring* dedicates several passages to the stories of these two authors, exploring their lives through ekphrastic descriptions of photographs and postcards and recovered letters. After a friendship that lasted their whole life, Paddy and Richard spend their last moments together learning, talking, sharing and creating, which not only shows the complex creative process behind screenwriting but will also become a way for Richard to deal with his grief after he loses his friend. Paddy's presence inevitably looms over Richard's learning process on Katherine Mansfield and Rainer Maria Rilke's lives, which were also tainted and cut short by terminal illnesses, tuberculosis and leukaemia:

> Richard breathes in. It hurts.
> That's Katherine Mansfield's fault.
> He is just a little fearful that he'll also start to somatize the poet Rainer Maria Rilke's leukaemia. (Smith 2019, 33)

These two authors, despite being from New Zealand and Austria, coincided in Switzerland for a period of time: "Literary giants, Mansfield and Rilke, same place, same time. Amazing." (27). This storyline creates a stark contrast between these author's fruitfulness when being allowed to travel and leave their home countries and the misery created by the migration policies of the United Kingdom and the inhumane treatment of migrants in detention centres, presented through the storyline of Florence, a young girl who has been separated from her mother, and Brittany, a worker from one of these prison-like detention centres whom the child befriends when trying to be reunited with her mother.

Likewise, *Summer* also presents the story of a migrant, the Italian Lorenza Mazzetti, who travelled to England after losing several family members as a consequence of nazi raids and went on to become one of the most prominent figures of the Free Cinema Movement. Similarly to Mansfield and Rilke, Mazzetti's migration allowed her to produce some of her best works, her border-crossing is presented as fruitful and rewarding. Her film, *Together*, is about trauma:

> It's really startling. About two men who are friends and are both deaf mutes, who can't talk like everyone else does. [...] And the film says all these complicated things, and it does it without saying a word. (Smith 2020, 71)

Her story is recovered by Charlotte, Arthur's partner, during a conversation "about how complex being a neighbour is" (71). After experiencing life-altering events like the Brexit referendum and the subsequent process of leaving the European Union and the devastating COVID-19 pandemic and its isolating quarantines, the characters (and the readers) have had to ask themselves difficult questions about borders and society, about our identity and our relationships with those around us and with the rest of the inhabitants of the world.

Moreover, it is in *Summer* that the network of relationships between the characters of the previous instalment is finally unveiled, and thus we learn that each novel has been constructed upon the basis of all its preceding ones. In fact, the artworks from the previous novels also make appearances in this one, like "the thing [she] was talking about in her will, the man says. [...] *A smooth round stone among my possessions*. (69). Arthur has now become the owner of the round stone that his mother carried around during her last months, and he has also

found a way to connect with it, to open up and, like her mother, be vulnerable. In a novel where all the missing pieces find their place, with *Summer* the palimpsest is exposed at last.

In conclusion, in the Seasonal Quartet, art permeates every aspect of the novels as one of the central themes and the building blocks of the structure. On the one hand, extradiegetically, the allusions to works of art serve as a way to place the novels within a network of cultural products, it links them with other texts, paintings, sculptures and films in order to highlight the similarities and differences between them. On the other hand, the intradiegetical role of art in these novels is a key aspect of the plot: in *Autumn*, Pauline Boty's art is a connecting bridge between individuals; in *Winter*, Barbara Hepworth's sculptures are a healing mirror of the soul; in *Spring*, Richard and Paddy's rewriting of Rainer Maria Rilke and Katherine Mansfield's story is depicted a creative process and an anticipatory way to deal with grief; in *Summer*, Lorenza Mazzetti's films allow her to shatter borders through her political commentary. The intertextual references to painting, sculpture, film and literature and the importance that the characters confer on each of these art forms are a way to unveil their truth content and become a depiction of the final role of art in the novels, a tool for social commentary and a potential catalyst for change.

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13. Crafting Curses and Preaching Sermons: Magic and Religion in Afia Atakora's *Conjure Women* (2020)

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Abstract

This paper explores the intersections between magic and religion in Afia Atakora's debut novel *Conjure Women* (2020). Since both practices have historically clashed, society turned magic into a "subjugated knowledge" and religion into a "well established knowledge", forming a clear hierarchy (Foucault 1980/2020, 82). Throughout the narrative, Atakora establishes the dichotomies: personal/communal, secret/sacred, and belonging/unbelonging in order to reflect how magic and religion became an imprint in the African American cultural tradition. Therefore, it is my aim to analyze the way in which the characters of Rue, a conjure woman, and Bruh Abel, a preacher, dwell on these dichotomies. *Conjure Women* thus illustrates the critical interplay between personal and communal spaces, shaping the African American community pre- and post-Civil War while criticizing the ongoing issues in contemporary America.

Keywords: Afia Atakora; Magic; Religion; Slavery; African American.

1. Introduction

Afia Atakora's neo-slave narrative *Conjure Women* (2020), unfolds the compelling journey of Rue, as she grapples with the complexities of her life during and after the era of slavery, all while contending with the enduring trauma that has afflicted a community damaged by the pernicious institution of slavery. Additionally, Rue, being both a descendant of a midwife and a midwife herself, confronts a malevolent curse that has clouded over the community, with the blame for its presence unjustly attributed to her.

In the narrative, the community finds itself ensnared within a temporal liminal state, hovering between the eras of Reconstruction and antebellum America. Rue is forced to undertake the arduous task of preserving this community, all the while facing a conflict of ideals with Bruh Abel, a newly arrived preacher who seeks to contribute to the community's well-being. Rue and Bruh Abel's discordant methodologies, reflective of their differing perspectives, create tension within the community, further exacerbated by the dire situation of an epidemic claiming the lives of newborn infants born on the plantation. The novel departs from this clash between two different approaches that are supposed to save the community's future.

In the annals of Western history, religion has wielded a profound influence, effectively molding the beliefs and practices of entire civilizations. It shaped societies and offered comfort in times of need. Nonetheless, magic has existed for centuries, whether it be in the form of ceremonies, the belief in the world of spirits, roots and herbs, or the use of the land as a tool. In that sense, one can say that both magic and religion shared some commonalities and for centuries they even coexisted. However, by the fifteenth century, European thought shifted this

narrative and began to devalue magic and regard it as primitive, even dangerous. More specifically, the Christian church censured and even persecuted those who engaged with the spiritual realm, deviating from the church's prescribed doctrines (Greenwood 2013, 64-65).

This paper explores two critical elements in the African American tradition: magic and religion. It is worth noting that during the early colonial era, especially in the context of the forced displacement of African people throughout the Americas, the foundational roots of an African tradition endured. This resilience was particularly evident as Africans in North America utilized this knowledge as a "means of survival" (Johnson and Smith 1998, 89). Yet, as slavery became more regionally concentrated and slave owners imposed stricter limitations, enslaved individuals found it hard to maintain their traditional beliefs. Consequently, these distinctive cultural traditions began to erode, with their rich cultural legacies becoming progressively difficult to document or preserve. While these traditional African cultural practices gradually waned, the prominence of religion, specifically Christianity, grew. Houses of worship and communal structures were established with a prevailing emphasis on the Christian faith. Notably, black communities, partly galvanized by the Great Awakening of the early eighteenth century, constructed places of worship that served as pivotal institutions in reshaping and affirming their identities within the framework of the plantation system (1998, 139-141).

During slavery times, magic and religion did function together since both practices were performed by different individual in the community and they also served diverse purposes. Yet, there were instances when these two realms clashed, specifically as magic or conjuring began to be diminished by many.

2. Contested Forces

Scholar Yvonne Chireau in her famous *Black Magic*: *Religion and the African American Conjuring Tradition* (2003), distinguishes between magic and religion claiming that magic is "used for specific, personal ends. It operates mechanically— as opposed to prayer, which is communal, devotional, and noncoercive. […] Religion is, accordingly, a public and social activity; magic is private, manifested in solitary, focused events, and has no church or sustained collective" ([2003]2006,3).

These two dichotomies will serve as a departing tool since both Rue and Bruh Abel—the main characters in the story—occupy these two spheres, private and public respectively. Even though the novel fluctuates between antebellum slavery and the period of Reconstruction, alternating both times in every chapter, the beginning of the novel is critical to understand Rue's magic and her position as a midwife and healer in the community:

> Since the end of slaverytime, Rue had birthed every last child in that town. She knew their mamas and their daddies, too, for she was allowed into sickbeds for healing and into birthing beds alike, privy to the intimate corners of joy and suffering and through that incidental intimacy she had come to know every whisper that was born from every lip, passed on to every ear. (Atakora 2020/2021,6)

The passage underscores Rue's pivotal role within the community as a healer and midwife, upon whose knowledge and expertise the community heavily relies. Simultaneously, she offers a personal service, functioning as a confidante and counselor. This multifaceted role proves to be of paramount importance, particularly among women seeking pregnancy termination or preventative remedies, as evidenced by Chireau. On the plantation, the practice of conjuring is characterized by its private, solitary, and profoundly personal nature. Consequently, Rue not

only imparts physical healing but also provides spiritual solace and moral support to other women on the plantation who grapple with issues distinct from those faced by men.

Rue acquired these skills from her mother, Miss May Belle, who was both a midwife and a conjurer. Although Miss May Belle did not directly instruct Rue, she exposed her to the rituals, herb-mixing, birthing processes, and other vital tasks intrinsic to the conjuring tradition. This highlights the significance of Black women not only in the context of the plantation but also in the broader conjuring tradition. In accordance with the insights of writer and professor LeRhonda Manigault-Bryant in her study of Gullah/Geechee women, it becomes evident that these women have served as active contributors and custodians of African American culture, while also facilitating religious practices (2014, 63).

