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1818-2018, MARY SHELLEY
FRANKENSTEIN

EMILY BRONTË
WUTHERING HEIGHTS, 1818

1933-2017
**JIM
MILROY**

1920-2017
**RANDOLPH
QUIRK**

NOBEL PRIZE 2017
**KAZUO
ISHIGURO**

**WILLA
CATHER**

1918

MY ÁNTONIA



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ÍNDICE

TRIBUTOS

7

BEATRIZ GONZÁLEZ MORENO
Universidad de Castilla-La Mancha

Mary Shelley

Frankenstein, or the Modern Prometheus de Mary Shelley.
Entonces y ahora (1818-2018).

12

MARÍA VALERO REDONDO
Universidad de Córdoba

Emily Brontë

Wuthering Heights: A Fresh Critical Overview.

16

AITOR IBARROLA ARMENDÁRIZ
Universidad de Deusto, Bilbao

Willa Cather

[Our] Antonia by Willa Cather: One Hundred Years
in the Making.

23

JOSÉ ANTONIO HERNÁNDEZ MORALES
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Kazuo Ishiguro

A Celebration of Kazuo Ishiguro's Literary Works:
An Insight into Nostalgia and Postcolonialism.

35

JUAN CAMILO CONDE SILVESTRE
Universidad de Murcia

James Milroy

El legado de James Milroy en el estudio sociolingüístico
del cambio y la variación en lengua inglesa.

42

MARTA CARRETERO
Universidad Complutense de Madrid

Randolph Quirk

In Memoriam Randolph Quirk
(12 July 1920 - 20 December 2017)

ÍNDICE

BOOK REVIEWS

45

PAULA BARBA GUERRERO
Universidad de Salamanca

Memory Frictions in Contemporary Literature

María Jesús Martínez-Alfaro & Silvia Pellicer-Ortín, eds.

48

MARTA CARRETERO
Universidad Complutense de Madrid

English Grammar: A University Course

Angela Downing

52

REMEDIOS PERNI
Universidad de Alicante

National Identities and Imperfections in Contemporary Irish Literature. Unbecoming Irishness

Luz Mar González-Arias, ed.

55

ROCÍO RUESTRA CAMACHO
Universidad de Oviedo

Corporalidad, Temporalidad, Afectividad: Perspectivas filosófico-antropológicas

Luisa Paz Rodríguez Suárez y Jose Angel García Landa, eds.

58

MARÍA CECILIA MARCHETTO SANTORUN
Universidad de Santiago de Compostela

Superhero Comics

Chris Gavaler

ÍNDICE

BOOK REVIEWS

61

HÉCTOR FUENTES SOTO

*Universidad de La Laguna****After American Studies: Rethinking the Legacies of Transnational Exceptionalism.***

Jeffrey Herlihy-Mera

64

MARÍA GRAU PEREJOAN

*Universitat de Barcelona****Harbors, Flows, and Migrations: The USA in/and the World***Vicenzo Bavaro, Gianna Fusco, Serena Fusco
& Donatella Izzo, eds.

66

MIGUEL ÁNGEL JORDÁN

*Universitat de València****Reading Austen in America***

Juliette Wells

68

VIOLETA MARTÍNEZ ALCAÑIZ

*Universidad de Autónoma de Madrid****Victorianomania. Reimagining, Refashioning, and Rewriting Victorian Literature and Culture***

S. Falchi, G. Perletti & M. I. Romero Ruiz, eds.

71

MERCEDES PÉREZ AGUSTÍN

*Universidad Internacional de La Rioja****Conversación que mantuve con Evan Pritchard en relación con los cuentos del pueblo Micmac y sus costumbres***Junio 2010, Ministerio de Asuntos Indios en Ottawa,
Canadá

INTERVIEWS

76

SONIA LUQUE MALDONADO Y JUAN-JOSÉ MARTÍN-GONZÁLEZ

Universidad de Málaga

I International Seminar on (Neo-) Victorian Studies in Spain: VINS Network

TRIBUTE

BEATRIZ GONZÁLEZ MORENO
Universidad de Castilla-La Mancha

***Frankenstein,
or the Modern
Prometheus***

de Mary Shelley.
Entonces y ahora
(1818-2018)

“Frankenstein continues to drag on its spectral existence”¹

Publicada anónimamente, *Frankenstein, or the Modern Prometheus* veía la luz el 1 de enero de 1818; desde entonces hasta ahora no ha dejado de editarse o de adaptarse, y eso que los comienzos fueron difíciles. El manuscrito fue rechazado en 1817 tanto por el editor de Lord Byron, John Murray, como por el de P. B. Shelley, Charles Ollier. Finalmente, sería una editorial menor la que asumió el riesgo: Lackington, Hughes, Harding, Mavor & Jones. Las críticas que recibió fueron igualmente encontradas. Algunas, como la de *La Belle Assemblée*, describieron la obra como “a very bold fiction... likely to be very popular” (139-140); otras, como la de John Wilson Croker, estuvieron menos atinadas:

What a tissue of horrible and disgusting absurdity this work presents. — It is piously dedicated to Mr. Godwin, and is written in the spirit of his school. The dreams of insanity are embodied in the strong and striking language of the insane [...] Our taste and our judgment alike revolt at this kind of writing, and the greater the ability with which it may be executed the worse it is -- it inculcates no lesson of conduct, manners, or morality; it cannot mend, and will not even amuse its readers, unless their taste have been deplorably vitiated -- it fatigues the feelings without interesting the understanding (382).

Si hay una reseña poco acertada y carente de visión de futuro, es esta. El tiempo ha demostrado que *Frankenstein* no sólo es una lección moral, sino también una obra que admite una gran riqueza de enfoques; una obra polimorfa, adaptada en incontables ocasiones y que no ha dejado de entretener al público desde que fuera publicada. *The British Critic* no se quedó atrás y arremetió no sólo contra la obra en sí, tachándola de grotesca e inmoral, sino que además señalaba lo mucho que desmerecía a la propia autora; el hecho de que el autor fuera una mujer suponía “an aggravation of that which is the prevailing fault of the novel; but if our authoress can forget the gentleness of her sex, it is no reason why we should; and we shall therefore dismiss the novel without further comment” (438). Teniendo en cuenta la estética dominante en la época para las mujeres, según la cual “la mujer tiene un sentimiento innato más intenso para todo lo que es bello, lindo y adornado” (Kant 66), Mary Shelley se había apropiado de una forma de escribir masculina, carente

de todo decoro. Pero esa crítica sería, precisamente, uno de los puntos fuertes de la obra. *Frankenstein* irrumpía en el género gótico para transformarlo. Ann Radcliffe, al diferenciar entre el horror y el terror en su conocido ensayo publicado póstumamente “On the Supernatural in Poetry” (1826), había sentado las bases en torno al debate sobre el gótico masculino y el femenino: “Terror and Horror are so far opposite, that the first expands the soul and awakens the faculties to a high degree of life; the other contracts, freezes and nearly annihilates them” (149). Así, mientras el terror venía a definir novelas góticas como las escritas por Radcliffe, el horror caracterizaba un gótico masculino cuyo máximo exponente era Matthew Lewis. La obra de Mary Shelley, sin embargo, suponía una trasgresión de dichas etiquetas y confería al gótico femenino una nueva dimensión, algo que la crítica feminista señalaría cuando en 1976 Ellen Moers acuñaba el término “*Female Gothic*” en su *Literary Women* y manifestaba que “*Frankenstein* brought a new sophistication to literary terror” (Moers 91). Terror y horror se entremezclan en *Frankenstein* para ofrecer al público escenas que elevan, sólo para después proceder a la aniquilación. No es lo sobrenatural explicado al estilo de Radcliffe, es algo nuevo: lo sobrenatural explicado mediante la ciencia. En este sentido, *Frankenstein* marcaba un antes y un después en la literatura gótica, pero también afianzaba el desarrollo de otro género, la ciencia ficción. Señalaría Brian Aldiss en 1973: “We look at the dream world of the Gothic novel, from which science fiction springs; we identify the author whose work marks her out as the first science fiction writer” (Aldiss 8). Pero todo esto, la aclamación de la crítica, tardaría en llegar.

En cuanto al éxito se refiere, los orígenes de *Frankenstein* fueron más bien verdes. Me explico. Como suele ser habitual, el público no se familiarizaría con *Frankenstein* a través del texto escrito por Mary Shelley, sino en gran medida mediante la adaptación teatral de Richard Brinsley Peake, *Presumption; or, The Fate of Frankenstein*. La obra se estrenó en el Lyceum Theatre de Londres el 28 de julio de 1823 y tuvo una acogida triunfal. El monstruo, interpretado por un tal T. P. Cooke, llegaría a identificarse con la criatura misma de forma similar a como lo haría Karloff: “yellow and green greasypaint on his face, black lips, unkempt hair, exposed blue legs” (Lavalley 249). El *Frankenstein* de Peake, esa criatura verduzca, arraigó de tal forma en la cultura popular que Punch señaló que Cooke “was also the original Monster in *Frankenstein* — and a very original monster, too, who made a furore ▶

¹ *London Literary Gazette*, 11 de septiembre de 1823: 590.

◀ in Paris, and gave a colour to gloves. Vert de monstre” (181). *Frankenstein!* Cooke se había convertido en lo que hoy llamaríamos un “influencer”. Basta teclear en internet *Frankenstein* para ver lo mucho que abunda el verde.

El éxito “popular” de *Frankenstein* favoreció una segunda edición publicada en dos volúmenes en 1823 por G. y W. B. Whittaker; en esta ocasión, Mary Shelley aparecía como autora. Y, como ella misma reconocía, “On the strength of the drama my father had published for my benefit a new edition of F.” (259). Este mismo hecho impulsaría una tercera edición revisada y publicada en 1831 en el nº 9 de la serie “Standard Novels” de Henry Colburn y Richard Bentley. Esta publicación tiene el honor de ser la primera edición ilustrada de *Frankenstein*, y el privilegio recayó en Theodor Von Holst, quien se distanció del *Frankenstein* de Peake y se acercó de nuevo al original de la autora. La reseña que apareció en la *London Literary Gazette* dejaba claro que Mary Shelley se había alejado del modo de escribir típicamente femenino, bello, para abrazar el que hasta ese momento se consideraba prototípicamente masculino, sublime:

What a tissue of horrible and disgusting absurdity this work presents. — It is piously dedicated to Mr. Godwin, and is written in the spirit of his school. The dreams of insanity are embodied in the strong and striking language of the insane [...] Our taste and our judgment alike revolt at this kind of writing, and the greater the ability with which it may be executed the worse it is -- it inculcates no lesson of conduct, manners, or morality; it cannot mend, and will not even amuse its readers, unless their taste have been deplorably vitiated -- it fatigues the feelings without interesting the understanding (382).

Igualmente, la reseña destacaba la ilustración donde vemos por primera vez a la criatura. Este hecho resulta relevante porque, desde este momento, la forma de leer/ver *Frankenstein* seguirá dos caminos paralelos: el de las adaptaciones y distorsiones del original, bien en textos, bien en cine, teatro, ilustraciones, etc.; y el que intentará acercarse al original de forma más cercana y fidedigna.

Que duda cabe que quien presenta *Frankenstein* al mundo es Universal Pictures en 1931. James Whale dirige a un Boris Karloff que se alzaría como imagen icónica de la criatura, entonces y ahora. Una cabeza plana, los tornillos saliendo del cuello, los pesados zapatos, el traje rabricorto,

etc.; elementos todos ellos con los que el público está familiarizado, seguramente más que con la novela. Es más: de nuevo hace su aparición el verde. Por cuestiones de luz y cámaras, Jack Pierce decidió que pintaran la cara de Karloff de un tono azul-verdoso, un color que garantizaba el tipo de gris adecuado para la pantalla en blanco y negro (Hitchcock 152). *Frankenstein* pasaba a formar parte del imaginario colectivo. Un monstruo había nacido: “It’s alive, it’s alive!”; y andaba suelto.

Y, sin embargo, como sucediera con la obra teatral de Peake, este *Frankenstein* no era el *Frankenstein* de Mary Shelley. Con todo, el éxito de la película favoreció la publicación de nuevas ediciones del libro y, lo más importante, muchas de ellas ilustradas. Siguiendo la estela iniciada por Holst, posteriores artistas gráficos comenzaban a “leer” la novela destacando la tragedia de la criatura, poniendo de manifiesto la estructura narrativa, o señalando la importancia de lo femenino en la obra; ilustradores como Nino Carbe (1932), Lynd Ward (1934) y Everett Henry (1934) hacían algo que la crítica no había llevado a cabo hasta ese momento: destacar el valor literario del texto con toda su riqueza de matices. Y lo hacían, además, alejándose de la imagen Karloffiana e intentando recuperar la voz de Mary Shelley (González Moreno 2018).

Frankenstein, como la criatura, se las apañó para sobrevivir; adaptada en numerosas ocasiones al cine, traducida, ilustrada, parodiada, etc., formaba parte de la cultura popular, pero no de la Academia. Como señalaría Robert Kiely en 1972: “It is something of a miracle that *Frankenstein*, originally published in 1818, has survived its admirers and critics [...] Opinion about *Frankenstein* was strong from the beginning, but no critical thinking on the subject was more elaborate and self-conscious than that of Mary Shelley herself” (155). Cuesta creer que no es hasta los años 60 que la obra de Mary Shelley comienza a ser reivindicada como parte del canon literario. James Rieger inicia el camino en 1963 y poco después, en 1965, se le une en la cruzada Harold Bloom, quien se referiría a la obra como “a Romantic mythology of the self” (611-18). Otros, como el ya mencionado Kiely, George Levine, Swingle o Small, les seguirían en este proceso de canonización². La crítica feminista hacía su entrada en 1974 cuando Ellen Moers analiza *Frankenstein* como parte del gótico femenino y subraya su carácter de “birth myth” (24). Otras, como Kate Ellis (1979), Gilbert y Gubar (1980), y Anne K. Mellor (1988), consagraban tanto a la obra como a la autora, y convertían a la primera en un clásico sobre esa “female anxiety of author- ▶

² Harold Bloom. “Afterword” to Mary Shelley’s *Frankenstein*. New York, 1965, 215. Este ensayo se publicó por primera vez como “Frankenstein, or the New Prometheus”. *Partisan Review* 32 (1965): 611-18; Robert Kiely. “Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley (1818)”. *The Romantic Novel in England*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard Univ. Press, 1972, 155-73; George Levine. “Frankenstein and the Tradition of Realism”. *Novel* 7 (Fall 1973): 14-30; L. J. Swingle. “Frankenstein’s Monster and Its Romantic Relatives: Problems of Knowledge in English Romanticism”. *Texas Studies in Literature and Language* 15 (Spring 1973): 51-65; Christopher Small. *Mary Shelley’s Frankenstein. Tracing the Myth*. Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1973; Chris Baldick. *In Frankenstein’s Shadow: Myth, Monstrosity, and 19th Century Writing*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1987; Anne K. Mellor. “Possessing Nature: The Female in *Frankenstein*”. *Romanticism and Feminism* (1988): 220-32.

ship” (Gilbert y Gubar 51), el libro como un hijo, esa “hideous progeny” (Shelley 10) que termina devorando a la escritora. En definitiva, comienza a hacerse cierto que “if popular culture has adapted it, no part of culture can ignore it” (xiii). Levine y Knoepfmacher editan en 1979 *The Endurance of Frankenstein* y escriben en su prefacio la cita anterior. Frankenstein no puede ser obviado; entre otras razones, porque para entonces ya ha alcanzado la categoría de mito (Baldick 1987).

Hoy en día el número de artículos, libros, adaptaciones a diversos medios, etc. es monstruoso. Mary Shelley instó a su criatura a que “go forth and prosper” (10), y vaya si ha prosperado. Si uno teclea la palabra “Frankenstein” en Google, el buscador devuelve unas 68.100.000 entradas; “Dracula” devuelve 55.500.000; y “Sherlock Holmes”, 28.900.000. He elegido estos otros dos grandes mitos de la literatura, personajes que han escapado las páginas del libro y tienen vida propia, porque con motivo del bicentenario Leslie S. Klinger ha ofrecido al lector *The New Annotated Frankenstein*, una edición bellamente anotada e ilustrada, siguiendo la estela y el éxito de sus dos ediciones anteriores: *The New Annotated Sherlock Holmes (The Short Stories, 2004; The Novels, 2005)* y *The New Annotated Dracula (2008)*. Visto el impacto de uno y otros, parecía natural que *Frankenstein* ocupara el lugar que se merece en esa trinidad icónica. Que la novela de Mary Shelley se acomode entre personajes victorianos no es de extrañar. El cientifismo de la obra entronca con la temática victoriana, siempre dual, en torno a la ciencia: declive o progreso (Ballesteros 1998). En este sentido, los recientes estudios neovictorianos y la corriente steampunk han sabido ver que Frankenstein es una obra romántica, victoriana en espíritu. Un ejemplo reciente lo encontramos en la serie televisiva *Penny Dreadful* (Showtime; 2014-2016), donde Victor y la criatura comparten un Londres victoriano con Dracula y Dorian Gray, entre otros.

Resulta significativo que, entre las múltiples ediciones que han salido al mercado para conmemorar el bicentenario, se encuentre una promovida por el MIT: “An-

notated for Scientists, Engineers, and Creators of All Kinds”, la cual tiene como objetivo “[to] allow STEM readers to explore critical understandings of the ethical and societal dimensions of scientific inquire” (Shelley 2017, xii-xiii). *Frankenstein* vuelve a sus orígenes, o, por lo menos a uno de ellos, y se recupera ahora más que nunca como un aviso sobre la responsabilidad creadora y la manipulación genética, la hybris en la que puede incurrir el científico. No en vano proliferan términos como “Frankenfood” o “Frankendrugs”. Así, “Franken-” se ha convertido en un prefijo frecuente para denotar un resultado monstruoso fruto de una transgresión, de un ir más allá de las leyes de la naturaleza. Con todo, tampoco es esto algo plenamente nuevo. Al poco de ver la luz Frankenstein, creador y criatura se convirtieron enseguida en una útil metáfora para denotar cuestiones éticas/raciales/étnicas para con el otro. Punch recurrió a ella en diversas ocasiones, tales como *The Russian Frankenstein and his Monster* (1854), *The Irish Frankenstein* (1882) o *A Frankenstein of the East* (1930). Entonces era Irlanda, Rusia y la India; hoy en día, *Frankenstein* se ha convertido en una poderosa metáfora para referirse a los Estados Unidos desde muy diversos ángulos; como expresa muy atinadamente Elizabeth Young en su *Black Frankenstein: The Making of an American Metaphor* (2008): “You can teach an old metaphor new tricks... The United States is extraordinarily gifted in creating monsters like Frankenstein” (1), ya sea económicos, políticos o sociales – o “McFrankenstein Creations” (3).

Frankenstein surgió tímidamente como la obra de una joven de 18 años aquella noche de junio de 1816, y ya se encuentra en cada rincón del planeta; criticada en sus inicios y tachada de absurda y sin moraleja alguna, ha demostrado tener mucho que decir en todos los ámbitos. Cuando Mary Shelley regresó a Inglaterra y asistió a la adaptación teatral de su obra, declaró: “But lo and behold! I found myself famous”³; si hoy en día, doscientos años después, Mary Shelley pudiera comprobar hasta qué punto su progenie ha proliferado, bien podría repetir dicha exclamación y sería más cierta que nunca. ■

³ En una carta de Mary Shelley a Leigh Hunt, 14 de agosto de 1823.



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TRIBUTE

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***Wuthering
Heights:***
A Fresh Critical
Overview

If the power of literature could be measured by the impression that it leaves on the reader, by the power and energy of its effect, *Wuthering Heights* would undoubtedly succeed as one of the most powerful and effective texts of all time, as the quantity and intensity of the echoes and critical literature that it has produced demonstrate. Few literary texts have incited so many interpretations, so many exegetic passions and controversies. Its first reviewers highlighted the strangeness and originality of the novel and refused to recognize its excellence, regarding it as lowbrow fiction. The words “coarse,” “vulgar” and “repulsive” were the most repeated, and the “depraved nature” of both the writer and the readers of the novel was frequently stressed. Since F.R. Leavis’ famous contention in a footnote of *The Great Tradition* (1964) – “I have said nothing about *Wuthering Heights* because that astonishing work seems to me a kind of sport” (27) – many have been the renowned critics (Gilbert and Gubar, Terry Eagleton, Nancy Armstrong, Frank Kermode, Hillis Miller) who have ventured to penetrate the novel. One of its first reviewers summarized perfectly what I think is the most accurate impression that *Wuthering Heights* leaves on its readers and critics: “It is a strange sort of book, baffling all regular criticism; yet it is impossible to begin and not to finish it, and quite as impossible to lay it aside afterwards and say nothing about it” (*Douglas Jerrold’s Weekly Newspaper*). What I want to do here is to analyze what critics have had to say about *Wuthering Heights* in the last twenty years. How has the criticism on the novel evolved? Is there still a critical vacuum around it?

In the second part of the twentieth century, the wave of feminism also reached *Wuthering Heights*. Since Gilbert and Gubar’s famous analysis in *The Madwoman in the Attic* (1984), a great deal of feminist critics have paid attention to the role that gender plays in Emily Brontë’s novel. In her essay “Gender and Layered Narrative in *Wuthering Heights* and *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall*” (2003), N.M. Jacobs argues that the narrative structure of the novel approaches the female hidden self within the social world. The novel follows the pattern of approaching an extremely violent private reality through a narrator that justifies that violence. For Jacobs, most of the violence in the novel is perpetrated by the patriarch of the house, the owner of power, and by the “psychic fragmentation” that patriarchal authority imposes on both men and women (227). Thus, the opposition between male and female words is here refracted in the source of the brutality depicted.

In “Diaries and Displacement in *Wuthering Heights*” (2003), Rebecca Steinitz states that the diary functions both thematically and literary, as an object in which both the writer and the readers can project their own desires (254). Thus, both Catherine and Lockwood – the marginalized young daughter and the sophisticated gentleman – use their diaries to cope with their senses of displacement: “In the novel, then, the diary itself becomes the proverbial place of one’s own, but its very status as such reveals how, psychologically, textually, and material-

ly, one’s own place can never be secured” (254). Steinitz analyzes the novel as a series of attempts to deal with the sense of displacement, especially the efforts of Catherine and Lockwood to do so through their diaries (257). She suggests that in her representation of the diaries, Brontë is working with the cultural connotations of the genre, especially its materiality, highlighting its ability to palliate the anxiety of place, even if she ultimately questions this ability (259). Therefore, through her diary’s actual marginality, Catherine is claiming the social margins as her own (259), and Lockwood’s violation of Catherine’s diary marks him as one who does not respect the privileged textual materiality of the genre (260). Regina Barreca’s essay “The Power of Excommunication: Sex and the Feminine Text in *Wuthering Heights*” (2003), also deals with women’s relationship to language. She asserts that in the novel women can take control of language and their narration, letter-writings and readings are a “decipherable text of resistance” (235). Thus, all the texts produced by the female characters in *Wuthering Heights* indicate “an appropriation of the power of language which women then use as an instrument of control against the dominant order” (227). In the same way that they take control of language, they also take control of sex, since women “speak their desire and act on it” (237).

In her second study of nineteenth-century fiction, *How Novels Think: The Limits of Individualism from 1719-1900* (2005), Nancy Armstrong argues that Victorian fiction portrayed the appalling qualities of ruling-class masculinity as truly detestable *only* when those qualities are present in women. In *Wuthering Heights*, women disturb more than stabilize domestic relations, from the two resolute Catherine’s, the determined Isabella Linton and the loquacious Nelly Dean. Using the example of Lockwood’s trying to prevent the ghost of the first Catherine entering her bedroom, and Heathcliff’s violent reaction to thwart Cathy’s attempt to leave *Wuthering Heights*, Brontë shifts the positions usually occupied by male and female and goes so far as to justify the violence that both men employ in trying to keep Catherine out of the house and Cathy in. Thus, masculine identity is only asserted by subordinating and controlling femininity, creating the illusion of masculinity’s social independence and economic autonomy. This violence destabilizes the foundations of masculinity and makes it susceptible to new forms of social rivalry (Armstrong 87).

In “The Holy Spirit in Emily Brontë’s *Wuthering Heights* and Poetry” (2000), Lisa Wang employs Emily Brontë’s poems to throw light to *Wuthering Heights*. She asserts that the everyday boundaries and divisions which help our understanding of the world are constantly broken down and distorted in the novel, creating a constant state of instability which is extremely disturbing to the reader, and which calls into question our idea of reality (168). Heathcliff’s strong desire to tear down the barriers that separate the living and the dead, combined with his desire to dissolve the distinction between the Self and the Other, leads to his own destruction (169). The world of *Wuthering Heights* is then one in which boundaries ►

are constantly blurred, distorted, and broken down, where the prevailing principle is one of instability and fluctuation (169). In his book *Last Things: Emily Brontë's poems* (2007), Gezari states that the originality of *Wuthering Heights* and what connects the novel to Brontë's poems is the representation of a passionate relationship that continues after death: "*Wuthering Heights* isn't just about Heathcliff's reaction to Catherine's death; it is about how he lives his life in relation to her death" (113).

Harold Bloom, in *Novelists and Novels* (2007), posits a comparative line for the novel while highlighting the transcendental eroticism of the protagonists. For him, *Wuthering Heights* is a "triumphant revision of Byron's *Manfred*" (132). Bloom refutes Gilbert and Gubar's thesis that *Wuthering Heights* is a "Romantic feminist critique of *Paradise Lost*" and argues that "*Wuthering Heights* is *Manfred* converted to prose romance, and Heathcliff is more like *Manfred*, *Lara*, and Byron himself than is Charlotte Brontë's Rochester" (134). Emily Brontë's religion is fundamentally erotic, and the only possible consummation for the love of Heathcliff and Catherine is through death (134). Thus, Catherine and Heathcliff's passion neither seeks nor needs societal sanction. Whatever their love is made of, it is individual and goes beyond gender, creed or morality (136). In Bloom's words, "romantic love has no fiercer representation in all literature" (135). In "The Cuckoo's History: Human Nature in *Wuthering Heights*" (2008), Joseph Carroll reads *Wuthering Heights* as the story of Heathcliff and affirms that appropriation is the central conflict in the novel: "It is a story about a parasitic appropriation of resources that belong to the offspring of another organism" (249). Heathcliff is "an alien force" who has disrupted a domestic world, usurped its authority and property, and destroyed its domestic harmony (249). Carroll concludes that *Wuthering Heights* "operates at a high level of tension between the motives that organize human life into an adaptively functional system and impulses of revolt against that system" (250).

Critics have also tried to overcome the critical lacuna that has always surrounded the novel and have paid attention to the role that history and economy play in *Wuthering Heights*. These critics powerfully argue that the meaning of the novel lies within the history in which it was produced and first published. Terry Eagleton, in *The English Novel: An Introduction* (2005), contends that the story of Catherine and Heathcliff "is one of an absolute commitment and an absolute refusal" (96). In the novel there is a constant conflict between passion and society, rebellion and moral orthodoxy: "Emily's great novel is that rare phenomenon, a tragic novel in the epoch of high realism" (96). Death is the only way to appease that destructive desire. Thus, the passionate and egalitarian relationship between Heathcliff and Catherine finds no place in a hierarchical society and must finally relent to the realm of mythology (96). Eagleton's analysis shifts towards a Marxist reading. He contends that the real theme of the novel is "the decline of the English yeomanry" (100). At the end of the story, the Heights have been absorbed by the Grange, and this in fact replicates a real historical de-

velopment in nineteenth-century English society (100). And where does Heathcliff stand? According to Eagleton, he "belongs economically with the Grange, but culturally with the Heights" (100). Thus, he is paradoxically a remnant of the past, which was crueler and more resilient, and a sign of the future, which belongs to rural capitalism (100). In the story of Heathcliff and Catherine, "Romance and realism meet only to collide" (100).

