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# **E s s a y s**



## **Alien Invasions and Identity Crisis: Steven Spielberg's *The War of the Worlds* (2005)**

Rocío Carrasco Carrasco  
Universidad de Málaga  
rocio.carrasco@dfing.uhu.es

### ABSTRACT

The idea of national identity as threatened by foreign invasions has been at the centre of many popular Science Fiction (SF) films in the United States of America. In alien invasion films, aggressive colonisers stand for collective anxieties and can be read “as metaphors for a range of perceived threats to humanity, or particular groups, ranging from 1950s communism to the AIDS virus and contemporary ‘illegal aliens’ of human origin” (King and Krzywinska, 2000: 31-2). Such films can effectively tell historical and cultural specificities, including gender concerns. In them, the characters’ sense of belonging to a nation is destabilised in a number of ways, resulting in identity crisis in most cases. A fervent need to defend the nation from the malevolent strangers is combined with an alienation of the self in the search of individual salvation or survival.

The present analysis will attempt to illustrate how threats to configurations of power are employed in a contemporary alien invasion film: *The War of the Worlds* (Steven Spielberg, 2005). Specifically, the film takes the narrative of destruction to suggest the destabilisation of US national power within the context of post September 11, together with a subtle disruption of the gender and sexual status quo. Indeed, new ways of understanding masculinity and fatherhood assault both the public and the private spaces of its white male heterosexual protagonist, Ray, performed by popular actor Tom Cruise. Ambiguous patriotism, identity crises and selfishness are at the core of this contemporary version of H.G. Wells’s landmark novel.

**Keywords:** science fiction, masculinity, identity crisis, 9/11, patriotism

## 1. Introduction: the alien as a threat in the SF movie

The figure of the alien in its multiple guises is often depicted in SF films as an intruder or as an evil creature, violating the boundaries existing between the self and the 'other'. There is a general tendency to show a terrifying, different and marginalised 'otherness' as opposed to familiar, healthy and reassuring depictions of the dominant 'one'. The latter is normally linked to the human being, and specifically to the white male hero. In relation to this issue, Vivian Sobchack classifies popular SF images into three categories –the alien, the familiar, and an intermediate category that fuses them. The tension among these three categories is what is specific to SF films (Sobchack, 1987: 87). Indeed, and as it will be argued below, the mere presence of the alien itself destabilises biased configurations of power, causing identity crisis on most SF protagonists. The antagonism between the 'one' and the 'other' can be analysed adopting different lines of thought, since the category 'other' offers many ideological, political and/or psychoanalytic interpretations. In general terms, it has been argued that the 'other' suggests social and cultural fears.

Political, cultural, family and gender issues are raised in films that picture aggressive alien invasions, where an unfamiliar presence threatens to challenge current configurations of power. Indeed, the hero's antagonistic relationship with the 'other' conditions plot structure. In particular, this topic was especially relevant in SF and horror films of the 1950s. Popular films of this decade, like *The War of the Worlds* (Haskin, 1953) or *The Thing from Another World* (Nyby, 1952) portray this challenge of power structures through the topic of the foreign alien attack. Suggesting the Cold War ideology of 'containment', these films reproduce the typical anxieties of the times. The extraterrestrial monster of *The Thing* and the Martian tripods destroying the Earth in *The War of the Worlds* seem to evoke latent collective fears. As in most alien invasion movies, both heroes are confused and disoriented and must struggle not only against the invading alien but also against the inefficacy of their governments when attempting to solve a problem that affects national security. The male need of facing a superior enemy in the form of a massive alien invasion is present in many other SF films of the 1950s. Although a less remarkable example, *Earth versus the Flying Saucers* (Sears, 1956) also shows the need to fight a devastating and powerful enemy, this time in the form of UFOs landing all over the Earth. Male aggression is also necessary, together with technology, to fight the alien threat. Cornea argues in this sense that "the male scientist certainly picks up the mantle of power, but only once he has demonstrated that he can fight like a man and assure the survival of the world" (49). The need of a 'superior male force' seems to be the solution for the survival of the nation.

The Cold War paranoia of a communist invasion is evoked in what we may denominate 'body invasion' films. *Invasion of the Body Snatchers* (Siegel, 1956), *Invaders From Mars* (Sears, 1953), *It came from Outer Space* (Arnold, 1953) or *I Married a Monster from Outer Space* (Fowler, 1958) depict alien beings who invade and/or penetrate human bodies, causing identity problems. This process of possession depicted in the films threatens to destabilise familiar distinctions between the 'one' and



the 'other', human and alien (King and Krzywinska, 2000: 51). In them, there are no physical fights or battles against the aliens but an invasive appropriation of the body that affects both the space of the family and the relationship of the heterosexual couple. *Invasion of the Body Snatchers* invokes a neurotic world that confronts 'us' (the United States of America) versus 'them' (alien invaders), and where the hero –Doctor Miles Fennel– is alarmed. Apart from the common reading as a representation of the anxieties of communist infiltration and atomic conflict, *Invasion of the Body Snatchers* can be analysed as a disruption of 'healthy' male patriarchy. Katrina Mann analyses the film in this light and contends that it makes use of xenophobic tropes of racial and sexual difference to dramatize the social, political and personal disruption of US hegemonic white patriarchy (Mann, 2004: 49). She might be referring to the film's suggestion that this alien enemy that infiltrates US society and turns individuals into hostile and emotionless beings disturbs the status quo of the 'American way of life'. The alien menace is depicted as a force that invades human bodies and turns individuals into hostile, emotionless and asexual pod people. The body becomes, then, a site of suspicion, since anybody can be one of 'them'. Hence, infested male bodies fail to spot the connotation of social power. It is precisely this alien takeover what produces an identity crisis in the male protagonist. Fostered by the 50s social climate of paranoia, the 'other' represents disease and contamination, since it spreads like an infection among the population. The monstrous 'other' penetrates its victims while they are sleeping, causing them to surrender their identity. Aliens that literally transgress the limits of the human body threaten the 'healthy' values of US society.

Fear of women's authority and reproductive roles are also present in films that follow the topic of the aggressive alien extraterrestrial. In "Gender in Nineteenth-Century Science Fiction: The Female Alien and the Woman Ruler", Robin Roberts argues that it is the female alien's ability to reproduce that makes her so threatening to the male protagonist and to patriarchal society (1993: 20). Accordingly, by encountering the female alien, the male hero recognises and defines his own masculinity and that of the dominant culture. If we follow this argument, the film *Attack of the 50 Foot Woman* (Juran, 1958) can be considered as an instance of how female sexuality graphically threatens humanity in SF of the 1950s.

Specifically, the image of the alien as a 'foreigner' is at the centre of many ideological readings. In colonial discourse, the 'other' is normally constructed as that which is unfamiliar to the dominant ideology of the West. In this sense, Loomba argues, the limits between civilisation and barbarism lie on the production of a conflicting difference between 'black' and 'white' (57).<sup>1</sup> The construction of the 'other' as a dangerous outsider prevails in many SF films, where the alien invader is associated to images of barbarism, aggression and difference. This difference needs to be eliminated since it threatens to enter and disrupt Western society. In relation to this issue, Adam Roberts argues that SF "comes out of the Age of Empires because it is a necessary part of the official ideology of Empire-forming that difference needs to be flattened, or even eradicated" (Roberts, 2000: 65). SF serves, then, the dominant ideology of the twentieth-century American Empire.

The menace of non-Western values is further suggested in many SF films released after the 1950s. The topic of the extraterrestrial invader that threatens US institutions specially privileges this reading. For instance, in *Independence Day* (Emmerich, 1997) the source of threat is the extraterrestrial ‘other’, which is considered as evil and dangerous. The film implies that the eradication of outsiders is necessary for the whole world to survive and for US supremacy to remain intact. In this sense, and taking into account the 1990s Golf-War crisis over US political and social integrity, and the general unease towards illegal immigration, the radical ‘other’ might be associated with the negative concept of blackness, despite the fact that Will Smith plays a starring heroic role. In relation to the film’s ‘dark’ aliens, Mair argues: “During the Middle Ages, Islam was the darker Other of Europe (...) During the Cold-War, communism acquired the mantle of alien Other. The post-Cold War West returns to Islam” (Mair, 2002: 37). The film hints a plea for ‘Americanness’, significantly constructed as plural in the film, as evidenced by the heterogeneous and racially mixed group of people who is to save the world. For that, the eradication of alien ‘outsiders’ seems to be necessary.

In addition, and especially in some contemporary alien invasion films, gender and racial issues are questioned and revisited by means of humour and direct allusion to how SF has traditionally presented the ‘other’ as a threat to normative structures of power. For instance, the film *Mars Attacks!* (Burton, 1996) makes use of traditional ‘fears’ and revisits them through parody. From the beginning of the film, the Martians’ flying saucers invading the Earth are not meant to be threatening for humankind, that is seen dependent on TV and mass-media. Indeed, the Martians are believed to be peaceful and the president of the U.S.A, James Dale (Nicholson), prepares a warm welcome for them twice. Against any predictions, the small Martians attack and kill the civil population, unveiling their evil purposes. Popular SF movies like *The War of the Worlds*, *Earth vs. the Flying Saucers*, *Godzilla* or *Alien* are parodied in the movie. Neither president James Dale nor the famous professor Donald Kessler (Brosnan) initially show any apprehension but, on the contrary, believe in the Martians’ peaceful nature. They are so confident about their own scientific and political superiority that they see no real reason to worry about the Martians’ threat. However, the aliens humiliate and betray them, what can be analysed as human incapacity to deal with and understand the condition of the ‘other’. Cultural misunderstandings, fostered by a context of uncertainty and paranoia towards an alien attack, echo the US panorama at the turn of the millennium.

In short, the encounter with difference is effectively reflected in many SF films. Sexual and racial differences disrupt the ‘American norm’ and are normally depicted as threats in the form of invading aliens or monsters.

## **2. The national border, patriotism and self-survival in *The War of the Worlds***

*The War of the Worlds* (2005) was directed by Steven Spielberg and written by Josh Friedman and David Koepp. It is a version of H.G. Wells’s 1898 novel with the same

title, which was adapted for the radio in 1938 by Orson Welles and taken to the big screen in 1953 by Byron Haskin and producer George Pal. Apart from Haskin's and Spielberg's adaptations, Jeff Wayne's 1978 musical version of *The War of the Worlds* inspired later musicals and computer game versions.

Like other alien invasion films, both versions of *The War of the Worlds* are centred on the opposition between self/other. The films place their main male characters at the privileged side of the binary opposition and the extraterrestrial beings that invade the Earth at the deviant side. Hence, the 'other' is depicted as fearful and repulsive. The films' invasion narrative reflects different threats that destabilise people's confidence at each historical moment. While Haskin portrays the 1950s generalized context of the Cold War paranoia, Spielberg re-imagines Wells's scenario to provide us with a metaphor of the terrorist threat in the U.S.A. after September 11. In addition, the familiar trope of the confrontation 'us' versus 'them' serves as a vehicle to include instances of identity crises, which surfaces in different ways in these two films.

Haskin's *The War of the Worlds* (1953) mirrors the socio-political issues that were under threat during the 1950s implying that the 'others' are pernicious beings with colonial aspirations and, therefore, should be exterminated. The decline of US world power and the Cold War ideology of containment against 'intruders' are implied in the film. Scientist Dr Clayton Forrester (Barry) feels disoriented because of the meteors that are invading the world. His first reaction, shared by most of the population, is to hide and to warn others about the forthcoming danger. Humanity reacts in a negative way against the appearance of these alien presences, with the exception of a couple of men who try to approach the visitors and, as a result, are immediately killed. Consequently, the whole community is scared and the first reaction is to be distant and sceptic. This behaviour can be interpreted as a product of their disorientation and anxiety towards the 'foreigner' and society's inability to deal with the appearance and acceptance of disturbing 'others'. This is reinforced by reiterative sentences like 'it is the oddest thing I've ever seen' and by the Martians' association to an annoying sound. Like many other films of the 1950s, the alien is represented as a malignant force, intent on destroying human civilisation.

As a way to overcome this political crisis one needs to fight against the enemy and, for that purpose, the military forces are called. The army is a sign of authority and power at times when a decline of US world power is evident. It also evokes the destructive technologies used in previous world wars while showing contemporary advances in arms manufacturing. The political context of terror and the fear of a communist invasion are unmistakably materialised in the film.

Likewise, Spielberg's *The War of the Worlds* (2005) portrays both the anxiety of mass hysteria and the individual confrontation with contemporary fears. The film becomes an allegory of the trauma and panic felt in the United States of America as a consequence of the devastating attacks of the World Trade Center in Manhattan and the Pentagon in Washington DC on 11 September 2001. The film makes use of images of devastation and scenes of massive destruction, suggesting an apocalyptic scenario that resembles disaster films. As Cornea argues, disaster films encourage a comparison with

the earlier world war period. Indeed, the “[p]aranoia and political undercurrent might be seen to return in the serious remakes of recent years, as set against the political protectionism marked by so-called ‘war on terror’ and the threat from a somewhat nebulous al-Qaeda” (2007: 33). Disaster films proliferate especially in times of crisis and have renewed their popularity after the terrorist attacks of 2001. The popularity of these images of destruction is, according to Jean Baudrillard, a result of everyone’s fantasy of seeing the destruction of any hegemonic power. Hence, the attraction these disaster films exert “shows that acting-out is never very far away, the impulse to reject any system growing all the stronger as it approaches perfection or omnipotence” (Baudrillard, 2002: 7). Accordingly, our dreaming of this event justifies, then, the spectacle of mass destruction on the World Trade Center. What becomes clear, as it is contended here, is that *The War of the Worlds* takes advantage of this popularity of images of destruction to pose questions on the problematics of the breaking of a national identity, together with the questioning of male authority.

The alien attack triggers a rupture of the national border. The geopolitical concept of nation is a Western idea that emerged under specific economic circumstances. It has become one of the most important modes of social and political organisation in the modern world (McLeod, 2002: 68) and has been defined as ‘imagined political community’ by postcolonial criticism (Anderson, 1991: 6). *The War of the Worlds* breaks with the so-called ‘myth of the nation’, which, in McLeod words, has the following defining features:

- Nations are imagined communities.
- Nations gather together many individuals who come to imagine their simultaneity with others. This unified collective is the nation’s ‘people’.
- Nations depend upon the invention and performance of histories, traditions and symbols which sustain the people’s specific identity continuous between the past and the present.
- Nations evoke feelings of belonging, home and community for the people.
- Nations stimulate the people’s sense that they are the rightful owners of a specific land.
- Nations standardise a unitary language accessible to all people.
- Nations are often narrated through forms of representation which promote the unities of time and space.
- Nations place borders that separate the people ‘within’ from different peoples outside. (McLeod, 74-5)

The feeling of defending the ‘nation’ has proved to be a powerful symbol to many anti-colonial movements against the colonial rule.<sup>2</sup> Accordingly, to construct a national consciousness is essential for the struggle for independence.<sup>3</sup> Although the ‘myth of the nation’ might function as a valuable tool for the pursuit of liberty and progress, it also encompasses a conflict which Partha Chatterjee calls ‘liberal dilemma’ (Chatterjee, 1993: 4). For the achieving of this ideal community, undemocratic forms of government are sometimes employed. Moreover, nationalism is normally associated to aggression,

violence, domination and irrationality and, as such, it has proved to be a problematic term.

In *The War of the Worlds*, borders are threatened. Yet, the feeling of connectedness to pursue 'liberty' from the colonising alien tripods does not work. Instead, people are seen in fight for individual survival, what does not fit into the 'national myth' described by McLeod. The attack is taken by surprise and the population does not really know what is happening, especially at the very beginning of the movie. When the first lightning appears, Ray does not seem to be frightened since he believes it to be something 'cool', even funny, a mere product of the season. Little by little people start to worry about 'weird' lightning, including his daughter Rachel, who confesses her fears and pleads for fatherly protection. Thus, no real struggle against the enemies is at first appreciated in the movie, apart from one taken up by the army and police forces. The construction of a national consciousness seems to be at a very early stage.