Both Miss May Belle and Rue attain esteemed status within their community due to their proficiency as healers and midwives. However, Rue's respect proves to be ephemeral as early in the narrative, she assists in the birth of Black-Eyed Bean, a child born with a caul, signifying the gift of sight in African tradition. Shortly after his birth, unexplained infant fatalities commence, casting suspicion upon Rue. The community begins to attribute the unfortunate occurrences to Rue, perceiving her as having brought a curse upon the village. This shift in perspective transforms the community's previous respect for Rue into a palpable sense of threat:

> The men began to spit wherever Rue walked. They did not do it in her sight. […] But they saved up their spittle behind their lips like cud, spittle being the best defense to ward off what they'd decided must be the cursing of a witch. Rue felt it, and she felt the men watching her as she walked through the center square of the cabins. […] She knew that behind her back they were hocking up their hate, swirling it in their mouths. […] She was isolated, estranged, but hadn't she always been? Perhaps from the very moment she'd been born, if memory could take her back that far, for from the start Rue had ever been Miss May Belle's daughter, her destiny marked because of it. (Atakora [2020]2021, 89-90)

The excerpt serves as an illustrative example of how fear, particularly within the confines of a close-knit community, can have devastating consequences, and it stresses Rue's vulnerability to the repercussions of this fear. Concurrently, the passage illuminates the prevailing societal phenomenon wherein many conjure women find themselves marginalized, remaining on the periphery of the central social structure of the community, despite their possession of formidable mystical abilities. In Rue's case, she has always occupied the role of an outsider, akin to her mother, functioning as a conjurer. Regrettably, the community predominantly perceives them solely as healers. However, in the wake of Rue's apparent loss of magical efficacy, she is ostracized by the community. This ostracism is exacerbated by the fact that, as with many female conjurers, they often conduct discrete rituals in the realm of women's bodies and sexuality, thereby leading isolated lives at times, confined to the privacy of their own homes. This phenomenon emphasizes the prevailing notion that these conjure women, while endowed with immense powers, remain on the periphery of the community's social fabric, primarily as a result of their perceived distinctiveness and the discreet nature of their mystical practices (Chireau [2003] 2006, 22-23).

Bruh Abel, on the other hand, embodies the social and public aspects of religion. He came to assist, guide, and fix the entire community, he was:

> […] a fine-looking man in the same over-big suit, and he carried a Bible though he wasn't ever seen to read from it— likely he couldn't read at all. He didn't need to look at the Bible to do his preaching. […] he did have a gift for speaking, for lighting up the dullness that had some time ago settled over that town like the dust of the Northern soldiers' retreat. Bruh Abel spoke with the lilting tongue of some other county, it was there in the spin of his r's and the caper of his s's, a twang like the beginning of a good

song. His talk was sweet to listen to and he did talk, not from a pulpit, not even from one place on the sandy edge of the river. Instead he walked back and forth through the crowd. Rue saw the way everybody trained their eyes on him. He'd sometimes walk straight into the river as though he thought he'd float right on top, and he didn't seem one bit bothered by the water that lapped at his ankles. (Atakora [2020]2021,46)

This description vividly portrays Bruh Abel as an emblematic figure of divinity, one who commands veneration, respect, and reverence in the community. Despite his lack of formal literacy skills, his eloquence, positive demeanor, and the symbolic presence of a Bible in his possession effectively convince the community that his preaching offers the sole solution to their ongoing challenges. His arrival is regarded as a divine intervention, as he is perceived as having been sent by God to deliver salvation. This starkly contrasts with the evolving perception of Rue within the village, as her magical abilities are now dismissed, paralleling Toni Morrison's concept of "discredited knowledge" (Morrison 1983, 342). There is a hierarchy of power, Bruh Abel occupies the top since he is respected, followed, and admired, whereas Rue is at the bottom of the hierarchy she has now become an outcast, a pariah endangering the community. Because Rue poses a threat to the village, as more babies keep dying, people believe "the illness was unnatural, they were saying, and ill punishment brought on by the few sinners left in their midst. For Bruh Abel had baptized just about every willing sinner he could find, excepting Bean. And Rue" (Atakora [2020]2021, 107). This, of course, reveals a clash between the spiritual realm and the religious one and since the Christian faith is more institutionalized, Rue needs to almost abandon her beliefs to avoid any backlash. The village needs Bean to be baptized so that the sickness disappears, yet Bruh Abel needs Rue to be baptized so she accepts and embraces Christianity. This can be read as a form of subjugation as Rue is forced to undergo a ritual that goes against her nature, her powers as a midwife which not only highlights the powerful pull religion has had throughout history, but also the way men dominated the structures of power.

A while later the baptism happens, a ritual that all the villagers must witness, expecting a miracle, waiting for the constant deaths to cease. In the river:

Rue felt Bruh Abel's hand squeeze the nape of her neck, felt his other hand rest on her waist a moment before he tipped her backward. When she felt the water gain it was a shock, like she was falling in a dream when she hadn't yet figured out that she was sleeping. She held fast to Bean. His head on her breasts positioned him just high enough that he was not all the way submerged beneath the water. He was halfway in; she was the one who was submerged, who was drowning. She was the island he clung to. Bruh Abel put his hand on her stomach, his thumb in the dent of her navel, and he kept her down, pushed her down even as she struggled to rise. […] Bean was a weight on her chest and there was Bruh Abel's hand below her belly, pushing down into a place she'd never felt any hand pushing but her own. (Atakora [2020]2021, 121)

This baptism can be understood as a transgression of the body, Bruh Abel's hand on Rue's neck and waist, his plunging her into the depths of the river seems to be a domination of Rue's beliefs, she is not in control of her own powers, instead Bruh Abel is the one in control. As the story progresses, both Rue and Bruh Abel realize they have to work together in order to save the community, Rue must respect Bruh Abel's ways of preaching and Bruh Abel must do the same with Rue's magic, and "they worked it together in the end, got each other free" (Atakora [2020] 2021, 264). In an interview about the novel, Atakora admits that the novel dwells on that dichotomy between magic and religion, even though at times both seemed different, black people found a way to blend them and form a unique African American tradition. She says,

"African spiritual and folk practices persisted in secret and became blended with Christianity, resulting in uniquely Afro American practices like Hoodoo, Voodoo, Santería and of course conjuration. *Conjure Women* lives in the middle of this dichotomy of magic versus miracles" (Atakora 2019).

In the end both characters represent a critical part of an African American tradition, Rue symbolizes the African roots, the knowledge passed down from her ancestors whereas Bruh Abel characterizes the Black Church, one that has been refined and reshaped by the African American community "to satisfy their own spiritual and practical needs" (Gates [2021]2022, 16).

3. Conclusion

This paper demonstrates how the novel situates Rue and Bruh Abel in two different spaces: the private or personal and the public. Rue, as a midwife occupies the former assisting the community from within the confines of her own home in secret, but Bruh Abel inhabits and wanders around the communal space guiding the village and preaching God's word. Despite the fact that most of the novel focuses on Rue's and Bruh Abel's difficulties in bringing the community together, Atakora manifests the merging of the two, the way African Americans have been able to maintain their African ancestry and mold it to fulfill their needs. Thus, magic and religion intertwine in order to form a unique African American identity.

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14. The Depiction of the Spanish Civil War in British Young Adult Fiction: Lydia Syson's *A World between Us*

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Abstract

In recent decades, the Spanish Civil War has become a popular backdrop in British historical novels. Curiously, some of these narratives are aimed at teenage audiences, who may be more drawn to adventures with less traumatic depictions of human cruelty. One such novel for young readers is Lydia Syson's *A World between Us* (2012), where a 17-year-old trainee nurse journeys to Spain in 1936 as a medical volunteer, following a young man who enlisted in the International Brigades. Following Peter Hunts's approach to analysing war stories in terms of what, how and why authors write them, this paper aims to provide an in-depth analysis of Lydia Syson's novel to examine how the Spanish Civil War is depicted in this young adult narrative.[10]

Keywords: Lydia Syson, Spanish Civil War, young adult fiction, historical novel.

From its inception, the Spanish Civil War piqued the interest of journalists, writers and intellectuals worldwide who, recognising its potential for world-historical significance, sought to personally witness and write about the unfolding conflict. In her book *Battling for News: The Rise of the Woman Reporter* (1994), British journalist and biographer Anne Sebba described The Spanish Civil War as "the biggest world story" of its day (95). In the twenty-first century, the Spanish Civil War has emerged as a prominent setting in British historical novels. Esteemed authors such as C. J. Sansom, Jack Ludlow, Colm Tóibín, Lindsay Ashford, and Patrick McGragh have drawn inspiration from Spain and its 1930s civil war to shape their plots and characters.

While the historical subgenre of Spanish Civil War literature is typically dominated by detective novels, romantic tales, and biographical narratives, it is intriguing that some of these narratives are directed toward young readers, considering this type of audience may typically gravitate towards other genres such as adventures or mysteries. One such novel tailored for young readers is Michael Morpurgo's *Toro! Toro!* (2001), which recounts the adventures of a young boy who experiences the harrowing bombing of his village and the subsequent destruction of his family in 1936.[11] In Joan Lingard's *Tell the Moon to Come Out* (2003), the narrative follows the escapades of a 16-year-old Scottish boy who embarks on a journey to Spain in 1939, fervently searching for his father who had mysteriously vanished during the war. Lydia Syson's *A World between Us* (2012) presents the story of a 17-year-old trainee nurse who undertakes a voyage to Spain in 1936 as a medical volunteer, following a young man who had enlisted in the International Brigades.