In *The Gothic, Postcolonial and Otherness: Ghosts from Elsewhere* (2009), Tabish Khair makes an original post-colonial reading of the novel, arguing that Emily Brontë's *Wuthering Heights* is "a novel of terror" which "brings the Empire into the heart of England, thus interlinking Gothic terror with imperial displacement and power" (64). After his three-years-absence, Heathcliff shows a great dexterity in the instruments of power – language, manipulation, inheritance, marriage, money. For the rest of his life, he will use these instruments as devices of terror and he ends up as the owner of both *Wuthering Heights* and *Thrushcross Grange* (69). These instruments are the same that were once used by the Earnshaw and the Lintons, but now they are instruments of terror in the hands of Heathcliff (69). For Khair, the uniqueness of the novel is its problematic and complex analysis of the relationship of terror and displacement, power and dispossession, its colonial narration haunted by ghosts from the colonial margins (64).

Henry Staten, in *Spirit Becomes Matter* (2014), states that Emily Brontë's greatest achievement is to have created, in 1847, an irreverent hero who disregards Christian belief and Christian morality (132). Like Carroll, Staten reads *Wuthering Heights* as "the great poem of mourning of modernity, as the *Iliad* was of antiquity" (132). But *Wuthering Heights* is not only about the genuine and mythical passions of beings that are close to nature. For Staten – as for Eagleton – class subordination and class movement are also at the centre of the novel. Thus, Heathcliff suddenly passes from being at the bottom of the social hierarchy (non-white, nameless and a foundling) to become part of a genteel family. Then, he is forced to go back to his previous class status and becomes a servant. Then, he reappears once more as a gentleman. Heathcliff himself causes similar sudden class variations in others. In representing class changes in such personalized and fluid manner, *Wuthering Heights* exposes its conflictive nature (134).

As we have seen, the critical literature on *Wuthering Heights* in the last twenty years has not really altered its focus with respect to previous exegesis. It continues to pivot around feminism, thematic readings emphasizing transcendental love, Marxism, and (post-)colonial readings. It is quite interesting how feminist critics have challenged Heathcliff's massive figure in the text and have read the novel in terms of gender. Thus, whereas the most conventional critical traditions see in Heathcliff the central problem of *Wuthering Heights*, the character who determines our sense of what the novel is about, feminist critics have dismissed the protracted debate over whether Heathcliff is hero or villain, and have put Catherine at ►

◀ the core of the novel. On their part, Lisa Wang, Janet Gezari, Harold Bloom, and Joseph Carroll leave aside the social dimension of the novel and focus on Heathcliff and Catherine's individual energies, and in the transcendental dimension of the novel. Terry Eagleton, Tabish Khair, and Henry Staten go back to the overpowering figure of Heathcliff, underlying the ideological conflicts of the novel as reflections of the social injustices of Brontë's time. Their analysis, though groundbreaking and comprehensive, is nevertheless reductionist. In his "Letter About Mallarmé", Valéry argues that, whether in science or the arts, if we look for the source of a masterpiece

Most of these critics fail to point at the literary contextual determinism of the novel, that is, to the possible literary precedents that help – or not – to explain *Wuthering Heights*. If opposites are born from opposites, are not Charlotte Brontë's *Shirley* and *Jane Eyre* two novels where the voice of women rise up? Is not Lord Byron's *Manfred* a dramatic poem in which we find a platonic and transcendental love? Is not Sir Walter Scott's *The Bride of Lammermoor* a story about usurpation and dispossession? Although these critics clearly locate the novel within the contingencies of the history through which it is produced and against which it is read, they fail to assert its position in the (English) literary tradition. ■

we can observe that what a man does either repeats or refutes what someone else has done – repeats it in other tones, refines or amplifies it, loads or overloads it with meaning; or else rebuts, overturns, destroys and denies it, but thereby assumes it and has invisibly used it. Opposites are born from opposites (qtd. Said 15).



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TRIBUTE

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***[Our] ^Ántonia
by Willa
Cather:***

**One Hundred
Years in the Making**

There is little question that literary works—like individuals, societies or even the whole planet—go through different stages of evolution and increase (or decrease) in relevance and visibility according to particular historical circumstances. Depending on the ethical and aesthetic attributes of a literary piece and the kind of conventions privileged by specific critical discourses, one single work may experience substantial transformation in the hands of different generations of readers and scholars. In Terry Eagleton's words, "there is no such thing as literature which is 'really' great, or 'really' anything, independently of the ways in which that writing is treated within specific forms of social and institutional life" (202). As this theorist sees it, what would be essential to the kind of literary study that he favors "would be its concern for the kinds of *effects* which discourses produce, and how they produce them" (205; italics in original). In this regard, texts which highlight how particular discursive practices are held in higher (or lower) esteem at different historical junctures and which invite the specialist to discern how those practices achieve greater (or limited) repercussion "as forms of power and performance" (Eagleton 205) should be of significant interest. No doubt, Willa Cather's *My Ántonia* (1918) would be a case in point since, as Sharon O'Brien and others have cogently argued, it was the novel that would determine the author's place in (or outside) the canon of American literature and show how that canon "results from a complex process of cultural production and transmission in which publishers, reviewers, editors, literary critics, and teachers structure the interaction between the text and the reader" (O'Brien 241). Indeed, if anything becomes evident while reading through the responses and criticism that the novel has given rise to since its publication, it is the overwhelming critical and ideological metamorphoses that the literary culture—and its standards—has undergone this last century. While many critics, both in the U.S. and across the Atlantic, would consider *My Ántonia* one of the "major" works of American literature and its author among the most "authentic" voices at the turn of the 20th century (Mencken), others would challenge those distinctions on various grounds ranging from the writer's "political conservatism" (Hicks) to her narratives' fondness for worlds of the past that seemed increasingly "bourgeois" and "elegiac" (Trilling; Kazin).

What seems fairly undeniable, in any case, is that both positive and adverse appraisals of the novel have contributed to expanding the points of entrance into a dialogue with the work, as such aspects as its narrative viewpoint, structure, heroine, and its regional character, among others, have become the cruxes of in-depth readings and intense critical debates. In an article entitled "Unsettled Worlds", Wilhite shows how several hints of narratorial unreliability and narrative indeterminacy in *My Ántonia* work their way into the reader's consciousness to "unsettle the aesthetic uniformity of the text" (270). It is precisely these elements

of uncertainty and lack of stability that open the novel to all sorts of interpretations that, in all likelihood, neither author nor narrator could have foreseen in their respective worlds. When, in the brief Introduction to the novel, Jim Burden, the main narrator, decides to change the title of his manuscript from "*Ántonia*" to "*My Ántonia*", he seems convinced that by adding the possessive adjective he is claiming authority over and providing a suitable frame to a story that would in this way offer a fairly round portrait of "a *Bohemian girl [who] seemed to mean to us the country, the conditions, the whole adventure of our childhood*" (n.p.). Nevertheless, the author is also judicious enough to indicate in the Introduction that Burden's text contains his highly subjective memories of the heroine—whom he had met over thirty years before—and, significantly, without having organized them into any type of conventional narrative: "*I didn't take time to arrange it; I simply wrote down pretty much all that her name recalls to me. I suppose it hasn't any form*" (n.p.). As will become clearer below, these two important pieces of information are crucial to understand the supple and Proteus-like nature of the book, which, depending on whose hands it has fallen into, has been described as a retrograde novel all too engrossed in "the gaudy domesticity" of limited feminine interests (Trilling 152) or as "a celebration of energy, which contains, and does not evade for those who can hear, the undertow of plain knowledge that all energy fails" (Byatt iv). Richard Millington has recently noted that what characterizes Cather's best fiction is that, like *My Ántonia*, it "invite[s] us toward new forms of thought and feeling, toward a new sense of the sources of meaning and value, toward a new repertoire of response" (56). It is in this sense, as an endless source of new interpretations and invaluable human wisdom, that I think the novel might be best renamed as [*Our*] *Ántonia*, since the breath and diversity of the commentary that the work has generated clearly transcends that which the author—and her highly sensitive persona in the text—could have expected from the pseudo-autobiographical account of her formative years on the Nebraska plains.

If elements of formal ingenuity such as the partial viewpoint, the selective memory work, and the uneven narrative structure can be said to have played a decisive role in the proliferation of those multifarious readings of the novel (see Fryer 286-88), nothing less could be argued about the thematic richness and complexity of the work. What is particularly striking is that the topics that caught Cather's attention more than a century ago appear to be as incumbent today as they were when the American frontier was still moving westward. In the mid-1970s, James Woodress remarked that after the author's demise in 1947 and with the emergence of the New Critics' emphasis on close reading, Cather's main novels "were discovered to be full of myth and symbol" and, rather than being mere realistic portrayals of "the taming of the wild land" (46), were found to be rich in emotional content deeply rooted in the author's Nebraska experience and what she was fond ▶

of calling “the gift of sympathy.” When, at the age of nine, Willa and her family moved to her parental grandparents’ farm on the open plains of Nebraska from her birthplace in Virginia—the same as Jim does in the novel—, she came into contact with the immense human variety of immigrant families who were arriving from New England, the American South, Sweden, Germany, Russia or, like the protagonist of *My Ántonia*, from Bohemia. Early reviewers of the novel, such as Randolph Bourne or H.L. Mencken, praised the book for breaking away from “the genteel tradition” and offering a captivating picture of the much more culturally-diverse reality that was taking place on the American frontier. It has only been more recently, though, that Cather’s true contribution to the cultural mode of thought created by the “migratory consciousness” has been established. According to Joseph Urgo, “She is the one major American writer whose body of work is substantial enough to redirect American literary history in the twenty-first century by showing how thoroughly *transit* has marked Americans” (5; my emphasis). If Ántonia Shimerda’s story is profoundly conditioned by her foreign origins and her efforts to integrate in the rural community of Black Hawk, one should not underestimate the additional burden that being a woman meant in such a context. Like most of Cather’s other immigrant heroines—Alexandra Bergson in *O Pioneers!* (1913) or Thea Kronborg in *The Song of the Lark* (1915)—, Ántonia is compelled to make use of all her physical, emotional, and intellectual resources to deal with the family pressures, class consciousness, patriarchal attitudes and gender aggression that were common in the society of those times. Ammons and other feminist critics have been insisting for more than four decades now on the nexus that interlocks issues like the creation of artistic ties in multicultural contexts and the search for new forms of expression in Cather’s Nebraska novels with those of “male violence, the dangerousness of heterosexuality, [or] the need of women to find and establish deep and often sexually charged relationships with each other” (Ammons 131). Of course, these latter topics come up in her works in varying degrees and under different guises, but *[Our] Ántonia* is no exception, as she can be observed to be ill-used by several male figures who take advantage of her innocence and vulnerable position in the variegated spheres of social life in which she is seen to participate. Last but not least, there is the theme of the untamed landscapes of the Midwest that captivated the author’s imagination in ways at least as potent as her “unlikely heroines” did. Ellen Moers went so far as to assert that “To look hard at Cather’s landscapes, in fact, is to perceive not the woman in the writer so much as the mystic—an aspect of Willa Cather’s temperament that requires, I believe, more examination” (260). And, indeed, her descriptions of the prairies in *O Pioneers!* or *My Ántonia* fill the reader with a feeling of great earthbound ecstasy and almost physical dissolution onto the limitless plains. These are Jim’s first impressions of the territory as he nears his grandfather’s farm on a wagon at night early in the novel:

There seemed to be nothing to see; no fences, no creeks or trees, no hills or fields. If there was a road, I could not make it out in the faint starlight. There was nothing but land: not a country at all, but the material out of which countries are made. No there was nothing but land—slightly undulating, I knew, because often our wheels ground against the break as we went down into a hollow and lurched up again on the other side. I had the feeling that the world was left behind, that we had got over the edge of it, and were outside man’s jurisdiction (7).

Moers, Fryer, and others have noted that Cather adopted very much a “bardic role” in reporting the beauty and the hazards of the prairie land. It could be argued that Jim Burden’s experience of the environment is deeply colored by the nostalgia he feels for his childhood days, but he does not sidestep some of the awe-inspiring effects that the primordial and, somehow, hostile spaces may have on human beings. In the end, the Nebraska landscapes can easily become fertile soil for any eco-critic showing a certain degree of interest in the multiple functions that they are seen to fulfill in Cather’s best fiction.

In the case of *[Our] Ántonia*, it has been observed that, in fact, there are parts of the narrator’s memories in which it is difficult to distinguish the heroine from the land that fosters her development as a person. This identification between the main character and the landscape around her becomes nowhere more evident than in the last Book of the novel, “Cuzak’s Boys,” in which the heroine, now “a stalwart, brown woman, flat-chested, her curly brown hair a little grizzled” (331), has become the mother of a large crowd of children, all of them dependent on her bountiful nurturing powers:

[...] She had only to stand in the orchard, to put her hand on a little crab tree and look up at the apples, to make you feel the goodness of planting and tending and harvesting at last. All the strong things in her heart came out in the body, that had been so tireless in serving generous emotion.

It was no wonder that her sons stood tall and straight. She was a rich mine of life, like the founders of early races (353).

Daiches objected that to elevate the heroine to this status of a kind of “Earth Goddess” in the last section of the book may not be in keeping with the “note of implicit tragedy” (58) that had been sounded in earlier parts of the novel, especially Books II and IV. In those two sections, immigrant country girls were viewed in Black Hawk as “a menace to the social order” (201) and, eventually, Ántonia bore an illegitimate child from the cheap, pseudo-aristocrat Larry Donovan, who had deserted her after a short period of cohabitation in Denver. Despite the dark clouds that gather over the heroine’s life during that period, Daiches also admits that the ►

❖ happy ending seems to make sense if we consider the novel's key theme of the infinite energy and resilience of the protagonist who, like the land itself, is always ready to come alive reinvigorated again in spring after the hardships of the wintertime. Here is a brief, but vivid, description of Jim's memories of the arrival of that time of the year during his childhood on the prairies:

When spring came, after that hard winter, one could not get enough of the nimble air. Every morning I wakened with a fresh consciousness that winter was over. There were none of the signs of spring for which I used to watch in Virginia, no budding woods or blooming gardens. There was only—spring itself; the throb of it, the light restlessness, the vital essence of it everywhere: in the sky, in the swift clouds, in the pale sunshine, and in the warm, high wind—rising suddenly, sinkingsuddenly, impulsive and playful like a big puppy that pawed you and then lay down to be petted. If I had been tossed down blindfold on that red prairie, I should have known that it was spring (119-20).

Besides the close connection existing between some distinct features of the heroine and the Nebraskan landscapes, it should also be said that the latter can be seen to serve a larger structural function, since Cather's innate consciousness of the land, the seasons, and the weather proves to be a strong unifying element giving coherence to an otherwise disjointed novel. Several specialists have pointed out how important the agricultural and seasonal cycles are in the novel and how deep an impact the weather and these cycles have on the characters' emotions—especially, those of Jim and *Ántonia*. The land and its changes seem to stand at the very center of the novel as human behaviors (friendly relations, love affairs, selfish reactions, suicides, etc.) seem to follow the very rhythms of nature. Thus, when *Ántonia* tells the Harlings in Book II about the shocking suicide of a tramp who had thrown himself into a threshing machine the previous summer, she finds the terrible incident rather incomprehensible: “Now, wasn't that strange, Miss Frances?” Tony asked thoughtfully. “What would anybody want to kill themselves in summer for? In threshing time, too! It's nice everywhere then” (179). As mentioned earlier on, there is a bond and continuity between the land and the protagonist of the book that entices us to read most of her actions and reactions in the light of what the natural environment would dictate in the particular given circumstances.

Ultimately, it is also important to underline that Cather's profound knowledge and immense love for the region as well as her choice of a style of writing that seemed (in its directness) fully adequate to capture its mythical essence, are very much behind her triumphs as a writer (cf. Woodress 48-49). Several critics have maintained that her prairie novels show, in their clean vision and simplicity, the same kind of understanding of the

pioneer farming experience and the frontier that historian Frederick J. Turner exhibits in his poetic renditions of the context. In Marcus Cunliffe's opinion, because she was able to “furnish some authentic and most valuable fragments” of the usable past of her country, Cather helped it “to understand itself and its momentous, momentary heritage, and she brought dignity instead of rhetoric to such understanding” (41). The passage below perfectly illustrates the author's in-depth knowledge of her materials and her ability to represent them in such a way that it is inevitably going to pull the reader into them. This is Jim Burden during his last summer holiday in the countryside before he leaves for school in Lincoln, where a new chapter of his education will take place:

I followed a cattle path through the thick underbrush until I came to a slope that fell away abruptly to the water's edge. A great chunk of the shore had been bitten out by some spring freshet, and the scar was masked by elder bushes, growing down to the water in flowery terraces. I did not touch them. I was overcome by content and drowsiness and by the warm silence about me. There was no sound but the high, sing-song buzz of wild bees and the sunny gurgle of the water underneath. I peeped over the edge of the bank to see the little stream that made the noise; it flowed along perfectly clear over the sand and the gravel, cut off from the muddy main current by a long sandbar. Down there, on the lower shelf of the bank, I saw *Ántonia*, seated alone under the pagoda-like elders (235).

Of course, enthusiasts of nature writing will be delighted by paragraphs like this which, rather than being pure description, make the writing come truly alive for us. Cather is a master in the use of sound words, color words, mood words that appeal in different ways to all our senses, and she can also employ figurative language (similes, metaphors, personifications, etc.) in such a way that fairly common and ordinary elements of the landscape acquire a deeply symbolic dimension. One of the best-known passages in the novel, in which the reader clearly experiences this rich treatment of the setting, occurs a few pages after the above-quoted section, when Jim and the “hired [immigrant] girls” are watching the sun go down while sitting on the grass near the river:

Presently we saw a curious thing: There were no clouds, the sun was going down in a limpid, gold-washed sky. Just as the lower edge of the red disk rested on the high fields against the horizon, a great black figure suddenly appeared on the face of the sun. We sprang to our feet, straining our eyes toward it. In a moment we realized what it was. On some upland farm, a plough had been left standing on the field. The sun was sinking just behind it. Magnified across the distance by the horizontal light, it stood out against the sun, was exactly contained within the circle of the disk; the handles, the tongue, the share—black against the molten read. There it was, heroic in size, a picture writing on the sun (245). ▶

❖ For a writer who, in her own words, believed that “The higher processes of art are all processes of simplification” (Cather, “The Novel” 40), this seems like a fairly elaborate and imaginative vision offering various possible interpretations. Fryer has observed that this “magical vision” is symptomatic of Cather’s writing in the sense that it takes place right “in the midst of [the characters’] storytelling” about their respective relations with the land, in that “felicitous space” which, as this critic argues, is both “real and mythic” (270). In spite of the author’s radical advocacy for a style of writing that would cut away any superfluous detail and unnecessary convention, it is clear that she had the perfect eye and the right words to convey all those meanings she did not explicitly need to name. According to Eudora Welty, “Willa Cather saw her broad land in a sweep, but she saw selectively too—the detail that made all the difference. She never lost sight of the particular in the panorama. Her eye was on the human being” (44).

If landscapes gave Cather the opportunity to show us that she could transmute, with seemingly little effort, the commonplaces of daily toil into true revelations about the role of nature in shaping our destinies, the contemplation of human experience in action allowed her to dig deep into the complexities of origin, class, faith, gender, etc., that govern our existence. In this regard, the character of Antonia Shimerda became an authentic gold lode for the author, since the intersection in her of all these vectors turned her into a unique specimen of the human race, yet a universally-recognizable one. Based on a real Bohemian immigrant, Annie Pavelka, who had been hired by some German neighbors when Cather was still a child living in Red Cloud, NB, she was described by the author as “one of the truest artists I ever knew in the keenness and sensitiveness of her enjoyments, in her love of people, in her willingness to take pains” (qtd. in Byatt i). Surely, as Muriel Brown has noted, Antonia is not likely to think of herself as an artistic spirit, yet her storytelling talents and her ability to establish order out of confounding experiences may suggest otherwise—not to speak of “her shaping influence as a pioneer [that] helps to create a nation in her role as wife, mother, and homemaker” (100). From very early in the novel, we discern that, despite her youth and faltering language skills, the protagonist seems to possess the penetrating eye and human sympathy to read what happens around her in an imaginative light. These are Antonia’s words to describe her beloved father’s sad transformation after they arrived to the new country:

“My papa sad for the old country. He not look good. He never make music any more. At home he play violin all the time; for weddings and for dance. Here never. When I beg him for play, he shake his head no. Some days he take his violin out of his box and make with his fingers on the strings, like this, but never he make the music. He don’t like this kawn-tree” (89)

At first, Jim fails to grasp the weight that Antonia’s words carry but, later on, when her father takes his own life soon after Christmas, he begins to realize about her huge power to see into other people’s suffering and nature. Some scholars have argued that Cather was truly fascinated by the capacity of immigrant women to record in very simple types of narrative their people’s character and family histories. But, of course, what catches the reader’s attention—more so than her gift for understanding and sympathizing with others—is the heroine’s versatility and determination to bring comfort and beauty out of the most distressing circumstances. Again, critics have been inclined to see traces of the author’s own struggles against social norms and gender conventions in many of her protagonist’s attitudes. For instance, after the Shimerdas are left without the head of the family, Antonia is obliged to work in the fields for other neighboring farmers in order to add some cash to the family’s modest earnings. Although this drastic change entails abandoning her childhood antics, household chores, and her education, she seems more than happy to do so if it is for the benefit of her people:

“Oh, better I like to work out-of-doors than in the house! She used to sing joyfully. “I do not care that your grandmother say it makes me like a man. I like to be like a man.” She would toss her head and ask me to feel the muscles swell in her brown arm.

We were glad to have her in the house. She was so gay and responsive that one did not mind her heavy, running step, or her clattery way with pans. Grandmother was in high spirits during the weeks that Antonia worked for us (138).

No doubt, Cather must have recycled many of the stories she heard from the immigrant women she grew up with to delineate some of the most salient features of her heroines. However, as Welty rightly explained, “Personal history may turn into a fictional pattern without closely reproducing it, without needing to reproduce it at all. [...] Fictional patterns may well bite deeper than the events of a life will ever of themselves, or by themselves, testify to” (47-48).

Kathleen Norris stresses Cather’s gift for creating “strong, memorable female characters” (xvi), which she sees as a potentially subversive act in the context of the American frontier literature—a predominantly male microworld. In this regard, it is important to note that, besides the protagonist of the novel, there are other immigrant women in the book who also succeed in their pursuit of “the American dream in their own way” (Woodress 49). Lena Lingard, with whom the narrator has a short-lived romance in Book III, becomes a prosperous dressmaker and businesswoman in Lincoln by using the knowledge she had accumulated while working as a hired girl back in Black Hawk. Similarly, Tiny Soderball also carves herself an affluent future by jumping on the opportunity ▶

◀ to go mining in Alaska where she makes a fortune by showing great initiative in a mostly masculine context. When Jim Burden meets these two childhood friends later in his life in San Francisco in Book IV (“The Pioneer Woman’s Story”), they both seem to represent the Horatio Alger success story in its female variation. Nevertheless, in the narrator’s eyes, true achievement and elation can only materialize for somebody like *Ántonia*, who has remained faithful to the land that saw her grow in the New World and is now contributing to its settlement by raising a large and healthy Bohemian family on the plains. One of the most moving moments in the novel takes place when all her children come out of the cave that they have laboriously built to keep their preserves of fruit, pickles, etc. in huge glass jars and barrels: “We were standing outside talking, when they all came running up the steps together, big and little, tow heads and gold heads, and flashing little naked legs; a veritable explosion of life out of the dark cave into the sunlight. It made me dizzy for a moment”(338-39). Predictably, this is one of the indelible pictures that Jim will collect in his mental album to later reconstruct the narrative of a woman so strong, independent, and true to her inner self that she has remained inaccessible to a more conventional human being like him:

That moment, when they all came tumbling out of the cave into the light, was a sight any man might have come far to see. *Ántonia* had always been one to leave images in the mind that did not fade—that grew stronger with time. In my memory there was a succession of such pictures, fixed there like the old woodcuts of one’s first primer: *Ántonia* kicking her bare legs against the sides of my pony when we came home in triumph with our snake; *Ántonia* in her black shawl and fur cap, as she stood by her father’s grave in the snowstorm; *Ántonia* coming in with her work-team along the evening sky-line. She lent herself to immemorial human attitudes which we recognize by instinct as universal and true. I had not been mistaken. She was a battered woman now, not a lovely girl; but she still had that something which fires the imagination, could still stop one’s breath for a moment by a look or gesture that somehow revealed the meaning in common things (352-53).

To conclude, and on a more personal note, for those of us interested in human mobility and processes of socio-cultural interaction and adaptation, [Our] *Ántonia* can become an invaluable sourcebook since it is packed with ideas and characters that may add a great deal to our current debate on diversity in American culture (see Norris xvi). As Urgo has explained, Cather’s engrossment in themes such as “The sense of place, the mythical coun-

ties, the small town dramas, the historical explorations of family and locality, [and] the tremendous sense of loss” (13)—all of them so common in immigrant fiction—have turned her into a “major novelist” in recent decades. She was one of the few in her generation to combine in her books the interests of the immigrant peasants and the artist, the homesteaders in the mid-West and their forebears in other regions of the world. Characters such as the wicked Krajiek, Mr. and Mrs. Shimerda, Ambrosch, the three Bohemian Marys, the Danish laundry girls, the pathetic Ole Benson or *Ántonia*’s husband, Anton Cuzak, reveal to us the dreams and tribulations experienced by the newcomers in an environment that was not particularly hospitable to them. Some of them succeeded and some others—such as *Ántonia*’s father or his Russian friends—succumbed to the difficult circumstances. But, as Jim Burden recalls, most of the young girls that he met as a child finally managed to make it good by the next generation:

I always knew I should live long enough to see my country girls come into their own, and I have. To-day the best that a harassed Black Hawk merchant can hope for is to sell provisions and farm machinery and automobiles to the rich farms where that first crop of stalwart Bohemian and Scandinavian girls are now the mistresses (201)

Some critics have accused Cather of a certain “heroic idealism” in her depiction of these immigrant lives, which in less than two complete generations were seen to be fully integrated into the human landscape of the region. However, they rarely refer to the heavy toll this process often took or to the special conditions that the American frontier presented for that uncommonly fast incorporation. As Fryer, Norris, and others have noted, though, Cather draws a “thoroughly realistic picture” (Norris xv) of the process of adaptation in which, paradoxically, isolation and deprivation often worked to create very strong ties of trust and solidarity among all sorts of newcomers. The author was extremely good at showing how forces that, one would assume, would pull societies in different directions, in fact, eventually contributed to the emergence of communities where human beings from different origins and conditions could live together in a mutually enriching manner. If, in addition, the eyes and the voice of the author seem perfectly suited to capture and report this colorful parade that she had the privilege of witnessing, then the results are bound to be something like [Our] *Ántonia*. As Bernice Slotte has rightly explained, “Because she [Willa Cather] was many-colored, her readers too respond to an art that gives them freedom and depth, for richness” (253). ■



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TRIBUTE

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***A Celebration
of Kazuo
Ishiguro's
Literary
Works:***

An Insight into
Nostalgia and
Postcolonialism

Many of our deepest motives come, not from an adult logic of how things work in the world, but out of something that is frozen from childhood.

Kazuo Ishiguro

The aim of this contribution is to praise and briefly analyze the brilliant work of Kazuo Ishiguro, Nobel Prize winner in Literature 2017, along with a brief recognition of his original achievements in the field of postcolonial literature and the way he has focused on the damaging effects on the colonized. Besides, I display the way he uses the framework of nostalgia and memory to provide the reader with the issue of cultural difference and otherness, highlighting the need and responsibility to explore and find a shared essence between oppressors and oppressed. More specifically, it is an attempt to show Kazuo Ishiguro's ethical responsibility and faith in honesty and integrity by showing the features of his main characters' confessional writing, which has made of him a unique contemporary writer.

Introduction

Kazuo Ishiguro, the British author winner of Man Booker Prize for Fiction with *The Remains of the Day* in 1989, was deservedly awarded the Nobel Prize in Literature in 2017. The Jury emphasized that he is a writer "who, in novels of great emotional force, has uncovered the abyss beneath our illusory sense of connection with the world" (*Ishiguro-Facts*, 2018).

