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ASOCIACIÓN ESPAÑOLA DE ESTUDIOS  
ANGLO-NORTEAMERICANOS  
aedean

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*Percy John  
Bysshe Keats  
Shelley*

POETRY 1819

*Walt  
Whitman*

*IRIS*

NOVEL 1919

*MURDOCH*

ESSAY

*ČILIL*

CONTENT &  
LANGUAGE  
INTEGRATED  
LEARNING





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## ÍNDICE

TRIBUTES  
LITERATURE AND CULTURE

8

BILL PHILLIPS  
Universitat de Barcelona

***Percy Bysshe Shelley  
& John Keats are Dead White  
European Men***

15

EULALIA PIÑERO GIL  
Universidad Autónoma de Madrid

***Do I contradict myself?  
Very well then I contradict  
myself***

Walt Whitman, el poeta de las emociones y los sentidos.

25

MARIÁNGEL SOLÁNS GARCÍA  
Universidad Nacional de Educación a Distancia

***Vida y posteridad de una  
mente brillante***

Iris Murdoch (1919-1999)

ARTICLE  
LINGUISTICS

33

XABIER SAN ISIDRO  
Moray House School of Education; University of Edinburgh

***The Multi-faceted Effects  
of CLIL***

A Literature Review

## ÍNDICE

RESEARCH  
PAPER  
LINGUISTICS

50

JAVIER PÉREZ GUERRA  
*Universidade de Vigo****Linguistic variation all over  
the place***

Some Briefing Notes about the LVTC Research Group

## BOOK REVIEWS

55

VICENT BELTRÁN-PALANQUES  
*Universitat Jaume I****Speaking in a Second  
Language***

Rosa Alonso Alonso, ed.

60

LAURA ROLDÁN SEVILLANO  
*Universidad de Zaragoza****Women on the Move. Body,  
Memory and Femininity in  
Present-Day Transnational  
Diasporic Writing***

Silvia Pellicer-Ortín and Julia Tofantšuk, eds.

63

LAURA DE LAS MERCEDES BUJÁN-SÁNCHEZ  
*Independent Scholar****Queering Women's and Gender  
Studies***Begoña Crespo, Isabel Moskowich and Carolina  
Núñez-Puente, eds.

66

MARÍA LUISA PASCUAL GARRIDO

*Universidad de Córdoba****Mid Eighteenth-Century Female Literary Careers in the Monthly Review and The Critical Review***

María Jesús Lorenzo Modia and Mónica Amenedo-Costa

71

FRANCESCA BLANCH-SERRAT

*Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona****Mid Eighteenth-Century Female Literary Careers in the Monthly Review and The Critical Review***

María Jesús Lorenzo Modia and Mónica Amenedo-Costa

74

JESÚS BOLAÑO QUINTERO

*Universidad de Cádiz****Paul Auster's Ghosts. The Echoes of European and American Tradition***

María Laura Arce Álvarez

77

DAVID YAGÜE GONZÁLEZ

*Texas A&M University****Tradition and (R)evolution: Reframing Latina / o Identities in Contemporary US Culture***Carmen M<sup>a</sup> Méndez García, ed.

## ÍNDICE

## BOOK REVIEWS

80

BURCU GÜLÜM TEKIN

*Universidad de Zaragoza****Voice and Discourse in the Irish Context***Diana Villanueva Romero, Carolina P. Amador-Moreno,  
and Manuel Sánchez García, eds.

83

MARÍA ISABEL SEGURO

*Universitat de Barcelona****Gender Issues in Contemporary Irish Literature. Electronic Journal of the Spanish Association for Irish Studies 13:2***

Melania Terrazas, ed.

88

JUAN NAVARRO

*Universidad de Murcia****Teoría y práctica de los estudios culturales.***

David Walton

91

JAVIER ÁLVAREZ CABALLERO

*Universidad de Salamanca/ University College, Dublin****Otro mundo es posible. Un canadiense en la Guerra Civil española***

Ted Allan. Edición de Juan Manuel Camacho Ramos

93

DINA PEDRO & VICTORIA PUCHAL TEROL

Universitat de València

***Celebrating Women in  
Literature and the Arts of the  
Nineteenth Century***

LAP (Literature, Arts and Performance) Research  
Group. Universitat de València (Spain), 21 November  
2018. In-house research seminar.

**BILL PHILLIPS**

*Universitat de Barcelona*

***Percy Bysshe  
Shelley  
and John  
Keats are  
Dead White  
European  
Men***



**P**ercy Bysshe Shelley and John Keats are Dead White European Men and no longer enjoy a pre-eminent position in the hearts and minds of poetry lovers and teachers; the canon is not what it was. Now that they are forced to jostle with the competition to gain our attention we need to ask ourselves whether they were any good in the first place.

Few of their contemporaries thought so. Friends, of course, supported them, often in print, but nobody else. In Shelley's case there were two complaints. His earliest poems, considered both by himself and later supporters to be juvenilia, received scathing criticisms: "There is no 'original poetry' in this volume; there is nothing but downright scribble," exclaimed an anonymous critic in 1814: "it is really annoying to see the waste of paper which is made by such persons as the putters-together of these sixty four pages" (Barcus 45). But the main objection was moral; Shelley's works were indefensible. Strangely enough, when his verse was criticised for its content, his qualities as a poet were often extolled: presumably his moral crimes were exacerbated by the waste of talent displayed together with the fear that his lyrical proficiency might lead susceptible readers astray. In a review of *The Revolt of Islam* in *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine*, John Gibson Lockhart, writing anonymously, conceded that Shelley "is strong, nervous, original; well entitled to take his place near to the great creative masters, whose works have shed its truest glory around the age wherein we live" (Barcus 117). The problem was that he would insist on dabbling in politics, and Lockhart is in no mood to be merciful: "As a political and infidel treatise", he thunders, "*The Revolt of Islam* is contemptible" (Barcus 117).

Keats tended to escape the accusations of moral turpitude (though his association with Leigh Hunt was considered reason enough to condemn him), but his quality as a poet was rarely recognised beyond his own limited circle of friends and supporters. His first volume of poetry, *Poems*, appeared in 1817, was largely ignored, and remained unsold. According to the publishers, Charles and James Ollier, "the greater number of persons who have purchased it from us have found fault with it in such plain terms, that we have in many cases offered to take the book back rather than be annoyed with the ridicule which has, time after time, been showered upon it" (Matthews 7). Keats, naturally enough, changed publishers, and his next volume to be published, *Endymion*, was brought out by Taylor and Hessey. Their diligence in promoting Keats's work was successful in the sense that reviews appeared in several of the major literary magazines of the time, but they were deeply hostile. *The British Critic* and *Quarterly Review* were sarcastic, or, as they preferred to put it, "droll". "This is the most delicious poem of its kind, which has fallen within our notice" (Matthews 91), begins the anonymous reviewer of the *British Critic*, and concludes with the solemn assurance "that this poem, containing 4074 lines, is printed on very nice hot-pressed paper, and all sold for nine shillings, by a very respectable London bookseller" (Matthews 96). The pages between are devoted to a 'droll'

retelling of the narrative itself. John Wilson Croker, the unsigned reviewer of *Quarterly Review*, writes in similar style: "Reviewers", he complains,

**have been sometimes accused of not reading the works which they affect to criticise. On the present occasion we shall anticipate the author's complaint, and honestly confess that we have not read his work. Not that we have been wanting in our duty —far from it— indeed, we have made efforts almost as superhuman as the story itself appears to be, to get through it; but with the fullest stretch of our perseverance, we are forced to confess that we have not been able to struggle beyond the first four books of which this Poetic Romance consists (Matthews 110).**

Lockhart, once again writing in *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine*, eschews drollery and viciously questions Keats's sanity instead: "The phrenzy of the Poems was bad enough in its way", he exclaims; "but it did not alarm us half so seriously as the calm, settled, imperturbable drivelling idiocy of *Endymion*" (Matthews 98). These criticisms, and especially Lockhart's, were considered, at the time, to have precipitated Keats's early death. More recent commentators, however, such as Keats's biographer, Andrew Motion, blame the walking trip to The Lake District and Scotland that Keats undertook in the summer of 1818: "for two days he trudged thirty seven miles, was saturated by rain, exhausted by stumbling through bogs, chilled by sleeping in bleak huts, drained by the effort of merely continuing [...] It was on Mull that his short life started to end, and his slow death began" (Motion 290). It is ironic that it was a walking tour, so closely associated with Romanticism, practised and championed by Wordsworth, and de *rigueur* for any would be poet, which hastened his end.

Keats's third and final volume of poetry, *Lamia, Isabella, The Eve of St Agnes, and Other Poems*, like the previous two, was limited to a small print run of 500 copies. It received slightly better reviews, but there was still much hostility, and Keats was a long way from the reverence his name would inspire a century later. An unsigned review in *Eclectic Review* in April 1820 claims that "Mr Keats's failure is, not the want of talent, but the misdirection of it; and this circumstance presents the only chance there is that some day or other he will produce something better" (Matthews 238). Keats's problem is his youth. "Mr Keats," argues the same critic, "it will be sufficiently evident, is a young man —whatever be his age, we must consider him as still but a young man" (Matthews 236). His best work, the argument goes, is still to come.

But it is not, really, Keats's and Shelley's poetry that captured the imaginations of later generations of poetry readers and literary gossips, but their lives and deaths. In Keats's case it is —put simply— his early death from tuberculosis in 1821 at the age of 25. Indeed, such was the lack of interest in his work that, in England, his po-

etry was not reprinted for another twenty years when *The Poetical Works of John Keats* appeared in paperback as a kind of ‘modern classic’ of the mid-nineteenth century, and his popularity slowly grew. The idea, however, that Keats died too young to ever achieve his true potential persisted—perhaps rightly. How can we know? In 1880 Matthew Arnold wrote:

**For the second great half of poetic interpretation, for that faculty of moral interpretation which is in Shakespeare, and is informed by him with the same power of beauty as his naturalistic interpretation, Keats was not ripe. For the architectonics of poetry, the faculty which presides at the evolution of works like the *Agamemnon* or *Lear*, he was not ripe (Arnold 120).**

Arnold is by no means dismissive of Keats, arguing that “No one else in English poetry, save Shakespeare, has in expression quite the fascinating felicity of Keats” (Arnold 120) but again, there is the suggestion that much, if not most, of his work is immature, *is not ripe*.

This was unfortunate for twentieth century critics, who accepted Keats unreservedly, but considered ‘manliness’ and ‘maturity’ two of the defining characteristics of great poetry. Sir Arthur Quiller-Couch included 14 of Keats’s poems, covering 27 pages in his canonical *Oxford Book of English Verse*—the same number of pages devoted to Wordsworth (Milton only gets 18), ensuring that the boy poet had to be taken seriously, but how was his youth to be explained away? A solution to the conundrum was to be found in “To Autumn”: the ode

**gives us not only the fullness and softness of autumn—the ripeness of it— but also its more masculine qualities, the acrid, the rough, and the vigorous [...] It is no accident that the ripeness which is the theme of the poem should stand in so close an analogy to the maturity which is the theme of Keats's moral and intellectual life (Walsh 326).**

This lapidary passage by William Walsh overcomes three major objections to Keats’s work in a mere four lines: his lack of maturity, his lack of manliness and (why not?) any possible suggestion that Keats lacked a *moral and intellectual life*. Harold Bloom weighs in with his own unstinting praise: “‘To Autumn’ is the subtlest and most beautiful of all Keats’s odes, and as close to perfection as any shorter poem in the English language” (Bloom 432). Bloom, like his colleague Helen Vendler, is taken with the idea that there is such a thing as a ‘perfect poem’ and that the earlier a poet writes one, the better. For “‘To Autumn’ to be *as close to perfection as any shorter poem in the English language* is definitive proof—if such were needed—that Keats’s work does not lack maturity. Bloom goes on to say that the poem specifically demonstrates that “there is no further need for progression” (Bloom 435), suggesting that Keats did rather well to die when he did, hav-

ing completed his life’s work. This narrative—built like a house of cards upon the fragile foundation of a short three stanza poem—is summed up by Geoffrey Hartman, who reiterates the idea that Keats had reached the summit of his career:

**In fear of early death, and sensing riches his pen might never glean, Keats evokes a figure of genial harvests. Three times he renews his surmise of fruitfulness, three times he grasps the shadow without self-defeating empathy. Even fruitfulness is not a burden in “To Autumn”. This, at last, is true impersonality (Hartman 435).**

Autumn? Of course: the autumn of one’s life. Approaching death. But also a time of harvest, a reckoning of one’s achievements. Not only does Keats culminate his career with his greatest poem, but he magnanimously tells us—if we have the wit to understand—that that is precisely what he is doing. This narrative will not go away. “His last five years brim with human experience”, writes Michael Schmidt in his best-selling *Lives of the Poets* (1998); “he decided to abandon medicine for poetry and his world opened out. His writing matured in a matter of months” (Schmidt 397). It is fortunate that Keats did not write an ode to summer, instead. Or horses.

Shelley’s life and death have been a source of fascination for two hundred years: his expulsion from Oxford University for his pamphlet *The Necessity of Atheism*, his marriage to Harriet Westbrook, his support for Catholic emancipation and Irish independence, his elopement with Mary Godwin, Harriet’s suicide, his friendship with Byron, his death at sea and his subsequent cremation on an Italian beach in 1822. It was the perceived immorality of his poetry, however, that incensed critics during his lifetime. In a review of *Prometheus Unbound*, published in 1821 in *The Quarterly Review*, Shelley’s work in general is condemned and his qualities as a poet questioned, but it is his principles which are held in greatest disdain:

**He professes to write in order to reform the world. The essence of the proposed reformation is the destruction of religion and government. Such a reformation is not to our taste; and he must, therefore, applaud us for scrutinizing the merits of works which are intended to promote so detestable a purpose. Of Mr. Shelley himself we know nothing. Be his private qualities what they may, his poems (and it is only with his poems that we have any concern) are at war with reason, with taste, with virtue, in short, with all that dignifies man, or that man reveres (Barcus 266-7).**

The anonymous reviewer (possibly W.S. Walker – Barcus 254) claims no interest in Shelley’s private life—though it is hard to imagine he really knew nothing of him—confining his comments to the poetry. Matthew Arnold, writing over six decades later, has no such qualms. His essay on Shelley is in response to Edward Dowden’s 1886

biography, *The Life of Percy Bysshe Shelley*. Arnold, the Victorian moralist, is outraged at Dowden's defence of Shelley's behaviour, particularly towards Harriet Westbrook, and quotes Dowden's absolution of the poet: "That no act of Shelley's, during the two years which immediately preceded her death, tended to cause the rash act which brought her life to its close, seems certain" (Arnold 236). Arnold can barely contain himself: "Shelley had been living with Mary all the time; only that!", he exclaims (Arnold 236). By the end of the essay (of some 47 pages), he writes

**Of his poetry I have not now space to speak [...] The man Shelley, in very truth, is not entirely sane, and Shelley's poetry is not entirely sane either. The Shelley of actual life is a vision of beauty and radiance, indeed, but availing nothing, affecting nothing. And in poetry, no less than in life, he is a 'beautiful and ineffectual angel, beating in the void his luminous wings in vain' (Arnold 351-2, original italics).**

But there he is, like Keats, set in the stone of Quiller-Couch's *Oxford Book of English Verse*, seventeen pages, eleven poems. Not as many as Keats, but "To a Skylark" is there, as is "Ode to the West Wind" and a number of other lyrical works largely devoted to nature. These poems were considered to be his best for well over half a century, and were consolidated by the publication of Penguin's *Shelley, Poems*, first published in 1956 and still in print today (Penguin Poetry Library £8.02). Edited by Isabel Quigley, it is not at first glance obvious that it is a selected rather than the complete poetry. According to Quigley,

**his great gift —and he had it supremely— was as a lyric poet. Even his long poems are at their best sustained lyrics, and, for all his belief in the moral, and when he was young, the propagandist power of verse, for all his large claim that 'poets are the unacknowledged legislators of the world', it was the lyrical content of poetry that in practice chiefly interested him (Quigley 19).**

It is not clear here exactly what Quigley likes about Shelley, but she makes a series of references to musicality —lyrics were once accompanied by the lyre, after all— that suggest content was not really Shelley's concern, so much so that, she claims, "as he grew older, Shelley came to look on his poetry less and less as a moral mouthpiece" (Quigley 19). This is nonsense: as *he grew older!* He died at the age of 29, and among his later works were "The Masque of Anarchy", *Prometheus Unbound* and *Peter Bell the Third*, all highly political articulations of moral outrage.

Shelley and Keats, then, are firmly in the canon established in the early twentieth century by a cohort of other white European men, all of whom are now dead too. What, if anything, do they have to offer us today? Firstly, it must be confessed, their language is peculiar. "Hail

to thee blithe spirit / Bird thou never wert" —the first lines of Shelley's "To a Skylark" and a perennial favourite of the old time anthologists and critics— is hardly the kind of speech used by ordinary people. Look at any novel from the nineteenth century, and apart from Joseph in Emily Brontë's *Wuthering Heights*, people tend to speak English much as they do now. Why do so many poets of the Romantic period use 'thou' and 'thee'? Does Shelley really want the ridiculous 'wert' focalised at the end of the line, with its echoes of 'wart' and 'worm'? Ironically, poets such as John Clare or Robert Burns, who deliberately wrote in non-standard English, sound more natural to the twenty first century ear than their Romantic contemporaries. They should have listened to Wordsworth who, twenty years earlier, had argued for "a plainer and more emphatic language" which was far preferable to "that which is frequently substituted for it by Poets, who think that they are conferring honour upon themselves and their art in proportion as they separate themselves from the sympathies of men, and indulge in arbitrary and capricious habits of expression (Wordsworth 245-6). Not that he always took his own advice.

Keats is as bad as Shelley. "Thou still unravished bride of quietness / Thou foster-child of silence and slow time" is written in such exaggerated 'poetic' language that it becomes almost risible, saved only by its enigmatic (in the sense that a Metaphysical conceit is enigmatic) invitation to work out what on earth the poet is talking about. This particular poem, "Ode on a Grecian Urn", is even more notorious for its penultimate line: "Beauty is truth, truth beauty". Cleanth Brooks, in *The Well Wrought Urn*, wrote 5,000 words on the meaning of this line, an over-inflated endeavour punctured by the suggestion of later critics that the aphorism was merely the "leaf-fring'd legend" of the poem's fifth line; an inscription bordered with decorative vegetation (McGann 448). Of course, this may not be what Keats meant at all, but it saves the reader from exclaiming, along with T.S. Eliot, that "this statement of equivalence means nothing to me" (Eliot 78).

Despite these objections, Shelley and Keats were both taken up and celebrated by late twentieth/early twenty first century critics. In Keats's case it was the New Historicist Jerome McGann, who argued that "To Autumn" was written in response to a request from Keats's publishers, Taylor & Hessey (McGann 1993). They were concerned that Keats would once again come under attack from the critics, as he had done with *Endymion*, and wanted him to avoid writing anything contentious. His next volume, they hoped, would contain pleasant poems about nature, the seasons, and suchlike. Hence "To Autumn", which was written during a trip to provincial Winchester in September 1819 when the weather was particularly nice and a bumper harvest was in the offing. Andrew Motion, in his biography of Keats, suggests that the Peterloo Massacre should also be taken into consideration, though with reservations: "It would oversimplify the case to say that because the poem was

written in the aftermath of Peterloo, it is precisely concerned with the Massacre”, he vacillates (Motion 462). The Massacre took place at St Peter's Field, Manchester, on 16 August 1819, when 15 people were killed and hundreds more injured after the Manchester and Salford Yeomanry and the 15th Hussars attempted to arrest Henry ‘Orator’ Hunt while addressing a packed crowd of between 60,000–80,000 on parliamentary reform. This, perhaps, is why Taylor and Hessey wanted Keats out of harm’s way, knowing that he would be disturbed by the events and might do, or write, something foolish. This, suggests Motion, is why “the word ‘conspiring’, in the third line, both embraces and deflects the plotting that Keats knew surrounded Henry Hunt’s recent activities” (Motion 462). So Keats knew about the massacre, and mentions it, but in such a way that no-one will notice.

“To Autumn”, then, might not be about Keats’s maturity, or lack of it, after all. Jonathan Bate has another suggestion:

**Our understanding of “To Autumn” should begin with the knowledge that the weather was clear and sunny on 38 out of the 47 days from 7th August to 22nd September 1819, and that in the week of 15th-22nd September temperatures were in the mid-60s, whereas in the corresponding week in each of the three previous years they had been in the mid-50s (Bate 102).**

Bate’s claim —and it seems perfectly reasonable— is that “To Autumn” was Keats’s response to the beautiful weather and bumper harvest that occurred in September 1819 after three years of cold, wet, darkness and hunger caused by the eruption of the volcano Tambora in Indonesia in 1815. At the time people did not know the cause of the extremely bad weather, but it is during this bleak time that Mary Shelley’s *Frankenstein; or, The Modern Prometheus* and Byron’s poem “Darkness” were written and published.

McGann’s New Historicist interpretation of “To Autumn”, and Bate’s ecocritical reading, are persuasive, and respond to a not uncommon practice over the last twenty years or so for academics to present texts from a variety of theoretical standpoints. This is all very well, but tends to put the spotlight on the theory, rather than the literary text; we all know that a text can mean whatever we want it to, but is this the only justification we have for looking at it in the first place? It may be, if our concern is for social justice, or the environment, rather than literary appreciation. But why, then, choose texts which to an extent defy such interpretations; which require them to be teased out, often rather tenuously? Would it not be better to select a text which is openly political, or environmental? Such questions seriously challenge Keats’s privileged position in the canon. If it is the politics of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries that we want, let us look at Hannah More, Anna Laetitia Barbauld, Robert

Burns or William Blake. If we are concerned about the environment, who better than John Clare? Keats offers us onomatopoeia and magniloquence, and some rather banal and unoriginal meditations on the meaning of art and eternity. True, he can write a good sonnet —Helen Vendler devotes a quarter of her book *Coming of Age as a Poet* to “John Keats: Perfecting the Sonnet” (Vendler 41-79)— but is this enough?

In comparison, Shelley’s significance continues to grow. The kind of intellectual and academic dishonesty — perhaps censorship would be a better word— demonstrated by early and mid-twentieth century critics was challenged by Manfred Wojcik in the final essay of an otherwise rather conservative collection of articles published in 1968:

**A critical analysis of the main features of Shelley’s work shows quite clearly that the failure of the great majority of his critics has not been coincidental but inevitable. Of all the Romantic poets he was the most revolutionary in his political and social views. His poetry is the most uncompromising in its critical reflection of contemporary social conditions and the most passionate in its demand for social justice. The revolutionary message of his art has placed him beyond the reach of sympathetic bourgeois understanding so that his bourgeois critics have had hardly any choice than that between abuse and misinterpretation (Wojcik 284).**

Wojcik’s defence of Shelley was taken up by Paul Foot who, in 1980, published *Red Shelley* and changed forever the study and appreciation of his work:

**Shelley was not dull. His poems reverberate with energy and excitement. He decked the grand ideas which inspired him in a language which enriches them and sharpens communication with the people who can put them into effect. That is why he was loved and treasured by the Chartist workers, the social propagandists of the 1890s, the suffragists and feminists of the first twenty years of this century. And that is why socialists, radicals and feminists of every hue should read Shelley today —read him, learn him by heart and teach him to their children.**

**If Shelley’s great revolutionary poetry —all those glaciers and winds and volcanoes— can get to work on the imaginations of the hundreds of thousands of people who have had enough of our rotten society and of the racialism and corruption off which it feeds; if that poetry can inspire them to write and talk with a new energy, a new confidence and a new splendour, then there is no telling what will happen (Foot 274-5).**

Among these revolutionary poems is “The Masque of Anarchy”, a poem missing from Quigley’s selection (in 2016, perhaps in recognition of 60 years of Shelleyan misrepresentation, Penguin issued the monumental *Percy Bysshe Shelley: Selected Poems and Prose*, edited by Jack Donovan

and Cian Duffy), the final stanza of which was graven onto the tombstone of Paul Foot, who died in 2004:

**Rise, like lions after slumber  
In unvanquishable number!  
Shake your chains to earth, like dew  
Which in sleep had fallen on you:  
Ye are many—they are few! (Shelley 368).**

In an article in the *New Statesman*, Anoosh Chakelian argued, in 2017, that the same lines have become, over the years, “a rallying cry for peaceful resistance. It has been recited at uprisings throughout history, from Tiananmen Square to Tahrir Square” (Chakelian). According to Michael Rosen: “Shelley was campaigning for freedom, for free thought, for free love. He was campaigning for a fairer society; it was a time of incredible oppression. He said there’s loads of us, it’s just a little corrupt crew – well, of course that applies now” (Chakelian).

Another such poem is the sonnet “Ozymandias”, a prophesy of the fate of tyrants everywhere:

**I met a traveller from an antique land,  
Who said—“Two vast and trunkless legs of stone  
Stand in the desert. . . . Near them, on the sand,  
Half sunk a shattered visage lies, whose frown,  
And wrinkled lip, and sneer of cold command,  
Tell that its sculptor well those passions read  
Which yet survive, stamped on these lifeless things,  
The hand that mocked them, and the heart that fed;  
And on the pedestal, these words appear:  
My name is Ozymandias, King of Kings;  
Look on my Works, ye Mighty, and despair!  
Nothing beside remains. Round the decay  
Of that colossal Wreck, boundless and bare  
The lone and level sands stretch far away (Shelley 153).**

Out there in Shelley’s *antique land* lie too the desicated figures of Mussolini, Stalin, Hitler, Franco, Pol Pot, Idi Amin and Nicolae Ceaușescu; of Ferdinand Marcos, Augusto Pinochet and Saddam Hussein. And they will be joined by current despots such as Saudi Arabia’s Crown Prince Mohammad bin Salman (at the time of writing the kingdom has just executed 37 people, two of them by crucifixion) and Haji Waddaulah of Brunei, among many others. And there, in the ridiculous pomposity of Ozymandias’s boast, do we not catch also the plaintive cry of Donald Trump? All will eventually fall. But Shelley’s most inspiring work? Now, in the twenty-first century, as democracy disintegrates around us, the corrupt triumph, and unelected monarchs don the bemedalled uniforms of tin pot soldiers to harangue their subjects, “England in 1819” speaks more loudly than ever:

## England in 1819

**An old, mad, blind, despised, and dying King;  
Princes, the dregs of their dull race, who flow  
Through public scorn,—mud from a muddy spring;  
Rulers who neither see nor feel nor know,  
But leechlike to their fainting country cling  
Till they drop, blind in blood, without a blow.  
A people starved and stabbed in th’ untilled field;  
An army, whom libercide and prey  
Makes as a two-edged sword to all who wield;  
Golden and sanguine laws which tempt and slay;  
Religion Christless, Godless—a book sealed;  
A senate, Time’s worst statute, unrepealed—  
Are graves from which a glorious Phantom may  
Burst, to illumine our tempestuous day.**



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***Do I  
contradict  
myself?  
Very well then  
I contradict  
myself***

Walt Whitman, el poeta de las  
emociones y los sentidos

## ***“The United States themselves are essentially the greatest poem”***

***(Whitman 1973: 711)***

**L**a caleidoscópica figura humana, poética y artística de Walt Whitman es tan imponente que sintetizarla en un ensayo breve y conmemorativo del bicentenario de su nacimiento (1819-1892) es realmente una tarea compleja. En su extraordinaria obra en verso, el escritor consigue crear un yo poético nuevo y un universo norteamericano propio, pero también diseña una suerte de apasionada cartografía universal en su deseo ambicioso de abrazar el mundo y de abarcar multitudes. Este aspecto tan llamativo de su poética se refleja en el poema cosmopolita “Salut Au Monde!” (1860), donde su voz internacional afirma que “I am of Madrid, Cadiz, Barcelona, Oporto, Lyon, Brussels, Berne” (1973: 144). El poeta visionario que ratifica y confirma sin pudor y de forma permanente sus contradicciones vitales tenía una profunda vocación cosmopolita, pero al mismo tiempo nacionalista —“The Americans of all nations at any time upon the earth have probably the fullest poetical nature” (1973: 711)— en la que los Estados Unidos es, en su diversidad y complejidad, su objeto poético más apasionante. En palabras de Félix Martín, “Whitman fue engranando su identidad personal en el mosaico de la historia política de su país” (2003:10).

Otro gran sueño como artista fue retratarse a sí mismo no solo poética, sino también fotográficamente: “No man has been photographed more than I have” (Folsom 2011: 517), confesó en la última etapa de su vida, y para ello utilizó la novedosa tecnología fotográfica para dejar constancia de la evolución física de su cuerpo e imagen pública. De hecho, Whitman fue el escritor más fotografiado del siglo XIX y sentía debilidad por aquel ingenio tecnológico, ya que estaba convencido de que podía reflejar una imagen más auténtica de su persona: “I find I often like the photographs better than the oils”, “They are perhaps mechanical, but they are honest” (Folsom 2011: 518). Lo cierto es que se conservan unas 130 fotografías del poeta de casi todos los periodos de su vida. Este hecho tan inusual en la época nos explica el convencimiento absoluto que tenía sobre el valor testimonial de la fotografía y su fascinación por los avances tecnológicos del siglo XIX. Por otro lado, se sentía profundamente atraído por la posibilidad de descubrir distintas imágenes y facetas visuales de sí mismo: “I meet new Walt Whitmans every day”, “I don’t know which Walt Whitman I am” (Folsom 2011: 518). Estas palabras nos muestran, sin duda, la evolución del yo y los efectos del tiempo y el espacio en el poeta. En realidad, Whitman tenía una conciencia clara sobre la necesidad de abarcar su mundo interior y el mundo exterior por igual. No tenía ambages en posar de forma sugerente y atractiva porque era un hombre profundamente sensorial, libre, auténtico y sincero en cuanto a sus gustos literarios, su cuerpo, las emociones y pasiones

más humanas. Un buen ejemplo es la primera edición de *Leaves of Grass* (1855), que costó de su bolsillo y para la que escogió un retrato en el que se muestra con 35 años, vestido de manera informal, con la camisa abierta por el cuello, la cabeza ladeada cubierta por un sombrero, y la mano en la cadera. Es un grabado realmente sugerente para una portada en la que el poeta posa de forma desenfadada y seductora (*Whitman Portraits* 1973: s/n). Esta insistencia en retratarse, en mostrarse tal y como se sentía en cada período de su dilatada vida, nos hace pensar que deseaba establecer un vínculo visual con su público. En este sentido, hay que destacar que Whitman consideraba a sus lectores como un público activo que debía construir, como plantea Wolfgang Iser en la fenomenología de la lectura, el significado de la obra literaria y, quizás, la imagen del artista creador: “the reader is to do something for himself, must be on alert, must himself or herself construct indeed the poem, argument, history, metaphysical essay –the text furnishing the hints, the clue, the start of frame-work” (Folsom 2018: 386).

Su deseo de tener éxito y de ser reconocido públicamente como un artista total, con una voz mesiánica e influyente en la sociedad, le llevó a construir un Whitman público que, en ocasiones, subsumía al privado. Podríamos decir que aspiraba a convertirse en una celebridad popular desde muy joven, y para ello construyó un personaje público de carne y hueso, sensual, sensorial, contradictorio, apasionado, profético, y en último término, profundamente norteamericano, tal como se presenta en el canto 24 de “*Song of Myself*”:

**Walt Whitman, a kosmos, of Manhattan the son  
Turbulent, fleshy, sensual, eating, drinking and breeding,  
No sentimentalist, no stander above men and women or apart from  
them,  
No more modest than immodest (1973: 52).**

### ***Apuntes biográficos de una vida en busca del éxito popular***

Walt Whitman nació el 31 de mayo de 1819 en West Hills, Long Island, y se crió en el seno de una familia obrera y numerosa de nueve hijos cuyos padres practicaban la religión protestante cuáquera. En ese hogar, Walter Whitman, el progenitor de origen inglés, encarnaba un papel frío y distante, ya que, entre otras cuestiones relativas a su autoritaria personalidad, tenía un problema grave de alcoholismo. Fue un padre taciturno y angustiado por



los problemas económicos, puesto que, al parecer, su profesión de carpintero y granjero no le proporcionaba los ingresos necesarios para una prole tan numerosa. Esta vivencia tuvo un eco vital en el poema autobiográfico “There Was a Child Went Forth”, en el que Whitman ofrece un retrato sin paliativos sobre esta terrible experiencia: “The father, strong self-sufficient, manly, mean, anger’d, unjust, / The blow, the quick loud word, the tight bargain, the crafty lure” (1973: 365). Sin embargo, de su madre, Mary Van Velsor, de origen holandés, nos brinda una imagen mucho más amable y dulce desde una perspectiva sensorial: “The mother with mild words, clean her cap and gown, a whole-/some odor falling off her person and clothes as she walks by” (1973: 365). Lo cierto es que Whitman estaba muy ligado afectivamente a su madre porque era una narradora imaginativa de historias y, al mismo tiempo, intentaba mantener la paz del hogar (Reynolds 2005: 4). Desde los tres años, el pequeño Walt vivió junto a su familia en el barrio neoyorquino de Brooklyn y su permanencia en ese entorno urbano se prolongó durante casi veintiocho años. Allí se formó como poeta en las calles y en la escuela, donde solo permaneció hasta los once años. Si bien fue un lector voraz de todo lo que caía en sus manos, lo cierto es que sentía una devoción especial por Fenimore Cooper, Walter Scott y los relatos de aventuras.

La necesidad de dinero en el hogar fue un elemento fundamental para que el joven Walt saliera a buscar trabajo desde muy pronto. La suerte le sonrió y tuvo trabajos muy distintos como albañil, maestro, impresor, reportero, periodista, botones y pasante en despachos de abogados. Lo cierto es que de su experiencia como maestro no guardaba muy buen recuerdo y decidió dejarlo después de cuatro años de labor pedagógica en la escuela Woodbury, puesto que significó “un purgatorio terrible, ‘una cueva del diablo’” (Martín 2003:19). Sin embargo, el periodismo lo atrajo desde el primer momento y le ocupó mucho tiempo, ya que fundó un semanario llamado Long Islander. En esta empresa vital se embarcó siendo una especie de hombre para todo, en la medida en que no solo escribía, sino que lo editaba, imprimía y también lo repartía a lomos de su yegua Nina en el pueblo de Huntington en Nueva York. Este trabajo le proporcionó una formación fundamental tanto en todo lo concerniente a la realidad social y cultural de su país como a los distintos aspectos del proceso editorial que, a la postre, le vino muy bien para sus propias publicaciones poéticas. Desde un principio, a Whitman le interesó controlar el proceso de publicación de sus obras, y siempre intentó supervisar todo lo relacionado con la edición. Sin duda, era un gran perfeccionista en su labor como poeta y *Leaves of Grass* es el gran testimonio de su empeño por examinar, mejorar y contrastar las versiones que le llevaron a hacer revisiones de su obra magna a lo largo de su vida. De hecho, la última versión del poemario, llamada “deathbed edition”, es de 1892, justo meses antes de su fallecimiento, y es considerada la definitiva.

La vida familiar de Whitman no fue apacible; más bien al contrario, los distintos problemas que aquejaban a sus

hermanos le causaron un gran desasosiego permanente, tal y como se puede constatar en sus cartas. Su hermano Eddy era discapacitado mental y físico, y precisaba de atención continua. Por otro lado, su hermano Jesse daba muestras de inestabilidad mental y ataques de locura debido al daño cerebral que padecía al haberle caído el mástil de un barco en la cabeza. Su hermano Andrew era alcohólico, y su hermana Hannah se casó con un maltratador psicótico que le dio una vida de sufrimiento y penalidades. En medio de este terrible panorama familiar, Whitman intentaba mantener la ecuanimidad y ayudar a su madre y hermanos en todo lo que podía. Los otros tres hermanos, George, Jeff y Mary, parece ser que no tenían problemas importantes, pero tampoco mostraron gran aprecio por el mundo creativo y la poesía de su hermano. En este difícil entorno, Whitman se convirtió en una suerte de figura paterna que brindaba apoyo permanentemente a su familia.