Self-reliance combined with mutual assistance, which has been remarked as a fundamental American virtue, is absent from the movie. Regarding the effects of the rising equality of social conditions on the individual in the context of early 19<sup>th</sup> century America, the French political thinker and historian Alexis de Tocqueville wrote in 1835:

Americans (...) are fond of explaining almost all the actions of their lives by the principle of interest rightly understood; they show with complacency how an enlightened regard for themselves constantly prompts them to assist each other, and inclines them willingly to sacrifice a portion of their time and property to the welfare of the state. (647)

Yet, in the film individuals are mainly concerned with their own interest and self-survival. There is no unified collective or sense of belonging to any imagined community. Apart from showing the evil nature of the 'other', Spielberg's film demonstrates the insanity that can infect us all at moments of tremendous crisis (Vest, 2006: 70). Indeed, the most frightening moments in the movie involve not the conflict between aliens and humans, but those depicting humans fighting for survival, which account for a situation of mass insanity. This corresponds, on the other hand, to Wells's belief in the destructive nature of civilisation *per se* (Aoun, 2006: 233).

The film stresses selfishness. As a consequence of the invasion, cars do not work, except that of Ray's friend, which he manages to get without consent. Leaving his friend behind, Ray drives away with his two kids. From this moment onwards, this car becomes the target of many people who would use any means to get it, since it entails a hope for survival. Humans are mainly concerned with individual salvation, what increases paranoia and confusion. Aggression, chaos and hysteria are especially recreated in the sequences of the ferry when everybody tries to cross the Hudson River. Rachel screaming and people running and fighting for survival reinforce the chaos. The use of weapons helps to reassert power and to establish who the strongest is and, therefore, who is to cross the river to a supposed salvation. Darwin's theory of the survival of the fittest seems to be a rather 'relative' concept here. At these tough moments, Ray is seen crying and feeling desperate. He manages, however, to get his

two kids on the ferry with him. However, this kind of 'heroic' deed is soon to be undermined by Ray's inability to help a friend and her daughter, whom he meets just before embarking the ferry. He is not able to take care of friends either. As this sequence evidences, the film portrays an unorganised and selfish society, victim of the attacks of a devastating enemy, and unable to collectively fight against it.

Patriotism, or the proud feeling of belonging to a nation, can suggest an effective way to contribute to fight against a common enemy.<sup>4</sup> However, as it has been illustrated, this collective responsibility is denied in favour of self-interest in *The War of the Worlds*. In relation to this issue, Vest affirms that the film "is a vibrant, terrifying, and observant examination of how American democracy, generosity, and liberty are the most precarious of ideas and institutions when under assault by alien aggressors" (2006: 68). Vest believes in the film's critique of the patriotic fervour that has recently characterized the United States and sees the film's political implication in different sequences. At a key moment, the son's protagonist, Robbie, spurns fatherly authority and protection. Vest studies the political subtext in this sequence, arguing that these different generational attitudes towards military service in times of war resonate with contemporary discussions of the appropriateness of recruiting high school students for service in Iraq and Afghanistan (69). Apart from echoing recent debates about military policies, I believe that the sequence denounces the false or dubious patriotism that has characterised the United States of America after the terrorist attacks in 2001.

Robbie's decision to fight for the nation is interpreted here as a product of his disorientation and family problems. Previously in the movie, Robbie's relationship with his father has been depicted as troublesome and distant. Robbie admits wanting to see the war with his own eyes. He needs to feel better with himself and he sees an opportunity to do so by enlisting in the army. That way, he will not depend on his father's decisions and will be able to show determination and courage. Also, he will stand out from a mass of people only interested in self-survival. Robbie's supposedly patriotic feeling is partly grounded on individual interests as much as on the lack of a stable father figure. Hence, the problematic father-love is displaced to the service of the nation. As Homi K. Bhabha contends in "Are you a Man or a Mouse?" the anxiety about the domestic scenario of problematic father-love can be displaced into another kind of anxious love –*amor patriae*– which is the naturalistic, phallic identification with the service to the nation. The instinct for respect –central to the civic responsibility for the national service– comes from the father's severity, which is an effect of his 'peripheral' position in the family. In this sense, the father is a kind of 'phallic peripherality'. It is the absence of the father that constitutes the principle of national self-identification and the service of a nation. This gendering of the nation's domestic metaphor makes its masculinism neurotic (103-4). If we take into account this argument, Robbie's decision to join the army can be read as a projection of his anxious love to the nation.

Another instance of an ambiguous 'patriotism' comes from the mentally disturbed character of Ogilvy (Williams), who openly claims he would die for the country. In the basement, Ogilvy confesses that he has a plan to fight the tripods and in doing so,

liberate his country from this threat. This sequence in the basement accounts for the different reactions towards the coming of the 'other', suggested by Ray and Ogilvy's attitudes towards the aliens. Indeed, and as Ogilvy himself confesses, they 'are not on the same page'. Ogilvy has a plan to create a resistance movement against the aliens and Ray prefers to continue unnoticed and hidden, in an attempt to save his daughter from harm. Ogilvy is firm to stop the 'occupation', as he himself denominates the alien plan. He states that they are going to be the ones coming from the underground this time.

After they witness an alien capturing a human being and draining all his blood, they both panic. Ogilvy turns mad and starts shouting 'Not my blood' and digging a tunnel in frenzy, while Ray's behaviour is far from heroic. Afraid that Ogilvy's screams may attract the aliens, Ray decides to kill him. In Wells's novel, the narrator kills the curate accidentally when trying to calm him. This act is intentionally done in Spielberg's film and, far from being a heroic deed, demonstrates the character's hysterical reactions produced by the presence of the 'other'. Ray and Ogilvy's irrational behaviour show a lack of understanding and organisation when struggling against the 'other'.

The military forces stand, then, as the only instance of a joint struggle against the enemy. As the film develops, however, it becomes evident that the military forces cannot deal with the enemy in an effective way. The superiority of the tripods is latent, especially in sequences where we see them in comparison with masses of people who shiver with terror when encountering them. Still, at chaotic moments, some sort of authority seems to be needed, embodied here, as happened in Haskin's film, by police forces and the army. With this, the film denounces the idea that force and violence are effective ways to reduce the anxieties of a nation. According to Brian M. Jenkins, the best way to increase the nation's ability to respond to disasters is "to enlist all citizens through education and engagement, which also happens to be a very good way to reduce the persistent anxieties that afflicts [the United States]" (2006: 156). In reference to the terrorist attacks on September 11 and the policies adopted after them, Jenkins claims that the United States of America has not responded to them in an effective way. He claims for public education, information and the need for a reasonable 'patriotism' to strengthen US society after the devastating attacks. In a similar way, the film uses the topic of the hostile alien invasion to suggest this uncertainty and lack of agreement and engagement to face the problem of an aggressive invasion.

### **3. Terrorism and identity crisis**

Kim Newman affirms that Wells's novel is difficult to adapt "in that it is like a compilation of personal experiences and second-hand news items, with a nameless narrator whose only plot function is to be there" (Newman, 2005: 83). Spielberg's film is complicated with family problems, which also echo the dynamics of Wells's book. Following this line of thought, Vest affirms that "[t]he end of the world evokes a morbid fascination for Spielberg's audience no less than for Wells's readers, rehearsing some of American's most fundamental cultural anxieties to suggest that our lot in life is

to endure civic insecurity, political ambivalence, and fractured family relationships” (Vest, 2006: 71). Faithful to its sources, Spielberg manages to mirror contemporary anxieties, evoking symbolic commentaries about the concerns present in the United States of America at the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, which include questions of gender identity.

Steven Aoun affirms in *Metro 149* (2006) that while Wells used the book as a vehicle to teach Western civilization the lesson of ‘natural selection’ Spielberg’s *War of the Worlds*, nonetheless, “manages to be more adaptable by looking East and West simultaneously” (233). Specifically,

Spielberg’s movie is a colonial object that may be directed towards culturally specific anxieties (...) Given the cinematic language, Spielberg’s film can speak to (and reassure) conflicting worldviews regarding the rise of terrorism or spread of imperialism. (233)

Accordingly, the movie gives expression to both left and right wings critiques in relation to terrorist and imperialist matters. Aoun is of the opinion that producers decided to include both approaches in order for the film to become a success in an international context. The resulting product is, I believe, an expression of the times’ uncertainty, and political and cultural specific worries.

Released in a context of urban terror, the film reflects the view of everyday US citizens towards the dangers of terrorism and the crisis caused by it. Significantly enough, the alien tripods erupt from beneath the Earth surface and are controlled by alien creatures that aim at a massive destruction of the world. Once the cells emerge from the underground, a general mood of chaos and destruction permeates the film, reinforced by the reiterative use of close-ups of Ray’s terrified face. As opposed to the 1953 film, the church is the first building to be destroyed by the menacing ‘other’. While in Haskin’s version the church served as an element of union, salvation, and romantic encounter, in Spielberg’s the first alien cell emerges precisely from it. Religious beliefs do not seem to have a place, then, in the globalised world that the disturbing ‘other’ plans to get hold of by means of aggression. The impious destruction of this symbol adds tension to the narrative. With it, Spielberg shows the contemporary situation of the Western man, who has lost credibility as a father and as a world international policeman. Religion is not a refuge any more. Men are to do by themselves and cannot get comfort in religion or in the traditional nuclear family.

We get sequences which strikingly resemble the events that took place on 11 September 2001. Vest sees this and argues that “[t]he parallel to the images of New York City residents covered in the dusty ash of the collapsed Twin Towers on 9/11 is unmistakable, and Ray reacts with the same horror that we saw etched across too many faces on that fateful day” (68). Ray arrives home covered in dust and ashes and, in a clear Lacanian allusion, looks himself in the mirror, getting a terrible image of a frightened and desolated Ray who realizes about his fears. His defensive strategy is to take his gun, a rather ridiculous act if we take into account the overwhelming supremacy of the tripods. Yet Ray needs to ‘feel’ male power. From this moment onwards Ray heads for the stability and equilibrium suggested by his ex-wife.



George W. Bush spoke of the War on Terror, which entailed an effort on the part of the United States of America to combat terrorism and finish with radical organisations like Al Qaeda. Al Qaeda's war aims are basically political, and it is widely believed among US citizens that this terrorist group has an arsenal of weapons of mass destruction. The question "Are we safer now?" has become frequently asked in the United States of America (Jenkins, 2006: 145). *The War of the Worlds* makes allusions to this social terror. Rachel is constantly asking her father about their safety and about the origin of the attacks. Significantly, the children's first reaction towards the coming of the tripods is to think of a terrorist attack, what implies their familiarisation with these matters. This is especially seen in a sequence that shows the moment after Ray discovered about the existence of the tripods and is driving towards his ex-wife's house with the children. After Ray has taken his two kids to their mother's house, he decides to hide in the house's basement for protection. In the midst of his disorientation and insecurity, Ray resorts to his gun. His insecurity is suggested in a scene in complete darkness after another alien attack, and only Rachel's whisper is heard: "Are we still alive?" Sequences like this tell human's powerlessness in the face of the massive attacks, what resonates with religiously based terrorism.

Moreover, events like 9/11 provoked trauma and shattered the sense of national identity. Even those who did not lose friends or loved ones or were not in New York that day experienced secondary or vicarious trauma via the media (Gordon, 2007: 254). Trauma revises, then, a whole vision of patriarchal culture. In relation to this topic, Cathy Caruth proposes that there is a deep disconnect between what is experienced and what is assimilated and, therefore, the trauma "is not experienced as a mere repression or defence but as a temporal delay that carries the individual beyond the shock of the first moment" (7-10). A process of discovery best understands experiences of trauma. Literature, films and sociology, among others, are ways of thinking about and responding to the experience of trauma. Caruth is of the contention that in a catastrophic age trauma can provide the link between cultures not only because we can recognize the past of others but also because it enables us to listen through the departures we have all taken from ourselves (11). In our encounter with trauma we can, then, rethink our notions of experience and get a new understanding of history.

After September 11 the paranoia of a possible terrorist attack in the United States of America has caused the use of controversial strategies and campaigns against terrorism. One of the largest obstacles to dealing with threats from terrorism came from the 9/11 Commission, whose final report of July 2004 remarked a 'failure of imagination'. According to such report, the United States of America needed to anticipate and prepare for what terrorists might do next:

Sending waves of suicide bombers to America's shopping malls, demolishing Boston's waterfront with a sabotaged liquefied-natural-gas (LNG) carrier, bringing down the George Washington Bridge in New York City, crashing a plane into the White House or a nuclear reactor, spraying a major urban center with anthrax, sinking tankers to block narrow straits, unleashing hoof-and-mouth disease, bringing down the banking system, spreading

smallpox, vaporizing Manhattan with a nuclear bomb, all once considered far-fetched, became presumptions. (Jenkins, 149)

The belief in these presumptions has led to a panorama of paranoia and mass hysteria, as reflected in Spielberg's film and in other cultural products. Moreover, the advance of globalisation, which encourages the lack of borders, and technological developments like the Internet or mobile phones contribute to facilitate terrorist communication. Danger can be anywhere and potential terrorist attacks help to keep the country on edge. Mass media and the public domain of the existence of these threats further help to construct and extend social terror. Organisations like Al Qaeda had openly manifested to be hostile to western civilization: "its cosmopolitanism, secularism, materialism, sensuality, arrogance, support of women's rights, and obsession with technology" (Patterson, 2005: 380). Jenkins rightly points out an added problem when taking action against terrorism in general. Terrorists are normally denounced "as mindless fanatics, savage barbarians, or, more recently, 'evil-doers'-words that dismiss any intellectual content" (53). The United States has defined terrorism according to the quality of the act, not the identity of the terrorists or the nature of their cause (54). This angry rhetoric and the desire to see the terrorist as evil impede any effort to understand the enemy and to consequently formulate effective responses to terrorism.

All these factors create a sense of frenzy, which is reflected in the film. Camera movement helps create this generalised feeling of disorientation and uneasiness. Subjective shots and a fast moving camera provide realism to the scenes. Hoberman affirms in *Sight and Sound* (2006) that the film went into production immediately after Bush's election and "like the president, Spielberg sought to invoke the trauma that precipitated America's current war and, not coincidentally, scare the bejeezus out of the U.S. public" (22). Spielberg talked about 'an ultra-realistic' film with clear references to terrorism and war that ultimately resolves the horrible events it represents:

Its narrative trajectory is informed by a particular political logic. In tracking the emotional development of the frightened child's father (Tom Cruise) from callow, immature hotshot to responsible mensch, *War of the Worlds* provides an allegory of George W. Bush's crisis-inspired growth into leadership— or at least of the audience's willingness to grant him that growth. (Hoberman, 23)

Yet, Ray is somehow obliged to develop his 'responsible' side as a consequence of the desperate situation he is living. Whether the film finally resolves the events it echoes or not, the extended presence of trauma and the depiction of a population in crisis suggest the dismantling of traditional power structures.

Indeed, the male protagonist is a metaphor of the contemporary man in crisis. Although not all men were unemployed or unhappy, studies have revealed how at the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, masculinity was troubled and "American men remain bewildered by the sea of changes in our culture, besieged by the forces of reform, and bereft by the emotional impoverishment of our lives" (Kimmel, 1996: 330).

Specifically, *The War of the Worlds* engages with the uncertainty produced by a shifting concept of family and how identities are inevitably affected by these changes.

Ray is at odds with his role as a father. The coming of the extraterrestrials has given Ray new parental duties and, out of necessity, he has to take up childcare. He is overwhelmed by his new responsibility. His children become alien to him, which recalls the dissolution of the nuclear family. He does not conform, then, to the middle class, sensitive "New Father" models proposed by critics like Pleck and Pleck in "Fatherhood Ideals in the United States" (1997). Ray does not behave either as the modern Hollywood father, sometimes weak but usually morally upstanding, like the one embodied by Michael Douglas in *Fatal Attraction* and *Traffic* (Bruzzi, 153). Instead, Ray's behaviour escapes conventional heroic patterns.

In "Child/ Alien/ Father: Patriarchal Crisis and Generic Exchange", Vivian Sobchack deals with the cultural meanings of the child and how this figure has contributed to a generic convergence between contemporary SF, horror and family melodrama. Indeed, many films have been 'marked' as contemporary not only because of their release dates but also by "their mutual figuration of the alien or Other as somehow implicated in family life" (4). Sobchack argues that American bourgeois family has experimented a crisis since the 60s and this is shown in films like *The Terminator*, *E.T.* or *Close Encounters*. The family and its members are seen as subjected to dissolution, transformation and redefinition: "A man's home in bourgeois patriarchal culture is no longer his castle (...) It is no longer possible to avoid the presence of Others –whether poltergeists, extra-terrestrials, or one's own alien kids" (Sobchack, 1991: 4). The figure of the child condenses a cultural drama that seeks resolution in the three genres. Whereas SF manages to offer a promise to resolve the conflict, there are no such resolutions available to either the horror film or the family melodrama –both playing out patriarchal impotence. Accordingly, otherness can be found both outside and inside the family. In this sense, *The War of the Worlds* shows a menaced man who is unable to cope with this situation. An absent father, a feature that became common in the Lucas-Spielberg's blockbuster movies of the 80s, sees traditional family relationships as disturbed.