Ishiguro, who is currently 63 years old, is a recognized and acclaimed intellectual who has been writing full-time from the publication of his first novel, *A Pale View of the Hills* (1982), to the most recent, *The Buried Giant* (2015). Among his selected production, he has been widely recognised for his seven novels, short stories and film scripts for both television and cinema. Ishiguro was born in Nagasaki on 8 November 1954, although he has lived his whole life divided between his land of origin, which he left at the very young age of five when his parents left Japan in 1960, and England, where he grew up as a foreigner and was educated. This fact has marked and oriented his literary work in a specific direction, mainly by taking into consideration two factors: the role of memory in the shaping of people's identities, as a dynamic device that subjectively re-establishes the characters' perception of past events, and the unsettled displacement and hardship endured by many fellow countrymen from the war-torn East country, which was reduced to ashes after the Second World War. Kazuo Ishiguro's land felt in certain ways the same dismantling post-war effects that Great Britain severely suffered. This latter shocking and terrifying event, that was specifically significant in the author's home city on 9th August 1945, since the atomic bomb that was launched on Nagasaki resulted in the death of over seventy thousand civilians, played a post-traumatic role in the survivors' individual and communal identities. Thus, I believe that these two elements, history and dislocation, intertwined with a strong sense of nostalgia ►

and dissatisfaction, have exerted a strong component in post-war literary authors like him within and outside Japan. Kazuo Ishiguro, who was born just eight years after the holocaust, comments on a unique interview conducted by Rob Gilhooly and Yoko Hani for *The Japan Times* in 2001:

I continue to find memory a fascinating device. It is a filter through which we all see ourselves – we tell stories about who we are and what we’ve done in the past and who we have become. And because memory is vague and hazy and open to manipulation, it’s very easy to deceive oneself about one’s life. There is cowardice and heroism in trying to face up to that and bring the past into focus. Maybe...because of my history, there is a part of me that has an irrational fondness for the textures of memory and recreating them.

Besides, Kazuo Ishiguro is an exceptional writer who has always been noticed for a delicate and restrained, controlled way of expressing feelings and thoughts, as well as for writing international novels. He has earned the admiration and praise of many readers and scholars. Furthermore, the author is one of the most outstanding postcolonial writers of his generation, and he has greatly contributed with his fiction to strengthen postcolonial debates and considerations about oppressive practices, enlarging and enriching the latest perspectives about the studies based on the underlying hegemonic strategies and other historical processes that validate inequality. As Wojciech Drag argues in her book *Revisiting Loss*:

Although his fiction is far from monothematic, the themes of remembering and accommodating loss find a way to creep into each of his novels. Even if seemingly absent or merely faintly present on the surface, they invariably make up the emotional core of the narrative (2014: 1).

Multiculturalism and Colonialism: Dwelling in the Past

Kazuo Ishiguro is not only one of the most interesting multicultural writers in the world, whose fictions, although not very prolific, saddle originally between western and eastern cultures. The author has reached international fame for the quality and global treatment of themes as well as for his number of followers, whose numbers don't stop increasing year after year, and who come from all over the world. We can consider him a British author because his academic background is European, he writes in English and his permanent home is in England, although his Japanese heritage, which is expressed through a delicate and subtle literature, a calm

and harmonious pace, with constant allusions to little and apparently insignificant details, is definitely rooted in the Far East, mainly by his use of a minimalist approach towards the events. Furthermore, Kazuo Ishiguro adapts and moves easily between his “two cultures”, and that makes him truly original.

Kazuo Ishiguro's works have much to do with the unswerving and abusive control that during many centuries has been exerted by the Western powers and still has much influence on many other lands all over the planet. Thus, Ishiguro is a committed writer who calls into question and defies the superiority of the colonizer and the unfair treatment of the colonized. Likewise, he superbly challenges the cultural and racial hierarchies by focusing on the process of *othering* and marginalization.

In a global way, he is part of a meaningful group of writers who have been able to give voice to the experiences and realities lived by many individuals after the traumatic disintegration of empires. Therefore, his writings are specifically significant because he deals with the way the colonizer and the colonized bond is felt from the side of the oppressed in the first person, how the feeling of not-belonging can affect the individual so intensely and influence directly their coexistence in a new society. Within this literary trend, the author organizes a particular narrative that connects the universal suffering among all those human beings who grieve everywhere without distinctions of race, religious practice or colour, although the victims are apparently very different. Such detailed narrative portrays a series of confused and perturbed characters who struggle hard with their differences and individualism against the diverse mechanisms of control created by those in the observance of a supreme postcolonial power. In fact, the relationship between the colonised and the coloniser is one of marginalization, separation and isolation, where the settings, more than physical territories with fixed political boundaries, are states of mind for those who live in the shadows, outside the mainstream of the metropolis, forbidden, rejected, ignored and unable to communicate with the world and even among themselves.

Kazuo Ishiguro is also renowned because he is able to vividly depict the colonization of minds by the power groups as well as by capturing the public's attention due to an originally striking and greatly disconcerting perspective of the subaltern. His fiction is closely connected to this time of big changes, migrations and identity problems that the world is experiencing nowadays. He deconstructs a racist and binary line of thinking which has been installed in us for too long and still pervades the Western countries and its influences around the world by denouncing these abusive practices openly. Following the same assumption, we can see how constant repression is ubiquitous in his different stories, as it happens in the episode when Tommy, in *Never Let Me Go*, must sadly face his lack of creativity with regard to his classmates, as Kathy recalls: ▶

◀ **My guess is that from sometime before he did that elephant, Tommy had had the feeling he wasn't keeping up – that his painting in particular was like that of students much younger than him – and he'd been covering up the best he could by doing deliberately childish pictures (Ishiguro 2005: 20).**

Accordingly, Ishiguro is not only a crucial figure in contemporary fiction as well as an artist concerned with themes such as the clash between cultures, race, gender, and the concept of nation, but also with a strong sensitivity of moral obligation towards a shameful history of exclusion and oppression, which in many cases has been censored and repressed, and only partially told in the best of circumstances. He seems to appreciate and understand the nightmarish shock of forced exile, but at the same time he has the sensitiveness of embracing different cultures by putting himself in the shoes of those who must leave their lands in search of a better life and an alleged brighter future in an unknown and many times inhospitable territory.

Thus, Kazuo Ishiguro's novels are set in between the West and the East and they have reached international fame for their quality and multiculturalism. As the novelist assures in the interview in *The Japan Times* with regard to the influences in his multicultural background:

My guess is that from sometime before he did that elephant, Tommy had had the feeling he wasn't keeping up – that his painting in particular was like that of students much younger than him – and he'd been covering up the best he could by doing deliberately childish pictures (Ishiguro 2005: 20).

Postcolonialism is well-ingrained in all Ishiguro's fictions in one way or another, and this is shown through the many attitudes and thoughts which are displayed by the characters in the plots and manifested from a nostalgic point of view. There are always open questions which reflect the cultural, political and social maladies that have their roots in the past and still prevail deeply in the 21st century. Nevertheless, the characters frequently remain stuck in the past, mentally stultified and dreaming about a realm that remains ambiguous and contradictory. Kazuo Ishiguro creates a special relationship between the different characters of his narratives partly thanks to the intertextuality of the voices and perspectives, where binary oppositions become vague. Notwithstanding, the fictional characters of his fictions embody, in a more or less explicit way, a truth that stems from the injustice and cruelty that subjugation generates, and they come to represent the epitome of the subaltern who rebels, whether consciously or unconsciously, against power. Guha states with regard to colonialism that:

Emerging as it did not by 'internal process', but as an 'external force', it was doubly alienated from the local culture, both in its becoming and in its being. As an 'absolute externality', colonial rule was structured like a despotism, with no 'mediating depths', no space for transactions between the will of the rulers and the ruled. This produced what Guha calls a *décalage*, the insertion of the world's most dynamic power of the contemporary world into the power relations of a world 'still living in the past'. The colonial state was an anachronism embodying the paradox of an advanced bourgeois culture 'regressing' from its universalist impulse to compromise with 'precapitalist particularism under colonial conditions of its own making' (quoted in Kaiwar 1989: 207).

Furthermore, Kazuo Ishiguro establishes clear affinities between certain atrocities committed in different regions at different times of history, making us wonder whether we, as human beings, evolve towards a better society or decline and degrade ourselves in a repeating cycle by going over and over the same terrible old mistakes. His characters seem to change of setting and century; however, the opposing attitudes and motivation remain the same or even become more refined and stylized as the marginal victims must face the excruciating problems of race, ethnicity and social displacement in painful and torturing ways. For instance, Mr. Stevens, in *The Remains of the Day*, has been at the service of a lord who openly conspired against his own nation in favour of the fascist regime of Germany, and although the world has changed since the protagonist recalls his story, he still reflects and believes in the Victorian values of a time which is long gone, based on repression, rigidity, and strictness. This may be noticed in the butler when he talks in a rather biased and tendentious manner, to the point of becoming sectarian, about the specific standards of his profession and, in general, about the English race:

It is sometimes said that butlers only truly exist in England. Other countries, whatever title is actually used, have only menservants. I tend to believe that this is true. Continentals are unable to be butlers because they are as a breed incapable of the emotional restraint which only the English race is capable of (Ishiguro 1989: 44).

Hence, *The Remains of the Day* shows the inner thoughts and feelings of a narrator who monopolizes the events and is also unable to come to terms with his colonial past. Consequently, he ends up creating his own reality, adapting his memoirs to his comfort and particularities, in order to suit his own desires. In addition, the protagonist's mind is full of vivid memories that are undermined by numerous omissions and inaccuracies in the information that he provides, so Stevens deliberately reinterprets the past events from his advantageous position as a unique narrator, in order to hide his internal fight towards the oppressive structures of the British Imperialism that he has suffered inadvertently. ▶

✦ Thus, nostalgia is filtered through memory, which is a very useful and original technique in the author's narratives, as it forges the identity of the different characters, principally in their involuntary situation of displacement. The characters, who are brilliantly outlined, find themselves in situations where they are forced to live in exile, spatially but also temporally displaced and away from their comfort. For instance, in *The Buried Giant*, Axl and Beatrice can only recall their past experiences through minor exterior signs, which is exactly why they live in a permanently confused state. We can appreciate the anxiety and concern that the wife feels about being separated from her only son and, although she doesn't know exactly where he is, both her and her husband embark on a sentimental journey that changes their lives forever as she fights hard to remember the "message" of finding her son. Hence, she is determined not to obliterate the existence of her displaced descendant:

'Our son, Axl. Do you remember our son? When they were pushing me just now, it was our son I remembered. A fine, strong, upright man. Why must we stay in this place? Let's go to our son's village. He'll protect us and see no one treats us ill (Ishiguro 2015: 26).

Otherness and Deconstruction in the Fiction of Kazuo Ishiguro

In spite of the strong sense of postcolonial obligingness by characters such as Stevens in *The Remains of the Day*, who firmly believes in his masters' authority, or the characters Christian Banks in *When We Were Orphans* and Kathy in *Never Let Me Go*, who seem to have adopted the internal Eurocentric white discourse of their "superiors" after many years of alienation, Kazuo Ishiguro makes the subaltern speak in their own language and express freely their thoughts at the end of their "failed journey". He also undermines the nostalgic past when he shows the negative influence of the colonial enterprise on individuals. Characters such as Stevens have been so well indoctrinated that they are not even conscious about their wrong beliefs regarding Lord Darlington, who is seen as a naïve and misguided master. However, a change truly takes place as the butler shows a progressive shift of attitude. There is defiance to the damaging and destructive effects exerted by the patriarchal system of limitation and manipulation, as the characters are aware of the fact that their beliefs and those of their masters are inevitably antagonistic.

It is also very interesting to observe how Kazuo Ishiguro dismantles the notion of home and brings it closer to oppression and racism because the familiar environment is depicted as an enclosed space, private and embedded in longstanding traditions. However, it is of primary importance to notice the fact that the setting of *When We Were*

Orphans (2000) is an Eastern island that is geographically located as an overseas possession of the British Empire. Thus, this precision helps to universalize the theme of pioneering adventure overseas, and the international presence of Western citizens in Shanghai at that time highlights the colonial presence of certain great powers beyond the individual. This situation is exploited by the colonizers, who, through aggressive and mean methods, take as much benefit as possible from the colony and its islanders, first the British company Morganbrook and Byatt, and later the local dealer Chiank – Kai-shek. Their main purpose is to trade with the lucrative business of opium behind the superficial façade of good colonial practices, which exemplifies the accumulation of power at the hands of abusive and insolent colonizers who rule the island harshly and corruptively. Nevertheless, Kazuo Ishiguro deconstructs the notion of "Englishness" in favour of cross-culturalism and diversity through the childhood memories of the male protagonist and his worries about keeping his "English" identity: "I saw my chance and said: 'Uncle Philip, I was just wondering. How do you suppose one might become more English?'" (Ishiguro 2000: 77); to which his "uncle", whose role is that of an enigmatic father figure, wittily answers:

'No, I suppose you can't. Well, it's true, out here, you're growing up with a lot of different sorts around you. Chinese, French, Germans, Americans, what have you. It'd be no wonder if you grew up a bit of a mongrel' (Ishiguro 2000: 76).

Even more thought-provoking is the way he dismantles the idea of security, protection, peace of mind and safety in Ishiguro's protagonists. For instance, Christian Bank in *Never Let Me Go* is partially a British returnee, a sort of refugee who has been sent to Europe after the strange disappearance of his parents. He is seen as an orphan who must be guided and looked upon like a lost child, unattached and vulnerable. This paternalist attitude increases enormously the level of otherness felt by the main character. His sense of split is such that he becomes a full-time criminal investigator, whose main aim is, together with his exaggerated self-promises of finding his mother and father's home back in Shanghai after all these years of separation and suffering, to fight the injustice and corruption left behind by the British Empire. This triggers a dangerous dream of false and over-expected hopes, taking Banks away from reality and placing him directly into a fictional world.

The "Oriental" predicament is also seen in *When We Were Orphans* as Christopher Banks, the English narrator of the novel, recalls the house of his childhood friend Akira. He makes a subtle comparison between his Japanese friend dwelling and his own, apparently not finding any notorious differences with regard to their external features, as both have been designed according to Western standards within the Far Eastern colony of Shanghai: ✦

❖ **My memory of Akira's house is that, from an architectural standpoint, it was very similar to ours; in fact, I remember my father telling me both houses had been built by the same British firm some twenty years earlier (Ishiguro 2000: 71).**

However, when the English boy focuses more specifically on the internal details of his Japanese friend's home, a stylistic resource that the author typically uses in his narratives, which is to concentrate on minimalist details to show the greatest differences, the concept of Otherness is inevitably revealed. The East–West dichotomy is ironically stated by ridiculing and absurdly exaggerating his friend's relatives' taste when adopting “wrongly” the European style:

But the inside of my friend's house was a quite different affair, and the source of some fascination for me. It was not so much the preponderance of Oriental pictures and ornaments – in Shanghai, at that stage in my life, I would have seen nothing unusual in this – but rather his family's eccentric notions regarding the usage of many items of Western furniture. Rugs I would have expected to see on floors were hung on walls; chairs would be at odd heights to tables; lamps would totter under overtly large shades (Ishiguro 2000: 71).

With respect to the main objectives in Kazuo Ishiguro's novels, there is a strong connection between memory, displacement and one's self-identity with the notion of morality. The reality in his stories informs us that there is not a fluid and peaceful transition into a new domestic environment, but a difficult and harsh split from everything and everybody. Likewise, there are other themes in his novels which are closely related to ceaseless oppression and blatant racism, such as identity, personal crisis, a feeling of disaffection and solitude. In fact, there seems to be a clear parallelism between all these themes and how the fears and anxieties of the protagonists are conceived inside their heads. In like manner, Kazuo Ishiguro, who is in a way an Asiatic outsider on British soil, makes use of male and female minority stereotypes as a decolonizing strategy against the postcolonial hegemonic stance. This is a very effective way to challenge the readers' original expectations about particular issues which are essential to the full development of the subaltern, such as identity, independence and the right of men and women to seek a more balanced and fair society. In connection with this, Kazuo Ishiguro, by means of depicting cross-cultural interrelations between postcolonial themes and subaltern characters, criticizes the Western powers of both past and present, those capitalist systems based on patriarchal bigotry, intimidation, sex discrimination, homophobia and other forms of oppression. The emotional attraction that his literature exerts on the readers towards nostalgia and memory is not purely accidental, and his fiction explores the ambiguity of nostalgic images, delusions, and the real, calling on an alternative perspective away from

the simplistic Eurocentric explanation of reality and past events. As Cynthia Wong asserts,

In addressing the insider/outsider status of his and his characters' national identity and the nature of human choices and destiny, Ishiguro highlights the responsibility of the writer to his cultural times and the issues that engage human action and ideas (4).

Moreover, there is a successful attempt to deconstruct the familiar cultural myths of the English culture, such as the image of the butler, the British gentleman, the private school institution, the philanthropic organization, the overseas trade companies, the Arthurian legend and the Victorian country house, all of them considered emblems of Great Britain, in novels such as *The Remains of the Day*, *Never Let Me Go*, *When We Were Orphans* or *The Buried Giant*. In fact, he manages to portray them satirically in the interest of those silenced and repressed voices that belonged to so many anonymous citizens whose agency of their own lives has been constantly refused. The author shows the heritage of a past empire in an alternative and subversive form such as the depiction of Darlington Hall in *The Remains of the Day* as a “luxurious” prison. The manor house contains a number of characteristic features which give the reader the impression that the plot is held within a “cage”. For instance, Stevens has lived for many years secluded from the outside world by his own initiative, dwelling within its four walls with the sole purpose of pleasing his employer to ensure utmost effectiveness. Another very interesting aspect is that, apart from undertaking “his” journey through the beautiful English countryside, which is greatly idealized and romanticized, Stevens always keeps Darlington Hall in mind and spirit as if he had never left it. Hence, this can be clearly seen in all the anecdotes and reminiscences of memories that revolve around his place of work and home, which amounts to the same time. However, it is ironic to see how the butler is surrounded by luxury, beauty, quality, history and the finest things, but his chamber resembles a poor cell both in size and the facilities that it offers to him. Furthermore, his lack of proper identity and “nakedness” is such that he doesn't even own his clothes, representing a mostly unprotected and powerless colonized subject: “I am in the possession of a number of splendid suits, kindly passed on to me over the years by Lord Darlington himself, and by various guests who have stayed in this house and had reason to be pleased with the standard of service here” (Ishiguro 1989: 11). That is to say, the author unveils an uncertain and precarious present that has nothing to do with the evocative past that the main character so insistently idolizes. Besides, the butler's feeling of otherness and inferiority is so evident that he is never addressed by his real name but by his surname, which illustrates even more his anonymity and nonessential role in the daily reality. ▶

◀ There is also a sort of magical realism in Kazuo Ishiguro's prose which serves as a Postcolonial instrument of Western demystification. That, mixed with the subversive Orientalism and the nostalgic narrative of his literature, has the quality of changing the discursive power from the dominant elite towards the subaltern. As Slemon claims with regards to Magical realist texts such as *When We Were Orphans*, they are "read as a form of postcolonial discourse...comprise a positive and liberating engagement with the codes of imperial history and its legacy of fragmentation and discontinuity" (1995: 101).

Therefore, Kazuo Ishiguro is able to spread successfully the imaginative domains that stretch over different geographies through the experiences of several isolated, lost, destitute characters in his fictional stories. They lose confidence and must affront different experiences, giving way to vacillations, getting jealous and suffering from anxiety with regards to their own experience of "otherness". Besides, the narrator himself demystifies and deconstructs ironically the legitimate "Englishness" by presenting settings such as Darlington Hall as frameworks where many weaknesses and defects take place, eroding the efficacy and legitimacy of such an "honourable and virtuous" institution, which deteriorates fast with the passage of time.

All the characters are linked by similar traumas told from a nostalgic perspective and that tell about the matter of displacement and identity in different places at different times and the impossibility of a connatural and homogeneous race society because it would be a disgraceful utopia. On the contrary, Kazuo Ishiguro advocates for a pluralistic society from a cultural and racial point of view, much more enriching and integrating different people, more democratic and more representative of reality. He has distinguished himself by the original perspective given to his fictions, which are connected with this time of fast change and adjustment, migrations and identity problems that the world is experiencing nowadays. He subtly aims attention at the flaws and defects of the protagonists, as well as at their fate due to the consequences of their actions and decisions to highlight the process of stigmatization against the others.

Nostalgic Relationships and Identity

The human relationships that are built between the different characters of Kazuo Ishiguro's novels are never durable and strong but, quite otherwise, they remain tense and fragile. These flimsy friendships are generally based on positive memories from a previous time experienced by the narrators, who always turn out to be the main protagonists of his fictions. The characters work on a permanent state of identification with their most private past in order to put up with their marginal

lives and develop themselves both physically and emotionally, reconstructing their unreliable memories and arranging them in order to ensure a fixed and balanced identity.

In the same vein, there is a longing in all Ishiguro's characters to unfold their own past for the purpose of disclosing their most inner experiences and make sense of their fractured recollections, challenging the new order of their lives. Their adversities and discomforts, as well as their afflictions and pains, come from their private past and reflect their present struggles and frustrations. These are traumatic reminders that take them back to an allegedly better time in the past that they must confront in order to cope with their miserable living conditions and with the cruel treatment exercised by Western hegemony. However, they still gather enough courage and energy to dream of rebuilding their lives; nonetheless, Kazuo Ishiguro works at a deeper level of social consciousness, and while the narrators delve into their own past, they also make constant biased references toward other manifold characters involved in their stories, judging and even condemning them morally, in order to gain full support from the reader. Therefore, the author ironically makes us see and question the breaches and fissures of the first person narrators' unreliability of their nostalgic moments, mainly when they suspect potentially negative consequences of the people that surround them.

Another interesting point to consider is that, although Kazuo Ishiguro's characters are founded in the context of bildungsromans, they hardly grow and mature; on the contrary, they progress slowly and in very narrow circles, instead of moving forward. The protagonists' personal memories act as barriers against their normal moral, emotional, intellectual and social development, bringing them back to their childhood or to a previous idealised time, always preferable in their minds to their bleak and distressing present. They must dwell in places that most of the times they have not voluntarily chosen. They are never fully accepted, almost always pointed out as the "strangers", mocked by those who see them as a threat because they do not belong to their communities.

Therefore, Ishiguro discloses in all his narratives the fact that we cannot judge and segregate people only on a set of assumptions based on classicism, racism or any other discriminatory stance. The writer goes even deeper and subtly suggests that through a clear evocation of intricacies and multiplicities of the different moments of history, in connection with the many cultural trends that have taken place everywhere in the Western world, there has never been and there never will be an unmixed, Aryan and uncontaminated society. On the contrary, the message given by Ishiguro has more to do with the idea of a historical process of postcolonial interbreeding, a blending and fusing of people from many different origins, as is shown in *The Buried Giant* and the way the Briton Mistress Beatrice and her husband desperately address the young Saxon warrior: ▶

❖ **Master Edwin! We both beg this of you. In the days to come, remember us. Remember us and this friendship when you were still a boy. As he heard this, something else came to Edwin: a promise made to the warrior; a duty to hate all Britons. But surely Wistan had not meant to include this gentle couple (Ishiguro 2015: 344).**

This novel sets a series of connections that have to do with the presumed extermination of thousands and thousands of innocent Celtic Britons by the Anglo-Saxons in the Dark Ages. Furthermore, there is a deeper level of meaning which has to do with the denunciation of colonial practices, because the characters are subjected to dictatorial practices, abuses, exploitation and unfair treatment by dominant and irrational powers. Besides, the development that nostalgia prompts in Beatrice and Axl is related to their exile from the community they belong to and the search for their son. As Du Bois reminds us, everyone attempts to “be a co-worker in the kingdom [or queendom] of culture, to escape both death and isolation” (1903: 11). This decision transforms their quest into a symbol for their freedom, their identities and their ethnic historical experiences, as the omnipresent narrator calls into question their unreliable memories: “Had they always lived like this, just the two of them, at the periphery of the community? Or had things once been quite different?” (2015: 7). In this manner, there is a strong yearning for finding themselves and recuperating what has been lost along the way, even at the cost of losing hope, friendship and meaning to their lives.

It seems that Kazuo Ishiguro’s unreliable and omnipresent narrators, through memory and uncertainty of meaning, incertitude and inconclusiveness, warn us against the mistake of believing that cultural crossing is something new and related only to our times. That is in part why his fiction, twisted and disturbing, denies the synthesis of place, time and action, with the novels showing vulnerable characters trapped in their own reflections and nostalgia for a lost and dying world, yearning to come back home. There is a voice of the idealised past, submerged in a lyrical pessimism and psychological war with themselves which, in spite of the pain and torment imposed by the racist and oppressive surrounding societies, still have the courage to denounce the atrocities suffered.

Henceforth, the language of nostalgia is the axis on which the different characters of his novels define their existence and disconnection, between their failure to remember and their self-obliteration, as the novelist assures us in an interview with Cynthia F. Wong about *When We Were Orphans* and its main character, Christopher Banks:

I am talking about the more pure, personal sense of nostalgia for one’s force, as well as a very destructive force, because like idealism is to the intellect, that kind of nostalgia has the same relationship to the emotions. You remember a time emotionally when you thought the world was a better place (2001: 320).

In fact, even the titles of his novels contain a hint of irony regarding memory and identity. For example, the absence of proper and dignified freedom in the dystopian *Never Let Me Go* plays an important part in the development of the main characters and the relationship between them. Being clones, they suffer a relentless depersonalization policy in Hailsham School, along with a lack of confidence and alienation, mainly because, after all, they are just “a generation of created children” (2005: 259) who are begotten to be effectively dismembered. They must serve to the larger cause of saving “human” lives so they are instructed as to comply with their “natural” destination. Hence, the only way the characters have to perpetuate their own existence is by storing and collecting physical items which serve as a substitute for their most private experiences, as is seen in Kathy with her strong attachment to her tape and the song that gives the novel its title: “‘The Song’, I said, ‘it was called “Never Let Me Go”. ‘ Then I sang a couple of lines quietly under my breath for her. ‘Never let me go. Oh, baby, baby. Never let me go...’” (Ishiguro 2005: 266). She doesn’t want anyone to steal from her the most precious treasure she still owns, and so she keeps it secretly, a music that makes Kathy desire to come back in time, anxious to find some sort of comfort and ease.

In the case of *The Remains of the Day*, the reference is made towards the topic of nostalgic British expansionism and its destructive consequences, reiterating the hopeless illusion of going back to an imperial past gone long ago. This is something Mr Stevens finally recognizes after a fortuitous encounter with another professional colleague on Weymouth pier at the end of his personal quest, with the late lights of the evening switching on and the last light of the day blurring, metaphorically signaling the twilight of a life and, at the same time, of an empire and a life of service dedicated to the “cause”:

Perhaps, then, there is something to his advice that I should cease looking back so much, that I should adopt a more positive outlook and try to make the best of what remains of my day. After all, what can we ever gain in forever looking back and blaming ourselves if our lives have not turned out quite as we might have wished? (Ishiguro 1989: 256 – 257).

The character’s sentimental and psychological connection to their past is constant, but Kazuo Ishiguro does not create a direct correlation with the present. On the contrary, he achieves this through the fragmented memory of the protagonists, which is rather inaccurate. Moreover, something very insightful here is the fact that the characters, in their unreliability, can only recall certain specific details but not the general situations. Therefore, the reader constantly finds it difficult to make a distinction between what is real and what has been manipulated by the unreliable protagonist–narrator as well. An interesting example is found in *Never Let Me Go* through Kathy, another character for whom memory and personal re- ▶

relationships of trust among peers are very important elements in her social and emotional growth:

I don't remember if it was before or after the class, or how full the room was. I remember having books in my hands, and that as I moved towards where Ruth and the others were talking, there was a strong patch of sun across the desk – lids they were sitting on (Ishiguro 2005: 53).

The awareness of her identity as well as her development towards adulthood truly begins when she hears the story of her own birth as a clone from original human beings and thus, knowing her origins, she is able to reassert her own identity and her rights as a woman. However, these traumatic experiences after such a shock cause the characters of the novel to develop feelings and impressions of frustration and disrespect towards themselves as well: "Our models, what they were like, that's nothing to do with us, Kath. It's just not worth getting upset about" (Ishiguro 2005: 166).