[10] The research leading to the publication of this essay was supported by funding from the Ministerio de Ciencia e Investigación under the 2022 programme of grants for research projects (Reference PID2022-140013NB-I00).

[11] The novel was adapted for the stage by dramatist and director Simon Reade, along with two other war stories in *War Plays: Private Peaceful, Toro! Toro!, The Mozart Question* (2012).

Considering the inherently didactic nature and moral intent of young adult fiction, the inclusion of war depictions within these literary works has sparked spirited debates (Sarland 2005, 31). This contention arises from the fact that these war narratives often encompass unsettling imagery of violence and present vivid, traumatic portrayals of human cruelty. In fact, there has been a discernible increase in the prohibition of children's and young adult books in the United States, affecting various states and millions of readers within the public education system, particularly those titles that "touch on violence and abuse, health and wellbeing, or instances or themes of grief and death" (Ciabattari 2023). Nevertheless, American children's author Jenniffer Armstrong advocates for the merits of introducing accurate portrayals of war to young readers, arguing that war narrative afford them "the chance to think of what is just and unjust, to develop the capacity for philosophic inquiring doubt. It gives them the chance to contemplate the alternative to peace" (2002, 31).

While the horrors of warfare may no longer be deemed as taboo subjects in contemporary literature for teenagers, Peter Hunt, a British scholar from Cardiff University, underscores the need for a judicious approach to addressing these issues. He raises crucial questions, asking, "*what* should we give (or not give) our child-readers; *how* should we give it to them; what will they or can they understand; and *why* do we or should we write about such thing?" (2005, 14). This paper aims to offer a comprehensive analysis of Lydia Syson's *A World between Us* with the objective of addressing the four critical questions posed by Hunt in relation to the portrayal of war in young adult literature.

Hunt's response to his initial question concerning what we should or should not present to young readers is theoretically straightforward: we should provide them with "anything and everything" (2005, 14). Nonetheless, he emphasizes the significance of ensuring that war narratives incorporate an element of hope and do not solely adopt a pessimistic view of warfare (2005, 15). In *A World between Us*, the Spanish Civil War is not merely a backdrop to the character's actions; rather, the characters are actively immersed in the distressing and traumatic events of the conflict. The protagonist, Felix (Felicity Rose), stands out as an idealistic and courageous young British woman who arrives in Spain as a nurse. She dedicates herself to humanitarian work within various field hospitals situated near the front lines, where she tends to wounded and diseased soldiers. The narrative often unveils the harsh reality that innocent people become victims of the war, as evident in the book's opening scene, where Felix finds herself in an open truck, surviving an attack by enemy aeroplanes. Tragically, others are not as fortunate: "Felix watches the other—the old woman, and the mother with the child in her shawl—as they move backwards towards the truck. The baby is quiet now, because he is dead. Felix watches and can't speak. Her mouth is dry. She is burning up" (n.p.). Similarly, Nat Kaplan, the young and idealistic volunteer with whom Felix falls in love with, undergoes his own share of violence while fighting with the International Brigades. One of his initial experiences unfolds during the Battle of Jarama, where the sounds of bullets, the sensation of his dry throat, and the sight of his comrades falling one by one, "like dolls on a scrapheap, wounded or lifeless" (Syson 2012, 94), provide an unflinching, realistic, and accurate depiction of the scenes of the war. The narrative does not shy away from portraying the grim realities of warfare.

However, as Hunt alluded, there appears to be a glimmer of hope at the end of the narrative, particularly in the lives of the protagonists. While one of the main characters, George, tragically loses his life during an air raid while driving an ambulance on the Gandesa front, the two protagonists, Felix and Nat, emerge from the war, return to London, and eventually marry. Almost akin to a *deus ex machina* plot device, the narrative seems to neatly resolve all problems, culminating in a happy ending with the traditional wedding, featuring "Felix, happily arm in

arm with Nat" (2012, 260). It is April 1939, and the Spanish Civil War has concluded. True, the Republican cause they sought to aid did not achieve victory, and consequently, they were unable to prevail in their valiant defence of the fundamental values of freedom and democracy. Nevertheless, as the narrator conveys in the final chapter, "That war was over. Franco had won. But the fight wasn't finished" (2012, 262). Perhaps, this foresight alludes to the impending Second World War, which is on the brink of commencing that very year, and in which the protagonists are likely to find themselves combating other oppressive regimes and ideologies.

Hunt's second inquiry that merits consideration in young adult stories is *how* intricate issues such as war and violence are treated. Is war and violence depicted in a crude and unembellished manner, or does the narrative opt for a more delicate approach? Does the war narrative exalt violence as part of a grand adventure, or does it challenge the conventional notion of the soldier as a hero? In *A World between Us*, with Felix serving as a nurse in field hospitals and Nat as a soldier in the International Brigades, the ramifications of war emerge in their stark reality. The narrative leaves no space for delicacy; rather, violence and death are portrayed vividly through evocative imagery and detailed language. An illustrative instance is found in the scene involving Bernie, a volunteer of the British Battalion, who sustains wounds in battle and is subsequently brought to Felix's hospital, only to die shortly after receiving a blood transfusion. The narrative maintains an unwavering focus on Felix's perspective, as she experiences the ordeal: "Before she [Felix] could answer, Bernie's eyes closed. The last breath left his blood-filled lungs" (2012, 104). In *A World between Us*, there is no gratuitous violence or glamorization of war, and when violence is depicted, the accompanying anguish and loss are equally conveyed.

Nevertheless, the scenes of violence and cruelty that permeate this young adult novel find their justification within a political and historical context; that is to say, with some kind of "mediation, introduction or policing by adults" as Hunt has suggested in his study on war in children's literature (2005, 16). Syson clearly justifies the characters' actions and decisions from the outset, when Felix and Nat cross paths during the so-called "Battle of Cable Street", a working-class uprising against Oswald Mosley's fascist Blackshirts that took place in London's East End on October 4, 1936.[12] Nat, unwavering in his resolve, is already resolute about volunteering to combat the Spanish fascists, bolstered by support from Hitler and Mussolini (2012, 10). Felix too is swiftly convinced, readily echoing the rallying cry of "No pasarán", as she describes the Cable Street incident to her family: "We won't let the Fascists through. Not in Madrid. Not in London" (2012, 16). In case any doubt lingers concerning the motivations of the protagonists in engaging in this conflict, the author supplies a "Historical Afterward" at the story's close, furnishing a lucid explanation of the International Brigades' ultimate fate during the Spanish Civil war, casting them as the "volunteers who went to save democracy in Spain" (2012, 265).

Despite the array of details and clues that both the narrative and paratexts offer to facilitate an understanding the Spanish conflict, a question arises: to what extent can readers, particularly those at a young age, fully grasp the intricacies of these events? In Hunt's words, "Does fiction about war actually contribute to understand what is real?" (2005: 21). It is reasonable to presume that, owing to their age, most readers may lack familiarity with many aspects of these historical occurrences, and for many, this may serve as their first contact with this historical conflict. Following a meticulous examination of the history of the Spanish Civil

[12] Kimberley Reynolds discusses the representation of these events young-adult fiction in her article "'¡No pasarán!' The Battle of Cable Street as a Political Context for Youth Activism in Fiction for Children and Young People" (2021).

War,[13] Syson interweaves a multitude of authentic events, locations, and individuals into the narrative, thereby fostering a sense of authenticity and verisimilitude. In the final "Acknowledgements" section, the author herself affirms that "From the outset" she endeavoured to render the novel "as accurate" as she possible could (2012, 271). Nonetheless, something that could potentially challenge historical accuracy is the introduction of the archetypal opposition of good and bad characters, a characteristic often found in stories intended for adolescent readers. In *A Word between Us* we encounter the "heroic" protagonists embodied by idealistic, courageous, and altruistic young Britons, burdened with a profound sense of duty, who willingly relinquish their lives to journey to Spain in defence of their ideals. They eventually emerge as war's victims, bearing indelible post-war scars (2012, 261), thus eliciting the reader's empathy. Conversely, on the sombre side of history, we encounter characters aligned with the Nationalist faction, exemplified by individuals such as Dolores, a treacherous Spanish nurse collaborating with Felix. Initially misperceived, it is subsequently revealed that she exacted revenge on Republican patients after her mother fell victim to the Republicans (2012, 185–193). She even tried to kill Felix and Nat using a "surgical blade" (2012, 199).

In addition to the use of stereotypical characters, another factor that contributes to a simplistic view of the war and distorts its reality is what remains unsaid. While Syson's novel references the horrendous massacres against the Republicans occurring in Badajoz, with 4,000 men dead and the bullring "knee-deep in blood" (2012, 34), the "atrocities on the road from Malaga" once the city had succumbed to Franco's forces (2012, 109), and the "flames rising from the burning city" of Guernica (2012, 148), no mention is made of the equally cruel acts perpetrated against Nationalists by the revolutionary committees that replaced democratically elected local governments in Catalonia, or the mass execution of suspected fascists just outside Madrid.[14] In the context of war, as is often the case, both sides in the Spanish Civil War bore responsibility for widespread atrocities. Additionally, sometimes the image offered of those participating in the war remains incomplete. A notable example is the portrayal of the Guardia Civil, which in this novel is associated with Franco's rebels as "Holed-up Fascist sympathisers" (2012, 49). Syson's young readers are not informed that, similar to other military forces, the Civil Guard was divided, with some remaining loyal to the Republic's government while others sided with the rebels.[15] In fact, in the republican and anarchist Barcelona that Nat encountered upon his arrival in Spain, the Guardia Civil played a significant role in quelling Nationalists (Martínez Bande 2007, 303–24).