En 1862, durante la Guerra Civil, Whitman estaba trabajando como periodista en Nueva York y decidió trasladarse a Washington alarmado por las heridas de guerra de su hermano George y la cantidad de bajas y heridos en la batalla de Fredricksburg, en Virginia. El poeta tuvo un papel destacado en el auxilio y apoyo a los soldados heridos y traumatizados por la crueldad de las batallas de la contienda. Durante los seis años en los que estuvo sirviendo como enfermero voluntario en los hospitales, pudo constatar por sí mismo el sufrimiento de los más de 100,000 heridos que pasaron por los hospitales de guerra. Su misión con los soldados era la de atenderlos, leerles la Biblia, escribir las cartas, darles sostén emocional y proporcionales dulces, fruta, papel y pequeñas cantidades de dinero. En suma, su labor como enfermero fue extraordinaria en todos los sentidos. Sin embargo, su misión filantrópica en la guerra se vio interrumpida en 1865, ya que James Harlan, Secretario de Interior, lo despidió de su trabajo en el “Bureau of Indian Affairs”, porque encontró un volumen de *Leaves of Grass* en el escritorio del poeta. Harlan lo leyó y se quedó escandalizado con las imágenes sexuales del poemario, y decidió despedirlo por motivos morales. Lo que Harlan fue incapaz de percibir era precisamente la forma tan inocente, pura y carente de morbosidad con la que Whitman describía la sexualidad humana. Para el poeta lo que sí era reprobable era la censura: “The dirtiest book of all is the expurgated book” (Robertson 1997: 573). A pesar de este sinsabor desagradable para Whitman, al terminar la guerra publicó su poemario *Drum-Taps* (1865). En esta antología se refleja su creatividad y profunda tristeza ante los daños morales, físicos y económicos que causó la confrontación fratricida en su país, pero, sobre todo, el desconsuelo de una nación que pasó de la ilusión democrática a la pérdida de la inocencia de su fundación teocrática. Hay que señalar que en este volumen hay cuatro poemas dedicados al presidente Abraham Lincoln, quien en vida fue uno de los héroes más inspiradores de Whitman y, tras su terrible asesinato en el teatro Ford de Washington, el 14 de abril de 1865, se convirtió en una figura sagrada para el poeta, tal y como podemos leer en los últimos y desgarradores versos del famoso poema elegíaco “O Captain! My Captain!”: En

**My Captain does not answer, his lips are pale and still,  
My father does not feel my arm, he has no pulse nor will,  
The ship is anchor'd safe and sound, its voyage closed and done,  
From fearful trip the victor ship comes in with object won;  
Exult O shores, and ring O bells!  
But I with mournful tread,  
Walk the deck my Captain lies,  
Fallen cold and dead (1973: 338).**

este panegírico, Whitman deja claro que Lincoln era el capitán de la nación americana, un hombre que para el poeta encarnaba los valores de la democracia, la compasión, la moderación y la sencillez del pueblo. Con su peculiar léxico demótico, vernáculo y de la calle, el poeta rinde un sentido homenaje al que él consideraba el héroe por antonomasia del pueblo norteamericano.

No cabe duda de que Whitman tuvo la inteligencia emocional y poética de captar las voces, sonidos, melodías y cadencias sonoras de su entorno más cercano. Su amplia experiencia laboral y su contacto con la gente de todas las clases sociales, le permitieron escuchar las voces más variadas que constituían su material poético, el que transformaba en un poema que, sobre todo, tenía un carácter oral. Por consiguiente, decidió convertirse en la voz del pueblo, en el bardo americano de la democracia al presentarse como artista de la palabra y, de esa manera, fue recibido en su época y en la proyección universal que adquirió su obra poética con el paso del tiempo.

Durante los últimos diecinueve años de su vida, Whitman vivió en Camden, Nueva Jersey, cerca de su madre, que estaba gravemente enferma, y de su hermano George, que fabricaba tuberías en la ciudad y tenía cierta estabilidad familiar. El fallecimiento de su madre fue un auténtico golpe moral y afectivo para el poeta, quien confiesa que el impacto de esta pérdida y su carácter eminentemente emocional fueron determinantes en el derrame cerebral que tuvo al poco tiempo y que le dejó paralizado el brazo y la pierna izquierda e imposibilitado para moverse. Así pues, no le quedó más remedio que recurrir a una silla de ruedas para poder desplazarse. Este achaque físico tuvo consecuencias económicas, ya que se redujeron sus ingresos y él mismo confiesa en su correspondencia la precariedad a la que se tuvo que enfrentar a raíz de su deterioro físico. A pesar de este percance en su salud, siempre mantuvo una actitud positiva ante la vida, y prueba de ello es la alegría y el buen ánimo que emana de sus cartas. No obstante, la realidad es que Whitman nunca se pudo recuperar anímicamente de la pérdida de su madre.

En cuanto a su visión sobre el amor, Whitman fue muy sincero y abierto en lo concerniente a todos los tipos de relaciones amorosas. De hecho, fue defensor convencido del amor libre más allá del matrimonio. A pesar de su franqueza y claridad en cuanto a la representación de la sexualidad, sentía una actitud de rechazo absoluto hacia la obscenidad y la pornografía (Reynolds 2005: 101). Para él la sexualidad estaba vinculada a lo natural, a la realidad de la necesidad corporal y de la procreación y, según el escritor,

a la santidad, “I am the poet of the Body and the poet of the Soul” (1973: 48). La literatura sensacionalista, que tan popular era en la época, abusaba de esta forma de representar la sexualidad y, según el poeta, era el reflejo de mentes repugnantes: “all the literature of rape, all the pornograph of vile minds” (Reynolds 2005: 101). Los críticos whitmanianos han destacado, precisamente, que el poeta era un hombre avanzado para su época y la sexualidad ocupaba un papel preponderante en su poesía, pero siempre de una forma cósmica, holística, sensorial y absolutamente carente de toda morbosidad, tal y como se puede leer en sus versos: “Sex contains all, bodies, souls, / [...] Without shame the man I like knows and avows the deliciousness of his sex, / Without shame the woman I like knows and avows hers” (Reynolds 2005: 105). En cuanto a su vida amorosa, hay que señalar que Whitman se sentía atraído por los hombres jóvenes. En la sección “Calamus” de *Leaves of Grass*, el poeta celebra precisamente el amor homosexual y la camaradería masculina. No obstante, parece ser que el poeta tuvo algunas relaciones platónicas con mujeres, ya que se sentían atraídas por su asombroso carisma, como en el caso de la londinense Anne Burrows Gilchrist, crítica literaria y autora de una biografía de referencia sobre William Blake, quien se enamoró perdidamente del poeta al leer *Leaves of Grass*. Sin embargo, una de las relaciones amorosas más duraderas del poeta fue con el joven soldado confederado Peter Doyle que a la sazón tenía veinte años. Durante ocho años se vieron casi a diario y mantuvieron una correspondencia muy afectuosa en la que el poeta también adoptó el papel de padre protector del joven. En este sentido, el crítico francés Asselineau señala que la homosexualidad es la clave de la personalidad y de la poesía whitmaniana; su actividad artística fue terapéutica y le sirvió para encauzar de forma creativa sus deseos y pasiones (1962).

La precaria salud del poeta se fue debilitando poco a poco debido a otros derrames cerebrales que sufrió y a la tuberculosis que finalmente mermó sus fuerzas. Falleció en Camden el 26 de marzo de 1892 y fue enterrado, por su expreso deseo, en el cementerio Harleygh de esa ciudad, en el que pusieron una sencilla lápida con su nombre en la tumba. Con anterioridad, Whitman había previsto que su tumba estaría junto a la de sus padres y cuatro hermanos que ya habían fallecido, quizás en un gesto de volverse a reunir con la familia a la que tanto protegió durante su vida.

## ***El poeta telúrico, holístico, trascendentalista y mediático del verso libre y musical***

Recordad, dijo el autor de *Leaves of Grass*, que mi obra “arose out of my life in Brooklyn and New York from 1938 to 1853, absorbing a million people, for fifteen years, with an intimacy, an eagerness, an abandon, probably never equalled” (Reynolds 2005: 24). Whitman tenía una conciencia muy clara de la trascendencia universal

de lo que había escrito y a quién se lo había dedicado: “the idiomatic book of my land” (Reynolds 2005: 24). Y esto era así fundamentalmente porque su cometido fue el de escuchar a su gente y observar el discurrir de su país con una gran intensidad, honestidad y sinceridad. En el plano más íntimo, tenía muy claro que su obra poética era el fruto palpable de la interacción entre el cuerpo y la mente, o bien el gozo de las emociones a través de lo sensorial, es decir, de la ineludible conexión entre la emoción y los sentimientos: “My poems when complete should be a unity, in the same sense that the earth is, or that the human body (senses, soul, head, trunk, feet, blood, viscera, man-root, eyes, hair), or that a perfect musical composition is” (1973: 764).

De este modo, sus poemas representan una variedad de emociones y sentimientos apasionante. Por lo tanto, podemos concluir que su obra literaria es una suerte de repositorio cultural no solo de su relación emocional con el mundo que le rodeaba y sus percepciones sensoriales más directas con los seres humanos y los objetos que formaban parte de su mundo, sino que nos muestra de forma honesta y sincera un retrato del mundo afectivo de su época. No cabe duda de que Whitman utiliza el espacio literario y su voz poética para investigar y retratar las relaciones de género con su entorno y también los efectos políticos de sus respuestas emocionales como prácticas culturales. Recordemos que para Whitman las emociones son sociales y los sentimientos son personales y biográficos, tal y como él señala en sus anotaciones: “Make full-blooded, rich, natural Works. Insert natural things, indestructibles, idioms, characteristics, rivers, states, persons, etc. Be full of strong, sensual germs” (1973: 764).

Desde muy joven, Whitman fue educado en la filosofía deísta y en el cuaquerismo religioso de sus padres. En este sentido, podríamos decir que su tendencia al misticismo en *Leaves of Grass* procede, en gran medida, de la doctrina cuáquera de la luz interior o “inner light”, que era una suerte de inspiración o de intervención divina para iluminar al creyente. Esta predisposición hacia el misticismo religioso individualista lo conectó directamente con el filósofo trascendentalista Ralph Waldo Emerson y con su epígono Henry David Thoreau (Piñero 2017: 5-15). Tal y como hiciera el autor de *Walden*, Whitman recorrió los caminos, los pueblos, las ciudades, los bosques, los parajes más grandiosos de una nación joven con la que se identificaba y a la que amaba profunda y apasionadamente. Con respecto a su admirado Emerson, en alguna ocasión mencionó que llevaba un volumen de los ensayos de este pensador en su bolsa del almuerzo. En concreto, el que más le pudo influir fue “The Poet” (1844), en el que Emerson expresa la necesidad que tenía la literatura norteamericana de que surgiera un poeta universal, poderoso y con una voz propia vernácula. En su primera edición de *Leaves of Grass* (1855), se percibe de forma muy clara la influencia del trascendentalismo emersoniano en cuanto a su inquietud sobre “an emphasis on self-reliance and nonconformity” (Reynolds 2005: 11), y también en lo concerniente a la búsqueda de una poesía auténticamente

norteamericana. Asimismo, encontramos en el poemario la meditación panteísta emersoniana en la importancia que adquiere la naturaleza ubérrima del Nuevo Mundo y en la búsqueda de una poesía orgánica y holística. En este aspecto son muy significativas las reminiscencias de los escritores románticos ingleses, según ha señalado Antonio Ballesteros (2013: 45-81). De igual manera, el concepto del poeta demócrata y la asunción de toda la sorprendente diversidad de la nación norteamericana son aspectos que Whitman quiso incorporar en su ars poetica a través de un yo lírico articulado en el verso libre y que, como él mismo decía, abarcaba las multitudes: “I am large, I contain multitudes” (1973: 89).

Whitman le envió un volumen de la primera edición de *Leaves of Grass* a Emerson como muestra de admiración y agradecimiento. El filósofo le respondió entusiasmado, “I have great joy in it. I find incomparable things said incomparably well, as they must be. I greet you at the beginning of a great career” (Reynolds 2005: 12). Como cabía esperar, también Henry David Thoreau, mostró su admiración sin paliativos e incluso se desplazó a Nueva York para conocerlo en persona. Para Whitman esta recepción tan positiva por parte de estos grandes escritores representó el espaldarazo definitivo de la autoridad literaria y filosófica norteamericana de la época y él mismo se sintió tan motivado que escribió un ensayo periodístico elogioso en el que se autocalificaba como “An American bard at last” (Reynolds 2005:13). En efecto, Whitman construyó un yo poético integrador que representa “un gesto de reconciliación y de mediación entre posturas políticas, clases sociales, razas, sexos y credos religiosos” (Martín 2003: 10). Desafortunadamente, las reseñas críticas de la obra no supieron interpretar esta visión integradora e idealista, ya que no fueron ni mucho menos tan entusiastas. Whitman recogió un puñado de invectivas que eran reprobatorias y en las que se le criticaba el lenguaje excesivamente sexual y explícito, al igual que su obsesión por representarse a sí mismo y ser el objeto poético por antonomasia. Incluso llegaron a afirmar que su poesía era fruto de los delirios de un desequilibrado (Reynolds 2005: 13).

A pesar de esta recepción inicial tan negativa, Whitman fue reconocido por su extraordinaria capacidad de captar la cultura de su época, en especial el teatro, la música popular y clásica, la ópera y el teatro musical. Como muchos otros neoyorquinos, era un asiduo espectador de los espectáculos teatrales del barrio de Bowery. No cabe duda de que le encantaban el mundo de las candelas y los actores con los cuales se identificaba: “I have always had a good deal to do with actors; met many, high and low” (Reynolds 2005: 43). Ya hemos señalado previamente que, en sus numerosas fotos, en muchos casos, posaba con ciertos ademanes teatrales. Incluso en su poema “The Sleeper” dice de manera convincente: “I am the actor, the actress, the voter, the politician” (1973:426). En efecto, el poeta se consideraba a sí mismo un gran orador y cuando recitaba su obra empleaba sus grandes dotes escénicas para persuadir a la audien-

cia. Este optar por las técnicas oratorias quizás fue también fruto de la influencia del predicador cuáquero Elias Hicks, quien hacía gala de una convincente retórica religiosa. Según señalan los biógrafos, el poeta asistió de pequeño a muchos sermones en los que el predicador desplegaba no solo su mensaje religioso, sino también su ideología democrática. De este modo, articuló su visión del poeta como orador de la nación, influido por la importancia que adquirió esta habilidad en la sociedad norteamericana. Así pues, el orador Whitman se sumaba a la eclosión de la “Golden Age of Oratory” que se desarrolló en el periodo que abarcó desde la revolución norteamericana hasta la Guerra Civil.

La poesía de Whitman suena muy franca y directa porque el método de composición que empleaba el escritor se basaba en la espontaneidad, el verso libre, la musicalidad y el siempre presente eco de los sermones bíblicos. Este último aspecto podía ser reconocido perfectamente por el público norteamericano protestante habituado a este tipo de retórica persuasiva e iluminada utilizada por los pastores en las iglesias. No obstante, el poeta revisaba y corregía sus poemas hasta que consideraba que estaban perfectos para comunicarse con la audiencia. Este aspecto retórico, como ya hemos explicado, era fundamental en su *ars poetica*, ya que, sobre todo, buscaba comunicarse con el público norteamericano. Es decir, la voz lírica del poema incluso anima a que los destinatarios participaran en el proceso creativo de la interpretación.

Otro aspecto fundamental de su obra poética es la presencia de la música tanto como referencia textual como en la retórica poética. En *Leaves of Grass*, Whitman nos presenta un auténtico catálogo musical en el que, por ejemplo, alude a setenta y dos términos musicales en los títulos, y en los poemas se mencionan veinticinco instrumentos musicales (Reynolds 2005: 49). Sin embargo, las alusiones a la música vocal son las que predominan en este catálogo poético. Lo cierto es que el poeta tenía una vastísima cultura musical y era gran admirador de cantantes de ópera famosos de la época, como es el caso de los italianos Cesare Badiale, Alessandro Bettini, Giulia Grisi, Marietta Alboni y la soprano inglesa Anna De La Grange. La estudiosa Julia Spiegelman incluso llega a afirmar en su estudio pionero sobre la influencia de la ópera en el verso de Whitman que “it was at the opera that Whitman first conceived the free rhythmical style of his verse” (1942: 171). Con estos antecedentes, no cabe duda de que el poeta se inspiró en el canto operístico y adaptaba el verso a las distintas técnicas del *bel canto* italiano, como en el caso de la longitud del verso en el que emplea un calculado *fiato*, o lo que es lo mismo, la dosificación del aire en cada línea: “But for the opera, I could not have written *Leaves of Grass*” (1973: 640). Asimismo, y en el aspecto expresivo, se podría decir que se observa la influencia de las melodías operísticas en los versos más emotivos y apasionados. En suma, Whitman adoptó técnicas teatrales, oratorias y belcantistas para convertirse, según la ocasión y el momento, en actor, cantante u orador de su poesía (Reynolds 2005: 56).

## ***El escritor y su visión crítica sobre la sociedad***

Walt Whitman fue siempre un defensor incondicional de los valores democráticos de su país y nunca los cuestionó, aunque sí adoptó una posición crítica sobre los grandes males que aquejaban a su tierra. En el ámbito político, podemos afirmar que fue un norteamericano convencido de las virtudes de la democracia en el contexto de la clase media trabajadora que para él podía atesorar la verdadera esencia de la América liberal, tal y como afirma en su ensayo *Democratic Vistas* (1871). Precisamente, este manifiesto político refleja sin paliativos su idealismo reformista en cuanto a la visión utópica de armonía y hermandad social a la que aspiraba para la sociedad. Sin embargo, también muestra una crítica certera sobre el materialismo rampante y la corrupción política que surgió durante la controvertida reconstrucción de la posguerra de la “Gilded Age”, bautizada así de forma irónica por Mark Twain.

En cuanto al abolicionismo, Whitman nunca ocultó que estaba en contra de la esclavitud y que ayudaba a los esclavos huidos en su peligroso viaje hacia Canadá, además de darles cobijo en su propia casa, tal y como expresa en sus versos de la sección 10 de “*Song of Myself*”:

**The runaway slave came to my house and stopt outside,  
I heard his motions crackling the twigs of the woodpile,  
Through the swung half-door of the kitchen I saw him limpsy and weak,  
And went where he sat on a log and led him in and assured him,  
And brought water and fill'd from my own, and gave him  
Some coarse clean clothes, (1973: 38)**

En su faceta de escritor de otros géneros literarios como novela y relatos, la dilatada experiencia de Whitman en los periódicos le ayudó en los inicios de su carrera literaria en prosa. De este modo, decidió empezar a transitar por el camino muy popular de la publicación de la ficción por entregas en los años 1840 y estuvo once años de su vida, desde 1841 a 1852, escribiendo para distintos periódicos (Blalock 2018:78-87). El fruto de esta experiencia se plasmó en la publicación de veintiséis relatos y dos novelas: *Franklin Evans, or the Inebriate: A Tale of the Times* (1842), narración a favor de la templanza con el consumo de alcohol, y *Life and Adventures of Jack Engle: An Autobiography* (1852). Estos datos son provisionales, ya que, en el caso de la última novela, *Jack Engle*, fue descubierta en 2016 por Zachary Turpin, un avezado estudiante de doctorado de la Universidad de Houston. En efecto, esta obra se había publicado por entregas en el *Sunday Dispatch* y Turpin se percató de que en los cuadernos de Whitman había ciertas anotaciones sobre personajes y una trama narrativa que le dieron pistas sobre la existencia de una posible novela. Así que siguió el hilo de estos indicios y buscó el periódico que todavía estaba sin digitalizar en la Biblioteca del Congreso de Washin-

gton hasta que dio finalmente con el relato. El estudioso whitmaniano y editor del *Whitman Quarterly Review*, Ed Folsom, publicó de inmediato la narración en la red para darle máxima difusión. Este sorprendente hallazgo arroja luz sobre facetas poco conocidas del escritor, teniendo en cuenta que Whitman es uno de los autores norteamericanos más estudiados por la crítica norteamericana y mundial. Por consiguiente, no hay que descartar que otros nuevos descubrimientos pudieran ver la luz en el futuro y el canon literario whitmaniano pudiese ampliarse.

Según la cronología de las publicaciones, el poeta estaba escribiendo *Leaves of Grass* mientras publicó *Jack Engle*. Los temas que afloran en su poemario ya se encuentran pergeñados en la novela, destacando, entre otros, la lucha incansable del ser humano frente a las vicisitudes, la ciudad como paradigma del ciudadano libre, el individuo adánico y luchador, la tanatografía, la transformación permanente de la ciudad, y la necesidad de reformas sociales. La novela es fruto de su experiencia juvenil como botones en los despachos de abogados James B. Clarke y de su hijo Edward. Igualmente, está dedicada a los lectores de periódicos de la época porque hay muchas alusiones a ese lector implícito con una cercanía y complicidad muy llamativas. El tema central que Whitman aborda en esta novela es el de los abogados corruptos que se dedicaban a los negocios sucios. Quizás podríamos afirmar que *Jack Engle* se inspira en su propia experiencia en los bufetes de abogados y en la ficción popular decimonónica, que era fundamentalmente sensacionalista y folletinesca, para recrear el ambiente turbio y desalmado en que se movían algunos letrados neoyorquinos en el entorno de la especulación financiera de Wall Street. La vida y aventuras heroicas de Jack Engle, un joven huérfano que intenta sobrevivir en la calle y que por fortuna es adoptado por un lechero y su esposa, que se convierten en sus benefactores, es un ejemplo de supervivencia heroica en la jungla urbana de Nueva York. El joven termina como becario en el bufete de Covert, un abogado sin escrúpulos cuyo comportamiento es el de un delincuente que maneja a su antojo y engaña a todos los que trabajan para él. El soñador Jack Engle tiene una fe casi ciega en el sueño americano, a pesar de que el mundo de las leyes no le apasiona en absoluto y sí se siente muy atraído por rescatar a las víctimas del abogado corrupto. Este es el caso de Martha, una huérfana cuáquera, que es estafada y abusada por Covert quien logra hacerse con la herencia de la muchacha. Finalmente, Jack Engle la rescata, hace justicia, se enamora de ella y se casan. En esta novela con final feliz, Whitman aprovecha para hacer una sutil crítica sobre los niños abandonados que lamentablemente pululaban por las calles de Nueva York. Del mismo modo, el escritor no ahorra críticas a una sociedad que también maltrataba y abandonaba a los ancianos con el entrañable personaje de Wigglesworth, un escribiente del bufete que malvive como muchos otros ancianos empobrecidos que se veían en las calles de la metrópolis. Este relato de un abogado desalmado y sin escrúpulos que abusa de una mujer indefensa nos recuerda a otra archifamosa narración de la época: "Bartleby, the Scrivener: A Story of Wall-Street", de Herman Melville, autor del que también conmemoramos

el bicentenario de su nacimiento en 2019. Curiosamente, este relato fue publicado anónimamente en dos entregas en noviembre y diciembre de 1853 en el *Putnam's Monthly Magazine*, y muestra una trama muy similar, ya que también está ambientado en el mundo financiero de Wall Street, donde unos pocos se enriquecen a costa de muchos que trabajan sin descanso (Piñero, 2006: 9-49).

Retomando el tema de la defensa a ultranza que hace Whitman de la mujer menesterosa en *Jack Engle*, es fundamental señalar que el escritor era un valedor de los derechos de la mujer y siempre estuvo dispuesto a proponer reformas sociales para alcanzar la igualdad de derechos. Quizás tuvo mucho que ver en estos ideales su educación cuáquera y su pensamiento liberador y democrático, además de la influencia definitiva de su madre. De este modo, Whitman apoyó los movimientos sufragistas y las reformas que favorecerían los derechos de las mujeres, y sentía gran admiración por las oradoras feministas que luchaban por esta causa, como en el caso de Fanny Wright, Lucretia Mott y Ernestine Roce (Reynolds 2005: 110).

## ***El poeta universal y su herencia poética sin fronteras***

La compleja figura de Whitman poeta y personaje popular ha calado de forma profunda en la sociedad norteamericana y en el imaginario universal de las letras. Su obra poética se ha diseminado de forma permanente y cada generación ha sabido identificarse con sus versos. Tal vez la aceptación tan unánime de Whitman después de doscientos años es el fruto de su sensibilidad profética sobre una América multiétnica, multicultural e igualitaria en cuanto al género y a lo social. El poeta supo derribar las barreras sociales, culturales y literarias que fue encontrando en su dilatado camino vital y artístico. De hecho, cada tradición cultural ha sabido interpretar en su obra intertextualidades poéticas, místicas, políticas y religiosas. Por poner algunos ejemplos paradigmáticos, en la India se ha leído *Leaves of Grass* como una suerte de yoga occidental o han interpretado al poeta como heredero de la tradición vedántica. En China, los críticos han identificado en su poesía conexiones con el Taoísmo e intertextualidad poética con los poetas clásicos chinos Lao-Tzu y Chuang-Tzu. En la antigua Unión Soviética fue interpretado como un poeta proto-socialista (Folsom 2018: 386). En el caso del Reino Unido, Whitman se convirtió en una suerte de profeta socialista con un mensaje poético libertario y una camaradería masculina cargada de contenido sexual (Folsom 2018: 397). En España, el poeta modernista Federico García Lorca se quedó fascinado con Whitman cuando hizo su viaje iniciático a Nueva York. Parece ser que el poeta León Felipe le invitó a leer su traducción, ya que en aquel entonces vivía en Nueva York. Ambos poetas tenían muchas cosas en común, pero Lorca se sentía especialmente atraído por cómo Whitman articulaba su amor por la música y la cultura popular en su obra. Para el poeta granadino, Whitman tenía "duen-

de”, ese elemento mágico que solo unos pocos artistas poseen y que los conecta con el público universal más allá del tiempo y de las fronteras. En su sentido homenaje poético “Oda a Walt Whitman”, perteneciente a *Poeta en Nueva York* (1929-1930), el escritor granadino reconoce a un grandioso referente poético para su obra por muchas razones, pero quizás la más importante es que Whitman representa la homosexualidad de forma heroica a través de la admiración del cuerpo masculino, la fraternidad y la camaradería en la que predominan una visión luminosa plena de sinceridad y autenticidad. Para Lorca fue un descubrimiento poético vital que cambió su percepción de sí mismo y su vivencia más íntima de la homosexualidad, ya que todo lo que había vivido sobre esta realidad identitaria en España eran insultos, comentarios peyorativos, críticas y marginación. De este modo, Whitman se convirtió en una fuente de inspiración, en un referente artístico y humano radicalmente opuesto a todo lo que él había experimentado en su patria.

En el caso de Argentina, el escritor Jorge Luis Borges, gran experto en literatura norteamericana, también se convirtió en un admirador incondicional de Whitman y tradujo su obra poética. La lista de poetas y escritores en lengua española influidos por la herencia literaria de Whitman es interminable, sobresaliendo nombres tan significativos como los de Rubén Darío, Pablo Neruda y Ernesto Cardenal en el mundo hispánico. La impronta poética de Whitman en su propio país y en Gran Bretaña también fue realmente prodigiosa, con poetas que reconocieron abiertamente su influencia y mostraron una gran admiración, como es el caso de Hart Crane, William Carlos Williams, Wallace Stevens, D. H. Lawrence, T. S. Eliot, Charles Olson, Gary Snyder, Allen Ginsberg y John Ashbery, entre otros muchos.

## ***Epílogo: de Walt Whitman a Walter White, o el impacto del bardo en la cultura popular y visual norteamericana y universal***

Como ya hemos puesto de manifiesto, Walt Whitman se convirtió en un icono mítico de la cultura norteamericana en vida. De igual modo, su poderosa imagen y su herencia literaria han permanecido como un leitmotif cultural a lo largo de dos siglos. De vez en cuando, tanto su voz poética como su imagen emergen de forma estelar en el contexto de la cinematografía y la televisión. Este es el caso de la extraordinaria película *Dead Poets Society* (1989) de Peter Weir, interpretada magistralmente por Robin Williams. En esta obra el poco ortodoxo profesor Keating recita de forma apasionada los versos elegíacos de Whitman, “Oh Captain, my Captain”, dedicados a la muerte del presidente abolicionista Abraham Lincoln. Los extasiados estudiantes a los que persuade a través de la emoción y la afectividad de los versos whitmanianos, caen rendidos ante tanta belleza y apasionamiento. El

profesor Keating les confiesa a sus ensimismados y boquiabiertos estudiantes que “we read and write poetry because we are members of the human race. And the human race is filled with passion”. El poema de Whitman “O me! O Life!” resuena también muy convincente en la interpretación sincera del profesor, quien concluye “That the powerful play goes on, and you may contribute a verse”. De este modo, el profesor Keating no solo convence a sus estudiantes sobre el papel fundamental de la poesía, sino que les invita a convertirse ellos mismos en poetas de la vida y en protagonistas de su futuro: “What will your verse be?” Con esta sugerente invitación, los estudiantes se entregan al laberinto poético de Whitman. Finalmente, el profesor Keating logra ilusionar con la poesía a los jóvenes, algo que, a priori, se podía considerar quimérico, debido a la brecha generacional y al significado arcano de la poesía. Pero el gran artífice de este cambio es, sin duda, Whitman, cuya voz sensorial y emotiva emerge, una vez más, con una fuerza que trasciende el tiempo y los cambios sociales e inspira más que nunca a los jóvenes.

Otra aparición estelar de Walt Whitman es en la provocadora serie televisiva *Breaking Bad* (2008-2013), creada por el genial guionista Vince Gilligan. Para empezar, el nombre del protagonista de la serie, Walter White, tiene claras reminiscencias del poeta. En el sexto episodio de la tercera temporada, Gale Boetticher, un químico que prepara metanfetamina en un laboratorio clandestino y es un gran admirador de Whitman, le recita el poema “When I heard the learn’d astronomer” (1865) a Walter White para rendirle un homenaje al héroe trágico de la serie. En efecto, Boetticher admira a este profesor de química de educación secundaria que se dedica a elaborar metanfetamina de una pureza sorprendente. Lo que el químico Boetticher desconoce es que White mantiene una doble vida muy difícil y arriesgada, porque está gravemente enfermo de cáncer y es consciente de que le queda poco tiempo de vida. En medio de esta turbulencia vital, la obsesión de White es dejar a su familia un patrimonio para que puedan subsistir cuando él desaparezca y hayan pagado los elevados gastos hospitalarios de su enfermedad. Sin embargo, y a pesar de su existencia gris en un instituto de Albuquerque, Walter White es un mago del laboratorio, cuya destreza con las sustancias químicas produce una droga que raya en la perfección. Por esa razón, se convierte en el héroe astrónomo-científico del poema de Whitman: “When I sitting Heard the astronomer where he lectured with much / applause in the lecture-room” (1973: 271). De forma inusitada, Walter White es el artífice que ilumina el mundo mundo clandestino de Boetticher y le hace entender la perfección matemática del universo: “In the mystical moist night-air, and from time to time, / Look’d up in perfect silence at the stars” (1973: 271).

Sin embargo, en la serie hay una vuelta de tuerca final, una revelación, a mi modo de ver, realmente inesperada y genial. El químico admirador de Walter White le regala una copia de *Leaves of Grass* al que considera su maestro y fuente de inspiración más importante, escribiéndole una sentida dedicatoria: “To my other favorite W. W. It’s an

honour working with you. Fondly G. B.”, que paradójicamente se convertirá en la revelación fundamental de la serie. El oficial de la DEA, y además cuñado de Walter White, visita el cuarto de baño de la casa de sus familiares y se encuentra con la copia de *Leaves of Grass* dedicada, lee la dedicatoria y descubre, tras muchas pesquisas y análisis grafológicos, que el destinatario del poemario es, para su gran horror, su propio cuñado Walter White. Después de seguir las andanzas del químico más buscado de Albuquerque, descubre que el gran delincuente era parte de su propia familia, un hombre enfermo y casi moribundo al que admiraba profundamente. No es casualidad tampoco que el protagonista trágico de la serie se llame como el padre de Walt Whitman y, de este modo tan literario, se desvela la identidad real del gran Walter White, cuyo alias, Heisenberg, es también un guiño irónico a la excelencia científica. No cabe duda de que Vince Gillian hace un homenaje a Walt Whitman con este giro narrativo o poético de una de las series más exitosas de la televisión. El papel del Walt Whitman y de *Leaves of Grass* en la serie es crucial para desvelar la identidad real del profesor de química convertido en un auténtico capo de la droga que, a pesar de su fantasía heroica y redentora del inicio, arruina moral y físicamente a sus seres queridos. El viaje hacia el infierno de la producción y el tráfico de la metanfetamina termina paradójicamente con una revelación poética. Y, en último término, es la obra poética de más luz y universalidad de la literatura norteamericana la

que desvela la identidad criminal de un enfermo terminal transformado en delincuente. Cabe preguntarse si a Walt Whitman le hubiera importado que su obra magna y su entidad como poeta tuvieran un papel fundamental en el desenlace de una de las series televisivas con más impacto en todo el mundo. Pues la respuesta es, lógicamente, especulativa, pero tengo la intuición de que no le hubiera importado; al contrario, se hubiera sentido halagado de que tanto él como su obra hubieran sido protagonistas de la cultura popular que tanto admiraba y de la que tanto aprendió en su vida artística. Es más, considero que el autor de los versos finales tan reveladores de “*Song of Myself*”: “I bequeath myself to the dirt to grow from the grass I love, / If you want me again look for me under your boot-soles” (1973:00) se hubiera sentido halagado de convertirse en el gran actor del desenlace de una serie sobre las miserias y grandezas humanas, ya que recordemos que nada de lo humano le era ajeno al poeta más universal y genial de las letras norteamericanas:

**I see something of God each hour of the twenty-four, and each moment then,  
In the faces of men and women I see God, and in my own face in the glass,  
I find letters from God dropt in the street, and every one is sign'd by God's name (1973: 86-87).**



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***Vida y  
posteridad  
de una mente  
brillante***

**Iris Murdoch (1919-1999)**

## “Words are the most subtle symbols which we possess and our human fabric depends on them”

### Iris Murdoch: 'The Sovereignty of Good'

**E**l próximo 15 de julio se celebra el centenario del nacimiento de Jean Iris Murdoch, considerada una de las escritoras en lengua inglesa más influyentes y prolíficas de la segunda mitad del siglo XX. La crítica británica ha destacado la labor intelectual de la que muchos consideraban la mujer más brillante de Inglaterra, capaz de combinar filosofía y literatura de forma extraordinaria. Escritores como Malcolm Bradbury elogiaron la originalidad de una de las escritoras más grandes de la literatura británica posterior a la Segunda Guerra Mundial, que además supo mantenerse en primera línea a lo largo de su trayectoria. También Harold Bloom la distingue como una de las mentes más creativas de la historia de la literatura, continuadora directa de los principales maestros decimonónicos.

Muestra de este reconocimiento fueron la concesión de los premios y distinciones más importantes que otorga Gran Bretaña, no solo literarios, sino también honoríficos, como su nombramiento como Dama Comandante de la Orden del Imperio Británico (DBE). Su máximo reconocimiento literario lo alcanzó durante la década de los setenta, con premios como el *Whitbread Book Award* (hoy conocido como *Costa Book*) en 1974 por *The Sacred and Profane Love Machine*. Nominada en cuatro ocasiones al Booker Prize, finalmente le fue concedido en 1978 por *The Sea, the Sea*. El broche final a su carrera literaria llegó dos años antes de su fallecimiento con el *Golden Pen Award*, otorgado por toda su trayectoria y su dedicación a la escritura, un hecho que queda patente en la dimensión de su legado, que abarca diversos géneros: veintiséis novelas, dos obras de teatro (*The Servants and the Snow* y *The Three Arrows*), dos volúmenes de poemas (*Poems by Iris Murdoch* y *A Year of Birds*), una novela radiofónica (*The One Alone*, con música de Gary Carpenter), un libreto para la ópera de William Mathias *The Servants*, y un relato breve (“Something Special”). A este corpus se suman cinco obras filosóficas y numerosos ensayos.

Lamentablemente, Murdoch ha sido una autora desatendida por el público español. No es frecuente encontrar su nombre en los temarios de estudios literarios ni filosóficos de las universidades españolas. Seis años antes de su muerte, Murdoch recibía el Doctorado “Honoris causa” que le otorgaba la Universidad de Alcalá. Su discurso de investidura, celebrada el 16 de abril del año 1993, la retrataba como una firme defensora de los estudios humanísticos y de la filosofía, ya entonces en peligro de desaparición de los programas de estudio. No era esta la primera vez que la escritora y filósofa visitaba nuestro país. Un año antes, coincidiendo con la publicación de su primera novela traducida al español, *Bajo la red*, Murdoch impartió charlas en Santiago de Compostela y Salamanca. En 1990, con

motivo de uno de los muchos viajes organizados en aquel entonces por el British Council, pronunció una conferencia en la Facultad de Letras de la Universidad de Castilla-La Mancha. En esta ocasión los profesores Antonio Ballesteros y Eulalia Piñero tuvieron el honor de hacer de traductores simultáneos y presentadores de la escritora y de su esposo, el profesor de literatura inglesa y crítico literario John Bayley, quien acostumbraba a acompañarla en sus viajes. Juntos aprovechaban sus visitas a nuestro país para disfrutar de una de sus grandes pasiones: el arte, y en concreto la pintura, que resuena en la narrativa de Murdoch y a la que consideraba una contribución a la vida moral. Pero no todas sus visitas a España tuvieron fines literarios, ya que también aquí disfrutaron de algunas vacaciones. Conocidas fueron sus estancias en la Costa Brava, invitados por el historiador John Grigg, y en Lanzarote, en casa de Borys y Audi Villers, quien años después se convertiría en la segunda esposa de Bayley, fallecido en esa misma isla en 2015.

