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# FREDERICK DOUGLASS & MARTIN LUTHER KING LITERATURE & CULTURE

MURIEL SPARK

WILLFRED OWEN

LINGUISTICS

MATTI RISSANEN

DEBORAH SCHIFFRIN

M.A.K. HALLIDAY





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## ÍNDICE

 LITERATURE AND CULTURE  
 TRIBUTES

7

 MAR GALLEGO  
*Universidad de Huelva*
***Frederick Douglass  
& Martin Luther King***

 Commemorating Frederick Douglass and Martin Luther  
 King: African American Rhetoric and Black Masculinity

19

 BERTA CANO ECHEVARRÍA  
*Universidad de Valladolid*
***Wilfred Owen***

Wilfred Owen's Search for Words

25

 TOMÁS MONTERREY  
*Universidad de La Laguna*  
 FRANCISCO GARCÍA LORENZANA Y PEPA LINARES  
*Traductores de Muriel Spark*
***Espléndida Spark***

In Memoriam. 1918–2006

 LINGUISTICS  
 TRIBUTES

32

 MARÍA JOSÉ LÓPEZ-COUSO & BELÉN MÉNDEZ-NAYA  
*University of Santiago de Compostela*
***Matti Rissanen***

In Memoriam: Matti Rissanen, the linguist, the friend

38

 BEGOÑA BELLÉS FORTUÑO  
*Universitat Jaume I*
***Deborah Schiffrin***

In Memoriam

## ÍNDICE

TRIBUTES  
LINGUISTICS

41

DANIEL GARCÍA VELASCO

Universidad de Oviedo

***M.A.K. Halliday***

El lenguaje según M.A.K. Halliday

RESEARCH PAPERS  
LITERATURE AND CULTURE

45

CLARA ESCODA

Universitat de Barcelona

***“Much Deeper than That”:  
Hegemonic Emotional  
Experiences and Affective  
Dissidences in Martin Crimp’s  
In the Republic of Happiness  
(2012)***Research Project: British Theatre in the Twenty-First  
Century: Crisis, Affect, CommunityRESEARCH PAPERS  
LINGUISTICS

57

MARÍA F. GARCÍA-BERMEJO GINER

Universidad de Salamanca

***Sources for the Lexical Study  
of the Southern Dialects,  
1500-1900***Research Project: Dialectología inglesa diacrónica e  
Historia de la lengua inglesa (DING)

## ÍNDICE

## BOOK REVIEWS

68

ALFONSO CEBALLOS

Universidad de Cádiz

***The History of the Performance of American Drama in Spain 1912-1977. Theatre as a Weapon Against Political Authoritarianism***

Espejo, Ramón, 2017

71

AMANDA ROIG-MARÍN

University of Cambridge

***The Routledge Research Companion to John Gower***

Saez-Hidalgo, Ana, Brian Gastle &amp; R.F. Yeager, eds., 2017

75

MACARENA GARCÍA-AVELLO

Universidad de Cantabria

***Reporting the First World War in the Liminal Zone. British and American Eyewitness Accounts from the Western Front***

Prieto García-Cañedo, Sara, 2018

77

SERGIO MARÍN CONEJO Y MARÍA BURGUILLOS CAPEL

Universidad de Sevilla

***Women's Prophetic Writings in Seventeenth-Century Britain.***

Carme Font. 2017

81

JESSICA ALIAGA-LAVRIJSEN

Centro Universitario de la Defensa Zaragoza

***Traumatic Memory and the Ethical, Political and Transhistorical Functions of Literature***Susana Onega, Constanza del Río,  
Maite Escudero-Alías (Eds.)

## ÍNDICE

## BOOK REVIEWS

84

PETRA FILIPOVÁ

P. J. Safarik University in Kosice, Slovakia

***Rethinking Gender in Popular Culture in the 21st Century: Marlboro Men and California Gurls***Astrid M. Fellner, Marta Fernández-Morales and  
Martina Martausová, eds

86

REBECA GUALBERTO VALVERDE

***Dueños del tiempo y del espanto: genealogía nietzscheana de la responsabilidad en la narrativa victoriana***

Valls Oyarzun, Eduardo, 2017

EXHIBITION  
REVIEW

90

PATRICIA ÁLVAREZ SÁNCHEZ

Universidad de Málaga

***Coetzee's Universe in Black and White: 'Photographs from Boyhood'***'Photographs from *Boyhood*'

## INTERVIEW

96

PATRICIA ÁLVAREZ SÁNCHEZ

Universidad de Málaga

***Hermann Wittenberg***

An Interview

MAR GALLEGO

Universidad de Huelva

# ***Commemorating Frederick Douglass and Martin Luther King:***

## **African American Rhetoric and Black Masculinity<sup>1</sup>**

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You have seen how a man was made a slave [. . .]  
you shall see how a slave was made a man

Frederick Douglass, *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, An American Slave* (1845)

Darkness cannot drive out darkness; only light can do that.  
Hate cannot drive hate; only love can do that

Martin Luther King, *Strength to Love* (1963)

**A**s we commemorate the two hundredth anniversary of Frederick Douglass's birth and the fiftieth anniversary of Martin Luther King's assassination in 2018<sup>2</sup>, issues of violence and racism continue to cast a shadow over our understanding of what these two important celebrations may mean in contemporary US<sup>3</sup>. The two were preeminent figures that became powerful voices in their representation of the African American community at critical junctures of American history: Douglass as the most eloquent nineteenth-century abolitionist activist and, after the Civil War, politician and diplomat; and King as the most iconic leader of the Civil Rights movement. Both of them were powerful and cogent voices against racial discrimination, demanding equality and dignity for the African American community. Their remarkable contributions instigated crucial changes that profoundly transformed American society and history, and their legacy is justly respected and cherished not only in the United States, but also throughout the world.

Beyond their different backgrounds and historical periods, it is my contention that they were strikingly similar. Douglass and King's fight against racial injustice and prejudice paved the way for a new conceptualization of race and race relations, as well as a rethinking of related categories such as humanity, dignity and manhood. My purpose in this essay is twofold: on the one hand, to contextualize their legacy and historical significance as public figures from a contemporary perspective; and on the other, to place them in dialogue with ongoing scholarship on African American rhetoric and black masculinity by analyzing two of their most inspiration-

al speeches. Drawing from abolitionist and civil rights discourses, they were able to advance a pathbreaking critique of the racist past and present of the nation that continues to resonate today. In so doing, they helped to forge a distinct African American public voice, not exempt from contradictions and controversies. These celebrated figures invite an exploration of the difficulties and complexities confronting them as public African American men. Such an exploration should aim to reach beyond congratulatory gestures and offer new insights into their complicated role in the struggle for black equality in the US. In light of all this, it is fitting to continue the investigation of what their contributions can provide as valuable lessons of the past for the present and the future.

## ***1. Contextualizing Douglass's Legacy Two Hundred Years Later***

Lord, how come me here...  
There ain't no freedom here, Lord...  
They treat me so mean here, Lord...  
They sol' my chillen away, Lord...  
Lord, how come me here...

**Excerpted from a Traditional African American Spiritual**

Frederick Douglass became the leading African American voice in the struggle over the abolition of slavery. A

<sup>2</sup> I would like to express my deep gratitude to my colleagues and leading scholars Justine Tally and Isabel Soto for their insightful suggestions and comments on earlier drafts of this article.

<sup>3</sup> In the adverse sociopolitical landscape in which the US is immersed nowadays, topics such as violence and the importance of life, especially whose lives matter, are essential. In the aftermath of the Charlottesville events on August 12 2017, the emergence of the alt-right and the increasing visibility of white supremacist groups, violence spreading on social media, and the rising threat of racism, the US is an increasingly acrimonious and unjust society.



former slave, his significant contributions as an abolitionist lecturer and spokesperson for the slave community have been repeatedly acknowledged. His writings and lectures comprise an immense legacy which is based on his first-hand experiences as a slave, but also on his intimate knowledge of the workings of race and race relations in his country. Douglass was a pioneering voice that forcefully articulated the myriad ways in which race and racism shaped everyday life for both blacks and whites not only during slavery, but also during Reconstruction. Arguably, his work was instrumental in ending slavery, and in denouncing the continuation of racist practices thereafter. Douglass was inspirational for later movements, especially the Civil Rights movement, and remains a crucial referent for any critical race scholar to date.

As Robert McDonald states, he was a “hero, a voice for liberty—one that should echo, resound, and inspire others in the lingering struggle to bring equality of treatment to men and women throughout the United States” (2011, 5; emphasis in the original). Indeed, his message was empowering and inspiring in his lifetime, as it undoubtedly contributed to bring about the abolition of slavery and to clear the way for universal suffrage<sup>4</sup>. His was the voice of many powerless individuals as his words brought to the forefront the actual plight of many enslaved men and women in his classic memoir *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, an American Slave* (first published in 1845), and in his revealing speeches as an outstanding orator. Douglass was a prolific writer, he authored two other autobiographies apart from his *Narrative, My Bondage and My Freedom* (1855) and his final one *Life and Times of Frederick Douglass* (1892), and other works such as *Reconstruction* (1866) and *An Appeal to Congress for Impartial Suffrage* (1867). He also edited his own abolitionist newspaper, *The North Star*, and traveled to Ireland and Great Britain to promote the abolitionist cause.

Throughout his life, Douglass remained an indefatigable defendant of the enfranchisement and rights of black people. He was advisor to President Abraham Lincoln and other presidents, and a committed statesman. He is now a canonized figure in American politics and writing, although it took till 2013 for American

Congress to place his statue in the Capitol. Ironically enough, over recent years he has been considered the representation of the American self-made man, as Albert Murray points out:

**Not even such justly canonized Founding Fathers as Benjamin Franklin and Thomas Jefferson [. . .] represent a more splendid image and pattern for the contemporary American citizen. On balance, not even Abraham Lincoln was a more heroic embodiment of the American as self-made man. After all, Lincoln, like Franklin and Jefferson, was born free. (qtd. in Lowry 2013, 1).**

He definitively embodies the triumph over circumstances, as he was able to raise his voice to denounce the horrors of slavery, and relentlessly fought against racial and gender injustices till the very day of his death<sup>5</sup>. The many events celebrating the freedom fighter and civil rights advocate on this 200th anniversary are thus a just tribute to what this fierce abolitionist, activist and author stood for, as Douglass has been an inspiration for the Civil rights movement and beyond<sup>6</sup>. For instance, in the city of Rochester where he lived longer than any other place, mayor Lovely A. Warren and county executive Cheryl Dinolfo have proclaimed 2018 as “The Year of Frederick Douglass”, and they are organizing an array of initiatives and activities to “foster pride and honor his legacy”<sup>7</sup>. A federal law was signed by president Trump to honor this anniversary and carry out the different festivities.

While honoring his many accomplishments, I would contend that we would benefit from further investigating Douglass’s multidimensional figure. He was a man of his time, a veritable “Founding Father”, who grappled with the complex topic of the definition of black manhood and dignity in an age that denied first slaves, then free blacks their most basic rights. His choices were certainly limited by the racial and gender configurations of nineteenth-century America. Ultimately, it is our critical endeavor to evaluate his historical role with sobriety, questioning any “master narrative” that renders him as just another national hero without taking into account the full import of his enduring legacy. It is also our task to continue to bolster interpretations that re-

<sup>4</sup> Douglass’s gender politics have been interrogated since the early 90s, despite the fact that he was the only African American man who attended the Seneca Falls convention, the first convention on women’s rights in the US that issued the groundbreaking “Seneca Falls Declaration” in 1848. He publicly spoke on behalf of women’s rights. But his break with the suffragists and other episodes on account of the exclusion of black women heavily compromised his position as a protofeminist author and activist.

<sup>5</sup> Douglass’s last day was minutely recorded as he spent the morning in the Congressional Library and attended a meeting of the National Women’s Council in the afternoon. Upon returning home, he suffered a heart attack and instantly died in 1895 (Neklasen 2018, 1-2).

<sup>6</sup> In his speech for Black History Month <sup>2017</sup>, President Trump referenced him as if Douglass were still alive: when he said: “Frederick Douglass is an example of somebody who’s done an amazing job and is getting recognized more and more: I notice” (qtd. in Graham 2017, 2)

<sup>7</sup> <http://cityofrochester.gov/FrederickDouglass200/>

calibrate and illuminate other less explored dimensions of that legacy.

## 2. King Revisited: A Dream Deferred

**What happens to a dream deferred?**

**Does it dry up**

**Like a raisin in the sun?**

**Or fester like a sore--**

**And then run?**

**Does it stink like rotten meat?**

**Or crust and sugar over--**

**like a syrupy sweet?**

**Maybe it just sags**

**like a heavy load.**

**Or does it explode?**

**Langston Hughes, "A Dream Deferred" (1951)**

Revisiting Martin Luther King's vast and inspiring legacy is always a challenging task, as his activism and works deserve a much lengthier study than these pages can do justice to. This is especially true on the fiftieth commemoration of his tragic death in 1968, as it prompts a profound meditation on the impact of King's iconic figure and what the legacy of the Civil Rights movement may represent five decades after his untimely death. His lifelong fight against racial discrimination and poverty has served as a model for other social and political movements on a global scale, and King's work continues to reverberate for many in the twenty-first century as a testament to his extraordinary impact.

Coming from a long line of Baptist ministers in Atlanta, his meteoric rise to prominence in the Civil Rights movement started in 1954 when he became pastor of the Dexter Avenue Baptist Church in Montgomery, Alabama. He was also a member of the executive committee of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, the leading civil rights organization in the US. He successfully led the legendary Montgomery bus boycott in 1955, one of the most important nonviolent demonstrations. In 1957 he was elected president of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference, the civil rights organization resulting from earlier efforts to provide coherence to the movement that was inspired by Gandhi's nonviolent activism. Other key moments in the civil rights actions led by King were the massive protest in

Birmingham, Alabama, and the historic march on Washington, D.C., in 1963, where 250,000 people heard his best-known address, "I Have a Dream"<sup>8</sup>.

His prominent role as a national and world leader was confirmed when he was named Man of the Year by Time magazine in 1963, and especially when he was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 1964. His leadership was instrumental in the ending of legal segregation in the US with the passing of the 1964 Civil Rights Act and 1965 Voting Rights Act. But he was also a tireless author, he penned six books: *Stride toward Freedom: The Montgomery Story* (1958), *The Measure of a Man* (1959), *Strength to Love* (1963), *Why We Can't Wait* (1963), *Where Do We Go from Here: Chaos or Community?* (1967), and *The Trumpet of Conscience* (1968). He also published numerous articles and essays, among them his well-known "Letter from a Birmingham Jail" (1963), which is regarded as the manifesto for the movement.

When the news spread about his death, riots erupted throughout the country and there was a massive international response. Yet his death remains a mystery heavily clouded by suspicions of FBI and government's involvement in the assassination. Even today we witness a resurgence of conspiracy theories<sup>9</sup>. According to William Pepper in *Orders to Kill: The Truth Behind the Murder of Martin Luther King, Jr.*, there was a "ruthless conspiracy" that led to his assassination. What is undeniable is that FBI files, released under the Freedom of Information Act in the 1970s, revealed that he was under government surveillance. Five decades later, this murder is still to be cleared up.

Perhaps the most widely known African American leader of his era, King is still mourned as a global visionary and charismatic leader who changed the understanding of race relations in the country and around the world. Among the many events and initiatives commemorating his assassination this year, the National Civil Rights Museum is hosting an exhibit throughout 2018, "A Legacy Remembered", whose alleged purpose is to examine the continued impact of his legacy on people and events throughout the world. The museum also hosted a two-day symposium under the title "Where Do We Go from Here?" based on his last book *Where Do We Go From Here: Chaos or Community?* Scholars, intellectuals, policy makers and practitioners convened to present on pressing issues such as criminal justice, voting rights, persistent poverty, economic inequity and unequal education. Their critical assessment clearly demonstrates the state of civil and human rights issues and racial and economic equity fifty years after his death<sup>10</sup>.

<sup>8</sup> The sources for this biographical information come from "Martin Luther King Jr. - Biography" (2014), and "Biography: Martin Luther King Jr., Biography" (2018).

<sup>9</sup> Douglass's last day was minutely recorded as he spent the morning in the Congressional Library and attended a meeting of the National Women's Council in the afternoon. Upon returning home, he suffered a heart attack and instantly died in 1895 (Neklasen 2018, 1-2).

<sup>10</sup> The Symposium took place on April 2-3, 2018, and culminated with a commemorative ceremony on April 4, 2018, at the historic Lorraine Motel.

King has been honored with a national holiday, and a memorial on Independence Mall in Washington, D.C. Moreover, an increasing number of streets across the United States have been renamed after him in commemoration, although this practice is not exempt from conflict and racial tensions, as Derek Alderman points out: “Black and white Americans hold strong and often competing opinions about the historical importance of the civil rights leader and thus collide over selecting the most appropriate street to identify with him” (2003, 164). Recognizing King and keeping his memory alive and the achievements of the Civil Rights movement proves a trying task, not only across racial lines, but also within the ranks of African American activists.

In the meantime, King’s larger-than-life image continues to grow. As Derrick Alridge suggests, he is even regarded as the “messianic savior of African Americans” (2006, 662). Kevin Bruyneel insists: “while the haloed reading of King is currently prevailing, there remains real contention over the definition and deployment of his legacy” (2014, 77). His deep commitment to fighting social injustice through nonviolent civil disobedience will continue to be a source of inspiration for generations to come. Yet we critics need to challenge the “heroic and celebratory master narratives” that Alridge questions, and present him as a complex, multifaceted human being who faced great challenges and controversies in his own lifetime, even with other Civil Rights leaders and other Christian organizations. And moving beyond the Civil Rights period, his message continues to reverberate in present-day United States, besieged by racial confrontations that could benefit from King’s zealous advocacy of nonviolent militant activism.

### ***3. Their Revealing Speeches: Race and Gender Politics***

For the purposes of this article, I would like to pay special attention to two of their most frequently quoted and influential speeches, both to emphasize their similarities as well as to gain a deeper understanding of the traditions they drew from and the challenges they faced as African American leaders of their time. Under constant scrutiny in the public arena, they actively participated in the debates and controversies on race and race relations in the country. Along the way, they helped to formulate notions of belonging and selfhood so as to incorporate African Americans, especially men, as full citizens.

On the topic of another celebratory landmark in the US, the 4th of July, Douglass delivered “What to the Slave is

your Fourth of July?”, on July 5, 1852, in Rochester, New York. This speech is particularly revelatory, as it takes issue with the fundamental democratic principles on which the Founding Fathers envisioned the birth of the American nation. The address is also interesting because it shows Douglass at his best, making use of abolitionist rhetoric to enlist his white audience in the cause of abolition. In this sense, Douglass was directly influenced by the efforts of early African American activists that can be documented as early as the late eighteenth century engaging in collectively petitioning for the abolition of slavery<sup>12</sup>.

Following the lead of those activists, Douglass utilizes rhetorical strategies that became common features of abolitionist discourse to assert African Americans’ right to full citizenship and to warn against the dark cloud that threatened the American nation:

**The character and conduct of this nation never looked blacker to me than on this 4th of July! Whether we turn to the declarations of the past, or to the professions of the present, the conduct of the nation seems equally hideous and revolting [. . .] Standing with God and the crushed and bleeding slave on this occasion, I will, in the name of humanity which is outraged, in the name of liberty which is fettered, in the name of the constitution and the Bible, which are disregarded and trampled upon, dare to call in question and to denounce, with all the emphasis I can command, everything that serves to perpetuate slavery—the great sin and shame of America! (1852, 5)**

His outspoken stance against the hideous continuation of slavery is firmly anchored in the abolitionist rhetoric of the time, as he invokes the high principles of humanity and liberty in his claim for abolition. Moreover, the extract also shows Douglass’s mastering of two of the most powerful arguments that would serve as the pillars for the abolitionist cause: the political and the religious. On the one hand, Douglass mentions liberty and the Constitution as the basis for the democratic principles of the recently independent nation. On the other, God and the Bible are also deployed as rhetorical tropes to illustrate the inconsistency of slavery being upheld in an allegedly Christian country.

Jacqueline Bacon and Glen McClish indicate the ways in which early African American activists affirmed their American identity, their right to belong, by appropriating “the ideology and the language of the Revolution and the nation’s founding” (2008, 9), and transforming it to suit their own perceptions of freedom and nationhood. Consequently, applying the revolutionary principles to African Americans’ claims for freedom and basic rights figured

<sup>12</sup> As Bacon and McClish remark, these early petitions “enabled African Americans to create significant arguments for freedom; to develop a public voice; to interact with and respond to their white and black contemporaries, both directly as they addressed leaders and indirectly as they commented on American texts and ideals; and to both draw on and redefine conceptions of citizenship and natural rights” (2006, 5).

prominently in the abolitionist cause. Douglass skillfully invokes the language of liberty by making an explicit reference to one of the canonical texts, the Constitution, where those unalienable rights are granted and protected for all men. If the Constitution can be “disregarded and trampled upon”, the government undermines the very principles on which the nation was founded, and exposes them as fraudulent. In the name of those very principles the Constitution holds as sacred, slavery has to be condemned and suppressed in the independent nation.

Douglass also makes use of religious language in order to further his arguments to advocate the end of slavery. Recalling the image of the abolitionist medal in the “crushed and bleeding slave”<sup>13</sup>, Douglass artfully directs his speech against the contradictions inherent in a nation founded upon those guiding twin discourses of liberty and Christianity, which continues to perpetuate the “evil” system of the so-called “peculiar institution” that corrupts both slaves and the white master class<sup>14</sup>. Refuting racist commonplaces about slaves, Douglass also explicitly recalls the Bible as another canonical text to urge his audience to behave like “true” Christians, and support the end of the barbaric and inhuman practice of slavery. Douglass boldly declares that those “standing with God” are the victimized slaves, not the proslavery proponents. Therefore, enslaved people are depicted as morally superior to their white oppressors, in turn counteracting racist views about slaves’ lack of moral character.

Another moment of the speech reveals how Douglass is also keenly aware of other contradictions prompted by the legal system as it is applied to slaves despite their lack of legal status, a legal void which nonetheless does not deter the harsh punishment of slaves. In addition, the unequal treatment reserved for slaves and whites is also exposed by Douglass: “There are seventy-two crimes in the State of Virginia, which, if committed by a black man, (no matter how ignorant he be), subject him to the punishment of death; while only two of the same crimes will subject a white man to the like punishment” (1852, 5). Douglass summarizes the flagrant inconsistency by upholding the slaves’ “manhood”:

**Must I undertake to prove that the slave is a man? That point is conceded already. Nobody doubts it. The slaveholders themselves acknowledge it in the enactment of laws for their government. They acknowledge it when they punish disobedience on the part of the slave. (5)**

Following abolitionist rhetoric, this notion of manhood is manifestly tied up with the contradictory nature of slaves’ legal status: slaves are held responsible for their actions even if they are not legally recognized as “men”, that is, as citizens legally bound to the rights and obligations enforced by the American government. As Timothy Shortell observes, “the predicament for abolitionists was to figure out how to link opposition to slavery with a call for civil rights, in the face of America’s long history of racism” (2004, 76). This call for civil rights was also connected to the claim for slaves’ status as lawful men.

If the slave is acknowledged as a “moral, intellectual and responsible being”, it follows that certain attributes have also to be conceded to slaves: first and foremost, their right to humanity, and consequently the right to literacy, and ultimately, their right to liberty<sup>15</sup>. As Douglass emphatically affirms: “Would you have me argue that man is entitled to liberty? That he is the rightful owner of his own body? You have already declared it” (1852, 5). As “real” men, slaves are entitled to the unalienable rights protected by the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution. Deriving from this, the control over their bodies and minds needs to be granted to them. In a clever argumentation, Douglass uses the fundamental principles of the nation in order to assert slaves’ access to manhood, and therefore, to all the rights that are assigned to hegemonic American masculinity.

By means of this strategic alliance between manhood, liberty and literacy Douglass is able to contest prevailing notions of manhood encoded as white, heterosexual and literate. As Josep Armengol explains, this dominant normative definition evolved around a “moral economy of dependency” between masters and slaves (2017a, 18), where black men were compared to white women as dependent beings. Patricia Hill Collins adds: “As domesticated Negroes, representations such as Sambo, Uncle Tom, and Uncle Ben signify castrated, emasculated, and feminized versions of black masculinity whose feminization associates them with weakness. Once this connection is made, men can no longer be considered real men” (2004, 75). Challenging this traditional gender script of black men’s emasculation, black abolitionists like Douglass were intent on reclaiming manhood for slaves, comparing themselves to free white men. They must be credited for forging a new sense of a free black identity to confront the dominant stereotypical designation that either emasculated or brutalized black men<sup>16</sup>. Riché Richardson provides an enlightening discussion of

<sup>13</sup> This image is consistently employed by other orators who preceded Douglass such as Williams, a nineteenth-century orator who alludes to the “bleeding African” (Bacon and McClish 2006, 18).

<sup>14</sup> This is quite evident in Douglass’s Narrative, but also in another equally influential slave narrative *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl* by Harriet Jacobs.

<sup>15</sup> Again Douglass is making use of the abolitionist discourse that linked slaves’ humanity to notions of literacy and freedom. This was strategically employed by most slave narrators, as the classic *To Tell a Free Story* by William Andrews demonstrated.

<sup>16</sup> The dichotomic representation of black men as either feminized or animalized is dealt in great detail in *Black Sexual Politics* by Patricia Hill Collins and *Progressive Black Masculinities* by Athena Mutua.



the enduring images of black masculinity that emerged as a result of slavery in the South: “Uncle Tom and the black rapist”, which revealed the intentional “hermeneutics of black masculinity in the region as pathological” ([2007] 2010, 4). More pointedly, such pathological and demeaning stereotypical images laid the foundations for the dominant view of black masculinity that unfortunately frames the discussion well into the twenty-first century in the US.

Refuting these harmful stereotypes, Douglass asserts the humanity and dignity of slaves on the grounds of fulfilling the American ideal of manhood. While Douglass’s insistence on the concept of manhood has been rightly called into question, I would contend that to lay claim to (white) manhood was yet one more abolitionist rhetorical strategy for black men<sup>17</sup>. This strategic claim signals another appropriation on the part of the abolitionists, in this case of the existing code of masculinity in order to make room for a new identity, that of free black men. Still in its infancy, it is true that this conceptualization of masculinity conforms to a patriarchal vision predicated upon the principles of violent resistance and “othering”. Douglass builds on this precisely to resist the othering and marginalization of black men. In so doing, we can perceive, from the start, a compromised gender politics which excluded women. Douglass failed to imaginatively construct other possible productions of black manhood beyond the confines of the dominant ideological configuration. This assertion of manhood suggests how race and gender biases operated in nineteenth-century America to constrain Douglass to adhere to the hegemonic racialized and gendered script of white manhood. It also conditioned later responses to these ideological formulations, as we shall see in King.

Admittedly, Douglass uses all the rhetorical resources in the abolitionist repertoire to rebuke proslavery arguments. As a gifted orator, he vehemently denounces the “evil” of the system in front of a mainly white audience. This speech elicited a vigorous response and effectively contributed to the abolitionist cause at a crucial moment of the national tension over slavery, which had been growing in intensity after the passing of the Fugitive Slave Act of 1850. As William McFeely notes, it was the “greatest antislavery oration ever given” (qtd. in Terrill 2003, 218). This address has been accorded a great deal of critical attention in recent years<sup>18</sup>. Indeed, it is a masterpiece in which Douglass challenged the political and social climate of his time head on: “Americans! Your republican politics, not less than your republican religion,

are flagrantly inconsistent” (1852, 12). By pinpointing those contradictions and inconsistencies, Douglass urges the nation to shed all pretence and act against the horrors of slavery. Along the way, the speech is “an exemplary model of the potential for rhetoric to be a cultural and political resource” (Terrill 2003, 230). It also shows how Douglass had to struggle with negotiations on the status of black men in the nation. As we will see later, this public address bears significantly on civil rights discourse, and specifically on King’s last sermon.

Turning to King now, I would like to focus on his final speech “I’ve Been to the Mountaintop” delivered at Bishop Charles Mason Temple on April 3, 1968, one day before his assassination. It is my view that this address has been underestimated in that it has been considered notable solely for the prophetic words King pronounced at the end. However, I would argue that this speech is exemplary of King’s mature speeches, in which his views on race widened as he increasingly saw himself as a global leader. As Brandon Terry affirms: “We don’t understand that King always saw the Civil Rights Movement as part of a global struggle in a Cold War and anticolonial context”, and he goes on to say: “King was a global figure. He was traveling to India to meet with Jawaharlal Nehru in the 1950s, and attended the presidential inauguration of Kwame Nkrumah in Ghana” (qtd. in Mineo 2018, 2). While it is obvious that this global position is prominent in this speech, I would also add that the sermon is firmly grounded in African American rhetorical strategies that his predominantly black audience would be familiar with. This places King in a long tradition of other renowned orators and scholars, especially with close ties to the abolitionist discourse<sup>19</sup>.

In this speech King is able to project a strong African American public voice by means of rhetorical arguments, many of them already discussed in reference to Douglass’s text. As his starting premise, he uses the convenient trope of the fleeing Israelites in their exodus from Egypt: “I would watch God’s children in their magnificent trek from the dark dungeons of Egypt through, or rather, across the Red Sea, through the wilderness, on toward the Promised Land” (1967, 2). The appeal to the fleeing Israelites and Moses as the messianic deliverer traditionally has been part of African American religious rhetoric since slavery, so King is obviously making use of it as he attempts to close ranks with his audience. As Alridge reflects: “King understood the power of symbolism and metaphor and purposefully evoked messianic imagery and symbolism

<sup>17</sup> Douglass’s masculinism has been a recurrent subject of debate, as already noted. Armengol cites critics such as Yarborough, Leak or Bergner, to name a few. I agree with his view about the contradictory gender and racial politics in Douglass’s *Narrative*, and I would argue in other writings too (2017b, 2).

<sup>18</sup> Although as late as 2003 Terrill was complaining about the scarce attention devoted to the speech and, by extension, to Douglass’s oratory (218).

<sup>19</sup> Many scholars have underlined “fundamental connections between the rhetoric of various periods and movements—such as the abolition movement, the late nineteenth century, and the Civil Rights era” (Bacon and McClish 2006, 25). Other voices acknowledge the tradition of black protest as precursor, but not the import of that tradition as the explanation for the emergence of the Civil Rights movement (King 2015, 480).

in placing the struggle of African Americans within the context of biblical narratives” (2006, 665). At the end of the speech he also mentions the “promised land” as part of his insistence on the story of Moses leading the people there: “I may not get there with you, but I want you to know tonight [. . .] that we as a people will get to the promised land!” (1967, 10). Even his assertion that he may not be present implies the possibility of recasting him as the new Moses with the mission of signing a “new American covenant” (Editors 2018, 93). Using this familiar Exodus narrative undeniably helps to foster King’s message.

But then King effects a swift move to encompass world history tracing an interesting overview from Greece, the Roman Empire, the Renaissance, and Martin Luther after whom he was named, to finally center on American history and Lincoln: “I would come on up even to 1863 and watch a vacillating president by the name of Abraham Lincoln finally come to the conclusion that he had to sign the Emancipation Proclamation” (1967, 2). Lincoln’s depiction is clearly imbued with irony, as he hesitates to sign the Emancipation Proclamation. This quote is also illuminating as it foregrounds the importance of slavery in King’s political thought and ethics. Although he does not name it explicitly, the reference to Lincoln places King in a tradition that “goes back to slavery that focuses on values of self-respect and solidarity, avoiding hate and a whole set of principles that is supposed to guide a dignified response to unjust conditions” (Shelby qtd. in Mineo 2018, 3). I would argue that King purposefully employs this allusion to the Emancipation Proclamation to align himself with other black leaders, such as Douglass, who advocated for African American dignity and self-respect. In a later moment of the speech, he recalls the critical role of the slavery period in enabling the present: “When the slaves get together, that’s the beginning of getting out of slavery” (1967, 3). His call for unity is then rooted in the solidarity of his predecessors in order to promote the cause of abolition, again emphasizing the connection between the crusade against injustice of those brave slaves like Douglass and their ongoing struggle.

Moving to his present day situation, King evaluates the difficult times the nation is going through: “The nation is sick, trouble is in the land, confusion all around [. . .] But I know, somehow, that only when it is dark enough can you see the stars” (2). And he quickly connects the national and the global:

**Something is happening in our world [. . .] The masses of people are rising up. And wherever they are assembled today, whether they are in Johannesburg, South Africa; Nairobi, Kenya; Accra, Ghana; New York City; Atlanta, Georgia; Jackson, Mississippi; or Memphis, Tennessee, the cry is always the same: “We want to be free.” (2)**

This call for freedom is grounded in certain uncontested principles: first and foremost, nonviolence. He further says: “It is no longer a choice between violence and nonviolence in this world; it’s nonviolence or non-existence” (3). Secondly, the end of systemic racism will be brought about by achieving racial and economic justice for “the colored peoples of the world”. According to King, the war on poverty was tightly linked to the global fight for racial and social justice. Thus, his agenda prioritized better jobs, decent housing, higher wages and equal education as critical means to reach that aim.

In order to do away with poverty, King proposed a series of measures that were based on his call for unity:

**Now we are poor people, individually we are poor when you compare us with white society in America. We are poor. Never stop and forget that collectively, that means all of us together, collectively we are richer than all the nations in the world, with the exception of nine. (6)**

He even details that their annual income is “more than thirty billion dollars a year”, which needs to be redirected to their economic advantage. Recalling Malcolm X’s famous speech “The Ballot or the Bullet”, he even goes further to suggest boycotting white companies that are unfair on hiring practices, and strengthening black institutions and black-owned banks, always making clear that these actions have to be undertaken through nonviolent means. Despite their differences, King once again places himself in a long line of black leaders who address the bond between economic and racial inequity. His support of strategic black separatism was surprising in this and other late speeches. However, as Michael Dyson offers, “King still lauded the goal of ultimate integration, but conceded the need for temporary forms of separation as a means to preserve political power, consolidate economic resources, and shore up psychological strength” (2000, 114-115).

I would also like to draw attention to yet another strategic point in the speech, where King also insists on the work of his forerunners. Specifically, he would go back to the two arguments of which Douglass would avail himself in his speech: the political and the religious. His recourse to patriotic symbolism can be traced back to abolitionist rhetoric as an effective means to drive home his antiracist message: “But somewhere I read of the freedom of assembly. Somewhere I read of the freedom of speech. Somewhere I read of the freedom of press. Somewhere I read that the greatness of America is the right to protest for right” (1967, 5). As Shelby and Terry contend, King’s role in political theory has been mainly overlooked (qtd. in Mineo 2018, 5). Additionally, I stress his positioning as deeply rooted in black political thought and tradition from abolitionist leaders such as Douglass. The ironic tone that King deploys in the quote reflects back on the hypocritical attitude of a

nation which recognizes those unalienable rights, but miserably fails to enforce them. That is why American society has to confront its deeply entrenched racism which erodes its basic democratic principles. Foreshadowed by Douglass's stance, King deeply believed in democracy. As Dyson confirms: "despite the charge that he subverted the social order, he was a tireless advocate of democracy" (2000, 4).

The reference to religious language is obviously more direct, as King descended from a family of ministers and had been trained as a Baptist preacher<sup>20</sup>. When he decided on the ministry in 1947, he adduced "an inescapable urge to serve humanity" (qtd. in Jackson 2007, 29) as his main motivation. From then onwards, he would see himself as the spokesperson for the poor, influenced by his grandfather and his father's commitment to "service to the poor and to black people's political enfranchisement" (Jackson 2007, 14). For the three of them their ministry was both a vocation and a form of activism, what Jackson aptly terms "Christian socialism" (15). This understanding of an active service for the poor was also fueled by a strong identification with the impoverished black masses. In this speech King reinforces his view about the role of the preacher by asking rhetorically: "Who is it that is supposed to articulate the longings and aspirations of the people more than the preacher?" (1967, 5). This shows how acutely aware King was of his responsibility as a religious and political leader appointed to serve his people.

And another reference that can be found in common with Douglass is the topic of manhood: "We are saying that we are determined to be men" (3). To examine the politics of manhood in the context of the 50s and the 60s is certainly challenging, as many movements such as second-wave feminism were hotly contesting the prevailing normative definition of gender. What is really interesting about this period is precisely the competing narratives surrounding gender, and specifically about what black manhood should stand for. To put it simply, there were at least two main narratives: Civil Rights activists proposed respectability as integral to definitions of what black manhood entailed following the lead of their predecessors, while Black Power followers insisted on a more radicalized, aggressive and self-reliant representation of black masculinity. Resulting from the conformist attitudes to patriarchal norms in the fifties among many black men, bell hooks regrets the way in which they "in the name of 'black power' completely embrace patriarchal masculin-

ty" (2004, 14) as the ideal. She further chronicles what the "seduction" of patriarchal masculinity entailed for these Black Power militants: "Patriarchal manhood was the theory and gangsta culture was its ultimate practice" (25), asserting again violence coupled with greed as the core values in opposition to dignity and selfhood that were discarded as outdated.

Significantly enough, in his later years King also expressed his admiration for what he termed as the "psychological call to manhood" (Dyson 2000, 114) that was being promoted by Black Power exponents. It is also striking that King would voice his concern for manhood, virtually repeating Black Power formulas for masculine self-determination, a concern that can also be connected to Douglass's rhetoric. Yet there are also significant differences: in the midst of the abolitionist cause, Douglass and other leaders were driven by the pressing need to shape a new identity that would come to substitute the disenfranchised and emasculated image of black men. According to traditional accounts, in the Civil Rights era gender did not seem to play as much a defining role as race or class<sup>21</sup>.