The final question Hunt raises concerning these war novels for young readers pertains to their purpose, specifically whether the primary intent behind these narratives is to educate and promote moral values. There is little doubt that Syson's readers can learn about the nature of wars, violence, and suffering alongside appreciating values represented by the protagonists, such as selfishness, sacrifice, loyalty, and courage in defending their ideals. In this instance, these ideals are directed towards combating political ideologies prevalent in the 1930s, chiefly fascism, while paying a tribute to British volunteers who journeyed to Spain to aid the Republican side. Naturally, the author's ideological standpoint is apparent from the outset. The

[13] In the final "Acknowledgements" section, the author provides a comprehensive list of history books she had read, as well as details about museums, libraries and archives she consulted (2012: 272).

[14] For further information regarding the violent episodes of the Spanish Civil war, see the book by José Luis Martín Ramos, Professor of Contemporary History at the University Autonoma of Barcelona, *Guerra y revolución en Cataluña, 1936–1939* (2018), and the monograph by Julius Ruiz, also a historian at Edinburgh University, titled *Paracuellos, una verdad incómoda* (2015).

[15] According to Spanish historian Javier Tussell, 51% of the members of the Guardia Civil remained loyal to the Republican forces (1994: 439).

selection of John Cornford's poem "To Margot Heinemann" as the novel's epigraph provides an initial clue. Cornford, a communist poet who joined the International Brigades, died in the fight against the Nationalists at Lopera, near Córdoba, in December 1936 (Celada, González de la Aleja, Pastor García 2009, 107–109). After constant details and nuances that reveal Syson's political stance throughout the narrative, the concluding "Historical Afterward" confirms the initial epigraph's intent. It features a reference to the Dolores Ibarruri's speech delivered during a parade in Barcelona in 1938, directed at foreign volunteers departing Spain in the conflict's later stages: "Go proudly […] You are history. You are legend. You are the heroic example of the solidarity and universality of democracy […]" (2012: 265).

The heroism exhibited by the story's protagonists aligns with the words of this communist leader known as La Pasionaria. It is evident that Syson does not offer an impartial perspective of the human tragedy that unfolded during the Spanish Civil War. Instead, individuals on one side are depicted as heroes combating the evil forces of the opposing side. While this unambiguous political purpose may find acceptance and provoke minimal controversy among British readers, the Spanish Civil War continues to evoke bitter controversy in Spain, and its full comprehension and interpretation remain contentious. Therefore, this novel by Syson can be regarded as a representative of a genre that, as Kimberley Reynolds observes in *Children's Literature: A Very Short Introduction* (2011), has produced "powerful and ethically challenging works for children in recent decades" (121). In this instance, the challenge does not lie in the blurring of the boundary between friend and foe, as seen in John Boyne's *The Boy in the Striped Pyjamas* (2006), but rather, in the presentation of a one-sided view of a civil war without a clear condemnation of the conflict itself.

In conclusion, Lydia Syson's *A World between Us* admirably brings to life the Spanish Civil War for a young adult audience, offering a vivid portrayal of its characters' experiences with a realistic depiction of war, devoid of any glamorization or gratuitous violence. Syson's commitment to historical accuracy is evident through a meticulous integration of real events, locations, and people, fostering an authentic backdrop for her characters' experiences. However, it remains essential to recognize the existence of stereotypical characterizations and the omission of certain crucial aspects of the conflict, which may inadvertently simplify the multifaceted reality of the Spanish Civil War. The novel's one-sided perspective, emblematic of valiant protagonists and sinister antagonists, aligns with the clear political intent of paying homage to the British volunteers who joined the fight against fascism. This narrative approach may find acceptance within certain audiences but falls short of a comprehensive understanding of a historically contentious event.

Ultimately, *A World between Us* stands as an exemplar of a genre of literature that seeks to engage young readers with the moral and ethical dimensions of war, inspiring contemplation on issues of justice, ideology, and human suffering. Nevertheless, as scholars like Peter Hunt have urged, the complex portrayal of war in young adult literature necessitates careful consideration, as these stories play an influential role in shaping young minds. The enduring debate over the Spanish Civil War's historical legacy in Spain underscores the significance of comprehending the multifaceted and contentious nature of this conflict. As a result, while *A World between Us* offers a captivating and thought-provoking narrative, it also challenges readers to consider the complexities of historical narratives, the blurred lines between heroes and villains, and the intricacies of war's impact on individuals.

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15. In, Out and In-Between: Space in Joseph Cassara's *The House of Impossible Beauties*

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Abstract

Joseph Cassara's 2018 novel *The House of Impossible Beauties* portrays the lives of the queer inhabitants of the House of Xtravaganza amid the HIV crisis. Set in New York City between 1976 and 1993, this novel follows the main characters as they interact with and are alienated by the space around them. This paper will take an intersectional approach to space and analyze how it oppresses the Xtravaganzas not just as queer or transgender people, but also as Latinx, low-class, sick members of a society that rejects them. The paper will study the outside, inside and in-between spaces presented in the novel and how they relate with each other. It will argue that Cassara denounces the lack of space in society for these individuals, both then and nowadays.

Keywords: space, Latinx literature, gender, queer

1. Introduction

In *The House of Impossible Beauties*, American novelist Joseph Cassara writes that Angel Xtravaganza "was angry that space existed" (2018, 117). Set against the backdrop of New York City between 1976 and 1993, this novel portrays the lives of the queer Latinxs who live in the House of Xtravaganza in the age of the HIV crisis. Based on real people, the novel follows Angel, Hector, Venus, Daniel, and Juanito as they interact with the space around them, who alienates them in diverse ways. The main characters are not just oppressed as transgender or queer people, but also as Latinx, low class, sick individuals. This essay will take an intersectional approach to space and consider all these dimensions, relating them to space. It will conceive the outside, inside and in-between spaces as interdependent, and situate the Xtravaganzas interacting with society inside them. It will argue how there was no space in society for these people at the time, and they still lack a place among the rest nowadays.

The outdoor space could be conceived without the indoor space, and the latter is always contained in the former. However, the outdoors are only defined as so in opposition to the indoors, so these spaces cannot really be defined without each other. These spaces are naturally separated by borders and borders themselves constitute a third type of space. The fact that Angel expresses her anger at space for simply existing, when there is nothing she can do about it, summarizes this novel. This essay will first consider the inside space – the house; second, the outdoor space, or New York City; and third, the in-between space. It will analyze how these spaces are related to the main characters' identities in an intersectional approach.

2. The indoor space

The house has been understood as a shelter, as a female, mothering, nurturing space for the longest part in history. Gaston Bachelard, in *The Poetics of Space*, defines the house as a nest which "shelters daydreaming […] protects the dreamer [and] allows one to dream in peace" (1958, 6). He then adds:

> The house we were born in has engraved within us the hierarchy of the various functions of inhabiting. We are the diagram of the functions of inhabiting that particular house, and all the other houses are but variations on a fundamental theme… our bodies, which do not forget, [are linked] with an unforgettable house". (15)

Bodies do not forget the good memories, but neither do they let go of the bad ones. Bachelard's link between house and body explains how experiencing mistrust, trauma, or reluctance connects our bodies to our memories of a past house. Bachelard also related cellars and attics with fear. In the attic fears are rationalized since these spaces correspond to the head, whereas the cellar is pure darkness. Nevertheless, Bachelard failed to consider the house as a fearful place too. For instance, Juanito's dad's house in Puerto Rico is, for him, a dreamy, idealized place. However, once he gets there, his father abuses him, sexually, physically, and emotionally. Juanito's body will, therefore, never forget this space.

Bachelard's definition, albeit possible, does not cover the experience of all humans. The childhood home is only a warm memory of a space for some. As noted by Olivares, Bachelard conceives a house in a "male centered ideology", where a high-class man who never has to do housework or must be "confined to the house for reasons of his sex", easily has an idealized image of a house "that a woman might not have, especially an impoverished woman raised in a ghetto" (Olivares 1987, 160). Bachelard was right about how the need for a house is human, but his approach is far from being intersectional. It focuses on financially secure men who follow the rules of heteropatriarchy. Cassara's characters, on the other hand, were kicked out or left their childhood houses because they were queer, and once they are on their own, their economic struggle does not make the search for a house any easier.

Towards the beginning of the novel, Angel expresses her and Hector's need for an all-Latinx house: "he wanted to start a house in the ball scene. He would be the father, she the mother. All Latin. What if they got nowhere to go? Or nobody? Just like the morenas at Paradise Garage. And the white queens that trek out to the far reaches of Long Island" (Cassara 2018, 41). The house takes an ethnic dimension, in a community where marginalized people can find somewhere to belong:

> This is how a house becomes a home. This is how a house becomes a family. It had been Hector's idea from the start to form a community of runaway Boricua queens […] Her fear was that they would become like some Peter Pan Never-Land reenactment. If her body couldn't bear children, at least the thought of becoming a house mother could make her happy. And Hector would be the father. The dream was for them to have a group of chickadee children together in their home. Alphabet City would be their stomping grounds. (140–41)

The space for Boricua queens, which in the end becomes a shelter for not just Puerto Ricans, but also queer Latinxs and Italian-Americans, is conceived as a safe space. A space where Venus becomes a mother in the only way she can.