As a matter of fact, the family is not excluded from socio-political concerns and conflicts in US society but it becomes a mirror of them. In relation to the reading of family dynamics, Sobchack observes that rather than serving bourgeois patriarchy as a place of refuge from the social upheavals of the last two decades, it has become their site and serves as a sign of their representation (1991: 5). Ray's fractured family cannot stand as a place of escape from the problems of the outside world, but it becomes an allegory of them. Bemused and unable to find any alternative, Ray starts a journey towards stability still at hand by the promise to be a responsible father.

Ray is depicted as a menaced and fragile man who needs to defend himself against the 'other'. One of the ways to inscribe discourses of superiority on screen is by displaying a muscled body, which is, nevertheless, neutralised here by the presence of the huge tripods that make Ray appear as weak and ineffectual. In other words, the gigantic alien machines highlight Ray's physical vulnerability. Yet, there are some

sequences in which the notion of invisibility is tempting. The sequence at the ambulance driver's basement echoes the one in the 1953 film that presented the hero and heroine on a deserted farm. At its climax, Ray, Rachel and Ogilvy are hiding first from the sneaky alien searching for any human trace and then from the three aliens that enter the basement. This section is characterised by an agonic silence and an economy of movement (70), which turns out to be quite symbolic for the purposes of this analysis. Ogilvy's first reaction is to take an axe and try to chop the alien's long neck in two, to what Ray persuades him –using body language– not to do so.<sup>5</sup> Yet, he tries again and Ray is forced to kill him. The need of invisibility for survival is urged, then, in this sequence. Hence, apart from this social concept of invisibility, the film's plot also suggests the need of becoming invisible in order to survive. Ray –and humankind in general– needs to hide from the enemies if they want to live.

Once the aliens have disappeared, there is a feeling of hope for the re-establishment of the status quo. At the end of the film, not coincidentally set in puritanical Boston, the family is reunited and we learn about the stability suggested by tradition. The movie's reliance on previous texts also contributes to the emphasis on the reproduction of certain gender types. In addition, the presence of some actors and actresses in Haskin's 1953 version –Gene Barry and Ann Robinson– as the protagonist's ex-parents-in-law at the end of Spielberg's film also fosters the continuity of tradition, which is an instance of Spielberg's debt to his predecessor.

One can argue, therefore, that the film acts out the debates around the man in crisis. The political context of paranoia and fear of the foreigner, together with the inability to face family life, affect US society in general, male hegemony and the representation of the hero in Hollywood cinema in particular. The coming of the evil aliens evokes different fears and anxieties present in the United States of America at the time of the film's premiere (2005). Whereas the 'other' is read as an allegory of Islamic terrorism, or as hints of current changes concerning masculine roles, or as mere allusions to pollution and disease, it has always been taken as marginal. Indeed, Ray is in crisis precisely because of the presence of this foreign 'other'. Ray is frustrated as a consequence of his fear, anxieties and notorious inability to deal with the 'other'.

#### **4. Conclusion**

As commented here, in *The War of the Worlds* (Spielberg, 2005), the alien invasion topic has political overtones and contributes to recreate a state of mass hysteria. The movie suggests culturally specific anxieties, such as the dissolution of national borders, terrorism and gender trouble.

Ray evokes contemporary worries concerning the depiction of masculinity in the context of SF. The notion of the 'other' is constructed within the traditional negative parameters associated to what remains outside the norm. Ray's controversial relationship with the 'other' has contributed to stress notions of anxiety and insecurity. In order not to be exposed as soft –one of the worst things a man can 'suffer' in our

culture (Bordo, 55)– Ray feels an identity crisis since he is unable to prove his strong manly core.

At another level, Ray's relationship with his familiar world is, likewise, far from trouble-free. Indeed, he has got a difficult relationship with his family and does not know how to play the father's role in the chaotic world surrounding him. Contrary to what happened in Haskin's film, in Spielberg's the male character cannot find peace and comfort in the private realm of his family and is detached from the pleasures provided by a romantic liaison. Traditional family values, religious beliefs and romantic union are absent from Ray's life. He cannot face the reality surrounding him and behaves frantically in the face of difficulties. Ray's failure to finish with the aggressive enemy is reinforced by his inability to deal with his new familiar situation, which prevents him from fitting into the conventional heroic type. Far from being a site of comfort and safety, his family becomes a source of agitation. Otherness is also present within his familiar context.

Due to the general feeling of panic and anxiety in his private and public life, Ray cannot evolve into traditional heroic patterns. Rather, he is an ambivalent figure which perfectly epitomises a man in crisis.

## Notes

1. In his influential *Orientalism* (1978), Edward Said interrogates colonial power and argues that representations of the Orient in European literary texts were based on the binary opposition European self and non-European 'other'. This fact contributed to maintain European hegemony and power over the 'other'.

2. As Timothy Brennan contends in "The National Longing for Form", the 'myth of the nation' is ambiguous since it does refer, not to the idea that nations are mythical, but to the way that various governments invent traditions to give permanence and solidity to a transient political form (Brennan, 1990: 47).

3. Fanon is of the belief that writers and intellectuals should be responsible for resisting colonialism in their works. The construction of a specific national consciousness should be accompanied by the creation of a distinctly national culture, which, according to Fanon, moves through three phases. In the first phase, the writer or artist attempts to 'assimilate' the dominant trends. In the second, he/she is dissatisfied with copying the colonizer and turns backwards to the history of the people. The third phase is the fighting phase in which he/she becomes involved in the struggle against the colonial rule (Fanon, 1967: 179-82).

4. In 'Notes on Nationalism' (1945) George Orwell makes a distinction between a virtuous 'patriotism' and an aggressive 'nationalism'. Nationalism is a feeling of superiority about one's way of life, country or ethnic group whereas patriotism is a feeling of admiration for one's way of life and the willingness to defend it against any attack. The post-war context for Orwell's article results meaningful for his theories about nationalism.

5. This sequence recalls the *Alien* films, where the monstrous "other" hides in the spaceship and humans become anxious by the possibility to come across it.

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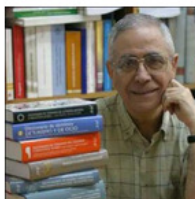
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*"We need goals, and to set those goals we need problems."*

*"Things need to be done through successive approaches."*

Enrique Alcaraz Varó  
Professor on English Philology at the  
University of Alicante  
Founder of IULMA



## Phi-Agreement in Past Participle Constructions

Concha Castillo  
Universidad de Málaga  
ccastillo@uma.es

### ABSTRACT

I argue in this paper that agreeing past participles are merged externally in the derivation in V endorsed with a feature [+resultative], whereas non-agreeing past participles are bound to value a feature [+perfective] against the *have*-auxiliary. Phi-agreement on the former kind of participle occurs since the meaning [+resultative] denotes a property of the logical object, which happens to merge in the position of sister to V-*en*. As postulated in standard frameworks, phi-agreement consists in that the V-*en* form values uninterpretable phi-features against the DP object. In contrast with agreeing past participles, non-agreeing past participles are merged externally in the form of V and they get their *-en* suffix in *v* valued against the *have*-auxiliary once the latter enters the derivation. The meaning or interpretation of this *-en* suffix is [+perfective] or [+anterior]. No phi-agreement occurs between these V-*en* forms marked [+perfective] and their logical object (whenever they select for one) since [+perfective] is a property of the event or situation as a whole, and not of the object. It is further suggested that the specific *Agree* relation that is phi-agreement appears not to be subject to configurations of asymmetric c-command, but to just occur on external Merge of the DP that bears the corresponding valued, interpretable phi-features.

**Keywords:** agreeing past participles vs. non-agreeing past participles, external Merge of V-*en* vs. internal merge of *-en*, [+resultative] vs. [+perfective], s-selection, asymmetric c-command

## 1. Introduction

*Phi-agreement* ( $\phi$ -agreement), that is, agreement in person and/or number and/or gender, used to be a widely-discussed topic in the generative literature of the Government & Binding (GB) period, and it can be considered to be one of the centres of interest in the literature of the minimalist period. From a conceptual or theoretical point of view, the interest of minimalist syntax in phi-agreement lies in an important way in the place that is allocated to morphology in the system, whether in narrow syntax or in the phonological component, and secondly, in case morphology is considered to be a narrow syntax issue, in the kind of configuration in which phi-agreement occurs or, in other words, in the ordering of the operation *Agree* relative to *Merge* as regards phi-features ( $\phi$ -features) (see the comprehensive volume by Boeckx, 2006). Further, it is widely known that agreement has been discussed in connection with *Case* ever since the times of GB syntax, which means that any account of agreement is expected to also be explanatory with regard to the *Case* properties of the nominal in question.

From an empirical point of view, phi-agreement is a core issue in the discussion of finite verb movement (or V-to-T movement) on the one hand, and of past participle constructions on the other: more specifically in relation to the latter, the distinction between agreeing past participles vs. non-agreeing past participles, both within a language and cross-linguistically, is a prominent subject of investigation.

In this paper I deal with phi-agreement of past participles, and I propose to account for some of the above-cited theoretical issues by explaining the differences between agreeing past participles and non-agreeing past participles. I argue that the *-en* suffix of each type is associated with a different interpretive feature, namely [*+resultative*] on the one hand, and [*+perfective*] on the other. This is held to account not only for phi-agreement on one type of past participle but not on the other, but also for the fact that each type of *-en* suffix is licensed at a different location in the process of derivation.

The core paradigm of agreeing participle constructions to be used in the paper is made up by passive sentences, as in (1), and unaccusative sentences, as in (2). Other sentence-types like reduced relative clauses, as in (3), or absolute small clauses, as in (4), will also be relevant for the discussion, though I must emphasize that the goal is precisely the phenomenon of phi-agreement (or lack thereof) and not the sentence-types in question. This means that no comprehensive analysis is provided of passives as in (1) –for instance, of the differences between so-called eventive passives and adjectival passives (see Section 4.1)– or of any of the other sentence-types.

- (1) a. Las mujeres han sido acusadas (Spanish)  
       the women<sub>fem.,pl.</sub> have been accused<sub>fem.,pl.</sub>  
       b. Le donne sono state accusate (Italian)  
       the women<sub>fem.,pl.</sub> are been<sub>fem.,pl.</sub> accused<sub>fem.,pl.</sub>  
       c. The women have been accused (English)
- (2) Teresa è arrivata (Italian)  
       Teresa<sub>fem.,sing.</sub> is arrived<sub>fem.,sing.</sub>

- (3) a. Las mujeres acusadas telefonarán (Spanish)  
 the women<sub>fem.,pl.</sub> accused<sub>fem.,pl.</sub> will-telephone  
 b. Le donne accusate telefoneranno (Italian)  
 c. The women accused will telephone (English)
- (4) a. Publicados los libros,.../ Llegados los invitados, Juan suspiró aliviado (Spanish)  
 published<sub>masc.,pl.</sub> the books<sub>masc.,pl.</sub> arrived<sub>masc.,pl.</sub> the guests<sub>masc.,pl.</sub> Juan sighed relieved  
 ‘Once the books have been published,...’ / ‘Once the guests had arrived, Juan sighed relieved’  
 b. Mangiata la mela,.../ Arrivata Maria, siamo andati al cinema (Italian)  
 Eaten<sub>fem.sing.</sub> the apple<sub>fem.sing.</sub> arrived<sub>fem.sing.</sub> Maria<sub>fem.sing.</sub> we-are gone to-the cinema  
 ‘Having eaten the apple,...’ / ‘Maria having arrived, we went to the cinema’  
 c. Ceci dit, la réunion a pu commencer (French)  
 this said the meeting has could start  
 ‘This said, it was possible to start the meeting’  
 d. This said, there’s no chance of winning the elections (English)

As for the set of non-agreeing participle constructions used, this includes canonical perfective sentences – that is, sentences with the perfective *have*-auxiliary – featuring a transitive/unergative predicate, as in (5), and also, crucially for the discussion, perfective sentences featuring an unaccusative predicate which also select for the *have*-auxiliary in languages like Spanish (6a) or English (6b).

- (5) a. Jean a vu la fille<sup>1</sup>  
 Jean has seen<sub>φ</sub> the girl<sub>fem.,sing.</sub>  
 b. Abbiamo salutato le ragazze  
 we-have greeted<sub>φ</sub> the girls<sub>fem.,pl.</sub>  
 c. El editor ha publicado los libros  
 the editor has published<sub>φ</sub> the books<sub>masc.,pl.</sub>
- (6) a. Los invitados han llegado / El barco se ha hundido  
 the guests<sub>masc.,pl.</sub> have arrived<sub>φ</sub> the ship<sub>masc.,sing.</sub> itself has sunk<sub>φ</sub>  
 b. The guests<sub>pl.</sub> have arrived<sub>φ</sub> / The ship<sub>sing.</sub> has sunk<sub>φ</sub>

I would like to clarify the inclusion of a language like English in the paradigm of both agreeing and non-agreeing participle constructions. Effectively, the constructions used for the argumentation in the paper come both from Romance languages like Spanish, French, or Italian, and also from a Germanic language like English. It is therefore necessary to specify that by *agreeing past participle* is understood here a participle or V-*en* form with overt phi-features, that is a participle whose phi- or agreement-features (which is an abstract concept) has a phonological matrix, as is typically the case in Romance languages, and likewise participles with phi-features that lack such a phonological realization, as is the case for a language like English. For past participles in the Old and Middle English periods to exhibit overt phi-agreement in e.g. passives, reduced relatives, or absolute small clause constructions, which structures feature the same core properties as in contemporary English, justifies treating the relevant participles as agreeing elements proper in contemporary English.

The paper is organized as follows. In Section 2 I carry out a quick review of the widely-known Spec, AgrOP approach to participle agreement in the GB period, and in Section 3 I describe the main lines of the minimalist analysis by D'Alessandro and Roberts (2008). After reaching a conclusion about central facts that are not accounted for in either kind of analysis, I propose in Section 4 an analysis that is based on the licensing of two different types of features, *[+resultative]* on the one hand and *[+perfective]* on the other. In Section 4.1 and 4.2 I describe each of these features in terms of the properties of valuation and interpretation, and I specify the location of each of them in the syntactic process of derivation. Lastly, I deal in Section 4.3 with the condition of asymmetric c-command. Section 5 is a summary of the discussion.

## 2. A Canonical GB Approach to Past Participle Agreement

As is widely known, the study of past participle agreement in the GB period focuses on a pattern that is observed in Romance languages like French or Italian, whereby participles selecting for a logical object or internal argument agree overtly with the latter whenever this does not follow the participle: let us observe the contrast between the passive structures in (1) and the unaccusative structures with movement verbs in (2) on the one hand, which are repeated below with the same numeration, and those in (7) on the other. The ungrammatical structures in (7) are ordinary perfective structures where the object occurs to the right of the participle.

- (1) a. Las mujeres han sido acusadas  
 the women<sub>fem.,pl.</sub> have been accused<sub>fem.,pl.</sub>  
 b. Le donne sono state accusate  
 the women<sub>fem.,pl.</sub> are been<sub>fem.,pl.</sub> accused<sub>fem.,pl.</sub>  
 c. The girls have been arrested
- (2) Teresa è arrivata  
 Teresa<sub>fem.,sing.</sub> is arrived<sub>fem.,sing.</sub>
- (7) a. \*Jean a vue la fille  
 Jean has seen<sub>fem.,sing.</sub> the girl<sub>fem.,sing.</sub>  
 'Jean saw her'  
 b. \*Abbiamo salutate le ragazze  
 we-have greeted<sub>fem.,pl.</sub> the girls<sub>fem.,pl.</sub>  
 c. \*El editor ha publicados los libros  
 the editor has published<sub>masc.,pl.</sub> the books<sub>masc.,pl.</sub>

The sequences in (7) all become grammatical if a non-agreeing participle is used instead:

- (5) a. Jean a vu la fille  
 Jean has seen<sub>-φ</sub> the girl<sub>fem.,sing.</sub>  
 b. Abbiamo salutato le ragazze  
 we-have greeted<sub>-φ</sub> the girls<sub>fem.,pl.</sub>

- c. El editor ha publicado los libros  
the editor has published<sub>-φ</sub> the books<sub>masc.,pl</sub>

The seminal work of Kayne (1989) and also immediately afterwards Belletti (1990, 1992) come to acknowledge the above facts by establishing the generalizations in (8). The authors posit a Spec,AgrOP mechanism similar to the Spec,AgrSP mechanism already available in syntactic theory for subject constituents. As shown in (9), phi-agreement is explained as the result of the movement of the object through the specifier of AgrOP.