Aunque nacida en Dublín, la vida de Iris Murdoch transcurrió en Inglaterra, donde vivió una feliz infancia junto a sus padres como hija única en lo que definió como “a perfect trinity of love” (Conradi 2010b: 51). Su formación académica arranca en la progresista Froebel Demonstration School de Londres, donde le inculcaron su pasión por aprender, para trasladarse años después al internado femenino Badminton School de Bristol, en el que se fue forjando su incipiente vocación de escritora. Muestra de ello son sus colaboraciones en el *School Magazine*, donde publica artículos, ensayos e incluso poemas, actividad que continuará durante su etapa universitaria en el periódico estudiantil *Cherwell*. Logró su ingreso en el elitista Somerville College de Oxford, ciudad en la que transcurriría la mayor parte de su vida y donde conocería a John Bayley, su compañero durante 43 años. En el transcurso de sus años de estudiante de “Mods and Greats” (literatura clásica, historia antigua y filosofía), se formó con profesores de la talla de Donald MacKinnon o Eduard Fraenkel. Su amor por la mitología clásica se reflejará en el argumento de muchas de sus novelas. En Oxford coincidió con alumnas como Indira Gandhi o el grupo de futuras filósofas formado por Elizabeth Anscombe, Mary Midgley y Philippa Foot, con quien mantendría una intensa relación afectiva de por vida. El interés de Murdoch por la política europea la llevó a militar en las Juventudes Comunistas, decisión que lamentaría años después cuando la Ley McCarran, sumada a su incapacidad para mentir, le impidieron obtener el visado para disfrutar de una beca en el Vassar College (Nueva York) que le había sido concedida. A lo largo de su vida Murdoch experimentará un inesperado viraje político al liberalismo, que será más notable en los años ochenta.

Su inesperado apoyo al Thatcherismo derivó de su indignación ante la pasividad del Partido Laborista británico frente a la violencia que ejercieron los piquetes de las *trade unions*, así como por su desacuerdo en materia educativa y, en concreto, por la supresión de las *grammar schools* del sistema educativo.

Avanzada la Segunda Guerra Mundial, y una vez concluidos sus estudios universitarios, Murdoch se traslada a Londres, donde trabajó temporalmente como funcionaria del Tesoro, aunque sin dejar de publicar poesía y artículos. En el escaso tiempo libre que le dejaba su trabajo, aprendió ruso para poder leer a Pushkin en su lengua original. Su amor por los idiomas se expande con el estudio de francés, italiano y alemán y, por supuesto, latín y griego. En su ensayo *Metaphysics as a Guide to Morals*, Murdoch consideraba la experiencia del aprendizaje de una lengua, en su caso la rusa, como un ejercicio de disciplina moral:

**I am confronted by an authoritative structure, which commands my respect. The task is difficult, and the goal is distant and perhaps never entirely attainable. My work is a progressive revelation of something which is independently of me. Attention is rewarded by knowledge of reality. Love of Russian leads me away from myself towards something alien to me, something that my consciousness cannot take over, swallow up, deny or make unreal (1992/2003: 373).**

Finalizada la Segunda Guerra Mundial, su compromiso social con los más desfavorecidos la llevó a ocupar un puesto en el comité de las Naciones Unidas para ayuda a los refugiados, primero en su sede londinense y más tarde en los centros de acogida a desplazados por la guerra en Bélgica y Austria. Fue en Bruselas donde asistió a una conferencia impartida por el ya reconocido Jean-Paul Sartre, con quien tuvo la ocasión de debatir sus ideas respecto al existencialismo francés tan en boga en aquella época. Este encuentro motivará años después la escritura de su primer libro de ensayos filosóficos: Sartre: *Romantic Rationalist* (1953). Durante su posterior estancia en Austria, conoció a Raymond Queneau, autor de *Pierrot Mon Ami*, que Murdoch traducirá al inglés y cuya influencia se puso de manifiesto en su obra. La desolación que percibió en los campos de refugiados, así como los efectos devastadores de la diáspora en el Reino Unido de los años cincuenta, será incorporada a sus primeras novelas, en las que el sufrimiento y el desarraigo que sufren personajes migrantes, exiliados y refugiados, supervivientes del Holocausto, plantea al lector diversas cuestiones morales. Es el caso de los hermanos polacos Jan y Stefan Lusiewicz en *The Flight from the Enchanter* (1956), o los judíos rusos Elsa y David Levkin en *The Italian Girl* (1964).

Murdoch retornó al mundo académico con una beca Sarah Smithson para cursar un Doctorado en Filosofía en Cambridge, donde se formó en la escuela analítica y quedó fascinada por el círculo de Ludwig Wittgenstein, a quien consideraba, junto con Martin Heidegger, el filósofo más importante del siglo XX. Dos años después, Murdoch regresaba a Oxford para impartir Filosofía en St. Anne's College, pero también con el firme propósito de dedicarse a la escritura, debutando ese mismo año en el mundo literario con su exitosa ópera prima *Under the Net* (1954). En 1998 la *American Modern Library* y la revista *New York Times* la incluyeron entre las cien mejores novelas de la literatura inglesa del siglo XX. Con ella quedaba inaugurada una tardía pero prolífica carrera literaria, que se extendería a lo largo de cinco décadas y finalizaría en 1995 con la publicación de su última novela, *Jackson's Dilemma*, cuando la enfermedad de Alzheimer obligó a Murdoch al retiro forzoso<sup>1</sup>.

La primera etapa creativa de Murdoch estuvo marcada por escritores y filósofos como Jean-Paul Sartre, Simone de Beauvoir, Ludwig Wittgenstein, Samuel Beckett o Raymond Queneau. *Under the Net* atrapa al lector en la red del lenguaje, “a machine for making falsehoods” (1954: 68), y en un mundo arquetípico murdochiano repleto de episodios extravagantes. Ambientada en la atmósfera social y cultural de la postguerra, la novela refleja la preocupación constante de Murdoch por la pérdida de la fe y de los valores espirituales en un mundo sin Dios. Gary Browning utiliza el término “desmitologización” para referirse a esta falta de creencias religiosas tradicionales propia del ser humano moderno, exacerbada por las grandes catástrofes políticas del siglo XX.

El abandono de su docencia tras quince años en St Anne's College permitió a Murdoch disfrutar de la escritura en la tranquilidad de su casa de campo de Oxford, sin olvidar sus breves estancias en su amada Londres, escenario habitual en numerosas de sus novelas y reflejo del estado moral de muchos de sus personajes. Allí acudía un día a la semana para impartir docencia en el Royal College of Art. Viajera incansable, su rutina solo se veía alterada por sus frecuentes viajes al extranjero, en los que recorrió toda Europa, además de Rusia, Estados Unidos, India, Australia y Japón. Como indica su biógrafo, Peter J. Conradi, Iris Murdoch era una escritora compulsiva que no concebía la vida sin una novela en marcha, hasta el extremo de que entre una y otra podía trascurrir tan solo media hora (2010: 500). Durante su proceso creativo, dedicaba buena parte del tiempo a inventar cada historia, pero, una vez que cada detalle estaba planificado y los personajes emergían, escribirla era una labor sencilla, siempre a mano (la tecnología representaba para Murdoch una amenaza al pensamiento creativo), en cuadernos que luego entregaba a Chatto & Windus para su mecanografiado, sin consentir la más mínima corrección.

<sup>1</sup> Solamente su manuscrito Heidegger: *The Pursuit of Being* quedó sin publicar por decisión propia.

La obra literaria de Murdoch alcanzó su madurez creativa durante los años setenta, su década más productiva, en la que sus novelas ganan en extensión, originalidad y complejidad, como atestiguan *A Fairly Honourable Defeat* (1970), *An Accidental Man* (1971) o *The Black Prince* (1973), su obra más metaficcional. Murdoch mantuvo su ritmo frenético de escritura y año tras año se fueron sucediendo novelas como *The Sacred and Profane Love Machine* (1974), *A Word Child* (1975) o *Henry and Cato* (1976). La crítica coincide al señalar este periodo como el de sus mejores novelas, con mención especial a *The Sea, the Sea* (1978), una recreación irónica de *La tempestad* de Shakespeare considerada por muchos su obra maestra. La mayor parte del análisis crítico de su obra se enmarca entre los años setenta y ochenta, cuando investigadores como Elizabeth Dipple, Richard Todd, Peter J. Conradi, Hilda Spear, Frank Baldanza, Rubin Rabinovitz, Peter Wolfe, Barbara S. Heusel o Deborah Johnson analizan su narrativa desde perspectivas tan diversas como la filosofía, la moral, la religión, el realismo o incluso el uso de estrategias postmodernas.

Los años ochenta dieron paso a novelas más problemáticas en las que resuena el mito, la magia y el misterio. Nos referimos a *Nuns and Soldiers* (1980), *The Philosopher's Pupil* (1983), *The Good Apprentice* (1986) y *The Book and the Brotherhood* (1987). El entusiasmo inicial que había suscitado su obra se fue desvaneciendo a finales de los ochenta. La última etapa literaria de la autora, esto es, los años noventa, se define por un creciente misticismo y animismo, e incluye títulos como *The Message to the Planet* (1989), *The Green Knight* (1993) y finalmente *Jackson's Dilemma* (1995), la novela publicada cuatro años antes de su muerte que marcó el comienzo de su viaje hacia la oscuridad. En una carta dirigida a Jeffrey Meyers, la propia escritora se mostraba plenamente consciente de las dificultades que le estaban impidiendo escribir su último libro, cuando su demencia empezaba a aflorar: "I am now very much at a loss, unable to conjure up any new scene. So, I am a bit depressed. [...] Of course I am trying to write a novel, but it is unusually difficult. Signs of age and time perhaps." (2013: 77). Según refrendaron varios estudios científicos, como el elaborado por *The Cognition and Brain Sciences Unit* del University College de Londres publicado en la revista *Brain*, aun sin haber recibido un diagnóstico certero de la enfermedad de Alzheimer en el momento de escribir *Jackson's Dilemma*, la pérdida de memoria semántica ya era manifiesta en el empobrecimiento de su poder narrativo. Este hecho se hace evidente en la significativa disminución de su vocabulario y la excesiva sencillez de su sintaxis. Murdoch fallecería tres años después, en 1999, a causa de las complicaciones causadas por su demencia.

Es cierto que la crítica literaria ha considerado a Murdoch una escritora extemporánea, dada la dificultad que entraña encasillar su producción literaria en las corrientes de su época. Al entrar en la escena literaria en 1954 de la mano de una novela protagonizada por un joven pícaro, parte de la crítica la etiquetó erróneamente dentro del movimiento británico de los *Angry Young Men* que se revelaba contra la injusticia social. No era ese el propósi-

to de Murdoch, quien siempre concibió la novela como un país libre, situándose también al margen de las perspectivas teóricas de su época, como el estructuralismo y la deconstrucción, que consideraba un siniestro ataque a la creatividad y a las formas de arte tradicionales. Del mismo modo, se opuso al reduccionismo de la teoría psicoanalítica. Sin embargo, algunos elementos de su obra como las referencias intertextuales o la incorporación de elementos fantásticos implican la presencia de cierto experimentalismo narrativo. La novela postmoderna, con la que no sentía ninguna afinidad, reflejaba para Murdoch la pérdida de los conceptos morales y políticos que otorgan significado a la vida del ser humano. Como señala en su ensayo filosófico *Against Dryness*, escrito en 1950:

**We live in a scientific and anti-metaphysical age, in which the dogmas, images and precepts of religion have lost much of their power. We have not recovered from two wars and the experience of Hitler. We are also the heirs of the Enlightenment, Romanticism and the Liberal Tradition. These are the elements of our dilemma: whose chief feature, in my view, is that we have been left with far too shallow and flimsy an idea of human personality (287).**

Para encontrar el paradigma estético que ejerció una fuerte influencia en la obra de Murdoch habrá que remontarse a la novela realista decimonónica. Conradi llegó a considerarla heredera directa de Dostoievski y, de hecho, la escritora admitía que el conflicto moral en torno al concepto de la bondad y la maldad humana había inspirado su creación literaria. Además de los novelistas rusos, trabajó con la influencia de grandes maestros británicos como Jane Austen, Henry James, Charles Dickens, Emily Brontë y, por supuesto, William Shakespeare, a quien Murdoch consideraba el más grande escritor de todos los tiempos y a cuya obra volvía continuamente en busca de inspiración.

No es fácil resumir las grandes preocupaciones que subyacen en la narrativa de Murdoch, pero cabe señalar cuestiones como la relación del ser humano con el poder, la verdad, la lucha entre el bien y el mal, la justicia, la naturaleza del pecado, el arrepentimiento, el cuestionamiento de la bondad humana, la sexualidad y la libertad individual. Pero la idea central que articula toda su obra es la naturaleza del amor, un concepto fundamental en su filosofía moral. No se refiere Murdoch a un amor posesivo que aprisiona al ser humano, un peligroso deseo sexual obsesivo y ciego dominado por el egoísmo, sino a la noción platónica de Eros, esto es, un amor contemplativo, empático y liberador, un amor sublime y virtuoso que reconoce y se preocupa por el otro y da sentido a la existencia humana. Tal y como lo define en su ensayo *The Sublime and the Good*:

**Art and morals are, with certain provisos [...] one. Their essence is the same. The essence of both of them is love. Love is the perception of individuals. Love is the extremely difficult realization that something other than oneself is real. Love, and so art and morals, is the discovery of reality (1999, 210).**

Una de las cuestiones ineludibles que suscita la obra de Murdoch es la sinergia entre su faceta filosófica y literaria, a propósito de la cual la autora siempre señalaba que una y otra ocupaban espacios diferentes. Murdoch vinculaba el pensamiento filosófico con la existencia y la moral, pero no con el arte y la buena literatura. La escritora se sirve de la literatura como instrumento para sentar las bases de una vida moral y alcanzar un mejor grado de comprensión del comportamiento humano. Por lo tanto, el papel de la literatura es decisivo, tal y como expone en su ensayo *The Sovereignty of Good over Other Concepts*, en el que la sitúa por encima de la ciencia:

**It is totally misleading to speak, for instance, of "two cultures," one literary-humane and the other scientific, as if these were of equal status. There is only one culture, of which science, so interesting and so dangerous, is now an important part. But the most essential and fundamental aspect of culture is the study of literature, since this is an education in how to picture and understand human situations. We are men and we are moral agents before we are scientists, and the place of science in human life must be discussed in words. This is why it is and always will be more important to know about Shakespeare than to know about any scientist: and if there is a "Shakespeare of science" his name is Aristotle (1970: 33).**

Las novelas de Murdoch no deben juzgarse como tratados filosóficos, aunque sin duda contengan una clara dimensión moral y espiritual, funcionando según Nick Turner "both as popular narrative and as philosophical discourse" (2011: 56). Defensora del platonismo, recurre a menudo a la alegoría de la caverna como metáfora de la transformación moral que sufren los personajes de sus novelas, quienes, para convertirse en seres humanos moralmente mejores, deben ser capaces de renunciar a su ego y abandonar su tendencia natural a habitar un mundo centrado en ilusiones y falsedad. Este peregrinaje espiritual hacia la realidad que existe fuera de uno mismo conduce al ser humano hacia la verdad y, con ello, hacia el bien. En esta ardua tarea, la religión y la experiencia espiritual pueden contribuir positivamente al desarrollo moral.

Esta forma de generosidad con los demás que persigue la filosofía moral de Murdoch conecta con el concepto que le inspiró su admirada Simone Weil de "moral attention". Esta idea de percepción moral tan presente en la literatura murdochiana reside en la mirada atenta hacia lo que nos rodea, en la que el yo se olvida de sí mismo. Murdoch se refiere a esta capacidad de cambiar desde dentro como un acto de *unselfing* o suspensión del yo. En su ensayo *The Sovereignty of Good* describe la idea de atención como el desarrollo de la conciencia moral a través de "a just and loving gaze directed upon an individual reality" (1970: 4). Pero son escasos los personajes de ficción que logran salir de la caverna y mirar más allá de ellos mismos y de sus propios deseos, adquiriendo así esta atención virtuosa necesaria para su progreso moral. Algunos logran reconocer la realidad y las necesidades del prójimo mientras

que otros muchos no conseguirán despojarse del egoísmo propio del mundo moderno y desatenderán al otro constantemente.

Murdoch se adentra en el estado mental de los personajes que habitan sus novelas, a menudo corales, y sumerge al lector en sus laberintos morales. Son personajes libres con los que la autora pretende en todo momento distanciarse emocionalmente, al modo shakespeariano. No es raro además que salten de una novela a otra, creando referencias cruzadas que confieren a la obra de Murdoch un sentido de continuidad y el espejismo de realidad. Sus conversaciones pueden resultar algo afectadas, ya que rara vez versan sobre cuestiones banales y cotidianas, sino que están plagadas de reflexiones trascendentales y razonamientos filosóficos. En su negociación con el mundo cometen errores y son presas de dilemas que ponen en cuestión su moralidad y que tendrán que ir dilucidando y enfrentando a medida que se vaya forjando la trama. Sus protagonistas, siempre masculinos, son artistas, funcionarios frustrados, profesores de universidad o intelectuales pertenecientes a la clase alta londinense. Abundan los escritores mediocres, a veces en busca de inspiración, otras enfrentados a bloqueos creativos o que aguardan su jubilación para dedicarse plenamente a la escritura. Solo los más afortunados ya están inmersos en el que creen que será su gran libro.

La creación de sus personajes ha sido objeto de crítica por los detractores de Murdoch, quienes critican a la autora por no desarrollarlos en profundidad, ateniéndose a un repertorio limitado que se encuadra en tipologías recurrentes fácilmente reconocibles por el lector murdochiano. Elías Canetti, con quien la escritora mantuvo una larga y tortuosa relación sentimental, inspiró una de las tipologías más representativas: la figura del encantador. Atiende a un personaje masculino, brillante a la vez que demoníaco y déspota, que ejerce un gran poder de manipulación sobre los demás personajes, especialmente los femeninos. Entre sus narradores protagonistas hechiceros encontramos a Mischa Fox (*The Flight from the Enchanter*), Julius King (*A Fairly Honourable Defeat*) o Charles Arrowby (*The Sea, The Sea*). Al enchanter podemos añadir otras dos tipologías confrontadas frecuentes en la narrativa de Murdoch: el santo y el artista. El buen artista es aquel de quien deriva el buen arte, el que tiene el poder de trascender su ego, liberarse de la propensión a la fantasía (un concepto muy distinto a la imaginación) y dirigir su atención a la apreciación de la realidad que existe fuera de uno mismo. En cambio, el personaje aspirante a santo responde a un personaje anodino, altruista y dedicado a la ardua búsqueda de la bondad moral. En su elenco tampoco falta la figura del bufón, un personaje solitario, débil y cargante, propenso a la bebida y objeto del desprecio y mofa por parte de otros personajes.

Además de sus personajes, si algo define la fascinante obra literaria de Murdoch es el modo en el que articula sus complejos argumentos. La excentricidad de sus textos, una singularidad que fascina a sus seguidores, también ha sido motivo de reprobación por parte de la crítica literaria. Sus finales son tan abiertos e inacabados como la

vida misma. Murdoch atrapa al lector en tramas llenas de enamoramientos intensos y repentinos, capaces de alterar la consciencia de sus personajes. Abundan los encuentros y desencuentros, acontecimientos que se precipitan y desatan situaciones inverosímiles, absurdas y divertidas, típicas de vodevil, reflejando la contingencia y aleatoriedad de la experiencia humana. Pese a que algunos lectores puedan percibir su prosa como farragosa e intelectual, su fino manejo de la ironía hace que sus textos destilen humor, alternando drama y comedia a partes iguales. Por algo su gran maestro fue Shakespeare. Como ella misma apunta en *Metaphysics as a Guide to Morals*:

**Much of the greatest literary art is a tragi-comic, or perhaps one should say sad-comic, condensation, a kind of pathos which is aware of terrible things, and which eschews definition and declared formal purpose. Such pathos is everywhere in Shakespeare. (1992/2003: 93)**

El sentido de la teatralidad es inherente a muchas de sus novelas y queda patente en la adaptación y puesta en escena de algunas de ellas. Es el caso de *The Black Prince* (1973), que ella misma adaptó; *A Severed Head* (1961), representada en Londres y llevada después al cine (aunque no fue del gusto de Murdoch); o *The Italian Girl* (1964), estrenada en Bristol y más tarde en Londres, cuyos derechos se acaban de adquirir este mismo año para adaptarla al cine. *The Bell* (1958) fue adaptada como serie de televisión por la BBC, cosechando un notable éxito.

Revisando su obra literaria con motivo del centenario de la escritora, advertimos que el objetivo de Murdoch no solo era entretener al lector, sino también alentarle a reflexionar sobre cuestiones fundamentales acerca de la condición humana. Desde la perspectiva que aporta el tiempo apreciamos que, lejos de haber quedado pasada de moda, como apuntaron algunos críticos, fue una escritora adelantada a su tiempo. Su narrativa adquiere en el momento actual más significado que nunca, al abordar cuestiones de tanta actualidad como son la inmigración y la diáspora, el suicidio, el aborto y la experiencia traumática posterior, la violencia doméstica, la homosexualidad, las desigualdades de género, e incluso la sexualidad fluida. La propia escritora, acostumbrada a meterse en la piel de sus narradores masculinos, perpetuó la inversión de roles hasta el punto de definirse ella misma como “a male homosexual in female guise” (2015: 347). Ya antes de 1967, año en que el Parlamento Británico aprobara la despenalización de las relaciones homosexuales, Murdoch defendía su legalización e incluía dentro de su elenco novelístico un personaje homosexual que unas veces reprime y otras expresa abiertamente su orientación sexual.

Aunque la temática de su novelística no haya perdido vigencia, la posteridad de Iris Murdoch no ha sido un asunto fácil. Las notas necrológicas publicadas tras su fallecimiento, un 8 de febrero de hace veinte años, y recogidas por McColgan, Valentine y Downs (2000: 99)

eclipsaron su amplia trayectoria profesional, centrándose en el devastador efecto que causó la enfermedad de Alzheimer en la mente de una mujer brillante al final de su vida. Por otro lado, fueron muchos los que, con mayor o menor acierto, se empeñaron en sacar a la luz todo lo que Murdoch había olvidado a causa del Alzheimer. Es esta una triste imagen de Murdoch motivada por la repercusión mediática que tuvo la publicación de la trilogía escrita por John Bayley, a quien Ignacio Echevarría describía como “industrioso empresario de su propia viudedad” en un artículo aparecido en el periódico *El País* el 10 de agosto de 2002. En los dos primeros libros de dicha trilogía, *Iris: A Memoir* (1998) y *Iris and the Friends* (1999), Bayley reconstruyó su vida junto a Murdoch, desvelando al público su deterioro como enferma de Alzheimer. Esta apropiación del espacio privado de Murdoch, que en vida se esforzó por proteger y que como autora evitó reflejar en su obra, fue duramente criticada por su círculo más cercano, conocedor del carácter reservado y discreto de esta mujer de conversación tranquila y largos silencios para quien “there are not many people whom one wants to know one” (Conradi 2010: 528). Amigos como Antonia S. Byatt, autora de uno de los primeros estudios literarios que consolidó a Murdoch como escritora, *Degrees of Freedom* (1965), calificó de cruel e imperdonable esta exhibición de la escritora como enferma. Esta simplificación de la grandeza de Murdoch, reduciéndola a sus últimos cuatro años, se vería acrecentada posteriormente con su lamentable representación cinematográfica en el biopic *Iris* (Eyre 2001), basado en ambos libros de Bayley, quien también intervino en la adaptación. Poco se vislumbra en pantalla de la genialidad de esta novelista y filósofa de la que se cumple el centenario.

A los libros de Bayley se sumó una buena cantidad de literatura biográfica sobre la escritora y filósofa, unas veces autorizada, como la biografía escrita por Peter J. Conradi *Iris Murdoch: A Life* (2001), en la que aúna su trayectoria vital y académica, y otras no aprobadas, como el retrato opuesto que ofrece A. N. Wilson en *Iris Murdoch, as I Knew her* (2003), una biografía de corte sensacionalista en la que se resalta su promiscuidad sexual o el abandono de su domesticidad. El golpe de gracia vino dado con las memorias de Elías Canetti, *Party in the Blitz: The English Years* (2005), en las que no solo desprecia a Murdoch como escritora, sino que caricaturiza cruelmente a la mujer que durante años fue su amante.

Esta fascinación por la vida privada de Murdoch se ha visto acrecentada por los numerosos diarios y la ingente producción epistolar que se conservan (muchos otros documentos fueron destruidos por ella misma). Conviene recordar que esta autora infatigable no solo escribía largas cartas a sus amigos (durante años intercambió cartas de amor diarias con la escritora y activista Brigid Brophy), sino que también mantuvo correspondencia manuscrita con sus lectores, labor que formaba parte de su rutina diaria. Recientemente hemos sabido que entre sus múltiples destinatarios se encontraba su admirado Tolkien, a quien deseaba haber respondido en éllico, y en un espacio

más cercano geográficamente, el filósofo zamorano Agustín García Calvo, quien conservó las cartas recibidas por Murdoch a lo largo de toda su vida.

Gran parte de esta correspondencia personal es ya de dominio público, al haber salido a la luz en los últimos años en recopilaciones como la editada por Peter J. Conradi, *Iris Murdoch: A Writer at War Letters and Diaries 1939-45* (2010), o las más de 700 cartas publicadas bajo el título *Living on Paper: Letters from Iris Murdoch 1934-95* (2015), entre las que se incluyen epístolas a Philippa Foot, Michael Oakeshott, Elías Canetti y Raymond Quenau. A este interés por sacar a la luz su fecunda correspondencia personal se suman las cartas que Murdoch escribió a amigos como David Morgan, Jeffrey Meyers o Brian Medlin publicadas en *With Love and Rage: A Friendship with Iris Murdoch* (2010), *Remembering Iris Murdoch: Letters and Interviews* (2013) y *Never Mind about the Bourgeoisie. The Correspondence between Iris Murdoch and Brian Medlin, 1976-1995* (2014).

Muchos de estos escritos han saltado a los medios (también a españoles) por el revuelo que causó el descubrimiento de toda suerte de romances que mantuvo durante su vida. El interés generado por la privacidad de una mujer tan reservada como Murdoch únicamente debería justificarse por su conexión con su mundo literario y porque por una vez no son otros, sino su propia voz, la que nos da a conocer a una mujer comprometida con sus principios morales, que vivió al margen de las convenciones sociales sobre la sexualidad y disfrutó de una intrincada e intensa experiencia sentimental al margen de su matrimonio (lo que ahora conocemos como poliamor), atraída siempre por la inteligencia de sus parejas. Pese a su semblante serio, su corpulencia y su porte austero de aspecto monjil (Bayley la definió como *anima naturaliter Christiana – religious without religion*), era tan divertida e ingeniosa como las tramas de sus novelas. Sus cartas la retratan como amante de los bares, incondicional de la telenovela radiofónica *The Archers*, y seguidora de los Rolling Stones y de los Beatles, a quienes consideraba que deberían nombrarse oficialmente poetas laureados.

Si consideramos la suerte de Murdoch en el mundo editorial español, observamos que no ha sido siempre favorable. Contadas han sido las editoriales que publicaron traducciones de sus novelas en décadas pasadas, a pesar de que su obra haya sido vertida a veintiséis idiomas. Solo tras su muerte, Murdoch regresó a las librerías gracias a la “Biblioteca Iris Murdoch” (Lumen), prologada por el cántabro Álvaro Pombo, quien, junto con el crítico literario Ignacio Echevarría, siempre se declaró gran admirador de la autora. Dicha colección incluyó títulos como *La negra noche*, curiosa traducción de *The Green Knight* (1993), *El mar, el mar* (1978), *Amigos y amantes* (1968), *El príncipe negro* (1973) y *El sueño de Bruno* (1969). Con motivo de la celebración del centenario del nacimiento de la autora, esta misma editorial reivindica su obra con el relanzamiento de tres de estos títulos con nuevas cubiertas. Destacado ha sido también el esfuerzo realizado por

la editorial Impedimenta por sacar del olvido su producción literaria con la publicación de *El unicornio* (1963, 2014), *Henry y Cato* (1976, 2013) y *El libro y la hermandad* (1987, 2016), y próximamente se publicará *Monjas y Soldados* (1980).

En vísperas del centenario, también sus textos filosóficos sobreviven al paso del tiempo gracias a la publicación de *El fuego y el sol* (1977, 2016), dedicado a Platón y su visión sobre el arte y su hostilidad hacia él, y a la recopilación de sus ensayos *La salvación por las palabras ¿Puede la literatura curarnos de los males de la filosofía?* (2018), ambos publicados por la editorial Siruela. La Soberanía del bien, inédito hasta ahora en España, verá la luz en un futuro cercano. El teatro español también recordó en fecha reciente a Murdoch como filósofa moral con *Acastos. Para qué sirve el teatro*, un coloquio platónico dirigido por Ernesto Caballero y representado por un grupo de jóvenes actores en el madrileño Centro Dramático Nacional, contando con el asesoramiento del filósofo Javier Gomá. Es encomiable la labor de todos ellos por acercar al público español el trabajo de Murdoch como escritora y filósofa.

Así pues, con motivo del centenario de su nacimiento, la obra literaria de Murdoch se reaviva internacionalmente. Se promueven conferencias, tertulias, suplementos literarios, reediciones de sus textos y obras críticas sobre su trabajo. Ejemplo de ello son las aportaciones de investigadores como Anne Rowe, Avril Horner, Mark Lupretch, Gary Browning o Lucy Bolton, o los ensayos críticos editados por Mustafa Kirca y Şule Okuroğlu, Daniel Read o Rebecca Moden. A todos ellos añadimos las obras monográficas escritas por Maria Antonaccio, Andreas Pattenidis, Niklas Forsberg, Miles Leeson, Ellen Abernethy Ashdown, o el meritorio repaso a su trayectoria como filósofa y escritora que Frances White trazó en *Becoming Iris Murdoch* (2014).

Son muchos, por tanto, los que se esfuerzan por mantener vivo el legado de Murdoch, no solo en su país natal sino también en toda Europa, Estados Unidos y Japón. La tecnología, tan detestada por Murdoch, está desempeñando un papel importante para lograr este objetivo. Muestra de ello es el grupo de Facebook *Iris Murdoch Appreciation Society*, fundado por investigadores y lectores de su obra, que supera ya los 1100 miembros, mientras que la cuenta de Twitter que gestiona el *Iris Murdoch Archive Project*, ya roza los 6.000. Por otro lado, la *Iris Murdoch Society*, fundada en Nueva York en 1986, cuenta con sucursales en Gran Bretaña y Japón que constituyen foros internacionales en donde estudiosos de su obra comparten sus visiones.

La Universidad de Kingston (Reino Unido) alberga desde 2004 el archivo de la escritora, donde se conservan sus más de 3.000 cartas, así como diarios personales, cuadernos de poemas, fotos y objetos personales. A ello se añade su copiosa biblioteca personal (la mayoría de sus manuscritos literarios y filosóficos se encuentran en el archivo de la Universidad de Iowa), compuesta por cientos

de volúmenes sobre literatura, poesía, filosofía o teología en distintos idiomas, y que salió a la venta cuatro años después de su fallecimiento, cuando su marido, que ya se había vuelto a casar, refirió problemas de espacio en su casa. *El Iris Murdoch Research Centre*, situado en la Universidad de Chichester, edita una revista anual con noticias, artículos y reseñas, y este verano por primera vez va a celebrar su Iris Murdoch Summer School. La confe-

rencia internacional bianual sobre esta excepcional autora y su obra filosófica y ficcional tendrá lugar este año en Oxford, en el mismo St Anne's College donde Murdoch impartió clases. En ella se conmemorará por todo lo alto el centenario de esta autora de reconocimiento internacional que encontró en la novela el espacio donde investigar su filosofía, apostando por la atención al ser humano, el amor y la ética moral.



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ARTICLE LINGUISTICS

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***The Multi-  
faceted Effects  
of CLIL***

A Literature Review

## 1. Introduction

**C**ontent and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL), ‘regarded as one of the central topics in the realm of present-day foreign language education’ (Rumlach 2017: 111) and widely endorsed by all stakeholders (San Isidro & Lasagabaster 2018a), has been globally and phenomenally expanding in the last couple of decades. From its very beginning, it has been referred to as a set of pedagogical practices that involve a less fragmented conception of the curriculum along with a greater focus on content-based tasks through the use of additional languages (Coyle et al. 2010; San Isidro 2016). To put it plainly, collaboration is the *sine qua non* in this approach (Pavón et al. 2014), as language teachers and content teachers design together to make students learn content through an additional language.

The numerous attempts to characterise this approach have kindled debate regarding its relation to preceding bilingual immersion programmes (Pérez Cañado 2012); its conceptual ‘vagueness’ (Bruton 2013: 588) vs. its being a ‘well-recognised and useful construct for promoting L2/foreign language teaching’ (Cenoz et al. 2013: 16); or its relation to immersion programmes aimed at protecting minority or regional languages (Somers & Surmount 2011; Cenoz et al. 2013). Similarly, the attempts to analyse the research foci and provide conclusive evidence of whether this approach is a panacea, or simply whether and how this approach affects learning have not only added fuel to the debate but also led to identify a number of lacunae. Pérez Cañado’s well-grounded and wide-angle analysis of CLIL research in 2012, for example, provided a comprehensive and unbiased critical analysis of earlier literature by 1) giving a detailed summary of the previous immersion programmes CLIL is considered to descend from, such as Canadian Immersion, North American bilingual education or European international schools; 2) providing a thorough analysis of the state of the art through characterising the heterogeneous CLIL panorama; and 3) analysing research outcomes from a geographical perspective, grouping research by areas: Northern, Central, Eastern and Southern Europe. In her analysis, Pérez Cañado concluded that ‘solid empirical studies’ were ‘sparse’ (2012: 329). In a more recent article, she updated her previous review and analysed CLIL-related literature identifying the deficiencies of the research related to the impact of CLIL (Pérez Cañado 2016): CLIL and non-CLIL students should be compared and contrasted through statistical analysis and triangulation of data; research should be longitudinal and combine quantitative and qualitative methods; dependent variables such as the first language and content learning should be considered; and homogeneity of the samples should be guaranteed.

In the past few years, research has been trying to keep pace with the exponential growth of CLIL programmes, which has made the body of literature on the field increase significantly, both adapting to a cross-contextual

array of aspects —such as the impact of this approach on language learning, content learning, motivations, translanguaging, code-switching, or pluriliteracies— and considering previously identified deficiencies. With this in mind, this article aims at canvassing a new literature review on the multi-faceted effects of CLIL in order to both classify the existing sizeable number of studies and bridge them to the state of the art and the identification of future research agendas.

## 2. CLIL: a clear-cut concept or a heterogeneous amalgamation?

As mentioned above, CLIL has been seen as a ‘well-recognised and useful construct for promoting L2/foreign language teaching’ (Cenoz et al. 2013:16) which, despite the myriad of contextual differences in implementation, has shown a wide range of commonalities (Coyle et al. 2010). In recent years, this view has changed and some research has turned to show a more negative and somewhat dismissive view of CLIL conceptualisation (Paran 2013; Bruton 2013) in terms of it being vague and too heterogeneous as there seem to be no distinct differences with regard to previously existing immersion programmes. This heterogeneity-turned-into-vagueness view (Bruton 2013) is, nonetheless, debatable. The fact that CLIL is usually linked to and identified with the previous bilingual education models might be explained by some misconceptions leading to confusing interpretations of this approach. Although CLIL shares characteristics with its predecessors (Cenoz & Ruiz de Zarobe 2015; Somers & Surmount 2011), Canadian immersion or American bilingual programmes ‘bear little resemblance to the study of English through the CLIL programmes in Europe, particularly in terms of the sociolinguistic and sociocultural context in which the L2 is learned and the authenticity of the input’ (Gallardo del Puerto et al. 2009: 65), a statement also supported by Lasagabaster and Sierra (2010).

Pérez Cañado (2012: 327), when differentiating CLIL in Spanish bilingual and non-bilingual communities, puts CLIL on a par with immersion programmes stating that ‘regarding the amount of CLIL experience, [...] bilingual communities have been working with it for more than 25 years’, although minority language immersion programmes in Spain existed way before CLIL. Similarly, Lorenzo (2007: 28) claims that CLIL is ‘considered the European label for bilingual education’, a statement that 1) comes across as surprising, considering the existence of bilingual programmes in Europe a long way before the coinage of CLIL; and 2) plays a weak hand on protection-oriented minority (regional) language immersion programmes, which have been part and parcel of language policy for decades.