Nevertheless, this house becomes a trauma space for Angel upon Hector's death. That is when she resolves to move from Alphabet City to the Bronx, because "around the empty Alphabet City apartment, she could feel Hector's absence like a pain between her temples. His

memory was a ghost that would keep haunting her ass. She knew they had to move" (Cassara 2018, 141). The house in Alphabet City dies with Hector and his sickness. In a way, it becomes a space infested with Hector's body, with HIV. Just like Hart Island was the place where HIV positive casualties were buried, the house becomes another space to avoid. It becomes a metaphor for them, in their gender expression, queerness and sexuality. Their struggle to find a house, moving around the city, is linked to their struggle to find a home for themselves in their own body.

3. The Outdoor Space

The outside space is, therefore, where all people are exposed to society. The area where these characters move is New York City: the five boroughs and their surroundings. According to the 2023 census, 37,5% of the population is white, 29% is Hispanic or Latinx, 23,1% is African American, and 14,5% is Asian[16]. These percentages denote the elevated number of residents who identify as Hispanic or Latinx, but also how diverse the city is in terms of ethnicity. NYC is one of the major immigrant hotspots in the USA, and every year it receives thousands of new inhabitants pursuing their own American Dream.

New York City is a cultural melting pot, in which the geographical divisions are extremely clear. Manhattan is by far the most expensive borough, with rent prices as high as $40.000 per month for a two-bedroom apartment[17]. Even within Manhattan there are huge differences among neighborhoods, with the areas around Chinatown slightly cheaper than the rest. This area, however, is being rapidly gentrified and prices are in the rise. Alphabet City reaches prices of around $8000 for the same type of house. Harlem, Washington Heights and the Manhattan-Bronx border, historically immigrant neighborhoods, have also become prohibitive. A two-bedroom apartment in the Bronx, poorer and with higher criminal rates, ranges from $3000 to $5000. The characters in this novel have to move around the cheaper parts of Manhattan and the Bronx, wanting to be both close to the Christopher Street Piers and to the Harlem ball scene.

The characters move around this space by walking, by using public transportation and in the cars of their clients. They live, work and exist mainly in Manhattan and the Bronx, but all other boroughs are mentioned. Brooklyn is where Venus finds her first shelter in the Serenity House, a place that "was far enough from Jersey City where she felt she had finally left her mother behind, but close enough to Manhattan where she could feel close to her people" (Cassara 2018, 59). Brooklyn is also where Daniel and Juanito live for a while. Jersey City is conceived as the place over the border of the city, in this case, the river Hudson. Queens is barely mentioned, and Staten Island is where Venus' lover-client lived. Staten Island is conceived as the location of Venus' heteronormative American dream: her dream house would be "in the suburbs: Catskills, Hamptons, the country. It would all be white, even the fence" (59). A white, suburban, nuclear family life. Staten Island had been a traumatic place for her, where a client had sexually assaulted her, but now she is allowing her new client, Charles, to take her there, telling herself that "he was more gentle than that" (181). He will, however, eventually abandon her.

The House of Impossible Beauties was inspired by Jennie Livingston's documentary *Paris Is Burning*, about the real-life Xtravaganzas. American theorist Judith Butler wrote a review of the documentary which she titled "Gender Is Burning", which goes in line with the

[16] United States Census Bureau, accessed February 2024: https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/newyorkcitynewyork
[17] Zillow, accessed February 2024: https://www.zillow.com

idea of gender being performative that she put forth in *Gender Trouble*. She argues that Venus Xtravaganza and the documentary are questioning "whether parodying the dominant norms is enough to displace them; indeed, whether the denaturalization of gender cannot be the very vehicle for a reconsolidation of hegemonic norms" (Butler 1993, 125). She adds that heterosexual privilege naturalizes itself and makes itself be the norm, but she rejects the idea of drag being subversive. Venus thinks that by becoming a biological woman, she will be able to escape the other traits of her identity that society uses to oppress her: race, class and sexuality. Venus is trying to achieve her heterosexual dream, pursuing the heteronormative rules. However, she dies in the process. This is only indicating that passing and realness are not enough, they lack a place.

The outdoor space provides comfort, economic security, and risk at the same time: after being sexually abused by a client during a night at the piers, Daniel describes that moment and place as his favorite, its rhythms making Manhattan vibrate. However, not even in their favorite outdoor spaces are they safe. The outdoors alienates them in their identity and fails to offer them a place in which they can safely exist. The only option they have is, considering what happened to Venus both in real life and in the novel, death.

4. The In-Between

The in-between space is situated both among and outside the indoor and outdoor spaces. Chicana writer Gloria Anzaldúa wrote:

> Borders are set up to define the places that are safe and unsafe, to distinguish us from them. A border is a dividing line, a narrow strip along a steep edge. A borderland is a vague and undetermined place created by the emotional residue of an unnatural boundary. It is in a constant state of transition. The prohibited and forbidden are its inhabitants. (2012, 25)

The prohibited and forbidden, in this case, are Angel, Venus, Hector and the rest of the Xtravaganzas. They inhabit these vague, marginal spaces, which become borderlands for them: their unnatural boundaries, imposed by society, create this permanent state of transition for them. Physically speaking, they move around spaces without belonging to any of them. The in-between spaces in the novel would be represented in places that are both in and out and none at the same time: fluid, moving. These are mainly the cars and the subway, safe-unsafe places in constant movement around the city.

The cars are one of the spaces where the Xtravaganzas and other queer people perform their job as sex workers. They move around the Christopher Street Piers in the West Village looking for clients, and when they find them, they are taken around the city. The cars become an inside space moving around the outside space. They are, therefore, safe-unsafe places, as conceived by Juanito: "cars were complicated because cars meant rules. Cars meant that at any moment, the client had the power to lock the doors and drive away without letting anyone out for fresh air" (Cassara 2018, 154). The cars, just like the piers, give them the money they need to survive in the capitalist society, but at the same time they are risking that survival, putting themselves in danger of sexual abuse or death.

The subway is presented as a safe-unsafe place too, where both comfort and sexual assault coexist. Towards the end of the novel, when Angel is already infected with HIV, she takes the train as the only way to feel physical human contact:

> She rode the train every Wednesday because she had the virus and she knew that nobody wanted to touch her. Once a week, she could put on her Chanel, get on that subway and when the train cars were packed with people, she could feel human bodies all against her and feel their warmth. (Cassara 2018, 386)

This gives her peace when no one else would touch her because of the virus. However, the subway is also a public place where Venus had got sexually harassed by a man in the past. While she was reading, he had put his penis on her book. Venus thinks that the train goes on, unaffected, because it was in an express tunnel, so the space keeps being a space in-between, stemming from the unnatural boundaries Anzaldúa wrote about, regardless of what happens in it. The rest of the society present in that space ignore the problem, and only address it once it is gone.

Apart from the physical dimension, the Xtravaganzas themselves are a kind of in-between space. Not only are these people in-between cultures, but in-between genders as well. They are neither one nor the other. The tension of gender, sexuality, class and race is what makes them borderlands themselves, uncomfortable in their home due to past traumas and uncomfortable in the streets due to society. They themselves are their own border, their identity is constructed as borderlands, they are inherently in-between. Cuban American writer Dolores Prida stated: "[Latinos] will always remain outside of both Spanish and English monolingual cultures, never fully understood by either one. I am a hyphenated American, a bilingual person who lives by dualities" (Feliciano 1994, 115). The hyphen in their identity, for example in Venus being Italian-American, becomes a border too.

In *On Earth We're Briefly Gorgeous*, Vietnamese American writer Ocean Vuong writes that drag queens perform when someone dies to avoid sadness, but:

> [They remain] an othered performance. Their presumed, reliable fraudulence is what makes their presence, to the mourners, necessary. Because grief, at its worst, is unreal. And it calls for a surreal response. The queens—in this way—are unicorns. / Unicorns stamping in a graveyard. (Vuong 2019, 226)

Vuong is reflecting in this fragment the same thing Joseph Cassara was trying to convey. Queer people are alienated, othered, and live in an in-between space that is avoided by the rest of society. These are the impossible beauties: they exist, and they fight to exist, even though society is telling them there is no space for them. As Henri Lefebvre argued, "space is not a scientific object removed from ideology and politics; it has always been political and strategic" (qtd. in Soja 1980, 210), indicating the intentional dimension of space alienation of the marginalized, not accepted by society.

5. Conclusion

All in all, *The House of Impossible Beauties* is a novel set in the 80s that is as valid today as it would have been then. It voices these people who stay in the borderlands, and at the same time it denounces the fact that there is still no space for them in the 21st century. Joseph Cassara succeeds in portraying them as beautiful, as humans who persevere in their quest to find a space. In the end, as Hector put it, beauty stems from happiness and sadness: "it made me so happy and so sad, but I mean that in a good way. That's how I feel whenever I see something really beautiful. That's how I know it's beautiful" (Cassara 2018, 96). The beauty of the reality that the novel portrays lies in the paradox of these people being both beautiful and impossible, and in how they keep persevering in the impossible but unstoppable quest of finding a space for

themselves in this society. A further analysis of this novel could include a study from the perspective of Lefebvre's theory.

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16. The Female Figure in *David's Story*

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Abstract

The female figure in Wicomb's oeuvre proves her determination to provide the reader with the female perspective of those voiceless South African women. Dulcie and Sally, the antagonistic characters of *David's Story* (2000), will be analyzed in this paper through post-colonial theories on identity construction–specifically black female identity–(Baiada 2007, Fanon 1986). These two characters' analysis will be supported by the works of feminist scholars such as Samuelson, Ngwira or Felki, whose insights into the black female identity – inside and outside South Africa – can bring some light to the challenging role black women had during the Black Consciousness Movement. This paper aims firstly, to analyze both the agency and the role women were given inside and outside the guerrilla in order to determine whether any of the female characters achieve the agency they aim for (Spivak 1988). Secondly, to consider these female characters' relation to Saartjie Baartman.