- (8) a. Agreeing past participles occur in structures with no external argument but with an internal argument or logical object  
b. The object that agrees with the past participle typically antecedes the participle itself in the resulting phonetic sequence  
(9) [<sub>AgrSP</sub>DP AgrS [<sub>TP</sub>T [<sub>AgrOP</sub>DP AgrO [<sub>VP</sub>V t]]]]

A weak aspect of the relevant approach is, as has been generally recognized, that it fails to explain in a straightforward way the (neutral) VS order of passives of null-subject languages like Italian or Spanish, or also the VS order of absolute small clauses in these languages: let us note (10) and also former (4a, b).

- (10) a. Han sido acusadas las mujeres  
have been accused the women  
'The women have been accused'  
b. Sono state accusate le donne  
are been accused the women  
(4) a. Publicados los libros,... / Llegados los invitados,...  
published the books arrived the guests  
b. Mangiata la mela,... / Arrivata Teresa,...  
eaten the apple arrived Teresa

In contrast to Italian or Spanish, a non-null-subject Romance language like French, or also a non-pro-drop non-Romance language like English, do not allow for VS passives or VS absolute constructions. In French, and likewise in English, which are languages where non-participial constructions are obligatorily SV on a general basis, (ordinary) passives of transitive verbs, and likewise absolute small clauses, must also exhibit the order SV: see (11) and former (4d, e).

- (11) a. Josèphe sera photographié par Marie  
Joseph will-be photographed by Mary  
b. He was arrested  
(4) d. Ceci dit, la réunion a pu commencer  
this said the meeting has could start  
'This said, it was possible to start the meeting'  
e. This said, there's no chance of winning the elections



addition to the latter analysis, it has also been argued in the literature that V-to-T movement could be in charge of licensing T's EPP feature (see the well-known work of Alexiadou and Anagnostopoulou, 1998).

Incidentally, in a more refined version of the theory, it is proposed in Chomsky (2000, 2001a) that the EPP is a property of any feature with the ability to trigger movement, and that the relevant feature of T that so happens to trigger the movement of a nominal into its Spec position could rather be labelled a *D-feature*. The structures in e.g. (1) or (2) above would be ones where T's D-feature has an EPP property, whereas those in (10) would be structures where the D-feature of T lacks the cited EPP property.

Focusing on the core of the discussion, once the relevant VS sequences are explained away (through an EPP feature of T, or a D-feature of T as provokes no movement) it is now the ungrammaticality of (7), repeated below with the original numeration, that must be accounted for. In effect, as argued by D'Alessandro and Roberts (2008), participles in non-unaccusative structures (as is the case of (7)) are expected to value the features of the relevant DP object through *Agree*, without there applying any movement or internal Merge of the object into a higher position. That is, *Agree* is in principle expected to ensure a relation between the participle and its object in structures like (7), which should arguably result in both elements exhibiting the same set of phi-features as in (1) or (2): nevertheless, the structures in (7) are completely ungrammatical.

- (7) a. \*Jean a vue la fille  
 Jean has seen<sub>fem.,sing.</sub> the girl<sub>em.,sing.</sub>  
 'Jean saw her'
- b. \*Abbiamo salutate le ragazze  
 we-have greeted<sub>fem.,pl.</sub> the girls<sub>fem.,pl.</sub>
- c. \*El editor ha publicados los libros  
 the editor has published<sub>masc.,pl.</sub> the books<sub>masc.,pl.</sub>

In order to solve this problem, D'Alessandro and Roberts (2008) propose that Romance past participle agreement is a morpho-phonological phenomenon that works according to the mechanism of *phases*, a theoretical construct that consists in that the process of derivation is divided up into chunks or pieces in order to alleviate the burden of syntactic computing (Chomsky, 2001a, b, 2005, 2006).

As is widely known, the theory of phases postulates a difference between a non-defective  $v^*$ , that is, a  $v$  that projects an external argument position, and a defective  $v$ , that is, a  $v$  that is unable to do so. Specifically, the DP object of a non-defective  $v^*$  is arguably licensed and sent out to Spell-Out (in order to become part of the phonological component) on its own, that is on a different cycle than the verb itself and its subject or external argument, which means for the overall computation of the verbal phrase to be made easier. By contrast, the DP object of a defective  $v$  need not be sent out to Spell-Out on its own, which allows the cited object to move into Spec, $v$  and for it to be sent out to Spell-Out later on within the same cycle as the verb.

Now, the analysis of D'Alessandro and Roberts (2008) in terms of phases hinges upon the hypothesis that morphological agreement takes place after Spell-Out, in the phonological component: since the DP object and the participle are sent out to Spell-Out on the same cycle in structures like (1) or (2), then for the two to share agreement is made possible; by contrast, the DP object is sent to Spell-Out separately from the participle in structures like (5) and as a result they are not expected to share agreement, which is what applies in ungrammatical (8).

Aside from the fact that I assume the theory or hypothesis that morphology must be explained as part of core or narrow syntax, and not exclusively as a piece in the phonological component, I would like to note that D'Alessandro and Roberts' analysis fails on the grounds that participle structures like (6), whose predicate is unaccusative and therefore projects a defective  $v$ , are left unexplained.

- (6) a. Los invitados han llegado / El barco se ha hundido  
       the guests<sub>masc.,pl.</sub> have arrived<sub>- $\varphi$</sub>  the ship<sub>masc.,sing.</sub> itself has sunk<sub>- $\varphi$</sub>   
       b. The guests<sub>pl.</sub> have arrived<sub>- $\varphi$</sub>  / The ship<sub>sing.</sub> has sunk<sub>- $\varphi$</sub>

The nominal in the Spanish and English structures in (6) is a logical object or internal argument of the corresponding verbs: according to the theory of phases, such a nominal is sent out to Spell-Out (in order to be phonologically realized) on the same cycle as the verb. On an account like D'Alessandro and Roberts, phi-agreement between the two should be expected, contrary to fact. Incidentally, as observed in the Introduction, the grammar of (contemporary) Spanish relies on an overt distinction between agreeing *-en* forms on the one hand, and non-agreeing *-en* forms on the other, and it is clearly the case that the participle forms in (6a) are non-agreeing. As regards the English language, such participle structures as those in (6b) have never exhibited overt agreement, not even when the participle of e.g. passive structures did inflect for number and gender. All in all then, both the Spanish and the English sequences in (6) are ones whose past participles lack the abstract construct in syntactic theory that are phi-features: in other words, the corresponding V-*en* forms value no person and/or number and/or gender features.

In Section 4 below I present an account of the distinction between agreeing vs. non-agreeing past participles that aims to explain not only the structures in (1) and (2) vs. those in (5), but also the structures in (6).

#### 4. The Present Approach to Past Participle Agreement

Given the construction-types in (1) and (2) vs. those in (5), it is clearly the case that *argument structure* is at the base of past participle agreement, since the DP that agrees with the participle is typically a logical object or internal argument, and not an external argument or logical subject. Hence, (8a) must be on the right track. However, the determining property distinguishing agreeing past participles from non-agreeing past participles cannot just be the argument structure of corresponding predicates, that is of



the abstract verbal root as stored in the Lexicon and characterized as selecting for an internal argument or otherwise an external argument, or both, since unaccusative structures with movement verbs or inchoative verbs in manifold languages happen to feature a non-agreeing past participle, as shown in (6). To (8a) should then be added a generalization like the one in (13) below.

- (8a) Agreeing past participles occur in structures with no external argument but with an internal argument or logical object  
 (13) Non-agreeing past participles must co-occur with the *have*-auxiliary, whether there is a logical object or not

I aim to account for (8a) and (13) by proposing that agreeing *-en* participles and non-agreeing *-en* participles each license a different kind of feature as regards their aspectual semantics, which is dealt with in Section 4.1 below. I argue that the features in question, which are identified here as [+resultative] and [+perfective] respectively, play a major role in the process of syntactic derivation, which means that they must be characterized as regards the properties of *valuation* and *interpretation* (Section 4.2). The feature [+resultative] of agreeing participles will be analyzed as being responsible for phi-agreement, which is clearly not the case for non-agreeing participles.

#### 4.1. On the licensing of two different types of features: the Semantics of [+resultative] vs. [+perfective]

As suggested in the preceding Section, the fact that non-agreeing past participles are not able to occur in a syntactic context where the *have*-auxiliary is not present, as opposed to agreeing past participles, which co-occur with the *be*-auxiliary, or which otherwise, in an important way, can occur on their own (let us recall reduced relative clauses or small clauses in (3) and (4)), can be used to postulate that they are each associated with a distinct type of feature that is relevant for the syntax. Such a contrast is bound to be at the base of the fact that only agreeing past participles do precisely that, that is license agreement with a nominal, whether overtly as in e.g. Spanish, or covertly as in e.g. English..

I would like to argue that agreeing past participles license a [+resultative] feature and that non-agreeing past participles license a [+perfective] (or also [+anterior]) feature. The semantics of each of these, which are incidentally frequently-recurring terms in the general literature on aspect, could be defined as follows:

- (14) a. [+resultative]: the property of an object that is the result or consequent state of a prior event<sup>3</sup>  
 b. [+perfective]: the property of a situation according to which the latter is completed at a time prior to the speech time

As advanced in the Introduction, passive structures as in (1) are canonical structures used in this paper to illustrate agreeing *-en* forms (both in Romance and in Germanic).

Those in (1) are specifically examples of eventive or agentive passives, which can be described as “denoting an action from the point of view of the object, which object is in a certain state as resulting from the cited action.” Such a state is precisely the property that is described in (14a), that is the property that is expressed by the agreeing *-en* participle.

Now, it must be noted that *resultative* is of course a term used in the highly-influential work of Embick (2004) in order to distinguish adjectival passives like *The door was already opened* –which the author calls *resultative passives*– from adjectival passives like *The door was open* –which the author refers to as *stative passives*. Whereas the former denote the state of an object once some event has taken place, the latter denote just a state, which entails that the participle can be assimilated in these to an adjective proper (Embick, 2004: 356).

I would like to emphasize the fact that the use of *resultative* that is relevant for the present discussion is one that covers both the participle occurring in the adjectival resultative passive of Embick, and the passive occurring in the canonical or eventive passive in (1), though each type of passive must be differentiated from the other. As noted in the Introduction, an analysis of passive constructions is outside the scope of this paper: I will restrict myself to noting, as I have mentioned immediately above, that canonical or eventive (or also agentive) passives denote, as the name indicates, an action. This action is viewed from the point of view of the logical object, which is crucially described as being in a state that is a consequence of the previous action. By contrast, adjectival resultative passives would denote a state that is a consequence of a previous action. From the point of view of syntax, the distinction between eventive passives on the one hand and adjectival resultative passives on the other could possibly be considered to depend on the treatment of the auxiliary *be*: once again though, this is an issue not covered by the present discussion.

Turning back to the core of the paper, I would like to note that, together with (1), the sequence in (2) is a paradigmatic example of an agreeing *-en* form, more specifically, the example of a structure which contains an unaccusative verb of movement in a language making systematic use of the *have/be* distinction as is Italian. This way, in accord with (14a), *Teresa è arrivata* (2) would mean informally that a “state is predicated of an individual, which state is the result or consequence of a previous event of arriving.”

Now, whereas the definition in (14a) acknowledges that agreeing *-en* forms denote the property of an object, (14b) specifies that non-agreeing *-en* forms denote the property of a situation. Two sentence-types are chosen in the present paper as paradigmatic of the use of these participles, which must obligatorily co-occur with the *have*-auxiliary: structures with transitive (or also unergative) verbs cross-linguistically, as in (5), or structures with unaccusative verbs or inchoative verbs in languages not exhibiting the *have/be* opposition, or not doing so in a systematic way, as in (6). A sequence like Spanish (6a) *Los invitados han llegado* or English (6b) *The guests have arrived* would express therefore the meaning of perfectivity or anteriority as a property of an event or situation as a whole, and not the property of an object or individual. By

contrast with the interpretation of *Teresa è arrivata* as specified above, the sentences in (6) could roughly be taken to mean that “an event of arriving is predicated of a given entity, which event has been completed at a time prior to the time of speaking.” Incidentally, it must be noted that the informal definition provided in (14b) is not a complete one from a Reichenbachian perspective. As is widely known, the framework of Reichenbach (1947) distinguishes the so-called *Reference time* in addition to the *Event time* and the *Speech time*, it being the relation between the Reference time and the Speech time that is core in distinguishing e.g. the present perfect from the simple past: whereas in the present perfect the Reference time coincides with or includes the Speech time (E\_R,S), in the simple past the Reference time precedes the Speech time (E,R\_S).<sup>4</sup>

The semantic characterization of the *-en* suffix of agreeing and non-agreeing participles as [+resultative] and [+perfective] that has been provided in the present Section is used in the Section immediately below in order to characterize each type of participle as regards the process of syntactic derivation, that is as regards the properties of valuation and interpretation of formal features. The main goal is to establish the connection between the feature [+resultative] and the phi-features of corresponding participles.

#### 4.2. Feature-valuation and feature-interpretation of [+resultative] vs. [+perfective]: a distinct licensing position for agreeing vs. non-agreeing participles

The seminal works of Chomsky (1995, 2000, 2001a, b) postulate that the linguistic component of core or narrow syntax proceeds through the operations *Merge* and *Agree*, where *Merge* consists in the combination of two syntactic units from the Lexicon/Numeration (*external Merge*) in order to form a new syntactic unit, and *Agree* consists in that an element that acts as a *Probe* that searches for a *Goal*, which it must c-command, in order to value formal features (see also at the beginning of Section 2). Incidentally, the c-commanding spatial relation that is assumed in standard minimalist frameworks is dealt with in Section 4.3. Before that, the focus must be on the distinction *valued/unvalued* on the one hand, and *interpretable/uninterpretable* on the other.

In effect, formal features are characterized in the above-cited framework as based on the properties of valuation and interpretation, and specifically Chomsky (2001: 5) couples together both properties through positing that a feature is uninterpretable “if and only if it is also an unvalued feature.” In this framework, the interpretability of features, that is, the capacity that a feature has to contribute meaning to the lexical item it belongs to, and eventually to the sentence as a whole, is the force driving a derivation. Further, the valuation of features will entail the movement (or *internal Merge*) of the Goal in case the Probe has an EPP feature or property. If there is no such EPP feature on the part of the Probe, then the valuation of features (that is, *Agree* between Probe and Goal) will take place without movement (see also Section 3 above).

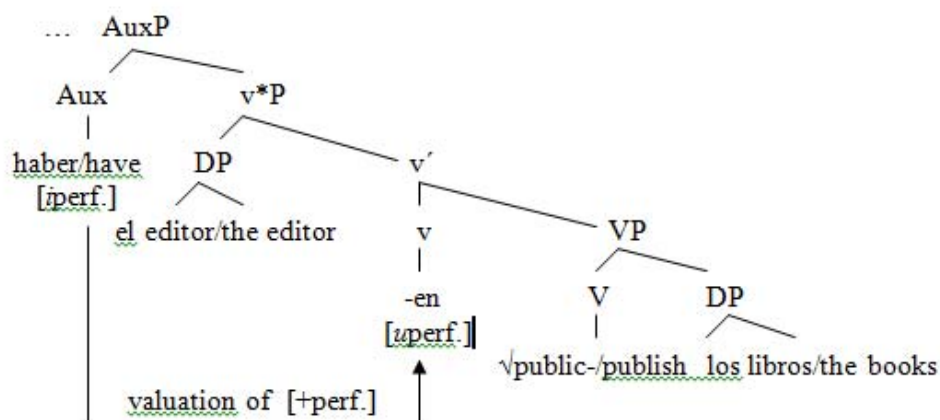
Pesetsky and Torrego (2001, 2004a, b) reject the biconditional established by Chomsky between valuation of features and their interpretability, and propose that each

such property works independently of the other, all combinations between the two properties being possible. On the authors' approach, the property of interpretability can be described as above, that is, as the semantic contribution that the feature in question makes to the item that bears it. As for feature valuation, Pesetsky and Torrego consider that this is the capacity of any given item to come from the Lexicon already specified for that property, in which case the feature in question is *valued* on that item; if, on the other hand, an item must borrow the property from another item, then the feature is *unvalued* on the borrowing item. One example to illustrate can be the  $\tau$ -features of T (typically, [+/-present]), which are interpretable on this head and unvalued, and happen to be uninterpretable on  $v$  and valued. T will act as a Probe for the Goal of  $v$ , with the result that T will value its  $\tau$ -features, and these will become interpretable for  $v$  itself.