Interestingly, CLIL seems to have adapted to the varied contexts of the European language diversity (San Isidro 2018) and, despite the fact that it is inextricably

connected to its predecessors and bears a relation to minority language immersion programmes, it has an entity on its own and is easily identifiable as a set of educational practices (Navés 2009; Pérez-Vidal 2013). It is remarkable, however, that despite the fact that CLIL is a language-diversity-oriented approach, English has become the majority language most widely used in its implementation (San Isidro 2018).

All these different views on the question of whether to put different labels under the same umbrella or not has been a hot topic in the literature. Citing Dalton-Puffer *et al.* (2014),

***The words immersion and CLIL live the lives of words in natural languages: they have histories, migrate from one discourse to another, acquire connotations and generally have fuzzy boundaries.***

Generalising its conception to any type of bilingual immersion programme can result in an amalgamation of utterly different things. Putting minority language immersion programmes on a level with CLIL can become a sensitive issue, since the focus and goal of minority language learning is protecting and developing the language. Furthermore, minority language immersion programmes existed way before CLIL and were based on different methodological parameters as well as different educational scenarios. The CLIL approach is dual-focused (Marsh *et al.* 2005) because it is about learning content through a foreign or additional language, which acts as a vehicle. The goal is complementing foreign language learning through extending the use of foreign language across the curriculum. On the other hand, minority language immersion programmes are language-focused and aim at the survival of the minority language. There should be a clear delineation between CLIL and other approaches so that its characterisation can be more straightforward.

### ***3. The evidence: multi-faceted effects of CLIL implementation***

As far as CLIL implementation is concerned, Pérez Cañado (2016) raised the issue of self-selection, lack of homogeneity and elitism when it comes to forming CLIL groups. In the course of the years and as a rule of thumb, students have been enrolling in CLIL programmes through either a selection process, which considered their results in the foreign language, or on a voluntary basis, i.e. out of their own motivation to learn (through) a foreign language. This has usually resulted in highly motivated groups of students with a good language competence showing huge differences in comparison to the non-CLIL groups. The lack of egalitarianism in this segregation-oriented approach regarding implementation has conditioned a significant share of the existing research (see the review below). A good number of research stud-

ies have shown positive effects regarding foreign language learning—CLIL students outperform non-CLIL counterparts—along with neutral or positive effects regarding the first language, or the learning of other content. In a good number of them, nonetheless, comparability is affected by the lack of homogeneity in the usually segregated groups. Nowadays, however, provision is changing not only in the different countries but also in the different regions. There are places in which CLIL, although still being experimental, has become a whole-school initiative accessible to all students (for instance, the Italian national policy on CLIL or the cases of Galicia or Valencia in Spain). Conversely, CLIL has still a long way to go to become mainstream and still relies excessively on students' self-selection. This is why research should adequately shift towards diversity and inclusiveness as far as whole-school implementation is concerned.

Regarding the analyses conducted on the effects of CLIL, the latest vagaries between the different research trends (San Isidro, 2018) have revealed that CLIL has become marmite amongst academics. From the initial enthusiastic views on CLIL effects (Marsh 2002; Coyle 2007; Coyle *et al.* 2010; Dalton-Puffer & Smit 2007; Lasagabaster 2008; San Isidro 2010; or Navés 2009), '*the pendulum has swung to the other extreme*' (quoting Pérez Cañado 2016: 2) questioning the validity of the research conducted from an opposite perspective, based on the lack of homogeneity as well as on various problems in its implementation (Paran 2013; Bruton 2015; or Rumlich 2017). Mapping the review of the literature presents a significant challenge mostly due not only to the vast number of studies but also to its multi-faceted and diverse nature. Generalising researchers' findings about the diverse CLIL realities is difficult, because 1) CLIL learning contexts are different, and 2) CLIL implementation varies depending on the socio-cultural settings as well as on the educational policies of the countries involved (Coyle 2008). With this in mind, for the sake of analysis, research literature has been grouped in a cross-contextual way considering five different topics which correspond to the different types of the impact CLIL makes on learning:

- **the impact of CLIL on stakeholders' perceptions, attitudes and motivations;**
- **the impact of CLIL on additional language learning;**
- **the impact of CLIL on the first language (L1);**
- **the impact of CLIL on content learning; and, finally, code-switching in CLIL.**

#### ***3.1. The impact of CLIL on perceptions, attitudes and motivation***

According to Lasagabaster and Doiz (2017) researchers seem to agree that high levels of motivation are perceived among students: '*one of the most powerful findings of CLIL groups centers on increased motivation in both learners and teachers*' (Coyle 2006: 11, as cited in Lasagabaster & Doiz

2017). Similarly, according to Lorenzo et al. (2010), studies into CLIL stakeholders' perceptions seem to have garnered positive views as far as foreign language learning. Dalton-Puffer (2007, 2011), nonetheless, suggested that there seems to be insufficient research investigating students' perceptions on how they view their CLIL teachers' language problems and use of corrections in instruction.

Regarding students' motivations and attitudes, in the European context, Seikkula-Leino's (2007) study on CLIL learners' affective performance and attitudes in Finland, revealed that, despite students enrolled on CLIL programmes being more motivated towards learning using a foreign language, they sometimes felt incompetent and inadequate in learning due to the complexities and difficulties of learning conceptually through a foreign language. Hence, Seikkula-Leino (2007: 338) claimed that *'learning CLIL can be so challenging that the maximal outcome of content learning is not always reached'* suggesting there is a need to consider student attitudes toward CLIL programmes. Also in Finland, in Merisuo-Storm's (2006, 2007) studies, on comparing CLIL students and non-CLIL counterparts, the CLIL strands were found to hold more positive attitudes towards language learning than their peers.

As regards qualitative analyses on the different stakeholders' attitudes and perceptions on CLIL, there are some examples of research conducted in Finland, Estonia, the United Kingdom, Poland, Italy and Spain. The study conducted by Södgerd (2006) revealed quite encouraging results with Finnish students showing positive attitudes, satisfaction and increased levels of confidence. Mehisto and Asser (2007) conducted a study into the stakeholders' perspective (school principals, teachers and families) in Estonia using semi-structured interviews, questionnaires and lesson observation. Results showed high levels of satisfaction, commitment and engagement in all stakeholders. In a similar fashion, Wiesemes' (2009) study on students and teachers in 8 schools in the United Kingdom revealed that CLIL enhanced motivation, although the lack of appropriate initial matching leads to question the findings. Czura et al. (2009) analysed the outcomes resulting from a qualitative study on CLIL, based on classroom observation and interviews with students and teachers in Poland. Results revealed that teachers showed professional satisfaction as they felt more involved, committed and eager. On the other hand, students showed positive attitudes but complained about the low standard of content subjects, the traditional methodology used and the unsystematic code-switching in the classroom. In Italy, Coonan (2007) used interviews, focus-group sessions and even teacher daily logs to analyse the perceptions of 33 secondary school teachers. Results showed that CLIL positively affected not only the way students learned content, but also their motivation and their degree of attention in lessons. Also in Italy, Infante et al. (2009) interviewed 11 experienced CLIL teachers using questionnaires and follow-up telephone conversations dealing with their professional background. Results showed that teachers' views on CLIL implementation were positive on the grounds of its effectiveness and methodological advantages.

In Spain, Pladevall-Ballester's (2015) study provided an overview of the students', CLIL teachers' and parents' perceptions after a year of CLIL implementation in five primary schools in Catalonia, elicited by means of opinion-based questionnaires and interviews. Results showed that children in this study were satisfied with the experience in general terms. Parents' perceptions were rather unrealistic as they were either too enthusiastic or showed that they were afraid that CLIL might be detrimental to the children's L1 or their content learning. Teachers' opinions offered a more realistic picture of what CLIL in primary school involves. Despite their general satisfaction with the experience and their enthusiasm and hard work, teachers highlighted their concerns and frustrations, mainly derived from the lack of institutional and peer support and lack of time.

Also in Spain, the impact of CLIL on students' motivation in Basque secondary schools has also been tackled in two studies (Lasagabaster 2011; and Doiz et al. 2014), both of them confirming pedagogical benefits of CLIL students when compared to non-CLIL with regard to their degree of motivation to learn English. Lasagabaster (2011) revealed that CLIL students were more motivated in relation to the degree of interest, their instrumental motivation, their attitudes towards learning English at school and the effort they made. In Doiz et al.'s (2014) study, CLIL students showed more intrinsic motivation, instrumental orientation and interest in foreign languages and cultures.

Regarding teachers' perceptions, two recent studies, a small-scale qualitative one (San Isidro & Lasagabaster 2019) conducted in Galicia, and a large-scale quantitative one (Pérez Cañado 2018a) carried out in Andalusia, have shown how teachers believe that CLIL exerts a positive effect on students' language competence and motivation.

In terms of motivation sustained in time, a recent research study conducted by Lasagabaster and Doiz (2017) shed new light on results on a longitudinal basis. In a similar fashion to previous studies, they analysed and compared the levels of motivation in CLIL and non-CLIL classes, this time in 5 secondary schools in the Basque Country. Contrary to expectations, CLIL did not seem to have long-term positive effects on students' motivation towards English, and motivation was maintained in the non-CLIL cohorts. Conversely, motivation to learn subject matter was maintained in the CLIL group.

Three implications can be drawn from the analysis of the research related to the impact on CLIL on attitudes and motivations:

1. **Although there is plenty of literature dealing with teachers' perceptions (Calvo & San Isidro 2012), there does, however, seem to be a need for research dealing with families' views and attitudes as well as with students' views and perceptions, not only in relation to the foreign language but also regarding other parameters, such as attitudes towards the learning situation, towards content learning, or towards the methodology used.**

**2. Whether it is only CLIL that makes attitudes and motivations improve or the combination of various methodological aspects remains to be seen. Future research should address the methodological component on a longitudinal basis so as to analyse the impact of pedagogy on motivations and attitudes.**

**3. Existing literature also seems to disregard the impact of CLIL on attitudes towards L1, something very important in communities with two or more co-official languages, in which one of those languages is a minority one. This could open a niche for future research.**

### **3.2. The impact of CLIL on additional language learning**

The CLIL approach is believed to improve foreign language competence without negatively affecting students' L1 or content learning (Lasagabaster & Ruiz de Zarobe 2010; San Isidro & Lasagabaster 2018a). As said above, despite the fact that CLIL is a language-diversity-oriented approach, English has become the majority language most widely used in its implementation. This could possibly be put down to the need for intercomprehension among the people living in the different Member States in the European Union, which has arguably made policy-makers prioritise it in the different educational systems.

The number of research studies on the impact of CLIL on foreign language proficiency is indisputably higher than the ones we find in relation to L1 or content learning (below). In general terms, CLIL students tend to outperform their non-CLIL counterparts (Dalton-Puffer 2011; Pérez Cañado 2012). The reasons for this might be explained by 1) the fact that CLIL students' exposure to the foreign language is invariably longer than their counterparts', as they attend CLIL lessons on top of the regular foreign language lessons (Merino & Lasagabaster 2018); and 2) the lack of initial matching in the samples as students usually enrol on CLIL programmes voluntarily, i.e. they are highly motivated towards language learning and their competence in the foreign language is usually higher.

There is a large number of studies that prove that CLIL students outperform their non-CLIL counterparts. In Germany, Zydati's (2007) research study, CLIL students showed significant differences regarding overall competence in the foreign language. The tests used focused on grammar, lexicon along with communicative and subject-related literacy. In Austria, Ackerl (2007) used lexical tests to measure vocabulary acquisition. Results showed that CLIL students outperformed their non-CLIL counterparts and that male learners did better than their female counterparts. Järvinen's research (2005) in Finland focused on the acquisition of subordination and relativisation in English. Despite homogeneity in the samples was not guaranteed, he claimed that the CLIL group out-

performed their counterpart as they were able to produce more complex and accurate sentences. There are studies, however, that show no significant difference between CLIL and non-CLIL groups as far as global competence in the foreign language is concerned, such as the one conducted in Sweden by Airey (2004).

Spain makes an interesting case for research, considering the different socio-linguistic contexts in the different regions. In the Basque Country, for example, a number of studies have shown evidence of successful CLIL (Gallardo del Puerto et al. 2009; Lasagabaster 2008, 2009; Ruiz de Zarobe 2010), proving that it positively affects foreign language learning. Similarly, in Catalonia, in line with previous results, Navés and Victori (2010), in an outcome-related study, have shown positive effects of CLIL on general proficiency. In Galicia, San Isidro (2010), and San Isidro and Lasagabaster (2018a) have also shown significantly positive results in both general proficiency and specific skills. This is also supported by the studies conducted by Pérez Cañado and Lancaster (2017) and Pérez Cañado (2018b) in Andalusia.

Moving from general competence results onto more specific ones, research has shown that results vary depending on the different skills. Admiraal et al.'s (2006) study in the Netherlands and Roquet's (2011) in Spain stated that differences are not significant in all language skills. Regarding speaking, CLIL students do significantly better than their non-CLIL counterparts (Admiraal et al. 2006; Lasagabaster 2011; Lorenzo et al. 2010), which might be explained by the fact that CLIL students play a more active role when using a foreign language and tend to do better when negotiating meaning (Mariotti 2006). As far as listening is concerned, results are not as categorical. Some studies have shown positive effects (Lasagabaster 2008, 2011; Lorenzo et al. 2010; San Isidro 2010), but we find studies showing no significant difference between CLIL students and their non-CLIL counterparts (Navés 2011). As to reading, studies—although scarce—have shown positive results (Admiraal et al. 2006; Lasagabaster 2008). Research showing evidence on listening and reading seems to be lagging behind as far as the number of publications is concerned (San Isidro & Lasagabaster 2018a; Pérez Cañado, 2018a).

As regards writing, according to Merino and Lasagabaster (2018), CLIL students usually show more lexical and morphosyntactic resources as well as a greater pragmatic awareness. These skills could explain the very positive results found in the research literature (Lasagabaster 2008; Lorenzo et al. 2010; Dalton-Puffer 2011). In Catalonia, Roquet and Pérez-Vidal (2015) analysed the differential effects of two learning contexts, formal instruction and content and language integrated learning, on the written production skills of intermediate-level Catalan Spanish adolescent learners of English as a foreign language. Superiority of the CLIL cohort was not confirmed, despite improvement in the case of CLIL group is shown. Results were only significant in the domain of accuracy.

In terms of results sustained in time, findings are less abundant and they have shown the same trend as the ones obtained in cross-sectional studies (Dalton-Puffer and Smit 2013). Longitudinal studies have shown that CLIL students outperform their non-CLIL counterparts (Grisaleña *et al.* 2009; San Isidro & Lasagabaster 2018a; Pérez Cañado 2018a). In Sweden, Sylvén (2004) gauged the effects of CLIL on incidental vocabulary acquisition through lexicon tests over the course of two years, showing that CLIL students outperformed their peers. In the Netherlands, Admiraal *et al.* (2006) conducted a longitudinal study with secondary education students who had been enrolled on CLIL programmes through English for four years. Results were positive in the oral and reading skills, and no negative effects were found either on L1 or content learning. Nevertheless, the study lacked initially homogeneous cohorts and statistical analysis.

A more recent study is the one conducted by Merino and Lasagabaster (2018), a longitudinal research study with 285 lower secondary students (CLIL vs. non-CLIL). Two test rounds —T1 and T2— were delivered at the end of the school years 2010-2011 and 2011-2012. The students' competence in English, Basque and Spanish was assessed and the four language skills were taken into account. Results in the foreign language did not agree with previous research. CLIL students, with an initially higher average score, as expected, outperformed their counterparts. Nonetheless, both groups showed a similar improvement from T1 to T2. Authors put this down to the time factor, i.e. to the fact that the study was longitudinal as distinct from the studies they analysed previously —cross-sectional—. They stated that, since CLIL success is dependent on the number of years of implementation, longitudinal studies must stretch over longer periods of time. This is shared by San Isidro and Lasagabaster (2018a) and Pérez Cañado (2018a), a view that tallies with the current trend of researchers in Germany who claim for comprehensive longitudinal model-based evaluations as well as a perfect control of the variables when conducting research on CLIL programmes (Rumlich 2016).

Despite the vast number of studies focused on the effects on additional language learning, the studies on meaning-making and the development of subject-specific literacies seem to be neglected (Ting 2012). This is shared by Meyer *et al.* (2015), who make it clear that there is a dearth of research oriented towards the way subject-specific literacies develop through an additional language and across different subjects in a CLIL environment. Two examples are the studies undertaken by Lorenzo and Rodríguez (2014) and Morton and Llinares (2018), which have shown some evidence of the development of academic language proficiency in content-driven settings.

In general terms, the studies reviewed show positive results regarding the impact of CLIL on foreign language learning. However, the analysis of the literature seems to

suggest 1) the need for longitudinal studies stretching over longer periods of time; and 2) a focus on the development of subject-related literacies.

### **3.3. The impact of CLIL on L1: interdependence and translanguaging**

Language learning is inextricably connected to the relationship between, and influence of the different languages, above all, in multilingual settings. A number of aspects related to learners' first and second languages influence and shape their additional language learning. Those aspects include the linguistic distance between the different languages, the learners' level of proficiency in their first language(s) and their knowledge of the additional language, the dialect(s) used, the status of the students' language in the community —majority vs. minority language— and the societal attitudes towards the learners' first language.

In multilingual education in general, and CLIL in particular, two or more languages interact in a person's mind, influencing each other both positively and negatively. The languages are not separate units but interlinked in the brain, where transfer from one language to the other can take place (Cook 2003). Cummins (1979) postulated the linguistic interdependence hypothesis, which states that in bilingual development, language and literacy skills can be transferred from one language to another.

In line with the interdependence hypothesis, in CLIL it is important for research to focus not only on the impact on the foreign language learning but also on its effect on and relationship with the environmental language(s). According to Pérez Cañado (2012), '*the L1 and content knowledge of the subjects taught through CLIL should be worked in as independent variables*'. However, the effects of CLIL on L1 have not been so widely researched possibly due to the fact that researchers have been more interested in analysing results regarding the vehicular language in CLIL implementation. By and large, result-oriented studies are scarce and have found no remarkable differences (Admiraal *et al.* 2006; Serra 2007; Sylvén 2010).

Merisuo-Storm's (2006, 2007) longitudinal research in Finland compared L1 literacy skills of CLIL students and their non-CLIL counterparts. Results showed no statistically significant differences between cohorts. Also in Finland, Bergroth (2006) studied the effects of CLIL on L1 (Finnish), L2 (Swedish) and L3 (English) as well as content learning (Mathematics). Regarding the effect on L1, the author concluded that L1 was not threatened by dual-focused education. Seikkula-Leino (2007) analysed the impact of CLIL on Finnish students' L1 and content learning. Although the CLIL group outstripped their peers, results were not significantly different. Conversely, Admiraal *et al.*'s (2006) longitudinal study in the Netherlands showed no negative effects on L1. The study lacked, however, initially homogeneous cohorts and statistical analysis.

As seen in the previous section, Merino and Lasagabaster (2018) conducted a longitudinal research study measuring the students' global competence in English, Basque and Spanish, considering the four language skills. Regarding results in Basque, they found no detrimental effect. Despite the fears shown in previous literature (Cenoz 2009, Lasagabaster & Sierra 2009) about the possible negative effect related to limiting exposure to Basque, the development in both cohorts was similar. Interestingly, students' competence in Spanish seemed to be unaffected as well, in line with previous literature (Admiraal *et al.* 2006; Serra 2007). A more recent longitudinal study conducted by San Isidro and Lasagabaster in Galicia (2018a) showed an overall positive or neutral results in the different languages of instruction (Galician, Spanish and English). The study carried out by Pérez Cañado (2018b) in a monolingual community, Andalusia, showed that the learning of L1 seems to be unaffected in a CLIL learning environment.

Although the effect of CLIL on L1 is under-researched, the existing literature seems to indicate, in general terms, that CLIL does not have a detrimental effect, something supported by some research studies based on teachers' perceptions (Calvo & San Isidro 2012). However, some critical voices (Lorenzo *et al.* 2010) point out that some teachers view CLIL as a menace to L1.

All the studies mentioned so far are related to the impact of CLIL on L1 (as well as on the foreign language dealt with in the previous section) from the perspective of language development, but not from the perspective of the development of the language to express knowledge or content. Two different but really fascinating research topics in the existing literature are, on the one hand, the impact of CLIL on the language(s) used to express content, i.e. subject-related literacies (dealt with in the previous section in relation to the additional language), and, on the other hand, the question as to how to assess that language. A language test does not usually address content-related language. Gablasova (2014) mentioned four common different ways of assessing bilingually-educated students. The first one is to assess students in L2, which means not only that students do not have to transfer their knowledge into their L1, but also that teachers cannot determine if it is the lack of knowledge or the low level of L2 that prevents them from demonstrating their knowledge (Hofmannová *et al.* 2008). The second one has to do with assessing students in their L1. This creates difficulties for them, especially when looking for vocabulary (Airey 2010). The third possibility is translanguaging, i.e. using a mixture of both languages to make content knowledge available to students (García 2009). Finally, testing in both languages could be an option (cf. Airey 2010; Järvinen 2010).

Gablasova's (2014) study took into account four different aspects of formal academic language: (a) accuracy; (b) fluency; (c) appropriate academic format; and (d) appropriate vocabulary, and compared the results between two groups of students —L2-instructed stu-

dents and L1-instructed students— who had gained the same knowledge. Both groups were balanced regarding proficiency. Although testing took place in L1 (Slovak) and L2, her conclusions were more focused on L1. Results showed that CLIL and non-CLIL students performed equally well in L1 in relation to formal definitions, accuracy and speech rate. But CLIL students underperformed with respect to the proportion of informative speech and lexical choice. The difference between L1 and L2 answers in the CLIL group might indicate problems in transferring literacy skills from one language to another. According to Gablasova, additional studies are needed for a better understanding of CLIL and its impact on academic language and the expression of knowledge.

In sum, the analysis of the literature seems to suggest 1) the need for longitudinal studies stretching over longer periods of time; and 2) a focus on the development of subject-related literacies so far neglected by researchers.

### **3.4. The impact of CLIL on content learning**

Several studies carried out in different European countries and regions have shown that there are no differences between CLIL and non-CLIL students regarding content learning. In Germany, Wode (1999) analysed results in History and Geography using statistics. No significant differences were found as CLIL and non-CLIL cohorts performed similarly content-wise. In Finland, Jäppinen's (2006) longitudinal study examined the effects of CLIL on thinking and content-learning processes with more than 600 students from 2001 to 2003. The assessment was carried out in the students' L1 through four test rounds. Results showed no differences between both groups. This suggests that both cohorts underwent a similar evolution. Conversely, younger CLIL learners revealed some cognitive development difficulties in more abstract scientific topics. These difficulties were not found in the eldest CLIL participants, among whom even better results than non-CLIL students were sometimes found. This led the author to consider the link between age and content in CLIL.

As mentioned in the previous sections, Admiraal *et al.* (2016) conducted a longitudinal study in the Netherlands with secondary education students who had been enrolled on CLIL programmes through English for four years. Results were positive in the oral and reading skills, and no negative effects were found in L1. With regard to content learning, they found no negative effects either. Nevertheless, and as mentioned above, the study lacked initially homogeneous cohorts and statistical analysis.

In Finland, Seikkula-Leino (2007) analysed the impact of CLIL on content learning. Although the CLIL group outstripped their peers, results were not significantly

different. By the same token, Stohler (2006) used videotaped lessons for analysis of content learning in Switzerland and found no statistically significant differences between CLIL and non-CLIL students, although the samples used were too heterogeneous.

Regarding studies showing that CLIL proves positive when learning content, the research conducted by the Ikastola network, a network of Basque-medium schools (IEEIT 2003, as cited in Merino 2016) in the Basque Country, showed that CLIL students attained higher results in content-based exams in both Basque and English. In Serra's (2007) longitudinal study in Switzerland, CLIL students outperformed their mainstream counterparts in Mathematics. Similarly, in Zydari's (2007, 2009) research studies in Germany, CLIL students show significant differences regarding subject-related literacy and content learning, respectively. Van de Craen et al. (2007) contrasted learning of Mathematics in CLIL and non-CLIL students in Belgium. CLIL students outstripped their counterparts in the overall results. The authors put it down to CLIL students showing a greater cognitive development.

A recent study conducted in Spain by Fernández-Sanjurjo *et al.* (2017) does not tally with the previous literature. In their study, the main objective was to assess if students learning Science through English would outperform their non-CLIL counterparts as regards content acquisition. The paper analysed a sample of 709 6th grade Primary Education students enrolled in public schools in the Principality of Asturias (Spain). A test to assess students' knowledge in Science and a context questionnaire (measuring participants' socio-economic status) were designed. The main finding is that non-CLIL students performed slightly better than the CLIL cohorts. The authors claimed that the structure of bilingual programmes may need revisiting, as the poorer performance of the participants in the study may indicate that the integration of content and language is not being fully achieved. Contrarily, the longitudinal study conducted by San Isidro and Lasagabaster (2018a) in secondary education with two homogeneous samples suggested that CLIL makes no impact on the learning of content. The study undertaken by Pérez Cañado (2018b) also with homogeneous samples showed a positive effect of CLIL on content learning in secondary education and a neutral impact on primary education.

Considering the literature dealing with stakeholders' opinions and perceptions, several studies have shown that 1) there seem to be no differences between CLIL and non-CLIL students when it comes to learning content (Mariotti 2006; Svenhardt *et al.* 2007) and 2) CLIL seems to have a positive effect (Coonan 2007; Grisaleña *et al.* 2009; Barreiro & San Isidro 2009).

In summary, considering the existing research literature related to the impact of CLIL on content learning, both outcome-oriented and opinion-elicitation studies seem

to suggest that CLIL either makes no impact on the learning of subject matter or shows a positive effect. All in all, the number of studies on content learning seem to lag behind if we consider research on attitudes or foreign language learning, and more solid longitudinal test-based research seems to be needed to be able to reach definitive conclusions.

### 3.5. Code-switching in CLIL

A different and not less important focus for CLIL-related research is the analysis of data related to students' oral code-switching. Although there exist some research papers dealing with code-switching regarding teacher-student interaction or teachers' use of L1 in the CLIL environment (Lasagabaster 2013, 2017; Gierlinger 2015), there is a dearth of research into students' code-switching.

Code-switching is usually described as a bilingualism-related activity in which more than one language—most typically the learner's first language and an additional language—are used either *intrasententially* or *intersententially* (Cook 2001; García 2009). Traditionally, code-switching has not been positively appreciated in additional or foreign language classrooms where the learners' target language and first language are separate and divided. This consideration might be explained by the general belief that switching from one language to another is the mere result of having a partial or incomplete proficiency of the target language (Reyes 2004).

Levine (2011: 23-29) suggested an ecological perspective, which emphasises a holistic framework to language learning, which tallies with the conception of language learning found in the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (Council of Europe 2001). This perspective considers that language learning should not be taken as a series of isolated components but as a global approach, which considers both the setting and the context. In the process, factors leading to code-switching and code choice have to be taken into consideration. Levine (2011: 33) also suggested that foreign language learners should be helped to develop an awareness of when and why to code-switch since code-switching is a normal creative aspect in a bilingual classroom. Levine (2011: 7) underlined the fact that the classroom is part of the '*real world*' since it contributes to an individual learner's maintenance of his/her own sense of identity and cultural belonging through the use of L1. Therefore, he concluded that code-switching offers an authentic communication resource in the school social interaction arena.

Over the last decades there has been a great interest in code-switching in the foreign language classroom. The most prominent code-switching classroom research has been carried out in the immersion programmes of



North America and Canada (Mesthrie *et al.* 2009; Levine 2011; Lin 2015). Conversely, when dealing with this topic in the European context, in relation to CLIL and multilingual settings, the interest seems to be different, given that research has focused on other topics (the ones dealt with previously). Cenoz and Gorter (2011) pointed out that multilingual practices in the classroom have been under-researched. Lasagabaster (2013) claimed that research on these multilingual practices in CLIL environments is almost non-existent. A CLIL classroom is a multilingual setting where learners usually share at least one common language. Therefore, according to Pérez-Vidal (2002), when facing highly demanding tasks, it is natural for students to use the whole of their linguistic repertoire, which includes their knowledge of L1.

Existing literature has been mostly related to teachers' use of L1 in CLIL lessons, because teachers' code-switching makes an important case for study as it is related to methodology and to the ecological translanguaging approach to teaching. However, contrary to this, the number of studies addressing CLIL teachers' code-switching use are thin on the ground and mostly difficult to compare (Coonan 2007; Grandinetti *et al.* 2013; Lasagabaster 2013; Llinares and Whittaker 2009; Nikula 2010; Viebrock 2012). An overview of them reveals the following features:

- **Firstly, the majority of the studies base teachers' beliefs on code-switching on qualitative interviews or questionnaires without any reference to classroom data, and therefore may run the risk of presenting a perspective whose results do not adequately portray the complexity of the classroom code-switching context (Lasagabaster 2013; Viebrock 2012).**
- **Secondly, some studies, although based on a mixed-methods approach, investigate teachers' language use without making their code-switching a major issue (Nikula 2010).**
- **Lastly, there are other studies that, although providing a considerable amount of code-switching instances, do not provide any deeper or systematic significance to this phenomenon (Grandinetti *et al.* 2013).**

Gierlinger (2007) observed that the use of L1 in CLIL settings varied considerably and depended on teachers' assessment of the classroom context. Similarly, Costa *et al.* (2008) observed that teachers resorted to L1 as a better way for them to explain the rules. In a different study, Coonan (2007) concluded that there were no clear-cut rules concerning code-switching between L1 and L2 in CLIL environments.

What is almost impossible to find is research literature tackling students' code-switching in CLIL environ-

ments through classroom data. There are three studies that merit attention as they do analyse classroom data. Redinger (2010) analysed code-switching in teachers and students in a multilingual setting—several schools in Luxembourg—. Different languages were used for different subjects. The student-related sample consisted of 8 girls and 13 boys. The majority of the students were Luxembourgish nationals and the other nationalities represented in the class were Serbian (2), Macedonian (1), Russian (1), Italian (1), German (1) and French (1). Redinger's pragmatic analysis of teacher-initiated and student-initiated code-switching revealed that language choice inside the classroom was heavily influenced by the context as students and teachers code-switched so as to achieve various context-related goals such as interpersonal relations, clarifying curriculum content and/or managing classroom discourse. Concerning students' language behaviour, results showed it was linked to their teachers' level of tolerance towards classroom code-switching. The analysis of naturally-occurring classroom interactions revealed that students not only resorted considerably more to Luxembourgish in lessons taught by high-tolerance teachers but also engaged more extensively in classroom interactions.

On the other hand, Gil *et al.* (2012) studied the purposes for which the L1 and L2 were used orally by students and teachers in a mainstream CLIL secondary education context—Technology in English—compared to foreign language instruction in the Balearic Islands (Spain). Data were gathered using questionnaires addressed to students and teachers, oral interviews to instructors and observations of class sessions. The findings showed some differences in the languages chosen to speak according to pedagogical functions and real-life functions. Results showed that the foreign language was much more used for pedagogical functions, whereas L1 was more resorted to with real-life functions, especially in the case of the students. Moreover, both teachers and students made a greater use of the foreign language for expressing specialised subject-matter lexicon, even when speaking in the L1. In CLIL lessons there were more instances of oral code-switching by both the teacher and the pupils, possibly due to the greater difficulty in coping with content in English.

San Isidro and Lasagabaster (2018b) carried out a two-year longitudinal qualitative study investigating the effects of CLIL on students' oral code-switching in a multilingual setting, a rural high school in Galicia (Spain). The results revealed that there was a greater decrease in the number of occurrences related to equivalence, reiteration, side-comments and intersentential code-switching among CLIL students.

The almost non-existent research literature on students' code-switching in CLIL environments through the use of classroom data makes it almost impossible to draw some conclusions about the impact of CLIL on classroom code-switching, but it makes it clear that it must be a niche research should fill.

## 4. Conclusions

The main conclusions that can be drawn from the existing research literature could be outlined as follows:

- The analysis of the literature related to the impact of CLIL on stakeholders' perceptions, attitudes and motivations suggests three important questions. Firstly, research studies show that stakeholders involved in CLIL show positive views and attitudes as well as higher motivation regarding the foreign language. Although there is plenty of literature dealing with teachers' perceptions, there does, however, seem to be a need for research dealing with families' views and attitudes as well as with students' views and perceptions, not only in relation to the foreign language but also regarding other parameters, such as the learning situation, content learning, or the methodology used. Secondly, Lasagabaster and Doiz's (2017) study revealed different results that do not tally with previous literature. Motivation towards the foreign language might not be sustained in the long term, and that is why the authors suggest the need for future research from a longitudinal qualitative perspective. And finally, existing literature seems to disregard the impact of CLIL on attitudes towards L1, something very important in communities with two or more co-official languages, in which one of those languages is a minority one. This could open a niche for future research.
- As regards the impact of CLIL on additional language learning, in general, the studies reviewed show positive results. However, the analysis of the literature seems to suggest 1) the need for longitudinal studies stretching over longer periods of time; and 2) a focus on the development of subject-related literacies so far neglected by researchers.
- Concerning the impact of CLIL on L1, although it is under-researched, the existing literature seems to indicate, in general terms, that CLIL does not have a detrimental effect on L1. Some research studies based on teachers' perceptions agree with this view or even show more positive considerations towards CLIL impact on L1 (Calvo & San Isidro 2012). However, some critical voices (Lorenzo et al. 2010) point out that some teachers view CLIL as a menace to L1. All in

all, more outcome-oriented longitudinal research is needed so as to elicit solid analyses. Furthermore, additional studies are needed for a better understanding of CLIL and both 1) its impact on the language(s) used in the expression of knowledge, i.e. subject-related literacies; and 2) its relation to the use of translanguaging.

- Regarding the impact of CLIL on content learning, both outcome-oriented and opinion-based studies seem to suggest that CLIL either makes no impact on the learning of subject matter or shows a positive effect. However, the number of studies on content learning seem to lag behind if we consider research on attitudes or foreign language learning. Solid longitudinal test-based research seems to be needed to be able to reach definitive conclusions.

- As to code-switching in CLIL environments, the almost non-existent research literature on students' code-switching through the use of classroom data makes it almost impossible to draw some conclusions about the impact CLIL makes on classroom code-switching, but it makes it clear that it must be a niche research should fill. Analysing how and how much CLIL students resort to code-switching can be a variable researchers should make use of to gain a deeper insight into the effects of CLIL on language learning and development.

As explained above, despite the plethora of research on the multi-faceted effects of CLIL, its validity has been constantly questioned due to the various problems in its implementation, such as the segregation of groups, usually based on CLIL learners' greater language competence and higher levels of motivation. The long-term lack of egalitarianism in this approach regarding implementation has conditioned a significant share of the existing research. In the past few years, however, CLIL has been on its way to becoming mainstream and this has triggered the sprouting of research that looks into this approach 1) making use of initially matched samples; and 2) considering CLIL as a whole-school initiative accessible to all students. It is perhaps high time research addressed its multi-faceted effects from the perspective of diversity. And that might be the way forward.



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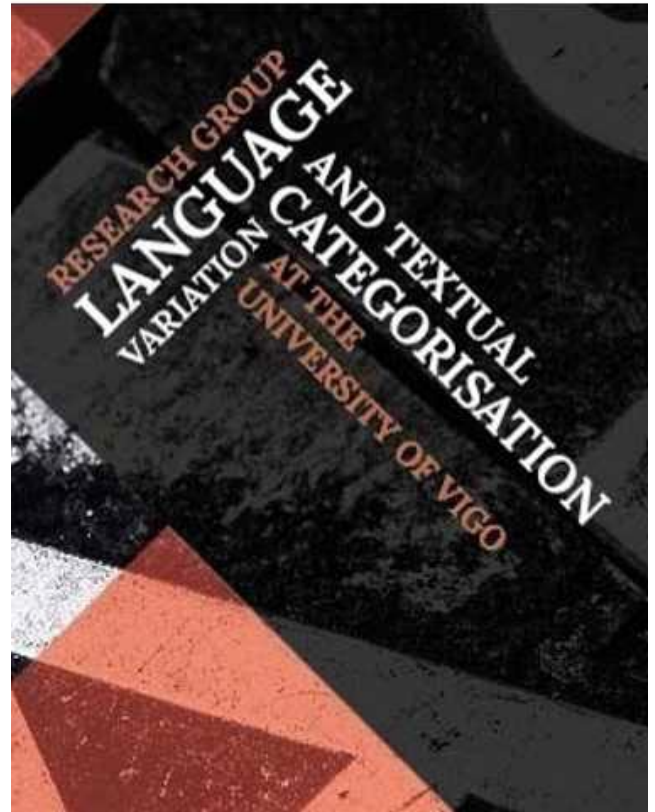
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# *Linguistic variation all over the place*

Some briefing notes about  
the LVTC research group

## 1. About LVTC

The research group “Language Variation and Textual Categorisation” (LVTC), based at the University of Vigo, currently comprises sixteen full-time researchers in the field of English language and linguistics, all of whom work at that institution. Members of LVTC include senior academic staff (Full/Associate Professors, Senior Lecturers), postdoctoral (Ramón y Cajal, Juan de la Cierva, senior postdoc) and pre-doctoral (FPU, FPI, Xunta de Galicia, University of Vigo) researchers, as well as a number of collaborating lecturers at the Universities of Liverpool, Balearic Islands, Valencia and Cantabria, three of these holding doctoral degrees that were supervised within the research group. One LVTC postdoctoral researcher, working in the field of humanities at the University of Vigo, was awarded a prestigious position on the Ramón y Cajal programme: Nuria Yañez Bouza completed her PhD thesis in 2007 (*Preposition Stranding and Prescriptivism in English from 1500 to 1900: A Corpus-based Approach*, published by Cambridge University Press), supervised by David Denison at the University of Manchester, UK, and held a Senior Lecturer position at that institution. Nuria has been conducting research within the group and has seen considerable success in regional and international project calls. Victorina González Díaz, who holds a PhD from the University of Vigo, is currently Senior Lecturer at the University of Liverpool and collaborates regularly with the research activity of LVTC, being a member of several of the team’s projects.