Kathy cooperates with her close friends with the purpose of finding out who they really are and what will happen with their short lives. Miss Emily, backing Madame Marie-Claude, who was a passionate pro-clone supporter with a philanthropic view, tells her and her friends: "We took away your art because we thought it would reveal your souls. Or to put it more finely, we did it to *prove you had souls at all*" (Ishiguro 2005: 255).

Another interesting fact has to do with Stevens' fragmented memory in *The Remains of the Day*, which is appreciated in his self-confessions to the reader about his past life in Darlington House during the thirties. His accounts do not follow a continuous linearity of time but shift constantly through flashbacks in an apparent disjointed manner, and the temporal disorders suffered by the butler seem to emulate his mental state after years of submission. Thus, he needs to build himself up out of the clash between two opposite eras, the imperialist one before the Second World War and the new international order set after 1945 led by the United States. Stevens has kept for many years all his emotions, feelings and upsetting memories well hidden inside his chest, but he cannot continue doing this anymore and opts for releasing his emotions through a personal diary. Therefore, as soon as Mr Farraday, his new American employer, gives him the chance to travel, he doesn't think twice about it and decides to undertake an apparently simple trip into the English countryside that turns out to be a real introspective journey: "The idea of such a journey came about, I should point out, from a most kind suggestion put to me by Mr Farraday himself one afternoon almost a fortnight ago, when I had been dusting the portraits in the library" (Ishiguro 1989: 3).

There is a nostalgic feeling of "being in the wrong place at the wrong time". This allows the protagonists of Ka-

zuo Ishiguro's novels, who tell their stories in first person narrative, to immerse themselves in a wistful past, with constant flashbacks to an idyllic and romanticized time which is often changed and transformed at the speaker's choice. Moreover, they carefully select and make sense of suitable experiences for their own interests, and this allows them to conform to their idealized and diffused identities. This is appreciated in *The Buried Giant*, when Wistan, the Saxon warrior, recounts his uprooting from his own people, and then his growth and maturity among the Britons both to Axl and his wife:

'I was taken from that village by soldiers and trained from a tender age to be the warrior I am today. It was Britons took me, so I soon learnt to speak and fight in their manner. It's long ago and things take strange shapes in the mind. When I first saw you today in that village, perhaps a trick of the morning light, I felt I was that boy again, shyly peeking at that great man with his flowing cloak, moving through our village like a lion among pigs and cows (Ishiguro 2015: 164).

By the same token, there is general skepticism as well as a strong sense of distrust by the characters in their own memories that prevent them from moving forward in their decision-making, not only about themselves, but also with the people they love most. Hence, by suppressing the hurtful reality of their recollections, the characters are able, at least in part and momentarily, to go on with their lives and preserve their respectability and honour. These genuine elements dig into the characters' times past and bring about partial meaning for their present situations. One very good example has to do with Mr. Stevens, the biased butler in *The Remains of the Day*, who, after many years of service to Lord Darlington, refuses to admit openly that his former master was a Nazi advocator in the interwar period. However, the butler's idealization and nostalgic remembrance of his old employer crumbles as his constant gaps and omissions fall subject to his own internal contradictions. Stevens's denial of any kind of involvement or acknowledgement, at least at the beginning, of what was going on at that time, declining any responsibility in it, is slightly suspicious to say the least:

How can one possibly be held to blame in any sense because, say, the passage of time has shown that Lord Darlington's efforts were misguided, even foolish? Throughout the years I served him, it was he and he alone who weighed up evidence and judged it best to proceed in the way he did, while I simply confined myself, quite properly, to affairs within my own professional realm. And as far as I am concerned, I carried out my duties to the best of my abilities, indeed to a standard which many may consider "first rate" (Ishiguro 1989: 211). ▶

✦ Notwithstanding, Mr. Stevens leaves aside his own sense of personal nostalgia and eventually recoils from such a unilateral and accusatory statement made about Lord Darlington, partially regretting his previous behaviour. The butler enlarges his vision of the past event by admitting, after considering the matter in greater depth, that he himself might have incurred in several errors as well:

Lord Darlington wasn't a bad man. He wasn't a bad man at all. And at least he had the privilege of being able to say at the end of his life that he made his own mistake. His lordship was a courageous man. He chose a certain path in life, it proved to be a misguided one, but there, he chose it, he can say that at least. As for myself, I cannot even claim that. You see, I trusted. I trusted in his lordship's wisdom. All those years I served him, I trusted I was doing something worthwhile. I can't even say I made my own mistakes. Really – one has to ask oneself – what dignity is there in that? (Ishiguro 1989:255-256).

This dramatic shift of perspective is typical in the main characters of Kazuo Ishiguro's novels as he introduces different voices striving to be heard and a plurality of visions which add an extra cosmopolitan scope to his writings. The protagonists desperately attempt to authenticate for themselves a distorted impression of agency in their past, and they do it mainly to justify and find an inner logic to their current situation of isolation. This "turning" towards the past is evoked through the mechanism of nostalgia but, at the same time, they sadly find out the terrible meaning carried with its disclosure. For instance, the boatman in *The Buried Giant* wants to know more about Axl and Beatrice before he helps them cross the river, and so he asks the husband if he feels pain when he looks back to his past, to which Axl replies:

You ask for a memory brings particular pain. What else can I say, boatman, than it's of our son, almost grown when we last saw him, but who left us before a beard was on his face. It was after some quarrel and only to a nearby village, and I thought it a matter of days before he returned (2015: 355-356).

The characters must confront the traumatic past that is haunting them to understand and prove who they really are. For instance, Christopher Bank, the main character in *When We Were Orphans*, is depicted as a bicultural character that has been raised in a bicultural environment as well. He unconsciously chooses to come back to the land where he grew up as a child, without really knowing that this will be a transcendental decision in his life. He embarks on an unwilling journey to the unknown, to the most atrocious form of alienation, which is a country divided and in war, for purely emotional reasons. His purpose is motivated by a nostalgic feeling, since he certainly

intends to find out if his parents are really alive, but he mostly deals with indifference and rupture in search of the love for a lost mother. Christopher's only way is to rely almost entirely on his fond but weak memories to try to recreate as vividly as possible a series of relationships that have been purposively forgotten with the passing of years. He has the imperative need to revisit and reassess his childhood experiences, although there is a constant distortion of the real events, with regular lapses and simplifications to suit his emotions as well as to accept the moral choices taken by the people around him when he was just a youth. Following this, we can appreciate how Christian Bank tries to remember the way he saw his mother at a certain time in order to interpret the reasons for the strange disappearance of his parents:

I have often tried to recall her face-the exact expression she was wearing-at that moment, but with no success. Perhaps some instinct told me not to look at it. What I do remember is her presence, which seemed looming and large, as though suddenly I were very young again, and the texture of the pale summer frock she was wearing (Ishiguro 2000: 102).

Hence, one of Ishiguro's main targets in his novels is to bring to light the voluntary amnesia that the subaltern characters seem to suffer through idealist nostalgia. To create this effect, the novels intelligently work with time devices such as analepsis, so the reader is conscious on many occasions of the shift from one state of mind to another experienced by the protagonists. Thus, there is a process of discernment by the characters through the feeling of longing and nostalgia that entails a catharsis. This drives them to make peace with their own past and have a chance for a better future in order to live in harmony with others, as it is well exemplified in *Never Let Me Go*, where the group of three young clones in a hypothetical England struggle to get to know their own identities during the nineties:

'Funny thing is, this talk with her, it did help. Helped a lot. When you were saying earlier on, about how things seemed better for me now. Well, it's because of that. Because afterwards, thinking about what she'd said, I realized she was right, that is wasn't my fault. Okay, I hadn't handled it well. But deep down, it wasn't my fault. That's what made the difference (Ishiguro 2005: 28-29).

In essence, the narratives of Kazuo Ishiguro contain a strong component of nostalgia that pervades everything. He deals mainly with oppression and displacement from the past to the present times, covering through abrupt shifts in time and dislocations of place and culture, the disgrace motivated by racial prejudices, discrimination, economic abusiveness and the creation of myths and superstitions against certain ethnic groups and in-

◀ individuals. The reality behind his novels tells totally ground-breaking tales linked by a common denominator: the subtle subversion of colonial models and patterns, using techniques such as the clever distinctness in the protagonists' language. This illustrates from the outset the issue of colonialism and the differentiation between the powerful and the powerless characters in the stories. A very interesting case which is linked to mistaken identity takes place in *The Remains of the Day*, when Mr. Taylor, Mr. Harry and the other peasants Mr Stevens finds on his involuntary stop at Moscombe, are just mesmerized by the butler's outstanding presence:

'That's true what Harry says. You can tell a true gentleman from a false one that's just dressed in finery. Take yourself sir. It's not just the cut of your clothes, nor is it even the fine way you've got of speaking. There's something else that marks you out as a gentleman. Hard to put your finger on it, but it's plain for all to see that's got eyes' (Ishiguro 1989: 194).

Thus, Kazuo Ishiguro shows that many of the harmful attitudes, prejudices and thoughts that are denounced in his fiction are still fresh and ingrained in many cultural, political, and social ideologies and philosophies in the 21st century. He makes us wonder whether we, as human beings, evolve towards a better society or decline and degrade ourselves in a repeating cycle by going over and over the same terrible old mistakes once and again. The characters

are subjected to change places and times; however, the opposing attitudes and motivations remain the same, or even become more refined and stylised as the victims must face the excruciating problems of race, exclusion and marginalisation in painful and unbearable ways.

Conclusion

Kazuo Ishiguro is undoubtedly a very special and uncommon writer whose fiction, although disturbing and painful in almost equal measures, is set as a bridge towards the different hues and shadows of racism and ceaseless oppression along history. His evocative and nostalgic lyricism acts as a mediator between the wounds of the past and the hope for a better future, which is an ideal mirror to reflect the characters' inner painful memories and thoughts related to the xenophobia, uniformity and oppression suffered internally. He uncovers many shameful events and atrocities made by human beings to other equals by using a delicate, metaphorical, symbolic and reminiscent style. The voices of the main characters take on a life of their own and surface hidden episodes of sectarianism in the old and new world. These characters are faced with dreadful discrimination and exclusion across different times and stages in human history, although their perspective is always a critical and condemning one. Regrettably, we as readers end Ishiguro's narratives with a bitter and pungent taste, as he seems to induce us to believe that we cannot learn from the big mistakes of our own history. ■



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El legado de James Milroy

en el estudio
sociolingüístico
del cambio y
la variación en
lengua inglesa

En lo académico y en lo personal, la figura de James Milroy (1933-2017) está necesariamente unida a la de Lesley Milroy (1944-), su esposa desde 1965, cuando ambos coincidieron como docentes en la Universidad de Manchester, y su compañera intelectual en varias investigaciones fundacionales en sociolingüística, en particular dedicadas al estudio del cambio lingüístico y la variación. Al glosar la trayectoria académica de James Milroy es, por consiguiente, inevitable hacer referencia a su trabajo conjunto con Lesley. Con todo, intentaré destacar sus aportaciones individuales, comenzando por su formación. Las pocas (y breves) semblanzas biográficas accesibles (Foulkes 2017; Wikipedia 2018)—la humildad siempre adornó su personalidad—mencionan el contacto con distintas variedades lingüísticas durante su infancia y juventud: con el inglés escocés y el Scots en Portpatrick, en el sudoeste de Escocia, donde James Robert Dunlop Milroy nació el 9 de febrero de 1933; con la variedad del inglés británico usada en el País de Gales y la propia lengua galesa que aprendió cuando su familia se asentó en el norte de este territorio; y, más tarde, con distintos acentos de los *home counties* en Surrey, al sur de Londres. Esta conciencia temprana del multilectismo y el multilingüismo puede explicar su interés posterior por el estudio de la variación y el cambio lingüísticos.

Su formación inicial en el King's College de la Universidad de Londres fue también filológica y literaria, como atestigua el volumen *The Language of Gerard Manley Hopkins*, publicado en 1977 en la prestigiosa colección "The Language Library" de la editorial André Deutsch (Milroy 1977). Es igualmente reseñable su especialización en nórdico antiguo (*Old Norse*), que cristalizó en algunos trabajos tempranos de crítica literaria sobre aspectos de las sagas de los tiempos antiguos (*fornaldarsögur*), como los dedicados al héroe legendario Starkaðr (Milroy 1975-1976) o al episodio de Ætternisstapi en la *Saga de Gautrekr* (Milroy 1967-1968). Este conocimiento de la lengua nórdica se trasluce también en algunas de sus publicaciones posteriores sobre cambio lingüístico, en ocasiones para ejemplificar propuestas teóricas, como las referencias al islandés como lengua conservadora en relación con la conformación histórica de sus redes sociales (J. Milroy y L. Milroy 1985, 376-377), pero otras veces en relación con aspectos monográficos de historia de la lengua inglesa: un ámbito por el que James Milroy demostró también gran interés desde el inicio de su trayectoria académica. Destacan, en este contexto, sus trabajos sobre el contacto interlingüístico, la variación dialectal o la estandarización, especialmente en el periodo medio—*Middle English* (c.1100-c.1500). Por un lado, el capítulo "The History of English in the British Isles" en el volumen *Language in the British Isles* editado por Peter Trudgill en 1984 (Milroy 1984), cuyos contenidos han sido actualizados con un nuevo título—"The History of English"—en la reedición del volumen acometida por David Britain en 2007 (Milroy 2007). Por otro lado, es destacable su extenso estudio "Middle English dialectology" (Milroy 1992a): un completo estado de la cuestión incluido en

el segundo volumen de la monumental *The Cambridge History of the English Language* que editaría Norman Blake, a la sazón colega de James en la Universidad de Sheffield, donde el segundo ejerció como Catedrático de lingüística desde 1981, tras su paso por Queen's University en Belfast.

Fue durante su estancia en Belfast en la década de 1970, cuando James y Lesley Milroy acometieron sendos proyectos de investigación fundamentales para la consolidación de la sociolingüística como disciplina: "Speech community and language variety in Belfast" (1975-1977) y "Sociolinguistic variation and linguistic change in Belfast" (1979-1982). El trabajo de campo detrás de estos proyectos supuso, en principio, una descripción exhaustiva de los distintos acentos urbanos de la ciudad, publicados en diversos artículos (Milroy 1978; J. Milroy y L. Milroy 1978) y, en particular, en el volumen *Regional Accents of English: Belfast* (Milroy 1981), en la línea de los trabajos de sociolingüística variacionista acometidos, a ambos lados del Atlántico, por William Labov en Nueva York ([1966] 2006; 1972), Walt Wolfram en Detroit (1969), Peter Trudgill en Norwich (1974) o Jenny Cheshire en Reading (1982). Además, la aproximación de James y Lesley Milroy a la comunidad lingüística de Belfast contenía novedades metodológicas importantes que cristalizaron en un nuevo enfoque micro-sociolingüístico de base etnográfica, expuesto por ambos autores en diversos artículos, como "Linguistic change, social network and speaker innovation" (J. Milroy y L. Milroy 1985) o "Explaining linguistic variation to explain language change" (Milroy 1998) y, especialmente, en el volumen seminal *Linguistic Variation and Change. On the Historical Sociolinguistics of English*, firmado exclusivamente por James (Milroy 1992a). De forma sucinta, las novedades metodológicas son las siguientes:

- I.** **La prioridad de observar la distinción entre cambio y estabilidad en el estudio de las lenguas. Las primeras aproximaciones sociolingüísticas al estudio del cambio lingüístico enfatizaban su importancia como un aspecto inherente a la naturaleza del lenguaje. Una de las novedades de la investigación acometida por James y Lesley consistió en valorar el mantenimiento estable de estados de lengua, la tendencia hacia la convergencia entre hablantes y el acuerdo comunitario sobre normas de uso lingüístico como factores que podrían arrojar luz sobre los cambios y, especialmente, sobre sus condiciones iniciales: el problema de la "actuación" (*actuation*), según la terminología propuesta por Uriel Weinreich, William Labov y Marvin I. Herzog (1968), referido a las razones por las que se realiza un cambio y a los factores concretos, tanto sociales como estructurales, que lo desencadenan en determinadas coordenadas espacio-temporales y no en otras; a su naturaleza esporádica, en definitiva.** ▶

2. « La necesidad de separar metodológicamente el análisis del comportamiento verbal de los hablantes, favorecedor del cambio y el mantenimiento lingüísticos, del estudio de sus efectos en el sistema, y, a partir de ahí, la distinción fundamental entre “innovación” y “cambio.” La primera se refiere a cualquier acto verbal espontáneo e individual que influye en un grupo concreto de interlocutores y puede transmitirse de unos a otros por imitación— la teoría de la acomodación lingüística desarrollada por Howard Giles en los años 70 es fundamental para esta propuesta (véase Coupland 1996)—, mientras que el segundo supone la consolidación de un proceso de difusión social de las innovaciones. Para desentrañar la “actuación” del cambio, según James y Lesley Milroy, sería necesario rastrear la difusión social de las innovaciones desde las primeras evidencias accesibles, las cuales ocurren en pequeños círculos de hablantes, con la dificultad añadida que esto supone. Estos inconvenientes pueden subsanarse, también según James y Lesley, observando el funcionamiento de las normas de uso propias de cada comunidad, las cuales están determinadas por las características de sus miembros y el tipo de relación que establecen entre ellos. Es además prioritario observar la producción lingüística real de los hablantes en interacción mutua, lo que Lesley Milroy denomina “lengua natural” (*natural language*) (1987b): actos de habla espontáneos, reconstruidos en su contexto de enunciación-recepción, orientados hacia los receptores con una función fáctica o pragmática— no exclusivamente identificadora—y enfocados al refuerzo de las relaciones o vínculos sociales.

Una novedad heurística importante derivada de esta base metodológica es la incorporación del constructo “red social” (*social network*) a las variables independientes que se venían aplicando con éxito en la investigación sociolingüística—edad, género, etnia, estatus socio-económico y profesional, estilo, entre otras. Como es bien sabido, las redes sociales de un individuo se construyen a partir del conjunto de contactos interpersonales que mantiene con otros, dentro de su entorno más inmediato o fuera de él. Para James y, especialmente, Lesley Milroy, quien detalló las aplicaciones de este constructo al estudio de la variación en *Language and Social Networks* ([1980] 1987a), las distintas propiedades estructurales de diferentes redes sociales podrían incidir de forma directa en la actividad lingüística de sus componentes; en concreto, la mayor o menor densidad del trenzado de las redes sociales (*loose-knit* vs. *close-knit networks*), la variedad o restricción de los ámbitos de interacción entre sus miembros (*multiplex* vs. *uniplex networks*) o el tipo de vínculos existentes entre ellos y ellas, fuertes o débiles (*strong* vs. *weak ties*) en virtud de sus duración, periodicidad, intimidad, reciprocidad, etc., podrían tener reflejo en la producción verbal de distintos hablantes. En relación con el cambio, Lesley y James descubrieron que las redes sociales compactas, en las que predominan los vínculos estrechos entre indivi-

duos que se relacionan en varios ámbitos de interacción social, actúan como fuerzas conservadoras y favorecen el mantenimiento de las variedades locales, de modo que son impermeables a los cambios. Además, los individuos situados en la parte central de estas redes—quienes están más integrados dentro del grupo—suelen ser los hablantes menos innovadores. Sin embargo, las redes sociales menos trenzadas, caracterizadas por el establecimiento de vínculos personales débiles, son permeables al cambio lingüístico, que se difunde a través de ellas con facilidad. Los hablantes más innovadores son aquellos que ocupan un lugar periférico en este tipo de redes, quienes, en virtud de esta ubicación, pueden establecer vínculos débiles con otros, de manera que no adoptan plenamente el habla característica del subgrupo al que pertenecen, de forma periférica, y quedan expuestos a las presiones que favorecen la difusión de los cambios procedentes de otras redes sociales. Lesley y James Milroy califican los vínculos débiles como auténticos puentes para la difusión de las innovaciones lingüísticas y, en consecuencia, para el desarrollo inicial de los cambios: promueven el contacto interpersonal entre muchas más personas que los vínculos estrechos, restringidos a los grupos cerrados y compactos, y requieren menos esfuerzo. En este contexto, los autores destacan, junto al papel de los hablantes más o menos innovadores, el rol fundamental de los “primeros adoptantes” (*early adopters*) de una innovación como los posibles promotores del cambio; se trataría de individuos centrales en su propio grupo, que establecen los vínculos más estrechos dentro del mismo y comienzan a emplear la nueva variante en su interacción con otros miembros de su propia red social y de otras próximas. La influencia de estos individuos dentro de su grupo es fundamental para que las innovaciones se transmitan a otros hablantes cercanos a ellos en un proceso de difusión que va desde el interior al exterior o desde el centro a la periferia.

Las aproximaciones al cambio lingüístico desde estas premisas permitieron comprender la fase de “actuación” de los mismos y supusieron una novedad paradigmática importante, vinculada posteriormente a la fundación de una “segunda vía” (*second wave*) en el estudio de la variación sociolingüística (Eckert 2012, n.p.): frente a la búsqueda de correlaciones amplias con las variables macro-sociológicas—nivel socio-económico o género—propiciada por la “primera vía”, esta línea se centra en el estudio etnográfico de configuraciones locales—micro-sociológicas, como las redes sociales—en las cuales se genera la interacción interpersonal coadyuvante del cambio. Por otro lado, como indica el subtítulo—*On the Historical Sociolinguistics of English*—, esta monografía supuso también la consolidación de la sociolingüística histórica, cuya obra fundacional había sido el tratado de Suzanne Romaine *Socio-Historical Linguistics. Its Status and Methodology* (1982). James Milroy incorpora los principios metodológicos de la sociolingüística al estudio de cambios atestiguados en la historia de la lengua inglesa, que son analizados de forma minuciosa; destaca, en este sentido, el estudio de la larga historia del fenómeno conocido como *h-dropping*: la aféresis del fonema /h-/ en posición inicial en algunas variedades ►

actuales del inglés británico, objeto de múltiples y controvertidas valoraciones por parte de los auto-proclamados defensores del idioma que, sin embargo, cabe entender como un fenómeno histórico retrotraído hasta el periodo del inglés medio (Milroy 1992, 136-145; véase también, Milroy 1983; 2005a). Son especialmente interesantes en estos estudios, por un lado, la labor de rastreo hasta encontrar el origen de la innovación y, por otro, las críticas contra la proyección de nociones actuales, como estándar o prestigio, a la interpretación de estadios históricos. Se trata de aspectos sobre los que James y Lesley Milroy incidieron de forma magistral en otro de sus libros conjuntos más conocidos: *Authority in Language. Investigating Language Prescription and Standardisation*, publicado en 1985 y actualmente en su cuarta edición (J. Milroy y L. Milroy [1985] 2012; véase también Milroy 1991).

Authority in Language es un estudio de base histórica y (socio-)lingüística sobre la formación—selección—y aceptación o imposición de normas lingüísticas, en el que se enfatiza el papel del componente ideológico subyacente a la estandarización y al prescriptivismo, en un contexto—el británico—en el que los auto-proclamados defensores de la pureza del idioma como signo de superioridad moral tenían—y continúan teniendo—bastante influencia social. El recorrido por la historia de estas muestras de rechazo hacia el cambio y la variación (*complaint tradition*), desde finales de la Edad Media hasta los siglos XVIII y XIX—claves en la codificación del estándar y el desarrollo de la tradición prescriptivista—ayuda a James y Lesley a relativizar sus efectos. Por otro lado, los autores desmontan estas actitudes con argumentos que han calado en investigaciones posteriores, tachándolas de confundir uso y sistema, lengua escrita, relativamente independiente del contexto (*context-free*), y lengua oral, subordinada a los contextos de emisión y recepción (*context-tied*). Finalmente, reclaman el papel de la función social y comunitaria del lenguaje como eje desde el que interpretar estas dimensiones. El volumen destila también un gran sentido común a la hora de aceptar la necesaria promoción de una variedad lingüística al rango de estándar—especialmente en el ámbito escrito—en aras de conseguir una uniformidad que beneficie a la eficacia comunicativa. Asimismo, se propone una noción ampliada de repertorio lingüístico, entendido como la totalidad de los estilos accesibles a los miembros de una comunidad, en el que participan discursos y textos de perfil diverso: orales o escritos, planificados o no planificados, orientados hacia el mensaje o hacia el receptor, etc. Este trabajo de James y Lesley Milroy se ha convertido en la base de otros textos que han revelado las raíces históricas y las contradicciones de ciertas actitudes prescriptivistas, como los trabajos de

Deborah Cameron (1995), Rosina Lippi-Green (1997), David Crystal (2006), Jack Lynch (2009), Tim William Machan (2009) o Anne Curzan (2014), entre otros. El propio James Milroy mantuvo su atención por este ámbito de estudio, sin perder de vista su componente histórico, en sus artículos “Language ideologies and the consequences of standardization” (Milroy 2001), o “Sociolinguistics and ideologies in language history” (Milroy 2012). A ellos cabe añadir otros que, en esta misma línea, han contribuido a desmitificar la construcción ideológica de la historia de la lengua inglesa, condicionada en ocasiones por actitudes puristas—“Some effects of purist ideologies in historical descriptions of English” (Milroy 2005b)—o por imágenes o constructos que condicionan su interpretación; así, en “The legitimate language: giving a history to English” (Milroy 2002), James denunció la visión tradicionalmente aceptada, y transmitida en la enseñanza, de la historia de la lengua inglesa como la evolución lineal de múltiples variedades dialectales en los periodos antiguo y medio que confluyen a partir del periodo moderno en una norma estándar: se trata de un claro antecedente del “mito del embudo” (*funnel-like model*) popularizado por Richard Watts en su monografía *Language Myths and the History of English* (2011).

La actividad académica de James Milroy se desarrolló posteriormente en la Universidad de Newcastle, donde fructificaron varios proyectos conjuntos con Lesley y otros investigadores—Gerry Doherty, Paul Foulkes, Sue Hartley o David Walshaw, entre otros—centrados en el estudio sincrónico de la variación sociolingüística en los acentos del norte y las Midlands de Inglaterra (L. Milroy, et al. 1999), incluyendo algunos dedicados a la palatalización y la glotalización de fricativas (J. Milroy, L. Milroy y S. Hartley 1994; J. Milroy, L. Milroy, S. Hartley y D. Walshaw 1994; Milroy 2003). A este periodo pertenece también la edición, conjuntamente con Lesley, del compendio de dialectología del inglés británico *Real English: The Grammar of the English Dialects of the British Isles* (1993). Los últimos años en la vida académica de James Milroy transcurrieron, también con Lesley, en la Universidad de Michigan, donde se jubiló en 2005, para trasladarse de nuevo al Reino Unido, a Doddington en Oxfordshire. Tras su jubilación, James no abandonó su vocación universitaria y mantuvo sus vínculos con la Universidad de Sheffield como Catedrático Emérito de lingüística y, posteriormente, con la de Oxford, como miembro emérito de la Facultad de Filología e Inglés.

James Milroy falleció el 12 de noviembre de 2017, dejando tras sí un importantísimo legado intelectual y un grato recuerdo en quienes pudimos disfrutar de su sabia y generosa compañía. ■



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TRIBUTE

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In Memoriam
Randolph
Quirk

(12 July 1920 – 20
December 2017)

Baron Randolph Quirk, Fellow of the British Academy 1975, Commander of the Most Excellent Order of the British Empire 1976, Knight 1985, and Baron (life peer) 1994, passed away on December 20, 2017, at the age of 97. Lord Quirk was one of the most prominent figures of the 20th century in linguistics. Every student and academic in this field will have been influenced by his studies on spoken and written language.

Lord Quirk was born in 1920 at Lambfell, Michael, Isle of Man. He was brought up in a farming family whose members were devoted to hard work and sceptical about religious and political orthodoxies. In his earlier years, he absorbed the Manx consciousness of both Celtic and Scandinavian roots and the coexistence of the autochthonous values with the increasingly dominant British values. This polycultural atmosphere contributed to his being throughout his life a “restless, free-ranging eclectic” and also to his interest in “language, history, and language history”, as he states in his autobiographical interview with Keith Brown in 2001. He started a degree in English at University College London; the curriculum had a historical bias, including Gothic, Old Saxon, Old High German, Old Norse and Anglo-Saxon. His studies during this period did not run smoothly: part of his energies were diverted by his interest in the lively politics of the time and even by music (he played in a dance band). His student life was interrupted by the Second World War, during which he served for five years in the Bomber Command of the Royal Air Force, where he obtained the rank of squadron leader. At that time he became interested in explosives and even started a degree in chemistry.