However, the blind spot of gender has been explicitly addressed by many scholars who have illustrated the ideological tenets undergirding constructions of both black masculinity and femininity at the time<sup>22</sup>. Jacquelyn Hall has emphasized the role of women in the movement from the onset as "helping to link race, class and gender" (2005, 1253). As the intersectional perspective stresses, race, gender and class ideologies are co-constitutive and mutually dependent<sup>23</sup>. Hence, more critical attention is needed to unpack the extent to which the ideology of black manhood was being determinative in the Civil Rights period, and particularly, in King's self-fashioning as a black leader calling for "new men". Indeed, he theorized about the need for this "new man": "Humanity is waiting for something other than blind imitation of the past. If we want truly to advance a step further, if we want to turn over a new leaf and really set a new man afoot, we must begin to turn mankind away from the long and desolate night of violence" (1967, 68). Of course, it has been argued that in the extract King is referring to mankind, not specifically to manhood, but it is time to also tackle a broader exploration of masculinity in King's philosophical and theological stance.

One way of looking into this is through the appeal to the notion of citizenship. Jeff Hearn specifies citizenship

<sup>20</sup> As Gary Dorrien asserts: "King was nurtured in the piety and idioms of an urban, middle-class, black Baptist family and congregation" (2017, 21).

<sup>21</sup> Historian Hall underlines how "the link between race and class lay at the heart of the movement's political imagination" (2005, 1245).

<sup>22</sup> One of these publications is Steve Estes's *Race, Manhood, and the Civil Rights Movement*, where the main argument is that both Civil Rights and Black Power movements were inclusive. Estes comments: "The civil rights movement was first and foremost a struggle for racial equality, but questions of gender lay deeply embedded within this overtly racial conflict" (2005, 2).

<sup>23</sup> For some key works on intersectional theory and practice, see the foundational texts by Kimberlé Crenshaw in 1989 and 1991, but also more recent accounts such as *Intersectionality* by Patricia Hill Collins and Sirma Bilge (2016), and "Intersectionality and Its Discontents" by Jennifer Nash (2017), to name a few.

as “one clear connection of men, masculinities and the nation” (2017, 41). Both abolitionist and Civil Rights movements revolved around the issue of citizenship, albeit in different ways. Nevertheless, these approaches marked their discourse on manhood. In the case of King, he seems to understand that his entire political project was centrally concerned with obtaining first-class citizenship for black people, because citizenship was still coded in white, heterosexual and male terms despite the fact that women had been granted the right to vote in 1920. Seizing the opportunity offered by this speech, King made a point in claiming manhood as the only access to full citizenship rights. Once again we see King echoing Douglass’s intervention.

Like Douglass, King also elaborates on his role as leader in opposition to codes of white masculinity. The question is then to what extent King also participated in the African American masculinist tradition. I concur with Ronda Anthony when she establishes that “black men’s struggles for gendered agency are inextricably bound up with their complicated love-hate relation to (white) normative masculinity” (2013, 4). Admittedly, in the 50s and 60s white heteronormative masculinity was markedly associated with power, freedom, citizenship and, more importantly, with self-definition. This would lead to the troubling issue of how to create liberatory black male identities within a hostile ideological regime still intent on demonizing black men. Anthony further argues that the traditional response is a conceptualization of strong black manhood, and she specifically mentions both Douglass and King as examples of that idealized strong manhood tradition (8). According to Anthony, the prevalent features of these strong black men are rooted in W.E.B. DuBois’s talented-tenth theory: “honor, respectability, middle-class intellect and talented-tenth leadership” (8). At the core, strong black manhood seems to be the only way to achieve self-determination in the face of racist oppression and domination, even reflected in the Civil Rights slogan “I AM a Man”<sup>24</sup>.

This is clearly a recurrent strategy employed by black leaders to access power and validate their leadership. Besides, to counter the stereotypical designation and persistent emasculation to which black men were subjugated in the Civil Rights era, black men like King arguably produced powerful myths of black masculinity. While this remains true, I would argue that in King’s case there are some telling breaks with the preceding tradition. Mainly, his emphasis on nonviolence seems to distance him from previous versions of black patriarchal politics. In this sense, the formation of non-violent

black men disproves any racist claim of their inherently violent nature. His investment in nonviolence as the only effective means to the goal of equality could be easily packaged as an alternative construction of black masculine identity. Although I would not go as far as suggesting that King represents what we can call “progressive masculinities”, he posits another kind of leadership not predicated upon violent resistance and domination of others. But he does share some of the characteristics Athena Mutua enumerates about progressive masculinities:

**Simply stated, progressive black masculinities, on the one hand, personally eschew and actively stand against social structures of domination and, on the other, value, validate, and empower black humanity in all its variety as part of the diverse and multicultural humanity of others in the global family [. . .] They are decidedly not dependent and are not predicated on the subordination of others. (2006, 7)**

As a polyhedric and complex leader, King perhaps ideally enacts this nonviolent articulation of black masculinity as a precursor of an alternative sense of masculinity. Yet analyzing the complexities and discontinuities of King’s performance of black masculinity calls for an in-depth study, as we continue to conceptualize and theorize upon the construction of progressive black masculinities into the twenty-first century.

### ***3. Conclusion: Assessment in the Age of Trump***

Assessing Douglass and King’s contributions in the Trump era has become increasingly problematic in an allegedly color-blind society plagued by violence and racial separation<sup>25</sup>. However, revisiting their words could provide a necessary corrective to the bleakness of the current situation, hopefully shedding new light on the pressing issues of racist oppression and domination. Examining the historical significance of Douglass and King confirms that both deserve credit for raising their courageous voices in the face of extremely difficult historical circumstances for African Americans. They deplored racism and the violence perpetrated against African Americans solely because of their skin color. They denounced the unequal practices of discrimination that excluded black people from the status of full citizen-

<sup>24</sup> Estes registers the various meanings assigned to the slogan by Civil Rights leaders “in both gendered calls for manhood and gender ‘neutral’ calls for human rights” (140).

<sup>25</sup> As I am writing these lines, white supremacists attempt another demonstration one year after Charlottesville, where a woman was killed and many injured by one of the racist supporters.



ship, first as slaves and then as second-class citizens. Their deep commitment effected actual changes that decisively altered American political and social conditions.

A close reading of two of their most influential speeches has further revealed that both of them engaged with the crucial debates of their time over race and race relations, aligning themselves with a long tradition of public denunciation rooted in African American rhetoric. Simultaneously, they also negotiated con-

structions of black masculinity, by appropriating or challenging the dominant codes of white manhood, and refashioning the tradition of strong black manhood in opposition to racist stereotypical designation. As we continue to critically assess their contributions guided by diverse approaches, and not only ritually praise them, this will prompt more nuanced and comprehensive insights into these two revered public figures and their complex and enduring legacy for generations to come.



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# ***Wilfred Owen's Search for Words***

**O**n the 11th of November 1918 the armistice that would put an end to World War I was agreed on in a train carriage stationed in the forest of Compiègne<sup>1</sup>. The document was signed in the early hours of the morning, but it was decided that it would not come into effect until 11 a.m. It is not clear whether this six hours' postponement was designed to give time for the news to reach all the units in their sometimes remote positions, or whether it was a kind of poetic licence so that the end of the war would be recalled, as it is, on the eleventh hour of the eleventh day of the eleventh month. Whatever the reasons, the consequence was that during this extra time some allied commanders decided to continue attacking positions that they already knew would be theirs if they just waited a little bit longer. The death toll of these six hours is estimated in some 10,000 men (Persico 85). This grotesque episode can be taken as representative of the kind of meaningless slaughter that had been going on at the Western Front and other areas in conflict for the previous four years.

Wilfred Owen was among those who died, though not on the last day of the war, but just a week before, on the 4th of November. It is well known how the telegram with the news of his death reached his family as the bells were ringing in Shrewsbury to celebrate the end of the war. He had been commanding a platoon following the rapid advance that took the allies beyond the Hindenburg line in the last big push known as "the Hundred Days Offensive", and was killed in a fruitless attempt at crossing the Sambre canal, some forty kilometres south of the Belgian frontier. His last letter home is a testimony of the maturity he had reached at twenty-five:

**It is a great life, I am more oblivious than alas! yourself, dear Mother, of the ghastly glimmering of the guns outside, & the hollow crashing of the shells.**

**There is no danger down here, or if any, it will be well over before you read these lines.**

**I hope you are as warm as I am; as serene in your room as I am here; and that you think of me never in bed as resignedly as I think of you always in bed. Of this I am certain you could not be visited by a band of friends half so fine as surround me here. (1985, 362)**

Wilfred Owen's relationship with his mother had been very close, but it is clear from these lines that at this stage he is more concerned with reassuring her than with sharing the dangers and discomforts of his situation. Instead, reminiscent of Shakespeare's "band of brothers" speech

in Henry V, he concentrates on that aspect of his military life that had given him most satisfaction: the feeling of solidarity he felt for the soldiers under his command. When he wrote this he was resting in a cold cellar by the river surrounded by his men who, as he describes earlier in the same letter, were peeling potatoes and smoking. The contrast of such a life with the security and protection that the "nation at home" enjoyed is immense, yet Owen expressed his feeling of privilege for the convivial atmosphere felt just before an attack in which he might lose his life.

Owen's development from an insecure, mother-dependent young man with poetic aspirations, to the independently-minded soldier poet that he became, took place over the last year and a half of his life. During this period he experienced trench warfare in the battle of the Somme, suffered shell-shock, was sent to Craiglockhart hospital in Scotland, met Siegfried Sassoon, who inspired him to write poems about the war, went back to training, was sent once more to France, and received the Military Cross for bravery. The changes he went through were profound and are reflected in his letters and poetry, especially in his last poems, those he wrote once he had left Craiglockhart. In this brief essay I want to consider how Owen's personal transformation led him to seek a new voice in his writings, one that would enable him to express not his own personal experiences, but those of his comrades, by speaking primarily in the plural, leaving behind the lyric "I" in favour of an epic "we", and thereby attempting a reconfiguration of the genre of war poetry.

In the famous draft preface to his planned collection of poems he proclaims in a few lines a revolutionary project for poetry that starts by denying the very essence of what had been the sustaining ingredients of war poetry:

**This book is not about heroes. English Poetry is not yet fit to speak of them. Nor is it about deeds or lands, nor anything about glory, honour, might, majesty, dominion or power except War. (1983, 535)**

This is a fragment full of negatives, announcing what readers should not expect to find in his poems and rejecting every motif related to epic, leaving "War" as the only standing ingredient. But he goes further in his list of exclusions when he famously states that "Above all I am not concerned with poetry. The subject is War, and the pity of War. The Poetry is in the pity" (1983, 535). This preface was understood as a manifesto for future generations of poets and also as a key to interpreting Owen's poetry that was subsequently classified as the poetry of

<sup>1</sup> This same carriage, stationed in the same forest, would be used deliberately 22 years later by Hitler when France surrendered in 1940.



pity and set in contrast to that of other war poets, such as Sassoon, whose poetry was inspired by anger rather than pity<sup>2</sup>. The preface adds one more important key to deciphering this poetry: “Yet these elegies are to this generation in no sense consolatory. They may be to the next. All a poet can do today is warn. That is why true poets must be truthful”. His poems are described as elegies of warning, not consolation.

The genre and scope of war poetry and more specifically of Owen’s stimulated a good deal of debate. John Johnston, in the first monograph written on the topic, *English Poetry of the First World War* (1964), argued that the appropriate genre for writing about trench warfare was the epic because it appears “equal to every aspect of primitive conflict”, and that the lyric poetry used by Owen and his peers was “the medium least capable of dealing with the vastly multiplied moral and physical confusions of technological warfare” (281). This criticism derives, albeit obliquely, from W.B. Yeats controversial decision to exclude Owen and his peers from his edited anthology *The Oxford Book of Modern Verse* (1936) on the grounds that “passive suffering is not a theme for poetry”, and his refusal to tackle the issue of war through the poetic medium: “If war is necessary, or necessary in our time and place, it is better to forget its suffering as we do the discomfort of fever” (xxxv). Most young poets of the thirties, however, found Owen’s poetry inspirational. For Auden, Spender, McNeice and Cecil Day Lewis he was the master to follow as they found in him a voice that still mattered even when “warning” against the war had ceased to be necessary (or perhaps not):

**Owen commends himself to postwar poets largely because they feel the same lack of a stable background against which the dance of words may stand out plainly, the same distrust and horror of the unnatural forms into which life for the majority of people is being forced. They know in their hearts exactly what Owen meant when he said “the poetry is in the pity.” (Lewis 15)**

Pity as an emotional response to war is open to question because it may produce a sort of complacency about the senselessness of the situation. There is a mild purge of conscience in the act of pitying that liberates one from responsibility and may result in passivity. But most of Owen’s poems are far from complacent, they aim at shocking the reader and obtaining a quasi-visceral response; some are accusatory, as in the last lines of “The Parable of the Old Man and the Young”: “But the old man would not so, but slew his son, / And half the seed of Europe, one by one”; many are full of horror in their explicit brutality

like the famous description of the dead soldier killed by gas in “Dulce et Decorum Est”:

**If you could hear, at every jolt, the blood  
Come gargling from the froth corrupted lungs,  
Obscene as cancer, bitter as the cud  
Of vile incurable sores on innocent tongues (140)**

And irony—which is supposedly in the antipodes of pity—is one of Owen’s most recurring tropes. With such overt accusations and explicit descriptions of the ghastliness of frontline experience it is not surprising that some reactions to the first publication of Owen’s poetry, especially by older critics, were adverse. Sir Henry Newbolt, who during the war had served in the War Propaganda Bureau, was dismissive of Owen’s collection:

**S.S. [Siegfried Sassoon] says that Owen pitied others but never himself; I’m afraid that isn’t quite true – or at any rate, not quite fair. To be a man you must be willing that others as well as yourself should bear the burden that must be borne. When I looked into Douglas Haig I saw what is really great, – perfect acceptance, which means perfect faith. Owen and the rest of the broken men rail at the Old Men who sent the young to die: they have suffered cruelly, but in the nerves and not the heart – they haven’t the experience or the imagination to know the extreme human agony. (314-15)**

With the perspective of history, comparing the attitude of the “broken men” to that of Douglas Haig, commander in chief of the British Army, and implying that their suffering was shallow in contrast is painfully ironic, but Newbolt’s observations are a testimony of the generational rift the war had provoked and the feelings of guilt and victimization that were only then starting to surface. Owen’s poetry meant truthfulness to subsequent generations while Haig would end up being known as “The Butcher of the Somme”.

Pity is certainly present in many of the poems but it is mixed with anger, despair, fear and an acute and pervasive sense of guilt. So why did Owen underline pity as the one element that defined his poetry? By choosing to single out pity from this range of feelings, Owen was privileging that emotion that is most akin to the elegiac mood. We can detect in this a calculated design of purpose that is expressed in the “Preface”. Studying the elegy as a poetic form had been one of his major concerns in the last year of his life. He was, after all, a very conscientious craftsman, as his experiments with

<sup>2</sup> Interest in the poetry of Wilfred Owen grew exponentially during the twentieth century, but it is in the sixties, after C. Day Lewis’s edition of his poetry (1963), that he became a canonical poet.

pararhyme testify<sup>3</sup>. During this period, according to Dominic Hibberd, he read Milton's "Lycidas", Shelley's *Adonais*, Matthew Arnold's "Thyrsis", Tennyson's *In Memoriam*, and English translations from the Greek elegists Bion and Moschus (141). The elegy provided Owen with an invaluable referent because it was at the same time adaptable and related to a long classical tradition, it had no constraining stanza so it could conform to a multitude of patterns and, most important of all, its predominant subject was death.

Still, the only poem that we can consider truly elegiac in a close-to-conventional form is "Anthem for Doomed Youth":

**What passing bells for these who die as cattle?**

**– Only the monstrous anger of the guns,**

**Only the stuttering rifles rapid rattle**

**Can patter out their hasty orisons.**

**No mockeries now for them, no prayers nor bells;**

**Nor any voice of mourning save the choirs, –**

**The shrill, demented choirs of wailing shells;**

**And bugles calling for them from sad shires.**

**What candles may be heeded to speed them all?**

**Not in the hands of boys but in their eyes**

**Shall shine the holy glimmers of goodbyes.**

**The pallor of girls' brows shall be their pall;**

**Their flowers the tenderness of patient minds,**

**And each slow dusk a drawing down of blinds. (1983, 99)**

Here the dead soldiers' deaths give way to a ceremony of mourning that can only take place at the front. The conventional rites are exchanged for the noises of guns and shells while the mourners are stripped of any external symbol of grievance. Despite the denial of a proper funeral, Owen conveys a certain sense of consolation in the last quatrain and couplet, introducing the pastoral element, so conventional in the elegies, and ending on a note of respectful silence that follows the blatant uproar of the first quatrains. The soldiers of modern warfare cannot be mourned with traditional ceremonies, but there is still a way. He composed this sonnet while he was at Craiglockhart and Sassoon collaborated on its final version, at least by providing the title<sup>4</sup>. This was one of Owen's first war poems and also one of his last sonnets, a form he had repeatedly used before the war. However, in many other later compositions he dislocated the rhyme scheme of the sonnet to produce poems that vaguely recall the original model but frustrate

expectations by not adjusting to it, producing a similar effect to what he accomplishes with his pararhyme<sup>5</sup>.

The consolatory note that is dimly present in "Anthem" is not to be found elsewhere. Not in vain did he announce in the Preface that "these elegies are to this generation in no sense consolatory." The ritual of burial is cancelled in one of his later poems, "Futility", where we hear an anonymous voice giving instructions in a futile attempt to reverse death by presenting a corpse to the life-giving force of the sun. The voice strives in vain for a way to restore life into this unknown corpse but ends up cursing the very principles of life: "O what made fatuous sun beams toil / To break earth's sleep at all?" (158). As in "Futility", many of Owen's poems speak of anonymous individuals, soldiers without an identity or an explicit connection with the poet who are represented in a war situation: being gassed ("Dulce et Decorum Est"), dying in a hospital bed ("Conscious"), incarcerated in a mental hospital ("Mental Cases"), having lost their limbs in combat ("Disabled" and "A Terre"), being blinded by a shell ("The Sentry"). Only from the letters do we occasionally learn how these episodes may have been part of Owen's war experience, as in the case of "The Sentry", which can be directly connected with a letter that he wrote to his mother on 16th January 1917: "I kept my own sentries half way down the stairs during the more terrific bombardment. In spite of this one lad was blown down and, I am afraid, blinded" (1985, 428).

These poems are impersonal in the sense that they do not focus on the poet's own experience, instead he becomes a vehicle for the expression of his fellow soldier's sufferings. Put together, they can be taken as a catalogue of war's disasters, similar to Goya's print series "The Disasters of War". When the poet's persona appears, it does so as an observer, he reports what he sees because he was present and can give testimony. The third person is therefore more common than the first, but when the first person does feature, it is frequently behind a barrier that separates his role from that of his men, the officer responsible for their wellbeing placed at a distance from them. These elegies (if elegies they can be considered) are beyond consolation and also beyond mourning. The voice that we hear is an accusatory voice that denounces "them" (the nation at home, the old generation, the warmongers) for what is happening to "him" (the soldier as victim). Not infrequently, however, the sense of guilt is shared by the "I". This happens in "The Show", an apocalyptic vision in which the poet contemplates

<sup>3</sup> Owen experimented with rhyme, looking for the cacophonous effect produced by the repetition of the consonantal sounds without the repetition of the vowels. It was Edmund Blunden, in his edition of Owen's poetry (1931), who first used the term "pararhyme"; Owen himself referred to it as "my Vowel-rime stunt" (1985, 300).

<sup>4</sup> On 25th September he wrote to his mother: "send you my two best war poems. Sassoon supplied the title 'Anthem': just what I meant it to be" (1985, 280).

<sup>5</sup> Owen had cultivated the sonnet form in his early years to such an extent that almost half the compositions in his extant non-war poetry are sonnets. In contrast, he wrote only three war sonnets following the conventional pattern. For a study of Owen's dislocation of the sonnet, see Hilda Spear (1984).

his own corpse devoured by worms that reveals itself as a nightmare battlefield: "Across its beard, that horror of harsh wire, / There moved thin caterpillars slowly uncoiled" (1983, 155). Two species of worm, the grey and the brown, "Ramped on the rest, ate them and were eaten" (155). The final horror comes when Death, that has accompanied him in this journey, reveals the nature of his participation in this carnage:

**And He, picking a manner of worm, which half had hid  
Its bruises in the earth, but crawled no further,  
Showed me its feet, the feet of many men,  
And the fresh severed head of it, my head. (156)**

Nightmares, together with a self-destructive sense of guilt, were at the centre of Owen's pathology when he was taken to the hospital at Craiglockhart after suffering a nervous breakdown. He had been commanding a platoon under heavy artillery fire for several days before he was seized by a panic attack that resulted in his hiding in a hole together with the corpse of a fellow soldier for four days. When he finally returned to the base he was severely reprimanded by his commanding officer for having let his men down. In "The Show" this image is reflected in the headless worm that the poet contemplates in horror. From a modern perspective we can only sympathise with the psychological trauma that he suffered, but back in 1917 the shadow of cowardice was looming. After his death his family took a great deal of trouble to avoid any mention to what had happened in the days before his admission to hospital<sup>6</sup>.

Nightmares and visions of different kinds recur in Owen's poetry. One of his most acclaimed poems, "Strange Meeting", once again projects his persona into a vision of his own death, but here the scene is not gruesome, as it is in "The Show"; rather, it is a revelation spoken by a German soldier killed by the poet, the German representing both the enemy and the poet's alter-ego. "Strange Meeting" stands out from Owen's oeuvre because it aspires to be more than a testimony of the soldiers' sufferings; it speaks to forthcoming generations, projecting an abstract vision of the future. Its two protagonists, the "I" and the "you", are representative of a whole generation that was sent into Hell, but also of all victims of all wars, past and present:

**It seemed that out of battle I escaped  
Down some profound dull tunnel long since scooped  
Through granites which titanic wars had groined. (148)**

The English and the German soldier that descend into Hell are anti-heroes, having achieved nothing with their death, neither for themselves nor for their countries: "now men will go content with what we spoiled / Or discontent, boil bloody, and be spilled" (148). In that sense the poem seems to transcend the elegy and enter into the realm of the epic (or more accurately the anti-epic) by widening the scope of its significance. The setting, Hell, is clearly a topical reference to the classical descent into Hades. As the two soldiers inquire about their truncated aspirations there is no clear difference between one and the other, their experiences and dreams having been partaken: "Whatever hope is yours, / Was my life also" (148). This blurring of identity allows for a multiple subject that embraces the destiny of a whole generation of combatants as they speak for their lost civilization. With its almost expressionist images "Strange Meeting" is a haunting poem that opens to past, present and future perhaps, inspiring W.H. Auden for his celebrated poem about the Spanish Civil War, "Spain 1937".

Some of Owen's most striking poems are those which explore the possibilities of dislocating genre. The technique of manipulating a traditional and recognizable form to render it different but still recognizable, thus frustrating the reader's expectations, is something which he mastered with the parhyme, the sonnet and the elegy, as we have seen. In addition, it is important to recognize a corresponding incursion into the epic form in some poems other than "Strange Meeting". Two of his last compositions, "Exposure" and "Spring Offensive", are not concerned with a single protagonist but with the "togetherness" of a group of soldiers sharing a mission. Both have a plural referent. In "Exposure" it is the "we" of a platoon stranded in a trench during an icy cold night; in "Spring Offensive" it is a coordinated collective attack across an open field. In both poems the natural world that surrounds the soldiers becomes the second protagonist, and in many ways the true enemy. Winter and spring offer radically different settings but in both the soldiers are inadequate and unable to adapt to the natural environment that modern war has put them in. In "Exposure", the lack of action, together with the cold wind, is killing the soldiers in the trench, who fall asleep and share a common dream that takes them back home:

**Slowly our ghosts drag home: glimpsing the sunk fires, glozed  
With crusted dark-red jewels; crickets jingle there;  
For hours the innocent mice rejoice: the house is theirs;  
Shutters and doors all closed: on us the doors are closed, –  
We turn back to our dying. (185)**

The poem exposes the lack of meaning in this shared sacrifice as the suffering of the soldiers does not receive the

<sup>6</sup> Owen's family, especially his brother Harold, carefully protected his reputation for years after his death. Many letters —probably those shedding light on his homosexuality— were destroyed. This did not stop critics and biographers from engaging in a debate on the topic, starting with a provocative article by Joseph Cohen, "Wilfred Owen's Greater Love" (1956).

recognition of their loved ones. The homes which they are supposedly defending are abandoned, and do not welcome them.

A similar meaninglessness is expressed in “Spring Offensive”, perhaps the last poem he composed, inspired in the rapid advance of the allied troops in the last push of the war. The soldiers stand in an open field, liberated from the seclusion of the trenches and wait for the attack to start, uneasy in the benevolent nature that surrounds them and for which they are unprepared:

**And though the summer oozed into their veins  
Like an injected drug from their bodies pains,  
Sharp on their souls hung the imminent ridge of grass (192)**

This tense tranquillity is broken when they go over the top to start the attack; abruptly the language changes from bucolic into epic:

**Of them who running on that last high place  
Breasted the surf of bullets, or went up  
On the hot blast and fury of hell’s upsurge,  
Or plunged and fell away past this world’s verge,  
Some say God caught them even before they fell. (192-3)**

This heroic language is continued in the next stanza, even with the use of language he had proscribed in the “Preface”, such as “long famous glories”. But all this wordiness is undone in the final couplet, as the few survivors are condemned to shame and silence:

**The few who rushed in the body to enter hell,  
And there out-fiending all its fiends and flames  
With superhuman inhumanities,  
Long-famous glories, immemorial shames –  
And crawling slowly back, have by degrees  
Regained cool peaceful air in wonder –  
Why speak not they of comrades that went under? (193)**

It is perhaps an irony of destiny that these were most probably Owen’s last verses, a refusal to speak about his comrades. In the “Preface” he had renounced the epic as an invalid form to express “the pity of war” and embraced the elegy instead, but then again he had renounced any sense of consolation. At the end of his short career he makes an exploratory incursion into the epic in order to manipulate it and urge a contrary response, the sense of a lost civilization, a generation without a purpose and no heroes, save the anonymous soldiers. His final line in “Spring Offensive” can be interpreted as a claim for silence. He seems to have come to the end of the road in his struggle to express what until then had been beyond expression.



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# *Espléndida Spark*

In Memoriam  
(1918–2006)

**E**n 1997, Dame Muriel Spark asistió como escritora invitada al XXI Congreso Internacional de AEDEAN, organizado aquel año por los departamentos de Filología Inglesa de la Universidad de Sevilla. Por entonces, a sus 79 años, Spark era reconocida como una de las más brillantes e ingeniosas novelistas británicas vivas, junto con Iris Murdoch y Doris Lessing. En la tarde (lluviosa) del 18 de diciembre, Spark leyó extractos de su cuento “The Executor”. El año anterior había aparecido su vigésima novela, *Reality and Dreams*, y otras dos más—*Aiding and Abetting* (2000) y *The Finishing School* (2004)—saldrían publicadas antes de su muerte el 13 de abril de 2006, cuando aún tenía en proyecto una nueva obra. En el centenario de su nacimiento, el Reino Unido, especialmente Escocia, ha homenajeado su extraordinaria contribución al arte narrativo con una intensa agenda de actos conmemorativos que, en conjunto, nos invitan a (re-)descubrir—como proclama el eslogan de la exposición en la Biblioteca Nacional de Escocia—“The international style of Muriel Spark”: la centralidad esencial del estilo, el alcance de su obra y prestigio, el mundo que conoció, y la vida que atestiguó.

Muriel Sarah Camberg nació en Edimburgo (en el distrito de Morningside) el 1 de febrero de 1918<sup>1</sup>, en el seno de una familia modesta de clase media. Sus padres fueron Bernard Camberg, un ingeniero judío-escocés, y Sarah (née Uezzell), quien conservaba su acento inglés para desazón de la pequeña cada vez que hablaba con otras madres. Su hermano Philip le llevaba cinco años. Nuestra escritora se educó en James Gillespie’s School for Girls, institución en la que el presbiterianismo era la religión oficial. Observadora y creativa, su precoz talento poético logró reconocimiento público (incluyendo una foto en *The Scotsman*). Su novela más célebre, *The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie* (1961), sondea las luces y las sombras de aquel Edimburgo formativo a través de la carismática maestra, a quien una de sus alumnas favoritas traiciona alegando que había inducido a otra joven del grupo a apoyar el bando franquista en España, donde perdió su vida a poco de llegar.

En 1937, marchó de Edimburgo para casarse con S. O. Spark en Rhodesia (hoy Zimbabue). Al año siguiente nació su único hijo, Robin. La progresiva inestabilidad psíquica de su marido hizo imposible la convivencia matrimonial. Ella decidió tramitar el divorcio (lo cual no era fácil bajo la legislación colonial) y volver a Gran Bretaña para implicarse de alguna manera en el conflicto bélico. Sus experiencias en África inspiraron algunos relatos, como “Bang-Bang You’re Dead”, “The Go-Away Bird”, “The Portobello Road” y “The Pawnbroker’s Wife”.

Muriel Spark regresó sola a Gran Bretaña en 1944 y se estableció en Londres, en el Helena Club (el modelo de “May of Teck Club” en *The Girls of Slender Means*, 1965). Durante la Segunda Guerra Mundial, trabajó para los servicios secretos en una estación de radio que emitía “detailed truth with believable lies” mediante la cual se camuflaba “subtle and deadly anti-Nazi propaganda” (Spark 1992,148). A su hijo solo se le permitió regresar en 1945, al finalizar la Guerra. Spark permaneció en Londres, mientras que él fue a vivir con sus abuelos en Edimburgo. Robin fue distanciándose cada vez más de su madre hasta el punto del resentimiento y la hostilidad, lo cual atormentó profundamente a la escritora hasta su muerte—al igual que la deslealtad de algunas amistades, un tema muy recurrente en su obra. En los primeros años de posguerra, Spark desempeñó trabajos diversos en el sector editorial. *Loitering with Intent* (1981) está en parte basada en su paso por la Poetry Society, donde editó *Poetry Review* entre 1947 y 1948, mientras que *A Far Cry from Kensington* (1988) capta el ambiente de Falcon Press.

La época en la que Spark se vio forzada a dejar su puesto en la Poetry Society marcó en gran medida el inicio de su carrera literaria, como nos recuerda su alter-ego, Fleur Talbot, en *Loitering with Intent*:

**The thought came to me in a most articulate way: “How wonderful it feels to be an artist and a woman in the twentieth century.” That I was a woman and living in the twentieth century were plain facts. That I was an artist was a conviction so strong that I never thought of doubting it then or since; and so, as I stood on the pathway in Hyde Park in that September of 1949, there were as good as three facts converging quite miraculously upon myself and I went on my way rejoicing. (Spark [1981] 1985, 19-20)**

Por una parte, su trabajo en aquella institución le abrió algunas puertas. Escribió y editó libros sobre W. Wordsworth, M. Shelley, J. Masefield, y las Brontës<sup>2</sup>. En 1951, “The Seraph and the Zambezi” ganó el concurso de cuentos navideños convocado por *The Observer*, y su primer poemario, *The Fanfarlo, and Other Verse*, fue publicado al año siguiente. Por otra parte, en 1953, Spark leyó la obra teológica de John Henry Newman, por cuya influencia se convirtió al catolicismo. El éxito de la historia corta y una transformación personal confluyeron de forma diferente para dar inicio a su carrera como novelista. Aunque ella se consideraba poeta, cuando Alan Maclean (de la editorial Macmillan) le propuso escribir una novela, Spark aceptó el reto. Con la generosa ayuda económica de algunas personas (entre ellas, de Graham

<sup>1</sup> Spark comienza su historia corta sobre la Primera Guerra Mundial (“The First Year of My Life”) formulando: “I was born on the first day of the second month of the last year of the First World War, a Friday” ([1975] 1997, 274).

<sup>2</sup> La editorial Lumen reimprimió su biografía de Mary Shelley en 2006 como homenaje póstumo a la escritora.

Greene<sup>3</sup>) consiguió concluir *The Comforters*, que apareció en 1957 con buena acogida. El personaje principal, Caroline Rose, se asemeja a su autora. Es una conversa al catolicismo que intenta escribir una novela y sufre alucinaciones<sup>4</sup>. Caroline oye no solo el traqueteo de una máquina de escribir, sino también voces que a su vez están creando una novela a partir de lo que a ella le sucede y los diálogos que mantiene. La estructura metafictiva de *The Comforters* supuso una manifestación temprana del posmodernismo en la ficción británica, si bien su novelística resiste cualquier etiqueta, como apunta Matthew Wickman en su análisis del modernismo y posmodernismo en Spark:

**[...] critics have, unsurprisingly, concluded that the polarities of modernism and postmodernism often inhabit the same text [...]. The same holds true of Spark, whose “hybrid background – part English, part Scottish, part Protestant, part Jewish – [makes] her a diasporic writer with a fluid sense of self”. This bespeaks postmodernism. And yet, her influences – T. S. Eliot and Marcel Proust, to say nothing of Cardinal Newman, gothic fiction, the Celtic Twilight, or the Scottish border ballads – are hardly postmodern in any conventional sense. So Allan Massie, for instance, situates Spark within a post-realist tradition whose work evokes “the fragmented manner in which we perceive reality” – a modern and post-modern convention [...]. (Wickman 2010, 63-64)**

Sorprendentemente para una escritora tan prolífica, cuyo legado literario se extiende a través de seis décadas, Spark nunca se repitió a sí misma, como decía Alex Hamilton en una entrevista con la autora: “She wants every book to be a completely new departure—new form, new theme, new style” (1974, 10). *Robinson* (1958), *The Ballad of Peckham Rye* (1960), y especialmente *Memento Mori* (1959)—hoy un clásico sobre la ancianidad—*The Bachelors* (1960), *The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie* (1961) y *The Girls of Slender Means* (1963), le otorgaron un enorme reconocimiento por parte de la crítica como una de las escritoras más destacadas e innovadoras de su generación. *The Mandelbaum Gate* (1965), galardonada con el James Tait Black Memorial Prize, narra el viaje de Barbara Vaughan (otro personaje converso) por Tierra Santa y los dos sectores de Jerusalén, con el trasfondo histórico del juicio del nazi Adolf Eichmann en 1961<sup>6</sup>.

Spark, que había abandonado Gran Bretaña en 1962 para trabajar en *The New Yorker*, dejó la ciudad de los rasca-cielos y se instaló en Roma en 1967. Su primera nove-

la “italiana”, *The Public Image* (1968), fue nominada al Booker Prize, así como la siguiente (aunque tardíamente en 2010), *The Driver's Seat* (1969), otra obra maestra y un hito en la ficción posmodernista británica. La décima novela de Spark narra las últimas horas de la vida de Lise, quien viaja desde un país del norte (quizás Dinamarca) a un país del sur (probablemente Italia) para materializar su propio asesinato tal y como ella lo había planeado. El narrador relata la secuencia de episodios como si estuviese viendo una película proyectada en una pantalla: con una linealidad cronológica en tiempo presente, solo interrumpida por siete analepsis y otras tantas prolepsis a lo largo del relato. Cuando el lector llega a la parte central de la novela ya sabe que Lise será asesinada y por quién. El foco de atención cambia del quién-lo-hizo (“whodunnit”) al por-qué-lo-hizo (“whydunnit”). El narrador está dotado de una gran capacidad de observación, pero lo ignora todo sobre la trama, los personajes, el espacio y el tiempo. En cambio, Lise toma el control sobre la marcha de los acontecimientos—ella ocupa metafóricamente “el sitio del conductor”—para que estos se desarrollen estrictamente según el plan que ella había ideado. Igualmente muy breve, *Not to Disturb* (1971) es otra novela metafictiva con un complejo entramado intertextual en la que los acontecimientos acaecen de acuerdo con el script que manejan los sirvientes de la mansión de los Klopstock—un anagrama de “stop clock”, como ha sugerido recientemente Mark Currie (2018) en su charla “Alternative Fates and Counterfactuals in Muriel Spark”.

Spark pobló Nueva York de personajes fantasmales en *The Hothouse by the East River* (1973) y noveló el escándalo Watergate dentro de los muros de un convento lleno de micrófonos ocultos en *The Abbess of Crewe* (1974). Las historias de *The Takeover* (1976) y de *Territorial Rights* (1979) transcurren en Italia (en Nemi y Venecia, respectivamente), y están caracterizadas por una visión satírica de la decadencia espiritual y corrupción moral de la sociedad occidental.

A finales de 1979, nuestra escritora se trasladó a Toscana (San Giovanni, provincia de Arezzo) con la escultora Penelope Jardine—su secretaria, amiga, compañera, y finalmente heredera universal.

Para muchos lectores de Spark, su novela autobiográfica y metafictiva *Loitering with Intent* (1981), también nominada para el Booker Prize, rivaliza con *The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie* y *The Driver's Seat* entre sus máximos logros. En *The Only Problem* (1984), profundizó en el tema del sufrimiento de Job (que ya había tratado en *The*

<sup>3</sup> Spark no conocía personalmente a Greene, otro católico converso; pero él había formado parte del jurado que premió “The Seraph and the Zambesi”.

<sup>4</sup> Spark había tomado dexedrina como supresor del apetito, que producía alucinaciones como efecto secundario.

<sup>5</sup> Con la excepción de *Miss Jean Brodie* (y la mayor parte de Robinson), la acción de sus primeras novelas transcurre en el Londres de aquella época.

<sup>6</sup> Su única obra de teatro para la escena, *Doctors of Philosophy*, se estrenó en New Arts Theatre Club (Londres) en octubre de 1962. Spark fue también autora de piezas dramáticas para la radio.

*Comforters*). En sus cinco últimas novelas, *A Far Cry from Kensington* (1988) otra joya autobiográfica, *Symposium* (1990), *Reality and Dreams* (1996), *Aiding and Abetting* (2000) y *The Finishing School* (2004), Spark continuó investigando los desconcertantes entresijos de la realidad—tanto visibles (reales e ilusorios) como invisibles (en la mente, la memoria, lo sobrenatural, lo trascendente, el pasado y el futuro)—y explorando cómo sus patrones caóticos y misterios inextricables pueden ser transferidos al arte narrativo, un arte que, en la pluma de Spark, se distingue por su elegancia y estilo.