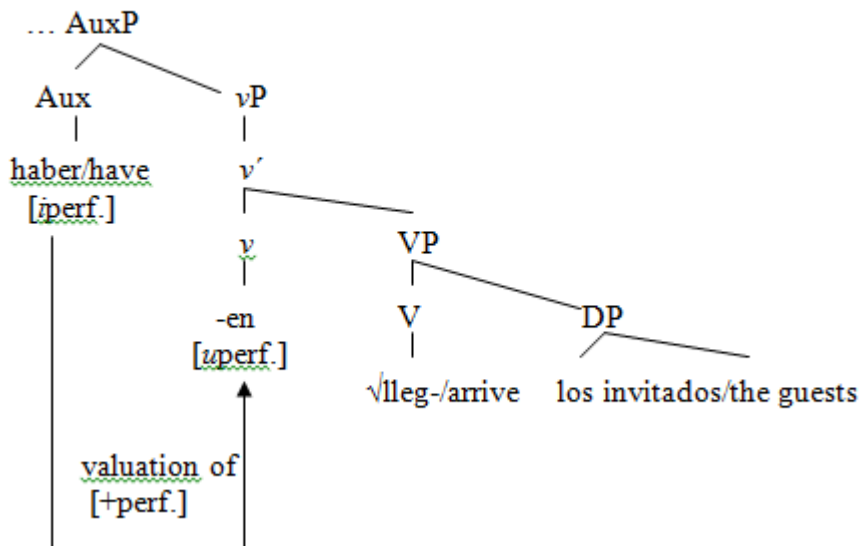
The above characterization of features as valued/unvalued and interpretable/uninterpretable must now be applied to the context of non-agreeing past participles on the one hand and agreeing past participles on the other.

Starting with non-agreeing participles, these forms have been shown in preceding Sections to occur in sequences with a logical subject and/or with a logical object, and to always appear in combination with the *have*-auxiliary – let us recall (5) and (6). The operation Merge that corresponds to any of the sequences in (5) or (6) will consist of a typical configuration where V s-selects for O(bject), with the two forming a VP as a result. After the Merge of V and O comes the Merge of a  $v$  head, which s-selects for S(ubject) and projects a Spec position for the latter: see tree-diagrams in (15). Incidentally, as assumed in standard frameworks, the  $v$  head is in charge not only of selecting a subject, but also of valuing the accusative Case-feature of O (that is, of the logical object or internal argument). Further, I would like to note that, for the sake of simplicity, only the relevant portion of derivation is shown on these two tree-diagrams, and in the three other tree-diagrams to appear in the Section, and that only the *Agree* operation that refers to the feature [+perfective], or later [+resultative], has been signalled. The notation [*i*] means “interpretable” and [*u*] means “uninterpretable.”

(15) a. Figure 1



b. Figure 2



Now, I assume that morphology is built up in narrow syntax and I take V to merge externally as a root-form and to license subsequently, in a higher position, corresponding inflectional affixes. In the case at hand, the cited inflectional affix is an *-en* suffix which lacks phi-features, and which has the meaning [+perfective], as argued in Section 4.1. The *-en* suffix of the participle is bound to be licensed by a head that c-commands the participle, which head is of course the *have*-auxiliary, which merges on top of vP: note again the diagrams in (15).

Based upon the above characterization of features, I would like to argue that [+perfective] is *interpretable* and *unvalued* on *have*, and that it is *uninterpretable* and *valued* on *v*. Now, the grammatical notion of perfectivity or anteriority is conveyed by *have* in combination with the (non-agreeing) *-en* participle (see in this regard the descriptive work of Ehrich, 1992). Neither the auxiliary nor the participle can be absent when it comes to the expression of an event or situation that is completed prior to another event or situation: the parameters of valuation and interpretation appear thus to be in complementary distribution as regards these two elements (though it must be recalled that all four combinations between valued/unvalued and interpretable/uninterpretable are arguably possible). For the *have*-auxiliary to select an *-en* form means that the Probe of *have* seeks for a Goal in the cited *-en* form. The very presence of the *have*-auxiliary in a sequence indicates the meaning of perfectivity or anteriority, hence the characterization of [+perfective] as interpretable on *have*: however, *have* cannot convey such a meaning on its own but needs to value [+perfective] through resort to another element in the Lexicon of the language that is present in the derivation, namely the participle form, hence the characterization of [+perfective] as unvalued on *have*. On the other hand, to say that [+perfective] is uninterpretable on the *-en* participle

does not contradict the fact that the *-en* participle is itself characterized as [+perfective], as has been argued in Section 4.1 above: [+perfective] actually means the completion of an event or situation prior to another event or situation and, strictly speaking, this can only be done by the *have*-auxiliary in combination with an *-en* form. In other words, if the *interpretation* of a sequence is perfective, then the *have*-auxiliary is chosen from the Lexicon or Numeration, and the form of the verb that must be instantiated is the cited *-en* participle.

Incidentally, it must be noted that the *have*-auxiliary figures in the position of Aux in the tree-diagrams in (15), though the possibility is open for it to be merged externally from the Lexicon into the T head. This is an aspect of the process of derivation that does not affect the core of the argumentation in the paper.

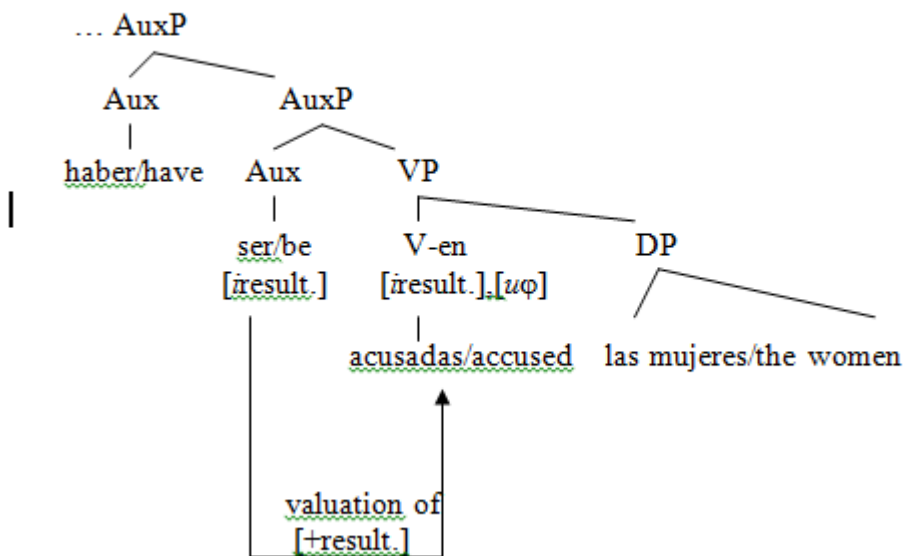
Summing up the discussion immediately above, the *-en* suffix of non-agreeing participles is located in *v*, and an *Agree* relation is established between the *have*-auxiliary and *V-en* in *v* by means of which *have* values its interpretable [+perfective] feature (marked [*i*+perf.] in the tree-diagrams in (15)) against the cited *V-en*. Now, such an analysis of non-agreeing *-en* forms is bound to contrast with the analysis to be provided for agreeing *-en* forms, since the latter occur in sequences where the nominal in question is a logical object or internal argument, and not a logical subject (let us recall the sequences in (1)–(4)) and they can be selected by the *be*-auxiliary (as in (1) and (2)) or otherwise occur on their own (as in (3) and (4)). Though the analysis of absolute small clauses is out of the scope of the paper (see Section 1), it is interesting to note that these structures are prone to receive a two-fold account, depending on whether an aspectual projection is considered to merge on top of the verbal phrase or not. However, reduced relative clauses (3) appear to be safely analyzed just like finite passive structures that happen to lack the *be*-auxiliary projection, which supports the idea that agreeing past participles can indeed be autonomous, that is that they do not require the presence of *be*.

Focusing now on agreeing past participles, these are argued in this paper to value phi-features on the one hand and a [+resultative] feature on the other (see Section 4.1 above). I would like to contend that the fact that they can occur on their own (as in (3) or also possibly (4)) means that the feature [+resultative] is both valued and interpretable on the participle itself, that is, on the *V-en* form in question. As for phi-features – that is, person and/or number and/or gender features – these are valued and uninterpretable on the participle, and valued and interpretable on the logical object or internal argument. The participle will thus value its phi-features against the object, and the object will value nominative Case.

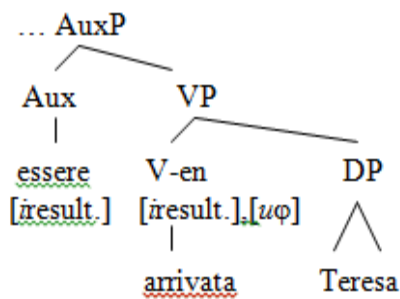
Now, given that both instances of features on the participle – phi-features on the one hand and [+resultative] on the other – can be licensed on external Merge of V with its object, and given also that *V-en* is not expected in agreeing past participle constructions to project any external argument position, that is, any subject position,<sup>5</sup> then it can be concluded that *V-en* is merged as such in V with the object as its sister. Thus, whereas the *-en* suffix of non-agreeing past participles is located in *v* (let us recall the tree-diagrams in (15)), the *-en* suffix of agreeing past participles is located in V in the

account proposed here: see the tree-diagrams in (16a, b).<sup>6</sup> V-*en* forms with the meaning [+resultative] are thus analyzed as merging from the Lexicon/Numeration as such V-*en* forms, and they must subsequently get their phi-features valued. Incidentally, the auxiliaries *have* and *be* can merge externally in an Aux projection above VP –as shown in (16a, b)– though the possibility exists, the same as in (15) above, for the auxiliaries to merge externally in the T head.

(16) a. Figure 3



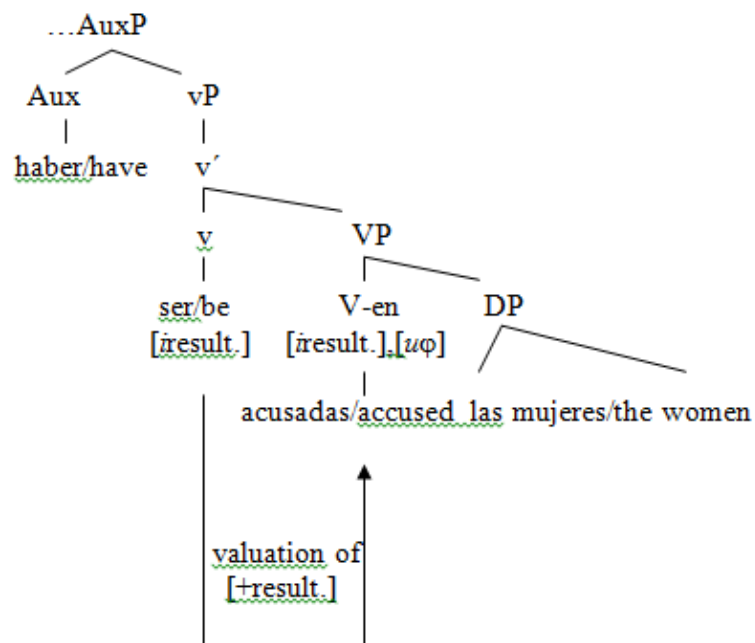
b. Figure 4



[+resultative] is a property of an entity or individual (namely, the object), and the *-en* forms bearing such a feature can occur with or without the *be*-auxiliary. As just mentioned, [+resultative] is valued and interpretable on V-*en*. In case V-*en* co-occurs with the *be*-auxiliary, then [+resultative] is interpretable and unvalued on *be*, which would explain that *be* must select a V-*en* form, though [+resultative] is still valued and interpretable on V-*en* itself, which element can occur on its own. The corresponding notation appears on the trees in (16a, b).

Now, as noted from the beginning of the paper, the aim of the present discussion is not to analyse passive structures proper, or the contrasts between the various types of passives. Nevertheless, I would like to observe that the possibility exists for eventive or agentive passives – that is, passives like the one illustrated in (1) – and also for movement structures as those in (2) to be analyzed as projecting a *v* head where *be* itself is merged (see the tree-diagram in (17)). Once more, I would like to say that such issues are out of the scope of this paper, and that the major goal of the present discussion is to present an analysis of the *-en* suffix of agreeing past participles as valuing different features from those of non-agreeing past participles, and also as merging in different positions in the derivation.<sup>7</sup>

(17) Figure 5



Summing up, the core argument in this Section, and actually the core argument of the paper, is that phi-agreement in *-en* participles occurs because the relevant verbal element denotes the property [+resultative] about the object that it selects, which *Agree* relation between the participle and the logical object can further be considered to take place with *V-en* in the typical *V* position of external Merge – without any need of internal Merge into higher *v*. Such sequences as (7), repeated below with the same numeration, are ungrammatical because the feature that the relevant *V-en* forms value is [+perfective], which does not relate to an object or individual, but to an event or situation as a whole. Therefore no phi-*Agree* relation obtains between the two.



- (7) a. \*Jean a vue la fille  
 Jean has seen<sub>fem.,sing.</sub> the girl<sub>fem.,sing.</sub>  
 ‘Jean saw her’
- b. \*Abbiamo salutate le ragazze  
 we-have greeted<sub>fem.,pl.</sub> the girls<sub>fem.,pl.</sub>
- c. \*El editor ha publicados los libros  
 the editor has published<sub>masc.,pl.</sub> the books<sub>masc.,pl.</sub>

I would like to note that the analysis proposed here is perfectly compatible with the theory of adverb-placement formulated in the influential work of Cinque (1999), or also in Blight (1999), according to which English *passive* participles (our agreeing participles valuing [+resultative]) appear to occupy a position lower than *active* participles (our non-agreeing participles valuing [+perfective]). Note the illustrations in (18) below.

- (18) a. The house was poorly built  
 b. \*They (have) poorly built the house  
 c. They (have) built the house poorly  
 (Blight 1999, in Caponigro and Schütze, 2003: 297)

On the account proposed here, for the adverb *poorly* to be possible in between the participle and the *be*-auxiliary, but not in between the participle and the *have*-auxiliary would indicate that the corresponding V-*en* element can itself be modified with manner adverbs, independently of the *be*-auxiliary. This is not possible with non-agreeing *-en* participles, which are located in *v* –and the same situation would apply to finite forms, also located in *v*.<sup>8</sup>

#### 4.3. In what configuration does Phi-agreement occur?

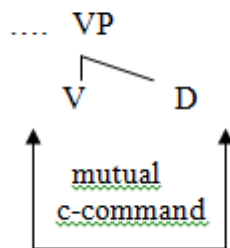
In this last Section of the paper I focus briefly on the c-command condition typically invoked for any *Agree* relation generally speaking in an Antisymmetry account of minimalist syntax.

Chomsky’s framework (1995 et seq.) defends that there is no specific order of Merge of elements into narrow syntax (so-called *Bare phrase structure* model of syntax) and, as is widely known, this is a view that contrasts quite strongly with the highly-influential model of *Antisymmetry* theory, originally postulated by Kayne (1994). The recent work of Kayne (2011/2013) establishes that Merge is bound to abide by the Spec-head-complement order of classical Antisymmetry theory, since every instance of Merge entails a relation of *Agree* between a Probe and a Goal, which is an *asymmetric c-command relation*. As is well known, the so-called *Linear Corresponding Axiom (LCA)* of Antisymmetry theory postulates that the above-cited universal base order results without exception from the condition that if an element  $\alpha$  c-commands an element  $\beta$  (that is, if  $\beta$  is dominated by a sister of  $\alpha$ ) then  $\beta$  may not c-command  $\alpha$  in the phrase-marker.