When the war was over, Quirk felt the need to settle and resumed his degree in English with enthusiasm. He studied phonetics with Daniel Jones and the then emerging discipline of linguistics with J.R. Firth. After finishing his BA, Quirk was offered a research fellowship in Cambridge, but instead accepted the alternative offer of a junior fellowship at UCL. At that time, he was influenced by Fernando Mosse of Paris and Marjorie Daunt of Birkbeck, and by his supervisor A.H. Smith. Quirk did his MA on phonetics, but his lecturing in Old English made him appreciate the potential of syntax to help students, and he switched to syntax for his PhD. In 1951, Quirk obtained a fellowship at Yale University with Bernard Bloch, which gave him the opportunity to visit a number of US universities such as Columbia, Brown and also Harvard, where he met Roman Jakobson. After a semester at Yale, Quirk moved to Ann Arbor, where he worked on the *Middle English Dictionary*, headed by Hans Kurath and Sherman Kuhn; with the latter, he wrote a couple of papers in Old English phonology (Quirk and Kuhn 1953, 1955). More importantly for his career, Quirk became acquainted with linguists who made him enthusiastic about the then innovative empirical work on syntax in spoken language, such as that of Charles Fries, Albert Marckwardt and Kenneth Pike. Particularly influential was Fries’s *The Structure of English* (1952), where electronic recording

was used to work on unedited spoken language. From then on, Quirk never abandoned the tape recorder and the hidden mike. These years also saw the publication of *The Concessive Relation in Old English Poetry* (1954), based on his PhD thesis, and of *An Old English Grammar* (1955), co-authored with Christopher L. Wrenn, which, unlike many textbooks at the time, gave a fairly complete account of syntax and word-formation.

Quirk returned to the UK in 1952, and shortly afterwards he moved to Durham, a relatively small university eminent in the study of the cultural and textual history of Anglo-Saxon England. In his lecturing, Quirk convinced students and colleagues that a linguistic approach could provide valuable insights for the study of classic authors, as he showed in his lecture “Charles Dickens and appropriate language” (1959). He also studied the grammar of present-day English and especially spoken English; in particular, the speech of his two children made an important contribution to a series of broadcast lectures that eventually grew into *The Use of English* (1962). He also travelled frequently to London, where the BBC gave him free access to their tapes and transcriptions of the spontaneous speech in discussion programmes. He considered using the then rudimentary first computers, and took a course in programming. He started to conceive the *Survey of English Usage*, aimed at compiling and investigating a corpus of spoken and written English. His first ideas for the Survey appeared in “Towards a description of English usage” (1960). The Survey got funded from a number of institutions and above all from Longman, and Quirk moved back to UCL in 1960 with the infant project and a research assistant. The project grew quickly with the aid of many scholars, some younger and others more senior, such as Florent Aarts, Wolf-Dietrich Bald and Jan Firbas. Tim Rix from Longman set up a generous fellowship that enabled third-world post-doctoral students to use the Survey resources for the production of English teaching materials. David Crystal headed the design of the scheme of prosodic and paralinguistic features, which make the Survey corpora invaluable for researchers wishing to consider stress and intonation in their work. The Survey shared Quirk’s eclecticism: it drew on scholarship from different sources, such as the Prague School, Hjelmslev’s glossematics, Bloomfieldian structuralism and even Chomskyan generative theories. Over the years, many well-known linguists apart from those mentioned above have done research at the Survey, including Dwight Bolinger, Noël Burton-Roberts, Derek Davy, Liliane Haegeman and Ruth Kempson, and also Sidney Greenbaum, Geoffrey Leech and Jan Svartvik, with whom Quirk published *A Grammar of Contemporary English* (1972), the first major corpus-informed study of real spoken and written English, whose revision and enlargement gave way to the classic *A Comprehensive Grammar of the English Language* (1985). This volume, together with the shorter *A Student’s Grammar of the English Language* (Greenbaum and Quirk 1990) became a reference work in many universities for many years, in the UK and also abroad, as I witnessed at ►

◀ the Complutense University, Madrid, where all those involved in English Studies were familiar with ‘the big Quirk’ and ‘the small Quirk’.

At that time, Quirk also worked for the British Council and made lecture visits to many countries such as Russia, China, Korea, Japan and a number of Commonwealth countries. He took a sabbatical in the year 1975-76, which he spent in Iraq and New Zealand. He also did head-hunting in Edinburgh for UCL, which resulted in a new linguistics section headed by Michael Halliday and including Bob Dixon, Rodney Huddleston, Richard Hudson and Eugene Winter. Later, this section joined Phonetics to become the Department of Phonetics and Linguistics. Quirk also encouraged the Longman publishers to produce dictionaries, which count among the most prestigious in the world. In 1972 he wrote a report about the state of UK speech therapy services, again with an important practical result: speech therapy was made an all-graduate career.

In 1981 he was appointed Vice-Chancellor of UCL, a post that he accepted reluctantly at a time when British universities faced a drastic cut-back. The then Secretary of State, Sir Keith Joseph, arranged for him a visit to an inner-city comprehensive school, which made him conscious of the poor quality of many British schools, whose students had few chances to be recruited at universities. In 1985, Quirk was knighted and appointed

President of the British Academy. He then worked at radically improving the National Curriculum in order to ensure a better schooling “for the many”, a work which he continued in the House of Lords since he became a life peer in 1994. He gave a course of lectures for prisoners in Durham Gaol, about which he said “I’ve never had more attentive and appreciative audiences!” Quirk advocated the use of Standard English, as he showed in *English in Use*, which he wrote with his second wife Gabriele Stein in 1990, but he also appreciated grammatical and lexical variance in English, as his 1995 *Grammatical and Lexical Variance in English* shows.

Baron Quirk was a true leader, with a future vision that enabled him to make beneficial decisions for the development of linguistics as an academic field and also for the language part of the British National curriculum. Eclectic as he was, he exerted his leadership in an energetic but gentle way, deploying diplomatic skills and showing a receptive attitude to different viewpoints, combining the best of tradition and innovation. He generously devoted his time to supervising the work of scholars at the beginning of their careers, who felt invigorated by his enthusiasm. We lecturers and researchers in English regret the loss of a truly enlightening figure that we have had the fortune to meet, in person or through his work. Now it is our turn to encourage our students to learn from his rich legacy. ■



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BOOK REVIEWS

PAULA BARBA GUERRERO

*Universidad de Salamanca****Memory Frictions
in Contemporary
Literature***

María Jesús Martínez-Alfaro & Silvia Pellicer-Ortín, eds.

London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017, 294 pp. ISBN: 978-3-319-61758-9, ISBN: 978-3-319-61759-6 (ebk).

Since the 1990s, the disciplines of memory and trauma studies have been attracting critical attention in the analyses of global contemporary issues, particularly those concerning culture and literature. This “memory boom”, to put it in Huyssen’s words (1995: 9), refers to the emergence of these fields as the necessary means to understand sociocultural productions, revealing the essential role of individual and social remembrance in the processes of political power distribution, identity formation, ethics’ development or trauma recovery. This volume, edited by María Jesús Martínez-Alfaro and Silvia Pellicer-Ortín, copiously alludes to this prevalence of traumatic memory in the construction of individual and national character, aiming to locate existing frictions in the intersections of memory. Literature thereby emerges as the site where the depiction of traumatic memories is examined, but also as the “medium of memory” (2017: 2), for these literary practices encourage non-canonical representations of trauma. *Memory Frictions in Contemporary Literature* discusses the diverse representations of remembering (and forgetting) together with the tensions emerging from their study. It aims to provide a global perspective of these frictions beyond pre-existing taxonomies, which is only

accomplished building an interwoven net of cross-cultural interpretations.

The collection is structured into four sections—plus an introduction and a conclusion, with a total of twelve contributions in which authors of very diverse origin not only give account of the presence of traumatic memory in literature, but also offer a close analysis of those textual features that code the aftermath of horror in the page. The introduction, written by the editors, justifies the relevance and critical urgency of the volume in the fields of memory and trauma studies, since the collection is a transcultural contribution that draws from a variety of sources and contexts. María Jesús Martínez-Alfaro and Silvia Pellicer-Ortín thus outline the interdisciplinary and transcultural essence of memory that, in its literary recollections, accounts for repressed horror and silenced stories; an assertion supported in the successive articles.

The first section (“Experimentation and Genre: Formal Memory Frictions”) gathers together three essays concerned with the formal strategies to translate trauma into contemporary narratives, seeking to identify different structures and modes in use. In the first essay Jean- ▶

✦ Michel Ganteau explores the elegiac mode as the suitable genre to express our intrinsic human vulnerability, result of previous cultural trauma. Drawing on Judith Butler's recent conception of precariousness as a source of resistance (2016) and on his earlier work on the human as vulnerable (2015), Ganteau examines three British/Irish novels—and one film—that render mourning and melancholy visible in order to reveal such conditions as powerful assets in hands of trauma victims. He also stresses the collective experience of trauma which, embodied in the fragile form of the elegy, promotes ethical solidarity. The second paper is written by Susana Onega, who delves into the process of trauma assimilation to recognize several formal devices (such as the changes in the narrative voice) as a mechanism to express split identities and trauma repression in Toni Morrison's novel *Home*. Onega mostly identifies memories as a sign of the protagonist's unrecognized fracture, and reveals the structural techniques that allow for him to heal in the end. The last contribution of this section is Sandra Singer's one. In her analysis of Colum McCann's *TransAtlantic*, Singer relates narrative experimentation to Rothberg's concept of multidirectional memory, enabling trauma comprehension through another traumatic retelling. She perceives the novel's amalgamation of tenses, contexts and narrative conventions as root for transgenerational legacies and frictions.

Part two—"Collective Tensions and Politics of Remembrance"—is devoted for the most part to the construction of collective memories and its relation with both individual and collective trauma. It presents traumatic memories as a source of contestation able to undo dominant political practices. Its first essay by Paula Martín-Salván analyses *The Submission*, a novel by Amy Waldman, to point out the political usage of commemorative artwork, and the covert manipulation and usurpation of traumatic cultural events. Regarding the post-9/11 American culture displayed in the novel, Martín-Salván observes a society in which official, public memorials in hands of national power ought to be substituted by individual practices of personal commemoration in order to escape their politicization. The second article in this section examines from a Freudian lens the fragmentation of traumatic memories and their conflicting essence, for they are both perceived as individual and collective. Marc Amfreville explores the short-story cycle of the South Korean American writer Paul Yoon to stress the universality of trauma and its simultaneous confinement to the intimate sphere of personal experience. It seems that only through literature can traumatic past stories be re-enacted and relived. The last essay belonging to this section is that of Nieves Pascual Soler, who questions the role of food in the process of memory and identity formation in Eduardo Machado's *Tastes Like Cuba*. She emphasizes the central position of food when establishing the individual's initial relation to the national (and glorified) order, but also in the reconstruction of cultural, post-national memories.

In the third section, "The Haunting Presence of the Holocaust: Multidirectional, Transgenerational and Me-

morial Struggles", Bárbara Arizti, Susanne Baackmann and María Fernández San Miguel open up a debate on Holocaust memories to discuss its fictional illustrations as well as the necessary presence of postcolonial trauma discourses. First, Arizti examines the potential of individual trauma narratives to give voice and visibility to other traumatic accounts such as the loss of cultural ancestry. In her analysis of the Carmel Bird's *The Bluebird Café*, Arizti recalls the multicultural universality of trauma and the need to contrast transcultural victimhood so as to give the events visibility through their interrelationship. Then, Baackmann studies the traumatic memories of first and second generation Holocaust victims to analyze the shift in perception towards the perpetrator's narrative. In doing so, Baackmann makes use of Hirsch's notion of the postmemory generation (2008) to define Rachel Seiffert's "Lore" as a story that does not represent the victim-perpetrator binary, but rather evaluates degrees of implication and responsibility that extend to the reader's practice. Fernández San Miguel explores our ethical obligation to give account of traumatic events in order to remember them in Doctorow's *City of God*. She examines the Holocaust horror depicted in the novel to remark its self-conscious criticism of Holocaust illustration, and a desire to remember it so as to engage the reader into social, ethical and political change.

The fourth and final section of this volume ("Mapping Memories, Spatial F(r)ictions and Troubled Identities") deals with the (spatial) representation of postcolonial, non-Western trauma, echoing Rothberg's thoughts on the dissemination of traumatic memories (2008). It also considers the alienation of space after violence has permeated it. The first contribution by Silvia Martínez-Falquina engages with the open debate on the analysis of non-Western trauma stories through the prism of *general* trauma theory. In doing so, she discusses the validation of Native American grief narratives—like Edrich's "Shamengwa"—through a re-mapping process of the trauma paradigm inclusive of cultural specificities. Dolores Herrero's analysis of *The Road to Wanting* constitutes the second essay of this section. In it, Herrero explores the articulation of memories on space to demand the recognition of place's vital role in the processes of identity construction, sensorial experiencing and posterior memory formation. She also accentuates the inclusion of different viewpoints in the canon of trauma theory. The third and final article belongs to Aitor Ibarrola-Armendáriz and it examines female sexual abuse and trauma in Louise Erdrich's *The Round House*. His contribution offers a glimpse into the traumatic accounts of historically marginalized voices who thrive in hostile political environments.

In this volume's conclusion, Robert Eaglestone goes through the main ideas explored to emphasize the need to avoid broad categories in order to deliver detailed recordings of our heterogeneous memory structures. He perceives the confluence of trauma and memory representation as due work in a complex discipline—memory studies—in need to incorporate the frictions that the volume accurately brings into light. ►

✦ This collection has a summative structure and, while it assesses memory from multiple (and apparently disconnected) perspectives, it manages to engage the reader with a cohesive discourse that shows the inter-relatedness of all these disciplines united in friction. It offers vistas into the intersectionality of memory from a very extensive scope of analysis and addresses (or, at least, points out) the current needs of the field. *Memory Frictions* is a

thought-provoking read that challenges our understanding of memory and literature, aiming to reassess its relationship while eluding the simplification of pre-existing models of literary analysis. Aware of the many-sided (but shared) nature of trauma, memory and its frictions, the essays of this volume exhibit a determination to innovate in the discipline of memory studies to give voice to every victim's testimony. ■



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BOOK REVIEWS

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English Grammar: A University Course

Angela Downing

London and New York: Routledge, 2014 (third edition), xix + 529 pp. ISBN: 978-0-415-73267-3 (hbk), 978-0-415-73268-0 (pbk), 978-1-315-75004-0 (ebk).

The book reviewed here, henceforth EGUC-2014, is the third edition of Downing and Locke's *A University Course in English Grammar* (1992) and *English Grammar: A University Course* (2006). The second edition was already undertaken by Angela Downing alone, since Philip Locke died in 2003. In the Preface (p. xi), Downing expresses her confidence that Locke would have welcomed the changes carried out in the second edition and in this third edition, and warmly acknowledges his collaboration in the first edition, without which the very conception of the book might have been different. Indeed, the changes made in the last edition are a worthy result of the continuation of the effort, already made in the second edition (see Alba-Juez 2007 and Hannay 2007), to improve what was already a high-quality volume. *EGUC-2014* has increased the presence of Standard American English by signalling more grammatical differences with British English and by including more American English examples, many of them from the COCA corpus (Davies 2008—). This edition also acknowledges quality work produced after 2006, such as Englebretson (2007) on stance, Martínez Martínez (2012) on *ing*-supplementive clauses in narrative discourse, and Doval-Suárez and González Álvarez (2010)

on the use of *it*-clefts by Spanish learners of English, as well as new editions of influential systemic-functional grammars (Bloor and Bloor 2014, Halliday 2014, Thompson 2014).

As is explicitly stated (p. xiv), *EGUC-2014* is mainly geared towards ESL/EFL undergraduate or postgraduate students engaged in studies of English linguistics. Even though Downing's career was based in Spain—at the Complutense University, Madrid—the book is not aimed at students having a specific first language, unlike two grammars published between the second and the third edition of *EGUC*, namely Lavid *et al.* (2010) and Mackenzie and Martínez Caro (2012), which focus on English and Spanish in contrast. *EGUC-2014* may be used as a complete course or selectively, depending on the contents to be covered. I find it especially useful as a cross-subject reference book in curricula with courses on English syntax, semantics and pragmatics. The reader-friendly layout of the contents also renders it suitable for self-study or as a reference to be consulted in research on any of the areas covered.

EGUC-2014's pedagogical aim is twofold: firstly, it seeks to provide students with an integrated vision ►

of English, with a clear understanding of the relation between form and meaning and between meaning and context. This aim is fulfilled through a reader-friendly layout of the contents and a rigorous use of terminology and basic linguistic concepts. Secondly, it also aims at improving the students' use of English, especially as regards interaction with others and adequacy of language to register. This aim is pervasively present in the book, but certain issues deserve to be highlighted in this respect: some examples are the treatment of indirect speech acts (Unit 16, pp. 133-140), the section on phrasal verbs with varying degrees of idiomaticity (pp. 302-310) and also the passive (pp. 232-237), which is presented mainly as a resource for organizing information, thus challenging the belief, common among ESL/EFL students, that the passive serves above all to 'sound more formal' or to avoid the first person pronoun. Specific reference is made to a number of frequent expressions or constructions proved to be problematic or insufficiently used by ESL/EFL students, such as the complementation patterns of the verbs *say* and *tell* (p. 98), the modal idioms *had better* and *would rather* (p. 291) or the constructions with adjectives '-er and -er' and 'nice and' (p. 431).

Just as the two preceding editions, *EGUC-2014* is written from an eclectic functional perspective. Its strongest influence is Hallidayan systemic-functional linguistics: accordingly, the clause is the predominant syntactic unit, this being reflected in the top-down order of the contents, with the chapters on the clause preceding those on units of lower rank, and also in the approach to the clause as a crucial unit in the realization of the three metafunctions, i.e. basic functions that all languages fulfil: ideational —the expression of our experience of the world—, interpersonal —the interaction with others in order to provoke changes in the world—, and textual —the organization of information. However, *EGUC-2014* also adopts viewpoints from outstanding work from other approaches or schools. In particular, the influence of three large reference grammars, namely Quirk *et al.* (1985), Biber *et al.* (1999) and Huddleston and Pullum (2002), is notable. Cognitive grammar (e.g. Lakoff and Johnson 1980; Langacker 1987, 1991; Talmy 1995) is also referred to in dealing with issues where it has proved to be particularly successful, such as phrasal verbs and Prepositional Phrases. Valuable monographs and articles, apart from those cited in the first paragraph, have also been considered in specific areas, such as Levin (1993) on complementation, Coates (1983) on modality, and Schiffrin (1987) on discourse markers. The sections on a number of phenomena, such as Theme, coherence and topicality, grammatical metaphor, the *get*-passive or the stance adverb *surely*, have also benefitted from the author's own research (see Downing 1991a, 1991b, 1996, 1997, 2001, 2004, 2006).

EGUC-2014 consists of 12 chapters, divided into a variable number of units, an answer key, select bibliography and a subject index. All the chapters contain exercises, and all but the first contain suggestions for further read-

ing. All the units except those in Chapter 1 begin with a short summary. The structure of *EGUC-2014* is very similar to that of the second edition, the main differences being the reversed order of Chapters 4 and 5, the replacement of the name 'unit' by 'module' and the reduction of one unit in the last chapter, which concerns the Prepositional Phrase. However, the internal structure of units and the terminology display more significant changes, some of which are commented on below.

Chapter 1 gives an overview of the whole course and introduces the basic concepts and terms used in it. Chapters 2 to 7 cover the clause and its elements of structure. Chapters 2 and 3 approach the clause from a syntactic perspective: Chapter 2 presents the syntactic elements of the clause and Chapter 3 covers the complementation patterns of the verb. The presentation of the syntactic phenomena is in many cases enriched by observations about related semantic and pragmatic features. The replacement of the term 'Predicator' by 'verb' in the first sections of Chapter 3 is a welcome change, since complementation patterns mostly depend on lexical verbs rather than on other features of the Predicator such as tense, aspect or modality. In Chapters 4 to 6, the clause is approached from the interpersonal, ideational and the textual perspectives mentioned above. In this edition, an independent subsection is devoted to the thematic progression pattern called 'split Rheme' (pp. 229-230), where a Rheme refers to two or more entities that subsequently occur as Themes, as in 'I have two close friends... One... The other...'. In this way, split Rhemes are more clearly distinguished from derived Themes. Chapter 7, which covers the combination of clauses into sentences, has been restructured in depth. The new version is more student-friendly: the layout is now more strongly based on form, the main distinction being coordination versus subordination, while in the previous edition the contents were organized around the more opaque Hallidayan labels 'elaborating', 'extending' and 'enhancing'. The inclusion of a specific unit on the discourse functions of the coordinating and subordinating linguistic devices heightens the pedagogical value of this chapter as an aid to the writing of coherent discourse with the main and the secondary information well distinguished. It is also worth mentioning the pages devoted to conditional structures (pp. 263-266), which enable students to progress from the effective but limited accounts of correspondences between the *if*-clause and the main clause provided in many ESL/EFL courses.

The following chapters pertain to grammar units of lower rank: the Nominal, Verbal, Adjectival and Adverbial Groups and the Prepositional Phrase. The four kinds of groups centre around one element, the 'head', which usually cannot be omitted, while the Prepositional Phrases have two obligatory elements, the preposition and its complement. The Verbal Group is covered in Chapters 8 and 9. Chapter 8 deals with the syntax and semantics of its different elements including catenatives and phrasal verbs; Chapter 9 concerns tense, aspect ►

and modality. The section on the past perfect (pp. 331-333) has been substantially modified, with more emphasis on its different discourse interpretations. In the area of modality, the terms 'extrinsic' and 'intrinsic' of the second edition are no longer used, which makes the section more student-friendly. Chapter 10, on the Nominal Group, uncovers the potential of this syntactic unit to express different kinds of meaning, often overlooked in courses on grammar. Chapter 11 covers the Adjectival and Adverbial Group, and Chapter 12 the Prepositional Phrase.

To conclude, this improved and updated edition of *English Grammar: A University Course* is great news for the academic field of English linguistics, and especially for ESL/EFL university students of English linguistics and for lecturers teaching these courses. Its pedagogical orientation and wide coverage of English grammar, extended to issues related to semantics and pragmatics, makes it very likely that *EGUC-2014* will succeed in being, like its predecessors, a basic reference in the curricula of many degrees in English Studies in the years to come. ■



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BOOK REVIEWS

REMEDIOS PERNI

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National Identities and Imperfections in Contemporary Irish Literature. Unbecoming Irishness

Luz Mar González-Arias, ed.

London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017, 248 pp. ISBN:
978-1-137-47629-6.

Luz Mar González-Arias's edited volume of essays is a valuable, even poetic, contribution to Irish Studies. It is a fascinating book that explores the disruptive elements of canonical definitions of Irish national identity, highlighting the role of "the imperfect, the disquieting and the dystopian". Interestingly, while focusing on the (de)construction of Irishness, most of the ideas discussed by the scholars participating in this project can as well inspire critical views on national identities beyond Irish borders. In her foreword, the Irish painter Bridget Flannery summarizes the very essence of the book through Gerard Manley Hopkins' line: "All things counter, original, spare, strange" (xi). Indeed, González-Arias's edited work pays attention to various kinds of original, spare and strange cultural phenomena that should attract both readers interested in Ireland's specific issues –the devastating effects of the Celtic Tiger, for example– and readers interested in political and

philosophical matters concerning the present world in general –changing family structures, body politics, life in contemporary cities, just to mention some of the themes discussed. In this sense, this book takes readers to a territory full of fissures and paves the way for a new paradigm of critical work: one that intends to deconstruct and contest plain canonical versions of contemporary culture. As González-Arias puts it in her introduction to the volume, "representing the imperfect becomes a strategy of resistance against the tendency to turn the collective memory of the country, in itself frail and malleable, as all memory systems are, into a record of glossy images" (4). Perhaps one of the book's greatest virtues is its ability to problematize ready-made versions of cultural identity paying attention to a wide range of topics. A related title in this field is Susan Cahill's *Irish Literature in the Celtic Tiger Years 1990-2008: Gender, Bodies, Memory* (2011); nonetheless, Cahill's publication focuses exclusively on fic- ►

tion, whereas *Unbecoming Irishness* offers a discussion on different genres, including poetry and drama—and a bit of visual arts— while paying special attention to the theme of imperfections and dystopian realities.

The book is neatly structured into five thematic sections: (I) “The Tiger and Beyond: Political, Social and Literary Fissures”; (II) “Disruption of Religion, Family and Marriage”; (III) “Ex-Centric Bodies and Disquieting Spaces”; (IV) “Stereotypes and the Distortion of Irishness”, and (V) “Unbecoming Irish Literature: The Inside Gaze” (a conversation with Lia Mills). Starting from the notion of memory and history as “located somewhere between fact and imagination” (2), the different approaches on politics, society, the body, national identity and the gaze, connected through literary and visual works, offer the reader new points of view on Irish identities while inspiring new interdisciplinary lines of research that take into account the polyhedral nature of cultural identity.

González-Arias’s introductory essay entitled “The Imperfect as a Site of Contestation in Contemporary Ireland” opens the door by posing the main questions, later responded by the contributors. The volume’s editor offers her own analysis of different pieces of work, such as Celia de Fréine’s poetry, Carmen’s Benson’s visual art, and Amanda Coogan’s performance art, and manages to show their engagement with the personal and the political and their sensitivity over the critical events occurred in recent decades in Irish history, from the downturn of the Celtic Tiger to other socio-political irregularities, spatial oddities and dysfunctional systems. They are three of the critical witnesses of the period comprehended between the end of the 1990s and the first decade of the 21st century. Other authors examined later in the book include Eavan Boland, Mary Rose Callaghan, Peter Cunningham, Emma Donoghue, Anne Enright, Emer Martin, Paul Muldoon, Eiléan Ni Chuilleanáin, Bernard O’Donoghue, Peter Sirr and David Wheatley.

The first section of the book starts with Ciarán Benson’s essay entitled “What Plenty Laid Bare! Ireland’s harsh confrontation with itself: 1999-2014”, and offers a useful reflection on the historical contextualization of the works discussed throughout the volume. It touches upon notions of national identity through the analysis of the disillusionment resulting in the aftermath of the Celtic Tiger, concluding that “what has happened is that what the brief time of plenty laid bare is an intellectual, aesthetic and political landscape in Ireland that ordinary citizens can now see more clearly for what it is” (35). While referring to the specific case of the Irish economic crisis, this chapter may as well be appealing as one of the numerous political and economical downfalls occurred in Europe in the first decade and a half of the 21st century, for instance in Spain. In the following chapter, Juan F. Elices’s essay “Satiric Insights into Post-Celtic Tiger Ireland: The Case of Peter Cunningham’s *Capital Sins*” demonstrates that satire serves as a vehicle to challenge the pillars of the Celtic Tiger, while distributing responsibilities for the crisis. Anita Morgan’s contribution to this section

explores the idea of “imperfection” as incompleteness to show the evolution from an individual consciousness to a community consciousness in McGahern’s first and last novels (*The Barracks*, 1963; *That They May Face the Rising Sun*, 2002). Such a change in perception, according to Morgan, becomes especially relevant in the Celtic Tiger context, but it may well be extrapolated to other countries where the notion of community has gained relevance over individuality in sight of the different 21st century economic crises.