En “Edinburgh Born”, un breve ensayo autobiográfico escrito significativamente en 1962, Spark se describió a sí misma como “a constitutional exile”—una persona para quien el sentido del exilio forma parte constitutiva de su ser: “It was Edinburgh that bred within me the conditions of exiledom, and what have I been doing since then but moving from exile into exile? It has ceased to be a fate, it has become a calling” (1962, 180)<sup>7</sup>. Esta percepción que la escritora ofrece de sí misma ha generado bastante controversia en torno al modo de adscribir su obra al canon literario escocés. No obstante, aunque desarrolló toda su carrera fuera de su tierra natal, su obra responde a una formación pura y certeramente escocesa, y refleja una estética identificable con las culturas del norte de Europa. En este sentido, me gustaría sugerir—al menos—paralelismos entre la creatividad narrativa de Spark y la estética del arte gótico (especialmente la arquitectura) que John Ruskin describió en el famoso capítulo “The Nature of Gothic” de *The Stones of Venice* ([1851-53] 1960, 160): lo salvaje (frente a lo civilizado o académico), lo cambiante, el naturalismo (en el empleo de imágenes de la naturaleza), lo grotesco, la rigidez (esa peculiar energía que da tensión al movimiento), y la redundancia (en la manera de utilizar los elementos ornamentales).

La conmemoración en Escocia del centenario del nacimiento de la escritora ha significado en cierta manera su vuelta a Edimburgo, de forma espectral, misteriosa, al más puro estilo Sparkiano. Además de numerosas charlas, talleres, y actos académicos (entre los que cabe destacar el *Muriel Spark Centenary Symposium*, organizado por Gerard Carruthers y Helen Stoddart, y celebrado en la Universidad de Glasgow los días 1 y 2 de febrero, coincidiendo con el cumpleaños de la autora), la editorial Polygon comenzó en noviembre de 2017 la reedición todas sus novelas en orden cronológico de aparición, salvo *A Far Cry from Kensington*, que fue publicada—con bastante sentido común—junto

con sus primeras historias que transcurren en Londres<sup>8</sup>. Un mes antes, en octubre de 2017, Polygon había lanzado, a modo de prelude, el maravilloso libro de Alan Taylor *Appointment in Arezzo: A Friendship with Muriel Spark*. Taylor, que conoció a la escritora en una entrevista y que posteriormente mantuvo con ella una gran amistad, nos presenta no tanto a la artista, sino a la mujer—su carácter sorprendente, sus gustos y aversiones, sus temas de conversación, sus errores, su generosidad, su gran sentido del humor. *Appointment in Arezzo* ha venido a complementar su autobiografía, de un lado el primer volumen, *Curriculum Vitae* (1992), escrito por la propia autora, y de otro lado el segundo volumen, *Muriel Spark. The Biography*, que ella había encargado a Martin Stannard y que tras no poca controversia con la novelista apareció finalmente en 2009 (supervisado por Penelope Jardine) con muy buena acogida por el mundo académico<sup>9</sup>.

Una Muriel Spark mucho más tangible se vislumbró en la exposición de la Biblioteca Nacional de Escocia (8 Dic. 2017–13 Mayo 2018). Además de vestidos emblemáticos y del manuscrito original de *The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie* (prestado por la Universidad de Tulsa para la ocasión), algunos de los objetos exhibidos venían a representar una pequeña muestra de su impresionante archivo personal. Spark siempre había tenido la costumbre de conservar “documentary evidence” (Spark 1992, 11), pero a partir de 1949 lo hizo de forma sistemática. Esta práctica a lo largo de tantos años dio como resultado “a vast archive” (Spark 1992, 185) no solo de su vida, sino de la historia. Puede decirse que, como en una de sus novelas, Spark regresó al fin a Edimburgo espectralmente, materializada en su archivo personal, el más extenso con diferencia de los que conserva la Biblioteca Nacional de Escocia, no muy lejos de su Morningside natal.

Sin embargo, sus restos mortales permanecen en Arezzo, bajo una lápida en la que se lee “Muriel Spark / Poeta / 1918-2006” y dos versos de su poema “Canaan” en versión italiana: “Nessun foglia si ripete / ripetiamo solo la parola”—“ninguna hoja se repite / repetimos solo la palabra”. Aunque “poeta” resulte un término impropio para definir a nuestra novelista, no hay equívoco ni sinonimia ni tropo romántico en el vocablo. Al contrario, “poeta” indica de forma nítida la naturaleza de su mente creadora y de su obra narrativa a la luz del “nevertheless principle”, que Spark acuñó en “Edinburgh Born”, y que describe la contradicción entre la certeza de que un hecho suceda y su realización efectiva:

<sup>7</sup> Este ensayo ha sido reimpreso bajo el título “What Images Return” en varios libros, como en *Memoirs of a Modern Scotland*, editado por Karl Miller (1970: 153-55. London: Faber and Faber) y *The Golden Fleece*, editado por Penelope Jardine (2014: 63-65. Manchester: Carcanet).

<sup>8</sup> En una entrevista con Mariella Frostrup (2018) para BBC Radio 4, Alan Taylor aconsejaba a quien nunca ha leído a Spark “to start with *The Comforters*. Start where she started, and then take them slowly, [...] like a good brandy. Just be careful. Don't glut! And you will age as she aged, and you will see how she developed, and changed, and challenged herself all the time”. En cambio, en la misma entrevista, William Boyd recomendaba empezar por sus cuatro novelas manifestamente autobiográficas—*Jean Brodie*, *Girls of Slender Means*, *Loitering with Intent*, y *A Far Cry*—por su “wonderful texture” y porque están “firmly rooted in real world”.

<sup>9</sup> A pesar de las grandes objeciones por parte de Spark al proyecto inicial de Stannard, ella le aportó generosamente todo tipo de información y detalles, imponiéndole finalmente “no other veto beyond the right to withdraw the imprimatur of ‘authorised biography’” (Stannard 2009, xi).



**[I] am reminded how my whole education, in and out of school, seemed even then to pivot around this word [nevertheless]. My teachers used it a great deal. All grades of society constructed sentences bridged by “nevertheless”. [...] It is my own instinct to associate the word, as the core of a thought-pattern, with Edinburgh particularly. [...] The sound was roughly “niverthelace” and the emphasis was a heartfelt one. I believe myself to be fairly indoctrinated by the habit of thought which calls for this word. In fact I approve of the ceremonious accumulation of weather forecasts and barometer-readings that pronounce for a fine day, before letting rip on the statement: “Nevertheless, it’s raining”. I find that much of my literary composition is based on the nevertheless idea. I act upon it. It was on the nevertheless principle that I turned Catholic. (Spark 1962, 180)**

En efecto, el “nevertheless principle” palpita en la estructura de todas sus novelas. Tal vez podríamos entenderlo mejor si pensásemos en aquellos elementos de la teoría del caos que han servido para explicar la obra literaria, tales como los “atractores extraños” o los “fractales”—esas aparentes repeticiones o duplicidades de situaciones, personajes y objetos esencialmente distintos, como las hojas a las que se hace referencia en la lápida de su tumba. También el “nevertheless principle” sugiere la irrupción de lo sorprendente que altera el curso de los acontecimientos. Además, puede añadirse que Spark se convirtió en novelista en virtud de este principio: ella nunca dejó de recordarnos en numerosas entrevistas que su creatividad literaria se configuró primero, y ante todo, como poeta, y que, cuando escribía narrativa, su mente obraba como la de un poeta, un don que poseía desde pequeña.

Por un lado, su lenguaje es económico, altamente significativo. Spark huye de las descripciones profusas, y opta por la sencillez y la brevedad del estilo de las parábolas bíblicas. Como aspecto destacado de esta economía, Spark sobresale en el control de la distancia narrativa. Sus mejores personajes están elaborados desde la perspectiva externa, haciéndolos accesibles solo a través de los propios acontecimientos, de sus actos, gestos y palabras. Incluso sus narradores homodiégeticos nos hablan más de sus experiencias que de su interioridad. Cuando aquellos narradores provistos de un grado mayor de omnisciencia se pronuncian sobre los personajes, lo hacen mediante pinceladas dispersas que parecen colorear un objeto, un acontecimiento o una frase en un diálogo, más que al personaje en cuestión.

Por otro lado, sus historias reflejan la comprensión de la poesía. Fábula y enunciación se compactan para sondear al ser humano en su dimensión existencial pero desde la constatación de una dimensión transcendente, casi siempre escurridiza en el texto. Este doble ámbito de la realidad—el humano y el transcendente—confiere a la narrativa de Spark cierto grado de abstracción que a menudo nos confunde por la aparente sencillez de su lenguaje y por la intensa trama de sus historias.

De esta doble percepción de la realidad es de donde surge la “verdad” en su obra. Con frecuencia se debate sobre

el alcance de su conversión al catolicismo. Sin entrar a valorar la religiosidad de la autora, me gustaría sugerir que su novelística por encima de todo se afianza firmemente en la visión católica de la historia (tanto cristológica como eclesiológicamente hablando), más que en el adoctrinamiento moral. Por ello, esa doble percepción de la realidad nos ayuda a entender también el controvertido asunto del enjuiciamiento moral por parte de Spark. Sus personajes—moralmente imperfectos como todo ser humano—compiten con la novelista (léase Dios) creando tramas e intrigas a fin de dominar, humillar, o destruir al otro. A veces triunfan en su empeño, como Lise en *The Driver’s Seat* o Robert Leaver en *Territorial Rights*; pero otras muchas veces pierden el control del plan que han puesto en marcha y quedan atrapados en sus propios escenarios, como Sandy Stranger en *Miss Brodie*, o Alexandra en *The Abbess of Crewe*. En ambos casos, es el lector quien ha de interpretar y juzgar. Spark constata la existencia del mal y expone la imperfección de cada sujeto, pero rara vez juzga o condena (al contrario que muchos de sus personajes). Ella nos hace partícipes de una visión de la historia, el mundo y la condición humana desde su óptica privilegiada—consciente del ámbito transcendente que penetra y envuelve la realidad efectiva.

De este doble nivel de observación emana además su finísimo y extraordinario humor irónico: de la diferencia entre lo que el personaje cree ser y lo que el narrador enuncia sobre él de forma sobria y directa. De hecho, la mayor parte de sus novelas exhiben una galería de personajes cuyo denominador común obedece a realzar todos los recursos propios de la comedia, especialmente a partir de 1970, cuando Spark defendió, frente al arte del sentimiento y la emoción, el arte de la sátira y del ridículo para combatir el absurdo y la hipocresía: “Ridicule is the only honorable weapon we have left,” decía en su discurso “The Desegregation of Art” ante la American Academy of Arts and Letters (Spark 1971, 24).

Lo cómico reside no solo en la enunciación sino también en la estructura de sus novelas. Por ejemplo, *Aiding and Abetting* gira en torno a la duplicidad y usurpación de identidades. Dos personajes aseguran ser el séptimo conde Lucan (quien desapareció en 1974 tras asesinar por error a la niñera creyendo que esta era su esposa—un caso muy sonado en Gran Bretaña). Un tercer personaje, Beate Pappenheim, quien en el pasado (y valiéndose de la sangre de su regla) había fingido tener estigmas y poderes curativos, es ahora Hildegard Wolf, una psiquiatra que trabaja en París y a cuya consulta acuden—en sesiones diferentes—los dos condes Lucan, quienes conocen su antigua identidad.

Cuando el timo de Beate salió a luz, ella huyó de su Alemania natal y vino a refugiarse en Ávila, en la tierra de auténticos místicos—santa Teresa de Jesús y san Juan de la Cruz. Esta breve referencia a Ávila y al Hotel Paradiso en Madrid en *Aiding and Abetting* son los pasajes más extensos de las escasísimas veces que Spark menciona España o el mundo hispano en sus novelas o cuentos. Según Stannard, ella visitó Madrid en septiembre de 1997

invitada por el British Council (2009, 517), aunque tal vez se trate de una confusión en el mes y en el destino final, y en realidad se refera al viaje de diciembre cuando (auspiciada por dicha institución) intervino en el Congreso de AEDEAN en Sevilla. En cualquier caso, España parece no encontrarse en el mapa ni personal ni literario de Spark. De igual manera, sus novelas han tenido en nuestro país una divulgación muy errática.

A pesar de su renombrado talento innovador, las primeras traducciones en lenguas hispanas vinieron a aparecer en diciembre de 1967, *El punt dolç de la senyoreta Brodie* (en versión censurada), y en enero de 1968, *Las señoritas de escasos medios*. A estas siguieron *Memento Mori* (en Andorra) en 1968, *La imagen pública* en 1970, y *Una mujer al volante* en 1971. En Chile se había publicado *The Comforters* con el título *Los consoladores* (1968), *Miss Brodie* como *La primavera de una solterona* (1968), y *Robinson* (1969). Ninguna llegó a España. En concreto, *Miss Brodie*, por problemas primero con la censura y más tarde con la editorial, no se publicó en castellano hasta mayo de 2006 (un mes después de la muerte de la autora), esta vez con el título *La plenitud de Miss Brodie*; y hubo que esperar hasta 2016 para leer el texto íntegro en catalán. Tras la traducción de *The Driver's Seat* de 1971, la siguiente novela que apareció en castellano fue—dado el éxito—*Loitering with Intent*, con el título *Vagando con aviesa intención*, en 1984. Muy lejos de *Kensington* y *El banquete* se tradujeron puntualmente, pero no será hasta la segunda década del siglo XXI cuando asistamos a un auge editorial de la obra de Spark en España con *Los solteros* y *La abadesa de Crewe*, y nuevas traducciones de *Memento Mori*, *Girls of Slender Means* y *The Driver's Seat*.

¿Cómo se percibe a Muriel Spark desde la óptica de la traducción? Francisco García Lorenzana y Pepa Linares nos han regalado amable y generosamente parte de su tiempo para hablarnos de sus impresiones y recuerdos tras haber traducido a Spark.

En 2010, la editorial Plataforma publicó la cuarta traducción al español de *Memento Mori*, hoy día todo un clásico de la representación de la ancianidad en literatura. Nos dice su traductor, Francisco García Lorenzana:

*Cuando Jordi Nadal, editor de Plataforma Editorial, me encargó la traducción de Memento Mori, Muriel Spark era para mí más una referencia literaria que una autora leída. La recordaba de referencias en historias de la literatura y reseñas críticas, pero no me había adentrado en sus textos. A pesar de ello, era consciente de su importancia para la literatura escocesa, británica y universal, de manera que la primera gran sorpresa fue descubrir a través del ISBN que su obra estaba muy poco traducida al castellano (ni a las demás lenguas cooficiales del estado). Se trata claramente de una autora más elogiada por los expertos, que leída por el público interesado en la literatura en mayúsculas. De hecho, esta circunstancia encajaba con la orientación de la colección más literaria de la editorial, centrada en ofrecer al lector hispano unos pocos títulos muy escogidos, que amplían el panorama de autores, géneros y temas a disposición del público.*

*Una vez enfrentado al texto, lo que destacaría por encima de todo es la sencillez. Una sencillez engañosa porque no es el resultado de la simpleza sino de un gran trabajo de elaboración y, si se me permite el término, refinación de la escritura, que da la impresión que escribir como lo hace Muriel Spark es muy fácil y está al alcance de cualquiera de nosotros, que podría escribir una novela como Memento Mori de un tirón si nos pusieramos a ello. Pero precisamente esa forma de escribir es la más difícil de todas, porque requiere precisar el lenguaje, economizar las palabras e ir al fondo del significado de las mismas. Posiblemente ese aspecto, junto con la sensibilidad irónica con la que se desarrolla la trama, son los dos aspectos que representaron las mayores dificultades de la traducción. No traicionar el original, complicando el lenguaje, y el intento de conservar la fina ironía en el tratamiento de los personajes y las situaciones fueron los aspectos que me llevaron más tiempo hasta conseguir el tono adecuado en el texto en castellano.*

*En cuanto a la historia que relata la novela, me sorprendió la gran sensibilidad con la que la autora fue capaz de retratar la vejez, o mejor dicho, las diferentes maneras de vivir y disfrutar o padecer de las circunstancias favorables o adversas de esta etapa final de la vida; sobre todo si tenemos en cuenta que fue escrita originalmente en 1959, una época en la que aún no se había popularizado el lenguaje médico para definir y clasificar las dolencias de la edad (Alzheimer, Parkinson, etc.), pero cuyos rasgos más característicos podemos reconocer en algunos de los personajes.*

*En definitiva, Memento Mori y Muriel Spark fueron un descubrimiento como lector y todo un reto como traductor.*

*The Driver's Seat* fue traducida por Andrés Bosch con el título *Una mujer al volante*, publicada por Lumen en 1971. En 2011, volvía a ser narrada en castellano por Pepa Linares, esta vez con el título *El asiento del conductor*, publicada por Contraseña, y seguida en 2012 por *La abadesa de Crewe*, también en versión de Pepa Linares, quien recuerda:

*Si todo texto crece al pasar del inglés al español y, en general, a cualquier lengua románica, este (El asiento del conductor) debía crecer lo menos posible para no empañar la nitidez, la precisión quirúrgica con que la autora alcanza un máximo de expresión con un mínimo de retórica, una información hiperrealista y detallada del universo que describe con un mínimo de recursos, y, naturalmente, para que no se perdiera en la traducción ni un ápice de esa ironía tan suya, que consigue muy especialmente con una variada y riquísima serie de analogías verdaderamente inspiradas y audaces. Todo lo cual produce un ritmo frenético, que, como ha dicho algún crítico, se parece al de un tranvía sin frenos que se precipita echando chispas. Pocas veces he sentido yo que un texto me llevara como este, literalmente arrastrada, con la lengua fuera.*

*La abadesa de Crewe es otra cosa. La novela es más ligera, con menor densidad en los personajes y las situaciones, y con más diálogos. La mayor dificultad en su caso fue buscar y a veces traducir la enorme cantidad de citas: la Regla de San Benito, alguna balada escocesa, varios salmos bíblicos y un buen número de poetas; entre ellos, Andrew Marvell, John Milton, Gerard Manley Hopkins, Yeats, Ezra Pound, Walter de la Mare, etc.*

La edición de *El asiento del conductor* llevaba un breve ensayo (“Los dados de la muerte regresan al cubilete”) a modo de prólogo escrito por Eduardo Lago. En la primera parte, y tal vez inspirado por la singular estructura temporal del relato Sparkiano, Lago ofrecía una nota biográfica de la autora que comenzaba por su fallecimiento y terminaba con una estampa imaginaria de su nacimiento. En este año de su centenario, las palabras de Lago resultan, si cabe, aún más evocadoras:

No hay constancia de lo que pensaron Bernard y Sarah cuando la comadrona los dejó a solas con aquella singular criatura en cuya cabeza se encerraba el germen de los cientos de historias que el destino reservó para que las contara ella. Sus padres tampoco podían saber por qué aquel bebé de mirada alerta y rasgos delicados pero firmemente definidos daba muestras de impaciencia. Solo a alguien que hubiera podido viajar desde el futuro hasta aquella modesta habitación después de haberse adentrado en los mundos a los que la niña daría forma en sus novelas le habría resultado posible entender el porqué de aquella extraña inquietud. (Lago 2011, 15)



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***Matti  
Rissanen,  
the linguist,  
the friend***

In Memoriam





*Matti Rissanen at  
ICAME-28 (2007),  
in Stratford-upon-Avon.  
(Photo: Sebastian Hoffmann).*

**L**ast January the English historical linguistics and the corpus linguistics communities were deeply saddened to learn of Matti Rissanen's passing, at the age of 80. Matti Junahi Rissanen was born on 23 June 1937 in Viipuri and died on 24 January 2018 in Vantaa. A lecturer and researcher at the University of Helsinki since the late 1960's, he retired in 2001, when he became Professor Emeritus of English Philology at his alma mater. In 1995 he also founded and became the first director of VARIENG, the Research Unit for Variation, Contacts and Change in English, appointed by the Academy of Finland as a Centre of Excellence from 2000 to 2011. After his retirement, Prof. Rissanen remained a very active member of VARIENG, producing first-rate research on a variety of topics, encouraging, inspiring, and assisting junior scholars and visitors at the Research Unit, and "spreading the word" at conferences, workshops, and seminars world-wide, just as he always did.

Author of over one hundred journal articles, book chapters, handbook contributions, and (co)edited volumes, during his long and productive academic life Rissanen's research interests were as wide as his knowledge of all periods in the history of the English language, from its earliest stages to the present day: from the Old English numeral one, the topic of his PhD dissertation (1967), to the origin of the Southern English Standard in the Late

Middle and Early Modern English periods or to Early American English (he was part of the international team that re-edited the *Records of the Salem Witch-Hunt*; cf. Rosenthal 2009). Given the obvious limitations of space, the list of selected publications provided below does not do sufficient justice to Rissanen's extensive academic production; for a more comprehensive account of his publications, research activities, and projects, the reader is referred to the University of Helsinki research portal ([https://tuhat.helsinki.fi/portal/en/persons/matti-rissanen\(7a2f33ca-9a3a-4d2e-a570-edfc1168d61f\).html](https://tuhat.helsinki.fi/portal/en/persons/matti-rissanen(7a2f33ca-9a3a-4d2e-a570-edfc1168d61f).html)). However, special mention should be made here of his by now classic chapter on the syntax of Early Modern English in volume III of *The Cambridge History of the English Language* (1999), as well as his many influential works on an area very closely related to our own research, namely the history of English connectives from the perspective of grammaticalization, a topic on which he worked until the very last days of his life (cf. his 2018 article on *ere* and *before*). In this domain, we all learnt from him a good deal about the origin and development of linking words such as *besides* (2004a), *till* (2007), and *considering that* (2014a), among many others.

A major landmark in Rissanen's career was undoubtedly the release in 1991 of the Helsinki Corpus of English Texts (HC), a project launched under his leadership at the Department of English of the University of Helsin-

ki in 1984. The HC is a 1.5-million-word multi-genre corpus, which spans the time from the earliest written records of English back in the 8th century through to the year 1710. Though a rather small corpus by modern standards (in contrast with more recent mega-corpora, comprising several hundred million words), the HC represented a real breakthrough in the history of (English) corpus linguistics when it was published in the early 1990's and set the stage for the compilation of further historical corpora. Even nowadays it still remains an excellent resource for diagnostic studies over the long diachrony of English. And if Fischer, De Smet and van der Wurff (2017: 12) rightly define the HC as "[t]he mother

leadership of Matti Rissanen" (Leech and Johansson 2009, 18) that the (originally) International Computer Archive of Modern English changed its name in 1996 to that of the International Computer Archive of Modern and **Medieval** English, while keeping the old acronym. As Jan Svartvik, one of the founding fathers of ICAME, put it, "[i]n persuading Matti Rissanen [...] to take over the post as Coordinating Secretary, Stig Johansson suggested that the letter 'M' in ICAME should stand for both 'Modern' and 'Medieval' -alternatively, the acronym can now be pronounced with a typically Finnish long consonant: ICAMME" (Svartvik 2007, 23). Rissanen's profound and lasting imprint on ICAME is such that



*Matti Rissanen, Ossi Ihalainen and Merja Kytö presenting the Helsinki Corpus Project at ICAME-8 (1987), in Helsinki (Photo: Helsingin Sanomat; with thanks to VARIENG).*

of all diachronic English corpora", Rissanen was indeed the "father" of the HC.

In view of his many achievements, Rissanen was awarded several distinguished honours and prizes, including an honorary doctorate from the University of Uppsala, Sweden (2001), honorary memberships of the Modern Language Society, the Japan Association for English Corpus Studies, and the International Society of Anglo-Saxons, as well as an honorary award from the Finnish Academy of Science and Letters (2007) and the Alfred Kordelin Prize (2012). He also served as president of the Societas Linguistica Europaea (1998).

It is however to ICAME, the International Computer Archive of Modern and Medieval English, that Rissanen's name will always remain most strongly attached. He joined ICAME in 1984, became a member of its Advisory Board at the 7th conference of the association held in Amsterdam in 1986, organized the 8th conference the following year at Hanasaari (near Helsinki), where ICAME returned for its 27th conference in 2006, and became Chair of the ICAME Board in 1996. It was precisely in recognition of the "flourishing of historical corpus work, which was in large measure due to the inspired

after leaving the Board in 2004, he was awarded "honorary life membership" of the organization in 2006, on account of "outstanding service to the field, outstanding scholarship and/or dedication to the creation of corpus material" (ICAME Constitution §3.3). Rissanen was indeed "an exceptional scholar –and a true "ICAMer" right from the outset" (Hoffmann, Kytö, Nevalainen and Taavitsainen 2018, 7).

Rissanen's contributions to academia are undoubtedly very telling of his scholarly height as a pioneer of corpus linguistics and of the use of computers in the humanities, but there was also a great man behind the linguist. When Matti passed away, colleagues from all over the world left messages with their tributes on the VARIENG website and on those of the various academic organizations to which he belonged. If one were to compile a "corpus" with those messages and commentaries and run a "concordance" for all the words in those texts, the adjectives *kind*, *friendly*, *warm-hearted*, *optimistic*, *supportive*, and *positive* would definitely rank very high in frequency, and would have *expert*, *inspirational*, *authoritative*, *great scholar*, and *philologist* within their "window of collocates". He was indeed a great professional, because he was also a remarkable human being.



*Matti Rissanen  
and María José  
López-Couso  
at ICAME-30  
(2009), in  
Lancaster (Photo:  
Belén Méndez-  
Naya).*



One of the features we all remember in Matti is how extremely encouraging he was with young scholars. Both of us met him at the foundational conference of the European Society for the Study of English (ESSE), held in Norwich in 1991, our first international conference. We, PhD students at the time, were really excited to meet the people behind the book chapters and journal articles we had to read for our dissertations; and among them, in the History of English panel, was Matti Rissanen. It was also at that conference that a revolutionary new resource, which was to literally change our lives as historical linguists, was introduced for the first time to the linguistic community: in one of the book presentation slots at the conference, Matti Rissanen (Project leader), accompanied by Merja Kytö (Project secretary), presented the Helsinki Corpus. We can still remember Matti and Merja, producing the floppy disk which contained the “treasure” and showing the corpus to the amazed audience in one of those bulky computers of the time. One could now search 1.5 million words of historical English belonging to different genres with a click of the mouse; how different from the old index cards with hand-written examples! But even though Matti was an enthusiast of computers, new resources, and electronic tools, he always made it clear that technology cannot replace the linguist, the philologist who must be behind the analyses and who must discover the patterns in the automatically searched concordances and word lists. This is a maxim we learnt from Matti a long time ago and one that we have passed on to generations of students since then.

ESSE-1 in Norwich was just the first of the many conferences we were destined to share with Matti in the future, year after year, everywhere in Europe (various editions of ICEHL and, especially, ICAME, so dear to him), and also in Spain: SELIM-11 in Vigo (1998), CILC-12 in Jaén (2012), and especially ICEHL-11 (2000), NRG-3 (2005), and ICAME-34 (2013), all three events organ-

ized in Santiago de Compostela by our research group *Variation, Linguistic Change, and Grammaticalization* (VLCG). It was always a great pleasure to see him again and receive his friendly hello hug. At conferences Matti would share his scholarship and his energy, no matter whether he was a plenary speaker, a contributor to a panel or to a workshop, or a poster presenter. We still remember how enthusiastic he was when he introduced the Corpus Resource Database (CoRD; <http://www.helsinki.fi/varieng/CoRD/>) at a poster presentation at ICAME-29 (Ascona, 2008). Because another of his personal traits was his deep humility: he was eager to hear what younger scholars had to say and was always receptive to the comments and suggestions other colleagues would make about his own work. He was the important professor who would not hesitate to accompany these two (then) young scholars to the stationery shop to buy stamps in our first visit to Helsinki for a research stay in 1998, to make sure that we got by with our almost non-existent Finnish. Over the last twenty years we have had several opportunities to share some time with Matti in Helsinki and elsewhere. The last occasion we saw him was precisely at the ICAME-34 conference we organized in Santiago in 2013, but after that we would always get his warm regards through his Helsinki colleagues and receive his and his wife Eeva's Christmas greetings every year.

Matti Rissanen's death last January left the community of historical linguists and the ICAME family of corpus linguists orphaned. However, as was made clear in the tributes paid to him at the ICAME-39 conference in Tampere (Finland) last May and at the ICEHL-20 conference in Edinburgh (UK) in August, our sadness for his loss has now, some months after his passing, turned into gratefulness for having had the privilege of meeting such a great scholar and a lovely man, a true maestro in scholarship and life, who we will always remember with a smile. Kiitos, Matti.



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BEGOÑA BELLÉS-FORTUÑO  
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***Deborah  
S. Schiffrin  
(1951-2017)***

**In Memoriam**

**P**rofessor Emerita Deborah Sue Schiffrin passed away early on the morning of Thursday July 20, 2017 at the age of 66. It was indeed a sad day for academia and researchers in the field of linguistics and discourse analysis.

I can still remember how I discovered Deborah Schiffrin and her work, I was a quite novel researcher at that time getting immersed in the field of discourse analysis and the study of discourse markers. I was determined to analyse spoken discourse for my PhD thesis and my options were not many. Professor Schiffrin's masterpiece *Discourse Markers*, published in 1987 by Cambridge University Press and based on her dissertation, soon began to be my work of reference par excellence. -I am holding the yellowish book in my hands while writing these words. No one involved in the field of discourse analysis nowadays can deny that Schiffrin's seminal book *Discourse Markers* opened a new dimension to the analysis of discourse and communication in academia; she coined a term that soon became used by the academic community and, at the same time, discourse analysis became a subfield of study within linguistics that gained place and interest among researchers. Soon after *Discourse Markers*, in 1994, she launched a second book that also became a benchmark in the academic community, this was *Approaches to Discourse*, where she approached the study of conversation unveiling the fascinating problems of the analyses of everyday real language in context. Another valuable contribution to the field of discourse analysis and already in the 21st century is *Schiffrin's Handbook of Discourse Analysis* (2001), co-edited with her colleagues Heide Hamilton and Deborah Tannen.

She was a member of the Georgetown University in Washington DC, (USA) for over 30 years where she lectured countless on sociolinguistics, pragmatics, discourse analysis, language interaction, narrative analysis, grammar in interaction, language and identity, and discourse and history. As she herself showed her students, her aim was to teach "the study of language in text and context". Her firm intention was to teach students the eight different approaches to discourse analysis developed from disciplines as varied as Linguistics, Sociology, Anthropology, Critical Theory, and Philosophy. She initiated the Masters in Language and Communication while being the department chair at Georgetown University (2003-2009), where her interests for communication gave path to courses on data gathering methodologies to analyse spoken discourse. She sharply defined the scientific

methods to produce valid scientific results in linguistics. She taught her students the importance of participant observation in speech acts, the possible problems encountered for data gathering, the correct/incorrect use of surveys, data coding, the identification of variables or the production of quantitative analysis, establishing a school and leaving a splendid legacy for future researchers in the field of discourse analysis.

Along the years she devoted an increasing attention to Narrative Analysis and became interested in life stories and oral histories; she pointed out the importance of narratives about major historical events to convey evaluative and referential information unveiling discourse identities. Specifically, she analysed personal narratives told by survivors of the Holocaust, while working on her project *Multiple Interviews with Holocaust Survivors*, and Japanese American survivors of the United States' internment camps. After this, she became a very caring fellow at the Centre for Advanced Holocaust Studies. Relevant publications related to this period are many, however, we could highlight here the articles "Language, experience and history: What happened in World War II" (2001) published in *Journal of Sociolinguistics*, "Language and public memorial: 'America's concentration camps'" (2001) published in *Discourse and Society* and a later work included in *Discourse Studies* with the title "Retelling the turning point of a narrative of danger" (2004).

She admired and closely followed the work of William Labov and Erving Goffman. In fact, Labov supervised a young Deborah Schiffrin when she was writing her PhD thesis at the University of Pennsylvania (1982). She even stated at some point that Labov and Goffman as well as Noam Chomsky had deeply influenced her academic career.

Throughout her career, Deborah Schiffrin wrote innumerable articles and very appreciated monographies. She supervised many fruitful dissertations and participated in a large number of academic boards. She also acted as an editorial member of prestigious academic journals such as *Language in Society*, *Journal of Pragmatics* or *Language and Communication*, among others. She lectured her students at university intensively and with enthusiasm. Thanks to her intense and valuable work she gained a relevant international position in the field of discourse analysis. Fortunately for us, her legacy on *Discourse Markers* and *Narrative Analysis* is still alive thanks to the many publications that continue to be written nowadays.



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# ***El lenguaje según M.A.K. Halliday***

**E**l pasado 15 de abril, a la edad de 93 años, fallecía en Sídney, Australia, el gran lingüista de origen británico Michael Alexander Kirkwood (M.A.K) Halliday. Halliday es mundialmente conocido en el ámbito de la lingüística por el desarrollo de la teoría denominada *Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL)*. En las páginas que siguen esbozaré los principales aspectos de su propuesta y las razones por las que ha tenido tan gran impacto en la lingüística contemporánea y en aplicaciones tales como la enseñanza de lenguas o la traducción.

Halliday fue alumno del lingüista británico J. R. Firth, hasta el punto de que Butler y González-García (2014, 44) consideran sus ideas una reinterpretación del trabajo del anterior. Tanto Firth como el propio Halliday recibieron una significativa influencia del antropólogo Bronislaw Malinowski. Así, por ejemplo, en su obra “The Problem of Meaning in Primitive Languages”, Malinowski defiende que, en el estudio de las culturas primitivas, el problema de elucidar la noción de significado “lead[s] from the mere linguistic into the study of culture and social psychology” ([1923] 1946, 296). Para Malinowski, el lenguaje es un modo de acción dentro de un contexto o cultura determinados. Como señala Martín Miguel (1998, 20), Halliday reconoce la influencia de este autor o de sociólogos como Bernstein en la orientación socio-cultural de la SFL hasta el punto de llegar a considerar la lingüística como una rama de la sociología. Así, Halliday (1970) nos recuerda que las funciones que una lengua cumple son específicas a cada cultura y que, por tanto, no es aceptable el estudio del lenguaje aisladamente de los usos culturales y sociales que cumple, aunque, por supuesto, considera que en cierto nivel de abstracción es bien posible aislar funciones comunes a todas las lenguas.

En consecuencia, para Halliday, el lenguaje es prioritariamente un fenómeno social que surge en el contexto de una comunidad y que contribuye en gran medida a establecer cohesión social. Por ese motivo, el contexto de uso y la función del lenguaje en sociedad resultan fundamentales en su metodología. En su obra más conocida, *An Introduction to Functional Grammar*, originalmente publicada en 1985, el autor explica que su modelo es funcional en cuanto pretende explicar cómo se usa el lenguaje y cómo su organización se deriva de los usos que ha de satisfacer:

**It is functional in the sense that it is designed to account for how the language is used. Every text — that is, everything that is said or written — unfolds in some context of use; furthermore, it is the uses of language that, over tens of thousands of generations, have shaped the system. Language has evolved to satisfy human needs; and the way it is organised is functional with respect to these needs — it is not arbitrary. A functional grammar is essentially a ‘natural’ grammar, in the sense that everything in it can be explained, ultimately, by reference to how language is used. ([1985] 1994, xiii)**

De esta cita se desprende un funcionalismo radical al negar, por un lado, la existencia de arbitrariedad en la lengua (aunque esto se matiza a continuación) y al afirmar que el objetivo de la lingüística es comprender cómo se usa el lenguaje y cómo las estructuras sirven para transmitir significado en el contexto comunicativo y en ningún caso caracterizar el sistema gramatical de forma independiente de su uso (lo cual sería propio de un enfoque formalista). Para Halliday los signos lingüísticos son efectivamente arbitrarios, pero la gramática responde de forma natural a la relación que establece con el mundo. Así, por ejemplo, la existencia de verbos y nombres, presumiblemente en todas las lenguas del mundo, es un reflejo de la existencia de participantes y procesos en la experiencia extra-lingüística. La gramática, por tanto, ha evolucionado para expresar significado de forma natural, en cuanto que se puede establecer una relación icónica entre ella y los significados que expresa.

En consonancia con esa línea sociológica, Halliday considera el lenguaje como “a system of meanings accompanied by form” y la gramática como un conjunto de opciones de carácter convencional compartidas por una comunidad de individuos que permiten expresar significado. La gramática ofrece así un potencial de significación que los hablantes pueden utilizar en función de sus fines comunicativos. Halliday lo expresa del siguiente modo:

**Systemic theory is a theory of meaning as choice, by which a language, or any other semiotic system, is interpreted as networks of interlocking options: ‘either this, or that, or the other’, ‘either more like the one or more like the other’, and so on. Applied to the description of a language, it means starting with the most general features and proceeding step by step so as to become even more specific: ‘a message is either about doing, or about thinking, or about being (...)’. Whatever is chosen in one system becomes the way in to a set of choices in another, and we go on as far as we need to, or as far as we can in the time available, or as far as we know how. ([1985] 1994, xiv); (véase también 1970, 142)**

El formalismo gramatical consiste en redes de sistemas en las que se desciende desde los niveles más altos de organización textual y sintáctica hasta alcanzar el léxico. Halliday enfatiza la pertinencia de estudiar cómo el contexto determina o favorece la elección de determinadas estructuras lingüísticas. Del predominante papel social del lenguaje se deriva un aspecto fundamental de esta teoría y algo en lo que se diferencia de modo sustancial de la mayor parte de modelos gramaticales contemporáneos: su orientación paradigmática y su arquitectura descendente.

Al inicio de la construcción de un acto de habla, los hablantes han de tomar elecciones básicas (demandar información, ofrecer información, realizar una propuesta de acción, etc.) que abrirán nuevas redes de opciones hasta, incluso, la elección final del vocabulario. El ejemplo más típico de la aplicación de las redes de sistemas al estudio

del lenguaje aparece en el denominado sistema de *transitividad*, que agrupa los medios gramaticales en los que se recogen los diferentes eventos, procesos, sucesos o estados en que se segmenta la realidad (Halliday 1970).