Antisymmetry theory has been criticized over the years on various fronts, one of these being the supposed weakness of the claim that VO, rather than OV, is bound to be the original order of Merge. The argument (against Antisymmetry or LCA theory) is that the relation between V and a pronominal O s-selected by V amounts to a relation between two heads, which is a totally symmetric relation, since V c-commands O and O c-commands V (the so-called *bottom-pair problem*).

Now, though the issue of linearization within narrow syntax is marginal to the present discussion, I must say something about the condition relative to asymmetric c-command between a Probe and a Goal, since I have argued in the core of the paper that phi-agreement between V-en and the logical object occurs in the position of external Merge of V: in that case, if O is analyzed as a head (more specifically, if O happens to be a D head), then the Probe of V-en does not asymmetrically c-command its Goal. See the tree-diagram in (19).

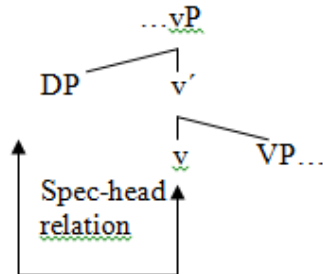
(19) Figure 6



I would like to say that I assume an Antisymmetry model in my research in syntax on a general basis, and that relations of *Agree* appear indeed to be typically based on an asymmetric c-command configuration: this is the case between the Probe of T and *v* as regards  $\tau$ -features (as standardly assumed), or the Probe of Aux and *v* as regards e.g. the feature [+perfective] or [+progressive] (again as standardly assumed), or also the Probe of Aux and V as regards the feature [+resultative] (as argued here). In all such cases, the Probe c-commands the Goal but not the reverse. However, I would like to suggest that maybe the specific relation of *Agree* that is phi-agreement does *not* necessarily abide by the condition of asymmetric c-command.

Now, in work in press I deal with phi-agreement in relation to the phenomenon of V-to-T movement, and I argue that phi-features in (ordinary) non-participial, finite structures are valued between *v* and the DP subject in its Spec position, and that the relevant valuation is completed on T's valing  $\tau$ -features against *v*. See the tree-diagram in (20).

(20) Figure 7



I support such an analysis by means of two arguments: on the one hand, the fact that the content or interpretation of phi-features on the subject nominal (that is, of person and/or number and/or gender features) are known by  $v$  on the external Merge of the cited subject nominal in Spec, $v$ , at a stage prior to T acting as a Probe for S; on the other hand, the fact that verbal paradigms of languages other than English (typically, Romance languages) figure distinctive morphology relative to tense and to agreement, which is in accord with a systematic building up of the verbal form in question through narrow syntax. The account that I defend is reminiscent of the original (pre-minimalist) analysis postulated by Pollock (1989) according to which agreement features are licensed separately and *before* tense features.

All in all then, in work in press I defend the view that phi-features between a finite verb and a subject nominal are valued in a Spec-head configuration, and in the present paper I defend the view that phi-features between a past participle and an object nominal are valued in a head-complement configuration that can be one of symmetric c-command. In both cases it is argued that phi-agreement occurs at the moment of external Merge in the derivation of the element bearing interpretable valued phi-features, which element is typically a nominal. A conclusion that seems to me to be thus far explanatory is for phi-agreement not to be subject to asymmetric c-command, but to the cited external Merge of the nominal in question.

## 5. Conclusion

I have argued in this paper that agreeing past participles differ from non-agreeing past participles in that the former enter the derivation endorsed with a feature [+resultative] whereas the latter must value a feature [+perfective] or [+anterior] against the *have*-auxiliary. For agreeing V-*en* forms to be merged already in V is compatible with the fact that such participles do not need the occurrence of the *be*-auxiliary, together with the fact that they denote the meaning [+resultative], which is a property of the logical object or internal argument, which merges, as standardly assumed, as sister to V.

The main point of the overall argumentation is that phi-agreement (between the corresponding V-*en* form and the logical object) occurs because the meaning [+resultative] denotes a property of the logical object, as just mentioned. The V-*en* form

with the valued, interpretable feature [+resultative] comes to establish an *Agree* relation with the object in order to value its (that is, the participle's) uninterpretable phi-features. In contrast with these *V-en* forms, those *V-en* forms that do not show agreement are obligatorily selected by the *have*-auxiliary. They are argued to merge in V (in the form of a root) and to raise subsequently to the *v* head, where they will value the *-en* suffix with an uninterpretable feature [+perfective] as soon as the *have*-auxiliary merges on top of *vP*. In accord with the above argumentation, no phi-agreement occurs whenever the *V-en* form values a feature [+perfective] because the latter is a property of the overall event as expressed by the sentence, and not a property of the object.

The proposed account appears to justify the fact that whereas all agreeing past participles in general s-select for a logical object, non-agreeing past participles *can* actually occur in structures with a logical object and no logical subject, namely, unaccusative structures with verbs of movement or with inchoative verbs in languages like Spanish or English. This latter fact seems to be left unexplained in seminal GB analyses, or in the minimalist phase-based analysis of D'Alessandro and Roberts (2008). An account like D'Alessandro and Roberts' is not explanatory enough from the perspective of the present paper not only because it restricts itself to treating past participle agreement as a morpho-phonological phenomenon rather than a narrow syntax phenomenon, but above all because it does not seem able to derive a sentence where participles of unaccusative verbs select for objects with which they nevertheless do not agree, as suggested immediately above.

In the last part of the paper I develop in a brief way the observation that the precise *Agree* relation that is phi-agreement appears not to be subject to the condition of asymmetric c-command, but that phi-agreement occurs in the configuration of external Merge of the nominal carrying the relevant valued, interpretable phi-features.

## Notes

1. It is well known that languages like French or Italian tend to use agreeing participles in perfective sentences with the *have*-auxiliary whenever the logical object is a clitic: see (i) below. I would like to observe that this structural type could possibly be put in connection with the original use of the *have*-auxiliary (that is, of perfective *have*) as the canonical predicate meaning possession (see also (12) in Section 2). Due to space limitations, this issue, which includes the issue of clitics and therefore the VO/OV order, are not dealt with in the present paper.

- (i) a. Jean l'a                      vue  
       Jean her<sub>fem.,sing.</sub> -has seen<sub>fem.,sing.</sub>  
       'Jean saw her'
- b. Le                      abbiamo salutate  
       them<sub>fem.,pl.</sub> we-have greeted<sub>fem.,pl.</sub>  
       'We have greeted him'

2. See Section 4.1 and 4.2 for a more detailed description of the notions of Probe and Goal, and of the operations Merge and Agree.

3. The meaning of “state” that is relevant includes both *temporary* states and *permanent* states, as distinguished in the literature (see e.g. Kratzer, 2000).

4. The goal of the present paper is not to defend any logico-semantic analysis of *perfectivity*, or of the present perfect in particular. Nonetheless, it seems appropriate to note that, aside from the Reichenbachian description as mentioned in the text, a very influential analysis is that of the present perfect as an *extended now* (see e.g. the work of Dowty, 1979).

5. Let us recall the existence of sequences like (i) in note 1 above. These are bound, however, to receive a separate treatment.

6. As for nominative Case on the object, this is of course a thorny issue in the literature. As is widely known, Chomsky (2000, 2001a, b) invokes phi-defectivity on the past participle, which would have number and gender features to value, but not person features, with the result that the object becomes available as a Goal for the Probe of T, and values above-cited nominative Case. Nevertheless, this kind of explanation is criticized in the literature on the grounds that it treats Goals as Probes themselves: in effect, it is so entailed that, if nominals have a person feature, then there must be a Probe in need to value such a feature. I endorse the general idea that Case is the counterpart of phi-agreement, as in the above framework, though the issue of where exactly in the derivation does the valuing of nominative Case apply belongs to work in preparation. Incidentally, it is well known that Pesetsky and Torrego (2001, 2004a) defend an analysis of Case where this is a tense-feature on the nominal, rather than the result of phi-feature valuation, as in Chomsky’s framework.

7. It is interesting to note that Embick’s (2004) analysis, which follows the tenets of *Distributed Morphology*, argues for different flavours of the little *v* head that would correspond to the different types of passives, and locates the *-en* morpheme in an Aspectual head above *v*P. Embick’s approach aims to justify the syntax and morphology of deadjectival verbs, and also of so-called resultative secondary predicates, and their connections with resultative passives proper, which means that the portion of structural analysis provided by the author as applying in between the root element and *v* is a fine-grained one. The reader is referred to Embick (2004: 383).

8. It is fair to note that Caponigro and Schütze (2003) postulate different heights of raising (that is, of internal Merge) for participles in passive constructions vs. participles in active constructions, though there exist major differences between the authors’ approach and the one defended here. Briefly put, Caponigro and Schütze (2003) focus on passives introduced by expletive *there* and their analysis relies very heavily on adverb-placement. Assuming a Spec,AgrOP framework for the licensing of objects rather than a feature-valuing framework as based on *Agree*, the authors reach the conclusion that Italian participles raise higher than English participles, an idea that is not contemplated at all in the present discussion.

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**Dorian Gray from the page to the screen. A comparative semiotic analysis of *The Picture of Dorian Gray* (Oscar Wilde, 1891) and *The Picture of Dorian Gray* (Albert Lewin, 1945)**

Tomás Costal Criado  
UNED  
corealis@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

Oscar Wilde's only novel, *The Picture of Dorian Gray* (1891), and its homonymous screen adaptation which dates back to the period immediately following WWII, *The Picture of Dorian Gray* (1945), directed by Albert Lewin, constitute an interesting example of semiotic transference from the page to the screen. As an audiovisual product, the film will allow the researcher to perceive the ways in which words become alive and add an enormous symbolic and significant wealth to the already abundant information that is conveyed through the connotative and allusive language of the text. This work tries to analyse meticulously a selection of key scenes taken from the film adaptation to later determine with the highest degree of accuracy possible what has been omitted, what has been added, and what has been deemed worthy of modification in the new version of Wilde's work, where both Lewin and his cast of characters play the role of mediators.

**Keywords:** Oscar Wilde, *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, semiotics, audiovisual translation

## 1. Refashioning Wilde: Albert Lewin's adaptation of *The Picture of Dorian Gray* (1945)

The fate of literary works, as occurs with various other forms of artistic expression, is often uncertain. Some behave just like shooting stars and after a period during which they are adored by the public and the critics alike they vanish and become imperceptible. Others have languid beginnings and gradually become cultural points of reference to be eventually enshrined as canonical masterpieces. Still others last for a year, a generation, or an epoch, and after that are left to gather dust until their ultimate rediscovery and more careful assessment.

In the particular case of the works of Oscar Fingal O'Flahertie Wills Wilde, Oxford wit, epigrammatic genius, sharp critic, and Irish raconteur par excellence, his unforgettable public persona, his personal progression from the heights of elation to the depths of despair and incarceration –indeed physical and spiritual, but not creative–, as well as his enormous capacity for self-fashioning, led to the very unique transformation of a man into a popular idol. No work of Wilde's is read today without being influenced by the memory of the plight of the author's trials and his encounter with the stumbling block of some John Sholto Douglas, also known in London high society as the infamous 9<sup>th</sup> Marquess of Queensberry.

In effect, it is a difficult task to separate Wilde's life from his work either in the case of his poetry or his criticism, much less still his fairy stories, novel or plays. On many occasions, the author himself acknowledged that he drew inspiration from daily experiences and direct contact with other relevant cultural figures of his time at home and abroad. Wilde's dictum of putting all his genius into his life and only his talent into his works is of course open to several divergent interpretations, but it should be remembered that there are plentiful instances of documentary evidence which stand as incontrovertible proof that, far from the image of the dandy that he pursued to achieve in the public sphere throughout his younger years, Wilde the artist was a methodical and hard-working creator.

Although only the future will tell whether Wilde's oeuvre will go down in history and manage to stand in parallel with the Dickens, Thackerays, Brontës, and Shelleys, just to name but a few, it does not seem too adventurous to assert that in light of the tremendous volume of scholarship, depth of analysis, variety of discussion, abundance of translations, and diversity of adaptations, the status of Oscariana has so far proved to be impervious to libel, defamation, disrepute and, like the mythical bird, permanently emerges from its ashes with renewed strength.

The purpose of the present study is to compare Oscar Wilde's only novel *The Picture Of Dorian Gray*, published in book form in 1891, with what is perhaps one of its most evocative audiovisual adaptations, the eponymous 1945 feature film by American producer, screenwriter and director Albert Lewin.

This being a semiotic and analytical approach to the transmutation of a literary text into an audiovisual product, the main research interest will be to try to pinpoint the potential dissimilarities, if indeed there are any, which exist between the language of the page and the language of the screen. With this goal in mind, reference will be made to



the life and work of Oscar Wilde to provide sufficient background for comparison and contrast between these two realities. A succinct bio-bibliographical note will endeavour to signpost which key moments in the author's life could have had a direct impact on his artistic production, and thus contributed to certain aspects of the creative process: from characterisation to public reception.

The present study will not pay attention to how the 1945 film was produced, or compile any information concerning the use that was made of the original text neither by the director nor the cast. Instead, in a dyadic analysis of four cuts excerpted from the film, numerous observations will be made in which the author's text and the director's footage are judged hand in hand as equivalent but distinct expressions of a symbolic construct that features instances of intra- and intertextuality. Therefore, the central concern of this proposal is to delineate a method of semiotic analysis by means of which *Dorian Gray* the novel and *Dorian Gray* the film are to be more easily and clearly understood in their own context.

Except when quoting verbatim, all page numbers in the novel will make reference to M. P. Gillespie's edition (Wilde and Gillespie: 2006b). As for the film and the clips that are subject to semiotic interpretation alongside the textual fragments, reference to their location has also been provided.

## **2. Bio-bliographical background**

### 2.1. The author and his time: early years

Sloan (2009: 1) reports that young Oscar's life in Ireland left a very deep impression on the future author of *The Happy Prince* and *The Importance Of Being Earnest*: "[...] Family life at the eighteenth century house in Dublin's fashionable Merrion Square was cultured, convivial, and sometimes chaotic, with bailiffs at the door on at least one occasion because of his father's financial confusions". Oscar's mother, Lady Jane Wilde, née Elgee, whose literary pseudonym was none other than Speranza in memory of her alleged noble Italian ancestors, was the closest to native aristocracy there was in Ireland, at that time still a colony of the British Empire. In her role as national poetess and political activist, Lady Wilde knew how to use the interstices of British colonial power to her advantage and put forward controversial points without being chastised by the advocates of imperialism. Ellmann (1988: 5) adds that she "[...] had a sense of being destined for greatness, and imparted it. Her son subscribed to her view, and treated her with the utmost consideration and respect, almost as though he were her precursor rather than she his". Therefore, the mother figure in the Wilde household was totemic in size and splendid in intellect, especially when attention is paid to the number of receptions that are reported to have taken place both in the Dublin and the London households during her most active years. Again, Ellmann (8):

Immoderateness was a policy with her. In December 1848 she wrote, 'I should like to rage through life –this orthodox creeping is too tame for me– ah, this wild rebellious ambitious nature of mine. I wish I could satiate it with Empires, though a St Helena were the end'.

It becomes clear in light of Speranza's remarks that the revolutionary spirit of the age had not completely disappeared, and that the power of her convictions would get her far, first locally and then nationally. Her allusion to the fate of Napoleon is double-edged: one can rebel against apparently insurmountable odds, but one can do it only for a short while before one is suppressed, destroyed and forgotten.

Without a doubt it is always advisable to distinguish between real life and fictional works; this appears, however, to be a considerably arduous task in the face of the peculiarities of the Wildes. This was no ordinary Irish family: their economic position was relatively comfortable and would have been so even more had it not been for Sir William's regrettable investment management; their social status and versatile disposition allowed them to be more than welcome both in the colony and in court; and the children could reap the benefits not only of a literary, but also a scientific family background. Even in his later years, during his exile in Paris after completing his sentence to two years hard labour in up to three British penitentiaries, friends, acquaintances and other assorted witnesses whose diaries have been preserved comment that rather than conversation, Oscar had the gift of narration so skilful was he in the art of persuading and making his point beautifully. Both biographers agree that Wilde's parents, although sceptical at first about the intellectual achievements that were to be expected from their second child, soon realised that young Oscar was well equipped with a powerful imagination and a way with words.