LVTC is coordinated by Javier Pérez Guerra, who maintains the group’s website (<http://lvtc.uvigo.es>), with information about members, team aims and projects, and a blog with up-to-date information about the activities developed by group members.

## 2. Research

Although LVTC members carry out research within the area of English Philology, the team’s research interests are fairly heterogeneous and thus allow for a substantial degree of interdisciplinary work within the group. The group’s trademark is the application of empirical (quantitative/statistical) methodologies, mostly corpus-based, to the linguistic exploration of English (and other languages) from the perspective of usage-based and construction grammars.

### 2.1. Research topics

LVTC members develop research in a number of areas related to variation in native and non-native English:

- The syntactic organization of sentences, clauses and phrases, and the integration of peripheral elements in the orthodox design of the English clause (left and right dislocation, topicalization, disjuncts, there-sentences).

- Linguistic variation and textual categorization in World Englishes, by the sub-team ViEW (<http://view0.webs.uvigo.es>), through topics such as the expression of perfectiveness, relativization strategies, expression of modality, voice in scientific writing, markers of exemplification, democratization and clausal verbal complementation.
- Constructionalization and grammaticalization, as strategies which explain, among other things, diachronic changes in the status of auxiliaries and verbs, concessive subordination and the unified syntactic behavior and interpretation of free adjuncts and absolute constructions in the recent history of English.
- Ellipsis in Modern and Present-day English.
- The functional and discursive features of written and spoken language.

Thematic choice affecting the surface design of the English clause from the perspective of Systemic Functional Grammar, and variation between learner and native English (both written and spoken) with a focus on the textual metafunction and the Theme-Rheme system.

The role of the target audience as a trigger for variation in the thematic organization of historical texts.

The organization of historical interactive discourse (turn-taking issues).

The multidimensional characterization of written and spoken (or, in diachronic studies, speech-based/related) genres.

- Multimodal interfaces such as language and music, in particular, the study of linguistic constraints which affect the preference for phonetic and phonological realizations in contemporary English, the role of musical rhythm in the teaching and acquisition of English, and the view of language and music as deeply interconnected cognitive systems.
- Surface complexity (noun/verb/adjective phrases, clauses).
- Eighteenth-century grammar writing and the history of language standardization, from the linguistic perspective –the (alleged) influence that normative rules have had on language usage– and from a grammaticological perspective –the content of grammars and the background of grammar writers.
- Philological analysis of manuscripts from a twofold perspective: paleography (codicology, i.e., decoration, foliation, binding, as well as the use of a particular script, special characters and abbreviations) and dialectology (orthography, phonology and morphology).

- Digital Humanities: transliteration of selected folios of manuscripts, literal translation in Present-day English, and in XML-format with Text Encoding Initiative tagging in header and body structure (TEI P5).
- Stylistic and lexical variation in translated diachronic texts, revolving around three central aims: the empirical connection between stylistic issues and lexical/syntactic comprehension, stylistic/lexical translatorial problems (key cruxes), and effective solutions to the multiple problems of microvariation posed by diachronic texts in this respect. Recently, these goals have included visual conceptualization in the analysis of variation.
- Impoliteness strategies in political debates, approached through both quantitative and qualitative analyses.
- Triangulated accounts of Present-day language by adopting psycholinguistic techniques, a collaborative line of research with the team's Language & Cognition Lab, which, thanks to generous funding from the Spanish State Research Agency, through a competitive call for projects relating to scientific infrastructure, will soon acquire three essential pieces of equipment which are necessary to conduct research in the field of cognitive science: NIRS, EEG, and mobile eye-trackers. In an attempt to develop research transferable to society and to the public and private sectors, and to increase the degree of international and national competitiveness of the team, other groups and researchers from fields such as linguistics, translation, psychology, telecommunication engineering, statistics and neurology have been integrated within these activities.
- The effects of frequency on language production (how we memorize frequent combinations of words as units or 'chunks') and perception (word-recognition experiments which test how frequency information interacts with reduction in speech perception). Taken together, the studies on production and perception suggest that the reduction of chunked sequences is not just a mechanical process but is subject to intuitive negotiations in speaker-hearer interaction.
- Information packaging in the clause (active/passive variation, marked themes).
- The impact of performance preferences and ease of processing on the design of grammars, through the phonetic analysis and speech-rate measurements with 'Praat' (software), database coding and statistical analysis (multiple logistic and linear regression) with 'R' (software), etc.
- Plurilingualism as a strategic axis in the internationalization process of universities, with a focus on language policy and internationalization, specific training for the university community, and language testing and accreditation. The LVTC team has contributed to the first national higher education language policy in Europe, developed by the Language Policy Commission of the Spanish Conference of Rectors and endorsed by all the public and private universities in Spain.
- Prosody, pronunciation and phonology:

Correlation between stress assignment and branching direction of compounds, and degree of (in)consistency between informants as regards primary and secondary stress placement stress in English three-constituent compounds, where the Lexical Category Prominence Rule is violated on many occasions. Compounds whose internal composition is NNN (Mount Everest region) are compared with those that contain adjectives – NAN (Norway's Prime Minister) and ANN (Great Recession Years).

Relation between the role of pronunciation teaching in the ELT classroom, course books, and material development.

Speech recognition resources as a means of improving the English accent of students enrolled on an ELT degree.

The role of year-abroad studies in Second Language Acquisition, with a focus on the development of perceptive and productive oral skills in Spanish university students of English, looking at both linguistic and extralinguistic factors through elicitation tasks.

Prosody (rhythm and intonation) of standard and non-standard varieties of English: working dynamics and effects of intonation transfer between languages (effect of intonational transfer on both the substrate and the superstrate, identification and description characterize elements in a non-native accent from an intonational point of view).

Connection between prosody, EFL teaching and acquisition, and cognition.

## 2.2. Research projects

Since 2001 LVTC has won considerable competitive funding from various Spanish Ministries and the State Research Agency, the regional government the Xunta de Galicia, and the European Union through its Lifelong Learning Programme Erasmus (Erasmus LLP). Also, the University of Vigo has provided financial support on a number of occasions through University-based competitive calls. There follows a selection of projects with which LVTC has been successful in European, Spanish and regional calls:

### (i) Research projects funded by national research bodies

Project FFI2013-44065-P, funded by the Spanish Ministry of Economy and Competitiveness, "Empirical analysis of linguistic alternation in the English language: synchronic and diachronic issues". Period: 01/01/2014–31/12/2016. Funding: €53,240 plus one predoctoral FPI contract. P.I.: Javier Pérez Guerra.

Project FFI2014-53930-P, funded by the Spanish Ministry of Economy and Competitiveness, “Morphosyntactic variation in World Englishes and compilation of resources for its study (the Gibraltar component of the International Corpus of English) (ViEW). Period 01/01/2015–31/12/2017, P.I.: Elena Seoane.

Project FFI2016-77018-P, funded by the Spanish Ministry of Economy and Competitiveness, “Variation in micro-diachrony”. Period 2017–2019. Funding: €60,000 plus one predoctoral FPI contract. P.I.: Javier Pérez Guerra.

Project FFI2017-82162-P, funded by the Spanish Ministry of Economy and Competitiveness, “A register approach to morphosyntactic variation in World Englishes and compilation of resources for its study (The International Corpus of English -Gibraltar)”. Period 2018–2020. Funding: €60,000 plus one predoctoral FPI contract. P.I.: Elena Seoane.

Language and Cognition Lab, scientific infrastructure, EQC2018-004934-P, funded by the State Research Agency. Period 2019–2020. Funding: €291,000. P.I.: Javier Pérez Guerra.

**(ii) Research projects with regional funding (Xunta de Galicia):**

Project EM2014/028, funded by Xunta de Galicia, “APU Writing Corpus 1979-1988”. Period: 01/06/2014–30/05/2016. Funding: €88,000. P.I.: Nuria Yáñez Bouza.

Project (Call for the consolidation and structuring of competitive research units in the Galician University System) CN2012/294. Period: 01/12/2012–31/12/2014. Funding: €70,000. P.I.: Javier Pérez Guerra.

Project (Call for the consolidation and structuring of competitive research units in the Galician University System) GPC2014/060. Period: 01/01/2014–31/12/2016. Funding: €70,000. P.I.: Javier Pérez Guerra.

Project (Call for the consolidation and structuring of competitive research units in the Galician University System) ED431C 2017/50. Period: 2017–2020. Funding: €120,000. P.I.: Javier Pérez Guerra.

**(iii) Participation in research projects funded by international institutions:**

Project “Image to Text, on Mary Hamilton Papers (c.1750–c.1820)”, funded by the Centre for Heritage Imaging and Collection Care and the University of Manchester. Period: 2011–2014. Funding: £2,000. P.I.s: David Denison (University of Manchester) and Nuria Yáñez Bouza.

Project “Democratization, Mediatization and Language Practices in Britain, 1700–1950 (DEMLANG)”, funded by the Academy of Finland. Research grant 285381, International Partnership with the Tampere-Helsinki consortium; PI: Paivi Pääta; LVTC member: Elena Seoane.

Project “Unlocking the Mary Hamilton Papers” (complete edition of the Mary Hamilton Papers, with full-text search, a personography, a tagged and searchable linguistic corpus), funded by the Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC); P.I.s: David Denison (University of Manchester) and Nuria Yáñez Bouza. Three-year major research grant, starting in 2019 plus three postdoc positions and funding for collaboration with the John Rylands Library (Manchester).

**(iv) *The interests of the teams have proved to be a perfect match for the Erasmus European LLP project “Developing intercultural competence of European Teachers of English (DICETE)”, of which LVTC was a partner team through its senior member Dolores González Álvares, jointly with other universities from Poland, Finland and France (2014. Funding: €40,616).***

**(v) *Research networks: LVTC belongs to the “English Linguistics Circle” research network, jointly with other four research groups from the Galician University System. The network, coordinated by Teresa Fanego (University of Santiago de Compostela), has won generous amounts of highly competitive funding from the Spanish Ministry of Economy and Competitiveness and from the regional government, the Xunta de Galicia:***

FFI2014-51873-REDT “Excellence research network: English Linguistics Circle”, funded by the Spanish Ministry of Economy and Competitiveness. Period: 01/12/2014–30/11/2016. Funding: €15,000. P.I.: Ignacio Palacios Martínez (University of Santiago de Compostela).

R2014/016 “Research network English Linguistics Circle”, funded by Xunta de Galicia. Period: 01/01/2014–31/12/2015. Funding: €120,000. P.I.: Teresa Fanego (University of Santiago de Compostela).

ED431D 2017/19 “Research network English Linguistics Circle”, funded by Xunta de Galicia. Period: 01/01/2017–31/12/2019. Funding: €150,000. P.I.: Teresa Fanego (University of Santiago de Compostela).

### 2.3. *Transfers*

Some LVTC members have been extensively involved in the compilation of electronic corpora and databases:

- APU Writing and Reading Corpus 1979–1988 (<http://www.helsinki.fi/varieng/CoRD/corpora/APU>, <http://apucorpus.webs.uvigo.es>): corpus of children's writing based on the APU materials and derived studies on the impact of eighteenth-century linguistic purism on English grammar teaching practices in the present day. P.I.s: Nuria Yáñez Bouza and Victorina González-Díaz (University of Liverpool).
- A Representative Corpus of Historical English Registers (ARCHER, <http://www.projects.alc.manchester.ac.uk/archer>): contribution to the categorization of text types such as journals and diaries. Coordinator: Nuria Yáñez Bouza.
- ICE-GBR, the Gibraltar component of the (renowned) International Corpus of English. P.I.: Elena Seoane.
- Some examples of the group's prolific organization of international conferences and workshops follow: International Conference on Late Modern English (November 2004), First Vigo-Newcastle-Santiago-Leuven International Workshop on the Structure of the Noun Phrase in English (October 2009), 28th International Conference of the Spanish Association for Applied Linguistics (AESLA; April 2010), International Workshop ELLIPSIS2012: crosslinguistic, formal, semantic, discursive and processing perspectives (November 2012), Englishes Today 2013 (October 2013), 28th International Conference of the Spanish Society for Medieval English Language and Literature (SELM; September 2016), 7th Biennial International Conference on the Linguistics of Contemporary English (BICLCE; September 2017), and Modelling the linguistic architecture of English: theories and methods (May 2018).

### 3. *International activity and impact*

Contributions to international journals/books, plus international scholarly cooperation, are significant assets of the LVTC research group. The vast majority of journal articles, books, book chapters and conference contributions derived from the members' research activity have international impact. Most senior and junior group members also carry out research stays abroad, which allows the group to keep in close contact with relevant research groups around the world. LVTC also invites for-

eign scholars to visit and conduct research seminars in Vigo. In fact, a substantial part of the group's funding is devoted to such invitations. There follows a selection from the list of recently invited professors: Dagmar Deuber (University of Münster), Ulrike Gut (University of Münster), Lise Fontaine (Cardiff University), Alistair Baron (Lancaster University), Alexander Bergs (University of Osnabrück), Thomas Hoffmann (University of Eichstätt-Ingolstadt), Marianne Hundt (University of Zurich), Jukka Tyrkko (Tampere University), Philip Durkin (Oxford University), Philip Miller and Anne Abeillé (University Paris-Diderot), Hubert Cuyckens and Kristin Davidse (University of Leuven), David Lorenz (University of Rostock).

### 4. *Capacity to provide guidance and training*

Since LVTC is willing to welcome new members from the (national/international) scientific community, all senior LVTC team members are involved in the teaching and research duties associated with the MA and PhD programs offered by the Department of English at the University of Vigo. LVTC has managed to recruit almost all MA and PhD students with an interest in English linguistics, and has actively requested (and obtained in most cases) the available means for the funding of predoctoral and postdoctoral research.

Alongside basic research and doctoral supervision, academic training is the most important task of the team at both the internal and external levels. As for external training, the group periodically invites international researchers of the highest prestige so that these can share their latest research and insights by means of research seminars for the members of LVTC and other neighboring universities. The group boasts a full and intense history of research seminars, delivered by both national and prominent international scholars, which can be consulted at the group's blog, <http://lvtc.uvigo.es>.

As far as internal guidance is concerned, part of the group's funds are devoted to financing the research needs of members: research stays, attendance at seminars and conferences, etc. The group has also used part of its funding to contract predoctoral students for a range of research projects related to their dissertations. This has been done both with internal funds from research projects and with funds obtained through the research networks to which LVTC belongs or has belonged.

## BOOK REVIEWS

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# *Speaking in a Second Language*

**Rosa Alonso Alonso, ed. 2018**

Amsterdam: John Benjamins, 2018. xii + 243 pp.

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**T**he volume *Speaking in a Second Language*, edited by Rosa Alonso Alonso, represents an excellent contribution to the area of L2 research that addresses L2 speaking from an updated and innovative perspective. The volume is updated since it discloses research on L2 speaking meeting current times and real learners' needs, and it is innovative, as Lynda Yates (this volume) suggests, since it approaches research on L2 speaking from various perspectives. The volume is structured in ten chapters that address timely research insights as regards L2 speaking. The academic contributions presented in this volume offer readers a distinct and comprehensive view of L2 speaking that certainly will enrich researchers and language teachers.

In addition to these ten chapters, the volume also includes a "Preface" by professor Lynda Yates, who revisits language teaching practices as regards L2 speaking and invites readers to reflect on how the skill of speaking has been traditionally understood (both in teaching and research) and how it has evolved over the years. Furthermore, Yates provides an overview of the different chapters of the volume and indicates that the authors view language as a human endeavour, in which language is understood as multi-faceted, dynamic as well as embodied, and speaking as socially and context dependent. Current issues concerning L2 speaking, such as multimodality and multilingualism, are recognised in this volume, which implies an important change in the way L2 speaking has been traditionally treated. In fact, in today's world, multimodality and multilingualism should be seen as integrative entities as they reflect how communication (e.g., L1, L2, etc.) is constructed and deconstructed. On the one hand,

from a multimodal perspective, L2 speakers employ different semiotic resources or communicative modes that allow them to create meaning, and therefore meaning can be explored by attending to those resources (see Jewitt et al. 2016). On the other hand, assuming that the world is multilingual and that speakers may possess a full linguistic repertoire, the multilingual phenomenon and the role it plays in L2 acquisition cannot be overlooked (see Ruiz de Zarobe and Ruiz de Zarobe 2015). Multimodality and multilingualism are two complex phenomena that should be carefully explored in the area of L2 speaking and, although this volume sheds some light upon these aspects, further research is needed. To put it briefly, as this volume suggests, research on L2 speaking has evolved over the years, but there is still much work to do, and it is our responsibility as researchers to share insights with language teachers in order to narrow the gap between research and teaching in order to improve the quality of L2 teaching and meet current demands.

## ***Chapter one,***

by Geeslin, Gudmestad, Kanwit, Linford, Long, Schmidt and Solon, provides a current state-of-the-art on research on sociolinguistic competence and L2 research, focusing particularly on sociolinguistic variation and L2 speaking. As the authors claim, the development of L2 sociolinguistic competence is crucial to construct successful communicative outcomes. This perspective goes beyond traditional approaches to L2 speaking which tend to rely mainly on lin-

guistic competence. The authors report that native speakers manage to provide information about their identity and membership to specific communities by means of specific structures that are adjusted to their interlocutors and the context of interaction, and interlocutors do the same over the course of an interaction to reach communicative purposes. These adjustments are also discussed in the area of pragmatic competence in terms of sociopragmatics (see Taguchi and Roever 2017), and L2 learners need to master this knowledge in order to use language appropriately. Research on sociolinguistic variation with native speakers reveals the context-dependent nature of language, which in turn reinforces the necessity for L2 learners to acquire sociolinguistic competence. The authors also discuss current issues within sociolinguistic competence, specifically, the role of lexical frequency, geographical variation, and learners' attitudes towards a specific language (variety). Finally, drawing on research insights and theories related to sociolinguistics, they present a research-informed approach to teaching L2 speaking in the language classroom.

## ***Chapter two,***

by van Compernelle, addresses L2 speaking from a different angle. The author, taking a Vygotskian perspective, centres on the development of L2 speaking within interactional competence, seen as a situated activity in which L2 speakers draw on specific contextually communicative resources to create a shared mental space where interaction takes place. Broadly speaking, interactional competence involves not only learning which resources are available and how to use them appropriately, but also one's competence in using relevant resources for a particular context. Drawing on previous research (Rine, 2009), van Compernelle (2015) proposes a model of interactional competence consisting of topic management, action sequencing, participants framework, turn-taking, and register. Among these components, in this study, the author focuses on register, specifically on sociopragmatics in French and Spanish, and explores how interactional competence can be developed in the language classroom through concept-based pragmatics instruction (CBPI). The author illustrates the pedagogical potential of CBPI with various examples taken from previous research and discusses interactional competence in terms of learners' orientations to communication as well as their ability to execute and control orientations in L2 interactions, text-based chat and written discourse completion tasks. Further research and new pedagogical treatments involve, as van Compernelle argues, expanding CBPI to deal with the different domains of interactional competence.

## ***In chapter three,***

Stam acknowledges the multimodal nature of communication (see Jewitt et al. 2016) by addressing L2 speaking from a holistic perspective. The author views gestures as

an integral part of speaking and argues that speaking is dynamic and involves an action. Stam provides a literature review that centres on different types of gestures (i.e., co-speech gestures, speech-linked gestures and emblems) and on the role of gesture in L2 speaking. Co-speech gestures refer to spontaneous hand movements that are co-expressed with speech and have cognitive and communicative functions since they may complement what the speaker says and relieve cognitive load. Speech-linked gestures and emblems, although different, occur with some sort of conscious awareness. The former types of gestures are asynchronous with speech and try to fill a gap or a grammatical slot in a sentence (e.g., searching for words). By contrast, the latter are culturally specific, conventionalised, and translatable (e.g., thumbs up) and are commonly known in specific communities. In addition to this, concerning gestures in L2 speaking, the author discusses that relation in terms of assessment, communicative competence, emblems and learners' gestures and their functions (see Stam 2013). Finally, research agenda for gesture research in native speaker and L2 learners, and future directions in terms of L2 pedagogy are presented.

## ***Chapter four,***

by Eskildsen and Markee focuses on the nature of L2 speaking as a social accomplishment from a conversationalist and multimodal perspective (see Mondada 2016 for a review on multimodality and conversation analysis). The authors, as Stam does in this volume, recognise the multimodal turn of speaking, which briefly consists of an interplay of various semiotic resources. As the authors claim, language is understood as a repertoire for social action, and language, cognition and learning are socially distributed, co-constructed, embodied and embedded in local situations. Bearing in mind those aspects, Eskildsen and Markee, following a conversation analysis perspective (a spin-off of ethnomethodology), make research claims as regards L2 speaking as a social endeavour and provide insights into talk-in-interaction as a social accomplishment. To do so, the authors examine various examples coming from different settings that illustrate how speakers' interactional features shape talk-in-interaction and achieve communicative purposes. Drawing on these examples, the authors evidence the complexity of L2 talk, show the locally situated nature of speaking and show that language, cognition and learning are embedded in the specific circumstances of talk, distributed across the various speakers, and embodied. Finally, the authors also show that L2 speaking involves speakers drawing on interlocutor's actions, navigate local ecologies, and use a variety of semiotic resources to accomplish talk-in-interaction.

## ***In chapter five,***

Lowie, Verspoor and van Dijk explore the acquisition of L2 speaking from the perspective of the complex dynamic sys-



tems theory (CDTS), which focuses on the process rather than on the product itself and recognises learner's variability over time. According to the CDTS, L2 speaking is not based on innate language specific abilities, but rather on a complex synergy of noticing, interaction and self-reflection that emerges over time. The authors further claim that L2 speaking, as a result of its emergent nature and complexity, is not only variable among learners but also within the same learner over time, which makes prediction as regards attainment complicated. The authors carry out a study with two twins with similar levels of proficiency and similar previous experiences to explore intra-learner variability and inter-learner variation in development. They examine participants' developmental patterns when performing similar tasks over a period of 8 months on two very robust measures that reflect syntactic and lexical development. Results reveal that the linguistic behaviour is highly variable despite the robust measurements and the two general linguistic variables. Furthermore, results suggest that even when all the possible variables are controlled, participants' behaviour can vary. Future implications and recommendations could be to promote continuous assessment (versus single oral exams), meet learners' needs and challenges, and to understand L2 instruction as language coaching.

## ***Chapter six,***

by Gilquin, offers an explanatory study set in the field of Applied Construction Grammar that attempts to identify recurrent sequences in L2 speaking from higher intermediate to advanced proficiency levels. Data for the study are taken from a specific learner spoken corpus, Louvain International Database of Spoken English Interlanguage (LINDSEI, Gilquin et al. 2010). The methodology of this study involves analysing part-of-speech tags sequences from the LINDSEI corpus and the Louvain Corpus of Native English Conversation (LOCNEC, De Cock 2004). Interestingly, this study takes an innovative perspective since it attempts to use part-of-speech tag sequences to explore construction. The author not only discusses the results of the study but also some methodological issues. On the one hand, as the study shows, learners and native speakers commonly employed basic noun phrases. Furthermore, compared to native speakers, learners' data reveal that they seemed to rely more on coordinated constructions and position adverbs in a different way. On the other hand, although the methodology followed may have some limitations, it has served to provide new insights as regards recurrent constructions of L2 speakers. Definitely, this study can provide language teachers with relevant information as regards learners' constructions which, in turn, contribute to developing in a more accurate manner L2 speaking practices.

## ***In chapter seven,***

Bygate offers a more pedagogically-oriented contribution that clearly provides fruitful insights into L2 teaching and

research. Particularly, the author claims that L2 speaking requires special attention and argues for creating pedagogical spaces to meet that learning necessity. Drawing on previous research, the author states that speaking and writing are different as regards the processing skills L2 learners need, and as regards patterns of written and spoken discourse. Although this may influence instruction and curriculum planning, Bygate does not suggest that L2 speaking should be separated from other language skills (see Norris *et al.* 2017). In fact, creating pedagogical spaces implies providing learners with appropriate opportunities and conditions for participating in tasks that are purposefully designed to develop L2 speaking. Concerning this, Bygate proposes some basic principles for teaching L2 speaking and suggests that tasks should be carefully constructed to promote successful learners' development of L2 speaking. Effective tasks may show some sort of structure and elicit meaningful outcomes, and serve as a bridge between initial or group work and plenary teacher-talk, which may result in collaborative talk between learners and teachers. In addition, it should be noted that although the teaching of L2 speaking has evolved over the years, much work remains to be done in this area, for example, with traditional language materials (e.g., textbooks).

## ***Fernandez, in chapter eight,***

covers a cutting-edge topic in the area of L2 teaching and research. Particularly, her study centres on bilingual speakers and addresses a quite common practice among bilingual speakers, that is, code-switching. The study presented here is conducted in a higher education context in the US and involves Spanish heritage language learners in the US whose dominant language is not their home language (i.e., Spanish), but English. The study investigates the different functions of English (as a language for code-switching) in the Spanish heritage language classroom. More specifically, the aim of the study is to explore metacognitive functions, metalinguistic functions and conversational functions during peer interaction. Participants speaking production were audio recorded, not only in situations involving learner-learner interaction but also learner-teacher. Nonetheless, for the sake of this study, only peer interaction was considered. This study shows that heritage learners were able to employ only Spanish and adapt language to different situations and interlocutors; however, among peers, English was used, for example, as a marker of bilingual identity, when facing language difficulties or discussing Spanish grammar. What is seen in this study is that code-switching has a prominent role in the language classroom, especially among bilinguals, and language teachers should reflect on this reality in order to best suit learners' needs in multilingual contexts.

## ***Chapter nine,***

by Tarone and Meyers, discusses the pedagogical value of The Mirroring Project, which broadly speaking cen-

tres on helping L2 speakers to improve intelligibility (commonly neglected from L2 speaking courses). This study represents valuable academic contribution that addresses L2 speaking from a multimodal perspective in a higher education context with international students in the US, who must obtain a high level in L2 speaking to teach undergraduate students (International Teaching Assistant, ITA). To reach that end, ITAs may take a course that addresses L2 intelligibility. In so doing, ITAs can develop their mastery of L2 suprasegmental phonology and non-linguistic communication. This study reports on a case study of a Chinese graduate student who participated in the project. Data were collected three times during the 15-week semester, showing three different developmental moments. Data analysis involved an acoustic analysis using PRAAT to examine suprasegmental features and a perceptual analysis that focuses on non-linguistic resources, emotion and tone. Findings revealed improvement during the instructional treatment in terms of intonation, stress, and non-linguistic resources, which became more evident in her final performance, described as more intelligible and more engaging. The study shows the value of providing learners with specific training that addresses key aspects in communication from a multimodal perspective.

## ***Final chapter***

Alonso, the editor of the volume, offers a final chapter that serves as a sort of academic commentary on this cutting-edge field of research. The author provides a critical review of the role of L2 speaking and comments on current approaches to teaching L2 speaking, revisits and comments on the main contributions of the different chapters included in the volume, and offers a precise overview of future research directions based on the salient research outcomes of the volume. The section devoted to the role of L2 speaking across various teaching methods serves the reader to explore how this particular language skill has been treated across different teaching methods, including, among others, the Grammar Translation Method or the Direct Method, and of course, current approaches such as the Communicative Approach and the Task-based Approach, which are learner-centred and understand L2 speaking as a key element. This review is followed by current approaches to L2 speaking, such as Task-based Language Teaching, Content Integrated Language Learning. The author highlights that current perspectives view language as a social activity in which the social and cognitive construct are integrated. Finally, the author reflects on future research directions that definitely will be valuable for researchers in the area of L2 speaking.

Overall, the volume reviewed here represents an impressive academic contribution in terms of the vast array of topics and issues that it addresses. As acknowledged in this review, this compilation of chapters covers a wide range of academic concerns as regards L2 speaking and

offers academic, critical and pedagogical reflection from various perspectives. Together, they provide a glimpse into promising directions of future research and language teaching in the area of L2 speaking.

The relevance of sociolinguistic competence as part of L2 speaking is highlighted in chapter one, while the development of interactional competence is discussed in chapter two. In both chapters, the authors provide a theoretical background that support their scope and offer various examples that clearly evidence the importance of developing these competences in the L2 classroom. These two competences are also in line with pragmatic competence, which, unfortunately, is not directly addressed in this volume. The role of gestures in L2 speaking are acknowledged in chapter three, in which the author reviews various types of gestures and the role of gestures in L2 speaking. The author presents various examples to illustrate that L2 speaking is not static but an action. In chapter four the authors show the potential of following a conversation analysis perspective to explore how L2 speaking is constructed in interaction. Through a series of examples, the authors discuss L2 speaking as an embodied and socially distributed social accomplishment.

In chapter five, using CDTS, the authors show learners' variability by exploring the performance of two twins over a period of time. Findings support the need for revisiting language teaching practices in order to provide learners with further opportunities to develop L2 skills. A corpus-driven analysis of L2 talk (non-native speakers and native speakers) is presented in chapter six. This study provides insights into the methodological approach followed in the study as well as into the development of L2 speaking, which definitely will be beneficial for language teachers. The role of task in L2 speaking is revisited in chapter seven in which the author claims for creating pedagogical spaces for L2 speaking. The author suggests designing specific tasks that engage learners in group work and whole class talk, and enhance meaningful L2 speaking outcomes. In chapter eight, the author focuses on the Spanish heritage classroom with bilingual speakers (Spanish and English) to explore English code-switching in peer interaction. Findings are not only revealing as regards different code-switching functions but also as regards the pedagogical value of code-switching. Chapter nine offers a case study of a learner's development of L2 speaking that focuses particularly on intelligibility and bodily actions. Chapter ten, as indicated above, serves as an academic commentary on the current situation of L2 speaking in which the author not only provides a review of L2 speaking but also reflects on speaking as a social and cognitive construct. Finally, the author, drawing on the key academic outcomes of the different contributors, identifies future research directions.

Certainly, the volume provides an up-dated academic contribution that discusses various and innovative ways to approach L2 speaking from different pedagogical and

research perspectives, and tries to meet current trends in language research and teaching such as multimodality and multilingualism. The different contributions of the volume constitute an academic effort that demonstrates the value of specific pedagogical applications, contributes to disseminating academic research, and detects promising areas of research. Broadly speaking, in this volume, L2 speaking is seen as dynamic and socially-based, assuming that language and speaking involves the use of a variety

of communicative modes in multilingual contexts. Taken as a whole, the volume presents a balanced overview of L2 speaking research and teaching. I remain hopeful that these academic chapters can contribute to narrowing the existing gap between language teachers and research in the area of L2 speaking. Finally, I also believe that this volume will be instrumental for researchers in the area of L2 speaking, language teachers as well as graduate and postgraduate students interested in this particular field.



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## BOOK REVIEWS

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# ***Women on the Move. Body, Memory and Femininity in Present-Day Transnational Diasporic Writing***

**Silvia Pellicer-Ortín and Julia Tofantšuk, eds.**

New York: Routledge, 2019. xx + 266 pp. ISBN: 978-1-138-32199-1

**I**n a time of emerging walls and the rise of nostalgic nationalisms, *Women on the Move: Body, Memory and Femininity in Present-Day Transnational Diasporic Writing* constitutes a thought-provoking collection of articles written by European feminist scholars as well as a necessary critical project which showcases the relevance of global migrations today and women's crucial role in all types of migratory movements. As Silvia Pellicer-Ortín and Julia Tofantšuk—the editors to this volume—explain in the introductory chapter, women are especially vulnerable in migratory mobility yet, present-day phenomenon of transnational migration not only has disclosed patriarchal mechanisms that subjugate women world-wide but also has allowed many of them to escape their oppressive past and envision a more prosperous future (2019: 5). Further, despite the growing importance in Academia of themes like globalisation, migration and transnationalism, the gender approach to female migratory experiences is still scarce in scholarly work as evinced by late publications (Jay 2010; Castro Borrego and Romero Ruiz 2015; Martín-Lucas and Andrea Ruthven 2017) more focused on identity issues in our transnational and global era than

on the implications of migration for women. Precisely, the collection under review fills in the niche around women's role in migration since it explores diasporic fiction written by contemporary female authors from different continents and offers startling insights into the intersections between gender and diasporic mobility. Likewise, it also scrutinises how, through form and aesthetics, these authors render a feminine perspective of our transnational times.

## ***First section***

The collection is divided into five main sections with a total of twelve contributions which function as different but complementary parts offering a deep and kaleidoscopic notion of female diaspora. The first section introduces an idea that will be reiterated in other chapters, which is the loss of agency and voice provoked by the feelings of unbelongingness, dislocation and disillusion that immigrants suffer when they arrive to their adoptive lands. Cédric Courtois's article on Chris Abani's *Becoming Abigail* (2006) and Chi-

ka Unigwe's *On Black Sisters' Street* (2009) inaugurates this section. In it, Courtois aptly reveals how globalisation continues the tie between former colonies and empires through global sex trade by depicting how the diasporic movement for labour of Abani's and Unigwe's Sudanese and Nigerian protagonists to Belgium and Britain respectively, ends up turning into a contemporary version of transatlantic slavery which reduces these African women to body and deprives them from their voices. Nonetheless, although both writers denounce African women's travelling bodies as sites of abuse and exploitation, as the contributor thoughtfully demonstrates, they also break the traditional view of Africans as never-ending victims by depicting how their female protagonists are able to reappropriate their own bodies and voices and fight neocolonialism and patriarchy in the host land. In the second chapter, Merve Sarikaya-Sen proposes a pertinent analysis of NoViolet Bulawayo's *We Need New Names* (2013) as a trauma fiction which reflects the distressing feelings of uprootedness, entrapment and disillusionment that the young Zimbabwean protagonist goes through when she migrates to Michigan. However, although the approach to Bulawayo's novel from trauma theory is an original suggestion, arguably, the weakness of this essay lies in Sarikaya-Sen's application of a Western pattern—particularly, formal traits of romance writing—to a non-Western text so as to explore the protagonist's trauma, for in so doing she seems to reproduce and perpetuate the Eurocentric approach of classic trauma theory that many scholars like Michael Rothberg (2008) and Stef Craps (2012) have questioned in the last years.

## Second section

The second section in this volume deals with transnational movements and identities of second and third-generation immigrants who, in spite of living in cosmopolitan cities, endure feelings of dislocation due to their hybridity. In the first article of this section, Beatriz Perez Zapata explores Zadie Smith's novel *Swing Time* (2016) and particularly focuses on the desire for rootlessness and movement of Smith's protagonist and narrator (a dislocated third-generation immigrant girl living in a (g)local but racist and classist London), who continuously feels her Jamaican-British hybridity as a burden. As this scholar cleverly indicates, only when the narrator gets acquainted with her African and colonial roots in a work trip to Gambia, she starts feeling liberated. I highlight Pérez Zapata's insightful analysis of the narrator's eventual homecoming and free-movement across the racialised suburbs and the white European centre of London after realising that, like this city, she is British but also a daughter of the Black Atlantic culture present in many of its neighbourhoods, as the ultimate step in her quest for identity and freedom. María Rocío Cobo-Piñero opens the second article of this section with an effective explanation of contemporary cosmopolitanism and the concept "Afropolitanism" which is followed by a rewarding study of Taiye Selasi's *Ghana Must Go* (2013). In her analysis, Cobo-Piñero intelligently points out how Selasi's novel embodies "a critical Afropolitan fiction that complicates

and problematizes diasporic identities" (Pellicer-Ortín and Tofantšuk 2019: 90) as can be noted in her Afropolitan second-generation immigrant characters, who, in spite of their material success while living in the US, actually become frustrated due to their fragmented identities. Nonetheless, although this article nicely covers the diasporic and transnational formal and thematic aspects of the novel, I would have appreciated a more thorough study on gender and the intricacies of migration and Afropolitanism in Selasi's female characters.