Las redes de opciones que ofrece el lenguaje se relacionan con las funciones básicas del mismo que se reflejan en su propia estructura. Halliday las denomina “metafunciones”:

**[t]he fundamental components of meaning in language are functional components. All languages are organised around two main kinds of meaning, the ‘ideational’ or reflective, and the ‘interpersonal’ or active. These components, called ‘metafunctions’ in the terminology of the present theory, are the manifestations in the linguistic system of the two very general purposes which underlie language: (i) to understand the environment (ideational), and (ii) to act on the others in it (interpersonal). Combined with this there is a third metafunctional component, the ‘textual’, which breathes relevance into the other two. (1994, xiii)**

Precisamente, estas metafunciones ideacional, interpersonal y textual son una de las aportaciones más interesantes del modelo, aunque el autor (1970, 143) reconoce que las dos primeras están tomadas del sociólogo Bernstein. Pero quizás lo más relevante de esta propuesta es la relación que estas tres metafunciones del lenguaje mantienen con los parámetros de contexto social que identifica el autor. Como quedara dicho, de la orientación sociológica del modelo de Halliday se deriva también un interés por el estudio del contexto social y cultural en el que se produce el fenómeno lingüístico. Halliday distingue tres parámetros dentro del contexto social: *field of discourse*, *tenor of discourse* y *mode of discourse*. El primero se refiere al tipo de actividad o relación social que tiene lugar durante el proceso comunicativo. El *tenor of discourse*, por su parte, hace referencia a los participantes en el proceso comunicativo y sus relaciones sociales. Finalmente, *mode of discourse* refiere al tipo de lenguaje empleado y al canal de transmisión. En su conjunto, estos tres parámetros definen un interesante marco para el estudio de las relaciones entre el sistema lingüístico y el social. La correspondencia quedaría como sigue:

- (1)            **field of discourse → función ideacional**  
                  **tenor of discourse → función interpersonal**  
                  **mode of discourse → función textual**

Esta correspondencia es relevante, ya que cada uno de los parámetros tendría influencia sobre una red de elecciones relativa a cada una de las metafunciones del lenguaje. Por ejemplo, teniendo en cuenta que la función ideacional se recoge casi en su totalidad por medio del sistema de transitividad, nos hallamos ante una propuesta que postula la existencia de una relación directa entre el contexto social

y cultural en que se desarrolla el proceso comunicativo y la codificación lingüística.

El funcionalismo de Halliday alcanza su máxima expresión en su metodología de análisis gramatical, ya que considera que el estudio de los fenómenos gramaticales debe partir de la premisa de que el lenguaje está organizado funcionalmente para satisfacer la comunicación y que, por tanto, cada unidad gramatical debe estudiarse con referencia a su aportación dentro del conjunto del sistema:

**[e]ach element in a language is explained by reference to its function in the total linguistic system. In this third sense, therefore, a functional grammar is one that construes all the units of a language — its clauses, phrases and so on — as organic configurations of functions. In other words, each part is interpreted as functional with respect to the whole. ([1985] 1994, xiv)**

Pero quizás el motivo principal del éxito de la SFL, más allá de ofrecer un marco teórico para el estudio científico del lenguaje, reside en su aplicabilidad a diferentes usos prácticos, como la enseñanza de lenguas, la traducción y el análisis del discurso. En su monumental obra sobre el panorama lingüístico cognitivo-funcional, Butler y González García (2014) muestran, a través de las respuestas a diferentes cuestionarios por parte de destacados lingüistas, cómo la SFL es prácticamente la única teoría funcional-cognitiva para la que la aplicabilidad a otras disciplinas supone un criterio de calidad. De hecho, el propio Halliday ([1985] 1994) enumera las diferentes aplicaciones de la teoría lingüística entre las que menciona el proporcionar ayuda a traductores e intérpretes, facilitar la enseñanza y aprendizaje de idiomas o comprender la calidad de un texto al lado de (y por tanto quizás al mismo nivel que) otros más generales y probablemente aceptados por cualquier lingüista, tales como entender la naturaleza del lenguaje y su evolución o identificar las propiedades comunes de todas las lenguas. Así, la propuesta de Halliday es inspiradora o, al menos, compatible con los principales enfoques a la enseñanza de una segunda lengua que surgen en los años setenta como reacción a modelos pedagógicos de corte estructural. Del mismo modo, la teoría ha servido como base para la creación de gramáticas para la enseñanza del inglés, como la publicada por Downing y Locke (1992), ganadora del Duke of Edinburgh's Award en 1993, que ha alcanzado ya su tercera edición. Asimismo, Butler (2003a, 47) señala que la lingüística sistémica es una de las teorías funcionales más orientadas al texto, para lo que encuentra antecedentes en la influencia de Malinowski y Firth. En realidad, es el texto, que Halliday considera una entidad semántica, la unidad de estudio básica en la teoría y, de hecho, su obra de 1985 presenta como objetivo la construcción de una gramática para el análisis del texto. Igualmente, autores como Fairclough (1993) reconocen la influencia de la obra de Halliday en el desarrollo del Análisis Crítico del Discurso que claramente entronca con la importante derivación de la propia SFL, a través de la denominada

escuela de Sidney (Martin 1992), hacia el estudio detallado de las propiedades del texto. El interés hallidayano en las propiedades del discurso y la cultura o sociedad en la que se enmarca, encuentra también fácil acomodo en modelos teóricos de la traducción y son varios los autores dentro de esta disciplina que han encontrado inspiración en Halliday (véase Butler 2003b, capítulo 5 para una visión general de las aplicaciones de la SFL en diferentes áreas).

A mi modo de ver, aquí reside la mayor aportación y originalidad de Halliday: no ya en el enfoque funcional al estudio del lenguaje, que también defienden otros varios autores y escuelas, sino en la aplicabilidad de la teoría a usos socialmente útiles. Ahora bien, quizás esta apuesta ha tenido como consecuencia reducir su capacidad explicativa y la precisión analítica. El formalismo empleado por la teoría no resulta ser lo suficientemente explícito, lo que le ha valido las críticas por parte de tanto lingüistas formalistas como funcionalistas que aspiraban a un mayor grado de rigor analítico. Probablemente por el mismo motivo, los lingüistas sistémicos (quizás con las excepciones de Hudson y Butler) apenas han entrado en debate académico con los lingüistas de otros modelos no ya solo formales, sino incluso funcionales con los que comparten presupuestos básicos. Resulta significativo observar que la obra más conocida de Halliday ([1985] 1994) no contiene referencia alguna a ningún autor en el cuerpo del texto, y solo al final del mismo cita obras de autores de la propia corriente sistémica con el fin de ayudar al lector a profundizar en aspectos de la SFL. Un mayor intercambio académico

con lingüistas de otras corrientes habría, sin duda, ayudado a que la lingüística sistémica alcanzase un mayor rigor en sus análisis gramaticales (véase Butler 2003b, 470) y, sin duda, a otras corrientes a entender la naturaleza funcional del lenguaje y la organización del discurso. Halliday reconoce la importante aportación de Noam Chomsky a la lingüística, pero le critica que el grado de idealización del lenguaje que emplea en su modelo le lleve a separarse de forma radical de lo que la gente verdaderamente escribe o dice. Por el contrario, cabría afirmar que el énfasis en el estudio del lenguaje en contexto y en proveer descripciones gramaticales accesibles y útiles para profesores de segundas lenguas o traductores, impide alcanzar el grado de profundidad o abstracción necesario para comprender las propiedades esenciales del lenguaje humano. De ahí que lo deseable siempre sea un intercambio de ideas y debate académico fructíferos, mucho más en el caso de figuras tan importantes de la lingüística contemporánea como las citadas.

Sea como fuere, la importancia de Halliday para la lingüística contemporánea está fuera de toda duda. Su magisterio, humildad y generosidad quedan recogidos en la multitud de emotivos comentarios en las diferentes necrologías publicadas tras su fallecimiento. Muestran con total claridad que nos encontramos ante una figura colosal no solo en el plano académico, sino también humano, y que su pérdida resulta irreparable para la lingüística, por mucho que su legado haya de permanecer durante muchos años como fuente de inspiración para los estudiosos del lenguaje.



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***‘Much Deeper than That’: Hegemonic Emotional Experiences and Affective Dissidences in Martin Crimp’s In the Republic of Happiness (2012)***

British Theatre in the Twenty-First Century: Crisis, Affect, Community



## **Description of the research group “Contemporary British Theatre Barcelona” (CBTBarcelona) and of the project “British Theatre in the Twenty-First Century: Crisis, Affect, Community” (FFI2016-75443, MINECO/FEDER)**

**T**he research group “Contemporary British Theatre Barcelona” (CBTBarcelona), recognised by the Catalan research agency AGAUR (2014 SCG 49 and 2017 SGR 40), has as its main field of research the outburst of theatrical energy and creativity that has, since the early 1990s, decisively contributed to widening the parameters of British theatre. Headed by Prof. Mireia Aragay (University of Barcelona) as Principal Investigator and with a team comprising scholars from the universities of Augsburg, Glasgow, Jaume I and Prague as well as Barcelona itself, the group has completed four research projects since 2002 (three national, one international) and is currently conducting its fifth one, “British Theatre in the Twenty-First Century: Crisis, Affect, Community” (FFI2016-75443, MINECO/FEDER). As indicated by the title, the project investigates the topics of “crisis”, “affect” and “community” in relation to the work of both established and emergent British playwrights in

the 21st-century, taking as a starting point the “affective turn” that has recently taken place in the humanities and in theatre studies. The two principal outputs of the research project will be two essay collections on the topics of “affect” and “crisis”, co-edited by Mireia Aragay, Cristina Delgado-García and Martin Middeke and by Clara Escoda, Enric Monforte, José Ramón Prado and Clare Wallace respectively. As a result of the previous research projects, the group has published the volumes *British Theatre of the 1990s: Interviews with Directors, Playwrights, Critics and Academics* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), *Ethical Speculations in Contemporary British Theatre* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), and *Of Precariousness: Vulnerabilities, Responsibilities, Communities in 21st Century Drama and Theatre* (De Gruyter, 2017), as well as the special issue “Theatre and Spectatorship” of *Journal of Contemporary Drama in English* (May 2016). For further information on the research group, please see <http://www.ub.edu/cbtbarcelona/>.

## **“Deeper than That”: Hegemonic Emotional Experiences and Affective Dissidences in Martin Crimp’s *In the Republic of Happiness* (2012)<sup>1</sup>**

**T**he popularity of therapeutic cultures and discourses of self-help, together with the founding of happiness studies as an academic field, make it possible to speak of a “happiness turn” (Ahmed 2010, 3) in the humanities<sup>2</sup>. In the context of the global financial crisis, and of the ensuing precarity it generated, however, it has become increasingly difficult to define happiness in dominant, capitalist terms, and as linked to the dominant narrative of “advancement, capital accumulation, family, ethical conduct, and hope” (Halberstam 2011, 89), which has been seen to bear “less and less relation to how people can

live” (Berlant 2011, 11). This has given rise to “critiques of happiness” that ask questions about the “happiness wish”, showing happiness is being used “to redescribe social norms as social goods” (Ahmed 2010, 2) and is “part of the regulation of affect conducted within the operation of power” (Butler 2008, 49).

*In the Republic of Happiness*, Crimp’s first musical and one of his most complex plays to date, published after *The City* (2008) and which came in close proximity to his adaptation of *Gross und Klein* (*Big and Small*) (2012) and the opera *Written on Skin* (2012) can be considered

<sup>1</sup> This article was supported by the research project “British Theatre in the twenty-first century: Crisis, affect, community” (FFI2016-75443; MINECO/FEDER, UE), funded by the Spanish Ministry of Economy and Competitiveness (MINECO), with Dr. Mireia Aragay as Principal Investigator, and by the research group “Contemporary British Theatre Barcelona (CBTBarcelona)” (2017 SGR 40), also with Dr. Mireia Aragay as Principal Investigator. The author wishes to thank both Dr. Cristina Alsina and Dr. Mireia Aragay for having offered me the possibility to publish this article.

<sup>2</sup> As feminist scholar Sarah Ahmed asserts, “Happiness Studies is now an academic field in its own right: the academic journal *Happiness Studies* is well-established and a number of Professorships in Happiness Studies exist” (Ahmed 2007/2008, 8).

to have been written under the auspices of a “crisis in the materialistic culture of happiness” (Lipovetsky 2007, 232)<sup>3</sup>, and to dramatize the “pressure exerted by the ideal of personal fulfilment in the ways of perceiving and judging our lives” (Lipovetsky 2007, 323). In the Republic of Happiness has been variously considered as a play that “invest[s] the musical with a more daring and even political significance” (Rousseau 2013, 4), which invites spectators to pay attention to the “self-reflexive associations of signifiers” (Aillot 2016) and coded expressions of consumerist discourses, and as a dystopia that alerts of the “pains of individualism” (Sierz 2012)<sup>4</sup>. In this light, and in reference to the epigraph from Dante’s *Divina Commedia: Paradiso* that opens “Part Three” – “Tu non se’ in terra, sì come tu credi” (“You are not on Earth, as you believe”) – it has also been read as a parodic satire that “makes recourse to the structure of The Divine Comedy in order to represent and also bring to a point of crisis the impossibility of self-realization of an individual [Uncle Bob] who is axiologically driven by the exaltation of the self” (Méndez 2017, 16; emphasis in the original)<sup>5</sup>.

This paper claims that *In the Republic of Happiness* contributes to the aforementioned debate and critique of happiness by dramatizing different “affective scenarios” (Berlant 2011, 9) of consumer capitalism, which suggest the “instability, fragility, and [...] cost” (Berlant 2011, 2) of the dominant happiness discourse, understood in consumerist, neoliberal terms. At the same time, the play presents “failure” (Halberstam 2011, 87) as a counter-hegemonic mode of non-conformity and critique, and through an affective mise-en-scène, it seeks to reinvest the spectators’ bodies with an increased “capacity to act, to engage, and to connect [...] [; with] aliveness and vitality” (Clough 2007, 2), thus disrupting the obviousness of the affective underpinnings of neoliberal consumer capitalism, and the “distribution of the sensible” (Rockhill [2000] 2006, 4) promoted by late capitalist societies

of control or of “spectacle”. Ultimately, the play seeks to invite spectators to imagine different ethical paradigms of individual and collective happiness defined in terms of “possibility” (Ahmed 2010, 222) and “becoming” (Greig and Seigworth 2010, 3; emphasis in the original), instead of as a “duty” (Ahmed 2012, 10)<sup>6</sup>.

I propose, however, that the play’s political force lies above all in its affective view of resistance, which Dominic Cooke took to its full expression in his production of the play for the Royal Court in 2012<sup>7</sup>. As shall be seen, as opposed to the consumer capitalist view of an isolated, individualistic self, which the feminist philosopher Adriana Cavarero has theorized as the “vertical” (2011a, 195), neoliberal self inherited from modernity, *In the Republic of Happiness* invites spectators to conceive of subjectivities that “inclin[e]” (Cavarero 2011a, 195) towards the Other. This article draws on Lauren Berlant and Sarah Ahmed’s affective analyses of happiness in contemporary society, which consider it as a “cluster of promises” (Berlant 2011, 12), and as something that is measured according to our proximity to certain objects, and transposes them into the key of drama. Arguably, Ahmed’s claim that happiness is mediated into an image of the “good life” that opens up specific mechanisms of subject (self) regulation, and Berlant’s similar understanding of the present as a “mediated affect” (Berlant 2011, 4), can crucially contribute to illuminate aspects of contemporary theatre and performance practice and of *In the Republic of Happiness* in particular.

*In the Republic of Happiness* is divided into three parts, “The Destruction of the Family”, “The Five Essential Freedoms of the Individual” and “In the Republic of Happiness”<sup>8</sup>. Part One, which opens with a naturalistic stage setting, presents a family during their Christmas meal that is interrupted by the visit of Uncle Bob, who has come to say good-bye as he and his wife Madeleine

<sup>3</sup> For want of an English translation of Gilles Lipovetsky’s *Le bonheur paradoxal* (2006), from now on, the translations from his book are mine. In French, [Autant de phénomènes qui apparaissent comme le signe d’une [crise de la culture matérialiste du bonheur [...] la pression nouvelle qu’exerce l’idéal d’épanouissement personnel sur les manières de percevoir et de juger notre vie” (2007, 232-223).

<sup>4</sup> From now on, the translations from Julien Aillot’s article are mine. In French: “le spectateur est ainsi amené à être attentif aux associations-réflexes de significants qui font idiomes [...] [faisant entendre les discordances de ce discours consumériste]” (Aillot 2016).

<sup>5</sup> The translation from Albert Méndez is mine. In Catalan: “[L]’obra és un sàtira paròdica ambientada en el context tardo-capitalista] que recupera l’estructura de la *Divina Comèdia* a fi de representar i posar en crisi la impossibilitat de realització d’un individu mogut axiològicament per l’exaltació del jo”.

<sup>6</sup> See Anthony Neilson’s *Narrative* (2014) or Rory Mullarkey’s *Pity* (2018) for other plays that explore the faultlines of contemporary, neoliberal definitions of happiness. *Narrative*, which was commissioned by and ran at the Royal Court from 5 April to 4 May 2013, is about how the Internet is changing our modes of perception. At a given moment, Neilson has one character say that “it’s the times as well: everyone’s told they’re entitled to nothing less than perfect happiness. Soon as that initial state of bliss wears off, they move on” (Neilson 2014, 258). *Pity*, which ran at the Royal Court Theatre from 12 July to 11 August 2018, directed by Sam Pritchard, is a satire that bitterly critiques the privatized, individualist understanding of happiness and well-being.

<sup>7</sup> *In the Republic of Happiness* was first performed at the Royal Court Jerwood Theatre Downstairs on 6 December 2012, directed by Dominic Cooke, where it ran from 6 December 2012 to 19 January 2013, with Michelle Terry and Paul Terry as its protagonist couple, namely, Madeleine and Uncle Bob. It was one of the last projects Cooke took on while still in post as Artistic Director of the Royal Court (Angelaki 2014, 312).

<sup>8</sup> Interestingly, in each part of *In the Republic of Happiness* Crimp seems to revisit a different style in his dramaturgy. In an interview with Aleks Sierz, Crimp recognizes crucial affinities with *The City*, and clarifies that “the fact that the play is being staged at Christmas is not a coincidence” (Crimp 2012b) as he wanted it to follow on from *The City*, “of which the last scene is a Christmas scene” (Crimp 2012b). Thus, whereas in Part One Crimp is “carrying on from where [he] left off at the Christmas moment” (Crimp 2012b), and, like *The City*, he plunges spectators into an apparent naturalism that slowly deconstructs itself, the middle section of the play foregoes the use of specific characters altogether, and has affinities with *Attempts on Her Life*” (Crimp 2012b). Finally, the third part, which is more minimalistic and is set in an empty, echoing space, could be said to return spectators to Crimp’s affective experimentations with light and emptiness in his postdramatic triptych *Fewer Emergencies* (2005).

are leaving for another country. Part Two is composed of five speeches, and the characters' names disappear as the cues are randomly attributed to the actors. In speeches one and five, for instance, called "The Freedom to Write the Script of my Own Life" and "The Freedom to Look Good and Live Forever" respectively, speakers are convinced that they "make [them]selves what [they] [are]" (Crimp 2012a, 41) and that they "write the script" (Crimp 2012a, 43) of their lives<sup>9</sup>. Finally, Part Three dramatizes Madeleine and Uncle Bob's relationship in the foreign country they were about to leave for in Part One, where they seem to have become the heads of a late capitalist, consumerist republic where Madeleine hopes to "mould" (Crimp 2012a, 85) the citizens by singing them the "100% happy song" (Crimp 2012a, 85).

In Part Three, which presents Uncle Bob and Madeleine as heads of a late capitalist "utopia", where both happiness and connectedness are imposed and understood in terms of a technology-ridden, consumerist "society of control" (Massumi 2015, 19) or of "spectacle" (Debord [1967] 2004), Uncle Bob has doubts with regard to the type of society they represent, and performs as a failed man. By presenting Uncle Bob as a "depressed" (Cvetkovich 2012) or failed individual who inhabits the margins of the dominant emotional and normative regimes, the play seeks to interpellate spectators as "response-able" (Lehmann [2006] 2007, 185) witnesses of the underlying contradictions of the dominant model of happiness. Indeed, by staging "negative affects" (Ngai 2005, 3), such as anger, despair and vulnerability, the play seeks to "interrupt the flow of meaning" (Massumi 2015, 8) and "bring about a reconfiguration" (Massumi 2015, 9) of power in relationships. Ultimately, it invites spectators to explore "ways of connecting to others and to other situations" (Massumi 2015, 6), so that a new understanding of happiness can emerge.

The starting point for *In the Republic of Happiness*, indeed, was the awareness, in Crimp's own words, that society "makes us feel angry and vulnerable even when we are materially prosperous" (2013b). As he adds, "the US/UK model of *laissez-faire* liberalism insists that individuals are entirely responsible for their own destiny – while at the same time fabricating needs which – notoriously – can never be met" (Crimp 2013b). Indeed, the play portrays a society where technology, consumer choices, marriage

and family are considered to be axiomatically associated with happiness, even when what Berlant calls the fantasy of the "good life" (2011, 2), after the 2008 financial crisis, is showing signs of attrition. As she puts it,

**the fantasies that are fraying include, particularly, upward mobility, job security, political and social equality, and lively, durable intimacy. The set of dissolving assurances also includes meritocracy, the sense that liberal-capitalist society will reliably provide opportunities for individuals to carve out relations of reciprocity that seem fair and that foster life as a project of adding up to something and constructing cushions for enjoyment. (Berlant 2011, 3)**

In this light, Part One of *In the Republic of Happiness*, which presents the mother, father, grandparents, and the two daughters, Debbie and Hazel, who are having a Christmas meal, strongly questions the "happiness wish" (Ahmed 2010, 2) and, instead, pictures a society that is characterized by precarity and inequality. As Crimp has put it, his aim was to portray a situation of "generational entropy" (Crimp 2012b) or downward social mobility – "the grandparents are the wealthy middle class, who both had good professional standing and a steady income, but their children have moved down the social scale" (Crimp 2012b).

In this respect, in "What Does the Ideal of Happiness Mean", Darrin M. McMahon argues that "happiness has emerged in recent years as a major preoccupation of our time, at once the goal of individual lives and the sole horizon [...] of our modern democracies" (2010, 469)<sup>10</sup>. However, he asks himself what the meaning of our relentless search for happiness is, "if not an avowal of our present discontent?" (McMahon 2010, 486). In his turn, in *Le bonheur paradoxal* (2006) Gilles Lipovetsky adds that in our society "the market rules ever more, there are more incitements to live better; the individual becomes more prominent, there are more demands for happiness" (2006, 307)<sup>11</sup>. Thus, it should not come as a surprise that, to the extent that happiness is defined in terms of the abundance of material and technological goods, anxiety, loneliness, and self-doubt also simultaneously increase.

As shall be seen, *In the Republic of Happiness* radically questions the neoliberal understanding of happiness

<sup>9</sup> As Crimp put it in an interview with Dan Rebellato, "the play began with the middle section, which dramatizes a mentality rather than a situation" (Crimp 2013a). Ironically, Crimp added that what inspired him to write the middle section was Andy Warhol's comment that "in the future everybody will be able to think what they like, and everybody will think exactly the same" (Crimp 2013a). Crimp also mentioned that, when the question arose as to how to stage this middle part, Crimp and Cooke decided "it would have to be about the relationship with the audience" (Crimp 2013a), and they made the actors sit differently each night, and all the actors say all the lines, but depending on where they sat. In Crimp's words, "one night it was four men and four women sitting side by side, and it created strange, different meanings" (Crimp 2013a).

<sup>10</sup> See McMahon (2006) for an exhaustive explanation of the evolution of the concept of happiness, and the appearance of its modern meaning. As he puts it, the modern view of happiness as a right everyone can aspire to developed with the Enlightenment, and it was Protestantism, which "emphasiz[ed] that God's original intention for human beings was that they should be happy here on earth," (McMahon 2010, 476) which first made a "sin" of sadness. The Enlightenment view of happiness, of which the 21st century is a clear inheritor, and which, according to him, clearly favours the spirit of capitalism, understands happiness as "an individual responsibility and choice – subjective, not objective, to be won by personal initiative" (McMahon 2010, 482), and is therefore fraught with problems.

<sup>11</sup> "Toujours plus de marché, toujours plus de stimulation à mieux vivre; toujours plus d'individu, toujours plus d'exigence de bonheur" (2006, 307).

and seeks to deconstruct the link between “happiness and power” (Ahmed 2010, 11), showing that “hierarchies of happiness may correspond to social hierarchies that are already given” (Ahmed 2007-2008, 11). Instead, it shows that happiness functions as an affective, “world-making device” (Ahmed 2007-2008, 11) that brings a very specific, (neoliberal) world into existence.

## **“Everything a Human Being Needs”: Affect, Norms and Power**

*In the Republic of Happiness* shows how affects are mediated by neo-liberal ideological frames into expressions of narcissism and distance from the Other, thus constructing the “vertical” (Cavarero 2011a: 195), individualistic subject of neo-liberalism. As Berlant asserts, “affective responses may be said significantly to exemplify shared historical time” (2011: 15), and affects’ strength comes from the ways they register “the conditions of life that move across persons and worlds” (2011: 16). Indeed, as shall be seen, as opposed to the consumer capitalist view of an isolated, individualistic self, which the feminist philosopher Adriana Cavarero has theorized as the “vertical” (2011a: 195), neo-liberal self-inherited from modernity, the play invites spectators to conceive of subjectivities that “inclin[e]” (Cavarero 2011a: 195) towards the Other.

In the article “Inclining the Subject: Ethics, Alterity and Natality”, Cavarero asserts that, from Kant, to Hobbes and Descartes, to Canetti, the modern self has been constructed as “transparent or opaque, enthralled by the dream of its own autonomy and integrity” (2011b, 16). Cavarero draws on Hannah Arendt’s *The Human Condition* (1958), and mobilizes Arendt’s definition of “inclination” against the traditional Western ideology of individualism through a focus on relationality and dependence. In *The Human Condition*, Arendt regards human beings as equal, and sees birth or natality as “the naked fact of our original, physical appearance” ([1958] 1998, 179), that is, as standing for an essential human condition. As Cavarero explains, taking the new-born as emblematic of the fundamental fact of human vulnerability, Arendt asserts that human beings are “constitutively exposed one to the others, beginning with the initial phase of this appearance: birth” (Cavarero 2011a, 199). Ultimately, therefore, Cavarero expresses the necessity to redefine the subject as being “inclined” (2011b, 17) towards the Other and, moving away from feminist critics who have valued interdependency over dependency, such as Carol Gilligan (1982) or Joan

Tronto (1993), she chooses the unbalanced, unilateral inclination as a new ethical paradigm.

In Part Two, Crimp dramatizes the “mediated affect[s]” (Berlant 2011, 4) of late capitalism through a very poetic song that sings, precisely, of the desire for connection and intensity in a mediated, technological and consumer society. In this song, which is not attributed to any specific character and is located between the first and second speeches of Part Two, a performer explains that s/he’s getting ready to leave “into space” (Crimp 2012a, 46). S/he seeks to convince her/himself, however, that s/he will not be alone so long as s/he has “the latest touch-screen telephone / plus all the different apps and leads” (Crimp 2012a, 46), yet soon admits that it is “cold out there!” (Crimp 2012a, 46), even though she has “a private oxygen supply / –lungs that inflate– a heart that bleeds –/ [...] everything a human being needs” (Crimp 2012a, 46). The intensity and desire for connection denied in late capitalist society are thus solely and poetically projected onto the heart, which, despite its artificiality, “bleeds” (Crimp 2012a, 46) in order to express the affects that are not acknowledged in consumer, late capitalist societies.

Cavarero’s inclining subject resonates with Nancy’s notion of a subject that leans outside itself, “over that edge that opens up its being in common” ([1986] 1991, 4). In *La Communauté Désœuvrée/The Inoperative Community* (1986), Nancy reacts against the advent of neoliberalism subsequent to the failure of Soviet communism, and sets out to question the idea of a homogeneous community, characterized by “common being”, as opposed to “being-in-common”. However, he also questions the traditional theory of individualism, in that it takes the individual as a self-contained, self-sufficient being, when s/he is, he claims, “merely the residue of the experience of the dissolution of community” ([1986] 1991, 3). And, he adds, “the individual can be the origin and the certainty of nothing but its own death” ([1986] 1991, 3)<sup>12</sup>. Thus, Nancy describes the “singular being” as one who, as opposed to the individual, accepts its own finitude, and the community of singular beings as an ethical paradigm. On these terms, “being ‘itself’ comes to be defined as relational, as non-absoluteness, and, if you will [...] as *community*” (Nancy [1986] 1991, 6; emphasis in the original). In consequence, we are all exposed to others, “always turned toward an other and faced by him or her, never facing myself” (Nancy [1986] 1991, xxxvii–xxxviii).

As shall be seen, Uncle Bob, who, in Part Three, addresses Madeleine as a “dispossessed” (Butler and Athanassiou 2013, 3), vulnerable subject, can be said to represent just

<sup>12</sup> In the same line as Cavarero, as shall be seen, Nancy claims that “such an incarnation of humanity, aggregating its absolute being beyond relation and community, depicts the destiny willed by modern thought” ([1986] 1991, 5). Like Cavarero’s notion of inclination, he claims that a community cannot be made “with simple atoms. There has to be a clinamen. There has to be an inclination or an inclining from one toward the other, of one by the other, or from one to the other” ([1986] 1991, 3; emphasis in the original). Affect, which is produced as part and parcel of a process of relating whereby beings exist at all, is thus this “glue” or clinamen Nancy and Cavarero claim is constitutive to the human being.



this “singular being”. In *the Republic of Happiness*, thus, seeks to redefine the self not in terms of “vertical[ity]” (2011a, 195) and possession, but in terms of the acknowledgement of our ontological vulnerability, and the “inclination” (Cavarero 2011a, 195) towards the Other.

## “What Have You Not Got?”: The Materialistic Culture of Happiness

Part One of *In the Republic of Happiness*, which introduces spectators to a family during their Christmas meal as it is interrupted by Uncle Bob’s visit, presents dominant, late capitalist understandings of happiness which define it in individualistic and consumerist terms. Indeed, the characters in the play show an understanding of happiness that is, as Zygmunt Bauman puts it, “through the shops, and the more exclusive the shops the greater the happiness reached. Happiness means acquisition of things other people have no hope of acquiring” (2008, 26). As Madeleine also puts it to Uncle Bob in Part Three, “I think you’ve forgotten how happy you really are. [...] Because what do you want? What have you not got?” (Crimp 2012a, 83).

In this vein, during the lunch, and despite the precarity and insecurity the characters reveal as endemic to late capitalism, the grandmother also offers a definition of happiness that is permeated by market values:

**I still like to sit in the back of a taxi and be driven through the streets –especially at dusk in summer with all the smells of plants and restaurants coming in through the window– and all the childless young people in the light summer clothes swarming on the pavements outside the shops and bars. I like to watch the meter running. I like to think ah these two minutes in a taxi have already cost me what that man emptying the bins will take more than an hour of his life to earn –and oh the extra stink of a rubbish bin in summer! Yes on nights like that the taxi is glorious and the fact I’m paying for my happiness makes my happiness all the sweeter –and the fact that other people are having to suffer and work just to pay for such basic things as electricity makes it even sweeter still. (Crimp 2012a, 13-14)**

For the grandmother, the fact of paying for her happiness as she wanders through the streets in a taxi is what enables her to identify that moment as a happy one. Happiness

is clearly experienced in capitalist terms, as tied to luxury and exclusivity, and in opposition to lives that are considered other, and correspondingly less happy, such as that of the man who empties the bins. Her speech demonstrates Ahmed’s views on happiness as “promised through proximity to certain objects” (2010, 29), and shows how “happiness and unhappiness are distributed and located within certain bodies and groups” and are “what you get for being a certain kind of being” (Ahmed 2007-2008, 11). The mundane difficulties that excluded “Others” undergo enhance Granny’s moment of happiness just as does the fact that she is paying for her happiness. In Julien Aillot’s words, “[s]uch a scandalous reply [on Granny’s part] can be read as ironically promoting an equitable redistribution of wealth, by contrast to an unbridled capitalism” (2016)<sup>13</sup>.

As shall be seen, such view of happiness is subverted in the text through the use of song, and was further deconstructed in Cooke’s 2012 production through an affective deployment of the *mise-en-scène*. It is at this point that Uncle Bob, the mother’s brother and the daughters’ uncle, breaks into the Christmas meal, as he thought “[he] would just suddenly appear” (Crimp 2012a, 19). Like an agent of subversion, and breaking with the act’s apparent naturalism, he begins a speech against the family, and explains that he and his wife Madeleine are leaving to another country. Madeleine describes it as a place where she is “flying first class” and where she just has to “swipe a security pass / To swim in the milk of thick white stars” (Crimp 2012a, 37). Right after this speech, Madeleine begins to sing a deeply melancholic song that laments the impossibility of achieving depth in relationships as well as in relation to one’s own feelings, showing that “to tie happiness to individualist neoliberalism is a utopia, from which not only isolation, but also dystopias spring” (Angelaki 2017, 138). As she puts it,

**Some people you lose  
Some people you keep:  
Yes I’m a family friend  
But I don’t go deep  
(no I never go deep)  
[...]**

**Yes I’m often in pain  
there are days I weep  
like a nymph by a stream–  
but it doesn’t go deep  
(no it never goes deep)  
[...]**

<sup>12</sup> In the same line as Cavarero, as shall be seen, Nancy claims that “such an incarnation of humanity, aggregating its absolute being beyond relation and community, depicts the destiny willed by modern thought” ([1986] 1991, 5). Like Cavarero’s notion of inclination, he claims that a community cannot be made “with simple atoms. There has to be a clinamen. There has to be an inclination or an inclining from one toward the other, of one by the other, or from one to the other” ([1986] 1991, 3; emphasis in the original). Affect, which is produced as part and parcel of a process of relating whereby beings exist at all, is thus this “glue” or clinamen Nancy and Cavarero claim is constitutive to the human being.

<sup>13</sup> In French: “On peut entendre une telle réplique, scandaleuse, comme promouvant ironiquement et implicitement une redistribution équitable des richesses, par contraste avec un capitalisme débridé” (2016).



As a family friend it's my duty to say  
 I'm leaving you now –yes– I'm going away–  
 But if I was tempted to come back some day–

went into the room  
 where your kids were asleep  
 and pushed pins in their eyes–  
 then I wouldn't go deep  
 (really –trust me– I never go deep)

[...] You're not to imagine I don't want to sing

[...] that I've got no soul  
 That my heart can't leap  
 When the bud unfolds–  
 Just it doesn't go deep  
 (no it never goes deep)

I've booked my ticket: I'm flying first class  
 To a cool place thin as a pane of glass  
 Where I just have to swipe a security pass  
 To swim in the milk of thick white stars.

It's a new kind of world  
 and it doesn't come cheap  
 and you'll only survive  
 If you don't go deep  
 (so I never  
 no I never  
 no I never go deep) (Crimp 2012a, 36-37)

Madeleine sings about a psychic and social state of affairs where the “society of control” or of “spectacle” isolates individuals from their own feelings and from society, as it bombards them with more fabricated, material desires and consumerist imperatives. As Byung-Chul Han has put it in *The Society of Transparency*, unlike in disciplinary societies, in the “society of control” individuals “are intensely connected and communicated amongst each other” (2013, 89), as it is precisely such communication that guarantees transparency to power. In this context, “exhibitionism and voyeurism feed the networks” which have become the new, “digital panopticon” (89). In such a society, neither joy nor “pain”, as Madeleine sings, ever “go deep” or can be deeply felt as they have become mediated states. As can be seen through the adjectives she uses to describe her future life, Madeleine's understanding of happiness is also, like that of the grandmother, based on owning a privatized, highly individualist world of material comfort.

In this song, Madeleine laments the emptiness that an understanding of happiness as uniquely based on success and individualism leaves in the individual. This dominant, late capitalist model of happiness and of subjectivity was particularly subverted in Cooke's original stage production, through Crimp's and Cook's affective *mise-en-scène*. As Madeleine sang, in Cooke's production for the Royal Court Theatre the stage was progressively flooded by a backdrop of intense red light, thus creating a highly dramatic, poetic stage picture. Set against Madeleine's light blue dress, the

darkling red light seemed to emphasize the desire for feeling, passion, and vulnerability denied by the “vertical” (Cavarero 2011a, 195), neoliberal subject Madeleine represented. The dark red light evoked the suppressed affects of connection and intensity which are obfuscated by the late capitalist construction or “moulding” (Crimp 2012a: 85), as Madeleine puts it in Part Three, of the “vertical” (Cavarero 2011a, 195) subject. The scene functioned as the unconscious or mirror image of the “Hard. Clear. Sharp. Clean” (Crimp 2012a, 35) Madeleine believes she must aspire to.

The music, the image and the words all created what Hans-Thies Lehmann calls a “synaesthetic perception” ([2006] 2007, 87) which invited spectators to postpone the attribution of meaning, asking for their perception to “remain open for connections, correspondences and clues at completely unexpected moments, perhaps casting what was said earlier in a completely new light” ([2006] 2007, 87). It, therefore, sought to create the conditions for spectators to ask themselves questions regarding the late capitalist imperative to be happy, such as whether, as shown by Madeleine, the search for happiness “might not entail its own undoing” (McMahon 2006, 15) and “our modern commandment to be happy [...] its own forms of discontent” (McMahon 2006, 15). Spectators were thus interpellated by the intense red light that sought to reveal to them the underside of the late capitalist, “happiness dream”, and to lead them to question the type of subjectivities required to fulfil it, urging them, precisely, to “go deep” (Crimp 2012a, 37).

In Cooke's production, as in the play in general, happiness was, instead, linked to ethics, and the acknowledgement of vulnerability, as suggested by Madeleine when she claims she “went into the room / where your kids were asleep / pushed pins in their eyes / then I wouldn't go deep”, presumably so that they wouldn't be able to see the state of the world, and might continue to be happy. Such an affective *mise-en-scène* thus sought to bring to the surface the affects that late capitalism represses and denies, such as intensity of connection and solidarity, and to induce spectators to a “change in capacity” (Massumi 2015, 4) which might lead them to find “different ways of connecting to others and to other situations” (Massumi 2015, 6).