Experiences from his childhood and his adult life will inform Oscar's main works of fiction in the same way that his studies in Dublin and Oxford, his lecture tour of the United States and Canada, his meeting with Walt Whitman, the French Decadents, and even the Pope during his short visit to Rome, which would cost him half his scholarship and a period of rustication, will provide the artist with enough original material as to be able to dispel the unfair accusations of plagiarism and appropriation of other artists' work that had been so damaging to his early career as a poet once and for all. In the same vein, apart from being naturally talented and a gifted student of the classical world, Oscar received the best education money could pay, first at Trinity College, Dublin, and then in the most ancient university in England, where he blossomed as a mature artist.

Having had first-hand contact with the Paris zeitgeist and seeing himself as an accomplished international figure whom everyone who was anyone wanted at their dinner table, Wilde decided to abandon his aesthete apparel along with his self-attributed professorship in Aesthetics, to concentrate on his other philosophical staples at least for a while. His transmogrification into a fully assimilated Irish gentleman among the English will see a marriage to Constance Lloyd, the birth of two sons, Cyril and Vyvyan, the editorship of *The Woman's World* magazine, the publication of two collections of short stories, hundreds of critical reviews, and the seed of the idea that would become *The Picture Of Dorian Gray*.

## 2.2. *The Picture of Dorian Gray* (Oscar Wilde, 1891)

Wilde's only novel was initially published in *Lippincott's Magazine* in 1890 and later corrected, modified, and expanded to be released in book form in a variety of editions: from the very expensive and richly decorated hardbacks the author reserved for his closest friends and male partners, to the shilling versions which tried to combat pirated print runs both in Britain and America. The novel was judged as scandalous and corrupted in the most conservative circles, thus generating a long-winded debate in two of the most circulated London monthlies: the *St James's Gazette* and the short-lived *Daily Chronicle* (cf. Mason, 1908). Yet, what was the reason behind the attacks? What is more, where was the immorality in the story to inflame newspaper editors to such a degree as to suggest the government get down to work and send Wilde to prison? Perhaps a summary of the main plot of the 1891 version of the novel, that is, the one that contains the final amendments by the author after having received a veritable scolding in the papers, could be of some use.

*The Picture of Dorian Gray* tells the story of a young man who, by a strange working of Fate, which remains unexplained throughout the novel, is granted his wish of not ageing. Rather than suffering the effects of feebleness and decay in his own person, it would be his painting that would act as a token of the passage of time. This strange pact comes to fruition after the mesmeric and almost diabolical encounter with Lord Henry Wotton, the perfect embodiment of the Victorian dandy, and his friend Basil Hallward, who paints the picture and feels as if he had left behind part of his soul the moment he finished the portrait. Trained in the doctrine of New Hedonism professed by Lord Henry and liberated from the restraints of Victorian social mores, Dorian sets himself the task of living his life to the fullest and thinking not about the consequences of his own acts, but about the multiplicity of ways that are open in front of him to maximise pleasure. The more Dorian searches for the ultimate pleasure, the more he has a deleterious effect on those who surround him, with the possible exception of the Mephistophelian figure of Lord Henry. Sibyl Vane, the actress Dorian believes he has fallen in love with, commits suicide after being rejected by him, and this makes Dorian aware of the curse that has created a binary opposition between the man and his enchanted picture: the picture would gradually degenerate on the surface, while at the same time Dorian would remain young as he was on the outside and fatally wounded spiritually. Lord Henry's influence, however, proves decisive when the protagonist expresses any slight intention to reform himself. The Hedonist mentor advises him not to change his ways and to thrust head-on in his pursuit of limitless pleasure. In consequence, the picture becomes hideous even to his owner; his horrid actions have baleful implications for all those involved with him –from Basil Hallward, whom Dorian murders in a fit of rage, to Sibyl Vane's vengeful brother, accidentally shot dead during a hunting raid– until things come to an end. Dorian, incapable of bearing the painful sight of his degenerate soul in the form of the painting, stabs it and dies. When

he is later found by his servants, his body is deformed beyond recognition and his painting recovers its original appearance, thus breaking the malefice.

Ellmann (1988: 300) makes an interesting point concerning the themes of the novel:

Dorian Gray, besides being about aestheticism, is also one of the first attempts to bring homosexuality into the English novel. Its appropriately covert presentation of this censored subject gave the book notoriety and originality.

Perhaps some people in the know would see this “censored subject” as one of the key elements of *Dorian Gray* as a novel, but judging by the reaction of the editors of the monthly magazines, most of the attacks directed to Wilde insisted on the poor quality of the story and its immoral subject. After all, a gentleman is depicted in the novel as a murderer and debauchee, which went against the grain of traditional Victorian values and common sense. For this reason, Ellmann (305) quips: “The effect of *Dorian Gray* was prodigious. No novel had commanded so much attention for years or awakened sentiments so contradictory in its readers. Wilde’s circle of young men were delighted”.

This “circle of young men” would be Wilde’s male lovers and rent boys, to whom, it has been reported (cf. Sloan, 2009), he gave signed first editions as a present. Among them Lord Alfred Douglas received one. It might be that Wilde’s circle enjoyed being at the centre of any scandal, but Constance’s letters reveal that after the publication “no one would talk to them”.

### **3. Semiotic analysis of *The Picture of Dorian Gray* (Oscar Wilde, 1891) and *The Picture of Dorian Gray* (Albert Lewin, 1945)**

#### **3.1. Preliminary concerns**

From its inception, the present study set itself the goal of being able to identify with a high degree of accuracy the series of visual transformations and textual transmutations that allowed for the conversion of a literary work into an audiovisual creation. The text itself, however, does by no means exist in isolation and, in consequence, carries with it a freight of associations with other texts, discourses, and ideologies that cannot and should not be ignored. According to Cobley and Jansz (1998: 162): “For Eco, a serious semiotics should be concerned to weed out bad interpretations in order to establish the principles of those which arise from successful semiosis, alighting ultimately, perhaps, on a Final Interpretant”. It would probably be too bold to maintain Eco’s position here. Regardless of how percipient the observers may be, they have only been offered partial access to highly complex referential sets of symbols. Indeed, in our case, to state that “bad interpretations” can be removed to clear the path for the truth would be as immodest as to claim that the beauty of a whole room can be grasped by peering through the keyhole. What is more, we assume that adaptation, as is the case with Albert Lewin’s version, requires both creativity and renunciation: however faithful the

transference from the page to the screen may be, much is bound to be lost and a reasonable amount of information is liable to be added. That in itself is not “bad” or prevents in any way the pursuit of “true” meaning, since it is our belief that reinterpretation, comparison, and contrast direct the observer to a novel assessment of what, up until that point, had been challenging to understand. Our very own conclusions, therefore, will be as biased as the original, if not more, and we should keep in mind that our current state of affairs is neither that of 1945, when the film was first released in cinemas in the United States, nor that of 1891, when *The Picture Of Dorian Gray* was first published in book form by Ward, Lock and Company.

### 3.2. State of the art

Crow (2010: 34) provides a clear and straightforward definition of one of the key concepts that will inform the following dyadic analysis, which will focus on the close reading of the original text and the symbolic interpretation of the images and dialogue on the screen:

Peirce uses the term semiosis to describe the transfer of meaning; the act of signifying. What is distinct about his view of semiosis is that it is not a one-way process with a fixed meaning. It is part of an active process between the sign and the reader of the sign. It is an exchange between the two that involves some negotiation. The meaning of the sign will be affected by the background of the reader; their background, education, culture and their experiences will all have a bearing on how the sign is read.

It is interesting to note that the process of symbolic interpretation is understood here as active negotiation between abstract entities, and that the final result will very much depend on the quality of the eye of the beholder. Taking into account that semiosis, rather than being a unique stand-alone act, is to a certain extent iterative, at least until further interpretations are counterproductive or the observer is not sufficiently equipped as to carry on the, in Eco’s terms, “weeding out” procedure, false starts, trials and errors and a permanent sense of uncertainty are to be expected. Trying to pinpoint the scope of Eco’s theory of semiotics, Crow (165) further adds that:

[...] Although Eco sees an openness in the reading of signs, he does not, however, suggest that there are an infinite number of readings. Rather, he describes a situation where the work of art is addressed to an ideal reader who will select from the suggested readings of the work. The ideal reader is not so much a perfect reader who interprets the work exactly as the author intended, but as a reader who is awake to the possibilities that the work contains.

This rather less hard-core reading of Eco’s posits may prove helpful in its application to a parallel semiotic approach to a selection of dyads of written and accompanying audiovisual text. If the only precondition is for the observer to be “awake to the possibilities”, then there are really no right or wrong interpretations,

instead, and more subtly, it becomes the ideal readers' responsibility to gauge the accuracy of their proposals, which should undergo a continuous cycle of interpretative amelioration. Eco (1986: 2-3) fuses together Peirce's theoretical essentials with his own take on semiotics when he indicates that:

The principle of interpretation says that "a sign is something by knowing which we know something more" (Peirce). The Peircean idea of semiosis is the idea of an infinite process of interpretation. It seems that the symbolic mode is the paramount example of this possibility. However, interpretation is not reducible to the responses elicited by the textual strategies accorded to the symbolic mode. [...] Many texts have undoubtedly many possible senses, but it is still possible to decide *which one* has to be selected if one approaches the text in the light of a given topic, as well as it is possible to tell of certain texts *how many* isotopies [paths of interpretation] they display.

Leaving aside the complexity of Eco's standpoint and Peirce's almost chiasmic formulation of the principle of interpretation, it becomes clearer that out of an "infinite process of interpretation" (semiosis), a progressively more polished reading of symbols should be expected to come out in the end. In this respect, Chandler (2007: 187) observes that:

According to theorists of textual positioning, understanding the meaning of a text involves taking on an appropriate ideological identity. In order to make sense of the signs in a text the reader is obliged to adopt a 'subject-position' in relation to it.

This comment reminds analysts of the importance of being aware of their own limitations, since once the interpretive process is started, subject and object become part of the same semiotic space. In brief, to uncover the truth behind signs, observers must take heed of the signifying complexity they are presented with, decide on the path of interpretation that is more effectively conducive to what they judge as an adequate reading, complete as many iterations as necessary to be able to reach some conclusion, and self-assess their own interpretive capacity in light of their final observations.

To conclude with the enumeration of pre-requisites for the effective composition of a semiotic methodology for textual interpretation, we may produce three premises and one preliminary conclusion: (1) semiosis is to be understood as a long process in which interpretation may only progress piecemeal; (2) each iteration brings the interpreter closer and closer to the ideal of truth; (3) the interpreter, positioned as a subject and involved in the interpretive process as much as the symbols which are presented for analysis, is affected by the changing conditions inherent to semiosis, thus; any semiotic interpretation is necessarily partial, but contributes fragmentarily to the pursuit of the "real".

### 3.3. Parallel analysis of four excerpts from the novel and their film correlatives

The subsequent semiotic analysis has been conceived as a comparison between written text and audiovisual text. The possible sources for the former have already been hinted

at in previous sections and the bio-bibliographical note about the author will, we hope, prove useful in the study of reference and allusion.

We remain fully aware of the separation that must exist between the life of the author, the persona of the narrator, and the qualities of the characters, although, as we had stated earlier, we believe that in the particular case of Oscar Wilde, the lines that divide those three realities have gradually become more and more blurred. In fact, biographers and commentators alike would agree that the talent that Wilde claimed to have put into his work found inspiration in the daily occurrences of his personal and professional life. As for the audiovisual text, the superimposition of a plethora of layers of information will need an even closer reading: the feature film is an adaptation of a novel that, at the time, was still in the process of being critically reassessed.

Therefore, from an analytical perspective, it would seem most efficient to put forward a common approach to interpret the page and the screen at once.

### 3.3.1. *First dyad: Come into the garden*

**Text:** chapter I, pp. 6-8.

**Audiovisual clip location:** One minute into the film, starting after the intertitle which reads “LONDON - 1886”.

**Audiovisual clip length:** 2m 48s, until Lord Henry says to Basil “Come into the garden”.

In our semiotic interpretation of the textual and audiovisual material in conjunction, special notice should be taken of the derivative nature of the latter: as we will see later, the film amalgamates the novel, the author’s life, other works by the same author, works by other eminent Victorians, classical pieces of literature, conjectures concerning ideological standpoints of the author’s era, Hollywood clichés, and allusions to the time when the film was produced. In this veritable palimpsest of intra- and intertextuality, it is our intention to explicate and justify the use of certain signs by virtue of which rather than the film being simply an adaptation, it manages to recreate the original and take its premise even further.

In the textual fragment, Lord Henry Wotton is characterised as a languid aristocrat conversant with the principles of paradox. Wielding his “opium-tainted cigarette”, he discusses the contrast he has observed between the Grosvenor and the Academy, where, according to him, there are “[...] either so many people that I have not been able to see the pictures, which was dreadful, or so many pictures that I have not been able to see the people, which was worse”. Interestingly, this exchange with Basil Hallward was not part of the 1890 edition of *The Picture Of Dorian Gray* as it was submitted to *Lippincott’s Magazine* (cf. Wilde and Gillespie 2006b: 186), but it will be reshaped in the form of an equivalent exchange between Algernon and Lady Bracknell in act one of *The Importance Of Being Earnest* (1895), where the former, discussing the programme for her aunt’s dinner party says, “[...] if one plays good music, people don’t listen, and if one plays bad music, people don’t talk”, to which aunt Augusta responds, “[...]”

French songs I cannot possibly allow. People always seem to think that they are improper, and either look shocked, which is vulgar, or laugh, which is worse” (Wilde and Gillespie 2006a: 14).

Reformulation of rhetorical figures in the same work, between works, as well as from oral to written discourse, is a feature that Wilde will come to adopt as he becomes an author of repute. Lord Henry’s “there is only one thing in the world worse than being talked about, and that is not being talked about” is an instance of Wilde’s conversational wit that was eventually made part of his corpus of published bon mots. As for Basil’s remarks on the subject of leaving town without telling his family in a romantic escapade of sorts, which, in light of the painter’s interventions, could easily be interpreted as a homoerotic encoding of his inner feelings, such topics will be also revisited in the Bunburying episodes of *The Importance Of Being Earnest*, where one character could be Ernest in town and Jack in the country, and the other create a terrible invalid by the name of Bunbury to avoid importunate social occasions and continue freely with his pursuit of new, recondite pleasures.

The scene that we have selected from the film begins with Lord Henry’s majestic though uninvited entrance in his artist friend’s house. Before he even alights from the carriage, the observer may realise how meticulously Wilde’s atmospheric description has been reflected: this devotee of “the great aristocratic art of doing absolutely nothing” is elegantly dressed and carries gloves, necktie, top hat, moustache and goatee, and the intrinsic cigarette and mouthpiece. His reading of Baudelaire’s *Les Fleurs du Mal* identifies him as a Frenchified decadent, and by looking at the way he tosses the driver his hardback copy of the book of poems, a considerably careless bibliophile at that. With the exception of Lord Henry’s superb transformation into a living and talking human being, all of the elements that have been described as part of the opening scene do not exist in the novel. This would undoubtedly constitute a case of semiotic enrichment, of which we will be seeing multiple others before the end of this analysis.

The novel alludes to Greek mythology when Lord Henry places Dorian Gray side by side with Adonis and Narcissus. Following Bullfinch (2000), the goddess Venus hurts herself accidentally with one of Cupid’s arrows and falls madly in love with young Adonis, whose fate was to be killed by a wild boar and whose blood gave Anemones, or Wind Flowers, their pomegranate colour. The same author speaks of Narcissus as a beautiful young man who fell in love with his own reflection in the waters, where he fell and drowned when trying to give himself a kiss. The moral of these two stories and the tragedy of Adonis and Narcissus prefigures Dorian’s fatal ending from very early in the plot. Wilde, a classical scholar out of Oxford, knew what he was implying when he put this comparison in Lord Henry’s mouth, and he could even have foreseen the reaction in the literary papers to his contention that intellect has a detrimental effect on beauty, to the point of suppressing it. Sagaert (2012: 88, our translation) adds that:

In ancient Greece, reasoning, debating, and cultivating oneself were inseparable from physical beauty. The term *kalos kagathos*, translated as physical beauty and beauty of the soul are of the utmost importance. They relate the beautiful and the good to a certain ideal



that implies an aesthetic, ethical, and political dimension. Conversely, in Oscar Wilde's novel, physical beauty finds purpose in itself. That is what makes it different from the Platonic Idea of beauty.