## Third section

The third section tackles the effects of diaspora in a more limited space traditionally related to women: the kitchen. In the chapter which opens this section, Cronne Bigot sagely studies selected stories by female authors of diverse origins—Edwidge Danticat (Haitian), Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni (Indian) and Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie (Nigerian)—in order to explore the host land home as a diaspora space which evidences the female protagonists' successful journey to the Promised Land, but also embodies their homesickness, dislocation and disillusionment. The strongest point of this chapter is indeed Bigot's exploration of the three authors' use of food as a trope which renders the protagonists' identity conflict and cooking as well as the kitchen and cooking as tropes which on the one hand reflect these diasporic women's entrapment in their new domestic space, and on the other, their gaining of self-empowerment to confront patriarchy. This point is also tackled by Chiara Battisti and Sida Fiorato in their illuminating essay on Monica Ali's *In the Kitchen* (2009), wherein they interpret the kitchen of the hotel where part of the narrative action develops, not only as a microcosm of global and transnational London but also as a mirror of the pervading colonial exploitation of immigrants in Britain and of patriarchal stereotypes on domestic and professional cooking that the female protagonist continuously fights.

## Fourth section

The fourth section of the collection is nicely articulated around European diasporic females who struggle with the consequences of their mobility, their liminal identities and the patriarchal societies in which they live. In the first chapter of this section, María Amor Barros-del Río particularly deals with Irish female migration, a diasporic movement which as she indicates, "challenged the traditional representation of Irish womanhood and her place within Irish society" (Pellicer-Ortín and Tofantšuk 2019: 141). Likewise, this scholar carries out a comparative and intersectional analysis of Edna O'Brien's *The Light of Evening* (2006) and Colm Tóibín's *Brooklyn* (2009), two novels set in the 1920s and 1950s, respectively, which share many points in common. It is worth mentioning her exploration of the protagonists' role of caretakers both in America and Ireland and how their homecoming not only entails their

reunion with their Mother Land but also their return to the oppressive patriarchal post-WWI and WWII Irish society. This compelling essay gives way to Selen Aktri-Sevgi's article on Anne Enright's *The Green Road* (2015), in which this scholar convincingly reshapes the understanding of mobility in her analysis of the women of a contemporary Irish family. In contrast to the other articles in this volume, this one explores a more psychological and liminal mobility related to ageing, mothering and disease, which allows these women to resist the patriarchal structures of Ireland's society in the Celtic Tiger period (1990–2008). In the remaining chapter of this section, Julia Tofantšuk uses a multidirectional approach to offer a thought-provoking analysis of the third-generation British-Jewish protagonist in Charlotte Mendelson's intertextual Bildungsroman *Almost English* (2013), who feels so uncomfortable with her hybridity that she decides to leave her diasporic home behind. Tofantšuk ascribes the protagonist's troublesome relation with her origins to her lack of knowledge about her family due to her grandparents entombing of traumatic exile memories. However, as this scholar aptly notes, food, "rituals of cooking and hospitality" and "the power of mother-daughter relation" (Pellicer-Ortín and Tofantšuk 2019: 196) enable the protagonist to fill in the gap in her identity and, like the prototypical hero(ine), return home.

## Fifth section

The last section of the collection has a wide geographic scope for, in it, Paul Rüsse and Maialein Antxustegui-Etxarte Aranaga analyse *El Puente/The Bridge* (2000), a short story collection by US-Mexican author Ito Romo, Carolina Sanchez-Palencia explores British-Caribbean writer Andrea Levy's *Small Island* (2004), and Silvia Pellicer-Ortín closes the section with her approach to Jewish-British author Michelene Wandor's work *False Relations* (2004). Moreover, these scholars focus their study on the spatial and temporal dimensions of the female protagonists' diasporic identity in a very compelling manner. In Rüsse and Antxustegui-Etxarte Aranaga's article—which starts with

a clarifying brief contextualisation of Chicano/a literature from its origins until our days—these two contributors examine the fluvial border between US and Mexico—Río Grande—that Romo's female characters must cross daily in order to go to or come back from work. In fact, both scholars establish an environmental link between those border women and the river and pay particular attention to the bridge connecting the US and Mexican sides, which as they sagely suggest, works as "a confrontational setting" in terms of class, race and gender, but also as a place of interaction which symbolises these women's "crossing of social boundaries" (Pellicer-Ortín and Tofantšuk 2019: 212). In her article on *Small Island*, Sánchez-Palencia offers an illuminating analysis not only of the socio-political and cultural dislocation of a Windrush immigrant couple after their crossing of another liquid border—the Atlantic ocean—but also of the racialised and gendered body as a space of geographical negotiation. Interestingly, just as this scholar remarks the variety of points of view and polyphonic voices in Levy's novel which counter the linearity of narratives with an imperialist and patriarchal discourse, Pellicer-Ortín highlights how multivocality in Wandor's collection of formally and thematically interconnected short stories set in a wide variety of places and epochs, reveals the survival of stereotypes and racism against the Jews throughout history. In fact, it is precisely Wandor's use of female narrators and the mixture of mythical and historical characters which epitomise the struggles faced by Jewish women throughout the centuries that leads Pellicer-Ortín to offer an insightful reading of this collection as a liminal narrative in which Jewish female characters are able to reconstruct their fragmented identity "through a cross-cultural dimension" (Pellicer-Ortín and Tofantšuk 2019: 239).

In conclusion, this engaging collection offers an interesting multi-angled approach to the current global issue of female diaspora in contemporary world literature. Lastly, the editors are to be congratulated on the effective selection and dialogic arrangement of such a wide range of original and insightful contributions which clearly infuse Diaspora and Migration studies with an urgent feminine viewpoint.



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## BOOK REVIEWS

LAURA DE LAS MERCEDES BUJÁN-SÁNCHEZ

*Independent Scholar*

# ***Queering Women's and Gender Studies***

**Begoña Crespo, Isabel Moskowich and Carolina Núñez-Puente, eds.**

Newcastle-upon-Tyne: Cambridge Scholars, 2016. x + 193 pp. ISBN: 978-1-4438-0955-9

**I**n a thoughtful attempt to bring closer to scholars the work being carried out in terms of women- and gender-related issues in the Faculty of Philology at the University of A Coruña, Spain, Begoña Crespo, Isabel Moskowich and Carolina Núñez-Puente, editors of the present book, organized a three-day symposium in September 2014. The result is *Queering Women's and Gender Studies*, an anthology whose leading topics are those reflected in the title: queer, women and gender.

The different contributions in this publication are a miscellany of perspectives, academic fields, methods, theoretical frameworks, research materials and even languages, which represent an illustrative hint of the extensive variety of approaches available to address its three chief themes. For example, the reader should expect the analysis of research materials that go from eighteenth-century scientific documents to twenty-first-century videogames; a diversity of methods that include corpus linguistics, ethnography, critical discourse analysis and close reading of literary texts; a multiplicity of theories and perspectives within the fields of language, culture, literature and society; and articles written in Spanish, Galician and English, with a predominance of the last one.

The volume is divided into eight chapters preceded by a prologue and followed by an epilogue. In the prologue, "Queer as Odd: Language, Literature and Culture as Crosswords", besides explaining the production of the book and commenting on its content, Crespo and Moskowich (two of the editors) warn readers of its un-

marked three-part structure: language (chapters one to three), literature (chapters four to six) and culture (chapters seven and eight). As a closing remark, the authors express their hope that the works selected satisfy "readers as they have satisfied the[ir] numerous national and international [anonymous] reviewers" (x), which proves the quality of the articles.

## ***Chapters one and two***

Chapters one and two, written by Leida Maria Monaco and Luis Puente Castelo respectively, use corpus linguistics to explore the writing performance of women scientists in comparison to their male counterparts. Each one of them investigates a different research question, but both share variables and use philosophical and life science texts from the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries as corpora. In consequence, the social background is also the same as well as the basis to understand the interest of their results; in the end, the authors seek to find out whether female scientists accomplished their work as successfully as male scientists despite their inferior position in society, especially in the fields of science and education, during a period when patriarchy was especially hard on women. More specifically, in chapter one, "Female Abstract Thinking: The Use of Abstract Style by Late Modern English Women Scientists", Monaco takes the concept of abstraction, a characteristic of late modern scientific discourse according

to previous research, as her starting point. She selects a number of linguistic features that have been found to make scientific discourse impersonal and, through quantitative analysis, she obtains unexpected and interesting findings regarding the fulfilment of abstraction by men and women scientists in their texts. For his part, Puente Castelo similarly studies “the use of conditional sentences as an example of consensus-seeking strategy” (21) in chapter two, “Uses of Conditionals in the Work of Eighteenth- and Nineteenth-Century Female Scientists: Applying Quantitative Methods to the Study of Female Discourse in the *Coruña Corpus*”. As the author states from the beginning, the aforementioned and well-known situation of women in the Late Modern period provoked that the few women who managed to be part of the scientific sphere were not seen as trustworthy as men scientists and, for this reason, they “tried to overcome these reservations, focusing particularly on their use of persuasive strategies to move peers towards acceptance” (21). Again, using quantitative analysis, and considering the numerous functions fulfilled by conditionals because of their variability, Puente Castelo's results show different predominant functions in the use of conditionals by both sexes; he thus determines that their use is conditioned by the presence of various interdependent factors that include personal preference.

### Chapter three

Starting from previous ethnographic research, where she analyzed discursive construction in an alternative economic model fostered by a group of women in Ecuador, Esperanza Morales-López deals with the potential of language in the configuration of society by means of a theoretical and methodological reflection on her data in “De la Perspectiva Etnográfica al Análisis Crítico del Discurso: Investigación en un Grupo de Mujeres Ecuatorianas”. She explains how a group of Ecuadorian women concerned with the fulfilment of their rights, who are known as “Movimiento de las mujeres de El Oro” (MMO), developed an ideological proposal based on solidarity economy and finance addressed to women. In a context of financial crisis and exclusion of women, in both the social and professional spheres, the Ecuadorian Government tried to include these social efforts in their constitution but, the language used in it (e.g. euphemisms) overlooked contextual details. The author analyzes the way this group of women transformed governmental language into a contextualized and effective discourse in a way that acknowledges the importance of specific linguistic resources (e.g. argumentation).

### Chapter four

In the next chapter, “Masculinidades Alternativas na Literatura Chinés-Americana: Maxine Hong Kingston e Gish Jen”, Carolina Soria Somoza discusses new and

out-of-the-ordinary alternatives to the stereotype of Chinese-American masculinity through the main characters in Maxine Hong Kingston's *The Woman Warrior* (1975) and Gish Jen's “Birthmates” (1995). Delicate, effeminate or asexual are the adjectives conforming the mentioned stereotype, which have found in literature a particularly successful medium for their expansion. In an attempt to fight such a retrograde model, some Chinese-American writers simply decided to assign to their characters features of the sexist masculinity typical of Western society such as strength, violence or independence, which are also clichés; however, the authors of the aforementioned works propose a different vision. Applying both masculinity and queer theories extended to race and ethnic groups, Soria Somoza examines Kingston's female protagonist, Maxine, and Jen's maternal father, Art, as samples of how non-traditional masculinities can and should put an end to stereotypes.

### *La Mujer Deseada y Deseosa en Diez, de Juan Emar*

Sonia Rico Alonso delves into the portrayal of three female characters as mothers of the male narrator's process of creation and projections of his sexual consciousness in chapter five, “La Mujer Deseada y Deseosa en *Diez*, de Juan Emar”. Assimilating the theories of Octavio Paz's women and otherness, Diana Tietjens's concept of agency and Simone de Beauvoir's woman in love, the author scrutinizes Papusa, Chuchezuma and Pibesa, the women that entitle the short-story cycle “Tres mujeres”, a section in Juan Emar's *Diez*. These stories, which are governed by a unidirectional masculine perspective, manifest how sexual instinct controls human emotions when the subject lacks inner freedom and mental control. Rico Alonso dissects the dualist complexities embodied in the three non-autonomous women who should be regarded as three different stages in the complex process of overcoming the body and elevating the spirit.

The struggle of finding one's identity within the context of exile and immigration is the core issue in María Frías's “Legal Aliens? Latina Writers in New York”. She studies the way Julia Álvarez, Esmeralda Santiago and Cristina García fictionalize their own experiences of exile and immigration in their respective novels *How the García Girls Lost their Accent* (1991), *When I Was Puerto Rican* (1993) and *Dreaming in Cuban* (1992). The migrant female protagonists' sense of alienation makes them adjust to or assimilate to the American way of life out of necessity to “construct [t]he[i]r own exiled selves” (108). As the author expresses after her analysis, this situation does not bring the desired outcome, because, instead of finding their yearned self, the female protagonists encounter themselves in a cultural limbo or have to live with dual identities, “a high price for becoming American” (124).



## ***Dante vs. Alice: Heroines and New Masculinity in Modern Video Games***

“Dante vs. Alice: Heroines and New Masculinity in Modern Video Games”, by David Muiños, produces a cultural analysis of video games. He focuses on two video-game characters inspired by literature, namely Dante, who alludes to Dante Alighieri, and Alice, who refers to Lewis Carroll’s heroine. Regarding Dante, Muiños describes its former and updated designs in terms of physical appearance to account for the audience’s disenchantment with the last version, which is considered less masculine in accordance to Western culture stereotypes despite having the same extraordinary skills. As for Alice, she is presented as an elaborated female character with masculine traits (e.g. physical prowess) and psychological complexity which has not achieved the same recognition as the previous one because male characters are marketed in a way that “overshadows the representation of women in video games as well as other gender identities” (141). He concludes highlighting the importance of raising awareness on the matters discussed so that the audience becomes responsible and demanding, which justifies the author’s introductory statement that “videogames need to be taken seriously” (131).

## ***Caribbean Mermaids***

Nelson Rodríguez-Avilez explores appearance and existence in transgender and non-conformed gender bodies in the last chapter, “Trans-Sexual Memories: Colonial Subjects and Caribbean Mermaids”. He takes the protagonists of *Middlesex* (2002) by Jeffrey Eugenides and *Sirena Selena vestida de pena* (2000) by Mayra Santos-Febres as examples of identities outside normativity and homo-normativity, the current socially accepted gay-life which excludes trans, “any identity that does not conform to the standards of a fixed definition for a gender-sex-body representation” (147). Eugenides’s Cal·liope (sic) is an intersexed person whereas Santos-Febres’s la Sirena and Martha Divine are transgender, but despite their differences, in the eyes of society both are inhabitants of a “terrorist body”, which means that they are a threat to the politically construct-

ed societal norms of the (reproductive, gender-identified) body. The author draws the reader’s attention to the need of going beyond the frontiers of the body and perceiving people as selves or identities.

Finally, the third editor Carolina Núñez-Puente closes the book with a call for an inclusive feminist coalition in the epilogue “Queering Contemporary Feminisms: From Pedagogy and Solidarity to Posthumanist Affective Coalitions”. Gloria Anzaldúa, Rosi Braidotti, bell hooks and Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick are just a few of the contemporary thinkers-activists that the author puts in dialogue and whose corresponding feminist methodologies and points of view constitute the background to understand the benefits of differences and disagreements in bringing groups together. Núñez-Puente defends the implications of “feminist pedagogy, dialogue and solidarity toward social change” (173) and vindicates queer, affect and posthumanist approaches as necessary tools to value and engage the world’s diversity. The author admits that changing the way people think is not an easy task, but she believes in the power of teaching to renew society and encourages educators to “try to infuse students with optimism that we can change the rules and that there is hope for a world free of injustice” (184), as she herself tries to do.

This collection of research essays manages to make the reader react against hidden segregational behaviors by raising awareness on sexual and other identity-related issues. Its eclecticism concerning the variety of disciplines, methods, approaches and perspectives offered can be interpreted as a transposition of the inclusiveness that the authors seek to account for the multiple identities that exist. The book proves that, despite some social advances in the last decades, there is still a lot to be done in terms of recognizing every single consideration of “otherness” as different. In order to achieve absolute equality, it is indispensable to maximize the potential of education to re-conceptualize our understanding of identity as a closed system which does not allow non-normative interpretations of the self. In all, the volume is a solid contribution to women’s and gender studies which opens new (e.g. queer, posthuman) ways of addressing and explaining human beings’ existence in society in and from the fields of language, literature and culture.

## BOOK REVIEWS

M<sup>a</sup> LUISA PASCUAL GARRIDO*Universidad de Córdoba*

# ***Mid Eighteenth-century Female Literary Careers in The Monthly Review and The Critical Review***

**Lorenzo-Modia, M<sup>a</sup> Jesús & Mónica Amenedo-Costa. 2018.**

Sevilla: Arcibel. 233 pp. ISBN: 978-84-15335-65-8

**W**ithin the bulk of literature instigating a necessary process of re-writing of the literary canon which feminist criticism has undertaken in the last decades, the volume recently published by Lorenzo-Modia and Amenedo-Costa, *Mid Eighteenth-century Female Literary Careers in The Monthly Review and The Critical Review* (2018) deserves close attention. This work, devoted to the genre of the literary review in the mid-eighteenth century, gathers the results of a research project which examines the assessment of prose work by three British female writers: Eliza Haywood, Sarah Fielding and Francis Sheridan. This is achieved mainly by scrutinising the literary reviews published on the writings of these authors in the second half of the eighteenth century, when literary criticism was already a well-established field. The volume seeks to cover a gap concerning the reception of female-authored literature, which is only partially addressed by Basker (2005), Domsch (2014), Donoghue (1996), Foster (1990), Ingrassia (1998), Rope (1978), Runge (2005) and Lorenzo-Modia herself (1997, 1998), by focusing on three case studies that reveal a general

trend in the reception of female authors during the time span examined.

## ***Introduction***

The book is well-organised into several sections which make a very consistent whole, offering an insightful analysis of the cultural context and the primary texts which the reader can find in an extremely valuable appendix. The “Introduction” (p.11-17) provides relevant information about the aims and scope of the research undertaken and the methodology implemented to achieve the proposed goals. As the authors claim, this volume is intended to “document the representations of female writers” and “the evolution of these overtime” (12) by studying the reviews published by two specific literary journals: *The Monthly Review* (1749-1845) and *The Critical Review* (1756-1817). Accordingly, the authors highlight the essential role played by the periodical press and literary reviews in Britain during the period, namely, “to promote

the development of a critical understanding of the key literary advances of the day, but also of the position of male and female writers within the literary field” (12).

## **Periodical Publications: Book Reviewing Papers**

The second chapter, entitled “Periodical Publications: Book Reviewing Papers” (pp.18-38) considers in detail the emergence of periodicals in Britain which, as Lorenzo-Modia and Amenedo-Costa point out, was due to a large extent to the “abolition of the Printing Act in 1695” (18). The authors trace the historical development of periodicals with a special focus on the press which engaged with literary works. Landmarks such as the foundation of Steele’s *The Tatler* (1709) and Addison’s and Steele’s *The Spectator* (1711) are mentioned, while the enormous potential of periodical essays and reviews “as tool[s] for cultural and social education” (19) is emphasized from the very beginning. Special attention is paid to the specificity of the literary review as a specific genre and its growing influence since it was essential in shaping the taste and opinions of the reading public. As evidence of the impact the press had on the cultural life of the period, the authors bring to the fore the close involvement of writers such as Alexander Pope, Henry Fielding or Jonathan Swift with different periodicals from the early eighteenth century, a trend that increased as the century advanced, with influential literary figures taking on “editorial duties and other activities within the sector” (20). The regular contributions made by Samuel Johnson to *The Rambler* and *The Idler*, Fielding’s in the *Covent Garden Journal*, and those of Warton, Hawkesworth and Johnson to the pages of *The Adventurer*, are considered to be the origin of high-quality literary criticism.

In tracing the evolution of literary reviewing, the role of magazines like *The Gentleman’s Magazine* (1691-1754), the first of its kind, is also underlined since, the authors argue, magazines attracted readers concerned with a wide range of topics such as “current political events on domestic and international affairs, literary and scientific matters, as well as the prices of goods and stocks” (21) but also included book reviews and a catalogue of works recently published. Readers of this volume are reminded of the fact that if the eighteenth century is known as the “Age of Criticism”, it is due to the significant contribution made by the periodical press to the improvement of literary criticism. As a result, the greatest merit of the periodical essays which engaged with literature in a critical way was that the appreciation of literature was “no longer confined to the elite” but “critically addressed to the general public” (22). *A Literary Journal, or a Continuation of the Memoirs of Literature*, edited by Michael de la Roche in 1730, is singled out as the one publication that started the trend for literary reviews in the modern sense. This journal, together with *Bibliotheca Literaria* (1722-1724), Reid’s *The Present State of the Republick of Letters* (1728-

1736), *The History of the Works of the Learned* (1737-1742) or *The Literary Journal*, published in Dublin from 1744 to 1749 (Griffin 2014: 127), clearly account for the gradual process of specialisation the periodical press and literary journals in particular underwent throughout the century, as the authors rightly argue. Lorenzo-Modia and Amenedo-Costa’s volume is extremely well documented, offering here as well as in the “Sources and Bibliography” section (125-128) comprehensive lists of both the essay periodicals and the magazines issued in the period.

## **The Monthly and Critical Review**

The choice of the corpus of analysis is also carefully justified. The authors argue that since literary criticism took a new turn by the 1750s when review journals started covering a wide range of publications on a regular basis, it seems logical to focus on periodicals published since then. Therefore, the influential and long-lasting *The Monthly Review* (1749-1845) seems a suitable source for this kind of study as it is considered to be responsible of boosting first-rate literary criticism. Its reviews increased in quality and the periodical started covering different literary genres which earlier journals had largely ignored (Roper 1978). Even though there were other review periodicals that followed the *Monthly Review*, Lorenzo-Modia and Amenedo-Costa conclude that none was similar in quality and influence until *The Critical Review* was published (Forster 1990). Runge (2005:277), whom the authors follow in their survey of eighteenth century press, notes that by the 1780s and 1790s new review periodicals were established, contributing to the formation of the practice of literary criticism and playing a very important part in the history of eighteenth-century British literature (25). Another factor Lorenzo-Modia and Amenedo-Costa have taken into account when selecting their primary sources is the degree of responsibility assumed by both journals as they managed to offer the general public “an opportunity to participate in the literary culture of the period” (25). Therefore, in this section closer attention is paid to the genre of the literary review in order to set the context for a detailed analysis of *The Monthly Review* and *The Critical Review* so that the differences between these two literary journals and the “abundant circulation of less serious publications” (26) become obvious.

The *Monthly*, founded by Ralph Griffiths in 1749, responded, as the authors claim, to the need of critical evaluation of newly printed books and, therefore, supplied abstracts and extracts of new books, short and long reviews in the main review section, monthly catalogues arranged by subject-matter and indexes for the readers to locate specific essays more easily. As for *The Critical Review*, founded by Archibald Hamilton and Tobias Smollett in 1756, it claimed that one of its main goals was providing impartial judgement on recently published works. According to Lorenzo-Modia and Amenedo-Costa, the contents of the *Critical* were arranged in a similar fashion to those in the *Monthly*, including a section de-

voted to foreign books. Reviews in both periodicals were published anonymously, though the secondary sources (Graham 1930, Roper 1978) consulted by the authors indicate that it was possible to identify who the contributors were and there is evidence to suggest that there were writers of renown, like Samuel Johnson, David Hume, Joseph Robertson and Oliver Goldsmith, contributing to these publications. The fact that an allowance was perceived for these reviews also indicates the degree of professionalization journalism and literary criticism had attained by the mid-eighteenth century.

Deeply concerned with the role of female intellectuals in the period, Lorenzo-Modia and Amenedo-Costa cleverly notice the indication on the title page of the *Critical* that it was published by “A Society of Gentlemen”, underscoring the irrelevance of women as worthy agents and participants in literary culture. As further evidence of female marginalisation, the researchers refer to a number of distinguished male authors who publicly refused to have women engaged in serious literary criticism. Yet, despite being a male-dominated area, the authors claim, “women ventured into the world of criticism” (30) publishing reviews in the *Monthly*, *The Old Maid* (1755-1756), *The Lady’s Museum* (1760-1761) and *The Analytical Review*, and they mention Frances Brooke, Eliza Heywood, Charlotte Lennox, Mary Wollstonecraft and Mary Hays as writers of reviews and essays. Furthermore, the authors call attention to the ideological differences between the two publications, being originally the *Monthly* “a Whig organ while the *Critical* was a representative of Tory principles” (34), but stressing, nevertheless, that their opposing ideological views did not seem “to have interfered much in the descriptions and evaluation of new works” (34). Another factor which, according to Lorenzo-Modia and Amenedo-Costa, had a bearing on the impartial assessment these periodicals claimed to offer is that they both had a subscription-based circulation. Therefore, both publications avoided biased or political accounts of works which might have damaged their reputation, and eventually decrease the number of subscribers, mainly members of the middle and upper class, but also educational institutions, learned and literary societies, libraries and book clubs. However, the principle of impartiality was not always granted; Lorenzo-Modia and Amenedo-Costa already anticipate here something that is given full treatment in the third chapter: the gender-biased treatment of books that obviously moulded the reception of female authors, establishing different sets of principles to evaluate works in accordance with the authors’ sex. As a result, male values and gender prejudice became, according to the authors, the standard for reviewing books by women writers. In this chapter the authors also describe the usual content of literary reviews in the two periodicals selected. These pieces informed the readers of the nature of the work, including a general description, a summary and quotations, which were followed by a personal evaluation of the merits and shortcomings of the work. Reviews could have a variable extension too – ranging from a few lines to up to seven or eight pages. Apart from the effect these had on the reading habits of the

public, reviews also advised writers on their possibilities for improvement and had “an impact on the evolution of an artist” (Runge 2005: 290).

## ***Eighteenth-century Women Authors***

The third chapter, “Eighteenth-century Women Authors” (pp. 39-120) is the most interesting and valuable section of the book since it is here where the authors give evidence of a keen eye for detail, managing to identify the values and strategies employed by male reviewers to assess the works written by women and to regulate their access to the literary scene. The analysis of their reception is based on the *Monthly* and the *Critical* reviews, and covers a time span of twenty years, from 1749 to 1769. An overview of the literary careers of Haywood, Fielding and Sheridan is first provided, followed by longer sections for each writer where the authors have carefully examined the reviews they received. Lorenzo-Modia and Amenedo-Costa consider worth mentioning the variety of genres (prose fiction, poetry, drama, biography, translation) that Haywood, Fielding and Sheridan worked on to underline their creative concerns as well as their high intellectual skills to pursue them successfully.

Eliza Haywood is presented as a prolific woman of letters, who contributed to *The Female Spectator* with several reviews, translated foreign works, and produced poetry, drama and fiction. The reviews examined by Lorenzo-Modia and Amenedo-Costa convey the idea that her work suffered the fate of most literature written by women around the mid-eighteenth century, which was to be measured against the aesthetic and moral standards set by the greatest male authors of the time. The authors’ insightful reading of the *Monthly* review of *The History of Miss Betsy Thoughtless* reveals that linearity in the construction of the narrative and the absence of digressions, common in male-authored fiction, were deemed as technical flaws. Similarly, the reviewers found distasteful the main character’s will for independence, which challenged widespread assumptions on gender roles. As the authors claim, this illustrates “the ways in which women’s oppression, both in cultural and economic terms, was in operation and hence that male chauvinism was deeply rooted in society.” (49) Although Haywood was praised for her descriptions of “dress and equipage, and other little exteriors” (*The Monthly Review* 5, Oct. 1751: 394), Lorenzo-Modia and Amenedo-Costa draw attention to the fact that these were considered inherently feminine features and consequently her work fell “short of reaching the literary standards expected for literature of the highest quality, which by implication are represented by male authors” (48). The authors conclude that Haywood’s critical reception was not particularly favourable (124). The space devoted to Sarah Fielding includes reference to the various genres (fiction, biography and translation) she cultivated with great success, according to some of the reviews examined. Apart from praising a sequel of her most famous novel, *The Adventures of David Simple*, and

the original structure of *The Cry*, critics particularly commended Fielding's didacticism in her fictional biography *The Lives of Cleopatra and Octavia*, in a sense anticipating the interest on women's lives and issues that was later to become the focus of women's studies. Her talents as a translator of classical works were also acknowledged in the reviews to Xenophon's *Memoirs of Socrates*. Finally, Frances Sheridan is described as a "respected author of novels and plays", whose epistolary novel, *Memoirs of Miss Sidney Bidulph*, "was an immediate success" (91). Most of her works received generally positive appraisals although in a rather condescending attitude, as Lorenzo-Modia and Amenedo-Costa rightly argue. In the reviews to her most famous novel, she was praised for her ability to enhance the moral qualities of her characters and encourage the pursuit of virtue, being favourably compared to Samuel Richardson in this regard, who had been so successful with the publication of *Clarissa, or Virtue Rewarded*.

## Conclusions

Having examined in the light of their cultural context the numerous reviews the authors collect in the "Appendix" (pp. 141-233), the fourth section offers the "Conclusions" (pp. 121-125). First of all, it is stated that these pieces of literary criticism were inevitable informed by a masculine perspective, thus applying standards of judgement predominantly male-oriented to works written by women. On the whole, this caused a rather negative assessment, or at its best, rather patronizing evaluations of female writing. For Lorenzo-Modia and Amenedo-Costa this implied a certain "degree of control over the formation of readers' responses" (121) towards female-authored books and made it more difficult for women writers to gain full recognition on the same level as male authors. As a result of this, much of the literary contribution made by these female authors has been neglected until the twentieth century, which explains their absence from the British canon in the past. The authors claim that this general neglect was due to the particular cultural context where these women wrote, which kept a narrow-minded perspective on "new and emerging female roles, but also limited the opportunities for presenting them to British literary society" (122). The authors also remark the hypocritical treatment given to female writers when reviewers meant to criticise their work but condescended with their faults because they were ladies. That is the case of the review issued by the *Monthly* on Sheridan's *Memoirs of Miss*

*Sidney Bidulph*, which according to the Lorenzo-Modia and Amenedo-Costa, "says much about the literary and cultural reception of female writers in Britain and raises awareness of the use of gender power in critical discourse" (123). Likewise, the authors state, many reviews provided evidence of current models of identity and works were described and assessed in accordance with prevailing social codes and gender stereotypes which rewarded women's traditional patterns of behaviour as dutiful wives and mothers and virtuous maids. On the other hand, the most positive outcome of the presence of the works by these female writers on the periodical press is, as the authors rightly point out, that despite the fact that they did not always receive positive assessment or the attention they deserved, women's writing was at least "represented in the culture of print when critical practice and debate was primarily regarded as a male activity" (124). Some of the reviews, especially those on Sheridan's and Fielding's works, were positive and revealed a timid but increasing support on the part of critics to these writers.

The fifth section presents the primary and secondary sources consulted ("Sources and Bibliography", pp. 125-140), including the eighty-four periodical publications that were issued throughout the eighteenth century and a comprehensive record of references which encompasses the primary works by the three authors, as well as an updated list of the monographs and reference works on eighteenth century fiction, press and culture consulted for this study. The last section is the "Appendix", whose inclusion I would like to commend as it allows readers of this insightful study to have first-hand access to the reviews and not just the quotations taken out of context which the authors have selected to support their arguments.

We have to congratulate the authors on their unrelenting efforts to raise awareness on the difficulties women have faced to enter cultural and literary history as active participants. This book has to be commended for being an invaluable source of information for anyone interested in Eighteenth-century studies, British cultural life, the emergence and evolution of the periodical press, the genre of the literary review, and the history of the *Monthly* and the *Critical*, two of the most serious literary periodicals published in the second half of the eighteenth century. But above all, the volume is an essential reading for those concerned with the reception of three female writers who participated in British culture in a male-dominated public sphere.



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## BOOK REVIEWS

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# ***Mid Eighteenth-century Female Literary Careers in The Monthly Review and The Critical Review***

**Lorenzo-Modia, M<sup>a</sup> Jesús & Mónica Amenedo-Costa. 2018.**

Sevilla: Arcibel. 233 pp. ISBN: 978-84-15335-65-8

In her analysis of mid eighteenth-century English women novelists, Felicity Nussbaum remarked on the ongoing increase in scholarly attention regarding the interaction between women authors and the rise of the novel, and highlighted a well-known issue in academia: the decades of scholarly neglect female voices have endured. “Widely read by their contemporaries”, Nussbaum wrote, “these women and others like them had largely been lost to the literary history of the first half of the twentieth century” (2005: 745). Among the great authors of the period, Nussbaum lists Sarah Fielding, Eliza Haywood, and Frances Sheridan. These three women writers, of different backgrounds and careers, have recently been the focus of academic attention, amongst which is the present book, *Mid Eighteenth-Century Female Literary Careers in the Monthly Review and the Critical Review*. This renewed interest allows for a reconfiguration in our understanding of eighteenth-century women’s literary careers and their contemporary reception. In this sense, the present volume makes a valuable contribution to a line of research of major interest and importance in current literary studies.

Indeed, ever since Nussbaum’s piece was published, almost fifteen years ago, researchers in eighteenth-century literary studies have applied themselves to fill the gap produced by gender bias in academia. Like some of their counterparts, Haywood, Fielding, and Sheridan have been the object of growing critical attention, as proves the publication of critical studies like Carol Stewart’s *The Eighteenth-Century Novel and the Secularization of Ethics*, republished in 2016; and reprints of their works: Sheridan’s posthumous *Eugenia and Adelaide*, Fielding’s *Cry*, and Haywood’s *The Fortunate Foundlings* have been reprinted by academic publishing houses in the last two years. Continuing this trend, two new biographical accounts of the life and work of Haywood and Fielding have seen the light as part of Routledge’s *Eighteenth Century Political Biographies* series: Kathryn King’s biography on Haywood (2015), Christopher Johnson’s on Fielding (2017). These recent publications show a continuous scholarly interest in showing the quality, scope, and influence of women’s creative work.

*Mid Eighteenth-Century Female Literary Careers in the Monthly Review and the Critical Review* follows in the footsteps of these publications in the sense that it adds to the new literature on women writers in general, and these three authors (Haywood, Fielding, and Sheridan) in particular. However, the volume does not confine itself to the analysis of the authors' careers, but also identifies a very compelling critical thread: the influence of the emerging periodical press in the reception of women's works. In their study, Lorenzo-Modia and Amenedo-Costa convincingly demonstrate that eighteenth-century critical reviews offer a bounty of data that may help us reproduce a more accurate representation of the critical responses to women's literary productions. For both Lorenzo-Modia and Amenedo-Costa, members of the Literature and Language department of the Universidade da Coruña and specialists in women's studies, history, and reception, the objective of their analysis is "to document the representations of female writers found in the press and the evolution of these over time", and to "assess in particular the presence of women in review journals" in order to "construct a framework for the study of male criticism of female-authored texts" (2018:12), a task they have successfully accomplished.

### ***Three subjects of investigation***

As already pointed out, the critical thread of the authors' analysis is the confluence between female authorship and eighteenth-century journalism. Indeed, the emergence of the periodical press in the Eighteenth century and the subsequent development and success of literary criticism was instrumental in shaping the British literary canon. The phenomenon of the rise in popularity of the periodical press is well known: half a century before the studied sample, around 320 periodicals were published, the number increasing to 700 in only fifty years. The numbers are staggering: "Newspaper circulation rose steadily from about 50,000 per week in the first decade of the century to about 200,000 in the middle." (O'Gorman 2007:128). With this overflow of data, the authors have chosen as sources two of the most successful and culturally relevant periodicals of the time, *The Monthly Review* and *The Critical Review* (*Monthly* and *Critical* henceforth), and analysed the reviews of the works of Haywood, Fielding, and Sheridan in the span of 20 years (1749-1769). Although the choice of these two periodicals as sample is amply justified based on practical matters (they both reviewed all three authors during the chosen time span), the importance of these publications in the founding of literary criticism cannot be overstated: The *Monthly* and The *Critical*, led by Ralph Griffiths and Tobias Smollett, pioneered modern literary criticism (Feather 2006: 96), reinventing reviews and rescuing them from puff pieces into actual works of intellectual value and a certain journalistic accuracy, a trend -in quantity and in quality- that would only increase during the Romantic period (Wheatley 2005: 1).

Regarding the three subjects of this investigation, the study reveals that the critical attention to Haywood did not help her earn a place in the British canon and held her career in little regard. Notwithstanding the dismissal of her contemporaries —Lorenzo-Modia and Amenedo-Costa remark—, Haywood is now recognised as one of the major figures of the eighteenth-century literary world, and her role in the rise of the novel has been the subject of scholarly interest since the last century. On the other hand, both Fielding and Sheridan were generally praised by the reviewer and received a more welcoming and supporting attitude towards the majority of their works, especially their later publications. All in all, the three authors' literary careers received critical attention and a heterogeneous recognition of their talents, in the sense that the critics responded better to some works than others.