## ***Power, Affects, and New Political Subjectivities***

Part Three, which presents Madeleine and Uncle Bob in the late capitalist, consumerist utopia they left for in Part One, dramatizes the loneliness, isolation and violence of the neo-liberal self, and the limitations of what Cavarero calls the “vertical” (2011, 195) subject of individualism, by presenting Uncle Bob's “negative affects” (Ngai 2005, 3) of anger, sadness and vulnerability. At the same time, by presenting Uncle Bob as a dispossessed subject who confronts Madeleine's “spectacular” and affective use of power with a more intense, bodily relationship, appearing as “inclined” (Cavarero 2011a, 195; emphasis in the original) towards the Other,

Part Three offers a new notion of happiness and subjectivity.

As mentioned earlier, in Part Three, Madeleine and Uncle Bob have become heads of a republic where both happiness and connectedness are imposed and understood in terms of a technology-ridden, consumerist “society of spectacle”, and where true contact is replaced by simulation and mediation. Uncle Bob gives “lectures” (Crimp 2012a, 82) to the “citizens” (2012a, 82) and Madeleine wants him to sing the “hundred-per-cent happy song” (Crimp 2012a, 85), which describes a dystopia where the earth has “burned to ash”, yet insists that “we’re the happiest that human beings / have ever so far been” (Crimp 2012a, 89). Indeed, this “society of spectacle” is conveyed through Uncle Bob’s song and speeches, which mould the “citizens” according to Madeleine’s desires. It is only after Madeleine prompts him the lines “sotto voce” (Crimp 2012a, 89), however, and as the stage directions repeatedly indicate, that Uncle Bob is able to carry on with his song, thus making his doubts regarding the society they embody clearly visible. As Uncle Bob puts it,

**Madeleine: Into the microphone**

*Pause. The music continues.*

**Uncle Bob speaks haltingly into the microphone.**

**Uncle Bob: Here’s our 100% happy song**

**it’s got a few words**

**but it doesn’t last long.**

**Hum hum hum**

**Hum the happy song.**

*Pause. The Music continues.*

**We make up the words as we go along**

**Each word is right**

**Nothing we sing is wrong.**

**Hum hum hum**

**Hum the happy song.**

**Madeleine: (*sotto voce*) We smile when / It’s white.**

**Uncle Bob:**

**We smile when it’s white, we smile**

**when the pear-tree’s green–**

**we’re the happiest that human beings**

**have ever so far been.**

**Hum hum hum**

**Hum the happy song.**

*Pause. The Music continues.*

**The earth –plus Mum and Dad–**

**the bedside lamp –the state–**

**have... have...**

**Madeleine: (*sotto voce*) have burned to ash.**

**Uncle Bob:**

**Have burned to ash–**

**Yes everything’s just great.**

**Hum hum hum**

**Hum the happy song. (Crimp 2012a, 88-9)**

Uncle Bob’s and Madeleine’s republic represents the neo-liberal governance of the present moment, which “invests –politically, psychically, and economically– in the production and management of forms of life: it ‘makes live’ [...] while shattering and economically depleting certain livelihoods, foreclosing them, rendering them disposable and perishable” (Butler and Athanasiou 2012, 31) –in other words, radically and unequally precarious<sup>14</sup>. In this context, Uncle Bob’s “hundred-per-cent happy song” (Crimp 2012a, 85) is designed to create an affective response of acceptance in the “citizens” of his republic. Madeleine and Uncle Bob’s “hundred-per-cent happy song” thus represents the “affect modulation” (Massumi 2015, 32) of power, which has taken the place of “old style ideology” (Massumi 2015, 32), thus proving, as Frédéric Lordon also defends, that politics is an “*ars affectandi*” (2016, 35). As Madeleine herself puts it, the song is “moulding” (Crimp 2012a, 85) those “hundreds and hundreds of gleaming eyes [that] are locked” (Crimp 2012a, 85) onto Uncle Bob’s (Crimp 2012, 85).

Given this state of affairs, as Massumi argues, meaningful resistance, or “alternative political action does not have to fight against the idea that power has become affective, but rather has to learn to function itself on that same level –meet affective modulation with affective modulation” (2015, 34). It is in this context that Uncle Bob, who is seen to have doubts with respect to the lectures and what he “[is] to say” (Crimp 2012a, 79) to the citizens, introduces a series of “negative affects” (Ngai 2005, 3), such as self-doubt, vulnerability and dispossession, in order to confront Madeleine’s “verticality”. It is specifically through Uncle Bob’s monologue that the play interpellates spectators as “response-able” (Lehmann [2006] 2007, 185) witnesses of the destruction of solidarity and self-awareness in neoliberal, late capitalist societies:

**Uncle Bob: What lectures? Where are the citizens? Why aren’t they thronging the staircase? Or using small plastic cups to drink coffee? Why can’t I hear the small plastic cups crackle? Is it I’m going deaf? You talk about the world but I listen and listen and I still can’t hear it. Where has the world gone? What is it we’ve done? –did we select and click?– mmm? Have we deleted it by mistake? Because I look out of that window and I don’t know what I’m seeing just like I’m opening my mouth now, sweetheart –look at it– look –opening it now– here –my mouth– now –look at it– and I don’t know what’s coming out –is this what I’m saying or is this what you’ve said I’m to say? How do I know? When will I ever remember? And of course I’m happy but I feel like I’m one of those characters Madeleine crossing a bridge and the bridge is collapsing behind me slat by slat by slat but I’m still running on –why? What’s holding me up? (Crimp 2012a, 84)**

<sup>14</sup> In an interview with Dan Rebellato, Crimp confirmed this, claiming that Part One of *In the Republic of Happiness* represents the institution of the family, Part Two the institution of the individual, and Part Three the institution of the state (Crimp 2013a).

Uncle Bob presents himself as a “depressed” (Cvetkovich 2012) or failed individual who inhabits the margins of the dominant emotional and normative regimes and confronts Madeleine with the “negative affects” (Ngai 2005, 3) denied by the dominant, late capitalist definition of happiness. Through the metaphor of the collapsing bridge, he laments the absence of affects of connection and solidarity in late capitalism, as well as of ethical structures that can sustain individuals. Thus, he portrays a landscape of the destruction and precariousness brought about by the late capitalist state, and of the disconnection from their politicians, on the part of individuals, who are no longer “thronging the staircase”. His performance is especially subversive because it presents failure “as ‘a hidden history of pessimism in a culture of optimism’” (Halberstam 2011, 88), or as the negative, repressed affects that “lie quietly behind [Madeleine’s] story of success” (2011, 88)<sup>15</sup>.

His speech seeks to interpellate spectators regarding the atomization of the subject in late capitalism, which violently erodes forms of community, equality and solidarity in favor of radical consumerism and inequality<sup>16</sup>. Uncle Bob’s affective labour is a “performative, theatrical or aesthetic approach to politics” (Crimp 2012a, 34) and, according to Massumi, the most effective form of resistance given power’s affective character<sup>17</sup>. And indeed, his appeal to vulnerability clearly destabilizes Madeleine, as she seeks to divert his attention by suggesting they could take “a trip” somewhere (Crimp 2012, 86)<sup>18</sup>. As Massumi puts it, affective expressions like anger or laughter –and Uncle Bob’s monologue might be pronounced in anger, since Madeleine asks him not to “shout” (Crimp 2012a, 85)– “are perhaps the most powerful because they interrupt a situation” (2015, 8). And he continues,

[...] They interrupt the flow of meaning that’s taking place: the normalized interrelations and interactions that are happening and functions that are being fulfilled. Because of that, they are interruptions of something that doesn’t fit. Anger, for instance, forces the situation to attention, it forces a pause filled with an intensity that is often too extreme to be expressed in words. [...] In that sense it’s brought something positive out –a reconfiguration [...] The overload of the situation is such that, even if you refrain from a gesture, that itself is a gesture [...] [A]ll the possibilities are present, packed into the present moment. (Massumi 2015, 8)

In the theatre, disruptions such as these may open spaces for intersubjectivity amongst spectators, “producing relational space-times [...] that try to shake off the constraints of the ideology of mass communications” (Bourriaud [1998] 2006, 166). Indeed, in situations such as these, the spectators’ thought takes place “in the body, through a kind of instantaneous assessment of affect, an assessment of potential directions and situational outcomes [...] That affective loading and how it plays out is an ethical act, because it affects where people might go or what they might do as a result” (Massumi 2015, 9–11). Arguably, from this point of view, through these subversive affects, Uncle Bob is seeking to establish contact with the “citizens”/spectators, which may enable for new forms of subjectivity and community to come into being. Even if, in the play, power relations are reconstituted according to the status quo just a little afterwards, spectators might indeed seize on such affective moment and recognize it as a situation of ethical possibility.

In Cooke’s production, the stage was designed as a poetic space that was offered as a possible vehicle of transformation for spectators, triggering their imaginative search for new ethical paradigms. Part Three, indeed, takes place in “[a]n enormous room. Daylight. Large windows suggest a

<sup>15</sup> In the original 2013 production, Crimp and Cooke emphasized Madeleine’s “verticality” through the physical interaction they kept on stage, and through the details of the *mise-en-scène*. Cooke himself has claimed he sees Madeleine as “a kind of embodiment of capitalist individualism – always promising fulfilment and salvation to Bob, but withdrawing it when he gets close” (qtd. in Angelaki 2017, 150).

<sup>16</sup> Uncle Bob and Madeleine’s republic ironically epitomizes neoliberalism, since it has become increasingly individualist, unilateral and “independent” to the point that it has become a republic of two, and the citizens have disappeared. Aillot asserts that the title of the play itself, *In the Republic of Happiness*, is transgressive in itself, since it “presents an ideal of happiness that has been recuperated by politics, and is associated to a regime; the republic. The nominalization of the adjective ‘happy’ and its transformation into a proper noun turn happiness not into an ideal that must be achieved, but into a fixed concept carved in marble” (2016). In French: “il présente un idéal de bonheur récupéré par le politique, associé à un régime: la république. La nominalisation de l’adjectif ‘happy’ et sa transformation en un nom propre font du bonheur non plus un idéal à atteindre, mais un concept figé, gravé dans le marbre” (2016).

<sup>17</sup> See Andy Smith’s *Commonwealth* (2012) for another play that also seeks to tap into the affective potential of the theatrical situation to offer spectators “hope” (Smith 2015, 59) and “chances to resist” (Smith 2015, 59), given the “things that affect all of their lives” (Smith 2015, 59; emphasis added). *Commonwealth* is narrated by a speaker who directly asks spectators to imagine a similar community to theirs and “think about how we are together” (Smith 2015, 58), thus also trying to have an incidence on spectators’ bodies and capacity to act.

<sup>18</sup> Their dialogue at this point clearly resonates with Richard and Corinne’s conversation in *The Country* (Crimp [2000] 2005), where Richard seeks to divert his wife’s attention after her denunciation of his behaviour by suggesting they could “drive somewhere” (359). As in *The City* (2008), in *In the Republic of Happiness* it is a woman who occupies a position of power. In this sense, both plays aim to reconsider the gender politics of *The Country*, which takes a more pronounced female bias, and are exercises in self-questioning on Crimp’s part.

green landscape –but the landscape is indistinct. The room is completely empty— except, perhaps, for what looks like an abandoned office-type desk. Uncle Bob is alone. He listens” (Crimp 2012a, 77), in a stage picture that is very reminiscent of the “scenarios, dreamscapes, or frescoes of the skull” (2011, 97) spectators encounter in Crimp’s plays, according to Martin Middeke. Crimp and Cooke, indeed, turned the stage into a Magritte-like painting dominated by white walls and echoing emptiness, which suggested to spectators that they found themselves within the consciousness of Uncle Bob, that is, within the “vertical” (Cavarero 2011a, 195), individualist, neoliberal subject, and, as shall be seen, it interpellated them to search for a new ethics grounded instead on “dispossession” (Butler and Athanasiou 2013, 3).

It is in this context that Uncle Bob seeks for a more physical relationship with Madeleine, asking her to look at his mouth (Crimp 2012a, 84), or, as Madeleine despondently says, “thrash[ing] and reaching for between [her] legs” (Crimp 2012a, 83). The emptiness of the *mise-en-scène*, and Uncle Bob’s yearning for Madeleine and his openness to her, indeed, suggested Nancy’s “singular being” and the need for the “unilateral ‘inclination’” (Cavarero 2011a, 195) towards the Other as the basis for a reconstruction of happiness, ethics and of community. Ultimately, then, the dramatization of Uncle Bob’s monologue and his performance of failure is part and parcel of a search for a new ethics grounded on “dispossession” (Butler and Athanasiou 2013, 3) and vulnerability.

## Conclusion

*In the Republic of Happiness* enacts a critique of the late capitalist “happiness wish” (Ahmed 2010, 2) as based on a materialistic or consumerist ideal, and dramatizes the loneliness and emptiness of such neoliberal understanding of happiness and subjectivity. Through Madeleine’s song in Part One, and by introducing Uncle Bob’s

“negative affects” (Ngai 2005, 3), it seeks to interrupt the “distribution of the sensible” (Rockhill [2000] 2006, 4) promoted by late capitalist societies of control or of “spectacle”, thus inviting spectators to reassess the dominant notions of happiness. At the same time, Cooke’s radically poetic and affective *mise-en-scène* sought to contribute to disrupt the obviousness and naturalness of the affective underpinnings of neoliberal consumer capitalism, allowing for “intermittent acts of political subjectivization” (Rockhill [2000] 2004, 3) in spectators, for them to find new definitions of happiness, outside the late capitalist model.

At the same time, the play redefines ethics in affective and contingent terms and as that which “confirms, facilitates, and enhances the subject’s *potentia* –the capacity to express his or her freedom” (Braidotti 2008, 186). From this point of view, and if the “good”, according to Spinoza, is what brings “maximum potential and connection to [a] situation” (Massumi 2015, 11-2), then happiness could be redefined in terms of “the struggle for possibility” (Ahmed 2012, 222). That is, as “the sense of being fully alive to the world we are in at the moment, whatever triggers that heightened state of affirmation in the time and space we occupy” (Segal 2017, 77). In Massumi’s affective terms, it should consist on “prying open” the spaces that would enable individuals to create “a fabric of heightened states” between them, between which “the greatest number [...] of connecting routes would exist” (1987, xv).

Crimp thus presents an affective textual and stage poetics, which consists in opening social interstices to create ethical “worlds of subjectivation” (Bourriaud [1998] 2006, 170), and ever more dense, “deep[er]” (Crimp 2012a, 37) forms of existing. Against the dominant, “vertical” (Cavarero 2011a, 195) emotions of neoliberal consumer capitalism, which reflect an understanding of happiness in private, individualistic terms, the play thus subversively redefines being as intensive and “driven by affect” (Braidotti 2008, 185), and demonstrates that our existence is always in itself collective.



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# ***Sources for the Lexical Study of the Southern Dialects, 1500-1900***

Dialectología  
inglesa diacrónica e  
Historia de la lengua  
inglesa (DING)

## Introduction

In the Early Modern period, the literary representation of dialect and works such as Alexander Gil's *Logonomia Anglica* (1619), John Ray's *A Collection of Words not Generally Used* (1674) or William Humphrey Marshall's collections of provincialisms are our main sources for the study of regional variation. To this, we must add the information contained in manuscript documents such as letters, diaries, inventories, wills, etc., and the incidental material which can be gleaned from contemporary dictionaries and grammars. Dialect phonology, more easily recognizable, was often the focus of the early descriptions and representations in detriment of dialect lexis and/or grammar. Since 2003, a group of researchers from the University of Salamanca has been gathering an electronic corpus of texts containing literary dialects or dialect literature from the 16th to the mid-20th centuries. It is an ongoing project and since 2011, 375 such texts, all of them MS Word documents, are freely available to researchers in the Corpus web page ([www.thesalamancacorpus.com](http://www.thesalamancacorpus.com)). Lately the scope of *The Salamanca Corpus* has been increased to include also word lists and dialect dictionaries and glossaries of the same time period. They can be freely accessed in the Corpus Section called Varia. So far 81 have been uploaded, making up a total of 1,662,484 words: 9 of them correspond to the 1500-1699 period, 15 to the 1700-1799 one, and 57 to the 1800-1950 one. About 100 others have already been scanned and transliterated and are in the process of being proofread prior to their upload.

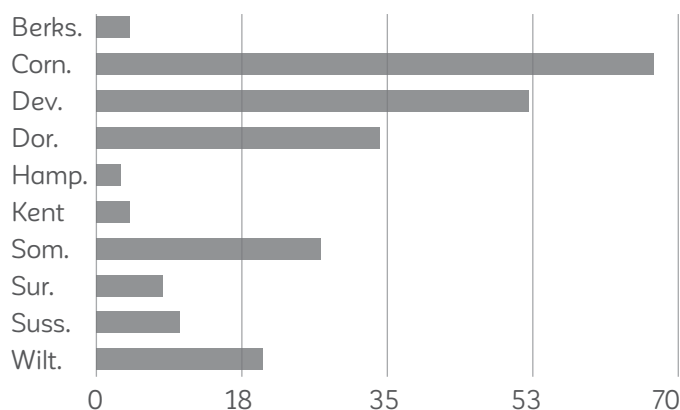
In this paper an attempt will be made at the description of some of the sources available for the study of southern dialects in the Early and Late Modern periods<sup>1</sup>. The 7 counties included in the IV volume of *The Survey of English Dialects* (1967-68) will be the focus of our sample analysis, that is Berkshire, Cornwall, Devonshire, Dorsetshire, Hampshire, Kent, Somerset, Surrey, Sussex and Wiltshire (hereinafter referred to by abbreviations).

### 1. Dialect Literature and Literary Dialect

It is traditionally accepted that *The Second Shepherd's Play* (c1430)<sup>2</sup> contains the first attempt at the literary representation of southern English for characterization purposes. Morphological traits such as the use of "ich" for "I" or "-eth" for "-s" were used, but no dialect lexis. Of the

Southern dialects, initially Kentish in, for instance, Stephen Hawes' (-1523?) *The Pastime of Pleasure* (1509) or St. Thomas More's (1478-1535) *A dyaloge of syr Thomas More knyghte* (1529), and later the South-Western variety, soon became associated with comic characters in canonical fiction, poetry and drama<sup>3</sup>. As regards dialect literature, Kent and Devonshire antedate the first instances we have of Northern dialect literature, with Thomas Churchyard's (1523?-1604) *The Contention bettwixte Churchyard and Camell, vpon David Dycers Dreame* (1552) (See García-Bermejo Giner 2013) and Thomas Ravenscroft's (c1592-1635) "A Wooing Song of A Yeoman of Kents Sonne" (1611) and with William Strode's (1602-1644) "The Wonders of Plymouth" (c1620) respectively. Until the 18th century the other southern dialects were ignored for the most part —Andrew Boorde's "Iche Am a Cornishe man" (1547) is a well known exception (See García-Bermejo Giner 2013, 2010 a & b, 1999). Literary authors repeatedly used the same traits: the voicing of initial fricatives, the occlusivization of interdental fricatives, and each forms mainly, but, at times, they also made use of dialect lexis. Eckhardt (1910-1911) studied the south-western dialect in 36 plays of this time period, extracting the dialect lexis in them. A mixture of south-western, colloquial, and northern traits can be found in the speeches of uncouth characters until the Late Modern period when writers tried to be more realistic in their depictions, not relaying on spellings, morphosyntactical or lexical features which had become enregistered in the literary representation of dialect and which could be inaccurate and/or archaic. This was a reflex of the new interest for regional varieties, which began at the time. Compared with the North, southern dialects were not represented as frequently in literary works in the 18th and 19th centuries as a summary look at the bibliographical sources for *The English Dialect Dictionary* (1898-1905)<sup>4</sup> (hereinafter EDD) shows.

#### 1700-1900 DL-LD Sources in EDD



<sup>1</sup> Early Modern English Southern dialects require a study in depth, in the line of the work done by Ruano-García 2010 for the Northern dialects.

<sup>2</sup> About the use of dialect in this play see Cawley (1958), Blake (1981: 65-66), Gómez Soliño (1985), Irace (1990), and Wales (2006: 69-75)

<sup>3</sup> Wakelin (1986: 51-56, 84-86, 115-18, 178-180) studies early lyrical and dramatic texts from Cornwall, Devon, Somerset and Wiltshire.

<sup>4</sup> See Ruano et al. (2015) for an overview of the EDD sources.

As we can see in Table 1, the south-western dialects continued to be the most frequently depicted in detriment of the south-eastern ones, with Dev. and Corn. widely surpassing Surr., Berks., or Hamps. Dialect words would be introduced in them with definitions—within the text or in footnotes—or paraphrasis to explain their meaning so as not to hinder readers' understanding. On occasion, glossaries were added at the end to explain the dialect spellings and also the lexis.

## 2. Dictionaries and Glossaries 1500-1700

The Lexicons of Early Modern English (hereinafter LEME) database allows for searches within 202 dictionaries and glossaries published between 1450 and 1702. Using as keywords the names of the seven southern dialects, the adjectives associated with them, and the terms “dialect”, “dialectal”, “provincial”, “south”, “southern”, “west” and “western” produced a total of 19 hits for individual words<sup>5</sup>: 8 for Kent in the second half of the 16th c., 7 for Cornwall in the second half of the 17th c., 3 for Western in the mid- 17th c. and 1 for Devon in the late 17th c. This seems to coincide with the gradual change from Kent to the south-western varieties that we also observed in the literary representation of southern dialects.

In *An English Expositor* (1616), John Bullokar (1574-1627) defined dialect as “[a] difference of some words, or pronunciation in any language: as in England the Dialect or manner of speech in the North, is different from that in the South, and the Western Dialect differing from them both.” Three years later, Alexander Gill (1565-1635), a school-master at St. Paul's school in London, and a native of north Lincolnshire, added a fourth dialect area, the Eastern, in the chapter on “Dialects: and a word about improper diphthongs” in his *Logonomia Anglica* (Gill 1619, 102-104). From his comments on the dialect phonology of the Northern, Southern, Eastern and Western varieties we may extract some instances of the contemporary dialect lexis. His Western area also includes Somerset about whose rustic people he says:

**for it is easily possible to doubt whether they are speaking English or some foreign language. For even now they still use certain ancient sounds, as sax for <cultro>, nem or nim for <accipe>, and English words are replaced by their own, as lax for <parte>, toit for <sedili>, etc. Furthermore they corrupt proper words, some in meaning, some in pronunciation, as wīz wai for <fraeno>, wītpot for <farcimine> (Gill 1619, 102)**

Neither in OED nor in EDD is this text quoted in illustration for these words.

*Sax* is defined in OED as †1. A knife; a short sword or dagger. *Obs. exc. Hist.* It offers no citations between 1400 and 1968. EDD locates it in Sh.I. Lin. Brks. **w.Cy. Som. Dev. Cor.** Also in forms *sex* Brks.; *w.Som.1 Dev.*; *zex nw.Dev.1* [saks, seks.] 1. sb. A knife. Lin. Streatfeild *Lin. and Danes* (1884) 355 ; Lin.1, w.Cy. (K.).

*Nem* or *Nim* in the sense of “to get into one's hands, to get hold of, pick up; to appropriate, to acquire, etc.” is considered by OED as “Now *arch.* and *Eng. regional (rare).*” Citations used to illustrate it go from eOE to 1630. Among them is Andrew Borde's “Ich am a Cornyshe man” a1549. In EDD we read that *Nim* is found in Scotland, the North of England, parts of the West and East Midlands and Kent, Som. and Dev. With the meaning “To catch up quickly; to take or catch up on the sly; to filch, steal.” Wright considers it obsolete and illustrates these meanings with texts from the North, Stf., Lei. War. and Kent.

*Toit* seems to refer to some kind of stool. OED records it under “tut, n.1 2.a.” as belonging to the western dialects with the meaning given by EDD “a small seat or hassock made of straw” and illustrating *toyte* with two citations from Devonshire Church Accounts dating from 1637-38 and 1647-48.

*Wītpot* is recorded by EDD as “WEET•POT, sb. Som. [Not known to our correspondents.] A sausage. (Hall.)” (i.e. James Orchard Halliwell in his *A Dictionary of Archaic and Provincial Words* (1847)). Halliwell does not offer any other information or citation for this word. In the introduction to his dictionary, he says that for Somerset he relied on literary sources, on word lists formed by 6 contributors and a manuscript glossary compiled 50 years earlier<sup>6</sup>.

I have been unable to trace any information for “lax for <parte>” and “wīz wai for <fraeno>”.

John Ray (1627-1705) was a botanist and a zoologist, born in Essex (at Black Notley, nr. Baintree), where he resided after having graduated from Cambridge. He was the compiler of the first attempt at a dialect dictionary. *His Collection of English Words Not Generally Used* was first published in 1674 and a second edition, revised and enlarged, appeared in 1691. Ray used his first hand observations from his field trips in search of data about the English flora and fauna as well as the information provided by correspondents native to the areas he was interested in. Both editions contain a section devoted to East and

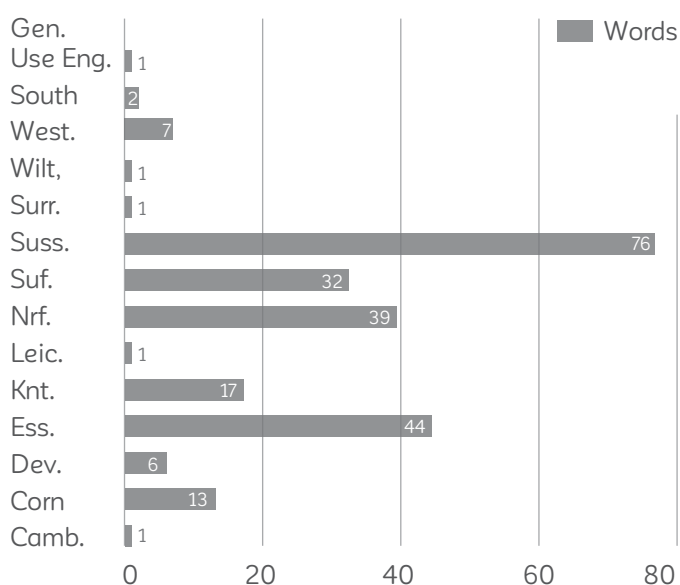
<sup>5</sup> Excluding those in John Ray's *A Collection of English Words* (1691) which we will be treated in more detail later and Bishop White Kennet's *Parochial Antiquities* (1695) studied in depth by Ruano-García (2018).

<sup>6</sup> Compiled by the father of Henry Norris (1789-1870), a surgeon born in Taunton, and to which he continued to add words. His father had compiled it at the suggestion of Mr. Boucher.



South Words which includes items from Cornwall, Devon, Kent, Somerset, Sussex, Surrey and Wiltshire. Among his contributors for these counties was Peter Courthope (1639-1725)<sup>7</sup>, of Danny, Sus., a rich landowner. He was one of the first fellows of the Royal Society and Ray's personal friend and patron who had helped him previously in other botanic publications. He first suggested to Ray the idea of the Collection, which is dedicated to him. Mr Nicholas Jeckyll, of Sibble Heveningham, Essex, and Mr. Mansell Courtman, Minister of Castle Heveningham, Essex, contributed most of the Southern words in the 1691 edition (Skeat 1874, xi and 2). Jeckyll's grandfather had gathered an impressive collection of manuscripts for the history of Essex, Suffolk, and Norfolk, which his grandson would later inherit. Mansell Courtman was the son of one of Ray's contemporaries in Cambridge and neighbour in Essex. Ray was conscious of the fact that he might have learned words from other counties during his university years and therefore consider them southern even if they were not. Rev. Skeat edited the second edition of the *List of Words Used in the South and East* in glossary form including also those dialect words used in other sections of the book devoted to tin working in Cornwall, to iron working, husbandry, making vitriol in East Anglia, etc. Rev. Skeat also inserted the 26 words found in Sir Thomas Browne's (1605-1682) chapter "On the dialect of Norfolk" which Ray had noted in his Preface but not included in his List. All in all, Skeat's edition contains 453 words of which 244 are unmarked. Of the remaining 209 some are localised in just one county, others in two or more counties, others "all over the South of England" or "the West" as can be seen in the following table. The most numerous are those for Sussex (76) and Essex (44) (his home county), followed by those from Nrf. (39), Suf. (32), Kent (17), Corn. (13) and Dev. (6).

### Ray' List of Words Used in the South and East



William Humphrey Marshall (1745-1818) was a native of Sinnington, Yks. Between 1759 and 1771 he worked in London and the West Indies before devoting himself to the study of the rural economy of England. He spent long periods of time in each region for his twelve-volume study of English agriculture. In them, he included sections devoted to the provincialisms of East Norfolk (1787), East Yorkshire (1788), the Vale of Gloucester (1789), the Midland Counties (1790) and West Devonshire (1796). Marshall had gathered them during his field trips in search for agricultural information. Unfortunately, he only included those words related to the topic of his interest. In the introduction to the first of his collections, the provincialisms of East Norfolk (1787), he stated:

**I registered the provincialisms of the District with the same assiduity I did its practice; and find myself possessed of nearly a thousand deviations from the established language. But the major part of those provincialisms do not relate especially to rural affairs; but belong to the ordinary dialect of the country; and cannot, with propriety, be introduced here. I have therefore selected such, only, as pertain to the subject of these volumes. (Skeat 1873, 45)**

He added that "...more material benefits may arise from a collection of Glossaries, of the provincial terms of different and distant Districts: [they] may serve to elucidate passages in the Early Writers, on rural subjects..., they may be serviceable in ascertaining the particular Districts in which they severally wrote." (Skeat 1873, 45). However, in the introduction to his "Provincialisms of East Yorkshire" he stated he had decided to make an exception—probably because it was his native dialect—:

**finding, in this particular instance, a DECLINING LANGUAGE, which is unknown to the public, but which, it is highly probable, contains more ample remains of the ANCIENT LANGUAGE of the CENTRAL PARTS OF THIS ISLAND, than any other which is now spoken; [he] was willing to do [his] best endeavour towards arresting it in its present form; before the general blaze of fashion and refinement, which has already spread its dawn even over this secluded District, shall have buried it in irretrievable obscurity. (Skeat 1873, 20)**

These 5 sections on Provincialisms were edited by Rev. Walter W. Skeat for the English Dialect Society in 1873. Not only did Rev. Skeat reproduce the lists of dialect words but he also located them in the corresponding volumes adding the sentence in which they appeared, so as to illustrate their meaning. Of interest to us here is Marshall's collection of West Devonshire provincialisms.

<sup>7</sup> He owned land in Sussex and in Kent. His correspondence with Ray is kept at the East Sussex Record Office, Danny MSS, 344-364.

It records 140 words. A search of the online version of Joseph Wright's *English Dialect Dictionary* produced a total of 1,246 hits for Marshall's lists of provincialisms, 98 of which corresponded to West Devonshire. In OED this list was used for 30 citations —whereas *The Rural Economy of the West of England* was used for 125.

There was a sixth volume in Marshall's Rural Economy series entitled *The Rural Economy of the Southern Counties: comprising Kent, Surrey, Sussex; the Isle of Wight; the Chalk hills of Wiltshire, Hampshire, &c.* (1798) in which no specific list of provincialisms was included and which was not edited as part of the English Dialect Society's reprinted glossaries. It is indeed among Joseph Wright's list of primary sources for EDD. However, a search of the online EDD produced only one hit: "Necessity sb. ... A spirit illicitly distilled from cider-dregs. w. Som. w. Devon. It ... is drunk ... under the appropriate name of 'necessity,' Marshall Rur. Econ. (1798) I. 326." However, neither Devonshire nor Somerset are among the counties covered in Marshall (1798). The quotation really corresponds to Marshall (1796), *The Rural Economy of the West of England*. Going through *The Rural Economy of the Southern Counties* (1798), I have come across over 50 provincial words variously located in Kent (generally or specifically in Romney Marsh or Maidstone), Surrey, Sussex (generally or specifically in Petworth), the Isle of Wight and the Chalk Hills of Wiltshire (and Salisbury). For instance, Bine (in Maidstone, Knt.): "...the provincial term for the stem of the hop; and likewise for the plant, collectively, except the fruit, or 'hops.'" In EDD, we find it under Bind, sb 1, 2 meaning "[t]he stem or stalk of the hop, or other creeping plant", located in War., Wor. Suf., Hmp. Cor. and Hrf. Marshall's *Review and Abstract of the County Reports to the Board of Agriculture, from the several Agricultural Departments of England* (1808-1818) is used for this last allocation. Wright also locates it in Kent because of the information provided by D.W.L.<sup>8</sup>

**BIND, sb.1 Var. dial. uses in Sc. and Eng. Also in form bine w.Wor.1 Hrf.2 Suf. Ken. Sus.12 Hmp.1 Cor.2 3 [bind, bain.]... 2. The stem or stalk of the hop, or other creeping plant. War.8, w.Wor.1 Hrf. Richer land will produce a greater quantity of bine than poorer, Marshall Review (1817) II. 286; Hrf.2 Hrt. The vines or binds ... of Hellweed, Ellis Mod. Husb. (1750) IV. i. Suf. B. & H. Ken. (D.W.L.), Sus.12, Hmp.1, Cor.2.**

OED records *Bine* as a dialect form recently adopted as a literary form. The earliest quotation dates from 1837 and is also associated with Kent:

**Bine, n. Pronunciation: /bain/ Forms: Also ME bynde, 17–18 bind.**

**Etymology: A dialect form of bind n., recently adopted as the literary form in the following senses...**

**b. spec. The climbing stem of the hop.**

**1837 T. Hood *Ode R. Wilson* What Kentish boor would tear away the prop So roughly as to wound, nay, kill the bine?**

**1864 Tennyson *Aylmer's Field in Enoch Arden*, etc. 57 When burr and bine were gather'd.**

**1884 G. Allen in *Longman's Mag.* Nov. 43 The 'fly'..on hops, is an aphid specialized for that particular bine.**

*The Rural Economy of the Southern Counties* (1798) is also among OED's sources. A search of the online version produced 13 hits, none of which correspond to the provincial words in it. They will be the object of further research.

Francis Grose (1731-1791) was an antiquarian, lexicographer and draughtsman born in London. He travelled extensively throughout England due to his work in the army and in his field trips to sketch buildings and monuments for his *The Antiquities of England and Wales* (1773-1787), among others. In 1787, he published *A Provincial Glossary with a Collection of Local Proverbs and Popular Superstitions*. In the Preface he stated that

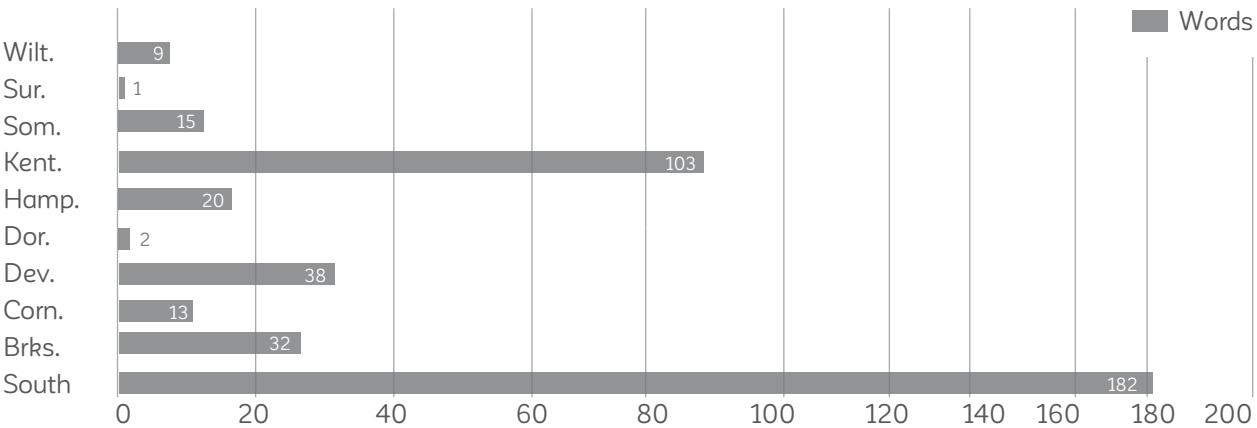
**Divers partial collections have been occasionally made, all which have been well received, and frequently reprinted; these are, in this work, all united under one alphabet; and augmented by many hundred words collected by the Editor in the different places wherein they are used; the rotation of military quarters, and the recruiting service, having occasioned him to reside for some time in most of the counties in England. (Grose 1787, iii)**

For the most part he did not include those words that only differed in pronunciation. Among his written sources he mentioned Rev. John Lewis, *History of the Isle of Thanet* (1723)<sup>9</sup>, county histories and *The Gentleman's Magazine*. From this last source, he claimed to have taken all those words allotted to Exmore (25 tokens). He labels the words as North, South and West Country and also by county, although he says that it is "difficult to find any word used in one county, that is not adopted at least in the adjoining border of the next" (Grose 1787, v).

<sup>8</sup> The initials D. W. L. correspond to Duncan William Lewin, from Ramsgate, a correspondent for Kent and EDD voluntary reader. He might be Duncan William Lewin, born in 1855 at Douglas, Isle of Man. In 1864 he appears in *The London Gazette*, (13th September, 4435), as living with his parents and siblings at Merton, nr. Wimbledon, Sur. He studied at King Williams College, Isle of Man. Left Christmas 1870. Apparently in 1898 he was living in Hobart, Tasmania (see obituary for his wife in *The Mercury Supplement*, March 5th 1898: <http://trove.nla.gov.au/ndp/del/article/9416865>). Possibly the author of *The Eucalypti hardwood timbers of Tasmania* (1906).

<sup>9</sup> John Lewis (1675-1746) was born at Bristol and attended grammar school at Poole, Dor. He graduated B.A. at Exeter College, Oxford.