The second section sheds light upon disruptions of family and religion in Ireland through different literary works. Patricia Coughlan addresses sibling relations in 20th century Irish Literature. The strength of this chapter resides on the combination of feminist, psychoanalytical and socio-cultural studies to criticize ideas of domination within the family structure, and to examine “instances of siblings representations in Irish texts that diverge, with increasing confidence and decisiveness, from official narratives and which protest the devastating constriction of emotional lives” (71). As a matter of fact, Coughlan discusses an interesting variety of works, from Tom Murphy’s 1961 play *A Whistle in the Dark* or McGahern’s *Amongst Women* (1990), to Anne Enright’s *The Gathering* (2007). In the following chapter, Marisol Morales Ladrón approaches Emma Donoghue’s hit novel *Room* (2010), which was adapted for the screen by Lenny Abrahamson in 2015. The escape of a captive woman and her child and their subsequent return after many years results in a paradoxical situation: they are now as “a lost tribe” with their own “strange kind of island culture” (94). Morales’s text reveals issues concerning the oppressive nature of social norms, the social hostility against *the other*—which can be seen in relation to those who diverge from the norm, but also acquires interesting overtones in the context of the so-called migration crisis in Europe— and the nature of the functional family. Again, this is a text that can attract the attention of readers keen on Irish identity issues, but those who are in search of texts dealing with cultural difference and identity in general will be also pleased with this. The chapter closing this section, written by Auxiliadora Pérez-Vides, presents an interesting perspective on Irish cultural difference by focusing on “imperfect celibacy” in Mary Rose Callaghan’s *A Bit of a Scandal*, a work that revolves around patterns of gender coding within the Catholic church, engaging with “debates about the clash between personal ethics and religious authority that shape current approaches to Catholicism in Ireland” (110). Precisely because this chapter presents an approach to social relations beyond the family, it provides this section with a more complete picture of Irish society.

Of particular interest is section three, “Ex-Centric Bodies and Disquieting Spaces”, where non-normative embodiments and spaces are explored. This section begins with Rui Carvalho’s fascinating approach to form and deformity in Paul Muldoon’s textual practices, both poetic and philosophical. Carvalho highlights Mul-

doon's interest in metamorphic processes and how it is reflected through his "poetry about the form-changing pathologies of fatal disease, especially as undergone by loved ones" (117). The essay comments on Muldoon's views on the metapoetic edge of human sorrow, the somatic and textual tropes, images of infection and degeneration and, all in all, Muldoon's discovery of "human beings in gestures that position them beyond the accepted borders of the human" (122). Curiously enough, the following chapter, by Hedwig Schwall, approaches imperfections as a chance through the works of Anne Enright (specifically, *The Portable Virgin*, *The Wig My Father Wore*, *The Gathering* and *The Forgotten Waltz*). Schwall argues that Enright escapes the phallic order—based on aspects such as delineation, completeness or harmony—to emphasize the dissemination of subjectivity, incompleteness and discrepancy. In this sense, Enright challenges previous notions of normative identity. Likewise, Aida Rosende's essay on monstrous mothers and mutant others calls attention to the fact that "discourses of monstrosity have been historically applied to all who are the Other with respect to the white, middle-class, heterosexual and male norm" (148). Drawing on Rosi Braidotti (1997) and Magrit Shildrick (2002), among others, Rosende analyzes Emer Martin's novel *Baby Zero* (2007) to show how women have been conceptualized in nationalist discourses, and how such notions can be challenged and resignified to denounce the marginalization of racialized and gendered immigrant population. Concluding section three, Lucy Collins offers an essay on "the imperfect city" (Dublin) in the context of the Celtic Tiger, and how Irish self-perception changes, shifting the relationship between the public and the private, memory and future; basically, dislocating preconceived notions of space and time. In this sense, Collins's essay elaborates on ideas such as Walter Benjamin's concept of deviation (*Arcades Project*, 1999), and constitutes an addition to the growing field of analysis of changing perceptions of space and time such as developed by scholars such as Mieke Bal (2016).

The chapters gathered within section four, "Stereotypes and the Distortion of Irishness", are the most cultural specific in this volume, as they focus on stereotypes of Irishness and the ways they are constructed by cultural artifacts. In this vein, Rosa González-Casademont examines the relevance of drinking culture on the screen, and how it can be read in a context of Catholic nationalism. Then, Shane Walshe's chapter deals with the actors' search for the perfect Irish accent, revealing that many of the dialect manuals and handbooks to learn Irish accent actually perpetuate stereotypical representations of the Irish.

To conclude, the last section, "Absolutely Imperfect", presents González-Arias in conversation with Lia Mills, a novelist, short-story writer, and essayist from Dublin. She is the author of the novels *Another Alice* (1996), *Nothing Simple* (2005), and *Fallen* (2013), but she is also known for her life-changing memoir *In Your Face* (2007), a book based on her personal experience of mouth cancer. The conversation focuses on Mills' writing in the context of the Celtic Tiger, mainly on her ideas about the imperfect, the incomplete and the abject in Irish contemporary history. Placed at the end of the book, this interview should not be overlooked by readers, since it provides an honest and personal insight into the main themes developed up until here. Doubtlessly, it constitutes a perfect conclusion, as Mills's words can be seen as summarizing the impetus and purpose of the scholars reunited in this volume. Mills says: "... the business of writers is to shine a light into the darker, murkier corners of human experience. Those corners don't have to be 'national', but in effect they often are if only because of proximity, insight, familiarity" (225). Effectively, while illuminating the specific context of Irish cultural identity and history, the reviewed volume of essays sheds light into dark corners of identity, human relations, body, space and culture that are beyond Irish borders and remain universal. And this is one of the numerous reasons why this book deserves to be read. ■



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BOOK REVIEWS

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Corporalidad, Temporalidad, Afectividad: perspectivas filosófico- antropológicas

Luisa Paz Rodríguez Suárez y José Ángel García Landa, eds.

Berlín: Logos Verlag Berlin, 2017. ISBN: 978-3-8325-4380-8.

En medio de los aún candentes debates sobre la dualidad mente-cuerpo, actualmente recobrados por corrientes como el Nuevo Materialismo (Dolphijn y van der Tuin, 2012), *Corporalidad, Afectividad, Temporalidad: perspectivas filosófico-antropológicas*, enmarca las corrientes filosóficas hoy en concordia con la integración definitiva de las dos esferas de la existencia humana clásicamente separadas. Con una base en la antropología fenomenológica moderna, bien heideggeriana, bien interaccionista, el volumen edita, a lo largo de 12 capítulos, las recientes visiones en materia de corporeidad, así como de los nuevos estudios llamados “del afecto” y de temporalidad, hacia donde parece haber virado últimamente la academia, alejándose de las ya más asentadas investigaciones sobre el espacio. De hecho, el cuerpo no es considerado por nadie

aquí “un espacio” que meramente habitamos. Siguiendo, en cambio, la psicología evolucionista y las ciencias cognitivas actuales, que hilan perfectamente estas tres áreas disciplinarias, somos en la medida que estamos mediados por la experiencia humana de nuestro propio cuerpo y sus emociones en un tiempo también humano.

Tras una introducción a cargo de los editores que brilla por su capacidad de pincelar la coherencia interna del volumen, Javier San Martín consigue poner el dedo en la llaga sobre la relación entre fenomenología y ciencias cognitivas, por cierto, ausente en la literatura de España, ya en el primer capítulo. Incorporando la distinción orteguiana entre vida biográfica, psicológica y biológica a las propias teorizaciones de Husserl, San Martín postula que también es necesario que la neurología parta ►

de una descripción rigurosa de la vida, aunque sea la psicológica. El hecho de que la conciencia, como su objeto de estudio, “acontezca” en el cerebro, no supone olvidar que ésta es un nivel fenoménico simplemente con un modo de darse diferente al que pueden tener los sentidos. Como San Martín, Rodríguez Valls en “Afectividad e intencionalidad del cuerpo” toma también los niveles fenoménicos de la experiencia, esta vez el de las emociones, como parte de una naturaleza integradora y en ocasiones integrante de lo exclusivamente humano, como la cultura, sin anular un ápice de la base fisiológica y evolutiva de las mismas. Valls subraya aquí que la fenomenología ha contribuido a evitar caer en el reduccionismo del constructivismo cultural o del materialismo radicales en esta compleja teorización sobre las emociones humanas, poniendo de manifiesto cómo éstas operan a través de la intencionalidad del cuerpo. En su apertura al medio, al que no se opone sino con el que se interrelaciona continuamente, el cuerpo se anticipa al mismo, en aras de cumplir proyectos vitales.

En el siguiente capítulo, “Corporalidad y existencia en Heidegger”, Luisa Paz Rodríguez Suárez analiza los Seminarios de Zollikon para investigar cómo el autor alemán no solo aborda la corporalidad, sino que de manera crucial proporciona en ellos las bases para una antropología filosófica postmetafísica. Ésta no está ya anclada en una metafísica cartesiana de la substancia, que superpone los planos óptico y ontológico de la existencia y escinde al ser humano en res extensa y res cogitans. Al contrario, la existencia no es ni la psique ni el cuerpo visible objeto de estudio de las ciencias naturales; ambos son modos de ser. Así, la lectura de Heidegger, concluye Rodríguez, suprime la dualidad mente-cuerpo y la consideración de la corporalidad en cuanto fenómeno óptico, pues ésta, destaca siguiendo al fenomenólogo alemán, es uno ontológico que es en cada caso de cada quien. “Ser cuerpo” es precisamente el tema abordado brillantemente por Felipe Johnson en el siguiente capítulo, donde desentraña, también a raíz de una afirmación venida por los Seminarios de Zollikon, cómo esto Heidegger ya lo anunciaba con sus lecturas de los conceptos *forma* y *materia* aristotélicos. Johnson, a través de una elaboración a través de lo corpóreo a camino entre lo delimitado y lo delimitante de la existencia, acota materia y forma al ámbito de lo vivo y lo humano, de un *sôma* “comprendido en el horizonte de la propia *psyché humana*” (122) que se autoproduce en su apertura al mundo, incluido a través de lo público del lenguaje (*lógos*).

También muestra esa apertura al mundo el cuerpo vestido, al que, con el capítulo “El vestir o el cuerpo como nómada” de Lazar Koprinarov, se entiende también como autoproducido en un intermezzo de permanente cambio, “de un lugar respecto a sí mismo” “a otro lugar respecto a sí mismo” (128) a través de la temporalidad fascinante de modas, consideraciones de clase social y poder, de a dónde queremos llegar, sin llegar nunca a asentarnos en un *ahí*, un *entonces* o en un *nosotros dado*, como nómadas que somos. La complejidad de lo tem-

poral y lo humano es abordada justo después por José Ángel García Landa. En “George Herbert Mead y la complejidad del tiempo humano”, Landa plantea dimensiones del tiempo propiamente humanas que de hecho definen la experiencia de la especie. Desenmarañando la consiliencia disciplinaria de Mead, el autor recoge cómo lo que los humanos hacemos, o nuestros proyectos, en consagración de nuestra identidad personal, es interpretable desde el interaccionismo simbólico como dimensiones no atemporales que son interpersonales y retrotraíbles siempre a un entorno presente, pues “si existen pasado y futuro es dentro del presente y en relación a fines interaccionales y comunicativos” (157). Incluso la historia integra lo que inscribe en un presente, lo que de hecho demuestra un sistema cognitivo muy diferente al del animal, incapaz de concebir pensamiento simbólico, lenguaje o instituciones constituyentes de un *orden* social que, por otra parte, nosotros mismos creamos y esperamos. Mediando la temática de los dos anteriores, “La subjetividad en la temporalidad nómada de Rosi Braidotti” es el capítulo elaborado por Aránzazu Hernández Piñero a partir de un recorrido por la obra de la poshumanista y su gradual cesión a elaborar el nomadismo identitario desde las coordenadas localizadas —siguiendo a la feminista Adrienne Rich— de lo temporal, y no ya de lo espacial. Pensarnos en potencialidades múltiples y sincrónicas, e incluso recordarnos así por la memoria, suscita una interesante conceptualización de la subjetividad que, coincide Piñero, “nos exige tanto rigor conceptual como creatividad” (190). A la memoria y su potencialidad hermenéutica intersubjetiva para empatizar con el otro, incluso un otro mediado por la narrativa, dedica Beatriz Penas Ibáñez el siguiente capítulo, tomando como referencia las obras ficcionales y autobiográficas de Salman Rushdie, *The Last Moor's Sigh* (1995) y *Joseph Anton: A Memoir* (2012). Para ello, Penas Ibáñez reúne la tradición hermenéutica con la más actual teoría literaria cognitiva y su tratamiento de la empatía en sus diferentes niveles entre autor(es)-narrador implicado y audiencia.

Los cuatro últimos capítulos se enmarcan en los recientes estudios sobre la afectividad, cerrando así las tres disciplinas que el volumen cubre. Falta quizás profundidad en delimitar que la tendencia a la que se adscriben tanto el capítulo de Elvira Burgos, “Amurallar Afectos”, centrado en una revisión de la vulnerabilidad construida desde la feminización y siguiendo la obra de Judith Butler y Wendy Brown, así como en el de Gemma del Olmo Campillo, titulado, “Afectividad y diferencia”, por su parte centrado en la política identitaria de la diferencia de Audre Lorde, es a la más discursiva de autoras como Sara Ahmed (2002) frente a la cognitivista de otros como Brian Massumi (2015). Probablemente adquiriría mayor coherencia temática con el resto del volumen si se hubiesen pincelado algunas teorizaciones también desde esta segunda perspectiva. Sí que se inscriben los dos restantes, elaborados respectivamente por Pedro Luis Blasco y Juan Velázquez, “Amor y perfección humana. El conocimiento interpersonal” y “Fenomenología del amor y afectividad”, en la tradición de la ▶

☛ antropología del conocimiento o la propia fenomenología, en ambos casos respecto a conceptualizaciones existenciales del amor en sus diferentes vertientes perfectivas, apareciendo así en mayor consonancia con el resto de los temas tratados en el volumen. Así planteado,

Corporalidad, Temporalidad, Afectividad no deja indiferente en las más recientes investigaciones a ninguna de las “dos culturas” (Snow, 1959), humanidades y ciencias puras. ■



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BOOK REVIEWS

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Superhero Comics

Chris Gavalier

London: Bloomsbury, 2018, 357 pp. ISBN: 978-1-4742-2634-9

S*uperhero Comics* is an introductory guide to the genre of comics based on the character of the superhero. This kind of comics is a field in need of research, since the medium of comics is often wrongly identified with this sole genre and since superhero narratives have frequently earned a bad reputation for their violent content and allegedly low literary quality (Meskin and Cook 2012, xxxiv), which results in the misunderstanding of the whole medium. This book is a new volume in the Bloomsbury series Comics Studies, which aims to provide an accessible approach, as useful for scholars as for students and the general public.

This book is written by Chris Gavalier, Assistant Professor of English at Washington and Lee University (USA). Before this volume, Gavalier published a series of articles beginning in 2013 about the figure of the superhero. He also wrote a book-length study on superheroes, *On the Origin of Superheroes: From the Big Bang to Action Comics no. 1*, published by the University of Iowa Press (2015).

Although Gavalier briefly acknowledges in the introduction to *Superhero Comics* the ongoing controversy about the definition of comics (see Holbo 2012), he follows the definition proposed by Scott McCloud: “Juxtaposed pictorial and other images in deliberate sequence, intended to convey information and/or produce an aesthetic response in the viewer” (qtd. in Gavalier 2018: 3) and adopts Will Eisner’s expression “sequential art” (qtd. in Gavalier, 3). Gavalier’s work adopts a practical definition of superhero comics as “historical particulars” (Ervine qtd. in Gavalier, 2) depending on a tradition

and its conventions and not on a set of traits the main characters possess, in order to avoid confusion with other types of mythical or literary heroes.

One of the innovative aspects in *Superhero Comics* is the periodization system. The different Comics Codes (legal changes in censorship established by the Comics Magazine Association of America) are taken as an objective, historical referent to establish periods, diverging from the usual division in “Ages” (Platinum, Golden, Silver, Bronze, etc.) popularized by collectors and used by authors such as Sherril Rhoades (2008). With this method, Gavalier avoids the uncertainty of the Ages dates and the value judgements inherent in that system, the only disadvantage being that in a Post-Code era, we will need a different periodization method.

The organization of the work pivots around Gavalier’s Comics Code periodization. After the introduction, the book starts with two historical sections, “Historical Overview, Part 1: Pre-Comic Origins” and “Historical Overview, Part 2: Pre-Code and First Code Origins”, proceeds to discuss the “Social and Cultural Impact” in the third section, devotes the fourth section to “Critical Uses”, and finishes with “Key Texts”. In “Historical Overview, Part 1: Pre-Comic Origins”, Gavalier explores the different aspects of the comics superhero, which he uses to organize the subdivisions of the chapter: “The Mythic Superhero”, “The Imperial Superhero”, “The Wellborn Superhero”, and “The Vigilante Superhero”. In “The Mythic Superhero”, Gavalier goes over Joseph Campbell and monomyth, cognitive psychology, violence as the main appeal of the superhero and developmental psychology. In “The Imperial ▶

“Superhero”, the character is analysed from a post-colonial perspective, as a dual hero that represents the values of the empire while he incorporates traits from foreign lands, which explains his extraordinary powers and, through exotic helpers, sidekicks or the hero’s own otherness, forces the periphery to align with Western values. “The Wellborn Superhero” delves into the connection between the early twentieth century ideology of eugenics in America and the character type. “The Vigilante Superhero” addresses the hero in tights as a personification of justice beyond ordinary legal institutions, a champion that combats threats that supposedly surpass the capacities of regular authorities and who defies the law to achieve his goals.

“Historical Overview, Part 2: Pre-Code and First Code Origins” deals with “The Fascist Superhero”, the logical outcome of the ethics of vigilantism. Even when defending liberal causes and democracy, superheroes like Superman or Captain America in the early forties have exerted authoritarian violence and embodied moral superiority. This type of superhero, typical of the II World War stands in stark contrast with the Cold War superhero, which he describes and studies in the next section, “The MAD Superhero”; the confrontations between heroes and villains during the Cold War became more complicated. Protagonists and antagonists became a metaphor for nuclear weapons, too terrible to be put to actual use, as it would lead to mutually assured destruction (MAD). This danger of total destruction made it impossible for the hero to eliminate villains, so superheroes limited themselves to thwarting the villains’ evil plans. These two types of superhero narratives still persist today (Gavaler 2018: 150-151); the fascist superhero would re-emerge constantly and would often be examined later, as in Frank Miller’s *The Dark Knight Returns* (1986). The crisis of the superhero, derived from the MAD model, would redefine the superhero as no longer all-powerful and as capable of failure and corruption; Lee and Kirby’s *The Fantastic Four* (1961-70) inaugurates this type of story.

The fourth chapter, “Social and Cultural Impact”, includes “The Black Superhero,” in which Gavaler exhaustively analyses the inclusion of non-white artists, authors and characters in the field, throughout the periods established in the introduction, which serve to subdivide the section. The fourth chapter also contains the section “The Gendered Superhero”, where an analogous course explores the presence of female and LGBT authors, artists and characters. Both subsections cover the evolution of these groups from invisibility, discrimination and stereotypes, to gradual inclusion and more complex representations.

The following part of the book, “Critical Uses”, is a systematic and complete guide of analytical tools with helpful diagrams and tables. Gavaler adequately synthesizes and sharpens the type of analysis derived from Eisner, McCloud, Neil Cohn and Joseph Witek’s methods. This chapter comprises the section “The Visual

Superhero,” divided into subsections covering layout rhetoric, framing rhetoric, juxtapositional closure, page sentencing, image-text degrees of integration, and representational abstraction. Gavaler’s explanations are clear and apply to many comics genres, although he constantly refers back to the one at issue (superheroes) and successfully presents the specific arrangements that are more typical in it and the way the content determines these visual stylistic choices. As regards image-text degrees of integration, Gavaler develops a spectrum system to categorize them and, as for representational abstraction, a scale that determines degrees of abstraction, distinguishing between density (amount of detail in the image) and contour (realism or exaggeration of the outlines of figures). Gavaler includes an analysis of Frank Miller and Bill Sienkiewicz’s *Elektra: Assassin*, which clearly shows how formal elements unique to the medium, like page sentencing or framing, can convey formal characteristics like point of view and narration shifts or elements of the content, such as psychological states.

“Key Texts,” the last chapter, consists in a tentative canon of the different Code Eras titles, including Siegel and Shuster’s *Superman*, Kane and Finger’s *Batman*, Marston’s *Wonder Woman* as foundational works, but also Moore’s *Watchmen*, Gaiman’s *The Sandman*, Morrison and McKean’s *Arkham Asylum*, McDuffie and Bright’s black superhero *Icon* or present-day *Black Panther*, another black superhero scripted by the first female African-American comics writers in Marvel, Yona Harvey and Roxane Gay (Gavaler 2018: 287). Additionally, the volume includes a glossary and a “Resources” section.

Gavaler pays careful attention to several aspects throughout the book; for example, the complex issue of authorship in comics, involving pencilers, inkers and letterers alike in his discussion of the different processes of the material production of comics (Gavaler 2018: 4-6). He does not leave aside issues like the economic conditions of production throughout the twentieth century and the great shifts in audiences. Occasional references to traditional literary works are aptly introduced to link comics and superheroes to previous narrative traditions, which proves of great assistance to readers unfamiliarised with comics. There are some underexplored dimensions, like the role of trauma, obsession and repression in superhero origin stories (Sandifer 2008: 175), which offers a contrast to the idea of the superhero as a fantasy of power, the predominant explanation in Gavaler’s work, with the exception of the passages referring to the crisis narratives of the sixties. Nevertheless, Gavaler’s analysis of the character type is robust and adequate for an introductory work.

In sum, *Superhero Comics* offers not only a pleasant reading experience, but also a very useful historical and analytical manual for both researchers and students, as it maintains a suitable balance between basics of Comics Studies and more specialized commentary. ■



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BOOK REVIEWS

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After American Studies: Rethinking the Legacies of Transnational Exceptionalism

Jeffrey Herlihy-Mera

London: Routledge, 2018, 186 pp. ISBN: 978-1-138-05405-9.

The conceptual problem of American exceptionalism has reached a new level in the aftermath of the Obama administration, reshaping itself in terms of neo-Americanness under the slogan “make AmWerica great again”. With the transnational turn, America, as a multi-faceted body, has become an area of study focused on patriation, patriotism, and a complicated web of social affiliations in which the mythic narrative is still dictated by power. The rebirth of America containing neo-, post-, and trans- spheres has made the Academia consider “the relationships among individuals” (Herlihy-Mera 2018: 8) in an imbalanced nation with several transnationalisms. *After American Studies: Rethinking the Legacies of Transnational Exceptionalism* is a thought-provoking critique of the transnational approach delivered in nine essays whose main aim is to abandon the general and examine the particular.

Jeffrey Herlihy-Mera, a Ph.D. and researcher at the University of Puerto Rico, begins the volume with a preface in which he states the limitations of conventional terms. Those terms refer to multicultural hyphenated realities with colonial tides which have become commodities, promoting a transformed agenda led by “difference” and “diversity”. According to American sociologist and social theorist Jeffrey C. Alexander, “the same term [multicultural] appears to be ineluctably connected, not with permeability and commonality, but with ‘difference’, with the deconstruction and deflation of claims to universalism, with the reconstruction, rehabilitation, and protection of apparently autonomous cultural discourses and separated interactional communities” (Alexander 2001: 238). Herlihy-Mera then proceeds to emphasize his interest in description rather than prescription when addressing the linguistic limitations imposed by the political body embodied by America itself. ►

◀ The volume's introductory chapter is titled "A Critique of Transnational Approaches to Community". It is an interesting outline of theoretical approaches and case studies, through which Herlihy-Mera ambitiously tries to examine the chronology of America as a transnation and its legacy. Although brief, this introduction provides a thorough explanation of the current state of affairs regarding theoretical tendencies and their predisposition to focus on the group model, which Herlihy-Mera considers a weakness. Departing from the idea that both immigrant and conquered nations have provided a powerful American metanarrative and a public subordinated by other status, the chapter analyzes the relationship between new kinds of imperialism, together with the psychological and neurological bases for the shifting meanings of multicultural identity performance. Finally, the chapter concludes with an enticing yet utopian invitation to ponder the future of American or TransAmerican cultures, while suggesting that the problem may be in the use of geography as a tool to exert Foucauldian biopower, rather than considering those cultures as metrics of their relations.

The first two chapters following the introduction, "The Ontology of Cultural Groups in Modernity" and "Place Making", serve as the theoretical basis for the understanding of colonized spaces, the formation of the US political body, and the configuration of physical places through language, time, and space. In them, Herlihy-Mera provides a comprehensive analysis of how the cultural canons have been imposed on TransAmerican cultures, and further, how these canons have become symbols of culture appropriation. Furthermore, these chapters analyze the question of geopolitical normativity that follows military conflicts, and the transition from multiculturalism to monocultural universalism. However, the author leaves room for improvement in the areas of cultural appropriation and "social death", given the fact that the Cultural Conquest is still an ongoing process, and both cultural groups and places/spaces are in an ever-changing cycle of [non]belonging.

Chapters 3 to 7 have been named "case studies" by Herlihy-Mera. This case-study section has been arranged according to the chronology of cultural institutionalization and its relationship with literary canons, art and power, acculturation, and transmedia storytelling; thus, covering a wide range of spatial quests derived from the "founding concept" of *American* as an adjective. In Chapter 3, "Literature as a Device of Cultural Appropriation", and Chapter 4, "A Coda to Literary Canons", the author explores in depth the politics of literature and how much critical attention the intersection between politics and literary studies has received, while pointing out the opposition between literary canons and literary criticism. Herlihy-Mera provides an insightful review of how the presence of political themes in literature within spaces claimed by the US political body has taken a transnational turn by becoming a worldwide object of study, aimed at questioning the geographical hierarchy and the logic of acceptable cultural performance.

The discussion of the state's material culture takes place in Chapter 5, "Art and Power". Perhaps this is the weakest essay in the collection, maybe because some of the matters the author analyzes in the chapter have been already studied and his contribution does not provide anything new to the discussion. Despite this, his approach to art as a mechanism of soft cultural power, and how color, symmetry, and psychology are all intertwined to create aesthetical spaces, is both traditional—as he explains color theory through imagery and symbolism—and unconventional, since he focuses on movement and migration fueled by the [cultural] appropriation of cultural icons. These themes provide a soft transition to Chapter 6, "Forced Acculturation", in which Herlihy-Mera discusses immigration as a sociocultural construct with cultural power. In this chapter he examines the codification of immigration and acculturation, and the power of citizenship as a biopower tool. The figure of the newcomer hence becomes the new TransAmerican, and with him/her new profiles are created to institutionalize inequality and empower the construction of illegal status.

The twenty-first century approach comes with the research about nontraditional art in Chapter 7, "Transmedia Storytelling", possibly the most ambitious essay in the collection. Departing from the idea that cultural appropriation within the US political body is subject to normativity, he establishes a solid connection between "nonfictional" cultural material and the transnational mythos for its emotive power. Besides, he examines the presence of the English language and its promotion through advertisement of Coca-Cola by the US political body; the mythification of sports as a form of theater and its power to control masses of people, hence creating a new cultural myth; and the social power of Google as a platform to spread the cultural importance of the state. He then criticizes the fact that Google discards the individual and that, based on demographic and geographic presumptions, it collectivizes search results. Thus, Google, Coca-Cola, and other forms of unconventional art have become new tools of colonialism, or, in Herlihy-Mera's words, colonialism redefined. Finally, he concludes the chapter stating that there is a possibility to challenge conventions through platforms that have conventional discourses embedded in them.

The volume concludes with Chapter 8, "Colonial Problems, Transnational American Studies", and Chapter 9, "Imagining New Communities". This extended conclusion discusses the impact of geographic and cultural assumptions in the construction of communities as well as the understanding that transnational divisions are brief. More specifically, in Chapter 8, Herlihy-Mera provides an in-depth analysis of the limitations of Transnational Performance/Performativity, as "it fails to constitute meaning beyond the recursive contingencies of the collective" (Herlihy-Mera 2018: 150). However, despite the theoretical limitations, he explains that this approach is an exercise in distortion because its aim is to break the paradigms of hybridity and hyphenation. ▶

◀ Whereas the result of this has been the creation of new labels, he goes on to propose in the final chapter an exercise of imagination using Age as the center of cultural study. In order to get rid of those labels, the aim is to achieve a non-existence, in which both culture and geography are independent concepts able to offer more meaningful affiliations. In conclusion, the legacy of Transnational American Studies is open for further expansion, as it is attempting to separate preexistent imperial convention and neocolonialist networks, as well as transnationalism and its discontent.