Keywords: Postcolonial Studies; South Africa; women; Zoë Wicomb; Apartheid

Set in 1991, the year of Mandela's release and the beginning of the end of Apartheid, *David's Story* (2000) tells the story of David. He is a South African coloured man, working as a representative of the underground world of activists and spies during the liberation movement, a world seldom revealed to outsiders. He leaves his life with his wife Sally in Cape Town to search for his Griqua roots in Kokstad.

In his search, David starts a platonic relationship with his fellow comrade, Dulcie Olifant, a black activist who sacrifices her voice (in terms of political enfranchisement) to participate in the liberation movement. One noticeable fact about Dulcie's story is her importance for both the story and the protagonist but at the same time the little knowledge about her the reader receives. In order words, she is the backbone for the story yet unknown. This paper provides an analysis of her–and other women's–representation and their similarities with Sarah Baartman, the Khoikhoi woman slave who was exhibited in Europe for her rare condition, steatopygia[18]. Dulcie has been considered by some scholars as the actual protagonist of the story as she works as a double victim of colonialism and patriarchy, although I wonder whether she is the protagonist or a substantial figure for the development of the story.

Dulcie and Sally, the antagonistic characters of this novel, represent the two kinds of women during the liberation movement. Sally would represent those women who had to leave behind the guerrilla to become a 'proper' woman, that is to say, to focus on domestic issues leaving her "in some measure dissatisfied with her insertion into domestic life" (Alvarez 2011, 129). On the other hand, we find Dulcie, whose denial of leaving the Movement automatically transforms her into "not a woman at all […] not pretty" (80).

[18] A physical condition of having high levels of tissue accumulation on the buttocks and thighs.

Before focusing on the character of Dulcie, what she represents and how she is represented, I want to highlight what both Dulcie and Sally share in terms of being women of the guerrilla. Samuelson's point on women during and after war relates to these two women's portrayal: for her, war is "a representational mine-field in which women are cast as idealized warriors, silenced victims, and emblems of the domestic world toward which the male warrior ostensibly directs his efforts" (2007, 835). While Dulcie would represent the "idealized warrior", Sally would be the "emblem of the domestic world", but both fit in the shape of "silenced victims". Sally, for her part, is silenced in terms of both her involvement in the Movement and her life with David and thus, the reader is not able to find a Sally on her own, but a commentator of David's life. Furthermore, the fact that critics have overlooked the character of Sally makes me wonder about her actual importance in the novel. Contrarily, Dulcie has very little space in the novel, yet she is one of the most analyzed characters.
From the information the unknown narrator gets from David, (s)he believes that "Dulcie is a decoy. She does not exist in the real world; David has invented her in order to cover up aspects of his own story" (124), as well as (s)he tries

to imagine a woman who takes that kind of thing seriously – protocol and hierarchy. Someone who sees no contradiction between military values and the goal of political freedom. Such a woman presumably does not rifle in her handbag for a lipstick, does not pause briefly before a passing mirror to tug at her skirt or pat her hair into shape. Or perhaps she does just that, taking pleasure in her double life (79).

It is interesting how the narrator wonders about Dulcie's double life and how she automatically opposes an activist and a feminine woman who stops by a mirror and wears lipstick. In this dichotomy of double life there is Sally, who doubts: "are there women in the world who do both? She thinks not" (32). Dulcie does not dismantle this preconceived idea that makes a woman unable to be strong and feminine at the same time, but she is, at least, able to dismantle the idea that women cannot exercise their power despite the fact that "power has never held any lure for her. Or so [David] believes" (18).
Although Dulcie "certainly would make no distinction between men and women" (78) within the Movement, she has grown up as an activist being surrounded by her comrades' comments on how they "wondered if she were man enough to do it by herself" (82) or how "they won't listen to a woman" (127). The physical abuse is highlighted various times throughout the novel when, for example, "men in balaclavas come like privileged guests into her bedroom, in the early hours, always entering the house by different routes, ridiculing her reinforced bolts and locks" (81). All these examples can be used as cases in point of how "women's bodies are still the objects of an intermingled desire and disdain" (Driver 2001, 232).
The fact that the character of the fighter, the one who breaks the sociocultural barriers for a positive reason, the one who believes in "enduring until the need to relocate once more" (178) has a similar outcome to the one who represents the opposite leaves a lot to be desired. Equally to Sally, Dulcie has her name obliterated (117) and "has done nothing less than her duty, nothing less than fighting for freedom and justice but [she still] cannot speak" (179). In other words: "[Dulcie's] story suggests that women who have fought for freedom may not, themselves, experience that freedom" (Samuelson 2007, 847). However, she might have not achieved the personal freedom she longs for, but what she has undoubtedly achieved is freedom for her people and her country by being part of the Movement and never quitting despite the constant physical and psychological abuse she receives. In this sense, we could

state that she achieves one kind of freedom, something Sally is not able to do. The personal and intimate freedom she could achieve after leaving the Movement is counteracted by the jealousy emerging from David's platonic love towards Dulcie.
Dealing now with David's relationship with Dulcie, what the reader firstly finds is David's apparent protection of Dulcie – "David instructs [the narrator] to remove all references to a special relationship between him and Dulcie" (137) and "David does not want her voice represented. That is because he wishes to protect her, he says" (199). This prevents the reader from creating an appropriate image of Dulcie and, what is more important, what he feels for her. What interests me about Dulcie's perspective is that the woman is again presented as the fragile one in the relationship and the one brave enough to talk about her feelings, even if they are not licit, and as the only one looking for some comfort and affection:

She is enraged that after years of avoiding what is known as love, of not allowing herself to be touched, and after years of resistance, of fighting tyranny, of keeping in control and making her measured way to the top, she is left tortured with uncertainty about a phantom lover (183).

When the narrator says "Dulcie longs for the quotidian" (184) she must refer precisely to this loneliness Dulcie feels in the middle of the chaos that participating in the Movement entails. And despite the fact that "she believes that they know nothing of her secret, her friendship with David" (180) she cannot avoid becoming "an adolescent once more […] resigned to the dilatation and contraction of her heart" (184). The inequity in this relationship is not only performed by David's passive attitude but it is Dulcie herself who neglects her own feelings by labelling her emotions towards David as "nonsense" (198) or "kid stuff" (198) and blames herself for putting her feelings ahead of "the weighty matters of a liberation movement" (198). But the question that is left hanging is: does an actual romantic relationship exist between them? There are no specific passages that confirm this hypothesis that the reader takes for granted. In fact, "only once, did David come close enough to place his hands on her shoulders" (199). This means that the novel pays much attention to something that never happened.
As previously mentioned, the steatopygia is one of the topics of *David's Story*. The female body is thus again used as the token for the coloured women's cultural trauma, displaying "the importance of confronting the past – the history of political subordination and accommodation, the history of women's bodies, the history of slavery" (Driver 2001, 218). And thus, the name of Saartjie Baartman and the "representational abuse" she entails (Poyner 2011, 318) echoes in the novel:

Saartje's foolish vanity, the treachery of white men, the Boer mistress who would not let her go, whose prophetic words rang in her ears, the sea sickness on the ship, the cage in London decked with leopard skins, and, on the catwalk of her cage, the turning of the spectacular buttocks, this way and that, so that Europeans would crack their ribs with laughter (135).

Baartman "has been reclaimed from a colonial symbol of Otherness and shame, to a symbol of indigenous roots and a reminder of past suffering, a postcolonial inspiration for national healing" (Easton 2002, 238–239). It was Georges Cuvier, a French scientist, who examined her body after her death in 1815 and some parts of Baartman's body were displayed in the Musée de l'Homme in Paris until 1974. In fact, in the course of the seventeenth century, Europeans started to focus on the scientific differences rather on the cultural differences of

the 'Other' to legitimize the racial prejudices already existent after colonization (Young 2011, 48). This kind of pseudo-scientific studies allowed Europeans to demonstrate that non-whites were biologically less evolved.
On the contrary, in South Africa Baartman has become the token of colonial exploitation, "an icon of postcoloniality" (Wicomb 1998, 91) and, in this novel, she represents how sexual abuse has remained in the bodies of coloured South African women nowadays. In David's words: "Baartman belongs to all of us" (135). With the figure of Baartman and the steatopygia, Wicomb fulfills her aim of confronting "the shameful attitudes to body shape that pervade racist South African thinking" (Driver 2001, 228). For David, there is an undeniable connection between Baartman and Dulcie:

the page at the end of the unfinished section on Baartman is a mess […] I know that it is his attempt at writing about Dulcie, because her name is written several times and struck out. (135).

But these references by David between the two women are not usually presented to the reader by David himself but through the unknown narrator, as in the passage above or: "he chose to displace her by working on the historical figure of Saartje Baartman instead" (134). As Gillian Gane asserts, these are "layerings of displacement among which it is virtually impossible to find a 'real,' 'true' Dulcie" (2002, 106).
The similarities between Saartjie Baartman and Sally can be more evident than those of Baartman and Dulcie, although some critics have agreed with David in the similarities shared by Dulcie and Baartman. For Samuelson, Dulcie is the "avatar of Saartje Baartman's story" (2007, 124). However, I beg to differ with Samuelson's comment. As presented in the following paragraph, Dulcie's resemblance to Baartman is not that apparent since they only share physical aspects (steatopygia for instance) but they differ in substantial issues, such as personal and life development. Apart from the name, which can or cannot be on purpose, and their shared steatopygia, in general terms Baartman and Sally follow a similar pattern. They are both under the shadow of a man, confined and silenced by the patriarchal authority who relegates them to a position from which they can neither escape nor achieve any freedom. In fact, Gabeba Baderoon asserts,

The Baartman whom Wicomb writes into existence in *David's Story* is definitely resistant to all mythological claims, leaving readers at the end of the novel with an image of a recurring, elusive figure whose meaning cannot be defined by national or ethnic symbolism (2009, 70).