Ray' List of Words Used in the South and East

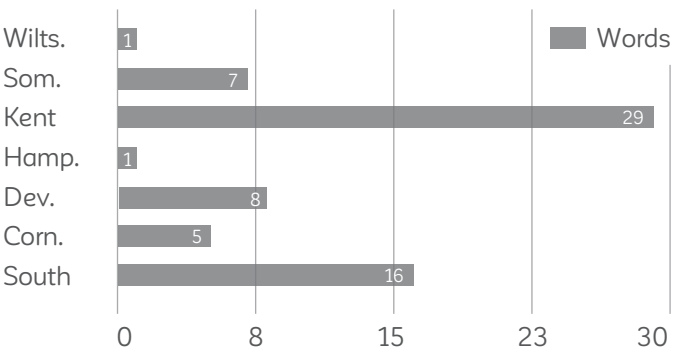


As we can see in the Table, South is the category with the highest number of words. Of the individual dialects, Kent is the best represented. Of the 103 tokens, 4 were in use in other dialects: Kent and S., Kent and N., Kent and Leic., and Kent Nrf & Sf. To Som. and Dev. we must add the 25 tokens labeled as Exmore. In 1814, a supplement to *Grose's Provincial Glossary*, compiled by Samuel Pegge, The Younger (1733-1800), was attached to the second edition of Pegge's, the Elder, *Anecdotes of the English Language* (1800). It was found among his manuscripts. He was an antiquary, poet and musician born in Godmersham, Knt. He went to school in Chesterfield, Db., his father's birthplace. Samuel Pegge, the Elder (1704-1796) was vicar of Godmersham, Knt. and remained in Kent until 1746. Samuel Pegge, the Younger, must have gained a good first hand knowledge of the Kentish dialect. As can be seen in the following Table, he added 29 tokens to the already numerous group of Kentish words. 16 more words were given the label South. In the case of the South-Western dialect, he included 5 more tokens in Corn., 8 in Dev., 7 in Som. and 1 in Wilt. He did not have anything to contribute to Brks., Dors. and Surr.

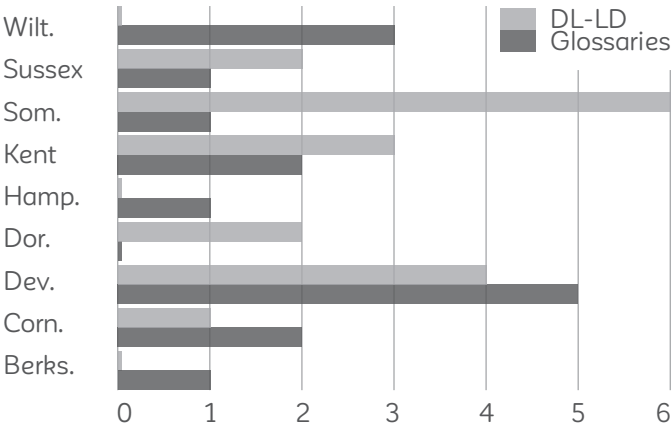
3. Dictionaries and Glossaries 1800-1900

In 1839, John Russell Smith (1810-1894) published what is considered the first bibliographical list for English dialects, *A Bibliographical List of the Works that Have Been Published towards Illustrating the Provincial Dialects of England*. Born at Sevenoaks, Knt, he was apprenticed to a bookseller in London and proceeded to open his own bookshop c.1833. He had a keen interest on English dialects. He published many other works on English dialects and by dialect writers. In this bibliography he included Ray's, Grose's and Marshall's works in the general section. Afterwards, he listed sources by county including not only Glossaries but also works representative of Dialect Literature (DL) and Literary Dialects (LD). He explained whether there had been several editions of any of them and the possible differences among the editions. He wrote short critiques of some of them, enumerating their strong and weak points. In the following table we can see the sources he gathered concerning the southern dialects. When a literary work contains a glossary it has also been accounted for in the glossary column.

Pegge's Supplement to Grose (1814)

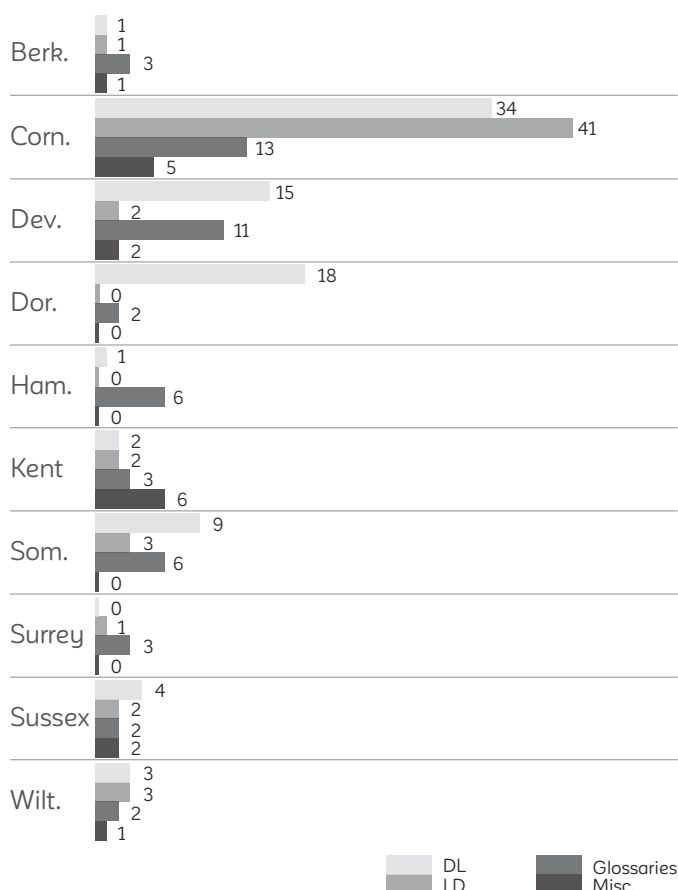


Pegge's Supplement to Grose (1814)



The contents of his bibliography were incorporated into the *Bibliographical List of the works that have been published, or are known to exist in MS., illustrative of the various dialects of English* edited by Rev. Walter William Skeat (1835-1912) and John Howard Nodal (1831-1909) in 1873 for the English Dialect Society. It was compiled by members of the EDD. As regards the southern dialects Rev. Skeat was in charge of the bibliographies for Berkshire, Hampshire, Kent and Somerset; George Clement Boase (1829-1897)<sup>10</sup> and William Prideaux Courtney<sup>11</sup> (1845-1813) compiled that for Cornwall; John Shelly was in charge of the one for Dev., and Rev. William Barnes of the one for Dorset. In the table that follows, we have grouped these sources as tokens of Dialect Literature, Literary Dialect, Glossaries and Miscellaneous. Usually DL texts are shorter and the longer ones are usually accompanied by a glossary at the end. I have also accounted for these glossaries in the Glossary section. The Miscellaneous group refers to topographical works, studies of the local fauna or flora, county histories, accounts and inventories, etc. If a list of dialect words is included in any of them, it has also been accounted for in the Glossary section.

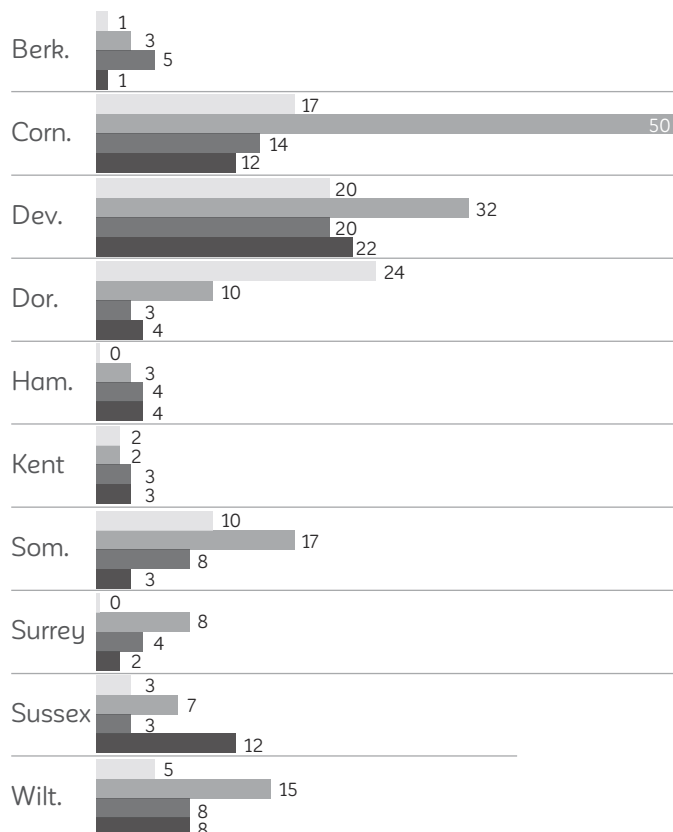
### Sources in Skeat & Nodal 1877



Sometimes mention is made of glossaries known to the compilers but untraceable. Others were in manuscript form and were edited and published by the English Dialect Society at a later date. The increase of DL and LD sources is notorious, especially for Corn. and Dor. More works of this type were published in the 40 years separating Smith's and Skeat & Nodal's bibliographies. And also writers attempted to be more and more accurate in their depictions of dialect, as we have already remarked.

When Joseph Wright accepted to become editor for the *English Dialect Dictionary*, he believed that the number of sources hitherto examined should be increased. This can be clearly seen in the final *List of Bibliographical Sources* for the Dictionary. It is true that the English Dialect Society had managed to either re-edit older glossaries or publish new ones, but the main difference can be seen in the increased number of literary sources used by Wright, even after having discarded those in Skeat & Nodal (1877) he considered unsuitable. For instance, of the 93 sources for Cornwall in Skeat & Nodal (1877), he made use of only 43 but added as many new ones. Nevertheless, there are dialects such as Kent, for which there continued to be an evident lack of sources.

### Sources in Skeat & Nodal 1877



<sup>10</sup> Born in Penzance, Corn., he was a bibliographer and antiquary. He worked as a banker in Cornwall and London until 1854. He spent the next 10 years in Australia and returned to London in 1864 working as a business manager. In 1874 he retired to devote his time to his bibliographical vocation. He helped John Ingle Dredge with his work on Devon bibliography. With William Prideaux Courtney he produced *Bibliotheca Cornubiensis* (1874-1882). He contributed over 700 memoirs to the *Dictionary of National Biography*.

<sup>11</sup> Born in Penzance, Corn. he was with the Ecclesiastical Commission between 1865 and 1892, becoming Principal Clerk in the Pay Office. He lived in London and Ramsgate, Knt. He compiled *Bibliotheca Cornubiensis* with George Clement Boase. He contributed over 600 memoirs to the *Dictionary of National Biography* and also to the ninth edition of the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*.



It should also be taken into account that even if a literary or miscellaneous text is present in the *List of Bibliographical Sources*, that does not necessarily mean that citations from it may be found within the dictionary. There are other sources which were only used once. And the opposite is also true; sometimes citations are found for texts which were not included in the *List of Bibliographical Sources*. For instance, Charles Knight's (1791-1873) novel *Once Upon a Time* (London: John Murray) written in 1854 is not among EDD's primary sources for Berkshire or for any other dialect, yet he is cited once to confirm a Berkshire usage: "PIGHTLE, sb.... Brks. There was one meadow close to the house called the Pitle, Knight *Once upon a Time* (1854) II. 117." The same thing happens with *A Dictionary of the Thames* (1887) by Charles Dickens, Jr. (1837-1896). It is used just once in EDD and does not appear in the list of its primary sources: "LODDON LILIES, phr. Brks. The summer snow-flake, *Leucojum aestivum*. It is very abundant in the meadows by the Loddon, and hence called 'Loddon lilies.' Dickens Dict. *Thames* (ed. 1887) 31; Druce *Flora* (1898) 485. "Ditto for *Our River* (1888) by George Dunlop Leslie (1852-1921): "SNAKE, sb.1... 2. Comb. in plant-names:... (8) -s-head, {a} the fritillary, *Fritillaria Meleagris* '... (8, a)... Brks. In the spring-time the beautiful Fritillary or Snake's-head can be seen growing in great abundance, Leslie *Our River*, in Druce *Flora* (1897) 494".

A description of the EDD sources for each of these seven southern dialects would be quite beyond the scope of this paper. I will only attempt a sample description of the glossaries for Brk<sup>12</sup>.

#### 4. *Lexicographical resources for Berkshire*

5 Glossaries and a study of the Brks. flora were used in EDD:

*The Flora of Berkshire* (1897) was compiled by botanist George Claridge Druce (1850-1932). He was born at Potterspurty in Northamptonshire. He lived in Northampton until 1879 when he moved to Oxford where he was to remain until his death. He collaborated in the foundation of the Northampton Natural History Society and also of the Oxfordshire Ashmolean Natural History Society (which would later become the Oxfordshire Natural Society). He wrote books on the flora of Oxfordshire, Buckinghamshire and Berkshire. Only the last one was used in EDD. There are 18 tokens in the citations of the dictionary, used to identify plants. For instance: "EDD DANE sb ... 2. Comb. (6) -wort, see — blood (a). ... (6) Brks. Druce *Flora* (1897) 256."

The corresponding entry in Druce (1897, 256) reads:

**S. Ebulus, Linn. Sp. Pl. 269 (1753) *Danewort, Dwarf. Elder....***  
**First record. At Seckworth (Seacourt) is abundance of**  
**Daneworth growing.... T. Hearne, *Liber Niger Scacc.* ed. 2, 591,**  
**1771....It is not unknowne but that great store of Daneworth**  
**and Walwort groweth at (Seckworth)... *Antiquities of the City***  
*of Oxford, Anthony Wood* 326 (1661-6), ed. Rev. A. Clark,  
 1889.

In OED the plant is not particularly associated with Brks., nor are "fat-hen", "gillyflower", "goldilocks" or any other of the 18 plant names selected by Wright. Druce (1897) is a primary source in OED for 5 entries, none of which is related to the Berkshire dialect. "Hell-weed", for instance, is recorded in OED as the name given in Sussex in 1694 to the *cuscuta europeae*.

John Nichols's (1745-1826) "Parochial Queries for Berkshire. Circulated by Mr. [E. Rowe] More in 1759" (1783) is the earliest publication we have on the Berkshire dialect. In 1759, E.R. More addressed a series of queries for a history of Berkshire to different correspondents in 12 Berkshire parishes. One of them was: "What particular games, sports, customs, proverbs or peculiar words and phrases, are used in your parts?" (Nichols 1783, 17). Only 2 people answered it, from Coleshill and Shefford. The first only noticed that "[t]he grammar of the common people here and about the neighbourhood is very vitious; also their pronunciation: e. g. they will say 'I goes' to bed — 'He go' to bed, &c. &c. Which 'woye', for which 'way' went he? &c. &c." (Nichols 1783, 50). The second, Richard Foster, possibly the Rector of Great Shefford at the time, attempted to provide more detailed information about the phonology and grammar of the dialect and recorded 32 words (Nichols 1783, 55-57). A search for Nichols in EDD resulted in 17 hits, 13 of which corresponded to Foster's contributions. All of them are supported by one or all of the other Brks. glossarists. A search of the online OED produced no hits.

*Bygone Berkshire* (1896) is a collection of papers edited by Peter Hempson Ditchfield. The collection can be found among EDD's sources but by itself it is not cited at all in EDD. However, one of the papers contained in it, "Berkshire Words and Phrases", by Rev. Maunsell John Bacon (1839-1924) does appear amongst EDD citations. Rev. Bacon studied at Sidney Sussex College, Cambridge. He was Vicar of Newton-cum-Hauxton, Camb., 1874-78, and of Swallowfield, Reading, 1881-1922. Even if Wright does not list him in the EDD bibliography, he is included in the "List of Correspondents" under his initials, M.J.B., as an informant for both Brks. (89 tokens) and Camb., (12 tokens). His contributions for Brks. are

<sup>12</sup> A more detailed analysis along the lines of Roper (2007) is in progress.

listed as “Brks (M.J.B.)”. There are 74 citations in EDD. 36 of them can be found in his Ditchfield (1896) paper. For instance:

**EDD. ALTERY, adj. Brks. The weather is said to be a bit “altery” when it tokens for rain (M.J.B.).**

Bacon (1896, 237) “a *bit altery* would apply to the weather *tokening* for rain.”

Sometimes Bacon provides the only existing information about a particular usage:

**EDD KITE v.2 Brks. [Not known to our other correspondents.] To look up sharply or peeringly; gen. with up. (M.J.B.).**

**EDD MARGIOWLET sb. Brks. The little white moth that flits about at twilight in summer. (M.J.B.).**

**EDD PE-PE BIRD phr. Brks. The wryneck, Jynx torquilla. (M.J.B.).**

Neither Ditchfield nor Bacon are among OED’s primary sources.

Amongst EDD’s list of primary sources we find *Glossary of Berkshire Provincialisms* (1847) by William Hewett, Reading. Apparently it was an unpublished glossary (Skeat & Nodal 1877, 18). I have been unable find any traces of it. It was probably compiled by the William Hewett author of *The History and Antiquities of the Hundred of Compton, Berks.* (1844). From the Preface to this work we know that he was residing at East Ilsley in 1842 and at Reading in 1844. He seems to have been the son of William Hewett, a surgeon of East Ilsley, and a friend of Job Lousley (1790-1855), the compiler of another Brks. glossary. He contributed to his records of Berks. flora. His surname is variously spelled Hewett and Hewitt. A search of the online EDD resulted in 794 hits but all of them pertaining to Devonshire Sarah Hewett. He appears among the primary sources for the 2nd edition of OED but I have not been able to find any quotations from him in the 3rd online edition.

In 1852 appeared *A Glossary of Provincial Words used in Berkshire* by Job Lousley (1790-1855). He was born at South Moreton, Brks. and lived at Blewbury and Hampstead Norris, near Newbury, where he ran big farms. He was an avid book collector and published widely on agricultural, botanical and historical matters related to Berks. Only 60 copies of his glossary

were printed. His fourth son, Barzillay Lowsley, published a longer glossary over thirty years later —he and some of his brothers, keen on genealogy, changed the spelling of their surname so that it conformed to the earliest form they could trace in their family history. The glossary contains 210 words. In EDD he is cited as “Brks. Lousley Gl. (1852)” once and as “Brks. Gl. (1852)” 119 times. In these, he is accompanied by his son’s Glossary (Brks. 1) 102 times. The Collections of Prince Louis Lucien Bonaparte support their information 7 times, as well as Grose (1790) (x19), M[aunsell]. J[ohn].B[acon]. (x4), W[alter].W[illiam].S[keat]. (x5). He is the sole authority for particular uses of a word 17 times and supported by M.[aunsell] J.[ohn] B.[acon] in one occasion. There is one word whose existence rests on his glossary: “EDD: DAR, sb.2 Brks. [Not known to our correspondents.] [da(r).] A small, hasty wash. Gl. (1852)”.

*A Glossary of Berkshire Words and Phrases* (1888) by Major Barzillay Lowsley (1840-1905) was published by the English Dialect Society. He belonged to the Royal Engineers, and used his father’s list of words as the basis for his own glossary of words he himself had heard in mid-Berkshire. His is our most important source for this time period. Pages 1 to 37 are devoted to the phonology and grammar of the dialect, and also to Customs (including a Mummers play), Superstitions, Folklore, Sayings (including some instances of dialect literature) and Place-names. The Glossary occupies pages 56-199. It includes both variant pronunciations and dialect words. It has 2,418 entries. It is cited in EDD as Brks.1. A search of the online EDD produced 1,634 hits. He is among OED’s primary sources. A search of the online dictionary produced 108 hits.

## Conclusion

Much remains to be done about the lexicography of the Southern dialects in the Early and Late Modern English Periods, especially about those of the South-East which were considered to be so close to the standard that they were not studied, or used for characterization purposes in literature, as frequently as those from the North. Yet, there are abundant sources, mostly untapped so far, which can contribute to improve our knowledge of the contemporary linguistic panorama. *The Salamanca Corpus* is attempting to make them available to researchers in electronic format. As we have seen, many antedatings to the OED, or new lexicographical data can be gleaned from them. Also, their analysis can contribute to a better understanding of EDD and may also add new information about the dialects of this time period.

<sup>12</sup> A more detailed analysis along the lines of Roper (2007) is in progress.



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BOOK REVIEWS

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# ***The History of the Performance of American Drama in Spain 1912-1977. Theatre as a Weapon Against Political Authoritarianism***

**Espejo, Ramón, 2017**

Lewiston: The Edwin Mellen Press.

1438 pp. (3 vols). ISBN: 9781495505294

**A** growing number of scholars appear to be turning their attention to intercultural relationships. While such a growth does not for the time being amount to a boom, nor is this kind of approach absent in past decades, the relevance of the field seems greater than ever before. Now everything, from a brand to a TV icon, may become global in a matter of an instant thanks to the Internet. The slower but often more meaningful processes by means of which cultural products and ideas have always influenced artists

and people in foreign countries is, not surprisingly, attracting significant attention. Maybe the variety of theoretical approaches is alluring in itself. Comparative literature and studies of what is now called “soft power”, to name only two, co-exist, and sometimes engage in fruitful dialogue.

This is hardly the place to attempt a comprehensive bibliography of the field, not even of specific studies on how English and American culture have impacted Spain over the years<sup>1</sup>. Hemingway or Shakespeare have invited

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<sup>1</sup> The opposite direction is also being analyzed. An example is the research group “Los Libros de Caballerías Castellanas en Lengua Inglesa: Anthony Munday y la Cultura Europea Renacentista” (FFI2015-70101-P).

numerous comparisons. In the case of the latter, studies abound, and some date as far back as the 1930s (Par 1935; Par 1936; Par 1940). Ever since the 1980s, such studies have taken off, both of authors whose connection with Spain was obvious (Hemingway [Stanton 1989; Laprade 2011]), and others in which it was less so (Samuel Beckett [Rodríguez-Gago 1988]). The conference organized annually since 2015 by CUNY and the Instituto Franklin of the Universidad de Alcalá de Henares on Historical Links between Spain and the USA furnishes some more evidence that the number of those interested in such field (and who regularly meet in order to cross-fertilize the scholarship each of them is producing) is rapidly rising.

The specific role played by American drama around the world has recently been targeted by Bak (2014) or Brater (2007) at an international level, and both books contain chapters devoted to Spain. However, the scholar who seems more committed to it in our country is Ramón Espejo, from the Universidad of Sevilla, who has been actively publishing on American playwrights in Spain for over 20 years. Journal articles and book-length studies signed by him have never ceased to appear, and among the most notable is his 2010 *España y el teatro de Arthur Miller*. Interestingly, Espejo surveyed both Miller's rapport with Spain, and also how his plays impacted Spanish stages and helped shape a somewhat more sophisticated theatrical culture (in the 1950s and 1960s, especially) than Franco's establishment had promoted theretofore. That book, however, maintained a tight focus on the plays themselves and their Spanish reception.

For the reader of that book, Espejo's new publication, *The History of the Performance of American Drama in Spain, 1912-1977. Theatre as a Weapon Against Political Authoritarianism*, may come as an unexpected surprise. To begin with, the sheer length (almost 1500 pages in three volumes) far exceeds anything attempted before, especially by a single author. On the other, the scope is much larger than that of the Miller monograph. Consequently, the attention devoted to specific playwrights is more superficial. Eugene O'Neill, Tennessee Williams, Edward Albee and Arthur Miller do receive considerable attention, and even have their own chapters. In other cases, names or titles file before us in quick succession. Most of the times this is entirely justified. In an attempt not to leave anything out, Espejo includes every single (major) production of American drama, and this forces him to tackle distinctly minor, irrelevant, uninteresting work. In such cases, it is warranted that only a few paragraphs are devoted to each. Maybe there are a few examples where one misses some more discussion of a given play or playwright, detecting in them greater significance than Espejo does, but in general terms his criteria for sifting the truly relevant from the less so are solid and reasonable.

On the other hand, the fact that some works (many, in fact) and their reception receive scant attention is more than offset by the thoroughness of the tapestry woven by Espejo. Before getting to the specific productions, Espejo takes us through the peculiarities of Spanish society, cul-

ture and theater in each of the different periods. We learn about how Spanish theater has always reflected larger cultural, social and political forces. The last is especially prominent, as Espejo keeps going back to how US drama has often provided an antidote against authoritarianism, while being allegedly deployed in its service. Only when the circumstances are unpacked does he proceed to discuss the role played by American drama in each of said periods. While the response to specific productions is attended to, Espejo finally sets out on a more ambitious quest: how Spain has defined the concept of Americanness over the years, and how theatrical borrowings from the US have both reflected and contributed to that shifting and often slippery notion. Actually, the four periods into which the study is divided (1912-1930; 1931-1951; 1952-1965; 1966-1977) are chosen because of the new definitions of Americanness and American drama each of them posited.

Highly readable, and often even amusing, the book is intended for a wide readership. Foreign readers interested in Spanish culture and/or American drama will be thankful for how Espejo eases their way into the subject by not taking much for granted and providing suitable context. To be sure, Spanish readers will probably find such sections less interesting. It is not that Espejo deals in platitudes, and he definitely shows familiarity with current bibliography. But most of us do not need to be told who Jacinto Benavente, Alfonso Paso, or Miguel Primo de Rivera for that matter, are. Conversely, Spanish readers will probably find the introduction to by now obscure names of American drama highly useful. Even specialists may be unfamiliar with Clyde Fitch, W. H. Armstrong, Bayard Veiller, Clare Boothe, Jean Kerr, and countless others.

The publication is very austere, and this probably accounts for the absence of photographs. Although probably understandable (a publisher who was prevailed upon to commit to a three-volume study may not have been so amenable to also including illustrations), they are sorely missed. Given that one of the points is that Spanish directors used American drama to channel innovations not only in playwrighting but also in matters of staging, images of select performances of watershed productions might have firmed up the narrative. I also missed interviews with some of the directors, producers and performers tackled throughout the study, especially given the advanced age of most of those still alive. I understand Espejo missed a great chance to obtain a testimony that may not be available for very much longer. It is my belief that such testimony is never crucial nor entirely reliable, but should not be neglected either.

Notwithstanding such minor criticism (also the fact that Espejo did not seize upon the chance to look at the early years of the democracy and maybe carry on until at least 2000), Espejo has provided us with a first-rate monograph, which will remain for decades the standard go-to resource for understanding US drama in Spain throughout most of the 20th century. The book is filled with highly useful footnotes, which, together with the

bibliography, open windows for those who might want to use it as a starting point to go deeper into a given author, work, or group of plays. The index is especially useful for quick reference. And the scholarly standards achieved by the study are rare, especially in terms of the comprehensiveness and originality of the research that it contains.

A new chapter in the cultural history of our country has thus been written. Espejo has mapped out territory and it would be a shame for others not to profit from

his groundbreaking work. In doing so, he has also produced a new chapter in a neglected aspect of the history of American drama: its significance, repercussion and reception worldwide. Few studies have so far targeted it. But, it is Espejo's contention, one I heartily agree with, that if someone still believes that the study of American drama can stop at the study of the texts, or at most of the American productions thereof, he is in for a surprise, as any drama of worldwide significance is considerably more than that.



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## BOOK REVIEWS

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# ***The Routledge Research Companion to John Gower***

**Ana Sáez-Hidalgo, Brian Gastle, and R. F. Yeager, eds. 2017**

London: Routledge.

402 pp. ISBN: 9781472435804

**I**n June 2018, BBC Radio 3 released a podcast entitled “John Gower, the Forgotten Medieval Poet”, which had been delivered by a subject specialist. This sensationalist title, conjuring up an image of Chaucer’s friend, “moral Gower”, fading into oblivion until modern literary scholars rediscovered him, might have prompted some inquisitive hearers to critically evaluate such a claim. At what point in history, if ever, was John Gower “forgotten”? *The Routledge Research Companion to John Gower*, edited by Ana Sáez-Hidalgo, Brian Gastle, and R. F. Yeager, precisely highlights the uninterrupted attention which Gower has attracted from his immediate *milieu* in the fourteenth century to present-day medievalists. With its 26 chapters, this impressive work is the most comprehensive monograph on Gower up to date. Its purpose is, in the editors’ words, “to build upon her [Siân Echard’s] solid foundation by providing comprehensive discussions of recent and current scholarship on focused, specific avenues of interrogation” (4). Not only does the present volume double the number of contributions in comparison to its predecessor, Echard’s (2004) *A Companion to Gower*, but its wide-ranging thematic coverage and interdisciplinary nature make it an indispensable reference work in medieval studies. The research on display in each chapter is remarkable, providing readers with insightful discussions alongside extensive bibliographies.

The introductory chapter by Ana Sáez-Hidalgo, Brian Gastle, and R. F. Yeager, “Gower scholarship then and now”, gives a sample of the vibrant nature of Gower scholarship; particularly illustrative is the amount of work undertaken in just the year chosen as a reference point, 2014. This introduction also prefaces the volume’s contributions by acknowledging the pivotal role of early scholarship in shaping our understanding of Gower and sparking subsequent in-depth studies. Apart from singling out such classic references as G.C. Macaulay’s edition of *The Complete Works of John Gower* (1899-1902) and John H. Fisher’s *John Gower: Moral Philosopher and Friend of Chaucer* (1964), both of which prove their centrality through their repeated citation in the chapters of this volume, the editors also call attention to how digital advancements are transforming research on Gower through the digitisation of manuscripts and the creation of highly valuable resources such as the *Gower Bibliography Online*. Along this line, the volume seems to leave the door open for future contributions with a digital humanities component, an approach which is tangentially commented upon (2, 4, 108, 233) although not fully addressed.

The ensuing overarching structure of the *Companion* is tripartite. “Working theories: medieval and modern” (Part I), “Things and places: material cultures” (Part II),



and “Polyvocality: text and language” (Part III) constitute the main thematic strands of the book. This review is too brief to treat each chapter fairly, but it would be useful to pinpoint some commonalities that emerge. Part I overviews the main theoretical frameworks informing Gowerian scholarship, which derive from medieval debates and discussions as well as from present-day critical approaches. While problematising the concept of *theory* itself in Gower, in Chapter 1 “Gower and theory: old books, new matters” (9-20), Jonathan Hsy fleshes out how modern theory can productively create a dialogic relationship with medieval literature. The main trends and shifts in theoretical approaches to Gower from the twentieth century to nowadays are outlined, covering a great deal of ground: ethical critiques, identity-based critical analyses through the lenses of feminism, queer studies, or postcolonialism, and historicist approaches. The subsequent chapters tackle specific theoretical orientations: Chapter 2 “Gower and gender” (21-36) by María Bullón Fernández skilfully puts gender- and sexuality-focused scholarship into perspective, drawing attention to its surprisingly protracted development — if compared to feminist approaches to other authors from the same period—, but which nevertheless did not hinder its exponential growth and diversification; directions for future work, including a reference to one of the most recent ramifications of the field into ecological studies (33), close her overview, a structure which is mirrored in most of the chapters of the book. The other three chapters in Section I place Gower and his oeuvre in wider medieval discussions revolving around rhetoric and the special significance of the *Confessio Amantis* — which includes the first rhetorical treatise produced in English— in Kim Zarins’s “Gower and rhetoric” (37-55); Christian religion and Gower’s curiosity about other views on the supernatural in R. F. Yeager’s “Gower’s religions” (56-74); and law and Gower’s depictions of his legal knowledge in Conrad van Dijk’s “John Gower and the law: legal theory and practice” (75-88).

Even though the emphasis of Part II, “Things and places: material cultures”<sup>1</sup>, is on physical entities — manuscripts and concrete spaces—, the contributors in this section of the book also map out Gower’s social, economic, and cultural position in late medieval England, thereby broadening the conceptual category of the subtitle, “material cultures”. “Material culture”, traditionally situated across archaeology and anthropology, is herein understood in a broader sense and, for the most part, coupled with manuscript studies and, to a lesser extent, visual culture. In Chapter 6 “John Gower’s manuscripts in Middle English” (91-96), Joel Fredell discusses how the system for classifying Middle English manuscripts has operated ever since Macaulay devised his three-category system. Despite the currency of Macaulay’s model, later refined by John Fisher,

Fredell talks us through the objections that broke the consensus on the Macaulay-Fisher model on the basis of the *Confessio* manuscript’s textual history and palaeography, among other aspects; Chapter 7 “Gower’s French manuscripts” (97-101) by Craig E. Bertolet is a necessarily shorter —given the limited number of extant French manuscripts— but equally informative overview of work on the manuscripts containing the *Mirour de l’Omme*, *Cinkante Balades*, and the *Traitié pour essampler les amantz marietz*. Chapter 8 “Gower’s Latin manuscripts” (102-109) by Stephanie L. Batkie is organised into the three main categories into which research on Latin manuscripts falls: “manuscript catalogues” (the reader will find very useful updated lists of the extant Latin manuscripts, 103-104), “manuscript production and conditions”, and “material contexts.”

In Chapter 9 “Iberian manuscripts of Gower’s works” (110-116), Ana Sáez-Hidalgo, also the co-editor of a monograph on Gower’s Iberian connections (Sáez-Hidalgo and Yeager, 2014), offers a fascinating account of the history of the Castilian and Portuguese renderings of the *Confessio Amantis*, *Confisyon del amante* and *Livro do Amante* respectively, the latter manuscript being deemed lost until the 1990s. If Chapter 9 is chiefly devoted to the Iberian manuscript evidence, Chapter 16 “Iberian Gower” (210-221) by Clara Pascual-Argente contextualises the production, reception, and circulation of these two translations, including the set of textual transformations that the Portuguese translation underwent in relation to its model (the English *Confessio*) and the more straightforward changes that Juan de Cuenca made in translating the Portuguese *Livro* into Castilian. Chapter 10 “Illuminations in Gower’s manuscripts” (117-131) by Joyce Coleman examines Gower’s own illustration programmes, particularly, archer miniatures (in the *Vox Clamantis*), the dream of Nebuchadnezzar and confession miniatures (in the *Confessio Amantis*), and his “visual afterlife” —his tomb and legacy. The Archer and Confession miniatures, according to Coleman, “confronted viewers with some of the first authorial images in English-language manuscripts since the small picture of Layamon in the London, British Library, Cotton Caligula A.ix copy of the *Brut* (f. 1; second half of the thirteenth century)” (117), which evidences Gower’s singularity in English literary history.

Despite the partial bibliographical information available and the lack of certainty over Gower’s profession, the urban and courtly aspects of his production are undeniable. Indeed, “his artistic mastery of the three dominant languages of medieval England also demonstrates a particularly cosmopolitan élan” (151). Chapters 11-13, “Gower’s Southwark” (132-149) by Martha Carlin, “Gower’s courts” (150-157) by Matthew Giancarlo, and “Gower, business, and economy” (158-171) by Roger

<sup>1</sup> See Woodward for a concise terminological overview (2015).

A. Ladd, consider Gower's environment, his residence in Southwark and links with the courtly world, and his views on politics, economy, and business. His somewhat mysterious professional and economic identity has yielded very different theories and interpretations, often—not unproblematically—underscoring his “bourgeois” qualities, which intersect with his alleged status as a London poet. In Chapter 14 “Gower and science” (172-196), Russell A. Peck powerfully argues that “perhaps rather thinking of Gower and Chaucer as ‘moral’ or ‘didactic’ writers, we should call them both ‘scientists’, or perhaps even ‘mathematicians’—writers devoted to wisdom and its materiality, who would be masters of science, or at least playmates with science, given their love of observation and understanding” (178-179). Peck makes a rather convincing case while revisiting the role of rhetoric as part and parcel of philosophy, ideas about cognition, and (ethical) science. The penultimate chapter of Part II, Chapter 15 “Gower's reception, 1400-1700” (197-209) by Robert R. Edwards, reviews the most significant dimensions of Gower's reception, from his reputation and early appraisal of his works, with no underlying literary or critical analysis, to later rewritings (205-206).

Part III, “Polyvocality: text and language”, analyses the multiple voices and echoes of Gower from the past and present. In “Gower's languages” (225-236), Tim William Machan explains the multilingual reality that characterised late medieval England and its materialisation in Gower's outstanding use of the three languages, which were not as clearly delineated as they are nowadays. I struggle with some affirmations (e.g. “indeed, French was always on the point of decline” (230)), which seem to neglect the wealth of literary and non-literary texts produced in Anglo-Norman during the period and its widespread use across the social spectrum (see Rothwell 2005, Britnell 2009, Ingham and Marcus 2016, and Sylvester and Marcus 2017, among many others), but otherwise the chapter gives a sense of the linguistic panorama which surrounded Gower. In Chapter 18 “Voices and narrators” (237-252), Matthew W. Irvin adumbrates several approaches to the study of Gower's multifaceted—and multilingual—voice and his narrators, which connect to some of the theoretical frameworks discussed throughout the volume (particularly in Part I) such as critical theory, ethics, and politics. Chapter 19, “Gower and the forms of history” (253-265) by Steele Nowlin, addresses Gower's formulations of historical change and the functions of engaging with the past, and Andrew Galloway's “Gower's classicizing vocations” (266-280) is concerned with his use of ancient literature. In Chapter 21 “Gower and romance” (281-295), Corinne Saunders shows how the romance tradition—in terms of motifs, conventions, and explorations of feelings—is deeply embedded in the *Confessio Amantis*, even though this work cannot be classified as belonging to the genre; and Brian Gastle's “Gower and Chaucer” (296-311) takes up the association between these two authors by focusing on four key areas: biography, common literary sources

and analogues, thematic issues, and poetics/style. This long-standing matter of discussion still merits consideration, especially if one takes into account the many articles on Gower which are still published in journals such as *The Chaucer Review* and *Studies in the Age of Chaucer*. The following and final four chapters consider Gower's oeuvre according to language, and so the first two chapters concern the ballades and the *Mirour de l'Omme* as epitomes of his production in French (Chapter 23 by Peter Nicholson (312-320) and Chapter 24 by Craig E. Bertolet (321-327)), and the French and Latin works are the topics of Chapters 25 and 26, authored by Yoshiko Kobayashi (328-340) and Robert J. Meindl (341-354), respectively.