Although it may seem idealistic at times, *After American Studies: Rethinking the Legacies of Transnational Exception-*

alism is an ambitious collection, conveniently arranged to show the reader the evolution of the transnational approach and what to expect in the foreseeable future. Moreover, the author succeeded at rethinking and discussing paradigms that have been established by normativity in a coherent way, providing the reader with a dynamic reading. Perhaps one of the greatest accomplishments of this volume is to make it relatable, as it covers an extensive range of trans-realities. The volume offers a solid insight on many aspects pertaining to spaces, identity, the political body, and [literary] criticism, as well as a point of departure for further research on the construction of these spaces and the [re]interpretation of America as a post- and trans-object of study in critical theory. ■



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BOOK REVIEWS

MARÍA GRAU PEREJOAN

*Universitat de Barcelona****Harbors, Flows, and Migrations: The USA in/and the World***

Vicenzo Bavaro, Gianna Fusco, Serena Fusco & Donatella Izzo, eds.

Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2017, 604 pp. ISBN: 978-1-4438-7318-5.

The thirty-two essays gathered in *Harbors, Flows, and Migrations: The USA inland the World* explore these three extremely relevant and significant concepts from a historical, interdisciplinary and transnational perspective. In fact, the approach of this volume makes the famous line by acclaimed West Indian poet Derek Walcott “the sea is history” (25) true not only to the Caribbean archipelago but beyond.

The work focuses on the actual and symbolic meanings of harbors in the globalized world. The trope of harbors, which holds a peculiarly central position in the American imagination, is thoroughly revisited. Its editors argue that the cultural and political spotlight has shifted towards the harbor as “a pivotal locale and a fraught symbol” (1), due to the current historical circumstances. Harbors, as sites that can be starting and arrival points of flows and migrations, are highlighted as having been, and continuing to be, crucial spaces in this current age of unseen movements of peoples.

The thirty-two essays gathered together are a careful selection of essays presented at the Twenty-Third Biennial International Conference of A.I.S.N.A. (the Italian As-

sociation of American Studies), held in Naples in 2015. The first three essays – which form Part I “Arrivals and Departures: Global and Local” – are written by three leading international scholars and the conference plenary speakers: Wener Sollor, Donna Gabaccia and Lisa Lowe. Sollors’s essay “Arrivals and Departures” is an analysis of historically differentiated visual and textual narratives revolving around the Statue of Liberty as an iconic immigrant myth at times evoked and at times debunked. In her essay, Gabaccia offers an insightful and ever-so relevant exploration of the notion of “the freedom to move” throughout the history of the United States. For his part, Lowe re-examines and deconstructs some of the widely disseminated narratives on global connections. These three opening essays set the ground for the rest of the book’s ten sections in that they draw on the transnational turn in American Studies (see among others Fisher Fishkin, 2005), stress its interdisciplinary nature, and importantly seek to bring to the fore silenced or sidelined narratives.

The next three sections combine re-readings of canonical texts by Melville, Whitman, James and Hemingway among others, together with lesser-known present and ►

◀ past literary, cultural, and political texts in which gender and ethnic diversity resurfaces. An example of the former is Elena Furnaletto's essay in Part II "The Nineteenth Century: Re-readings and Re-writings from Offshore", which offers an exploration of the section "Sea-Drifts" from Whitman's *Leaves of Grass*. Furnaletto highlights the transcultural poetic conversation between the People's Poet verse and the Sufi poetic tradition. In a similar fashion, in Part III, "Across the Atlantic—and back", Cristina Alsina-Risquez's analysis of Willa Cather situates the canonical yet marginal writer in a transatlantic space and acknowledges her work as an exercise of "re-thinking" the past" (154). Matteo Battistini's essay in Part IV, "Transatlantic Views: The Euro-American Circulation of Ideas", belongs to the latter category, as it deals with the origin and evolution of the middle class, a socio-historical category at the core of the American experience.

The essays comprised in Part V: "Topographies of Slavery and Colonialism" focus on the Black American experience from an undoubtedly transnational or hemispheric perspective. One such example is Marina De Chiara's exploration of the recurrence of images of harbors, islands, and sails in Derek Walcott's *Collected Poems, 1948-1984*, which the author interprets as responses to questions of cultural identity and language in the Caribbean archipelago.

The next four sections deal with the topography and tropology of mobility. Melten Kiran-Raw's essay in Part VI, "Tropes of Migration and Harboring", argues that the affective or emotional power of Solomon Northup's novel *Twelve Years a Slave's* responds to the interplay of topophobia and topophilia – fear and love of places, respectively. The essays included in Part VII: "Trans-Pacific Encounters" investigate Asian American literature. San Francisco's Chinatown is both presented as a metaphorical and ambivalent harbor in Pirjo Ahoka's investigation of Fae Myenne Ng's novel *Bone* (1993). Informed by critical affect studies, Ahoka convincingly argues that in the novel the depiction of racial melancholia permits the construction of a Chinese American countermemory and counterhistory. Parts VIII and IX, "Inflctions of the

Italian American Experience" and "Italian Americans between Fact and Fiction", comprise essays which belong to the prominent field of Italian American Studies, from disciplines ranging from linguistics, literature and visual arts to politics, media and historiography. The essays in these two parts offer a comprehensive analysis of the location of one of the immigrant communities in the US imagination and its cultural traditions. Rosemary Serra deals with language loss within the Italian American community in the US and analyses current language attitudes towards Italian and Italian dialects and their use among young Italian Americans in the Greater New York City area. Moving on to the field of literary studies and visual arts, Fred Gardaphe's essay explores the works of Joseph and William Papaleo. Gardaphe proves that these two Italian American writer and visual artist, father and son, respectively, challenge assumptions related to, and propose innovative ways of, describing Italian American identity through their works.

The volume closes with Part X, "Representing Muslim America after 9/11", which focuses on texts by and/or about the Arab American community. The essays included deal with some of today's most debated issues. Importantly, they challenge the idea of the US as a safe harbor, and bring to the fore sidelined issues on cultural identity within a theoretically safe harbor. This is the case of Fatma Salh Assef's essay, which analyses the works by two Arab American women writers, Mohja Kahf and Laila Halaby, as being subversive and aiming to unapologetically recuperate the Islamic component in American culture.

All in all, this volume will be of interest to a variety of readers due to the diverse array of approaches and disciplines through which the trope of the harbor is analyzed. Moreover, in an era characterized by worldwide refugees seeking to escape poverty, violence and war and unreachable harbors, not only will readers versed in American Studies benefit from these essays, but also a general readership for whom this volume can certainly shed some light on some of today's major events in the globalized world. ■



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BOOK REVIEWS

MIGUEL ÁNGEL JORDÁN

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Reading Austen in America

Juliette Wells

London: Bloomsbury Academic Books, 2017, 256 pp. ISBN: 978-1350012042.

As the author declares at the beginning of the introduction, one of her main purposes when writing *Reading Austen in America* is to provide certain information and different approaches which can act as a prequel for her previous publication: *Everybody's Jane: Austen in the Popular Imagination*, in which she examined “what Austen’s readers in America did with—and to—her novels in the twentieth and early twenty-first centuries, from collecting, to writing hybrid fiction, to founding the Jane Austen Society of North America”. (2).

Another of the aims of this book is to study the relevance of American reception of Austen’s novels, since, according to Wells, this is a pending task: “I believe that English scholars have neglected American reception of Austen chiefly because they, with the significant exception of Gilson, have considered the subject to be less inherently important than British reception” (2).

Wells’ work integrates different disciplines: book history, reception studies, history of reading, literary criticism, literary collecting and literary editing. Thus, the author expects to bring to light the relevance not only of American readers, but also of editors, collectors, bibliographers and literary tourists who, as Wells claims, contributed in a significant way to Austen’s renown during the late nineteenth century.

In this book, Wells tries to combine both an academic and a non-academic approach, a task which, as she af-

firms, many consider to be impossible. In order to do this, the author has tried to focus on the matters which can be of interest to a wide range of readers, exposing the specific information in each chapter’s endnotes:

I have chosen to feature primary sources and images that bring to life readers and the circumstances of their engagement with Austen’s writing. Data, which is so central to a great deal of book history, I keep to a minimum. Historical context, too, I include only as necessary to illuminate specific encounters between readers and books. I hope that scholarly readers will understand the adjustments I have made to increase accessibility, and I encourage everyone else to ignore the endnotes and read for what interests you (3).

Reading Austen in America is divided into five chapters, in which different aspects related to the publication in America of Austen’s works are displayed. In the first chapter, Wells explains Emma’s editing and publishing process. The first American edition of this novel was printed by Matthew Carey in December 1816, that is, just a year after it was first published in England by Murray and during Austen’s lifetime. Wells provides detailed information about copyright laws, the materials used in this American edition, the corrections that were made, the mistakes which were not corrected, the number of copies printed, the prices of the books, the distribution, ►

◀ the publicity, and the increasing popularity of Austen, whose works had gained the recognition of some authors and critics.

In the second chapter, titled “Tales of Three Copies”, Wells writes about the owners of three of the six remaining copies of 1816 *Emma*’s edition, and makes a contrast between the diverse receptions this novel had among those readers.

The first copy to be studied is the one which belonged to E. I. Du Pont, a French businessman, settled in Delaware, who purchased it for her daughters. Some biographical details about these ladies, especially about the eldest, are offered, and some information about the most popular books and genres during those years can be found too. Wells also talks about some of the reasons which could explain why *Emma* was not a favourite reading for these ladies, inferring from the good condition of the book that they didn’t spend much time with it.

When referring to the second copy, owned by the judge Jeremiah Smith (New Hampshire), Wells highlights the notes this gentleman wrote in several parts of the book, some of them about Austen’s life. Wells takes advantage of this fact to summarize the biographical information about this author available at that time, pointing out her inclusion in the *Encyclopaedia Americana*, published by Carey.

The third copy of 1816 *Emma* studied in this book was part of a circulating library in Rhode Island. The second volume’s marginalia is pencilled by two anonymous readers, who express their dislike for this work and its characters. Wells broadens the scope and makes a contrast between English and American readers’ reception of Austen’s novels.

Chapter three focuses on the Countess of Dalhousie, owner of the fourth copy. Wells creates a parallelism between this lady and Austen, and points out the fact that an accomplished and experienced woman, who had travelled throughout the world and had a great variety of interests, read several of this author’s novels, and took special care in the binding of *Emma*, when she didn’t do the same with other books in her library.

In the fourth chapter, the story of the Quincy sisters, Anna and Eliza Susan, is told. In addition to the fact that they were keen readers and enthusiasts of Austen’s works, these were introduced to their family through one of her brothers, Admiral Francis Austen. It was Eliza Susan who wrote him a letter extolling the virtues of his sister’s works and the increasing renown she was gaining in America. This letter marked the starting point of a frequent exchange and permitted Anna to visit Admiral Francis Austen and his family, during a tour around England with her family in 1856.

Finally, the fifth chapter concentrates on the epistolary relationship between two readers and collectors of Austen’s novels: Mrs Burke, from Baltimore, and the Oxford librarian David Gilson. Mrs. Burke, a great admirer of Austen works, began a collection of first editions, manuscripts, letters, translations and ephemera. Likewise, Gilson delved into these novels and everything which surrounded them, determined to compose a bibliography about this writer. Through their letters, Wells displays their perception of Austen’s increasing popularity, about the imprecisions in some of the studies about her, and the minor relevance that some academics granted to the first American editions.

As stated at the beginning of this review, one of the aims of *Reading Austen in America* is to emphasize the importance that Austen’s reception in the USA should have in any analysis about the impact of her works and her world-wide popularity. Wells’ research collects some of Austen’s first American reader’s responses and, as she explains, wants it to be an invitation for similar research in different countries:

I hope that the stories I have brought to light in *Reading Austen in America* inspire others to seek out further traces of Austen’s historical readers, both in the US and around the world. Clues to the reader’s experiences await discovery in the margins of books, as well as in personal letters and journals. (...) Through such investigations, we can continue to develop a richer understanding of Austen’s widespread influence and remarkable legacy (203). ■



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BOOK REVIEWS

VIOLETA MARTÍNEZ ALCAÑIZ

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Victorianomania. Reimagining, Refashioning, and Rewriting Victorian Literature and Culture

S. Falchi, G. Perletti & M.I. Romero Ruiz, eds.

Milano: FrancoAngeli, 2015, 208 pp. ISBN: 978-88-91725-90-5.

The term *Victorianomania* describes the current trend to replicate all things Victorian in contemporary culture. From prêt-à-porter, architecture and media to any art form, nothing escapes from this fashion, whose widespread fascination suggests that it appeals to the taste of the general public. It entails both faith and unfaithfulness, that is: it keeps the very bones of the original source to make the new product recognizable, but it offers a turning point in its conception, that sense of novelty which makes it unexpected. This is in fact the expression of remediation that lies at the core of this phenomenon.

Victorianomania. Reimagining, Refashioning, and Rewriting Victorian Literature and Culture, edited by Simonetta Falchi, Greta Perletti and Maria Isabel Romero Ruiz, is a collection of essays which successfully contribute to consider Victorian literature's continuing influence in twen-

ty-first-century cultural forms. Specifically, the articles concentrate on contemporary revisits of canonical novels from the nineteenth century which aim to establish alternative histories and to enhance marginal voices. As the editors point out in the introductory chapter, "giving voice to those who were marginalised and labelled as deviant in Victorian society and culture plays an important part in the neo-Victorian agenda" (9). *Victorianomania* highlights both the fascination for and the need to rewrite the past from the current perspective. It is a growing obsession, whose power of attraction suggests its potential value as a field of study, both in the present and in the future. And this is, precisely, what makes this volume so necessary.

Andrzej Diniejko opens this collection of essays by examining the origins of neo-Victorian fiction through John Fowles's *The French Lieutenant's Woman* (1969). This ►

novel employs an existentialist approach to deconstruct some of the Victorian myths and legacies and to reimagine them from a contemporary perspective, thus establishing a parallelism between the Victorian period and the British society in the 1960s. For this purpose, it capitalizes on numerous postmodern and metafictional narrative strategies, including “narrative voices, quotations, epigraphs, references and allusions to both the Victorian era and the present time” (18).

Diniejkó also finds a dialogic connection between Fowles’s book and the Hardyean discourse about the existential anxiety of limited freedom. And it is dialogic because Fowles does not merely replicate Hardy’s concerns about the human condition, but develops his own vision. In *The French Lieutenant’s Woman*, Fowles offers his characters the possibility to experience a limited freedom of choice. In doing so, he tackles some thorny questions like sexual moral conventions and gender relationships. Of course, giving freedom to choose to your characters implies that they can create their own values and, therefore, defy the Victorian social conventions. Hence, the protagonist, Sarah Woodruff, uses her femininity and sex to awaken from the traditional passive victim role of women and to achieve, eventually, existential freedom.

The French Lieutenant’s Woman is concerned not only with social and existential freedom, but also with the narrative one. That means here “the narrator’s privilege to manipulate his omniscience” (30). The unreliable narrator is used to encourage the reader to be active in the process of the (de)construction of meaning. Epigraphs, quotes and alternative endings mix together in this “masterly fusion of ambiguous, polyphonic narratorial voice and various literary, philosophical and scientific discourses embedded in a conventional Victorian plot with the fallen-woman motif and a romantic love story” (35).

Subsequently, María Isabel Romero Ruiz examines how the neo-Victorian genre contributes to reimagining issues connected to lesbian historiography and pornography in the past in order to construct a lesbian identity independent from heterosexual frameworks. Following both Foucault’s and Grosz’s theories, the author claims that the lesbian body has been regarded as a ‘deviant’ body threatening the common, traditional social organization. Bodies can be punished in order to make them docile, controllable and predictable. However, they can also “become active subjects and question traditional power through opposition and resistance to authority” (42). Such opposition and resistance require, necessarily, the interaction between different bodies, whose personal experience and emotions open the possibility to create a proper lesbian identity. In this sense, Romero Ruiz claims the need to look at lesbian theory as an inclusive discourse where differences among women are not accounted for. This means that “becoming lesbian is no longer a question of being lesbian, identifying as a lesbian or being known as one” (44); on the contrary, it entails an area yet to be defined through experience, motions and desire. This statement is essential to Sarah Waters *Affinity* (1999)

and *Fingersmith* (2002), where the writer challenges the patriarchal view of history by portraying heterosexuality as normal. Specifically, Waters is interested on the construction of a lesbian genealogy “based on experiences and emotions that encompasses all the ways in which the lesbian experience can be lived” (55).

Marta Alonso Jerez’s article remains very close to Romero Ruiz’s essay. She addresses the question of how fixed and stereotyped features related to gender and identity have become obsolete in the current period. More specifically, Alonso Jerez focuses on the steampunk movement as a literary genre that uses science and new technologies to offer an alternative history of the Victorian era. However, contrary to other works and researches, her essay discusses this subculture in relation to new gender identities and stereotypes. She analyses two literary examples, Bram Stoker’s *Dracula* and Stephen Norrington’s *The League of Extraordinary Gentlemen*, to show the way in which steampunks portray and define women with Victorian features and values historically related to the male sex. Notwithstanding, as the author suggests, there is still work to be done to replace archaic ideas of gender which are still present in contemporary society.

Rewriting and reimagining stereotypical gender roles is also at the heart of many neo-Victorian film musicals as Baz Luhrmann’s *Moulin Rouge!* (2001), Tim Burton’s *Sweeney Todd: The Demon Barber of Fleet Street* (2007) and Tom Hooper’s *Les Misérables* (2012). However, Ana Stevenson complains in her article that these films “do not effectively condemn or interrogate the Victorian gender order” (74), probably because costumes, props and settings do not allow the audience but to regard female characters as caged, helpless women. Stevenson refreshes the visual metaphor of the “bird in the cage” to define women’s place in Victorian society and to examine the use of the birdcage imagery to influence neo-Victorian interpretations of gender. In this sense, concerning her critique about the simplistic and glorified portrayal of the birdcage imagery in *Les Misérables*, *Sweeney Todd* and *Moulin Rouge!*, the reader perhaps should wonder whether some sort of remediation in each contemporary representation of the Victorian woman must be expected.

In the following essays, both Simonetta Falchi and Claudia Cao deal with different ways in which Dickensian literature has been renegotiated in modern adaptations. As Falchi rightly claims, “Dickensmania is one of the many declinations of the Victorianomania phenomenon” (87). In fact, as one of the most universally beloved and well-known writers, Dickens tributes increasingly have come up in the most diverse forms. It was his writing style what led D. W. Griffith to consider him as the master storyteller, thus translating Dickens’ storytelling techniques to the film narrative discourse. However, contemporary filmed and TV series adaptations of Dickens’ novels have usually failed in rendering their complexity and commitment with social and moral concerns. Falchi proves how BBC’s *Little Dorrit* (2008) emphasizes romance and love as the driving forces of the narrative, rather than social con- ▶

ditions as the financial crisis, the implementation of new technologies in our daily lives, or issues concerning women's rights and gender. The question remains whether the director who was unable to see the potential of these themes for a contemporary rereading of the novel, or whether it is the current audience who is not interested in analysing these thorny and uncomfortable questions.

Similarly, Falchi reflects on the multiple remediations of *Great Expectations* released from the late nineties on, including postmodern literary revisions, filmed and animated adaptations, TV series or Twitter versions. Some of these reinterpretations of the Dickensian novel have privileged a satirical-parodic perspective, while others have shown a gothic and sensational one. The first group aims to focus on Pip's story (his love for Estella, his moral progression towards snobbery, and his subsequent decadence), but accentuating the parodic features; the second one examines questions regarding the female group of characters, which implies to give centrality to issues that were secondary in the source text. Both of them seem to "confirm their antihierarchical attitude" (124). However, it is at least arguable that most neo-Victorian adaptations have succeeded in translating Dickens' social criticism or the role played by female characters to contemporary ideals.

Sarah R. Wakefield reaches a similar conclusion after exploring two recent adaptations of Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre*: a 2006 BBC miniseries directed by Susanna White and a 2011 Focus Features movie directed by Cary Fukunaga. Through these examples, the author demonstrates how mental illness and spousal abuse are, even nowadays, uncomfortable themes to be addressed. On the contrary, the two contemporary revisions of the classic text prefer to focus on the Jane-Mr. Rochester romance, thus regarding the suicide of Bertha Antoinetta Mason Rochester as a necessary death for the lovers to remain together.

In a subsequent essay, Francesca Di Blasio takes as a point of departure the premise that Robert L. Stevenson's *Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde* is a nonconventional, "deviant" novel from the overall very conformist Victorian age, and connects it to Emma Tennant's subversive *The Strange Case of Mr Jekyll and Mrs Hyde*. Tennant, already well-known for rewriting other masterpieces from a feminist perspective, reimagines *The Strange Case* "structuring her text as the opposite double of the original, reversing the gender-based schizophrenia of the totally male fictional world" (148) into a female one. Somehow, it constitutes a response to Stevenson's text, which silences the voice of women. Tennant preserves the essence of the original, but portraying the anxieties of our age.

Pilar Somacarrera proposes a neo-Victorian reading of Margaret Atwood's *Alias Grace* (1996) to tackle the relationship between the historical novel and the recovery of

the past to reconstruct a nation. Having a good knowledge of how nation-making projects are still a major concern in places like Northern Ireland and Spain, Somacarrera takes Atwood's novel to explore its strategies to recover the formerly-colonized Canada. She also looks at intertextuality in *Alias Grace* and Walter Scott's historical poem *The Lady of the Lake* (1810), "which was instrumental in the making of the emerging Scottish nation" (151). Somacarrera proves that Atwood was very much aware of her looking back at Scott's historical novels, and revisits him as a writer of national narratives with postcolonial resonances.

Silvia Lutzoni also deals with postcolonialism in her analysis of Ahdaf Soueif's *The Map of Love* (1999). This novel emulates the Victorian narrative style while, at the same time, it condemns the British imperialistic ideology of that age. Reflecting on her Egyptian condition, Soueif is very conscious of the cultural and political implication of setting her story in the Victorian period. In fact, the question of the 'Self' and the 'Other' is a highly recurrent theme in writers from postcolonial countries who aim to reinterpret the Western literary canon for the sake of peace and reconciliation with the past.

Finally, Alessandra Violi closes this volume by examining two neo-Victorian magic films from 2006: Christopher Nolan's *The Prestige* and Neil Burger's *The Illusionist*. Tricks and effects convey a powerful metaphor of the very roots of *Victorianomania*: the remediation and the distortion of the real Victorian world or, so to speak, an illusion-making of the past. Furthermore, Violi suggests that both pictures show not only nostalgia for the early days of the cinematic medium. Rather, they establish a parallelism with modern society and its enchantment with visual and media developments. Even though motion pictures became the greatest illusionistic show for the Victorians, contemporary audiences still wonder at the possibilities of the cinema with regard to the digital effects. Violi concludes that "there is nothing new in new media" (193); perhaps, what it is not new is the viewer's fascination with the achievements obtained by virtual technology.

It is worth mentioning how the different nationalities and backgrounds of the contributing scholars provide the book with manifold points of view from where addressing the renegotiation of Victorian culture and literature. It proves, additionally, that the neo-Victorian project "contemplates a cultural plurality, which implies notions of community and empowering through visibility" (11). It reinvents classical novels for diverse media, using the techniques offered by postmodern intertextuality to make of both texts "parallel epitomes of their own time" (13). The last words of Somacarrera's essay masterfully serve as an overall conclusion for the whole volume: the past must not be vanished or erased, for it is its survival in our imaginary that helps us to understand the present. ■

INTERVIEWS

MERCEDES PÉREZ AGUSTÍN
Universidad Internacional de La Rioja

Conversación que mantuvo con Evan Pritchard

en relación con los
cuentos del pueblo
Micmac y sus
costumbres

(Junio 2010, Ministerio de Asuntos Indios en Ottawa, Canadá)

Evan Pritchard es fundador del Centro de Cultura Algonquino y profesor de historia de los nativos americanos en la Universidad de Poughkeepsie en Nueva York, donde también imparte ética y filosofía. Conocido entre los Micmac como Abachbahamedtch, que significa en su lengua “ardilla rayada”, es ayudante de algunos ancianos algonquinos. Desde 1990, su dedicación a transmitir el mensaje de los algonquinos a través de la prensa ha ayudado a cientos de personas a comprender mejor a su tribu y sus enseñanzas. Es autor de muchos libros de reconocido prestigio como *No Word For Time: The Way of the Algonquin People* (2012) y *Native New Yorkers* (2002). En el Ministerio de Asuntos Aborígenes en Ottawa (Canadá), tuve la oportunidad de asistir a una charla sobre la importancia de contar cuentos, donde relató varios cuentos en lengua Micmac. A su vez, asistí dentro del Kumik, en el centro de asuntos aborígenes, a la ceremonia de la salida del sol, donde Evan entonaba un cántico a los 4 puntos cardinales dando las gracias al sol por darnos calor y vida para que crecieran los frutos, se alimentaran los animales y, en definitiva, prosiguiera la especie.

Mercedes Pérez Agustín (MPA): ¿Cuánto tiempo ha existido la tradición de contar cuentos entre los miembros de su tribu Micmac?

EP: Bueno, es muy antigua, se remonta al comienzo de nuestros orígenes y el pueblo Micmac se remonta al comienzo de nuestro tiempo, estábamos allí incluso durante la glaciación Wisconsin o la era glacial. A causa de los vientos muy fuertes y muy cálidos que suben hasta la bahía de Fundy, y por eso hay amatistas que crecen en las rocas allí cerca del agua, porque nunca fueron destruidas por los glaciares y había gente que vivía allí incluso en las épocas más frías; y de ese modo regresamos, es difícil decir hasta dónde, pero probablemente en una era previa. Esto es lo que se dice, y siempre tenemos gente que viene a visitarnos, sabes, de distintos lugares; y una de las cosas que se transmiten bien son los cuentos, de modo que algunos de los cuentos pueden proceder de otros lugares que se mezclaron con nuestros cuentos.

MPA: ¿Cuándo se contó el primer cuento?

EP: Es difícil saber la antigüedad de los cuentos. Los que tratan el tema de lo sobrenatural y sobre animales y la creación del mundo y de las cosas y que hay vida en la tierra, éstos son los cuentos más antiguos, pero no se les puede poner una fecha.

MPA: ¿No se les puede poner una fecha?

EP: No, porque los habitantes de las glaciaciones de Wisconsin dicen que transcurrieron hace unos once mil años A.C., antes de esa época, y luego averiguas que en la mayoría de los lugares se oye que no han estado aquí antes, ellos no han debido vivir aquí desde hace mucho tiempo. Pero, en nuestro caso, nosotros éramos especiales. Tú sabes que los científicos están de acuerdo con nosotros; digamos que nunca dejamos el glaciar, hacía un

frío de muerte; ahora están demostrando que existe una corriente de agua caliente que sube justo hasta la bahía de Fundy, derritiendo todo el hielo. Nosotros teníamos razón.

MPA: ¿Por qué piensa que las versiones del origen del mundo tienen tantas cosas en común entre los distintos nativos, tales como la tortuga y los gemelos, porque veo que se repiten en diferentes leyendas y tradiciones? ¿Por qué hablan de la tortuga y los gemelos? Digamos en las leyendas hopi, las leyendas abenaki y las leyendas micmac. ¿Por qué piensa que ocurre esto?

EP: La tierra es curvada, como sabes; ellos sabían que la tierra no era plana y tú sabes que la gente decía que esto era erróneo, y lo explicaban como cuando tú miras al caparazón de la tortuga, que es una curva muy inclinada, casi como una esfera, y se acerca a la forma de la tierra, así que es simplemente una forma de explicar, para que la gente lo entendiera, que la superficie de la tierra es tan curvada, ya sabes, porque vemos el horizonte cuando estamos viajando y desaparece. Pero hay muchos estudios sobre la tortuga, y la tortuga va muy lenta y estable, y viaja; y la tierra gira muy lenta y estable, y no viaja. Utilizo a la tortuga para referirme a la tierra entera, pero a veces en algunos cuentos se refiere a Norteamérica.

MPA: ¿Qué parte de Norteamérica es la isla Tortuga?