### ***Four chapters***

As for its structure, the book is organised into four chapters. It opens with an introduction into the purposes and objectives of the book. Chapter two, "Periodical publications: Book Reviewing Papers", offers an overview of eighteenth-century press culture, focusing on the emergence of periodicals and their influence within the formation of a literary canon. Chapter three, "Eighteenth-century Women Authors", is itself divided into three parts, each dedicated respectively to Haywood, Fielding, and Sheridan, with a brief biographical overview and an analysis of the reviews the *Monthly* and the *Critical* published of their various literary productions, be they essays, plays, novels, or translations. Chapter four offers the conclusions to the analysis of the reviews. The authors remark that, although it is true that these reviewers wrote with a gender bias, the simple act of being reviewed gave visibility to these works and their authors, and affirm that the *Monthly* and the *Critical* "provided these female writers with a cultural space" (2018: 125). The periodical press's attention and recognition generated a public interest which inserted Haywood, Fielding, and Sheridan into their country's literary history, or in other words, the British literary canon. Finally, the conclusion, which is followed by an appendix with a transcribed version of the reviews analysed.

In short, in the context of eighteenth-century literary studies, gender, and reception, Lorenzo-Modia and Amenedo-Costa's book takes as point of departure the scholarly effort that seeks to reinstate female voices into British literary history. The thorough study accomplished in *Mid Eighteenth-Century Female Literary Careers in the Monthly Review and the Critical Review* represents a necessary and valuable addition to the field of Eighteenth-century literary studies, bringing to attention the bias in the literary canon by examining one of the contributors to its formation, the periodical press in general, and their reviews of works by women in particular. Nevertheless, not only does it fill a gap



in research but also invites researchers to follow upon this line of investigation, and in this sense it constitutes a point of departure for future and further research. I consider very positively the book's clear structure and the inclusion of an annex containing the analysed primary sources, both of which highlight the book's dou-

ble function as a study and a resource. Taking this into account, we can safely say that this analysis opens up a line of research to examine other writers and other periodicals in which they were reviewed, inviting other investigators to broaden the sample of reviewed authors, the periodicals and/or the timespan studied.



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## BOOK REVIEWS

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# ***Paul Auster's Ghosts. The Echoes of European and American Tradition***

**María Laura Arce Álvarez. 2018**

London: Lexington Books. 188 pp. ISBN-10: 1498561632. ISBN-13: 978-1498561631

**P**aul Auster's *The New York Trilogy* (1987) is not just an anti-detective novel, as it has often been regarded. The book can be interpreted as a palimpsest of the Western Canon, where some of the great works of the American and European literary traditions are interwoven to create a rereading of modern reality in a new key—what the critic Malcolm Bradbury called “the postmodern tradition” (Arce Álvarez 257)—. María Laura Arce Álvarez moves away from the traditional analysis of the work of Auster as a postmodern rewriting of the detective fiction to make a thorough study of intertextuality in *The New York Trilogy*. In its six chapters, this exhaustive work dissects the influence that Herman Melville, Edgar Allan Poe, Nathaniel Hawthorne, Samuel Beckett and Maurice Blanchot had on Auster's trilogy.

Since the publication of *Beyond the Red Notebook. Essays on Paul Auster* in 1995, a collection of essays edited by Denis Barone, the work of Paul Auster has all but dropped out of view. Bern Herzogenrath published *An Art of Desire. Reading Paul Auster* (1999), an analysis of the deconstruction of the conventions of certain genres in *City of Glass*, *In the Country of Last Things* (1987), *Moon Palace* (1989), and *The Music of Chance* (1990). Mark Brown's *Paul Aus-*

*ter* (2007) focuses on the study of the individual's identity in the urban space of New York. Brendan Martin's *Paul Auster's Postmodernity* (2008) makes an analysis of the narrative of the author as a postmodern biography. In *The Invention of Illusions: International Perspectives on Paul Auster* (2011), edited by Stefania Ciocia and Jesús Ángel González, twelve international scholars—including the aforementioned Mark Brown—offer very different perspectives on Auster's books and films. However, the volume that most resembles the study of Arce Álvarez is Aliko Varvogli's *The World that Is the Book: Paul Auster's Fiction* (2001), an extensive analysis of the intertextuality present in the work of Auster. The difference between Varvogli's book and Arce Álvarez's is that the latter makes an intense study of intertextuality in a single title, *The New York Trilogy*.

## **Chapter one**

In the volume, we find a brief introduction (xi-xv) followed by six chapters, followed by and afterword (157-161). Chapter 1, “Paul Auster's Metafiction and Intertextuality in Context” (1-9), establishes the background

of the study—metafiction and intertextuality instead of anti-detective fiction. Each of the ensuing chapters introduces an in-depth study of the influence that a text or set of texts by a certain author admired by Auster exerts on the composition of *The New York Trilogy*. Although some parts of the introduction seem a bit forced, like the use of a quote by T. S. Eliot to justify the study of the use of intertextuality by a postmodern writer, or the long reference to Jorge Luis Borges and Miguel de Cervantes at the end of it—two authors that are sorely missed in the rest of the book—the general criteria for choosing the most appropriate authors are truly relevant. According to Arce Álvarez, there are three types of intertextuality in the work of Auster. There is an explicit intertextuality, “manifested by introducing in the fiction writers such as David Henry Thoreau and *Walden*, Walt Whitman, Edgar Allan Poe and ‘William Wilson’ and ‘The Narrative of Arthur Gordon Pym of Nuntucket’ (1838), and Nathaniel Hawthorne and ‘Wakefield’ (1835) among others” (6). Apart from this, there is an implicit intertextuality, which is revealed in two ways: there are authors and texts that shape the plots, symbols and characters in his stories, and then there is the influence of translation. Arce Álvarez argues that Auster’s work as a translator of Maurice Blanchot’s short stories gave him access to a literary theory that shaped a great deal of his fiction.

## Chapters two-four

In Chapters 2-4, Arce Álvarez offers three critical comparisons between the three novels in *The New York Trilogy* and each of the main American Dark Romantics. Chapter 2 “The Writer and the Typist” (11-26) presents a critical comparison between *City of Glass* and Melville’s “Bartleby, the Scrivener: A Story of Wall Street” (1853). The starting point of the analysis is their relationship with the act of writing, and she uses Blanchot’s literary theory and his texts about Melville to bring forth essential aspects of Auster’s style. Chapter 3 “The Writer and his Doubles” (27-39) deals with *Ghosts* and Poe’s “William Wilson” (1839). Apart from the obvious reference to Poe’s short story in *City of Glass*—after his wife and son’s death, the protagonist, Daniel Quinn, starts writing detective fiction under the pseudonym William Wilson—the plot of the second novel of *The New York Trilogy* could be thought of as a rewriting of Poe’s short story. Arce Álvarez presents a comparative study of the two stories based on Auster’s rewriting of Poe’s idea of the double. While the latter centres on the psychological implications of the representation of the doppelgänger, Auster makes use of Poe’s trope to recreate the process of writing. Chapter 4, “The Invisible Writer” (41-57), focuses on *The Locked Room* and Melville’s first novel *Fanshawe* (1828) as well as his short story “Wakefield” (1835). The consistency of these three chapters devoted to the influence of the Dark Romantics lies on the fact that

Arce Álvarez presents an interesting collection of essays related to the process of writing. In this fourth chapter, we see how Auster makes use of the traits of Melville’s characters to represent the role of solitude and of a confined space in such process.

## Last two chapters

The last two chapters of the book constitute the most impressive part of the study. The insightful discussion of the implicit influence of Beckett and Blanchot in Auster’s trilogy are truly comprehensive and provide a fascinating account of the relevance of its intertextuality for the “postmodern tradition.” Chapter 5, “The Trilogy of Absence” (59-107), offers an indispensable account of the intertextual relationship between Beckett’s trilogy—*Molloy* (1955), *Malone Dies* (1956) and *The Unnamable* (1958)—and Auster’s own. Although Arce Álvarez is not the first to establish this connection, hers is the most comprehensive study on the matter. Auster reformulates Beckett’s existentialism in an elaborate quest for meaning. This chapter complements the previous ones, which seem to be opening the way for this illustrative account of the act of writing whose end is a Beckettian-absurd absence. A void, as shown by Arce Álvarez, that represents the fate of the writer to reproduce endlessly “a cyclical discourse that constantly goes back to the beginning of the novel” (160). The last chapter, “Translating influence” (109-155), presents the most abstract of the intertexts. *The New York Trilogy* interacts with Blanchot’s literary theory in a way that was already looming large in Auster’s *The Invention of Solitude* (1982). Again, Arce Álvarez offers an account of this implicit kind of intertextuality as a “fictionalization of the process of writing” (160). This chapter brings the whole book together by presenting the different aspects that Blanchot defines as constituents of a literary space and which have been anatomised in the previous sections: “the essential solitude, the figure of the author, the locked space, the process of inspiration, the use of language and finally the literary death” (160).

In conclusion, *Paul Auster’s Ghosts* is an interesting and rewarding volume. The comprehensiveness of the book maps out in a simple way the convoluted theoretical ground of the intertextuality present in *The New York Trilogy*. The three comparative analyses of the works of the American Dark Romantics in Chapters 2-4 provide a thorough critical study of a topic that has always been associated with the New York author. However, it is the thought-provoking chapters devoted to the influence of Blanchot’s literary theory and Beckett’s trilogy overarching structure that add substantial significance to the critical analysis of Auster’s seminal work. The book is a pleasure to read and it not only fulfils its purpose of interpreting the trilogy from an intertextual perspective: it sheds new light on this recurrent field of study.



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## BOOK REVIEWS

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# ***Tradition and (R) evolution: Reframing Latina/o Identities in Contemporary US Culture***

Carmen M. Méndez García, ed. 2018

Universidad de Alcalá: Biblioteca Benjamin Franklin. ISBN: 978-84-16978-68-7

**T**he constant questioning of the *Latinidad* has been at the crux of the Latino community from its inception. This examination came from multiple fronts, both by people inside and outside of it along with the critical studies of the same. *Latina/o*, *Chicana/o*, Mexican-American, or, in the last few years, *Latinx* or *Chicanx*, among others, and the creation and evolution of a communal identity within the United States that reflects the complexities and perils of being a minority within a larger hegemonic group has been reflected both in the works of art created by said community as well as the academic examination of the same. In fact, when pondering about the multitude of terms surrounding the *Latinx* community, José Flores would underline how “[b]eyond the issue of names and labels [...] there are differing levels or modes of meaning simultaneously at work in the very act of apprehending and conceptualizing the ‘community’ and ‘identity’ in question” (Flores 2000: 193). That is, according to Flores, not only do these various terms that are used to conceptualize the Latino imagined community— as he borrows from Benedict Anderson’s definition of nation as an *imagined community*— echo the multiplicity of origins of the members of the Latino community but each term would determine a distinct lived experience of

each of the individuals who uses it and why. As the Pew Research Center published in 2013, the preferences for one or another term respond to a multitude of variables as where was the person using said terms born, their age, their dominant language, or even in which state they live in (Pew Research Center 2013). Therefore, the terms *Hispanic*, *Latino*, *Latinx*, or *Chicano*, to name but a few, could have different meanings not only for the person inscribing themselves into said community but also to the outside person labeling. As Flores would conclude, the Latino experience “is guided above all by lived experience and historical memory, factors that tend to be relegated by prevailing sociological approaches as either inaccessible or inconsequential” (Flores 2000: 197).

## ***Latinidad***

The question of *Latinidad* and what it entails constitute the part of what Gloria Anzaldúa was exploring in *Borderlands / La Frontera* (1987). While talking about nation and nationality, questions of culture, language, gender, or sexuality were key when defining Chicana identity, talking about it as an encompassing and multilayered

concept. For Anzaldúa, conceptions of identity and culture are what form the individual, carrying with them, entailing the historical suffering of a community under a colonial empire as well as the cultural and sexual struggles that women and sexual minorities had to endure. As Anzaldúa reflects when being rejected even from some members of her own community, “I will have to stand and claim my space, making a new culture – una cultura mestiza – with my own lumber, my own bricks and mortar and my own feminist architecture” (Anzaldúa 2012: 44). And it is within this *mestizaje* and hybridity that the volume *Tradition and (R)evolution: Reframing Latinx Identities in Contemporary US Culture* (2019) is situated.

This extraordinary volume deals with the current discussions that the field of Latinx/Chicanx Studies is having, offering some insight into what the past, present, and future of the discipline might look like. *Tradition and (R)evolution: Reframing Latinx Identities in Contemporary US Culture* integrates the multitude of Latinx identities within it, acknowledging the diverse ethnic, racial, sexual, and national origins of its members. As editor Carmen Méndez García reminds us, “[h]owever complicated a term may seem, [...] we can still find usefulness in it, if we understand that it should be used to describe, not to prescribe” (Méndez-García, n.d.: 12). For the editor, the multiplicity of terms that include the Latinx experience in the US enriches the discussion on the Latinx community. Rather than trying to dictate the correct terminology based on the different schools of thought that each individual scholar subscribes to in their essays, Méndez-García embraces the multiple terms that they use to offer an accurate depiction of what are the most common trends on the field, offering the reader a panoramic vision of the issues at the forefront of the discussion of Latinx Studies and respecting the rich history that each term has had. This is exemplified in the myriad of media analyzed in the volume – novels, art, children’s books, movies..., — the different national origins of each of the works examined – Puerto Rico, Dominican Republic, Mexico...—, as well as the bilingual nature of the Latinx community, with essays written both in English and in Spanish. Furthermore, the analysis of the Latinx identity and the multifaceted approach of the volume is illustrated by the division into three parts: “Identities and Interculturality, Drawing Identities”; “Identities and Tradition, Remembering Identity”; and “Identities at the Margins, Reframing Identities”.

## First section

In the first section, “Identities and Interculturality, Drawing Identities”, the essays focus on contemporary views on identity, analyzing current works of art that question the construction of identity of the current Latinx individual. Francisco José Cortés Vielco in his essay “Interculturality Interrupted: Judith Ortiz Cofer’s *The Latin Deli*” deals with the notions of inter, trans, and multiculturalism in the collection of stories and poems by Judith Ortiz

Cofer that describes the lives of Latinas from Puerto Rico in the United States in the 60s and 70s. Maria Laura Arce Álvarez with “The New Mordor: Dominican-American Identity and the Reconstruction of the Other in Junot Diaz’s *The Brief Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao*” offers a vision of the construction of Dominican-American identity and the construction of new ethnic spaces in the novel by alternating Dominican Republic history and United States reality. Maria Bernardo Flórez with “Representing Identity beyond Multiculturalism in Chicano Children’s Literature: Maya Christina Gonzalez’s Picture Books” shows the need for representation of Latinx children, visually and verbally, in the books by Mexican author Maya Christina Gonzalez. With her bilingual books that even illustrate Gloria Anzaldúa’s work, she offers not only the necessity of role models of the Latinx community from a very young age but also the connection with nature. In “Recipes for a Latina Identity: Feminist Food Politics in Children’s Literature”, Carmen González Ramos examines children’s picture books and the importance of food in them as a way to reject assimilation. Taking from four different Chicana authors, she sees the kitchen, usually inscribed as a space of subjugation for women, and reclaims the domestic space as a creative space and the locus of authority for women, as well as a space for community creation. Lastly, with her essay “Poesía y pintura de Raquel Valle Sentíes: filiaciones estéticas comprometidas” author María Jesús Castro Dopacio accounts for the life and work of this poet and painter from Laredo, Texas, along with the representation of other authors within her oeuvre, how these works challenge the literary and artistic status quo.

## Second section

The second section of the volume, “Identities and Tradition: Remembering Identity”, concentrates on how authors from the Latinx community have tackled the idea of memory in their reconstruction of identity. This is evident in Inés E. Veauthier’s essay “Past, Present, and Future: Memory and Belonging in Chicano Literature”, which analyzes the cultural memories of *Under the Feet of Jesus* by Helena Maria Viramontes and *The Guardians* by Ana Castillo. For Veauthier these two novels exemplify two ways of thinking about remembrance, once as a way to stay alive and another as to revise those same memories and reconstruct a different past. The past and the haunting of said memories is further explored in “Spring Is for Me! Floral and Binary Representations in *The Miraculous Day of Amalia Gómez*” by María Teresa Monroe. In her analysis of the novel by John Rechy, Monroe sees how in the exploration of the binary and dichotomized constructions that surround the title character there is an effort by the author to blur said structures and complicate sexual and moral normativities. Further exploring remembrance, Ellen McCracken examines the trauma of the diaspora in Reyna Grande’s *The Distance Between Us* with her essay “Truth in the Middle: Trauma and Collective Family Memory in Reyna Grande’s *The Distance Between*

Us". With her essay, McCracken questions the validity of autobiographical accounts and Grande's efforts to recuperate the past through photographic archives of her own family. Lastly, Vanessa de Veritch Woodside with her essay "Prickly Politics and 'Becoming' Chicana in Palacio's *Ocotillo Dreams*" analyzes the distancing of the Latina who has to make peace with her roots when being an English monolingual US citizen. Set in 1997 during the "Operation Restoration" in Arizona, Veritch Woodside examines the depiction of these traumatic events for the Latinx community as illustrated by Melinda Palacio.

## Final section

The final part of the volume, "Identities at the Margins, Reframing Identities", is concerned with sexual and gender identities, their depiction and examination in Latinx multimedia works as well as the multitude of spaces that they encompass. This is evident in Sophia Emmanouilidou's analysis of raúlsalinas' work in "*La pinta* Poetics and the Creation of the Social Imaginary in raúlsalina's *Un Trip Through the Mind Jail y Otras Excursions*". In her essay, Emmanouilidou considers the parameters of citizenship and personhood within the walls of a prison, illustrating the liminality of the incarcerated individual and what it entails when talking about Latinx masculinity. The exploration of masculinity is also the main focus of Juan González Echevarría's historical overview of the Chicano masculinity in cinema with his essay "Masculinidad en el cine chicano: ¿De las políticas del esencialismo a las poéticas del realismo?" González Echevarría's essay questions the hegemonic masculinity vis a vis homosexuality in the cinematographic Chicano project linked with the Movimiento and the adoption of the chauvinist mascu-

line model the Pachuco as exemplified in *Zoot Suit*. This questioning of the masculine modes of cinema is also illustrated in Xamuel Bañales' personal account in his essay "Toward a *Cinema de Jotería y de Liberación*". In his account of the Jotería movement, a mix of art, activism and scholarship, Bañales narrates his own personal projects within this group, pausing in his works *Chico Chats* and his interviews. With E. A. Montero Rangno's essay "*Mujeres Abnegadas*, Disobedient Eves and the *Mariposa* Consciousness: Finding a Darker Shade of Queer in Rigoberto González's *Butterfly Boy: Memories of a Chicano Mariposa*", the modes of masculinity and homosexuality alter to include other sexualities and genders. For Montero Rangno, the autobiography of Rigoberto González offers an exploration of the sexuality of the author, understanding Chicano as the locus of the intersection of sexual orientation and ethnicity. This is further explored in the last essay of the section "*Jotería* Legacies: Queer Chicana/o Cultural Production as a Cultural Heritage Site" by Daniel Enrique Pérez. In his essay, Pérez understands Jotería studies as an oppositional consciousness, with a project of historiographical research that focuses mainly on actor Ramón Novarro and visual artist Tino Rodríguez and their breakage of the heteronormative masculinity.

In conclusion, through the essays in the volume, *Tradition and (R)Evolution: Reframing Latino Identities in Contemporary US Culture* examines the current status of the field of Latinx Studies, illustrating the most up to date conceptualizations of identity for this community. Through a national, historical, and sexual overview of this identity and through a multitude of takes from the different essays, editor Carmen Méndez-García explores the intersectionality of the kaleidoscopic Latinx community, making this volume a fundamental text for anyone interested in the current status of the field.



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## BOOK REVIEWS

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# ***Voice and Discourse in the Irish Context***

**Diana Villanueva Romero, Carolina P. Amador-Moreno, and Manuel Sánchez García, eds. 2018**

London: Palgrave Macmillan. x+ 294 pp. ISBN: 978-3-319-66028-8

**T**aken-for-granted notions like culture, language and identity are all constructed and/or can be reproduced through a variety of voices and discourses that are articulated either in written or spoken form. In the case of Ireland, a country where the diversity of voices (and silences) as well as rich linguistic expressions co-exist and are constantly in shift, *Voice and Discourse in The Irish Context* is a valuable academic record. As its title reveals, and the volume itself accurately fulfils, this interdisciplinary collection of essays looks at the concepts of voice and discourse in the Irish context(s) from various angles such as linguistics, literary studies, visual performances and translation. Furthermore, the volume accommodates the analysis related not only to well-known Irish writers such as Behan, Beckett, Joyce, O’Casey, Wilde, and Shaw; it also dedicates a considerable space to recent academic research on more contemporary literary figures like Emma Donoghue, Colin Bateman, and Robert McLiam Wilson. As the editors Carolina P. Amador Moreno and Diana Villanueva Romero note in the introduction to the volume, the common point of the chapters is “a strong focus on language and style and an informed analysis of the material they discuss”, while each section frames the linguistic divergences “in similar, though not identical, contexts” (3). Employing both recent corpus methodologies as well as more traditional approaches, the volume is composed of ten chapters that are thematically grouped. The first section, ‘Enregistered Voices’, deals with how voice is socially received, while the second section, ‘Voic-

es from the Past’, provides recollections and analyses of Irish discourses in the past. The third part, titled ‘Performative Voices’, pays attention to Irish drama, and the last part, ‘Voicing Conflict, focuses on identity and the sense of self.

## ***First part***

The first part, ‘Enregistered Voices’, echoes ‘enregisterment’ (a term developed by Asif Agha that can be interpreted as linguistic varieties that are socially recognised within a language). The section opens up with an essay by Elaine Vaughan and Máiréad Moriarty. The authors introduce a pair of comedians called Rubberbandits, who are the urban representatives of Limerick. Vaughan and Moriarty explore the performance of this comedy duo and how they parody the *knacker*, a diminutive term in Irish English for an individual that lacks social education. However, according to linguistic data that the authors provide, the knacker is actually not a person but a concept (specifically within the borders of Limerick) to frame the differences of the middle class. As Vaughan and Moriarty conclude, Rubberbandits provide an insightful critique of the absurdity of the biases against the marginalised image of the knacker by offering creative language plays and voicing in their colourful performances. The second contribution of the volume is written by Carolina P. Amador-Moreno and Anne O’Keeffe. The authors



focus on a particular linguistic feature in Irish English (*be + after + V-ing* structure) and its various implications in the spoken and written corpora. What makes their analysis particularly interesting is that they have used large-scale contemporary spoken and literary data based on the statistics of the Limerick Corpus of Irish English. Amador-Moreno's and O'Keeffe's study ascertains that *be + after + V-ing* structure is employed both in fictional and in real contemporary spoken Irish English specifically to focus on the immediate outcome and/or closeness of an event as well as a past narrative device. Furthermore, the study uncovers that this linguistic structure is used in Irish English narrative contexts to reinforce the dramatic effect. The authors conclude that this particular structure is articulated often in informal conversations, indicating the speaker's personal perspective, unlike in some formal registers such as institutional speeches and workplace talk.

### Chapters three and four

Chapters three and four take us to the 'Voices from the Past', as both contributions revisit Irish emigrants' letters written throughout two centuries (from the eighteenth to the twentieth century). The third chapter of the volume, by Persijn M. de Rijke, focuses on schwa-epenthesis, a sort of spelling difference, and a distinctive characteristic of Irish English. In the light of a diachronic investigation of the Corpus of Irish English Correspondence (CORIECOR), the author examines this specific linguistic phenomenon in emigrants' letters written between 1730-1930. De Rijke's study unearths various schwa-epenthesis clusters throughout these letters that accommodate the altered words (i.e. 'film' was pronounced as [ 'filəm]). The study also uncovers the limited information related to the social and geographical situation of the writers of these letters, and highlights the fact that the lack of a certain conclusion, whether religious and / or gender based, may influence the use of epenthesis. De Rijke concludes that the schwa-epenthesis can be encountered more frequently in earlier IrE than today. Emigrants' letters are also the subject of chapter four with the support of CORIECOR, as Dania Jovanna Bonness focuses on these writings from a distinct linguistic perspective. The author examines the employment of negative and auxiliary contraction as well as the absence of the full forms of the modal and auxiliary verbs (i.e. 'be', 'have', 'will', 'would') in those writings. These letters generally include very rare use of contraction, and they do not specifically address auxiliary contraction, which particularly differs in later stages of IrE. Furthermore, Bonness provides an in-depth historical information about the auxiliary contraction during primal stages of IrE, and draws our attention to an interesting linguistic feature called colloquialisation. Coinciding with one of the main themes of the collection, *colloquialisation* can be defined as a process of a written language to be transformed into speech. The author concludes that both negative contracted and auxiliary contracted forms would be encountered more as these texts tend to be more colloquial.

### Chapters four and five

Chapters four and five shed light on 'Performative Voices', specifically on Samuel Beckett's work. In particular, the fifth chapter contains Ruano San Segundo's comparative study focusing on the stage directions of Beckett's play *Waiting for Godot* (1955) in English and in its French version (*En attendant Godot*), which was formerly published in 1952. According to San Segundo, in addition to laying out how words should be articulated, stage directions may reveal the details about a speaker's / a character's personality in a play. In the light of a corpus-based approach and with the support of Wordsmith Tools 6, San Segundo provides the recurrence of particular patterns related to each character in both versions. The author points out that the stage directions in *Waiting for Godot* are more carefully arranged and more well-planned, whereas in *En attendant Godot* they lack clarity. Taking into account the disparity between the two versions, San Segundo concludes *Waiting for Godot* can be accepted as Beckett's perpetual course of creativity. In chapter six, José Francisco Fernández deals with Samuel Beckett's play *Not I* (1972) in terms of issues related to Irish identity. While Beckett's writing is traditionally considered to be timeless as it is stripped of his Irish roots, Fernández claims that some components in the play confirms Beckett's strong link with his native land. Following a keen research, Fernández finds out that the incoherent utterances of Mouth (the main and the only character in the play) echo an Irish woman who was looked after in an unknown orphanage in Ireland. Fernández underlines Beckett's initial attachment to his national identity as related to Mouth's voice and to the obscure implications of an Irish setting in the play. The author concludes that this play, as a product of Beckett's ripened years, details the writer's preoccupations and life intentions concerning Ireland. The section closes with Gustavo A. Rodríguez-Martín's study on Bernard Shaw's *Caesar and Cleopatra* (1921) and *Saint Joan* (1923). The author examines the allegorical and symbolic elements in these works and illustrates Shaw's stance towards the political turmoil between Ireland and the British Empire. In the light of a chronological approach, Rodríguez-Martín pays attention to the shift in Shaw's perspective through time in between his production of the two plays. The author states that Shaw employs the phraseology of the political utterances of those times to awaken the interest in his audience. Rodríguez-Martín concludes his essay by stating that the symbolic elements (i.e. textual iconography, verbal anachronism, and gender connotations) in Shaw's two aforementioned plays provide an echo of the political zeitgeist of Ireland and Irishness.

### Final section

'Voicing Conflict' is the final section of the volume and it focuses on identity as a shared topic. Daniel de Zubía-Fernández has provided the first contribution of

this part and the author offers a comparative analysis of two novels: *El raro privilegio* (2012) by Ronnie Quinn (an Argentine writer with Irish roots), and *Fado alexandrine* (2013) by António Lobo Antunes (a Portuguese writer). Zubía-Fernández underlines how the horrific experience of war creates a similar sense of dislocation and alienation in spite of a common past in both cases. Furthermore, as the author explores, both novels dedicate a vast space to voice the silenced position of war veterans and their recollections. Acknowledging the impossibility of adaptation to homeland after war in both novels, Zubía-Fernández concludes that both narratives offer a striking perspective of war memories as they address all war veterans that have been ignored in their motherlands. The second essay in this section, by Teresa Casal, discusses the interaction between public and particular voices in two different works: “The Dead” (1914) by James Joyce, and “Speaking in Tongues” (2006) by Emma Donoghue. Taking into account the social, cultural, and political shifts that Ireland has experienced over the last century, Casal examines the altering perspectives towards concepts such as love, intimacy, and desire within the two short stories. According to the author, these works provide an access to the desires of their protagonists while revealing the ultimate lack of intimacy with partners or loved ones. Both “The Dead” and “Speaking in Tongues” auspiciously accommodate various voices and, as Casal concludes, the former addresses a male desire within the patriarchal Ireland of its time, whereas the latter depicts possible forms of intimate relationships within the contemporary Irish society. The volume closes with Stephanie Schwerter’s contribution.

The author examines the German, Spanish and French translations of two well-known novels which deal with ‘The Troubles’: *Eureka Street* (1996) by Robert McLiam Wilson, and *Divorcing Jack* (1995) by Colin Bateman. According to Schwerter’s research, both novels show a more detached position towards ‘The Troubles’, as both works employ word plays, parodic elements and irony. Therefore, the author underlines that these novels offer a distinct re-reading of the painful issues as they subvert the traditional approaches to the conflict. However, the terms that are particularly related to the bitter experience of ‘The Troubles’ together with the employment of Northern Irish humour, which might be challenging even for Southerners, are highly compelling for the translators. Schwerter’s concluding remarks reveal the difficulty of the accurate translations in the case of these novels as she expresses the need for translators who have an in-depth knowledge of the local cultural references.

All in all, this collection serves as an original contribution to the field of Irish studies as it brings together academic research on diverse disciplines such as linguistics, literature, performing arts, and translation. The volume offers a thorough and versatile source for reconsidering social, cultural, and political alterations in Ireland through almost two centuries, as it not only revisits the discourse of the past through the works of canonical figures, but also focuses on the voice of contemporary names. Providing an in-depth critical analysis on *voice* and *discourse* within the Irish context, these ten essays manifest how culture, language and/or identity are fluid concepts and are subject to (re)construction and (re)production.

## BOOK REVIEWS

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# ***Gender Issues in Contemporary Irish Literature.***

## ***Electronic Journal of the Spanish Association for Irish Studies***

Melania Terrazas, ed. 2018.

13:2. ISBN 1699-311X

Available: <https://www.estudiosirlandeses.org/portfolio-items/issue-13-2/>

**G***ender Issues in Contemporary Irish Literature* is a special volume of the journal *Estudios Irlandeses*, published by the Spanish Association for Irish Studies (Asociación Española de Estudios Irlandeses – AEDEI). This issue, edited by Melania Terrazas, is linked to the association’s international conference held in 2017 at the University of La Rioja titled “Fe/male Challenges in Irish Studies from the 19th to the 21st Centuries”. The aim both of the conference and this issue, as the editor underlines in the introduction, is to reassess “former ideological dogmas concerning gender issues and the exploration of new trends in gender in Irish studies” (Terrazas 2018: 1), trends which have become particularly salient from the 1990s, coinciding with the Republic of Ireland’s economic boom (the “Celtic Tiger” years), and its correlatively more culturally liberal attitudes.

Thus, the 1990s were characterised by the consequences derived from the abolition of the marriage bar (1973) and the growing economic independence of women, legalization of contraception—a measure which confirmed the growing sexual freedom for both women and men—and multiculturalism (leading to the establishment of ‘mixed’ families—embodied by the Taoiseach himself Leo Varadkar). This liberal process has continued well into the early 21st century with the referendums leading to the approval of same-sex marriage in 2015 and, most recently, the repeal of the Eighth Amendment on abortion on 25 May 2018.

These changes had already been foreseen by the more than obvious reformulations of family structures—despite the official discourse promoted by Article 41 of the Irish Constitution, according to which the State “guaran-

tees to protect the Family [...] as the necessary basis of social order and as indispensable to the welfare of the Nation and State". Consequently, women were recognised constitutionally as a pillar sustaining Family and State, to the point that the Republic had "to ensure that mothers shall not be obliged by economic necessity to engage in labour to the neglect of their duties in the home" (Art. 41 2.2). For obvious reasons, this had an impact on gender formulations not only on femininity but obviously on masculinity as well, since, as Peter N. Stearns states, "neither gender can be understood without comparison to the other" (2006: 3). However, as recent studies on the family in Ireland have foregrounded, the strict ideal imposed legally (by state policies) and morally (by the Irish Catholic Church) was, more often than not, an impossibility and a source of anxiety for many unwilling and/or finding impossible to adhere to the norm—particularly with the advancement and influence of second wave feminism in the 1960s. As the editors of *Family and Dysfunction in Contemporary Irish Narrative and Film* (2016) underline,

**Institutionalised through nationalist, religious, moral and political discourses, the family has functioned as an icon of Irish culture. The engagement of Church and State to foster an idea(l) of the nuclear family, based on principles of Catholic morality, patriarchal authority, heterosexuality and hierarchy has contributed to construct an image of the Catholic family that would officially become a cornerstone of the Irish society and a metaphor of national political and religious unity. With the legal support of the Irish Constitution of 1937 women's roles within the household were reduced to the fulfilment of domestic standards of motherhood and subservience. It was not until the last quarter of the twentieth century, with the introduction of liberal policies, the advance of the recognition of women's rights, the secularization of society, and the effects of immigration, transnational forces and globalization, when such an understanding of the family cell – as it has often been referred to – and, with it, Irish identity, commenced to be challenged (Morales-Ladrón *et. al.* 2016: 1-2).**

Celtic Tiger Ireland seemed to have come of age in order to confront its ghosts from the past as an act of contrition when, for example, the ill-treatment of single mothers and children born out of wedlock, with the state's knowledge, were publicly revealed—together with a number of scandals concerning child abuse on the part of Catholic priests. An example is the case of the Magdalen Laundries, institutions run by Catholic nuns where "fallen women"—mostly single mothers—were incarcerated in order to atone for their sinful acts in exchange for unpaid labour. These issues are still object of public discussion—so that debates concerning particularly women and gender continue to be in the forefront. After all, the report of the Inter-Departmental Committee to Establish Facts of the State Involvement with the Magdalen Laundries was not published until February 2013, resulting in the then Taoiseach Edna Kerry's official apology to the victims in the Dáil Éireann (Bowman 2016: 429-434). Thus, par-

ticularly within Irish studies, feminist theory and gender studies are particularly relevant despite of—or perhaps as a result of—the postfeminist discourse of recent years.

Unsurprisingly, especially in the late 1990s, and well into the twenty-first century, a number of academic, multi-disciplinary work on gender has been published, and this special issue of *Estudios Irlandeses* is an interesting addition to the field. The issue includes contributions not only from Spanish scholars, but also from the United States, Ireland and France, offering an international perspective on gender issues in Irish studies and in contemporary Irish literature in particular. The volume opens with an article by José Lanters on Thomas Kilroy's 1989 adaptation for the Irish stage of Henrik Ibsen's *Ghosts*. Interestingly, Lanters offers an analysis of Kilroy's process of adaptation—updating Ibsen's play and contextualising it in the Ireland of the late 1980s—as a direct response to the petition of the Irish actress Siobhán McKenna and the theatrical producer Phyllis Ryan. McKenna established a direct connection between Ibsen's *Ghosts* and the situation of women in the Ireland of the 1980s. According to the Programme Note, McKenna told Kilroy how "attitudes in Irish society towards women" were actually reflected in Ibsen's plays: "She said wasn't it some kind of terrible comment that the crawthumping puritanism, the withered fear of women which Ibsen wrote against so passionately in his native Norway could still exist in our own country over one hundred years after the first appearance of *Ghosts*" (quoted in Terrazas 2018: 8). This criticism was particularly taking into account the results of the 1986 referendum which rejected the legalisation of divorce.

Kilroy thus was directly questioning Art. 41 of the Irish Constitution on "The Family" and, consequently, the official discourse concerning women's role in society—establishing a direct link between Ibsen's criticism on the conventions of marriage and the containment of Irish women. Not only that, he also introduced the AIDS crisis by making one of the characters HIV positive instead of suffering from syphilis as in the original—linked in the popular imaginary of the time with promiscuous and "unhealthy /unnatural" sexual behaviour. Oliver, the HIV positive character, makes a passionate plea for love irrespective of sexual orientation, and this seems to foresee the "yes" arguments leading up to the 2015 marriage equality referendum that legalized same-sex unions in Ireland and led to the addition of a clause to Article 41 that marriage 'may be contracted ... by two persons without distinction as to their sex' (Terrazas 2018: 14). Lanters shows how the theatre—by adaptation in this case—speaks to social realities. Something similar, it could be argued, took place with the production of Marina Carr's *On Raftery's Hill* (2000) also at the Abbey—a play about patriarchal abuse within the family and incest—during the campaign for the referendum on the 8th Amendment on abortion.

Maureen O'Connor's "'Informed Love': Human and Non-Human Bodies in Tim Robinson's Ethical Aesthet-

ic” is an important contribution since, as the editor of the issue underlines, it offers “the first scholarly examination” of this artist’s prose writing (Terrazas 2018: 3), whose books focus on the Galway Bay area, “providing details of folklore, geology, family histories, politics, ethnography, zoology, economics, ornithology, botany and language” (Terrazas 2018: 20). A rather complex article due to the author’s multidisciplinary theoretical approach, O’ Connor intersects feminism, ecocriticism, cartography, mapping, new materialism and animal studies, amongst other critical perspectives, in her analysis of Robinson’s writing.