Albeit with variations, the organisation of the chapters, combining a thorough overview of the literature on the subject and suggestions for further research will suit a very wide readership: on the one hand, budding researchers, relatively new to Gower, will be able to cumulatively create a comprehensive picture of this author, his position on medieval culture and the worldview that transpires in his works; and, on the other, specialised scholars will learn more about state-of-the-art Gowerian research and how interdisciplinary it is. In addition, the precise sequence of the chapters seems to be flexible: for instance, Chapter 9 and 16 may be grouped together, and the last four chapters (23, 24, 25, and 26) could well serve as solid introductions to Gower's trilingual works and the manuscripts in which they are contained (Chapters 6, 7, and 8). The multilingual reality of the manuscripts containing Gower's works is emphasised on several occasions (100, 102, 107, and 108); at the same time, a language-based division seems to undermine the perception and study of Gower's works as they were originally produced and disseminated. Definitely, this partition is more convenient for individual research purposes—e.g. for those interested in textual productions in only one of the three languages; yet, it perpetuates a modern procedure, which tends to atomise multilingual productions rather than making sense of them as they stand in their manuscript contexts. Efforts are made to readdress this monolingual focus throughout the volume under review, and suggestions for future work encouraging scholars “to read the poems in the contexts in which they appear in the manuscripts—that is, as deliberately included with other languages rather than separate from them” (100) or to consider “his specific stylistic practices—rhetorical tropes and figures—across his three languages of composition” (51) are particularly welcome. Another strength of this Companion which should not be overlooked is its pedagogical, teaching-oriented dimension: advice on how to introduce Gower into the classroom and how students can benefit from reading him (10, 230, 233, and 262) reminds the reader of the rich potential that remains to be further exploited in the classroom. For all these reasons, this volume represents a landmark in Gowerian scholarship and an indispensable reference in medieval literature and culture courses worldwide.



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BOOK REVIEWS

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# ***Reporting the First World War in the Liminal Zone. British and American Eyewitness Accounts from the Western Front***

**Prieto, Sara. 2018**

Cham: Palgrave Macmillan

ISBN 978-3-319-68594-6

**S**ara Prieto's *Reporting the First World War in the Liminal Zone. British and American Eyewitness Accounts from the Western Front* examines the representation of the First World War in a number of testimonies written by British and American reporters who went to the Western Front at different stages of the war. This solid and rigorous research represents a valuable contribution to the study of the First World War, as the author goes beyond the study of journalistic reports by British and American writers in order to fill a void within the field of war reportage.

To start with, by focusing on journalistic accounts written by reporters who visited different war zones, this book seeks to counter current trends in First World War Studies grounded in testimonies from combatants and ex-combatants. This "combat-centred" perspective has been challenged throughout the past thirty years by women scholars committed to the recovery of testimonies

written by eyewitnesses, such as nurses. Their attempt to rescue female voices, however, tended to overlook war reportage. Therefore, a second and related aspect that has also been ignored and which the author achieves to reclaim are the testimonies of a number of reporters who went to the front lines and published their experiences during the armed conflict.

Furthermore, this research also provides a thorough exploration of the genre of "literary journalism". Since the texts under investigation correspond to this genre, the introduction undertakes an overview of the development and evolution of a genre that has not been sufficiently studied. Following the definition provided by the International Association of Literary Journalism, literary journalism can be summarized as "not journalism about literature but journalism that is literature" (Prieto 2018, 2). In other words, literary journalism defies easy categorizations and can be represented as a hybrid that is located



in-between different disciplines, which leads the author, in turn, to put into dialogue the form and content of texts that she characterizes by their “liminality”.

On the other hand, this book takes into account how nationality and gender affected the authors and their texts. This transatlantic dimension is one of its greatest virtues of the volume, as the inclusion of texts from both sides of the Atlantic allows Prieto to critically reflect on “the extent to which the author’s nationality —and their countries’ position at a given stage in the war— affected their style of writing” (Prieto 2018, 13). The emphasis on the differences between those texts written by men and those by women contributes to the awareness of the significant role played by gender in war reporting.

While drawing from canonical approaches to the First World War, such as Paul Fussell and Samuel Hynes’s “Myth of the War”, the author gives innovative insight into journalistic reports by incorporating interdisciplinary approaches and multiple perspectives within the fields of literary studies, literary journalism, anthropology, sociology and history. Doubtlessly, one of the innovative elements is the conceptual framework used, based on theories on liminality. Victor Turner’s formulations of the notion of liminality, that had been previously studied by Arnold van Gennep, are identified as the second stage of a “tripartite process” consisting of “[t]he entry into an unknown realm [which] marks the suspension of one’s original sense of identity with the resulting disorientation and uncertainty, and the eventual prospect of seeing the world with new eyes” (Prieto 2018, 11).

In this regard, the introduction offers a thoroughly documented theoretical foundation that adopts the notion of liminality to study both the authors and their texts. After a beautifully written description of the devastation of “the Great War”, the author proceeds to identify the liminal zone as the years of the conflict, from 1914 to 1918. Liminality, on the other hand, also applies to the texts that are left “in-between historical, generic and literary traditions” (11). The historical context, literary journalism and the texts under examination share this liminality, leading the author to consider the role that the First World War played not only for these testimonies, but also for the development of the genre as a whole.

The following chapters are structured chronologically. The second chapter “Pioneers: Entering the War Zone” deals with texts written by two British and two American reporters, Harold Ashton, Philip Gibbs, Richard Harding Davis and Alexander Powell, two of them male and two female. Written soon after the outbreak of the conflict, these texts focus on the initial difficulties and obstacles in reaching the war zone, the observation of fleeing refugees, along with the ultimate commotion and bewilderment caused by a novel form of warfare that could not be compared to any previous conflict. “The Liminal Tunnel: Authorial Voices in the War Zone” also incorporates accounts from both sides of the Atlantic by both genders in order to delve into the dissonance between the liminal nature of the war experience and the inherited tradition of war writing. Unable to represent the war according to traditional parameters, these writers were compelled to resort to hybrid texts. In this regard, the book compares and contrasts those texts written by British authors like Rudyard Kipling from those by Americans, such as Mary Roberts Rinehart and Edith Wharton. The next two chapters focus exclusively on texts from either Britain or the United States: chapter 4, “The Turning Point?: Journalists at the Somme”, analyzes the testimonies of British journalists of the Battle of the Somme, and “The American Rite of Passage” pays close attention to the representations of the entry of the United States into the war. Since the armed conflict identified as the liminal stage precedes the culmination of the rite passage, the last chapter also explores the rite passage that necessarily corresponds to the period after the war. “Incorporation: Post-war and Disenchantment” is referred to as a “coda” that includes both texts written after 1918 and the main conclusions of Prieto’s research.

To conclude, *Reporting the First World War in the Liminal Zone* offers not only a pleasant reading, but also an invaluable contribution to the study of war reportage written by British and American journalists during the First World War. All in all, Prieto’s research provides the reader with an original and innovative approach to texts that are exhaustively examined and put into dialogue with a solid theoretical framework. The reviewed book most definitely meets the objective of filling in “the gaps in the literary maps of the First World War and deepen our understanding of the European cataclysm” (188).

## BOOK REVIEWS

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# ***Women's Prophetic Writings in Seventeenth-Century Britain***

**Carme Font, 2017**

London: Routledge. 250 pp.

ISBN: 978-1138-64692-6.

**W**hen it was requested that Saint Teresa of Avila became a Doctor of the Catholic Church, this honour was denied by Pope Pius XI under the argument *Obstat sexus* (“her sex does not allow it”). This barrier was not conquered, as Carme Font reminds us, until 1970, almost four hundred years after Saint Teresa was canonised. With regard to this denial of the intellectual value of women —excluding some exceptional cases—, Font’s book sheds light on a whole corpus of female writers who focused their skills on prophetic writing, the only way allowed to transmit their own word at a time when women were forbidden to preach, but not to prophesy. By doing so, women found a way to transgress the gender boundary —as a sort of *captatio benevolentiae*, which presents them not as women, but as instruments of God’s voice— in order to play an active role in the course of current events. As Font points out, the addressees were not only the religious congregations, but also a larger audience or even a certain body politic. Whether they believed themselves to really be God-head’s speakers or they just used prophesy to create a persona allowed to speak out, or both at the same time, will keep us involved in the intrigue of each chapter of Font’s masterpiece: “Politicum”, “Protean Feminisms” and “In-communications”.

Font proposes a broad panoramic view of English prophetesses and how their writings evolve over the seventeenth century, reaching their higher point during the years of the Civil War. The *raison d’être* of these texts not only responds to the historical, cultural, and social circumstances in which they are framed, but also to a search carried out by these women, in order to find new forms of self-definition that would allow them to understand their own role in a changing world. Prior to addressing the different cases that will be presented, the introduction starts by defining the concept of *prophetic speech*, which we can consider as a crossroads—in Julia Kristeva’s terminology—in which faith, fiction, language and culture converge.

According to Font’s approach, prophecy can be seen as a radical language, a discourse of social transformation that includes religious consciousness, political participation and gender identity (4). Starting off with the definition provided by Diane Purkiss about prophecy as “any utterance produced by God through human agency”, the author remarks that it can be considered as a public service, as well as a direct communication between the divine and the human. Far from invoking an absent divinity, as through prayers or sermons, the prophetess becomes the channel of a present deity. In this line, public exposure

and divine action become united through the voice of the prophetess, who emphasises her vindication of divine goodness and justification of God's ways in order to maintain a "coherent theodicy" (5). Prophetic writings highlight the power of the word as a transforming element at the service of the common good.

The prophetic texts in diverse forms, such as prophetic poetry, spiritual autobiographies and self-narratives constitute a "gendered genre" (3); a particular way of female writing or a type of (*ante litteram*) *écriture féminine*. Prophecy also represents a process of individual empowerment for women, reinforcing the idea of female authorship, as a sort of activism that allows them "to gain a deeper understanding of themselves as creators of independent meaning as individuals, citizens and believers" (3). By means of their writings, prophetesses are able to participate, transform and influence the socio-political realm.

In this frame, all the rhetorical strategies performed by the prophetesses lead them to represent their own sexuality "through a highly personalised form of expression". The prophetic text allows women to reach a public impact, beyond their religious congregations (7). However, despite considering that prophecy entails a message of truth, some prophetesses are rejected—or their authority denied—due to the content of their prophecies or the fact that these do not adhere to a specific political or religious agenda. As Font remarks, the literary value of these texts especially lies in how, if we consider prophecy as a discourse, women reformulate or modify it.

As we can see, there are different positions and perspectives related to the prophetic discourse. The starting point, which shows women as a "vessel" or "channel" of the authority of men, and therefore of the voice of God, seems to reinforce the notion that women's passivity and their emotional nature represent the perfect medium to echo the sacred word. Nevertheless, according to Font's previous considerations about female authorship, and assuming that prophecy implies the disarticulation of language to construct "a grammar of one's own" (8), the analysis of the discursive characteristics of the text which allow prophetesses to acquire new forms of self-expression are of vital importance. Prophecy, in Puritan theology, appears associated with an exegesis of the Scriptures, but also with an experience of the soul. The choice of a language that is also accessible for non-elite classes, allows prophecy to elude the control of the dominant classes.

The prophet's gender could be used as a tool to discredit women who came into conflict with institutions. The Scriptures posits that women can also receive the gift of prophecy, even though they are not authorised to preach. In addition, St. Paul's *Epistle to the Corinthians* exhorts women to keep silent in churches and forbids them to speak in public. Font points out that the prophecy is an exception to this silence, and some writers, like the Quaker Margaret Fell, even defended and justified their position by claiming that they had received "the spirit of

God" (7). The Pauline prohibition, an argument repeated throughout the Middle Ages, becomes a focus of discussion during the *Querelle des Femmes*. The controversy will continue through voices such as that of Christine de Pizan and her impassioned defence of women's moral and intellectual values. In the seventeenth century, the debate over women's participation in the public and civil sphere still remains, with some notable responses by female writers and intellectuals (10).

English prophetesses will break the restrictions to which they were subjected: as they are not allowed to preach in churches, they do so in public spaces, unsettling the authorities for the capacity of their speeches to alter public order. As a part of the prophetic process, and with the purpose of spreading and vindicating her own individual voice, the prophetess will combine all her available tools: the spoken word, the written text and even the print medium (12). Font mentions how some authors see seventeenth-century prophecies as a social and class phenomenon, grounded on the support among women writers and women readers, creating a narrative in which religious and personal consciousness converge in the way in which culture is created and reflected. Women become aware of their own authority, challenging both class and gender hierarchies and thus transforming themselves into catalysts of social change.

Prophecy was favoured by both the existence of different factions that dissented about what kind of society would be ideal—and fit God's will—and by the importance of the ecclesiastical matter. Since Humanism had played a key role on the education of women from the middle and upper classes, they were familiar with the Bible and the Psalms, and were used to express themselves in writing. The study of the Bible at home made women capable of reading, understanding and commenting the sacred texts. Different religious movements from previous centuries laid the groundwork for seventeenth-century English women to put their thoughts into writing. Font provides some interesting examples, such as the Lollards, who followed John Wycliffe's ideas, encouraging the reading of the Bible and accepting women preachers, or the Beguines, who promoted women's intellectual activities. Other dissenter religious groups assumed that the state—monarchy included—should not meddle in ecclesiastical matters, and stressed the spiritual equality of all human beings (13): Fifth Monarchists, Quakers and the millenarian-like groups expected a structural socioreligious change, which would be brought about by the Second Coming of Christ and the establishment of New Jerusalem in England. Prophetic and visionary discourses are triggered by these movements: the reading and interpreting of the Scriptures, as a guide to understand the future, will become a pressing need and transform prophets into crucial elements, not only for their own salvation, but also for the sake of their entire community.

Prophetic writings tend to weaken with the Restoration (1660), with some authors arguing in favour of women's exclusion from the political sphere. In this line, Font

provides different study cases of how women managed to continue creating and disseminating their prophetic messages. Even though their need of self-expression should not be considered exactly as a feminist claim—at least in the terms we understand it today—it is clear that the female presence in the public sphere signifies an important influence on the minds and lives of women from this period.

In Part I, which includes chapters 1 to 4 and is named with the keyword “Politicum”, Font examines the political element in women’s prophetic writings, proposing that the public exposure of their texts becomes a form of activism rather than a religious discourse only. Starting off with this hypothesis, Font presents different approaches to and considerations about women as political subjects and how the contemporary analyses about gender and politics explain the ways in which prophecy could help women overcome the patriarchal tradition. In the same vein, she underlines the association of dissent and revolutionary writings with the “unfolding of liberal political principles of tolerance, separation of church from state and individualism”, as well as the idea of the “symbolic deployment of gender” as part of the discourse of the “subaltern” proposed by Antonio Gramsci (39). These approaches, despite involving concepts well after the prophetic texts, become a useful tool of analysis to understand this idea of activism in female writings, on where, *ante litteram*, some of these considerations about identity, subjectivity and subaltern can be found.

In this part, the figure of Elizabeth Poole is especially remarkable: “moved by God to speak, just as the Army is moved by God to act” (76). She sympathised with the Army, presenting herself as an advisor or counsellor and sharing with her “audience” her preoccupation for the welfare of the country (72). Poole becomes conscious of the “difficulties of England by the grace of God” whose Will makes her politically aware (64). From her writings, Font highlights *A vision*, where metaphors of the body are gendered so that the Army is reassigned feminine, following the traditional assimilation of king and husband (67). This assimilation, that implies the symbolic construction of a male body politic (70), associates the subordination to the king with the “natural political relationship” of sovereignty of husband over wife—an idea that we will also find in Margaret Cavendish—. The metaphoric content provided by Poole becomes didactic rather than threatening (73), and her prophetic writings a tool against regicide. The circumstances lead her to create “a public *persona* fit for the occasion” (86), which demanded the opening of political debates (87) that otherwise would go unnoticed (206).

In Part II (chapters 5 to 9), called “Protean Feminisms”, the prophetic content of the writings and narratives of the mid-seventeenth century is analysed, and the way prophetesses negotiate between their own conscience and God addressed. In this context, the prophet is not a passive channel who receives a revealed truth, but his or her understanding and interpretation of God’s will de-

pends also plays a role. As Font notes, female prophetic speech in England, in this period, combines “ecstatic, exegetic and autobiographical elements” (97). Religious writing improved women’s self-awareness, and, as a consequence, it has also been read as an early form of autobiography, in which the private sphere and domestic episodes could be combined with “devotional songs” and theological commentary (94). Font observes how women used the religious arguments to justify their actions in the public sphere.

In addition, the ecstatic component of prophetic discourse also contributed to a “greater awareness of the physicality of the body”, which can be seen in diverse experiential texts. Mystic raptures and ecstatic revelations, which produce a bodily reaction on the prophetess, are often considered as a sign of the prophecy’s authenticity. Thus, body becomes linked to language and desire, having been these notions explored by feminist authors, who set psychoanalytical connections between mysticism and gender (96). In order to examine the construction of a female subjectivity in these texts, Font alludes to the concepts of performance and acts of performativity, as well as to Julia Kristeva’s considerations of women mystics and their combination of the symbolic and the semiotic, which transformed “the fixed symbol of a phoneme into units of autonomous meaning” (110). This consideration can be applied to cases like Anna Trapnel’s discourse in *The Cry of a Stone*. A writer connected to the millenarian Fifth Monarchist ideas, she envisioned a triangular relationship among her “great Instructor” (116), herself as a “more suitable vessel” than male prophets, and the public. Endowed with a great talent that transformed her at the same time into a prophetess, a lyric and mystic poet, and a preacher (134), she legitimised her own voice and authority by strategies such as self-humiliation and a complex set of gestures to appeal to the public (117), making her words transcribed while she was immersed in her trance. In addition, Trapnel mastered the breaking down of “the workings and meanings of language” (120), including intonation, wordplay and songs to “confound the wise” and “cry out against their transgressions” (118). As Font says, the multi-layered message provided by Trapnel is also remarkable: on the one hand, she addresses an audience that is expected to understand the transcendence of the moment; on the other hand, she is also urging her Relator to transcribe her words (123). Despite the impact she generates with her physical presence through her performance, the second part of the communication occurs once her texts have been printed, increasing her sphere of influence.

Finally, Part III (chapters 10 to 12), “In-communications”, focuses on women’s strategies of expression in the construction of a language that adapted to the prophetic experience, and addressed a variety of subjects that affected their conscience and public life. The process of communicating their complex realities and experiences implies a certain loss of religious content and, as a consequence, a new language full of metaphors, stylistic resources, and different discursive models is cre-



ated (153). Through diverse approaches, these writers explore the connections between revelation and reason and they use prophecy as a medium to articulate their experiences of suffering ostracism or abuse (26). Font mentions various examples, such as that of Lady Leonor Davis, a millenarian and apocalyptic writer who received a religious “transcendent vision” (156) that took her to Tower of London several times. The rejection of her writings, she thought, made her stronger and gave proof of her truth-saying. Davis considered that prophecy was made of a simple spirit not a complicated one, and characteristically, although she foresaw the second coming of Christ and the New Jerusalem, —as millenarian groups advocated—, she was not connected to any dissent group on which she could depend “physically or emotionally” (158).

Another remarkable figure is Jane Lead from Norfolk, who was somehow connected to mysticism (176) and set in motion an intricate set of rhetorical devices, as Leonor Davis also did, to present herself as an “eternal now” prophetess (183). By rejecting an orthodox reading of the Bible, Lead integrated different beliefs to finally develop “a voice, a vision, a full cosmology that captures the reader’s attention” (173). A recurrent subject on her spirituality was her connection with a male-female deity (180) described as an imago: her visions invoked *Sophia*, the Virgin Wisdom, as the “feminine aspect of Christ” (176), and alluded to a female iconography —an eternal partner of a male God, with roots in ancient mythologies— that was probably influenced by apocryphal texts.

Font indicates that among these women who wrote about their experiences and kept their individuality even in the hardest circumstances, there were some, such as Joan Vokin, who had strong bonds with the Quaker congregation, whose texts, which “promised self-expression” (189), were well distributed and contained a message of equality. Two of these women, Katherine Evans and Sarah Cheevers, were arrested by the inquisitors during a stay in Malta (p. 192), after disrupting a Catholic mass. They wrote several documents about their own deten-

tion and imprisonment, and Evans, who was even called a “madwoman” and a “witch”, refused to perform any “feminine occupation” to please their captors (195).

As a conclusion, Font shows how the prophetic narrative allows prophetesses to construct their own version of a revealed truth, defending, modifying or subverting it in order to create a solid discourse and to vindicate their authorship. The texts chosen by Font for her analysis reflect a social concern and a set of skills that break the traditional image of women as intellectually weak or lacking autonomy. Likewise, Font’s study proposes an interesting approach to the prophetic text as a vindication of female authorship by means of a visionary discourse that, transcending the purely exegetical, allows for the participation of women in the public sphere and blurs the limits between sacred and secular. Women can express and recognise themselves and in their texts the tensions between the private and public spheres of authority are highlighted (134). This border is marked with “original units of meaning” of women that were writers and poets as capable as other women writers that had achieved recognition as Katherine Phillips or Margaret Cavendish (134).

To sum up, it would be interesting to return to the concept of crossroads from which we started. Moving away from other study models, some of them based on the interaction between the prophetess and her own congregation, Font digs into the analysis of the components that make women’s prophetic speech a discourse and a culture of its own. Regarding the different approaches proposed in each part of the book —namely politics, feminism (or proto-feminism) and communication— perhaps we can consider that the strongest point in Font’s study is its transversality, as well as her nuanced readings of the texts which allow her to present to the reader the complexity in the process of women’s self-definition. The large amount of different sources also deserves a special mention, not preventing Font from providing well-connected and meticulous explanations, as well as a lucid scrutiny of the specific conditions and background, recurrent topics, claims and meanings of each author.

BOOK REVIEWS

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# ***Traumatic Memory and the Ethical, Political and Transhistorical Functions of Literature***

**Susana Onega, Constanza del Río, Maite Escudero-Alías (Eds.)**

Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017, 331 pp.

ISBN: 9783319552774

**W** The current importance and popularity of the field of trauma studies—which emerged in the early 1990s “as an attempt to construct an ethical response to forms of human suffering and their cultural and artistic representation” (Andermahr, 2015: 500)—is undeniable, and it has become a dominant paradigm in cultural and literary studies. In *The Trauma Question*, Roger Luckhurst introduces the fields of cultural memory and trauma studies, and analyses “the emergence of the trauma paradigm” (2008, 5). This “trauma paradigm”, which has different branches<sup>1</sup>, has been said to have been inaugurated by the representation of the Auschwitz catastrophe (Luckhurst 2008, 5), and it has been accentuated by several other traumatic events oc-

curing in the last decades. The new millennium, the 9/11 attacks, the so-called “War on Terror” and the wars in the Middle East, the financial crisis and the ensuing global revolutions have “made the Western world feel like a more precarious and volatile place, in which we can no longer be nonchalant about our safety or our future” (Gibbons, 2017: np).

It has been acknowledged that narrative has the capacity “to provide an aesthetic representation of awful knowledge”, a fact that “would explain the proliferation of trauma narratives that has taken place since the aftermath of the Second World War” (Onega 2017, 370). Moreover, the idea that literature has also a healing capacity has been widely accepted. As Onega further explains, “[o]

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<sup>1</sup> Onega, del Río and Escudero-Alías present them in the introductory chapter to this volume (1-2).

ften, the authors are aware of the (self-)healing potential of their aesthetic activity” (Onega 2017, 370). And here lies the main focus of the volume *Traumatic Memory and the Ethical, Political and Transhistorical Functions of Literature*, carefully edited by Susana Onega, Constanza del Rio and Maite Escudero-Alías: “the analysis of the representation of traumatic memories and individual and collective suffering in contemporary literature” in relation to the transformative capacity of aesthetic narrative creation and to the evolution of literary forms (Onega et al. 2017, 7).

The volume, which comprises brilliant essays by scholars from different countries, “provides complementary outlooks on the rhetorics of violence, the effects of traumatic experiences, both individual and collective, and the role of memory in helping restore subjectivity and building a sense of cultural bonding” (Onega et al. 2017, 10). It is structured in eleven articles grouped in four main sections and framed by an introduction and a conclusion. The introduction presents a clear and detailed overview of trauma and memory studies, situating itself at a critical position that endorses the representation of traumatic memories “through rhetorical indirection and/or formal, generic or modal innovation in such a way that an open and unified view of trauma may accommodate room for socio-political change and transformation” (Onega et al. 2017, 3). In this light, the following sections offer several examples of how this has been achieved by texts from diverse authors.

The second chapter, Martin Elsky’s “Memory and Appropriation: Remembering Dante in Germany During the Sexcentenary of 1921” —included in the section entitled “The Ideological and Aesthetic (Re)construction of Cultural Memory in Early Twentieth-Century Literature”—explores the act of remembrance, commemoration and cultural re-appropriation from the perspective of post-war cultural crisis. The third chapter, David Lloyd’s “On Poetic Violence: W.B. Yeats’s ‘Leda and the Swan’ and César Vallejo’s ‘Vusco volvvver de golpe el golpe’”, analyses both poems and how they deal with European dramatic and violent political events which archetypically present what Walter Benjamin termed “mythical violence”. In his article, Lloyd relates the “violence of poetry itself” (Onega et al. 2017, 52) to political violence. His meditation on aesthetics reveals violence as a “destructive irruption of force” (Onega et al. 2017, 54) and unlocks the crucial question of the space of colonialism in Western history.

The second section, comprises three chapters on the ethical and aesthetic challenges in the representation of the Holocaust. Larissa Allwork’s historical article “Holocaust Trauma Between the National and the Transnational: Reflections on History’s ‘Broken Mirror’” focuses on the limitations of Holocaust memorialisation, and on the impact of trauma theory on her personal (re-)writing of cultural memory. Silvia Pellicer-Ortín’s “Wandering Memory, Wandering Jews: Generic Hybridity and the Construction of Jewish Memory in Linda Grant’s Works” looks at three different works —memoir, fiction

and literary reportage— by a British-Jewish writer who has rediscovered her personal as well as the collective fragmented traumatic memories through writing (Onega et al. 2017, 102). Finally, Rudolf Freiburg’s chapter, entitled “‘Fighting Trauma’: Silencing the Past in Alan Scott Haft’s *Harry Haft: Survivor of Auschwitz, Challenger of Rocky Marciano*”, analyses a “postponed autobiography” dictated to the author’s son 80 years after the traumatic events had taken place and which exemplifies “the difficult task of remembering again and again” (Onega et al. 2017, 129).

Part three, which focuses on romance and spectrality in the representation of traumatic memories in literature, consists of three more chapters. The first one, Justin Paul Brumit’s “Medieval Romance After HIV and AIDS: The Aesthetics of Innocence and Naïveté and the Postmodern Novel”, examines how medieval romance strategies and aesthetics can serve to represent the wounded or ill body during the rise of the HIV/AIDS crisis in the 1980s and 1990s in various texts, with special emphasis on Dennis Cooper’s post-Aids crisis gay fiction. Next, Jean-Michel Ganteau’s “Remembrance Between Act and Event: Anne Enright’s *The Gathering*” is based on the hypothesis that trauma may be “possibly healed or at least dealt with by converting traumatic memory into narrative memory” (Onega et al. 2017, 182) and analyses this Irish novel, which explores collective national trauma by means of the voicing of interrelated individual traumas. Furthermore, the article also examines the novel’s testimonial act and the paradoxical acts of remembrance present in it. The closing chapter in this part, Susana Onega’s “Class Trauma, Shame and Spectrality in Sarah Waters’s *The Little Stranger*”, offers a thorough close reading of Waters’s novel which demonstrates how the concept of the Gothic haunting ghost or spectre can be used to represent the projected phantoms of trauma.

The last section in the volume, which includes three articles on hybridity, liminality and the testimonial representation of postcolonial traumatic memories, opens with Anna María Tomeczak’s chapter “On Exile, Memory and Food: Yasmin Alibhai-Brown’s *The Settler’s Cookbook: A Memoir of Love, Migration and Food*”. Her article relates food, exile, personal and collective memory, and hybrid identity in diasporic communities as explored by Alibhai-Brown’s memoir-cookbook, which “tells the story of Ugandan Asians using food as a metaphorical anchor” (Onega et al. 2017, 234). Following, Bárbara Arizti’s “Self-Representation and the (Im)Possibility of Remembering in Jamaica Kincaid’s *The Autobiography of My Mother and Mr. Potter*” explores personal and historical trauma, self-representation, and the limits of autobiography in a postcolonial context by means of a close reading of the two cited autobiographical works by Kincaid, with special focus on Kincaid’s “rhetoric of negation” and her particular use of parataxis. Concluding this section, Ketrina Harack and Aitor Ibarrola-Armendariz’s “Trauma, Screen Memories, Safe Spaces and Productive Melancholia in Toni Morrison’s *Home*” offers an examination of the limits of classical trauma theory, and anal-

yses the representation of the concepts of home, exile and identity, as well as racial trauma in Toni Morrison's novel.

Finally, the concluding section, authored by Constanza del Río, Susana Onega and Maite Escudero-Alías, rounds off this consistent and innovative volume summarizing the main conclusions on the genealogy and conceptual nature of trauma and its artistic representations. No doubt, the volume—which addresses trauma as a culturally embedded phenomenon—achieves its aim and attests to the complexity of the conceptual “Gordian knot of trauma”, introducing complementary concepts coming from diverse thinkers and areas of study (Onega et al. 2017, 312). All in all, this work is a highly-coherent collection which also provides readers

reference to a diversity of texts that present an insightful analysis of the representation of trauma in contemporary literature in English, as well as of the particular and miscellaneous aesthetic and literary strategies used in said representation. And not less important, one of the main accomplishments of *Traumatic Memory and the Ethical, Political and Transhistorical Functions of Literature* is its deconstruction of classic trauma theory, expanding and transcending past and current understandings of trauma. This publication surely constitutes a reference in the field, as it opens up new definitions of the concept that will further evolve in the critical field of trauma studies, and hopefully this will also have “crucial practical implications for our moral, social and political lives” (Miller 1987, 10).



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## BOOK REVIEWS

PETRA FILIPOVÁ

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# ***Rethinking Gender in Popular Culture in the 21st Century: Marlboro Men and California Gurls***

**Astrid M. Fellner, Marta Fernández-Morales and Martina Martausová, eds**

Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2017. pp. viii, 247. \$125.95. ISBN (10): 1-4438-7898-7

**I**n an era of backlash against feminism and of anti-gender campaigns gaining ground throughout the Western world, this volume offers a rethinking of gender and its representation in media which may be used as a tool in future discussions on the topic of gender, identity, and equality. In the acknowledgements, the editors, Astrid M. Fellner, Marta Fernández-Morales and Martina Martausová, link the origins of the book to the 12th ESSE conference in 2014; from the vantage point of the latest ESSE conference in Brno, with its strong orientation towards the social and political situation regarding gender especially throughout Europe, it is clear that the topic of the representation and production of gender identities in popular culture remains highly relevant in 2018.

The context for this volume is further explained in the introduction, where the editors state that the terms “California Gurls” and “Marlboro Men” used in the title of the book point to the “contradictory gender pol-

itics that is indicative of a postfeminist media culture” (Fellner et al. 2017, 1). With fourteen contributors from four European countries – Austria, Germany, Slovakia and Spain –, the volume provides insight into the European perception of gender identities in an era of globalization and postfeminist sentiment, particularly into how the English-speaking media shape the perception of gender even in non-English-speaking parts of the world.

According to the editors, the events of 9/11, as Faludi points out in *The Terror Dream* (2007), shaped the way gender has been represented, perceived and constructed ever since. It is these new shapes that the book attempts to address in its two separate yet dialoguing parts on femininities and masculinities, respectively. The first part aptly puts a question mark right in the middle of the phrase “New Femininities” [New (?) Femininities], foreshadowing the inquiries into the anxieties inherent in the production and reproduction of contemporary

femininities in predominantly American media. The chapters presented tackle the influence of postfeminist sentiments on the perception and production of gender in contemporary society and media, putting an emphasis on the consumerism of twenty-first century Western society, which plays a significant role in how gender is represented and produced. Several chapters indirectly pose a question about the commodification of femininities and the shift in the representation of feminist struggles, themes, and values from rebellion to seeming complacency. The first part of the book insinuates, as Tim Edwards put forward in his *Cultures of Masculinity* (2008), that the femininities of the twenty-first century may have reacted to social and cultural developments in a way not unlike masculinities. In other words, it ventures the possibility that femininities are not in crisis, but are crisis, a crisis rooted in the underlying anxieties of postfeminist culture about what it means to be not just a woman, but a liberated, emancipated woman. An extensive range of popular culture phenomena is analyzed throughout the seven chapters: the *Fifty Shades of Grey* films and, to a lesser extent, books (Meritxell Esquirol-Salom and Cristina Pujol-Orzonas); HBO's *Girls* show (Heike Mißler in chapter 2, and María Dolores Narbona-Carrión in chapter 3); the popular series *Mad Men* (Leopold Lippert); the modern takes on the vampire genre in *The Vampire Diaries*, *True Blood* and *Twilight* (Lea Gerhards); the movies *Mad Max: Fury Road*, *Gravity*, *Ex Machina* and *Upstream Color* (Irina Simon); and the cultural narrative around the imprisonment of two *Pussy Riot* members in US media (M. Katharina Wiedlack).

The second part of the collection of essays considers masculinities and, as the title of this part suggests, how the images of masculinity have been shaped and re-shaped in the twenty-first century media. The anal-

yses reveal which parts of the Western hegemonic masculinity have been first concealed and later re-inserted into the image of what may be deemed new or post-feminist masculinities in contemporary television and film. Thus, the crisis observed on the representation of femininities in the first part of the collection is present in these four chapters as well: whether it be in the comparison of Richard Yates' 1961 novel *Revolutionary Road* and its more recent film adaptation (Rubén Cenamor); in the concept of fatherhood as a tool for re-establishing male authority in American postfeminist cinema (Martina Martausová); in the possibilities for queerness in the popular British television show *Doctor Who* (Rubén Jarazo); or in the challenges to kinship as inherently heterosexual in the television show *Crossbones* (Eva Michely).

The book primarily focuses on US television and film production, with some detours into the British media, and, as such, presents a highly actual analysis of the popular and most widely known instances of popular culture which have permeated the non-English-speaking parts of the world as well. It would be interesting to see a similar exploration of non-English-speaking media in order to further the dialogue on gender representation and production in other cultures and societies, even though the reach of US and British media is unparalleled and, therefore, highly relevant. As a whole, this volume provides an astute analysis of some of the best known and appreciated popular culture items from the wide selection of current film and television. The accessible language of the volume further makes this book valuable not only for the academics working in the fields of gender and culture studies, but also for undergraduate and graduate students, seeing as they may gain a different, and current, perspective on gender, as presented in contemporary English-speaking media.

BOOK REVIEWS

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REBECA GUALBERTO VALVERDE

# ***Dueños del tiempo y del espanto: genealogía nietzscheana de la responsabilidad en la narrativa victoriana***

Valls Oyarzun, Eduardo, 2017

Madrid: Escolar y Mayo, 2017.

ISBN: 978-84-16020-91-1, 320 pages

**R**ecent studies in Victorian Literature that have explored the synergies of Nietzschean thought and the British mind-set of the period are a few, but they fall short when compared with the astonishing critical effort here under review. As it may serve as an example, Henry Staten, in his 2014 study on the Brontës, George Eliot and Nietzsche, *Spirit Becomes Matter*, develops the fundamental claim that the scrutinized British authors find themselves among the precursors of the German philosopher's thoughts regarding the "practice" of what he terms as a critical moral psychology (Staten 2014, viii). Staten argues that the connection lies on Victorian physio-psychology, a "mental materialism" which participates from the same intellectual *milieu* as Nietzsche's "biologically based theory of 'will to power'" (ix). Staten explores the metaphorical value of Nietzsche's concept of "quantum of force," from his *Genealogy of Morals*, to explain "the

action of the will" (Staten 2014, 7), and reaches the conclusion that "with the concept of will to power, Nietzsche articulated the principles of the non-moral, or trans-moral, moral psychology that is practised by the Brontës, Eliot and Nietzsche himself" (8).

Staten explores Nietzsche's propositions respecting values of individual self-assertion, which he argues are physiologically based, to probe into the moral psychology of the novels examined in his book. He explores the division between the superior person and "the herd" in Charlotte Brontë's *The Professor* (10), employing Nietzschean terms, as he does when considering St John Rivers, from *Jane Eyre*, as epitome of the "aesthetic priest" in whom "the will to perfectly moral being is also the ultimate will to power" (14). He goes on to analyse the works of George Eliot to demonstrate Nietzsche's claim that Eliot epitomized the British emancipation from theology and its

replacement with morality (16)<sup>1</sup>. And yet, as Staten argues the absence of life-affirming values in Emily Brontë's *Wuthering Heights* and the distance that the frame narrations establish between the "overheated passions" at the centre of the novel and the author herself (23), one cannot help but stop and consider the utter necessity of a study such as Valls Oyarzun's essay, an invaluable contribution to contemporary Victorian criticism that, by tracing a Nietzschean genealogy of responsibility in Victorian narratives, travels much further and dives much deeper in its critical exploration of nineteenth-century texts, from Byron and Brontë to Conrad and Shaw, than its peers attempt to.

In the age of *Victorianomania*<sup>2</sup>, after decades of proliferating Neo-Victorian Literature and ten years of consolidated Neo-Victorian Studies as a productive field of cultural criticism, it seems useful to remember Llewellyn's assessment of Victorian scholarship in the inaugural number of the *Journal of Neo-Victorian Studies* (2008). Fifty years after the inauguration of the US-based journal Victorian Studies, Llewellyn gathered studies from expert sources to argue that the label "Victorian" certainly distinguishes, after half a century of studies, a specific period in British history and culture, but that it is also "a challenge to the idea of stable historical process that periodisation seemingly represents" (Llewellyn 2008, 167). This notion allows Llewellyn to suggest that "the Victorian period is possibly also eligible for alignment with the age of the postmodern in which neo-Victorianism exists" (167), which opens a new perspective to consider that Neo-Victorianism, from a scholarly standpoint, transcends the "period fetishism" (Flint qt. in Llewellyn 2008, 168) of clichéd Victorian reimagining, to critically engage with Victorian literature and culture from postmodern, new-historicist perspectives. The volume here under review, even though certainly not a critical study of Neo-Victorianism, fits squarely—and extends brilliantly—this new, postmodern trend in Victorian criticism, effectively deconstructing the cultural reception that, until very recently, had construed the Victorian era, whether as an age of certainty or of oppression, as the mythologized foundational tale of twentieth-century modernity (Valls Oyarzun 2017, 14-15).