EP: La isla Tortuga es todo Norteamérica. Esa es la cola de Méjico, Florida y todo eso. Y el continente parece que surge en el medio, que a propósito también es verde. La tierra es verde. Nosotros respetamos realmente la tierra como parte fundamental de nuestra creencia. Respetar la tierra. Alguien dijo recientemente, citando una charla entre comillas: “Si mamá no está contenta, nadie está contento”.

MPA: ¿Por qué hablan de la tortuga y los gemelos?

EP: El tema de los gemelos aparece por todas partes. Tú sabes que tratamos de no hablar sobre el bien y el mal, porque es demasiado fácil, porque queremos respetar al otro gemelo, el maligno. Tú conoces al que destruye las cosas y desordena las cosas para que la gente no intente decir que es malévolo, vale. Y tú sabes que los ancianos de diferentes tribus tienen cuentos de gemelos, pero nosotros no lo interpretamos así, simplemente como un diablo, tú sabes que no creemos en eso, es como cada cosa que él hace, tiene una finalidad.

MPA: Entonces, ¿se trata más bien de un embustero?

EP: Es un pícaro, sí, pero la cosa más importante para mí, y la cité el año pasado en los cuentos aborígenes, no es decir que los Mohawk o los Micmac no son tan buenos, sino que todo el mundo tiene un cuento de gemelos y en la Biblia también. Pero cambia según los lugares del mundo; pero en esa versión un hermano es cabezota y el otro es su cabeza, ya sabes; el primero, su cabeza es como el pedernal, es testarudo; y el segundo como el jarabe ►

de arce, ya sabes, es dulce, así lo expresamos, sabes, nosotros no decimos maligno. Y lo malo no cambia, sólo es malo, ya sabes; si dices que algo es malo, lo que estás diciendo es que ellos no esperan que tú cambies nunca lo que no es, ya sabes, intenta evitar eso.

MPA: Planteas que los indios dais la oportunidad para cambiar.

EP: Sí, así que esos dos gemelos eran inmortales en la mayoría de nuestros cuentos y la mayoría de las tribus tienen cuentos de gemelos; y, ya sabes, se encuentran todo el tiempo, incluso dentro de las familias se encuentran niños: uno que es muy dulce y creador, y el otro que es un embustero y tiene mucho odio o algo parecido; y por qué sigue sucediendo, no sabemos por qué; pero, ya sabes, aparentemente se remonta al tiempo de los indios. Pero en este primer cuento lo que sucede es simbólico y, ya sabes, en eso los cherokee y los iroqueses, eh, se ve que el muchacho de la cabeza de pedernal está incómodo. De acuerdo, así que está en el útero y no es el momento para nacer aún, pero realmente no puede esperar más y es impaciente; entonces dice que va a encontrar otra salida, y se golpea contra el otro lado del útero materno.

MPA: Haces alusión al Cuento de La Creación iroqués, ¿es así?

EP: Sí, y el del corazón dulce dice: “espera un minuto, estás destruyendo a nuestra madre, y entonces ya sabes que sólo estoy tomando otra salida, no voy por el otro lado, y es correcto”. La madre muere, y entonces el otro, el del corazón dulce, nace por el otro lado y entonces ellos, inmortales, ellos persiguen, así que la lección es obvia: es que todos somos gemelos.

MPA: El mensaje del cuento es todos tenemos lo bueno y lo malo.

EP: Todos tenemos lo bueno y lo malo, y cuando se actúa intencionadamente, sin descanso y nerviosos, y no estamos satisfechos con lo que tenemos, es cuando empezamos a destruir a la Madre Tierra. Y entonces ya sabes por qué nosotros no siempre tomamos atajos: porque no queremos herir a la Madre Tierra, ésa es la idea, ¿lo entiendes? No tomar más tiempo, pero no tomar atajos que causarán daño a la Madre Tierra.

MPA: El cuento del coyote y del salmón que le mencioné el otro día hace mención a evitar atajos para no destruir a la Madre Tierra.

EP: Bien, sí, ésa es la única versión que yo conozco, pero también vemos que todo era agua y que había una gran inundación y, ya sabes, los niveles del agua habían cambiado drásticamente en la tierra, y durante las épocas de calor sube mucho; y ya sabes que la gente lo suficientemente adulta para recordarlo decía que esto puede suceder de nuevo, y el agua podría subir; y los visionarios han visto un tiempo en el futuro en el que los océanos alcanzarán un nivel muy elevado y mucha

de la tierra que hay aquí ahora desaparecerá. O sea, que los cuentos no dicen todo.

MPA: En muchos cuentos aparecen los números 3 y 4. Por ejemplo, tienen que repetir 3 veces la misma acción para aprender, o deben lanzar 3 veces una piedra que decidirá sobre la mortalidad humana. ¿Cree que son números simbólicos?

EP: Sí; el 3 es generalmente bueno: si hacen algo tres veces, es fácil. El 4 representa las cuatro direcciones de la rueda, pero también decimos el número cuatro de las cosas, y entonces todo está en el cuatro. Explicamos la vida de esa manera, y que hay una variedad de cosas. Pero, en realidad, si quieres intentar simplificarlo, toda esa variedad es a menudo como si hirviera, convirtiéndose en una cosa que no es simplemente esta división que tiende a crear, ya sabes, este tipo de animosidad; pero si piensas en torno al cuatro, estás jugando con un poquito más de amplitud que si tú simplemente piensas en calor, frío, negro, blanco... De modo que miramos al cuatro si hay una polaridad del cuatro y, en realidad, así es más fácil recordar que esas cuatro cosas son de uno. Y que un pueblo tiende a regresar a una de esas cosas. Y en esas tres otras cosas hay una dicotomía del padre de la madre tierra moribunda.

MPA: ¿Qué simbolizan los niños para los nativos norteamericanos?

EP: Cualquier niño, cuando hablamos más sobre la cultura de los nativos americanos, cualquier niño es sagrado, porque decimos que están muy cercanos al creador. Vinieron simplemente de un mundo espiritual y están todavía allí lejos; y Europa tuvo eso hace miles de años, que todos los niños son sagrados, e incluso que algunos tenían más cualidades; y en nuestra sociedad nosotros pensamos de la misma manera, justo como los mayores. A algunas personas mayores se les entrena en nuestra cultura para recurrir a esos mensajes de los niños y básicamente tomarlos muy en serio. Lo que un niño dijo (y esto ponía muy nerviosos a los colonos al comienzo, ya sabes)... No podían creer que la sociedad entera pudiera estar reaccionando sobre lo que un niño había dicho, pero podría suceder que fuera el mensaje correcto que estaban esperando entonces. ¿Qué dijo el niño, sabes? Así que no se oye mucho de eso entre los historiadores, lo que una persona nativa te contará, que si ellos están en sus tradiciones y lo mismo para los iroqueses y los algonquinos probablemente, la mayoría de la gente con buen carácter, por supuesto, es una lección: si un niño viniera y dijera que necesitamos trasladarnos a Nebraska, la gente se lo tomaría muy en serio si fuera el momento adecuado y el mensaje correcto.

MPA: Los nativos también toman muy en serio a los mayores y a los niños porque pueden contarles cuentos, ¿es así?

EP: Los mayores están en su camino de vuelta al mundo espiritual, también son cultura, así que, cuando dan la vuelta completa a la rueda y regresan, y cuando ►

« llega la hora de partir, están en pañales, y pierden los dientes y el pelo, así que son una especie de bebé. Así es, es un círculo completo y escuchamos de verdad lo que tienen que decir, aunque a veces ellos pueden parecer un tanto locos. Hay una forma de escuchar eso para encontrar un mensaje del mundo espiritual y, por supuesto, los mayores contaban cuentos; y a veces pienso que muchos de esos cuentos vienen de sueños, es mi propia teoría, ya sabes, pienso yo. Y algunos cuentos tienen una especie de calidad irracional que es en realidad muy poderosa, porque estamos acostumbrados a escuchar cuentos que tienen algo de sentido, esos no son cuentos, no tienen que tener sentido exactamente de esa forma, pero la mayoría de los cuentos que contamos tienen que tener algo de sentido. Cuando estaba leyendo ese libro, Cuentos de lo sagrado, yo tuve algo de tiempo para elegir qué cuentos narrar.

MPA: ¿Piensa que los niños aprenden de estos cuentos? ¿Piensa que puede ser para ellos un buen ejemplo a seguir?

EP: Bueno, esa es una buena pregunta. Como estaba diciendo, nuestros cuentos nativos no son necesariamente morales, no son necesariamente para niños, para simplemente emularlos. Yo conozco muchos cuentos mundialmente conocidos, pero especialmente los cuentos nativos americanos son para los niños por una parte para entretener, y porque los niños experimentan ese comportamiento en la gente de su entorno y a veces sufren por ese comportamiento; y los cuentos muestran cómo ese comportamiento puede herir a la gente, y entonces eso les hace sentir, oh, comprendo, ya sabes; así que intentamos preguntar a los niños acerca de estos cuentos, qué piensan, que significan; y entonces la lección brota de los niños. Ok, no es realmente la respuesta, ésta se encuentra en las enseñanzas éticas que surgen del propio cuento; surgen del comentario sobre el cuento porque en cada cuento en todo el mundo tienen algún tipo de conflicto. Y así el conflicto, a menudo, es una persona que no está siendo justa, o quizás dos; quizás animales, nubes, montañas... pueden ser injustos, pero, bueno, en el conflicto los niños necesitan hablar de estas cosas, así que el cuento se narra generalmente a los niños cara a cara, y no a partir de un libro. Y así (tú podrías comentarlo ahora) nuestros cuentos tradicionales se creaban sobre la marcha. Así es como yo fui educado y como yo eduqué a mi hijo. Nosotros siempre creamos cuentos o contamos versiones de cuentos de ancianos, pero no los leemos en un libro. Mi madre nos leía, pero creaba nuevos cuentos, y había un ratón y cada noche había un cuento sobre un ratón; y al final tendría problemas terribles y si querías oír el final del cuento tenías que ir directamente a la cama, y entonces mañana te lo contaría.

MPA: ¿Cree que es bueno leer cuentos o mantener esa vieja tradición para hacer frente a los problemas cuando eres adulto?

EP: Sí, me ocurrió; a mi edad, recientemente, mi vida estaba hecha un lío; llegas a estas situaciones y sales de ellas,

así que, ya sabes, me costó muchos años caer en la cuenta de eso sobre los cuentos de ratones: estaban realmente vivos en cierto modo, y me ayudaban a seguir sintiendo que siempre hay una salida de cualquier trampa, sí, por supuesto. Yo escribí una colección de cuentos que conté a mi hijo y yo solía versionar, y a la gente le gusta, pero también escribí cuentos para mí y un muchacho iroqués donde escribí una especie de forma tradicional algunas cosas por las que estaba pasando.

MPA: De modo que le ayudó, era un tipo de terapia para usted, ¿le ayudó a superar problemas? ¿Piensa que hay una gran diferencia entre la antigua tradición de contar cuentos a los niños y escribirlos?

EP: Sí, hay una gran diferencia; yo dije algunas de esas cosas. Cuando le estás contando a alguien el cuento, se pueden ver sus caras y se puede leer la reacción, y es simplemente el instinto humano el que puede cambiar lo que estás diciendo para, en cierto modo, mantenerlos en su justo medio; así no se mueren de miedo o no se aburren, y simplemente proseguimos. O sea, que se puede en cierto modo saber qué parte del cuento les está llegando, y algo que parece aburrir a los niños, te lo harán saber. Así que ésa es la principal diferencia. Cuando escribes, todo es distinto. En primer lugar, cuando estás contando el cuento es muy circular y sigues repitiendo las cosas, y no se puede hacer eso en un libro impreso, no te lo permitirían. Y esto les presionará y sacarán todo lo que tengan que decir, o eso dirán. Yo intenté poner un poco de eso ahí y, llegado a este punto, dicen ellos, es simplemente su estilo, así que déjalo, ellos están establecidos, son dados a escribir muchas páginas, y luego dicen que tienen que pagar dinero, y así nos podemos librar de algunas. En la vieja tradición se repite mucho, tú acompañas a tu cuento de forma circular; es como cuando estás cazando un alce: tú no vas directamente al alce, ya sabes, das una vuelta al círculo siguiendo las agujas del reloj, y tú círculo se estrecha cada vez más, y estás delante del alce. Y entonces te huelen, así que les puedes tocar o lo que quieras hacer, ya sabes, a menos que tú simplemente quieras cazar para matar por comida; y así hacemos las cosas: no directamente, sino más indirectamente, así que cuando estás contando un cuento es que nuestros cuentos no tienen muchas citas a pie de página.

MPA: Una pregunta que me viene a la mente en este instante es si tiene eso que ver con la manera de pensar que la vida es un círculo donde todo gira alrededor y nosotros formamos parte del mismo.

EP: Sí, me gusta eso, me suena bien, pero no estoy seguro de si tiene sentido. Date cuenta que, cuando te narran cuentos, a la memoria le gusta que se le repitan las cosas, o sea, estás construyendo sobre ciertos puntos para recordarlos; o sea, que esto forma parte de eso, ya sabes; entonces la memoria es una parte importante de eso, porque en las viejas tradiciones la gente tenía mejor memoria y una de las cosas por las que los nativos estaban preocupados era que cuando la gente empezara a introducir los libros, ellos perderían la memoria. ▶

« **MPA: Por tanto, ¿piensas que la tradición oral ha ayudado a los nativos a tener mejor memoria?**

EP: Muchos de nuestros pueblos nativos todavía la mantienen, no dejan las cosas de lado; y algunas de ellas, aunque nos horrorice, no las anotan, recuerdan las cosas, y en cierto modo esperan que tú la recuerdes. Siempre estamos en el medio de un pantano con un amigo mío micmac: este muchacho y tú sabéis que él fue a mi casa y dijo, “¿Por qué no vienes a visitarme a mi casa?” Yo dije: “Sí. Iré a visitarte en algún momento, en unos seis meses”; nosotros estamos todavía en el medio del pantano diciéndome cómo llegar a su casa, ya sabes, estaba alejada; y después en ningún sitio sino a mil millas de distancia, y me estaba dando las indicaciones que él realmente esperaba que yo recordara, y lo hice. Yo intenté recordarlo. Y es gracioso, porque recorrí media milla y no podía recordar los últimos 3 kilómetros.

MPA: ¿Se está perdiendo la vieja tradición de las culturas nativas?

EP: Ah, sí, algo sí. Yo en cierto modo la conservo irónicamente, escribiéndola. Pero espero que la gente... Yo trato de memorizar todo lo que me gusta. Si me diese un golpe en la cabeza, yo regresaría a mis libros y los leería de nuevo, y eso sí que sucede. Esas cosas vienen y van sobre todo ahora, pero yo intento memorizar todas las cosas que estoy escribiendo porque yo espero que otra gente lo hiciera así, así que yo intenté preservar eso como parte de la vieja tradición que es la realidad.

Ya la parte de la vieja tradición está muriendo. Nosotros tenemos muchos hablantes que dominan nuestras lenguas con fluidez. Son ancianos y se están muriendo, y finalmente algunos de ellos se habrán ido; y al mismo tiempo hay mucha gente más joven que está intentando alcanzarlos y están aprendiendo estas lenguas algonquinas de la mejor manera posible, pero nunca las llegan a hablar con fluidez; y entonces aparece alguien como Jesse Bruche, un amigo mío que es joven y que está aprendiendo. Él no hablaba abenaki de niño, pero ahora sí; tiene unas niñas pequeñas y les ha enseñado, así que el abenaki es su idioma materno. Ya ves que la última gente que habla el idioma abenaki son muy viejos, ja, ja, ja. Así que hay una barrera generacional de 80 años, y estamos empezando de nuevo con los niños que tienen éste como primer idioma, y él lo comenzó muy intensamente con la gramática y todo de lo que yo casi me he olvidado; es aparentemente intensivo y difícil.

MPA: ¿Cuántas lenguas proceden del algonquino como lenguas importantes?

EP: Yo puedo recordar que hay aproximadamente 84 tribus algonquinas principales, y la mayoría de las lenguas son casi iguales, así que se reduce a 45 lenguas aproximadamente; pero, en realidad, son todas muy semejantes para alguien que está realmente inmerso en la antigua forma de la lengua, principalmente los ojibways, que tienen muchas palabras alternativas. Y por medio de la palabra alternativa puedes entender la lengua de tus vecinos. ■



OBRAS CITADAS

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CONFERENCE REPORT

SONIA LUQUE MALDONADO
JUAN-JOSÉ MARTÍN-GONZÁLEZ

Universidad de Málaga

VINS Network

I International Seminar on (Neo-) Victorian Studies in Spain

Universidad de Málaga (Spain)

10-12 May 2017

In the last decades, Victorian and Neo-Victorian studies have become one of the most productive critical fields in literary and cultural research. Aware of the manifest impact that the (Victorian) past exerts upon the present, scholars all over Europe have been analysing Victorian literature and culture and their connections to the present. This ongoing fascination with the Victorian past has indeed crystallised in Spain, as it is attested by this “I International Seminar on (Neo-)Victorian Studies in Spain: VINS Network”, celebrated at the University of Málaga on 10-12 May 2017. This international seminar lay within the research network “VINS: (Neo-)Victorian Network - FFI2015-71025-REDT” (<https://vins-network.org/>), coordinated by Professor Rosario Arias Doblas. The network is made up with scholars from several Spanish Universities who share academic interests in Victorian studies and their impact upon the present. The seminar under analysis aimed at officially launching this recently created research network, gathering different national scholars who, via their respective research projects, sought to share ideas collectively. This seminar, as the starting point of the first research network devoted to Victorian and neo-Victorian studies in Spain, was additionally marked by an international character. Indeed, the event hosted international scholars such as Birgitta Berglund (University of Lund, Sweden), Marie-Louise Kohlke (Swansea University, United Kingdom), Patricia Pulham (University of Surrey, United Kingdom), and Mark Llewellyn (Cardiff University, United Kingdom), being all of them reputed specialists in literary and cultural studies of the Victorian Age and the 19th century.

The critical notion of hospitality was a prominent topic in the seminar, as it is evinced by the eight papers that were presented on the subject. María Jesús Lorenzo Modia (University of Corunna) dealt with this concept in the light of the philosophers Emmanuel Lévinas's and Jacques Derrida's views, and explored their readings in Elizabeth Gaskell's novel *North and South* (1855) in relation to home, domesticity and labour relations, as well as she developed the description of Charlotte Brontë's life provided by the Victorian author. Juan-José Martín-González (University of Málaga) also applied Derrida's conception of hospitality together with Elizabeth Ho's notion of the 'neo-Victorian-at-sea' in order to examine two neo-Victorian novels, namely Nora Hague's *Letters from an Age of Reason* (2001) and Amitav Ghosh's *Sea of Poppies* (2008). Thus, he addressed this literary genre from a maritime perspective asserting that the sea not only enacts a liminal space that diffuses boundaries but also approaches history and culture on a transnational level. Other novels by Victorian authors such as Trollope and Dickens were tackled by Manuel Hueso Vasallo (University of Málaga). In this paper, the implications of hospitality also comprise political affairs, as it is exemplified in Anthony Trollope's *The Prime Minister* (1876) and Charles Dickens' *Our Mutual Friend* (1865). Hence, Hueso Vasallo focused on narratives that during the Victorian period served to enhance patriotic and nationalistic feelings that are still relevant in Brit-

ain and Europe. Furthermore, the notion of hospitality was also studied in connection with history. Thereby, Elizabeth Woodward Smith (University of Corunna) analysed the obstacles that, regarding Victorian notions of nationality, Prince Albert, Duke of Saxe, Prince of Saxe Coburg and Gotha, experienced with his arrival in the British royal family because of his foreign status in the country. Victoria Puchal Terol and Mayron E. Cantillo Lucuara (University of València) delved into the historical figure of Lucrezia Borgia in the Victorian and Edwardian theatre. For that purpose, they examined two plays: the comic *Lucretia Borgia*, M.D. (1868) by Henry James Byron and the tragic *Borgia: A Period Play* (1905) by Michael Field. They argued that, despite their differences regarding the receptiveness to the historical past, both plays have the strategy of 'revisionist hospitality' in common as they deal with a figure which had been traditionally demonized. In terms of culture, the eighteenth century witnessed the growing consumption of tea as becoming a symbol of hospitality. Raquel García-Cuevas (University of Kent, UK) explored how this fact prevailed until the nineteenth-century and is reflected in fiction. She focused on the surprising lack of hospitality of Catherine Linton (*Wuthering Heights* [1847]) and Helen Huntingdon (*The Tenant of Wildfell Hall* [1848]), who refuse to prepare tea for their guests, so she aimed to discuss the reasons for them being so inhospitable and their resistance to the Victorian ideals as the protagonists refuse to comply with their domestic duties as mistresses. Marie-Louise Kohlke (Swansea University, UK) delivered a stimulating keynote lecture focused on the connections between hospitality and inhospitality and their different modes in today's cultural imaginary in order to explore the politics of targeted reader/viewer response as well as manipulation in neo-Victorian texts. Drawing on a variety of literary and audio-visual neo-Victorian works, Kohlke significantly pointed out that neo-Victorian hospitality seems to rely heavily on inhospitality, given the genre's penchant for the darker and disturbing aspects of the period. She concluded by suggesting that the problematic dynamics between hospitality and inhospitality in the neo-Victorian genre could shed light on today's real-life encounters with forms that welcome Otherness.

Interrogations of gender and insights into Victorian women and writers were another of the key aspects tackled during the seminar. Miriam Borham-Puyal (University of Salamanca) analysed Andrew Forrester's *The Female Detective* (1864) and Emma Donoghue's *The Sealed Letter* (2008) and *Slammerkin* (2000) in order to examine the liminal situation of women in Victorian and neo-Victorian fiction. She argued that because of their in-betweenness, or because of them being sometimes the host and occasionally the guest, they are in a privileged position as they can observe and comment on society and culture as well as construct their liminal identity moving in and out of social spaces. Regarding the woman question in the Victorian period, Laura Monrós (University of Valencia) focused on the actress Elizabeth Macauley and the dancer Elizabeth ►

❖ Duchemin to show how performing Greek and Roman epic in the nineteenth century triggered the career of actresses and dancers. Moreover, it offered an alternative for female performers and enabled them to break boundaries and create their own aesthetics. Dídac Llorens Cubedo (UNED) examined Syrie James' *The Secret Diaries of Charlotte Brontë* (2009), whose plot establishes a parallelism between Charlotte Brontë's experiences and Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice* (1813). He discussed James' motives for merging Charlotte Brontë and Jane Austen, and pointed out the fact that both authors are considered forerunners of feminism in literature. Sonia Villegas López (University of Huelva) also dealt with Jane Austen and Charlotte Brontë in her approach to the Spanish writer Espido Freire. Hence, she analysed Espido Freire's approach to the aforementioned British writers in *Querida Jane, querida Charlotte* (2004). Villegas López pointed out that the novel suggests a relationship between Austen's and Brontë's works and the houses they inhabited by reading and interpreting physical traces, and thus she established connections between the protagonist's and the author's circumstances. Miguel Teruel (University of Valencia) paid attention to Scottish Gaelic women poets in the nineteenth century. Consequently, he concentrated on the translation from Scottish Gaelic into Spanish of two of Mary MacPherson, or Big Mary of the Songs' poems: "Nuairbha mi òg" / "Cuando fui joven" and "Brosnachadh nan Gàidheal" / "Incitación a los gaélicos" because of her being representative of the characteristics of Scottish Gaelic writing in Victorian times. Marcos Rodríguez Espinosa (University of Málaga) focused on Emily Brontë's *Wuthering Heights* (1847) and a translation of this novel by the successful Argentine translator María Rosa Lida, highlighting the scant attention paid to Latin American published translations and therefore suggesting new avenues of research.

Other papers presented further insights into key themes and remarkable icons in Victorian culture. Two papers addressed the subject of spiritualism. Patricia Pulham (University of Surrey, UK) delivered a keynote lecture in which she discussed the neo-Victorian authors' position as mediums, collaborating with dead Victorians to resurrect and reinvent nineteenth-century novels for a new readership. In the light of Pierre Bourdieu's theory of cultural production, she explored how the intellectual collaboration between creative writing, literary theory and the creative critic informs the unequal power relations between Victorian and neo-Victorian novels. Clara Contreras Ameduri (University of Salamanca) also paid attention to the spiritualist culture, especially concerning the encounter with racialized, gendered, and colonized Otherness in Marryat's *The Blood of the Vampire* (1897) and Hopkins' *Of One Blood: Or, the Hidden Self* (1903). She highlighted the appropriateness of Spiritualism for the discovery of the Other within and outside the Self, as well as its contribution to an empathetic response to the voices of oppressed minorities. Birgitta Berglund (Lund University, Sweden) delivered the keynote lecture "Corsets and Crinolines:

Some Reflections on Victorian Body Images", in which she delved on the different social, sexual and political meanings of the corset. Her analysis of such a significant element in Victorian body images opened the debate on the constraints of women in the nineteenth century and the male power and control over Victorian women. Sara Martín Alegre (Universidad Autónoma de Barcelona) examined Ralph Fiennes's film *The Invisible Woman* (2013), an adaptation of Claire Tomalin's eponymous biography of Ellen Ternan (1990) about the secret love story between Charles Dickens and the young actress Nellie Ternan in order to comment on today's obsessions with celebrity and sexuality. She concluded that this fact is misrepresenting our view of the Victorians, particularly of Dickens, though both biography and film seem to include neo-Victorian curiosities.

The impact or influence of Victorian culture upon Spanish culture was also tackled during this seminar. Hence, Rosario Arias (University of Málaga), in an interesting reading of the ghost as a figure that signals hospitality between past and present, self and other, addressed the increasing presence of Victorian ghosts and mediums in both contemporary British and Spanish literature and culture as hospitality towards the Victorian 'other'. Begoña Lasa Álvarez (University of Corunna) explored the portrayal of the heroine Agustina de Aragón in the biographical compilations published in Britain and America during the nineteenth century, where she is referred to as 'the Maid of Saragossa'. Out of this exploration, Lasa Álvarez delved into wider issues of cultural appropriation and the often asymmetrical relations between dominant and minority cultures. Furthermore, Celia Cruz Rus and Cristina G. Domenech (University of Málaga) analysed the creation of an educational and recreational blog with the purpose of fostering and disseminating the reading and understanding of Victorian and contemporary historical English novels within the Spanish population.

Mark Llewellyn's plenary talk "Terms of Engagement: The Public Place of the (Neo-) Victorians" stood out because of its consideration of public engagement issues. Drawing both on his experience as Director of Research at the UK's Arts and Humanities Research Council (2012-2017) and his extensive expertise in Victorian and neo-Victorian studies, Llewellyn reflected upon wider audiences outside academia who may show interest in creative manifestations of neo-Victorianism, but not so much in critical perspectives on the field. In an inviting and thought-provoking talk, Llewellyn suggested potential avenues and strategies to amplify the impact of literary-cultural critical research on society and to bridge the seemingly unbridgeable gap between academics and wider popular audiences.

In the wake on Mark Llewellyn's call to initiate public engagement projects outside academia, this international seminar arranged a public-engagement day on the 12th of May to close the event, complement the academic sessions and share our interest in (neo-)Victorian litera- ►

ture and culture with the audience. In the activity “In Conversation with Victorian Álvarez”, Rosario Arias and Celia Cruz Rus interviewed the author of novels such as *Hojas de Dedalera* (2012), *Tu nombre después de la lluvia* (2015) o *El sabor de tus heridas* (2016). In this activity Victoria Álvarez, one of the most promising authors in the Spanish literary scene, drew us upon her work as a writer and her Anglophile and Victorian literary references in a stimulating literary encounter between writer and readers. After that, Alicia Marchant Rivera (Departamento de Ciencias Históricas, University de Málaga) deliv-

ered the talk “La piedra y el papel, de la escritura última a la presencia victoriana en España: claves sobre la historia del Cementerio Inglés de Málaga”, in which delegates learned about the impact of the Victorian era in the city of Málaga and the English Cemetery in particular. The public-engagement day was topped by a guided walking tour around the English Cemetery in Málaga and some nearby buildings around Paseo de Reding. This tour enabled participants to perceive in situ the nineteenth-century past of Málaga and closed the nourished programme of the seminar. ■