Thus, if Baartman's symbolism in the novel was meant to match with Dulcie's life progression, the figure of Baartman would precisely represent this "national or ethnic symbolism" that the reader sees in the character of Dulcie. However, from the analysis done, I would assert that Baartman's elusiveness and inability to change her fate highly relates to the character of Sally; while Dulcie stands as the representational figure of the actual truth of coloured South African women, becoming a "symbol of the wounded nation that yet endures and carries within it the seeds of the future" (Gane 2002, 110).
After presenting a tentative reading of the novel and dealing with how women are presented in *David's Story* and what they represent, Sally being the re-domesticated character and Dulcie the ungovernable one, and both sharing different aspects that attach them to the historical figure of Saartjie Baartman, I argue that this novel is conducted towards the socio-cultural formations of the female body and the "seemingly immutable system of ethical

imperatives that has made the coloured body and identity the site of shame" (Dass 2009, 84). Despite the fact that Wicomb has dealt with the female body and shame in other works, what differentiates this novel from others is its denunciation of the sometimes-hidden reality of women in the ANC and the treatment of their gender, their bodies–which worsens if steatopygious–and their colouredness become a primordial differential issue. Furthermore, what the author condemns is the perpetuation of these male-chauvinist attitudes towards women in modern South Africa, and how "cultural amnesia is a palpable threat as contradictory voices and stories are reconciled into a single truth" (Baiada 2008, 45).

Transitioning to another crucial aspect of *David's Story*, and using Baiada's quotation as a link, the issue of truth plays an important role for the understanding of the representation of these women. The indetermination of truth by word of mouth usually results in misconceptions, as happens, for instance, with Dulcie's strength and her "super-natural powers" (180). In fact, "Wicomb always questions the existence of one fixed 'truth', which translates into her postmodern approach to literature, which, as previously illustrated, is admittedly "fragmented, indeterminate" (2013, 116). What *David's Story* accomplishes is a demonstration of how truth depends on the eye of the beholder, fulfilling then Wicomb's aim "to show that there is not one definite truth about that history" (Wicomb 2010, 24).

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17. Mental Health and Community in Giles' "Rain to Swell the Olives" (1994) and Tsoulis' *Between the Ceiling and the Sky* (1998)

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Abstract

Mental health is central to a person's well-being, and the experience of migration, which oftentimes is felt as exile, is stressful. Literature and storytelling allow readers to reflect on several situations and develop an understanding and empathy for the experiences of the characters. This paper aims to analyse two texts. First, the short story "Rain to Swell the Olives" (1994), written by Sydney-born Greek-Australian author Zeny Giles, explores the consequences of the stress and the lack of support felt by the main character in her impossibility to get pregnant in Australia. Second, the novel Between the Ceiling and the Sky (1998), written by Greek-born Greek-Australian author Eugenia Tsoulis, OAM, also explores mental health and the importance of the support of friends and a wider community. The analysis relies on Intersectional feminism (Kuznetski and Pellicer-Ortín 2023) and Trauma Studies (Balaev 2018).

Keywords: migration, identity, trauma, healing, Greek-Australian literature.

1. Introduction

Migrating to a new country is stressful, as Edward Said said, "Exile is life led outside the habitual order" (2000, 186). This stress can show its effects in physical, psychological and/or emotional pain or wounds that cannot close. Smells, tastes and textures can stimulate memory to a past moment, a place far away or a situation lived with other people. Feeling the support of one's community and following traditions -including cooking or eating typical food- can improve one's physical and mental well-being.

> Sociologist Madan Sarup reflects on exile and says:
>
> While it is true that literature and history contain heroic, romantic, glorious, even triumphant episodes in an exile's life, these are no more than efforts meant to overcome the crippling sorrow of estrangement. The achievements of exile are permanently undermined by the loss of something left behind forever (Sarup and Raja 1996, 137).

Literature and storytelling provide the space and "the means for dealing with experiences by discussing them" (Sarup and Raja 1996, 139), as they allow readers to reflect on several situations and develop an understanding and empathy for the experiences of the characters. As Julia Kuznetski and Silvia Pellicer-Ortín explain, "literature expose[s]… controversies and point[s] directions to possible solutions" (2023, 6).

Some of the lenses to explore experiences of characters who live in a country different from the one they were born in are (auto)biography, travel writing, postcolonial literature and also migration writing. In her clarifying article "Defining Migration Writing", Joanna Kosmalska considers this term an umbrella to refer to

> [a] whole variety of different types of literary and non-literary texts that have been published since the 1990s. They either tackle the topic of migration or emerge from the experience of migration (but not necessarily address the subject of migration). It is also not necessary for the author to be a migrant: it is enough that his or her work is inspired or influenced by the experience of migration and is imbued with a vision of cosmopolitan, transnational, hybrid society and the globalized world. (2022, 344-45)

These texts share some of the following features:

> The real-life nature of the writing (the story appears to have basis in real-life events and the author's first-hand experiences); creolization and multilingualism in the text; references to multiple cultures and/or geographic locations; impact of the Internet and online communication on the structure of the work; common themes and motifs (for example, locality *versus* globalism, community v*ersus* nation, exploration of belonging and identity issues, comparison of the home and host countries and cultures, living in a multicultural community, intercultural relationships, creation of new traditions and heritage, revision of gender roles and the like). (Kosmalska 2022, 345)

Kosmalska explores the concept of *migration writing* from three different angles. The first one is the theme-oriented approach, which focuses on the topic and content of the text. The second one is the ethnic-oriented approach, which focuses on the writer's cultural origin rather than on the topic. Finally, the third one is the text-oriented approach, which focuses on the formats of the writings and also includes visual and digital modalities (333-34).

Two texts are explored here: "Rain to Swell the Olives" (1994), a 4-page short story written by second-generation Greek-Australian migrant Zeny Giles, and *Between the Ceiling and the Sky* (1998), a 300-page novel written by first-generation Greek-Australian migrant Eugenia Tsoulis. These texts are part of "migration writing" as some of the topics relate to the experiences of migration; the difficulties of the characters' lives in Australia; missing Greece, their families and friends; traditions, food and dishes for special occasions; life in their villages; the traumas of the past; belonging, identity, interpersonal relations, filial piety. This article aims to focus on mental health and the idea of community in three characters: the main narrator in the short story and two female characters in the novel.

The two texts also share some characteristics regarding the construction of their main characters. First, they are women who migrated to Australia in the second half of the 20th century: either with their husbands or to get married. Second, they lived in Australia for more than five years, a period of time that allows adaptation to new lifestyles. Third, despite living in a community with other Greek migrants, their daily lives are defined by the lack of emotional support, the deep yearning for their families and beloved ones in Greece, and the longing for previous experiences and their unhealed emotional wounds.

2. Zeny Giles' "Rain to Swell the Olives"

Physical distance can affect one's emotional well-being and can have physical consequences. As Marisol Morales-Ladrón explains, "recent discoveries in neuroscience have confirmed the linkage of body and mind, suggesting that emotions and feelings, even more than reason, shape our decision-making processes, our consciousness and, therefore, our daily lives" (2023, 19).

The main character of Zeny Giles' "Rain to Swell the Olives", who significantly has no name –a fact that can be read as a metaphor for all the women who are not listened to and taken into account–, starts with a clear complaint and a self diagnosis:

> I am tired of doctors prodding, pushing, giving me pills and wanting me to measure with a thermometer to see if I am ready to conceive. There is nothing wrong with me or with my husband.

> You can see what a fine child we have made already. It is this place that is the problem. (Giles 1994, 71)

She knows what she should do to get pregnant and her solution is related to location, nature, History, myths, traditions and memory:

> Twenty kilometres from our village is a place called Gortys which used to be the metropolis for the whole of Crete. Amongst the ruined buildings is a temple to an Egyptian goddess. Barren women would visit her temple, then go with their husbands to the special tree where Zeus took Europa. From this tree they would pick a seed pod. People say that women would become pregnant and that each would have a son. The place is no distance from my parents' home. We would go to the temple and to the tree and I would give Tasso a son. (Giles 1994, 73)

The main character has detected the problem and solution to get pregnant, but since its cause is emotional (i.e., related to mental health) and not physical, and since she does not have the strength nor the support of her family, we suppose she does not share her thoughts with her husband. What is more, had she verbalized her feelings, it seems he ignored her and he decided she should try other options, most probably recommended by white Australian male doctors, rather than following her suggestion based on a Greek female tradition. We can see how many Cartesian binaries are at play here: white Australian vs Greek, male vs female, science vs tradition (Morales-Ladrón 2023, 19).