Valls Oyarzun's *Dueños del tiempo y del espanto* (Escolar y Mayo, 2017) explores rigorously and exhaustively the profound re-evaluation of the Victorian communitarian norm expressed in Victorian narratives by placing the critical lens upon individuals that transgress that norm, illuminating how their process of emancipation is cog-

nate with Nietzschean philosophy concerning individual responsibility. For the essay indeed traces a genealogy of responsibility, understanding this concept as an individual affirmation by means of which the individual becomes master of his own *fatum* in an act of aesthetic creation. The book, as a result, outstandingly succeeds in the very impressive task of developing (or at least suggesting) a critical theory of responsibility as a philosophical, ethical and aesthetic expression of the individual self which, in the book, is carefully traced throughout the evolution and transformation of Victorian literature.

In a way, by framing the Victorian cultural period within the boundaries of two waves of aestheticism (Romanticism and the *fin de siècle* Decadent movement), Valls Oyarzun's book effectively traces a genealogy of Modernity—the connection of Modernity and responsibility will become clear at the end of the study—that starts with a thorough critical exploration of Lord Byron's heroic archetype as expressed in his dramatic poem *Manfred* (1817). In the first part of the book, this first analysis explores the Byronic hero as a sort of "aesthetic channel" (Valls Oyarzun 2017, 49) that allows access to the Dionysian substratum of existence, an example of how the author successfully applies key concepts of Nietzsche's works to articulate a more than functional critical discourse that probes into the aesthetic and discursive intricacies of the texts explored. The Byronic archetype is not regarded as a mere type character, but as an aesthetic construction that allows the intuition of the Dionysian substratum; as the formation of an individual conscience that, through their Dionysian wisdom, manages to represent and therefore sublimate what lies beneath. This, within the critical framework of the study, constitutes the initial shape that the transgressive energy takes and that will become progressively sublimated beneath as many Apollonian veils as necessary so that, as the author explains in the first chapter, it can safely adjust to the Victorian ethical framework.

This process of sublimation is first explored in Emily Brontë's *Wuthering Heights* (1847). Far from discarding the alleged lack of life-affirming values, as established by critics like Staten, Valls Oyarzun explores the varied levels of narration as different levels of Apollonian fiction, of linguistic sublimation, that simultaneously hide an "ineffable secret" at the heart of the novel (83) and constitute a creative, *responsible* act to expand the limits of conscience. This expansion is an effort to interpret that secret that lies correlative to Heathcliff's own conscience—and this, as the author so convincingly ar-

<sup>1</sup> Another example of a recent study that explores ethics in Victorian novels and which includes the consideration of Nietzschean synergies is Jesse Rosenthal's *Good Form: The Ethical Experience of the Victorian Novel* (2017). The author explores intuition as a source of intellectual power on the basis that, as Nietzsche suggested, "over the course of the nineteenth century, an 'intuitive' faith in an internalized sense of right and wrong did come to take an increasingly prominent, if fraught, place in English moral life" (1). These moral concerns are indeed explored—much more exhaustively—in Valls Oyarzun's study.

See Falchi, Perletti and Romero Ruiz's *Victorianomania: Reimagining, Refashioning, and Rewriting Victorian Literature and Culture* (2015), reviewed in Nexus 2018.1.

gues, is a process of reading, of representing, that is, of responsible creation, that involves the reader as well. It constitutes a first step in the Apollonian contention of the Byronic hero, so to speak, and thus is followed by the introduction of a fundamental counterpart to the transgressive archetype detected in characters such as Byron's Manfred and Brontë's Heathcliff: the configuration of the hero proposed by Thomas Carlyle's *On Heroes, Hero-Worship, and the Heroic in History* (1841). As Valls Oyarzun explains, the Carlylean hero, a paragon of duty, honesty, courage, faith, progress, nobility, aristocracy, and even cruelty, is a palpable manifestation of a *divine* substratum of existence, and that inalterable divinity is the guiding principle of life and heroism, and as such is expressed in subsequent literary texts. From this moment, the book probes the intersections of Carlyle's heroic archetype, of Byron's hero, and of Nietzsche's anthropological proposal of the *Übermensch* or overman; and it begins by following Eigner's formulation of the "Byronic villain", a type of character who preserves—and thus perpetuates—the transgressive traits of the Byronic hero, but subdued to a Victorian ethical judgment that demands and celebrates the individual's social responsibility, that is, his absolute commitment to the community and its norms.

In the exceptional third chapter of the book, divided into three parts, the author meticulously analyses the changes in Victorian literature that move from expressing the "dialectics of the heroic" (123)—explored in Charles Dickens's *David Copperfield* (1849), Lord Edward Bulwer-Lytton's *A Strange Story* (1862) and Wilkie Collins's *The Woman in White* (1859)—to a "heroic synthesis" (156)—examined in R. L. Stevenson's *Treasure Island* (1881) and *Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde* (1886). After this synthesis, the chapter closes with a philosophical explanation of the notion of the "superior man" (174) that prepares the ground for the analysis that follows in the next chapter and that probes the literary representation of a superior *woman* in the protagonist of H. Rider Haggard's *She* (1886). The critical scrutiny of these texts shows how the Victorian ethical framework initially established a dialectical struggle between the Carlylean Hero and the Byronic villain as a sort of "allegorical fight between Good and Evil" (156). This reveals an ideological programme that locates Evil outside the community. But Valls Oyarzun's essay masterfully deconstructs that programme to examine how the hypothesis that Evil resides *within* the community progressively takes shape in Victorian literature to the effect of truly undermining the apparently solid normative ethics of Victorianism. Including a deeply insightful analysis of the David Copperfield narrator as a Carlylean hero (as a man of letters), who has known the Truth and reveals it in his monumental narrative (129), and a brilliant consideration of how Count Fosco begins to reveal the arbitrariness of the Victorian ethical programme (153), the textual analysis in this part of the book superbly elucidates the critical claim advanced by the author. It demonstrates, first, how Stevenson's work—and especially its actualization of the *doppelgänger* motif—verifies that "Evil" lies upon the foundations of the Victorian community and, sec-

ond, how this transgression of the norm gradually settles in the formation of Nietzschean thought in England (163), a process that crystalizes in the literary expression of the "superior man", or rather, the superior woman in the figure of Haggard's Ayesha. Ayesha, as image of the Dionysian substratum—rather than image of the eternal Divinity embodied by the Victorian female archetype of the Angel in the House—comprehends, incarnates and desires the mystery of life and death understood as inextricable, perhaps indistinguishable parts of an abysmal becoming (197), and so she stands, in the very convincing critical stance of the author, as the immediate precedent of the Nietzschean overman with whom the second part of the book is concerned.

The first chapter of Part II, as it unearths the synergies that connect Nietzsche and Oscar Wilde under the outlook of decadent thought (219), reaches the climax of the essay in its discussion, following Gagnier, of how the *fin de siècle* might be regarded as a postmodern reaction to Victorian modernity. This claim, somehow reverberating in Llewellyn's suggestion that the Victorian period could be aligned with the age of postmodernity that has birthed Neo-Victorianism, serves Valls Oyarzun to sustain his fundamental hypothesis in a brilliant conclusion: the decadent movement, sustained on an aesthetic, responsible configuration of the self, allows the formation of a non-dialectical paradigm, fully in line with Nietzsche's philosophical proposals (220), since, from this perspective, the decadent transgression of normative modernity—that is, Victorian postmodernity, so to speak—does not come from beyond, but constitutes a part within. The literary analysis that substantiates this claim is a two-chapter analysis of Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* (1898). As Valls Oyarzun demonstrates, Kurtz is the character who fully embodies an affirmative and non-dialectical, truly life-affirming, individual responsibility in harmony with Nietzsche's configuration of the overman. For Kurtz realizes the foundation of an individual, entirely responsible ethical programme beyond good and evil, sustained upon cruelty and the affirmation of eternal recurrence as the authentic manifestation of the abysmal thought (242)—a contemplation of the horror that stands in contrast to Marlow's kinship with the Victorian ideological programme. Marlow, the narrator of Kurtz's story, is far from being an overman, but he does reveal, through his observation and narration of Kurtz, the groundlessness of Victorian values—to echo Michael Levenson—that Valls Oyarzun painstakingly probes throughout this fundamental, indispensable essay.

The author concludes: as Marlow thwarts the notion of Victorian truth by lying to Kurtz's Intended, his narrative finishes with the shattering of the Victorian cultural norm as it confronts that norm with the monumental artistic creation of individual responsibility (273). And so the essay opens an epilogue that, in lieu of an orthodox conclusion, goes far beyond summarizing its main claims. In Valls Oyarzun's last chapter, there is a summary, of course, and there are conclusions about the genealogy of



responsibility in Victorian (post)modernity, but there is also an actual epilogue, a revelation of what happened after, a final critical exploration of Bernard Shaw's "superman" in his drama *Man and Superman* (1903), a most distinguished example of the "dialectical closure" that re-codified the overman in subsequent literature. This, which lays bare the author's desire to go deeper, to truly explore, demonstrates the uniqueness of a study that, apart from its undeniable merits as a piece of critical re-

search in the field of Victorian studies—obvious with just a look at the extensive and very pertinent bibliography, or a quick survey of the extremely informative footnotes that frame every page of the book—also constitutes one step further in contemporary, postmodern, deconstructive analyses of Victorianism. Rigorous, engaging and genuinely innovative, Valls Oyarzun's *Dueños del tiempo y del espanto* is more than a must-read. It is necessary, indispensable, and game-changing.



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## EXHIBITION REVIEW

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# ***Coetzee's Universe in Black and White:***

“Photographs  
from *Boyhood*”

Nobel Laureate J.M. Coetzee is acclaimed as one of the world's most influential living authors. His fiction occupies a special place in South African literature—it is believed that his first piece of fiction, *Dusklands* (1974), introduced Postmodernism in South Africa—but his work also transcends any national interpretation. His prose is sharp and rigorous and it engages with complex ideas such as abuse of power, ethical responsibility and animal rights. It is worth mentioning that Coetzee is not only a skilful artist, he is also a quintessential humanist in a comprehensive sense. He is stunningly well-read and an outstanding essayist, literary critic, scholar and translator. His areas of interest obviously include literature, but also linguistics, philosophy, mathematics, music and photography, among many others. As Attwell points out, one of the distinctive hallmarks of Coetzee's novels is that he works with a wide variety of resources, which makes his fiction intermedial and polysemic (2018).

One of these resources, and indeed a very important one, is photography, as images are meaningful in all Coetzee's fiction in different ways, but also in his youthful practice as a photographer. In an interview with Wittenberg, Coetzee tells us that he acquired a mail order miniature camera and later a 35mm Wega (an Italian copy of the famous Leica) and developed a passion for photography at a very young age (2018, 8). Fortunately, some of his readers have now had a chance to see the images he took between 1955 and 1956 in an exhibition that was curated by Hermann Wittenberg and Farzanah Badsha. It was held at the modest but impressive Irma Stern Museum in Cape Town between 25 November 2017 and 20 January 2018. The museum is well worth a visit on its own right, as it holds the permanent collection of the South African expressionist painter and ceramist that is its namesake<sup>1</sup>. It was actually the place where she lived and worked for most of her life. It is situated in Rondebosch, the residential suburb in Cape Town where Coetzee lived for a few years, and it is also very close to the University of Cape Town, where the author lectured until 2003.

Apart from a limited preview at a conference in Oxford, the Irma Stern exhibit has been the first and only occasion so far that Coetzee's photographs have been shown to the public. Most of the negatives had not even been printed as positives before the exhibition. They were donated to Wittenberg when Coetzee sold his apartment in Cape Town where they had been in storage for decades. Some of the material was in bad condition, so the negatives were digitally scanned and deposited at the Harry Ransom Centre (Texas), where most of the manuscripts of Coetzee's writings, correspondence, photographs, family memorabilia and research materials can be found. The author, who now lives in Australia, visited the exhibition in January and gave a public reading where he projected a series of these photo-

graphs while he read related extracts from *Boyhood* (1997), his first fictionalised memoir and the one which narrates his life from the age of ten to seventeen—the period during which these photographs were taken. Hence the title of the exhibition: "Photographs from *Boyhood*".

The photographs, printed in different sizes, and beautifully enhanced with white *passe-partouts*, were arranged thematically in the three rooms of the exhibition. They illustrate the time after Coetzee's family had moved back from Worcester to Cape Town, as he tells us in *Boyhood*. They allow us to see, through the author's eyes, a retrospective of his universe, aspirations and concerns at the time: austere portraits of his family and some of his friends, his school life at St Joseph's Marist College—including lessons, sports competitions, pupils and teachers—, self-portraits, a neatly organised bookshelf and books he was interested in—T.S. Eliot, Keats, Rousseau, Russel—, sheet music by Chopin, a record player, a typewriter, and photographs of photographs. The darkroom where he produced his photographs was also reconstructed in the exhibition.

Some of the images, especially those he captured during school lessons, were taken surreptitiously. Others, like for instance his self-portraits, were carefully planned and clearly reveal Coetzee's interest in the camera as an instrument to experiment with. These show different perspectives, and a playfulness with the use of natural and artificial light as one of the most important elements.

J.M. Coetzee's self-portraits. J.M. Coetzee



<sup>1</sup> Stern was a prolific artist and is believed to have introduced European Modernism and Expressionism in South Africa (Harmsen 1985, 240).



As Attwell has mentioned, Coetzee's relationship with the camera was indeed exceptional, and his photographs are the living proof of his experiments with perspectives, shadow and shutter speed, something very unusual for such a young person (2018). An interesting pair of photographs is that of his brother David jumping from a ladder.



that appear in his fiction introduce an important moment of revelation of truth. Also Ayala Amir points out that "the ambivalent connection to the truth is but one of several aspects of photography that Coetzee uses, and the shutter image is part of a group of photographic images scattered through his work" (2015, 59). For example, his first novel-*la* "The Vietnam Project" (1974) tells the story of an Amer-



J.M. Coetzee's brother David Coetzee in their garden. J.M. Coetzee

The images are a technical experiment in perspective, three-dimensional space and shutter speed, but they also capture a moment of joy shared between brothers.

In addition, the photographs show to what extent Coetzee was being shaped by images as an adolescent and also later in life, and provide new insight into his writings, where photographs play an important role. On the one hand, in one of his interviews with Attwell, Coetzee has admitted that *In the Heart of the Country* (1977) shows the influence of film and photography (1992, 59). On the other hand, as Wittenberg mentions in the interview that follows, images

ican mythographer called Eugene Dawn and his emotional involvement in the Vietnam War. The protagonist, whom we may call an architect of violence, carries around a handful of photographs of the human suffering in the war, and regularly scrutinizes them wondering how to get beyond the surface of the picture, analysing the effects of torture. Dawn, thousands of miles away from the war<sup>2</sup>, but immersed in the historical circumstances that have caused it, suffers and endures its consequences. At the end of the novel, he loses control over his life and becomes mentally ill. Coetzee probably chooses to include photographs in this story to represent war atrocities and their impact on

<sup>2</sup> One of them is of a U.S. soldier raping a Vietnamese girl. Another one shows soldiers holding two severed heads of Vietnamese men.

human beings, even on those, like Dawn, who have not been direct witness to them. But the pictures also become, through Dawn's gaze, epistemological sites of suffering and are examples of Coetzee's early engagement with figures of otherness.

Another of his central characters, Paul Rayment in *Slow Man* (2005), is a retired French photographer who takes pride in a collection of some valuable old photographs of Australian miners. He uses them to insert himself in the history of Australia, the country that welcomed him as a child and where he has spent most of his life, but they serve a different purpose as well. The novel tells us that Paul suffers a bike accident and that he has his leg amputated, which forces him to be taken care of by a Croatian nurse. He somehow takes responsibility for her teenage son, and shows him his collection of rare photographs. In spite of their value, the boy takes one of the images and replaces it with a digitally doctored copy, where he has substituted two people with members of his own family. According to Wicomb, "through substitution Drago inserts the Croatian immigrants into the Australian national memory so that the photograph literally binds the past with the future" (2009, 14). My interpretation is also that Coetzee seems to be telling us that pictures are only one representation of the story and the story can be replaced or reinvented, producing an alternative truth.

Photographs are again important in *The Schooldays of Jesus* (2016), a recent philosophical novel that narrates the story of a gifted child named David, who becomes a truly passionate dancer at an Academy of Dance. This peculiar school is run by the virtuoso Juan Sebastian Arroyo and his beautiful wife Ana Magdalena, who is described as a graceful spirit. But there is also a character named Dmitri, who gains importance throughout the novel and declares himself to be infatuated with her. As a worker for the art museum next to the Academy, Dmitri spends a considerable amount of time at the "Academia" and David develops a true bond with him. The photographs of women cut off out of pornographic magazines, which Dmitri keeps and shows to David, depict him as a despicable character, unworthy of such a relationship. In addition, he claims to have had a romance with Ana Magdalena, something readers would find difficult to believe considering that he has no inner noble qualities. But again, the photograph he keeps of her in her youth—together with her love letters—is a proof of their relationship.

Moreover, the pictures in the exhibition are also revelatory in themselves as they suggest possibilities and landscapes, which Coetzee later developed in his writings. They mostly tell us about his life as an adolescent, and this is the most obvious connection one can make when observing them. Therefore, they also interact with his first fictionalised memoir, as the title of the exhibition suggests. It is probably not a surprise that several of the exhibition's photographs focus on Coetzee's mother, Vera, when she was in her early forties, and this is actually where the exhibition starts. They capture her in her daily routine (knitting, flicking through a newspaper, reading

to her second child David, and sleeping), or just absorbed in her own thoughts.



Vera Coetzee, the author's mother, at their kitchen's door.  
J.M. Coetzee

As Coetzee tells us in *Boyhood*, he truly venerated his mother as a child: "He cannot imagine her dying. She is the firmest thing in his life. She is the rock on which he stands. Without her he would be nothing" (1997, 35). However, he also needed to distance himself from her overwhelming constant solicitude. His hidden admiration for her is also obvious at the speech he gave at the Nobel Banquet where he remembers her and ironically asserts: "[F]or whom, anyway, do we do the things that lead to Nobel Prizes if not for our mothers?" (2003). There is also one image of his father, Jack (Zac) Coetzee, being told off by Vera's Aunt Aunie. Coetzee probably took this photograph secretly. His feelings towards his father were ambivalent at a very young age. Jack Coetzee had been a great absence for him during the first years of his life, as he had left his pregnant mother and him in difficult circumstances to serve in the war in 1942. When the war ended and Jack returned home in 1945, Coetzee was very proud of his father's war service, but soon discovered that he consumed large quantities of alcohol, was



unable to keep a steady job, and incurred in endless debts (Kannemeyer 2013, 75).

Some of the images are also dedicated to books he was interested in. One of them captures Aunt Aunie's library with "shelves full of books" (1997, 107). There is also a photograph of his own library at the time, which included books by important philosophers such as Descartes, Hobbes, Kant, Locke, Pascal, Plato, Spinoza and Rousseau, among others. It is astonishing to see what he was reading when he was still a teenager.

There is also another important subject that captivated his gaze: his school life at St. Joseph College, the Catholic school he attended in Rondebosch. There are quite a few class portraits, which obviously indicate the importance school had in his life at the time. In the interview with Wittenberg, Coetzee mentions he participated in a photography club at his school and was indeed the driving force behind it (2018, 10). Most of these images focus on school lessons, teachers and schoolmates, one of whom was his lifelong Greek friend Nick Stathaki, with whom he shared a passion for sports (Kannemeyer 2013, 41). *Boyhood* suggests that, despite his outstanding academic progress, he felt himself to be an outsider; still, this is also the place where, according to the images, he developed a passion for cricket and many pictures are dedicated to this activity.

Two meaningful photographs depict the landscape of Voëlfontein, the farm where he spent long holidays up to about his twelfth year and where he played with the coloured boys (Kannemeyer 2013, 45)<sup>3</sup>. Voëlfontein has played an essential role in Coetzee's life as he mentions in *Boyhood*: "He has two mothers. Twice-born: born from woman and born from the farm. Two mothers and no father" (1997, 96).



Voëlfontein, Coetzee's family's farm in the Karoo region. J.M. Coetzee

The family's farm was situated in the Karoo region, a barren semi desert of the country's interior plateau in South Africa, where farmers settled down and managed to live off the land and practiced subsistence farming up to the early 1930s. This idea of an idyllic landscape where human beings can practice an economy—or even a philosophy—of subsistence is a subject Coetzee develops in his early novel *Life & Times of Michael K* (1983). Indeed, Coetzee has extensively written on the landscape and his relation to it. On accepting the Jerusalem Prize, he spoke of the colonizers' failure to truly love South Africa, "not just Africa the rocks and bushes and mountains and plains but the country and its people" (1992, 61). Worth mentioning is his story "Nietverloren" (2002) where Coetzee expresses his disappointment at economically oriented farming in the arid region of the Karoo.

Moreover, his photographs also portray his ethical awakening to otherness. They demonstrate relationships of power and servitude, a subject that Coetzee has brilliantly analysed in his fiction. South Africa was, at the time, a country where unmovable roles were assigned by skin colour. There were two coloured families on his family's farm and they lived separately. Some of the images in the exhibition capture two of their members, Ros and Freek, in different scenes; they illustrate Coetzee's interest in—and to a certain extent, fascination with—his family's labourers and their lives. In one of them they are at the Strandfontein beach in Cape Town. The blackness of their suits and hats makes a beautiful contrast to the whiteness of the sand.



Ros and Freek cleaning offal with a younger man as a young girl looks on, Karoo farm. J.M. Coetzee

<sup>3</sup> In South Africa, the term "coloured" refers to people of mixed race.

In another photograph Ros and Freek have probably slaughtered an animal, as described in *Boyhood*, and are cleaning offal.

Coetzee, the prolific artist, continues to be engaged in different academic and cultural activities. In 2013 he was the curator of the sculpture project “Cripplewood”; in 2015 he published his correspondence with the psychotherapist Arabella Kurtz, and this year he has closed the Poetry Festival in Granada and published *Siete cuentos morales* (2018) in Spanish first. While he admitted in Wittenberg’s interview that he was interested in photography because “it was a manly activity, in contrast to such effeminate activities as composing

poetry or playing the piano” (2018, 8), it somehow does not come as a surprise when we read in Kannemeyer’s biography that this was an interest he has cultivated for many years. Indeed, when he was studying at the University of Cape Town, he acquired a better quality camera that he used for a long time. There is also a letter from Knight that explains he still had a passion for photography back in 1962, after he had moved to England with his wife Phillipa Jubber (Kannemeyer 2013, 136). If we are lucky, we may have a chance to discover more of his photographs and analyse his creative relationship with the camera sooner than we think. It would surely be another opportunity to explore his universe in black and white.



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INTERVIEW

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# ***An Interview with Hermann Wittenberg***

This interview is part of a research project funded by the Universidad de Málaga, whose support is gratefully acknowledged.

**H**ermann Wittenberg was born in Cape Town, South Africa. He studied English at the University of Stellenbosch and at the University of Cape Town and is an Associate Professor in the English Department at the University of Western Cape. His research focuses on South African literary history, colonial and postcolonial travel writing, theories of spatiality, and ecocriticism. He has published several archival studies of the writings of J.M. Coetzee and Alan Paton, and edited J.M. Coetzee's screenplay adaptations of his novels *In the Heart of the Country* and *Waiting for the Barbarians* (published as *Two Screenplays*, 2014). He is responsible for having introduced the idea of intermediality, that is the use of different media—especially film and photography—to the study of Coetzee's fiction. In 2018 Wittenberg and Farzanah Badsha have curated the exhibition "Photographs from *Boyhood*", which shows the images Coetzee captured when he was a schoolboy.

**Patricia Álvarez Sánchez (PAS):** Coetzee is probably one of the most respected and decorated living authors in the English language. He is obviously better known and praised for his fiction, but he is also a literary critic, a linguist and a translator. Your research has situated his fiction in relation to photography and cinema and also, somehow, prepared the path for this unique exhibition. It seems a wonderful coincidence that you were the one who received Coetzee's photographic material and photographs. How did that happen? And how did you feel about it?

Hermann Wittenberg (HW): When Coetzee moved from Cape Town to Adelaide, Australia, in 2002, he still retained his apartment in Rondebosch, which was then rented out to students. In 2014, he decided to sell the property, and some stored personal effects had to be disposed of. I had worked with John Coetzee on the publication of his film scripts at the same time (the book was published as *Two Screenplays*), and had worked on cinematic and photographic aspects of his fictions, and was asked if I had any interest in the old enlarger and assorted photographic and darkroom equipment. When the boxes arrived and I unpacked them, I found, to my surprise, a number of old spools of photographic negative film. There were also a number of photographic prints, which the young Coetzee had made in his own darkroom.

I had the old negatives digitised, and was astonished when the CD arrived: photographs dating from 60 years ago, giving us an intimate sense of Coetzee's world as a schoolboy, aged about 15 or 16. It is also the world of the memoir *Boyhood* (1997): the photographs were literally "scenes of provincial life" – the subtitle of the book.

I contacted Coetzee about the material, suggesting that the photographs might have been given to me inadvertently, and suggesting that they might be used for an exhibition, before handing them over to the Harry Ransom Centre (Texas) where all his other manuscripts and personal papers are housed. Coetzee wrote to me,

quite sceptical that anyone would be interested in the photographs (they are after all *amateur* pictures, taken by a school boy), but during a conference visit to Adelaide where I showed some of the images to a very interested academic audience—an occasion at which Coetzee was also present—he may have realised that there was some scholarly, even public interest. Together with my co-curator, Farzanah Badsha, I then put together an exhibition concept, and Coetzee subsequently agreed to support the idea—and also collaborated by supplying some captions, as well as conducting an interview.

**PAS:** In one of your articles on the publication of *Dusklands* (1974), Coetzee's first piece of fiction, you mention that Coetzee's first publisher, Peter Randall from Ravan Press, asked him to supply some personal information for his first book. Coetzee, unwilling to provide him with much personal information, answered in a letter: "among the things I am interested in in a non-professional way are: crowd sports; other people's ailments; apes and humanoid machines; images, particularly photographs, and their power over the human heart and the politics of assent" (2011, 78). Do you think Coetzee has always been interested in photography?

HW: Yes, the idea that photographs have "power over the human heart", in other words an emotive force, is discernible in many of his fictions, from *Dusklands* (1974) right up to *The Schooldays of Jesus* (2016), if we recall Dmitri's reaction to seeing the photograph of Ana Magdalena on the front page of a newspaper. It is not surprising then to find this responsiveness to photography emerge early in life, even before he started to take pictures himself. If we can trust the semi-fictionalised memoir *Boyhood*, the young John is repeatedly fascinated by photographs and pictures. "He loves to page through the [his mother's] albums" (Coetzee 1997, 39) we read early on. Referring to one of the three books he owns, *Scott of the Antarctic*, he writes of himself in the characteristic third person: "He often looks at the photographs, but he does not get far with reading the book: it is boring, it is not a story" (46). And in his other book, a children's encyclopaedia, he dislikes the prose, but "pores over the pictures" (107). Early in life, images appear to have taken precedence over words: they have power to stimulate the imagination.

**PAS:** The title of your exhibition, "*Photographs from Boyhood*", is also very similar to the title of Coetzee's first fictionalized memoir. Is there a relationship between the two of them?

HW: Yes, the title, "Photographs from *Boyhood*" is a deliberate reference to the memoir, but we also need to remember that the memoir, as all autobiographical writing, is partly fictionalised. In his third memoir, *Summer-time* (2009), there is a cautionary note: "What Coetzee writes there cannot be trusted, not as a factual record—not because he was a liar, but because he was a fictioneer" (225). He also famously said that "all autobiography is



storytelling, all writing is autobiography: everything you write, including criticism and fiction, writes you as you write it" (1992, 17). So, the photographs complicate the "fictioneering" since, to some extent, they record what was really once there, at least what was once there for a split second before the lens of the camera. Photographs are of course not simply true records of what happened—they are also, like writing, representations or constructions of the real. But the images allow us to re-read the memoir in a different, perhaps more nuanced, way, drawing our attention to the complex interweaving of memory, truth and invention. Some of the images *do* authenticate the memoir: they show actual people, and depict scenes that appeared to have really happened. What has been particularly intriguing was to read *Boyhood* again against the background of the photographs, and there are indeed numerous points of overlap and congruence. There is, for example in *Boyhood* the description of "the picture of Jesus opening his chest to reveal a glowing ruby heart" (1997, 149) on the wall of the classroom at St Joseph's, a picture which is actually visible in several photographs. So is the decaying heap of books, newspapers and magazines in Tant Annie's flat. The description of the beloved Karoo farm in the memoir is also corroborated by several photographs, for example one which shows the "labyrinth of stone-walled kraals that belong to the old days when the sheep in their thousands had to be brought from the veld to be counted or shorn or dipped." (1997, 91). On the other hand, the photographs also show scenes that were not written about. It is possible to regard some of these images as "deleted scenes" that were not included in the memoir. One such scene is the episode when the two Karoo farm workers, Ros and Freek, were brought down to Strandfontein, to see the sea for the first time. As the photographs show, Coetzee was clearly fascinated by this occasion, snapping a number of documentary shots of the two men on the beach.

**PAS: At the time when the photos were taken (1955-1956), Coetzee obviously developed a passion for photography. What made this artistic means of expression so attractive for him?**

HW: That is a question only he would be able to answer. In his interview, he says that photography carried a considerable cultural cachet in the 1950s, as it was considered to be a more masculine activity than writing poetry or playing the piano (two of Coetzee's other creative pursuits at the time). This was the golden age of photography, exemplified by Life Magazine, and photographers such as Henri Cartier-Bresson whose practice of documentary street photography Coetzee appears to have emulated. Photography had considerable prestige at this time—we can see this exemplified in Hitchcock's *Rear Window* with its hero-protagonist who is a professional photographer. The film came out in 1954, shortly before Coetzee embarked on photography himself.

**PAS: How did he take his photographs? Was he also interested in the process of developing negative film?**

HW: The photographs document a period in which he first encountered the medium, attempting to master the technique of taking photographs and developing and printing them in his darkroom. There was a lot of experimentation, trying to learn the craft, so many photographs are less than perfect, yet also fascinating as they document a boy exploring the parameters of what was possible to achieve with a camera. The photograph we have used for the poster is a good example of this experimentation: it is shot into the mirror with a flash, creating a technically flawed, blurry image, but which is nevertheless absorbing in its expressionist aesthetics. At its centre is the camera, an Italian made Wega 35mm (a cheaper copy of the Leica II). He still owns the camera.

**PAS: Was there a specific person that taught him?**

HW: He credits his mother's example, but also mentions paying attention to photographs he encountered in magazines at the time. He was member of a photographic club at school.

**PAS: What function did the process of taking photographs have? Do you think he was simply experimenting with the camera or was it part of a self-discovery process?**

HW: I would not really be able to answer this question as to what his motives might have been. What is interesting, though, about this archive is that it shows that photography was the first creative medium in which he became proficient. In his youth, he also dabbled with writing poetry, and took up playing the piano for a while, but eventually, in his late 20s, took up prose writing seriously. It is in writing fictions that he achieved worldwide recognition, culminating in the Nobel Prize for Literature, as well as two Booker prizes. The early photographic work, though, alerts us to the pervasive influence of photography in most of his fictions: not only do photographs frequently feature in the many novels, but there is also often a photographic aesthetic that is discernible in the prose—attentiveness to lighting, framing, point of view.

**PAS: Looking at the pictures, one can see that Coetzee was making photographs in order to capture certain moments that were important to him and that he focused on several subjects and compositions: members of his family, his school life, Voëlfontein [the farm where he spent parts of his childhood], and even, as you have mentioned, the books that he read and the sheet music he was probably interested in. Do you think some subjects were already more important than others at the time?**

HW: Photographs always reveal at least two different "sides". They show us what was in front of the lens, or what was photographed, but they also tell us something about the person behind the camera: ways of seeing the world, interests and obsessions, an approach or attitude. Just thinking quantitatively, the number of images of Vera show that he was clearly strongly focused on his mother,

a complex interest—and disavowal of interest—that is also evident in *Boyhood*. The photographs give us an intimate look into a childhood which was perhaps typical for provincial life in Cape Town in the 1950s. The young Coetzee comes across as a serious boy, if we for example look at a remarkable photograph of his bookshelf and see titles such as Plato, Rousseau, Hobbes and Kant that the sixteen year old was reading. But we also see a playful side of Coetzee, getting up to mischievous behaviour at school—for example secretly taking photographs of teachers in class—. We also see a deep absorption in sport, especially cricket and rugby. The photographs show a deeply personal, intimate side of the author as adolescent.

We also should note that the images are overwhelmingly of people rather than landscapes or still lives: he was clearly fascinated with people's lives and the relationships between them. You cannot, I suppose, write novels if you are not deeply interested in people and what they do and think. So, in this sense, the photographs can be read as an early preview of the kind of writing that would later emerge. The photographs also complicate the image of the author as a reserved, cool and austere man. One can perhaps speculate that in his detached role as a photographer, as an observer standing outside and looking in, without being too closely involved, he found a model—or point of view—that later became habitual.

**PAS: There are also a number of photographs of photographs...**

HW: Yes, I think one can make the argument that in Coetzee's photography, just as in his writing, there is an interest in the medium itself, a self-reflectiveness and self-consciousness. There are several photographs where he documents the act of photography itself. As Derrida noted "this abyssal inclusion of photographs within photographs takes something away from looking, it calls for discourse, demands a reading" (1998). Already at an early age then, Coetzee's creative work posed questions about representation.

**PAS: Photographs appear in several of his novels and seem to carry meaning as well. The most obvious interpretation would be to say that they reflect the structures of power in which the powerless are embedded and marginalised, as we read in "The Vietnam Project" (1974), where its main character, Eugene Dawn, carries around and is fascinated by a handful of images that depicts the atrocities of the Vietnam war. Do you think that the photographs that appear in his fiction have other meanings as well?**

HW: This is a large question which one could write a whole book on. Photographs in Coetzee's fictions are clearly often significant, but their meaning and function differs from text to text. What I think they all have in common, though, is that they represent some moment of truth, or at least a gesturing towards revealing a truth. In the case of *Dusklands*, the photographs do not so much reveal an objective truth about what the war was really

like in Vietnam, but rather give us insight into the tortured subjectivity of Eugene Dawn. What truths these photographs reveal differs from novel to novel: the act of taking the photograph in *Age of Iron* (1990) is imagined as the moment death enters the body of Elizabeth Curren; in *Master of Petersburg* (1994) it is a daguerreotype that makes loss and mourning tangible; the photograph taken of David Lurie in *Disgrace* (1999) reveals him to be a fool, and, of course, photographs feature strongly in novels such as *Diary of a Bad Year* (2007) and *Slow Man* (2005).

**PAS: In an interview with David Attwell, Coetzee comments (1992, 59) on the importance of cinema and photography in his second novel, *In the Heart of the Country*. You have written on how this interest illuminates "the origins of Coetzee's cinematic style and its effects in his prose" (2014, 5). Could you please explain how?**

HW: Coetzee often sets up his scenes in the novels in a similar way to how a photographer would set up a shot. There is very often, for example, an attentiveness to lighting. Iona Gilbert has looked with much detail at the presence of a photographic aesthetic in her doctoral thesis ["Cinematic and Photographic Aesthetics in the Novels of J.M. Coetzee"]. The argument I pursued with regard to *In the Heart of the Country* and film is somewhat different: the novel utilises a form of montage through which separate sections of prose are put together in a way that dispenses with realist continuity editing. The models Coetzee found here are discussed with Attwell in *Doubling the Point*, and it is interesting to note that both these films [*La Jetée* and *Passengers*] are not conventional films—moving pictures—but constructed through an assemblage of photographs—edited together in a way that simulated a fast-paced narrative flow. This technique, together with voice-over, became catalytic for the narrative construction of *In the Heart*. The jump-cut editing that Godard used in films such as *Alphaville* was also formative.

**PAS: Considering the many options that you surely had to host such a unique exhibition, why did you choose the Irma Stern Museum?**

HW: One of the reasons Farzanah Badsha and I wanted to hold this exhibition at the Irma Stern Museum, is not just that this is a museum that houses some of the most beautiful and significant art works in South Africa, but that this is also the area of Cape Town, the Southern Suburbs, that is depicted in the photographs. It is also an urban landscape that is deeply associated with John Coetzee's life. He was born very close to here, at the Mowbray Maternity hospital just beyond the railway line; his first home as a student, was in Jefflyn Court, next to the Mowbray bus and taxi rank. Just 100 meters or so away, off Main Road in Upper Liesbeek Road, is the house with the oak tree, the house as we read in *Boyhood*, where he was happy. His schooling starting out in Rosebank Primary, and he matriculated at St Jo-

seph's Marist College, where many of the photographs were taken. Then there is the University of Cape Town (UCT), an institution which the museum is a part of, where he studied and subsequently had an illustrious academic career spanning almost 30 years. And not very far is the house in Toll Road, just off Belmont Road, Rondebosch, where most of the great novels were written, books that brought him world-wide acclaim and the Nobel prize. In this sense, it is very fitting that these photographs, taken by a youth more than 60 years ago, were exhibited at the Irma Stern, a place that is connected, in intimate and multiple ways, with the extraordinary writer that Coetzee has become.

**PAS: Where is the exhibition going next and when?**

HW: The exhibition will be hosted in the J.M. Coetzee Center for Creative Practice at the University of Adelaide next November.

**PAS: What projects are you working on at the moment?**

HW: Over the years I have become more interested in ecocriticism, on the one hand, and on the influence of film and photography in Coetzee's fiction on the other. I am now doing research on how photographs helped Coetzee develop the argument of his novels, particularly *Life & Times of Michael K* (1983) and its main character, whose depiction was very much influenced by the photographs of Jan Pieriga, the murderer of two farmers in Olienpoot.



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