O’Connor in particular highlights the importance of ecofeminism not only for reading and revealing new aspects of Robinson’s work, but also as the tool for deconstructing the human/non-human dichotomy and, thus, all other hierarchical dichotomies which promote non-egalitarian views and attitudes of the world by recognising the “multiple agencies” (Terrazas 2018: 21) of non-human existence (particularly resulting from ecocriticism’s new materialist approach). The article aims at reassessing Robinson’s work from the viewpoint of gender since, as O’Connor acknowledges, although Robinson feminises and even sexualises the land in his writing (which undoubtedly could be interpreted as drawing from the aising tradition), he does not recur to symbols of conquest and (sexual) penetration. On the contrary, images used by Robinson reflect an attraction for nature based on respect and understanding. As O’ Connor underlines, ‘Ecofeminists seek to dismantle hierarchical structures of thought, and contend that the fate of the environment is inextricably linked to the fate of those ‘others’ in a exploitative, top-down capitalist system including women” (Terrazas 2018: 22). This is what Robinson achieves in his writing, so the author contends, especially if one pays close attention to an aspect not particularly examined in Robinson’s writing, and that is his references to animal life.

The following two articles focus on John Banville’s writing, which complement each other despite their different perspectives. The first contribution, by Mehdi Ghassemi, analyses Banville’s trilogy: *Eclipse*, *Shroud* and *Ancient Light*. The second, by Mar Asensio Aróstegui, offers a deep exploration of the first novel from the trilogy, *Eclipse*.

In contrast to most critical material on Banville’s female characters, which more often than not targets the narrator’s “ethical shortcomings” in dealing with his female Other (Terrazas 2018: 31), Ghassemi considers that, particularly in the trilogy object of his analysis, women are the means by which Banville illustrates his “ontological and epistemological vision of the self” (Terrazas 2018: 31). In fact, the male protagonist/narrator frames his female counterpart as a means of “finding the true nature of the self and reality” in his attempt to unravel the “mystery” that women embody (Terrazas 2018: 31). For the purpose, Ghassemi offers an insightful analysis of Banville’s female characters using Paul De Man’s *Aesthet-*

*ic Ideology* and *The Rhetoric of Romanticism* in particular, together with Friedrich Nietzsche’s aesthetical concept of “the surface” and Peter Brook’s analysis of the (female) body as his theoretical framework. Ghassemi, thus, offers a convincing exploration of Banville’s trilogy arguing that his narrative can be conceived “as an examination of how masculine-feminine intersubjectivity functions, how it is constructed rather than a promotion of the phallic structure of male and female identities” since, after all, art is “a mirror-surface of the world” (Terrazas 2018: 40; 41).

On her part, Aróstegui in “The Role of Female Characters in the Narrator’s Quest for Identity in John Banville’s *Eclipse*” also offers another insightful critical approach. Instead of focusing on the “narrator’s narcissism” as is often the case in analyses of the novel, Aróstegui argues that in *Eclipse* female characters, in fact, contest being objectified by the male gaze. As she sustains along the article, the novel’s interest from the viewpoint of gender studies is that “the centrality of the male figure is progressively decentred by the agency of a feminine other, both puzzling and fascinating, who stubbornly keeps on intruding on the narrator’s solipsistic activities” (Terrazas 2018: 46). Nonetheless, as Ghassemi also contends, this female other is the one who ultimately enables the main male characters, Alexander Clever, “find his identity as an individual, as a father and as a creator” (Terrazas 2018: 54).

José Díaz-Cuesta’s analysis of John Michael McDonagh’s film *The Guard* (2011) is the volume’s contribution to the exploration of masculinities. Despite being criticised by some for its stereotypical approach to Ireland (a kind of response that the director’s brother, the playwright and filmmaker Martin McDonagh, also receives for his plays set in the “Emerald Island”) Díaz-Cuesta aptly demonstrates how J. M. McDonagh’s film criticises representations of masculinities in genres such as the western and other kinds of action films. Most specifically, Díaz-Cuesta shows how McDonagh satirises political correctness in order to offer a critical analysis on certain constructions of masculinity promoted by Hollywood action cinema.

María Amor Barros-del Río explores gender issues in another trilogy—in this case Edna O’Brien’s *The Country Girls Trilogy*, published in a single volume in 1986 together with the added Epilogue. More often than not conceived as a “feminine *Bildungsroman*” (Terrazas 2018: 77), Barros-del Río successfully argues that O’Brien’s work, in fact, reveals the impossibility of a female *bildung*, something the author achieves via innovative formal and structural narrative techniques. These include, for example, the use of an alter-ego by having two female characters and polyphony, enhanced by the addition of the *Epilogue*, as well as having one of the female protagonists gradually disintegrate and disappear with her death.

In order to sustain her argument, Barros-del Río firstly offers an account of the function and characteristics of

the *Bildungsroman* genre in Western literature. Then, she proceeds to demonstrate how this genre is particularly problematic within the context of postcolonial Ireland, considering that the “political ideology of the state and the ecclesiastical apparatus intervene in the formation of individual identity, restraining the emancipatory process to certain conventions that are strongly linked to specific models of citizenship explicitly stated in the Irish Constitution of 1937” (Terrazas 2018: 80). In other words, O’Brien problematizes the viability of a female *Bildungsroman* due to the conflicts arising between gender constructions and the search for personal identity in the Ireland of the 1960s. As Barros-del Río sustains, “The challenge of the female *Bildungsroman* [...] means not only an intrusion into a world in which she [the female character] is not considered as an active individual, but firm opposition to the subordinate roles that are expected from her within the heterosexual relationship” (Terrazas 2018: 80).

In “The Modernisation of William Shakespeare’s *Hamlet*: Identity and Gender in Irish Murdoch’s *The Black Prince*”, Alicia Muro Llorente examines how updating a canonical text in order to make it more accessible to a contemporary audience entails offering a counter-narrative of its female characters, particularly from such a male-centred text as Shakespeare’s play. In order to uphold her argument, Muro Llorente firstly gives an account of the how Ophelia and Gertrude have been interpreted. She concludes that “we do not really get to know them or understand their motivations, actions, or inner selves, we only learn about them through third parties” (Terrazas 2018: 92), that is, the men in the play.

Muro Llorente then proceeds to demonstrate how most characters in the play have their counterparts in *The Black Prince*. The author argues that Murdoch’s objective is to reassess the female characters in *Hamlet*, and firstly she does so by emphasising how the men in her novel narrate events “from their own masculine point of view, leaving little room for the female voice” (Terrazas 2018: 95). This is done in order to subvert the narrator’s central position in the novel at the end in the four Postscripts where the women are revealed to be far more powerful than initially expected and, in particular, by revealing Murdoch’s version of the young Prince of Denmark as an unreliable character/narrator—condemning thus his male gaze. What Murdoch achieves, as Muro Llorente aptly argues, is an understanding of the male gaze and how women are precisely constructed via that gaze (Terrazas 2018: 101).

Issues of translation in relation to gender are also taken into account in Edurne Goña Alsúa’s article “Translating Characters: Eliza Doolittle ‘Rendered’ into Spanish”. In this contribution, Alsúa analyses and compares the five Spanish translations of George Bernard Shaw’s *Pigmalion* by Julio Broutá (1919/1990), Ricardo Baeza (1943), Floreal Mazía (1952), Juan Leita (1985) and Miguel Cisneros (2016). Alsúa’s article foregrounds how certain choices in translation may render a character—in this

case Eliza Doolittle—differently from the original—and thus offer and/or reflect a gender perspective in accordance with the translator’s socio-historical context, and of the country in which the translation will be published, in this case Spain. Thus, via a number of examples from the various translations in comparison to the original, Alsúa shows how Eliza is rendered as a more confident character in Broutá’s 1919 translation (via the elimination of tagging, which does not exist in Spanish), and how in the re-edition of the same translated text in 1990 with the introduction of a scene from the 1941 published version in English, Eliza is presented as a more independent woman. Consequently, the 1990 re-edition reflects the changes in gender perspectives in the Spain of the late twentieth century together with the decade’s hope in the future (Terrazas 2018: 116).

Finally, in “Beauty Magazines’s Discourse in the Dystopian World of Louise O’Neill’s *Only Ever Yours*”, Ekaterina Muraveva problematizes media and advertising discourses addressed to women in relation to O’Neill’s dystopian novel. Muraveva convincingly sustains how *Only Ever Yours* (2014) thematic on the idealisation of female bodies via their objectification, commodification and sexualisation is a direct response to the kind of discourse used by advertising and beauty magazines—the so-called “glossies”, such as *Cosmopolitan* or *Elle*. For the purpose, Muraveva uses as a sample *Cosmopolitan*’s September 2013 issue and compares its imagery, language and discourse techniques to O’Neill’s novel, in particular via the use of (feminist) critical discourse analysis.

The novel, set in a dystopian world “where females are specially grown as ‘eves’ who are then redistributed into clear biological groupings: ‘companions’, ‘concubines’, and ‘chastities’, defining their future relations to men” (Terrazas 2018: 124), reflects the kind of discourse to be found in “glossies,” which clearly associate personal and professional success with beauty, understood above all as not being old nor obese. As Ekaterina highlights, “the discourse of beauty magazines sets out to create a perfect one-dimensional utopian world inhabited by beautiful, young and free individuals. [...] The celebratory discourse of contemporary beauty magazines exploits feminist agendas and foregrounds ideas of freedom and emancipation” (Terrazas 2018: 126), paradoxically, via the commodification and sexualisation of the female body. O’Neill, therefore, questions postfeminist discourses according to which the conscious self-manipulation or “self-objectification,” according to Rubino *et al.* (Terrazas 2018: 134) of the female body stands for agency and female power—and how current discourses about the body discriminate those who no matter what, do not fit in the norm: older women. As Claire Anderson underlines in relation to Rosalind Gill’s work, “the discourses of ‘girl power’ sit alongside a pervasive re-sexualisation of the female body, but where the continued invisibility of older women in public contexts persists” (2019: 17), one of the issues which O’Neill addresses in her novel.

The volume closes with two pieces from two Irish writers, Rob Doyle and Evelyn Conlon, on their perspectives of gender and literature. On the one hand, Doyle's text is particularly interesting in its reference to the effects of feminism's advancement on 'male anxiety' (Terrazas 2018: 139) and on how men conceive their masculinity. On the other, Conlon underlines how, despite the advances made by women worldwide and in Ireland in particular, it still remains an issue to write about women without constraint: "I'm a great one for the Lady

McBeths. I'd prefer to be horrible than to be a cardboard cut-out" (143). These two short pieces offer ample food for thought.

As the editor of *Gender Issues in Contemporary Irish Literature* points out, this special issue should give rise to new analyses including literature from the whole island of Ireland. Furthermore, it would be of great interest to include how other genders are approached and represented in contemporary Irish literature from the north and south.



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## BOOK REVIEWS

JUAN NAVARRO

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# ***Teoría y práctica de los estudios culturales***

**David Walton. Translated by Pilar Cáceres****Madrid: Editorial Carpe Noctem, 2018**

489 pp. ISBN: 978-84-945807-4-1.

**C**ultural studies has traditionally been associated with a school of thought whose consolidation may be traced back at least five decades, to the time when Richard Hoggart founded the Birmingham Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies in 1964. This marked the junction of numerous social and humanistic sciences which pre-existed what we now call cultural studies; however, up to that date they had been scattered and disjointed. This fact cannot be put down to chance or considered as conclusive as it continued a whole tradition which has been—and is indeed—deeply rooted in the English-speaking academia. Yet twentieth century's French philosophers slightly altered the course of this trend. Its interdisciplinary nature has led to the necessity of contextualising the numerous issues that it addresses. Accordingly, also due to its success among British authors, its scope of influence has been partially confined to Britain. Nevertheless, it has recently gained momentum in Europe, especially after some authors have included poststructuralist and postmodern theories in the sphere of cultural studies. To put it in Walton's words, in cultural studies—and especially in this book—"it is important, then, to stress that the contextualizing material [...] is drawn (mainly) from the narrow, if highly influential, British cultural studies tradition" (2012: 3). Taking this into account, the translation of this volume (*Doing Cultural Theory*), successfully rendered by Pilar Cáceres under the title *Teoría y práctica de los estudios culturales*, cannot but be noted as a challenging task.

It is actually the highly miscellaneous nature of cultural studies what fails to provide a proper, accurate defi-

nition of what it really is, mainly because of the impossibility of defining culture itself. It is no wonder, then, that cultural studies is often labelled as "pragmatic, strategic and self-reflexive" (Grossberg 1992: 2). Much has been said on this topic; however, regardless of the profusion of voices and opinions, most writers agree on the fact that culture, and by extension cultural studies, is an extremely difficult concept to define. It encompasses diverse social and humanistic topics such as, among others, ideology, the study of popular culture, the notion of the other, gender studies, or the analysis of mass media or the postmodern, which sketch out an interwoven net of concepts, views and approaches. All these factors complicate its identity and situate it in a non-place of blurred borders. Therefore, "it might be more effective to see it as a contested *space*" (Walton 2012: 2), where many disciplines interact and oppose each other. This indefiniteness is efficiently utilised in David Walton's *Teoría y práctica de los estudios culturales*, which covers a wide span of the history of cultural studies: from the mid-nineteenth century to the first decade of the twenty-first century. It examines the different perspectives kept in the analysis of culture throughout history. Thus, the book may be seen as an amalgamation of sociology and philosophy sprinkled with some historical remarks, and provides a summative but exhaustive analysis on the numerous currents of thought that have nourished, and helped to develop, what now is known as cultural studies. But it is not only theory what informs this book. The theoretical discussion is supplemented by numerous practice exercises that undoubtedly enhance its pedagogic and didactic purpose.



The book is structured in fifteen chapters plus a preface to the Spanish edition, an introduction, a thorough glossary and a list of references. For reasons of space, only a few chapters will be reviewed. It sets its starting point in Matthew Arnold's theories, considered to be the cornerstone of this field as he inaugurated a particular way of seeing popular culture, which would later be resumed by F. R. and Q. D. Leavis. Their contributions are quite significant as they challenged the relevance of grassroots culture and questioned the capacity of low classes to develop their own forms of culture. This paves the way for the subsequent theories set out by Raymond Williams, whose approach can be seen as antagonistic to them; also for the Frankfurt School and Adorno's critique of the culture industry, and E.P. Thompson's dissertation on the making of the English working class. This journey through the first recognisable steps of cultural studies allows Walton to shape a solid background that will support further analysis.

Structuralism plays a pivotal role in the book. Starting off with Saussure's concepts of *signifier* and *signified*, the book moves on to an accurate discussion on the contributions of Barthes, Levi Strauss, Eco and Stuart Hall to its cultural application. It also delves into the different theories formulated by Marx, Engels, Gramsci and Althusser, thus providing a bird's eye view of the ideological approach to culture throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. As to poststructuralism, the book gathers together Barthes, Derrida's deconstruction and its application to cultural studies, and, among others, the works and opinions of Spivak or Bhabha, which map out a complex but apprehensible outline of postcolonial studies. The next pages are devoted for the most part to the discussion of the theories developed by Lacan, Foucault and Butler, seeking to identify the numerous cultural phenomena operating in language, power and politics in the second half of the twentieth century. The following chapters look at several authors such as Baudrillard, Lyotard, Habermas or Jameson, seeking to map the connections between postmodernism and both structuralism and poststructuralism. These associations are particularly evident in a subchapter devoted to Jameson ("Cultura posmoderna, más 'falta de profundidad' y la disminución del afecto") where, after a brief introduction to the author's thinking —presented through his particular vision of Munch's *The Scream* and Warhol's *Diamond Dust Shoes*—, Walton underscores a connection between postmodern theoretical discourse and Foucault's interpretation of poststructuralism. This also links to Baudrillard's definition of the postmodern as the "breakdown between the high/low culture distinction" (Walton 2012: 229), which culminates the debate initiated by Mathew Arnold and the Leavises. Thus, the book follows a closed circuit track which paradoxically seems to draw the self-reflexive postmodern tendency of the late cultural studies.

A witty subchapter titled "Un estilo académico posmoderno: una introficción alternativa" shows, with a touch of irony, a self-referential text which breaks down the

most significant peculiarities of the postmodern. The text includes a series of puns, metanarrative phrases, eclectic styles and references to contemporary pop culture which bring to light the disjointed, fragmentary, globalised culture proclaimed by Lyotard. In his own words, culture is defined by an approach to consumption where "one listens to reggae, watches a western, eats McDonald's food for lunch [...], wears Paris perfume in Tokyo and 'retro' clothes in Hong Kong" (1984: 76). These are certainly the most challenging chapters to translate.

The last chapters are intended to analyse how the study of culture may supplement or surpass structuralism, poststructuralism and postmodernism. Here, the pedagogic purpose of the volume becomes more evident. As stated in chapter fifteen, the purpose of the book is "proporcionar una 'caja de herramientas general' que ayud[e] a los lectores a convertirse en miembros de la 'comunidad interpretativa' de los estudios culturales" (Walton 2018: 384). Specifically, chapter fifteen drifts into the future of cultural studies. Titled "Hacia dónde nos dirigimos" ("Where to Go from Here" in English), this last chapter resumes Jameson's notion of *cognitive mapping*, understood as "una cultura política pedagógica" con objeto de formular 'formas radicalmente nuevas' que puedan ofrecer una visión especial del lugar que ocupamos dentro del capitalismo multinacional" (Walton 2018: 384), and provides a cultural studies-based application of the notion. All these topics situate the object of study in the present. Thus, this section encompasses numerous questions which seek to understand how multinationals operate in society and how cognitive mapping, through journalism and online activism, can help to identify these processes. All these topics are interrelated and associated with space materialism and activist journalism. Therefore, discussions on numerous authors such as Hardt and Negri, Deleuze or Klein are addressed.

Such an exhaustive review on cultural studies requires a straightforward style, and Walton meets this expectation. Similarly, Pilar Cáceres' translation succeeds in providing a crystal clear text, keeping the balance between erudition and spontaneity. The major achievement of the translation is to circumvent language gaps standing between English and Spanish. This results in a coherent text, in line with the intention of the English original. The translation quality is optimal and so it is acknowledged in the preface: "Todo un logro por el que la felicito y quedo agradecido" (Walton 2018: 6). However, the translation process is not problem-free. Despite the successful transfer of both meaning and style, there are plenty of elements that not only enrich the original text but also complicate their expression in Spanish. As mentioned above, this becomes evident in chapters where puns, double entendres and wordplays appear, especially in "Un estilo académico posmoderno: una introficción alternativa" ("A postmodern academic style: an alternative intro-diction" in English). The first problem comes in the title; however, as can be noted, it is satisfactorily solved in the translation. Likewise, Walton uses homophony in many occasions to make puns. Many examples may be drawn but, for

reasons of space, only a few will be outlined below. For instance, *sleep-slip* and *fraud-Freud*: “The Fraudian sleep, I mean, Freudian slip: *it’s not so much that we talk in our sleep but that we sleep in our talk*” (Walton 2012: 201); the Spanish text reads: “El lapsus fraudento [my italics], quiero decir, el lapsus freudiano: no es tanto lo que dicen nuestros sueños cuando dormimos, como lo que dormimos cuando somos nosotros quienes hablamos” (Walton 2018: 292). A new pun is introduced in an attempt to locate the causes behind patriarchy: “The politico-religious vessel upon which male power wood have to be unlocked and based: PA-tree-Ark-key”. Once again a homophony (*wood-would*) activates the double entendre, which turns to be impossible to translate literally: “El arca político-religioso en el que la madera del poder masculino se basa y ha de ser reconocida: el patri-arca-do”. Due to language manipulation, deeply rooted in the source language, all puns are difficult to translate. This brings up the discussion on the impossibility of translation. The lack of sim-

ilarity between the languages involved demands some creativity from the translator; consequently, an adaptation is required which, however different it may be from the original text, still conveys a similar meaning. This type of problems is a permanent feature in the text. But in all cases the target text achieves to provide a proper solution to them and somehow manages to preserve the wordplays.

The translation of this volume should be seen as a renewal in Spanish-speaking academia. It provides an updated account of cultural studies spanning over a century of scholarly work, thus helping to spread its influence. Despite its many-sided nature, Walton achieves to condense such a complex amalgam of theories into clear-cut texts. Furthermore, Pilar Cáceres’ translation preserves the character of the original book. Aware of its difficulty, she delivers a translation that will surely help to eliminate language and cultural borders.



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## BOOK REVIEWS

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# ***Otro mundo es posible. Un canadiense en la Guerra Civil española***

**Ted Allan. 2017. Edición de Juan Manuel Camacho Ramos. Salamanca: Amarú Ediciones. 288 págs. ISBN: 978-8-49967353-0**

**P**or todos es sabido que la Guerra Civil española fue un hecho histórico que cambió el rumbo del país y supuso un antes y un después en su historia y sus ciudadanos. Aunque se ha escrito mucho sobre la vida en ese período tan difícil y traumático, si existe un libro que refleje este tema desde un punto de vista totalmente diferente al acostumbrado ese es *Otro mundo es posible. Un canadiense en la Guerra Civil española*, escrito por Ted Allan y editado por Juan Manuel Camacho Ramos.

Este libro nos ofrece la visión personal del escritor Ted Allan (alias Bob Curtis en la novela) sobre su experiencia vivida como miembro de las Brigadas Internacionales durante uno de los hechos que más repercusión tuvieron en la historia de España: su Guerra Civil. En *Otro Mundo es Posible* Ted Allan narra con detalle su vida desde que atraviesa los Pirineos para cruzar clandestinamente la frontera, hasta que vuelve a reunirse con sus camaradas brigadistas en el municipio de Quinto, en Zaragoza. El libro nos presenta los ocho meses que el autor pasó en el país durante el año 1937. A pesar de su deseo de ir al frente del Jarama a luchar contra el avance de las tropas fascistas, una herida sufrida en el brazo lo aparta de las trincheras y es designado como reportero de guerra en los estudios radiofónicos de Madrid, en el edificio de Telefónica. Allí será de gran utilidad para poder dar a conocer a los norteamericanos la situación del país durante el conflicto bélico. Este hecho es sumamente interesante, ya que

Bob no sólo está retransmitiendo la guerra, sino que al mismo tiempo está haciendo partícipes a otros países de la historia de España. Angustiado por la decepción que le supone apartarse de sus amigos, Bob Curtis conoce a la persona que será su gran amor, la fotógrafa Gerda Taro (alias Lisa Kammerer en la novela). Durante el resto la obra, Bob Curtis nos narra cómo transcurre su vida junto a Lisa y cómo experimenta el duro transcurso de la guerra envuelto en un mar de dudas y vaivenes emocionales. La cronología de los acontecimientos y la reseña biográfica previas a la novela incluidas en la edición de Juan Manuel Camacho Ramos son de gran utilidad para poder entender un poco más incidentes de la vida de Ted Allan y su compañera Gerda Taro durante el transcurso de los acontecimientos.

El libro supone una obra única no por los hechos narrados, sino por la perspectiva que se ofrece de ellos. Mucho se ha escrito sobre la crudeza y la angustia que supone una guerra, incluso sobre los sentimientos de aquellos que lucharon por defender su bandera. Sin embargo, *Otro mundo es posible* nos muestra a un chico canadiense de apenas 21 años que, viendo la situación española, decide no mostrarse indiferente y enrolarse voluntariamente en las Brigadas Internacionales para defender una bandera que no es la suya con la esperanza de, como él y sus amigos desean, acabar con “ratas, piojos, fascistas y demás alimañas” (Allan 191). Una de las características más reseñables del libro es la cercanía que se produce

entre lector y protagonista. Este lenguaje colorista nos lleva precisamente a identificarnos con las ideas de Bob. El libro se aleja de la neutralidad, y es precisamente ahí donde se establece el vínculo, ya que hoy en día, en una sociedad donde el altruismo escasea y vemos a diario los problemas que ocurren en todas partes del mundo, la iniciativa de Bob de hacer su equipaje y enrolarse en el ejército nos despierta cierto sentimiento de orgullo. Si bien puede que los hechos narrados no sean rigurosamente precisos en cuanto a historia se refiere, es imposible negar que conforman la historia personal del escritor, ya que los describe con el detalle y el sentimiento que solo puede otorgar el haberlos vivido en primera persona.

Otro elemento que resulta realmente llamativo es la frialdad con la que los personajes viven la guerra. Durante uno de los bombardeos sorprende ver cómo Bob y Lisa son capaces de encontrar un momento para besarse o, una vez fuera de peligro, Lisa es capaz de decir: “¡Vaya día! Me siento bien. Se recompusieron filas y me siento bien. Esta noche haremos una fiesta de despedida en Madrid” (255); o cuando Milty, uno de los amigos de Bob, es capaz de decir que “es una guerra maravillosa” (233). Hechos como este llaman la atención del lector, pues el

lenguaje usado es tan natural y al mismo tiempo tan impactante que, durante la lectura, resulta inevitable ponerse en la piel del personaje e imaginar nuestras propias reacciones durante una situación tan peligrosa.

Durante la lectura de un relato referente a la guerra se nos transmite el sentimiento de constante incertidumbre de aquellos que deben emigrar forzosamente, ya sea en busca de un lugar alejado del conflicto o incluso de aquellos que deben abandonar su país por miedo a las represalias derivadas de un pensamiento diferente al que se intenta imponer por la fuerza. Sin embargo, Ted Allan retrata un lado diametralmente opuesto en un libro que no deja indiferente a nadie y que, debido a ese enfoque tan particular de la historia, hace que el lector no pueda apartar la mirada del papel. La edición de Juan Manuel Camacho Ramos es realmente fiel a la obra original, y trabaja cada detalle con un cuidado que resulta asombroso. Otro mundo es posible no es solo una lectura obligatoria para los amantes de los relatos bélicos, sino un cuaderno de bitácora de unos muchachos que, lejos de mostrarse impávidos, decidieron dar un ejemplo a toda una generación, viajar a un país en guerra, y dejar una huella en la historia.

CONFERENCE REPORT

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DINA PEDRO AND VICTORIA PUCHAL TEROL

*Universitat de València*

# ***Celebrating Women in Literature and the Arts of the Nineteenth Century***

LAP (Literature, Arts and  
Performance) Research Group  
Universitat de València (Spain)  
21 November 2018  
In-house research seminar

**S**ince recent decades, Victorian and neo-Victorian studies have been gathering momentum in the academic world, both in the fields of literary and cultural criticism. This scholarly interest for all things Victorian is reflected in the numerous academic publications and international conferences devoted to this discipline. Due to this current academic attention, the research group 'Literature, Arts and Performance' (GIUV2017-354) hosted the in-house research seminar "Celebrating Women in Literature and the Arts of the Nineteenth Century" at the University of Valencia on 21 November 2018. This seminar was celebrated under the auspices of the research project "Entorno digital de investigación del teatro en lengua inglesa del siglo XIX escrito por mujeres. Fase 1" (GV/2018/A/106), funded by Conselleria de Educación, Investigación, Cultura y Deporte, and coordinated by Dr. Laura Monrós Gaspar. This research group is made up of literary scholars from several Spanish universities, whose research focuses on the dialogue between literature and the arts in the Anglophone tradition, with a special interest in modern cultural practices, such as reception and adaptation studies. This seminar aimed to open a discussion on the emergence of nineteenth century and neo-Victorian studies scholarship at a national level. Coinciding with the bicentenary of the publication of Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein; or the Modern Prometheus* (1818), the main purpose of the seminar was to vindicate the role of women as agents and producers of culture in the long nineteenth century and its aftermath in contemporary Victorian revisitations. This event had a national character, given that it included the active involvement of guest respondents from other Spanish universities, such as Prof. Rosario Arias Doblas (University of Málaga) and Dr. Miriam Borham Puyal (University of Salamanca).

The conference began with the opening remarks by Dr. Jose Antonio Calañas, Head of the Department of English and German Studies at the University of Valencia, and Dr. Laura Monrós Gaspar, coordinator of the LAP research group. The seminar was divided into two main blocks: the morning sessions, which were more academically oriented, and the afternoon panels, which included speakers and activities outside academia, whose main ideas revolved around the notion of public engagement.

## ***The morning sessions***

The morning sessions were conducted in English and were only opened to PhD students with academic interests in the fields of Victorian and neo-Victorian studies, as well as to members from the LAP research group, who acted as guest respondents. Speakers were asked to elaborate papers related to the research project they had in progress and to circulate them to the other participants in advance. On the date of the seminar, participants briefly presented their pieces, which were later discussed by the respondents and audience.

The notion of nineteenth-century actresses and female playwrights contesting mainstream gender roles was a prominent topic in the seminar. There were two papers dealing with this subject in the first morning panel. Victoria Puchal Terol (University of Valencia) presented her research project, "Displacing Victorian Women: Mid-Nineteenth-Century Popular Drama and the Representation of Female Identity", in which she questions the identity of displaced female bodies in the mid-Victorian popular stage, especially during the 1860s. In order to do so, she carried out a cross-genre analysis of mid-Victorian plays performed in London, in quest of a broader perspective of representation of female identity and metaphors of travel on the popular stage, away from the feminine preconception of the self. Along the same lines, Lucía Casanova Gornals (University of Valencia) delivered the paper "Reconstructing Elizabeth W. Macauley: A Genealogical Approach?", where she aimed to rebuild the biography of nineteenth-century actress Elizabeth Macauley following Bratton's genealogical model, a tool conceived to research women's history in the early nineteenth century. Macauley's life seems to have been obscured by theatre history, and this research project seeks to fill in the gaps of her biography.

Another key aspect in the seminar was the chronological evolution of nineteenth-century literature written by women, and its long-lasting impact until the present. Manuel Hueso Vasallo (University of Málaga) explored how the works of Victorian authoress Dinah Maria Mulock set a precedent in the representation of homosexual men in literature. In his research project, "Dinah Maria Mulock's Silence and Queer Representation", his main purpose is to carry out a chronological analysis of the portrayal of queer bodies in male homoerotic pieces of fiction, from the Victorian period to the present, to prove the still-lasting impact of Mulock's queer representations as disabled and silenced characters. On the other hand, Virginia Coll (University of Valencia) examined the different Spanish translations and the reception of Jane Austen's novels in Spain. The main goal of her dissertation "Publishing Jane Austen: An Editorial Analysis of Austen's Novels in Spain and a Stemmatic Analysis of Her Spanish Translations" was to trace the presence of Austen's novels in the publishing industry in Spain and to explore the socio-cultural conditions that affected their reception. She has conducted a study on the Spanish translations of the author's six main novels by constructing a stemmatic genealogy of the texts, so as to determine whether they were an original creation, or they stemmed from previous translations.

The last morning panel focused on contemporary and alternative portrayals of nineteenth-century women, with a special interest in their presence in popular media culture. Dina Pedro (University of Valencia) tackled this issue in her paper "Representations of Female Traumas in Neo-Victorian TV Series". She explored the frequent portrayal of empowered Victorian female characters and their struggle to work through their family traumas in a corpus made up of several neo-Victorian audio-visual works, including *Penny Dreadful* (2014–2016) or *Taboo*

(2017–). Her aim is to figure out whether this current obsession with the representation of female trauma in neo-Victorian fiction attempts to give voice to historically marginalised characters, or if it capitalises on the audience's morbid and voyeuristic expectations. Finally, Andrea Burgos Mascarell (University of Valencia) touched upon the socio-political content of dystopian young adult fiction in her talk “Dystopian Fiction for Young Adults: Cultural Representations of Human Needs”. Through an analysis of contemporary dystopian novels, such as *The Hunger Games* (Collins, 2008; 2009; 2010) or *Divergent* (Roth, 2011; 2012; 2013), her main aim is to identify common social and economic problems in dystopias and to relate them to real-life concerns in western societies. She draws on corpus linguistics, discourse analysis and tagging in order to perform a qualitative and quantitative analysis of the abovementioned novels.

## ***The afternoon talks***

After the morning sessions, the *Espai Cultural* of the Faculty of Philology, Translation and Communication of the University of Valencia opened its doors to the general public for the afternoon talks. Throughout the academic year, the *Espai Cultural* functions as an open space for cultural interchange, welcoming students, visitors, and professors of the faculty alike. For this reason, the selected venue was optimal for reaching a heterogeneous group, an essential goal that the afternoon sessions aimed at accomplishing. The first afternoon session was the research workshop “Diary of a (neo-)Victorian Researcher Tips for researching the Nineteenth Century”, delivered by Juan José Martín González (University of Málaga), in which he spoke about his experience as a neo-Victorian researcher and provided insightful tips for PhD students and early career researchers. This session was open to the general public, and it offered useful websites and archival collections, databases, or Anglophone associations that students could join and consult for their research projects. The speaker thoroughly explained how to set short-term objectives, keep focused or handle criticism in the academic world. At the end of the workshop, students were welcomed to share their experiences as young researchers, and to openly discuss the topics that the workshop had focused on.

For the afternoon sessions, the seminar counted with the enlightening participation of the guest speakers Juan Insua (Centre de Cultura Contemporànea de Barcelona) and Pedro Ruiz Castell (University of Valencia). Both plenary speakers remarked the need to make the Literature available to a public outside the academic sphere, finding a shared interest in the universal influence of Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein; or The Modern Prometheus* (1818). The afternoon sessions began with Juan Insua's *La criatura sin nombre / The creature with no name*, presenting a topic of discussion included in the Kosmopolis programme of 2018. The objective of Kosmopolis, a biennial literary event held in the Centre of Contempo-

rary Culture of Barcelona, is to provide a space where Literature can be discussed in relation with the Arts and Sciences. More precisely and under the scope of Kosmopolis, Insua took on the opportunity to comment on the contemporary relevance of Shelley's masterpiece and its relationship to the responsibility of science, the Anthropocene, and climate change. Insua's intervention began with the screening of a YouTube video titled *La criatura sin nombre*, paying tribute to Mary Shelley on the bicentenary of the publication of *Frankenstein*. In the video, Lord Byron's poem *Darkness* (1816) and excerpts from Shelley's celebrated novel foreshadow questions about the environment and engage the public in a debate about climate change and our ability to love and accept man-made ‘monsters’.

Following Insua's talk, Dr. Pedro Ruiz Castell presented *Frankenstein o el moderno Prometeo. Diálogos entre ciencia y literatura*. Ruiz-Castell introduced the public to a homonymous temporary exhibition celebrated at the Palacio de Cerveró from November 2017 to February 2018 in the city of Valencia. This exhibition was organized by the Institute ‘López Piñero’ for the History of Medicine and Science (IHMC), linked to the University of Valencia. As main curator, Ruiz-Castell explained that the exhibition had been open to a general audience and had aimed to bring forward the interrelationship between literature and science, highlighting the importance of literature's influence on the public's perception of scientific developments and discoveries. Within the framework of Shelley's *Frankenstein*, the exhibition had displayed real scientific objects from the nineteenth century stored by the aforementioned IHMC, as well as notes regarding the nature and use of such scientific instruments beyond Shelley's novel and its consequent screen adaptations. In addition, the exhibition had relied on the public's previous knowledge of Dr. Frankenstein's monster and his experiments as the starting point of debates regarding scientific ethics and the implications of certain research areas for humanity. As a conclusion, Ruiz-Castell discussed the exhibition's success due to its celebration in a public cultural space, yet another example of how bringing literature outside the classroom can entice interest and start a conversation about different aspects of our society.

## ***The round table***

The seminar concluded with a Round Table where members of the LAP Research Group discussed the group's ongoing research and common ground. Rosario Arias-Doblas (University of Málaga), Miriam Borham-Puyal (University of Salamanca), and Laura Monrós-Gaspar (University of Valencia) remarked the importance of facilitating forums of discussion for the development of Victorian and Neo-Victorian studies in Spain, as well as the need to continue celebrating and scrutinizing female figures from the long nineteenth century and its aftermath from different per-

spectives. Among the initiatives discussed in the round table, Prof. Rosario Arias Doblas talked about “Orientation”: A Dynamic Perspective on Contemporary Fiction and Culture (1990–onwards)’ (ORION). This project, funded by the Ministry of Economy, Industry and Competitiveness (Ref. FFI2017–86417–P) counts with the collaboration of Spanish and international scholars who work on English studies. As contended by Prof. Arias-Doblas, the main purpose of ORION is to employ the notion of ‘orientation’ to study and analyse contemporary fiction and culture published and produced in the UK and the States, in light of today’s globalised environment and during the late twentieth- and early twenty-first century.

After the day’s sessions, where the main point of discussion was the role of women as agents and creators of culture, the group attended a dance-theatre spectacle titled *SALT* at Sala Matilde Salvador in La Nau, University of Valencia. Fil d’Arena, the company responsible for the performance, presented a thought-provoking piece where three female dancers exposed the conditions that female emigrants endure in their journey for a better life outside their homes. To conclude the day, the performers welcomed questions from the audience and discussed the objective of their spectacle, emphasising the role played by women affected by the migration crisis, a current event that reminds us, yet again, of the importance of unmuting silenced voices.