The narrator decided to migrate to Australia with her husband, Tasso, and 18-month-old daughter, Desphina, to improve their living standards and have new experiences. However, this fact does not reduce the sadness she feels (Giles 1994, 71). Five years have gone by and Tasso and almost 7-year-old Desphina are happy in Australia: he feels successful as a breadwinner and she is happy in school. He would like to have more children but is not stressed about it. She says:

> I have gone from doctor to doctor and now the latest sends me here to try the waters. And Tasso, believing it will make a difference, takes his holidays and we drive many hours to reach this place.
>
> I am not happy where we live in Dulwich Hill [an inner Western Sydney suburb], but at least it has some edges. This open country frightens me. In Crete you cannot travel far from mountains. They hold us cradled. (Giles 1994, 72)

The main character finally verbalizes one of her fears: the landscape where she lives is very different from that of Crete. In her neighbourhood, there are no hills and no century-old olive trees which provide wood, olives and oil, that is, materials for construction, fire, nourishment and light. This difference shapes her whole experience of migration: she does not feel safe, a basic need. She recalls the happy days of olive collection with her cousin and other family members and the rain, which was needed to swell the olives –a metaphor of her wish to conceive–. She remembers moments when she was happy, comfortable, healthy and safe: "In my country I was beautiful – plump with color in my cheeks. I have grown thick and sallow" (Giles 1994, 73), she says. The tension she lives with blocks her body and gets her ill. She does not manage to be healthy nor feel strong to play with her daughter, obviously she cannot get pregnant again and, of course, she does not enjoy her life in Australia. The contrast between her identity before and after migration is deep.

The narrator is traumatized by this experience. Michelle Balaev defines *trauma* as "a severely disruptive experience that profoundly impacts the self's emotional organization and perception of the external world" (Balaev 360). In "Rain to Swell the Olives", the main character needs her community to heal. However, she has distanced herself from other Greeks in Australia as she knows that she cannot reciprocate taking care of other children or cooking

for other adults when they are sick. Furthermore, she cannot access her community in Crete, since sharing her fears and worries would make her weak, her decision to migrate to Australia a mistake and it would, consequently, have negative connotations. The narrator feels forcibly silenced and unable to ask for care: she is too vulnerable. In an article, Miriam Borham-Puyal develops Judith Butler's (2004) and Catherine Mills' (2015) notions of *vulnerability* and *relationality*. Borham-Puyal reminds the reader Butler´s statement that humans are vulnerable to others, who, in turn, are also vulnerable to them. Borham-Puyal then recalls Mills´ development of this idea by adding that vulnerability or relationality has "a 'double-edge', for humans are 'constituted by and through relations with others but also dispossessed' by them (Mills 2015, 41, 43)" (Borham-Puyal 2023, 38). Borham-Puyal then explains that texts can "display the ways in which the human body and psyche rebel against forced adaptability and [characters can] show signs of [their] corporeal vulnerability to cope with" the trauma of migration (Borham-Puyal 2023, 31). This is exactly what the protagonist of this short story suffers: her body and her psyche rebel against her expectation to adapt to Australia and she becomes weak.

3. Eugenia Tsoulis' *Between the Ceiling and the Sky*

Between the Ceiling and the Sky shows another example of the consequences of paternalistic attitudes and of the lack of community and communication. Antigone and Vangelia are two of the main characters in this novel. Antigone migrates from Greece to Australia to marry Petro, a middle-aged man she has never met before and whom, logically, she does not love. Antigone did not have other options to get married: her fiancé was killed during the Nazi occupation of Greece and she was forced to abort the child they were expecting. In Australia she lives with Petro, his sister, Vangelia, her husband, Stathi, and with another married couple: Elli and Niko. They are all looking forward to Antigone's arrival and eager to prepare the best wedding ever. Stathi will be her best man and will walk her down the aisle, Vangelia will design her dress and Elli, who is 8 months pregnant, will sew it. Vangelia and Stathi migrated to Australia to work and save money and left their children with their grandparents. Vangelia has cancer, but she does not tell anyone so as not to worry them. Antigone soon becomes pregnant and does all the house chores mechanically but feels immensely alone and hardly speaks, as she is coming to terms with the trauma lived in Greece.

Approximately one year later, on a stormy night, Vangelia is in hospital and Antigone, who has already given birth to her daughter, is home and suffers a crisis: she lives the horrors of the war again and sees the faces of the German soldiers in her husband. Petro does not understand her, tries to rape her and Antigone fights back. Petro feels outraged, decides to throw her out of their house and forbids her to get close to their baby. She leaves the house in her nightgown, barefoot and singing out loud

> for her baby, for herself, for the soldiers who had killed, for the men who had fought and lost, for the women who had mourned, for her husband who had wanted her, for Vangelia in hospital, for Elli who was far away, for the orange petals that were crushed under her body in that orchard, for the stars that didn't shine here, for the horizon all distorted where no sea ever met the sky. (Tsoulis 1998, 161)

Two English-speaking policemen find Antigone and she ends up in a mental hospital. As Antigone does not speak English, it takes the hospital 7 days to locate Petro. When he goes to visit her, she is so angry at him, that she does not answer his pleas and questions. Petro decides to be practical: he manages to convince the priest that married them to nullify their marriage and some months later, he marries a Greek neighbour, who takes care of him and of his

daughter. Vangelia is not allowed to visit Antigone and is told to forget her. With her limited English, her decaying health and the lack of support she feels, she does not succeed in looking for Antigone. Some time later, Vangelia dies in Australia, without sharing her illness, without seeing her children again.

The lack of communication and the lack of community support are central to the novel: the women are silenced and dominated, and when they try to express themselves, they are either not taken into account or considered a menace and treated accordingly. Antigone spends seven years in the mental hospital, until a doctor who speaks Greek listens to her and proves that she has no mental illness. After living some time in Australia –a time that is not explored in the novel–, she migrates to Greece and lives in her family house. There she writes her testimony so her daughter can read it if she ever finds her, even if it is after her death. This way, she is not silenced, makes her life valuable and also grievable for her daughter. As Judith Butler states, "An ungrievable life is one that cannot be mourned because it has never lived, that is, it has never counted as a life at all" (2016, 38). Antigone had been silenced and exiled and this is a way of resistance and resilience, since Ana María Fraile-Marcos explains, resilience is "the capacity to adapt to adversity and rebound" (2023, 2).

The lack of community and support makes it difficult to deal with the traumas of the war and of migration, but the lack of proficiency in English and the Australian health system have also become two barriers which have limited their lives and experiences. Neither Antigone nor Vangelia have felt the warmth, comfort and support of their community, and they did not have access to traditional remedies that may have helped their mental health in order to find inner peace and overcome their traumas.

4. Conclusions

To conclude, caring for others and the ethics of care involve a community: the traumatized and somebody else who is willing to look after the distressed person. Migrating and living in another country, with another language, a different landscape, the traumas of the past or the sacrifices and the distance from the beloved ones due to migration all directly affect mental health. The three female characters studied in this essay are strong women, but they cannot be resilient on their own, without the support of their community and under a patriarchal and paternalistic system which does not listen to or respect them. These examples of migration writing do not offer alternatives or happy endings for these main characters but their aim is to voice their experiences, to make them visible and, consequently, acknowledge them so that others, both migrants and non-migrants, can learn about these situations. As Joanna Kosmalska explains,

> Acting as a counterweight to the dominant narratives, migration texts make visible phenomena that are marginalized or deliberately kept away from the public. They record aspects that history and cultural memory tend to unintentionally ignore or wilfully exclude, providing alternative knowledge about social and cultural transformations brought about by migration. (2022, 347-48)

Experiences involving mental health issues have often been silenced and these texts provide a space for sharing, listening, exploring, learning and caring.

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El libro de actas titulado "Crossing Boundaries: Transatlantic Dialogues and Gendered Narratives", procedente del congreso 46th International Conference of Spanish Association of Anglo-American Studies (AEDEAN), celebrado en Las Palmas de Gran Canaria en 2023, examina las interacciones multidimensionales entre culturas, historias e identidades a través del Atlántico. Se destaca, en este sentido, el papel central del lenguaje en este contexto mediante el análisis de textos literarios y culturales que trascienden fronteras geográficas y temporales. Dividido en dos secciones principales: "Cultural Crossings and Transatlantic Discourses" y "Narratives By or About Women", cada una ofrece una introspección profunda sobre cómo el lenguaje, la literatura, los medios de comunicación y las expresiones culturales reflejan y moldean las experiencias de diversas comunidades. La primera sección se centra en los intercambios históricos y culturales que han moldeado las identidades y narrativas de distintas comunidades, subrayando la importancia de la interacción cultural para fomentar una comprensión más profunda de los diálogos transatlánticos. La segunda sección aborda las representaciones literarias y culturales de las experiencias de las mujeres a través de diferentes contextos y períodos, proporcionando una comprensión exhaustiva de la evolución de la representación femenina en la literatura. El volumen incluye artículos como "Miguel de Zárraga and the magazine La Tribuna de Nueva York" de Juan Antonio Sánchez Jiménez, que presenta una historia detallada de la revista ilustrada en español más significativa de Estados Unidos, y "Anti-Catholic Literature: Joseph Blanco White as Pretext of Authenticity in Two Escaped Nun Narratives" de Eduardo José Varela Bravo, que analiza la apropiación ideológica de las críticas anti-católicas de Blanco White en la literatura nativista estadounidense del siglo XIX. Otros estudios destacados incluyen "The English Language of Seventeenth-Century Ireland: A Corpus Analysis of the 1641 Depositions" de Seamus Johnston, Zeltia Blanco-Suárez y Teresa Fanego, que contribuye a la comprensión del desarrollo histórico del inglés irlandés, y "Life as Ritual in Inga Simpson's Nest" de Bárbara Arizti Martín, que examina cómo la narrativa invoca la vida como ritual a través de las interacciones de la protagonista con la naturaleza y la comunidad.