Briefly put, Wilde compares the protagonist of his story to his two closest Greek counterparts, even at the cost of associating physical beauty with certain death. Let us remind ourselves of Basil's somewhat alliterative wordplay concerning secrecy, mystery, and marvel in modern life: secrets and hidden meanings are indeed a basic ingredient of this tale of a lost soul.

The artist's studio and its contents are undeniably worth mentioning: clocks, buckets filled up to the brim with used brushes, canvasses, sets of colourful palettes, china vases, oil and charcoal self-portraits, putti, busts and embroideries of Buddha or Buddhist motifs, Greek sculptures, Louis XVI furniture, decorated mirrors, gas chandeliers, appropriately placed pieces of rope, bronze sculptures of Hermes, a centaur and, last but not least, an Egyptian cat ("one of the seventy-three Egyptian deities"). Bullfinch (2000: 102) says the following about centaurs:

These monsters were represented as men from the head to the loins, while the remainder of the body was that of a horse. The ancients were too fond of a horse to consider the union of his nature with man's as forming a very degraded compound, and accordingly the Centaur is the only one of the fancied monsters of antiquity to which any good traits are assigned.

Earlier on (6), the same author provides a very informative note on the god Hermes:

Mercury (Hermes) was the son of Jupiter and Maia. He presided over commerce, wrestling, and other gymnastic exercises, even over thieving, and everything, in short, which required skill and dexterity. He was the messenger of Jupiter, and wore a winged cap and winged shoes. He bore in his hand a rod entwined with two serpents, called the caduceus.

To the novel's Adonis and Narcissus, Lewin's 1945 production adds a multi-layered visual panorama that is intended to captivate the audience and provide a series of references to be internalised, in Eco's terms, using the most appropriate among the available isotopies, or paths to the right interpretation. Basil's room is populated with tools and decorative objects in equal measure; therefore, it has been designed as a place of inspiration as much as a place of creative exertion. Hermes monitors the room from above and a centaur stands guard beside the entrance, accompanied by a group of Buddhas, whose wisdom is contained in the book that Basil uses as reference and Lord Henry laughs at.

The simultaneous on-screen presence of Lord Henry, the Egyptian god, the mirror, and the hanging piece of rope somewhat resembling the gallows would suggest his visit is not that of a friend but a bad omen in itself. Lord Henry's initial fascination with the picture ensnares his senses and moves him to quench his voyeuristic thirst using Dorian as his object.

With our analysis of reference and allusion we contribute to the iterative process of semiosis in which new layers of information whose origin is in the novel have been adapted to a completely new set of circumstances. Our main hypothesis at this point would be that Albert Lewin sought to adapt *The Picture Of Dorian Gray* using abundant textual, co-textual (i.e.: manuscripts or *Lippincott's* edition, for instance) and contextual materials contemporary to the author in addition to other sources that could not have possibly been employed by Wilde, such as reactions to the 1891 publication, Wilde's subsequent criticism, poems, and plays, newspaper coverage of his public persona, and critical reception of the author contemporary to Lewin. Lewin was no biographer, although he was probably quite conscious of the fact that, to produce a successful adaptation, he would have to give the public at least part of what they wanted and prevent himself from coming to Wilde with his own agenda. Notwithstanding, it is our view that Lord Henry's characterisation in the film is such that it could very well be equated to the figure of Oscar Wilde, as it was conceived in the mid-1940s. Whether or not this theory deserves further development will be determined by the analysis of the subsequent scenes, in which much more direct allusions to Wilde and his works after *The Picture of Dorian Gray* are used to build unexpected plot lines and shocking film discourse.

### 3.3.2. Second dyad: Words, words, words

**Text:** chapter II, pp. 18-27.

**Audiovisual clip location:** Six and a half minutes into the film, before Basil says to Lord Henry "Sit down then, Harry".

**Audiovisual clip length:** 5m 58s, until Dorian states "I would give my soul for that".

This second dyad reveals the key elements of the plot and conjures up most of the topics that will inform the remainder of the story: from the pursuit of pleasure to the idea of a pact with an unseen force, and from the battle between art and science to the influence of an older man over a younger one. The first section of the selected clip, which features the critical part of Lord Henry's discourse on the importance of youth, has already been analysed by Seagroatt (1998: 741):

In the first scene of the 1945 film adaptation of *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, Lord Henry Wotton captures a butterfly in his top hat, slides a plate of chloroform under its rim, and asphyxiates the insect. After he impales the butterfly with a pin and mounts it on a clean white card, he presents the specimen to Dorian Gray. This first glimpse of Harry is both effective and misleading. Though the procedure foregrounds the arch-aesthete's peculiarly scientific predilections (and reveals his alarming cruelty), it belittles his scientific curiosity: Harry's specimen gathering seems the result of boredom rather than a sustained interest in the natural sciences—or indeed sustained interest in anything.

We would take issue with Seagroatt's reading of the scene on two particular points: Lord Henry's pursuit of the fake butterfly in the film reveals very little about his character, much less his "alarming cruelty"; and the first time the audience comes into contact with Lord Henry is not in the room itself, but, as stated above, reading Baudelairean verses inside a carriage on his way to Basil Hallward's home, which produces a rather different impression, making the character into a languid man of letters instead of a devotee of scientific research. In spite of these observations, we would agree that Harry's actions foreground events and discussions that will be enriched by the lord's torrent of arguments.

It is worth mentioning that, in a part of the film that has not been excerpted for the present study where Basil and Lord Henry are conversing in the garden, the latter catches sight of the infamous butterfly for the first time and manages to identify its genus and species as *Limenitis sibylla*. In our view, this would be a case of audiovisual prolepsis that in some way complicates the establishment of a clear and direct interpretative path for the symbolic use of the lepidopter.

Initially, one might surmise, as Seagroatt did, that the butterfly is there to characterise Lord Henry and support the theory of his being a man of two minds in everything he tries to accomplish: on the one hand he proves to be a man of action when he is excited by some external incentive, and on the other he demonstrates a remarkably short attention span that prevents him from devoting himself completely to any one task. Nevertheless, the superimposition of images that can be attested in the selected clip point towards a possible alternative reading of the butterfly symbol: in fact, without even paying much attention to what he is doing or saying, Lord Henry is capable of hitting two birds with one stone when he catches the butterfly and lures Dorian to the creed of New Hedonism.

Whilst Basil captures Dorian's soul in the painting, Lord Henry chloroforms the butterfly, the Egyptian god in the shape of a cat starts to take effect on the young man, the appropriately placed mirror reflects his image, and the small wooden mannequin on the side table metaphorically stands for the control and subjection he has been reduced to. Therefore, from this oversupply of visual and aural information, it could be concluded that where the novel is only hinting at a tragic dénouement, the feature film discloses all the mysteries for those observant enough to piece them together.

Still another anticipatory line of argument relates to Lord Henry's identification of the butterfly as *Limenitis sibylla* and the plausible covert suggestion that the insect stands for the way Sibyl Vane, and not Dorian Gray, will fall in the characters' net of corruption. At one point in the film, while looking inside a bush in the garden, Lord Henry utters the following words: "That's a very common type of butterfly, Basil. *Limenitis sibylla*. It hardly belongs in a gentleman's garden". This classist observation will be later revisited when Basil and Lord Henry attend Sibyl's show in the dismal tavern by the name of The Two Turtles.

In conclusion, whereas in the film the use of the insect conjures up a number of divergent semiotic processes conducive to its symbolic interpretation, the novel makes use of insects, birds, flowers, scents, and sensations as the perfect background for the

introduction of a controversial philosophy which the narrator describes in the film as a “praise of folly”.

Mahaffey (1998: 229, note 69) draws parallels between Wilde’s opinions on his creation and the symbolic relationship between Dorian, his reflection, and his portrait:

On another level, Wilde suggests that Dorian –translated into art– has the capacity to mirror Basil, exposing the corruption that shadows his desire for perfection, so Wilde’s book (another artistic mediation) has the capacity to mirror the reader. In a famous letter to the editor of the Scots Observer (9 July 1890), Wilde claims that “Each man sees his own sin in Dorian Gray. What Dorian’s sins are no one knows. He who finds them has brought them” (*A as C*, 248). Wilde’s claim supports his assertion in the preface that “It is the spectator, not life, that art really mirrors”.

In the selected textual fragment for this dyad, Lord Henry questions the existence of sin as a cultural construct, to which he later adds that people “Of course, they are charitable. They feed the hungry and clothe the beggar. But their own souls starve, and are naked”. It could be argued that the lord, regardless of his voyeurism and general passivity, is the only character that goes to any lengths necessary to turn away from Victorian hypocrisy: Basil flees the city at regular intervals for reasons unspecified and then returns to his studio to wallow in *The Wisdom Of Buddha*; Dorian sees himself as a restrained, rational individual, but transforms into a debauchee the moment he is offered the possibility of going against the grain; Sibyl, either in the novel or in the film version, behaves like an automaton until she meets the man of her dreams, who destroys her completely, body and soul. This impossible conundrum is embodied in the binary opposition between mediaevalism and the Hellenic ideal that had been one of Wilde’s main preoccupations since his days at Oxford. Better still than the Hellenic ideal, however, would be the new philosophy of Hedonism, where “[t]he only way to get rid of a temptation is to yield to it”, later reformulated by Wilde as “I can resist anything except temptation”. According to Gillespie (in Wilde & Gillespie 2006b: 399-400):

For Dorian, Basil’s painting operates in conjunction with Lord Henry’s doctrine of New Hedonism, which has already disposed the young man’s mind to assign paramount importance to sensual pleasure. Readers enjoy a broader perspective. As the narrative unfolds, Dorian’s egocentric behaviour counterpoints our first perceptions of his nature, reshaping our sense of his consciousness as it evolves during his continual search for new pleasures.

Dorian first realises that his beauty means power when he is presented side by side with a piece of art and a theory to supplement it. The film seizes this opportunity to theorise about how the Faust-like pact could have come to be, forcing new lines of dialogue on Lord Henry, depicting the Egyptian deity of the cat in the portrait, and using the latter as a token of dark, occult, and dangerous powers not to be meddled with. Later in his analysis of the novel and its plot (402-403), the same author adds:

As we read through *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, it becomes evident that an insistent nostalgia continually informs the images of Dorian created in the minds of both Basil and Harry. Each retains a retrospective view of Dorian's nature remarkably close to the judgements reached in Basil Hallward's studio on the June day described in chapter 2, counterpointing the sense of change that surrounds the later stages of the novel. Furthermore, each reflects, in a limited way, the problem facing anyone who tries to read the novel from a single, exclusionary point of view. Each man thinks he sees a complete individual, yet each sees only the picture that he created from the single perspective that he has adopted and validated.

The nostalgia Gillespie mentions is hardly complex to justify once the reader becomes aware of the fact that the novel is told in retrospect. We need only leaf through the first few pages of chapter I to realise that the narrator is telling the story of three men whose fate has already been decided: "[...] some little distance away, was sitting the artist himself, Basil Hallward, whose sudden disappearance some years ago caused, at the time, such public excitement, and gave rise to so many strange conjectures" (6). This would constitute yet another example of foreshadowing since very early in the novel. Lord Henry adores youth, but has lost it; Basil Hallward desires beauty, but does not possess it; and Dorian Gray pursues absolute pleasure, although he will never find it. The three men are dissatisfied and vent their frustrations making one another miserable.

The last two points of dissimilarity to be analysed within this dyad concern the figure of Gladys and Dorian's initial reaction to Basil's masterpiece. Firstly, Gladys could be described as a relatively unimportant character in the novel, perhaps even a mere narratorial instrument to direct Dorian to his final destination. In the film, however, she is transmuted into Basil's niece and equipped with a rather melancholic backstory whereby her mother died tragically when she was only a baby and uncle Basil took over her upbringing. Secondly, Dorian's reaction to both Lord Henry's philosophical "immoralities" and Basil's artistic dexterity are undoubtedly stronger: Basil, desperate at the sight of his two friend's critical view of his best work heads for "the long palette-knife, with its thin blade of lithe steel" and intends for a moment at least to "rip up the painting", until Dorian himself intervenes by crying out loud that destroying his work "would be murder". Indeed, if Basil had reacted more quickly, the main plot line, as well as the main character's life span, would have been surprisingly shorter. Notwithstanding, Dorian's eventual acceptance and almost unhealthy obsession with his portrait comes at the high cost of objectification: "[...] as soon as you are dry, you shall be varnished and framed, and sent home. Then you can do what you like with yourself".

### *3.3.3. Third dyad: Prince Charming and Sir Tristan*

**Text:** chapter VII, pp. 73-75.

**Audiovisual clip location:** Thirty-one minutes into the film, when Dorian starts playing the piano in the presence of Sibyl and the painting.

**Audiovisual clip length:** Five minutes, until Sibyl changes her mind and decides to stay for the night.

On this occasion, our textual and audiovisual selection attests the conspicuous dissimilarity between the novel and the film in the way the break-up has been treated. Where Sibyl the actress echoes Tennyson's *The Lady Of Shalott* when she says, "[y]ou have made me understand what love really is. My love! My love! Prince Charming! Prince of life! I have grown sick of shadows", Sibyl the singer makes her point much more skilfully by making use of her silence and acquiescence. Furthermore, the reasons that move Dorian Gray to break Sibyl's heart are radically different in the two versions.

In the novel, Dorian puts the philosophy of New Hedonism in action by confessing to the former object of his adoration: "[y]ou used to stir my imagination. Now you don't even stir my curiosity. You simply produce no effect". Therefore, when the novelty ends, a new pleasure must be sought if one wants to avoid the effects of weariness and boredom. More interestingly still, the young man reproduces Lord Henry's pronouncement almost verbatim when he regrets that Sibyl has caused him an unforgivable disappointment: "The world would have worshipped you, and you would have borne my name. What are you now? A third-rate actress with a pretty face". These brutal words literally destroy Sibyl and drive her to commit suicide.

Powell (in Raby: 2000, 184) believes that the eventual watershed in Sibyl's life, that of leaving her acting career to be the mother of Dorian's children and the angel of his house, was inevitably to lead her to a tragic end: "[...] Deep-seated in Victorian thought, even within the theatre itself, was the idea of an unbridgeable gap between women performers on one hand and wives and mothers on the other".

In the end, it appears, Lord Henry was right when he predicted that Dorian's romance would not last, as he was also correct in his assessment of the young man's expectations after being converted to the creed of Hedonism. Sibyl, on her part, never did amount to more than a thing to be possessed, or a prey to be shot down. With just one kiss from her Prince Charming, she became a captive of someone else's every whim.

In the film, the matter of Sibyl and Dorian increases in complexity. The allegory of the sparrow and the canary featured in the song at *The Two Turtles* continues to be developed by means of a contemporary twist that would bring the melodrama closer to 1945 spectators. In Dorian's richly decorated living room, under the influence of the portrait, the bewitched cat idol, the piano, Chopin's *Les Préludes*, and the accuracy of the grandfather clock, a game of shadows and light takes place at two in the morning. At Lord Henry's suggestion, Dorian sets Sibyl a trap whereby she would be blackmailed into staying for the night. Thus, a kiss in the original version turns into sexual intercourse before marriage in the adaptation to the screen. In other words, what Wilde's original tale had only hinted at, Lewin's adaptation brings to the fore much more explicitly. In fact, Dorian responds to Sibyl's initial reticence by describing her reaction as "conventional". That, however, is not the end of the story.

Lewin's production features an instance of what we would describe as a phenomenon of self-referentiality; a short fragment from "The Sphinx", a poem by Oscar Wilde, is read in this scene and used to voice Dorian Gray's feelings in his search for forbidden pleasures involving Sibyl Vane. What is more, Sibyl inquires who wrote the "strange poem" and she receives an answer that could be deemed metaliterary: "A brilliant young Irishman out of Oxford. His name is Oscar Wilde". What makes this situation peculiar is that Oscar Wilde becomes a character in a story he himself penned, a poem which was written and published in 1894 is introduced in actions dating back to 1890-91, and the fragmentary selection from said poem endeavours to support a plot device that was absent in the original text: the Egyptian cat which renders Dorian unageing. Nevertheless, by way of precaution, Lewin had set the film in 1886, which solves part of the problem and introduces a remarkable anachronism. From Wilde (2000: 127-135) we may see how Lewin's scriptwriters chose to cherry-pick a few verses from the considerably long poem "The Sphinx" in order to underpin their symbolic use of the Egyptian cat: "Dawn follows Dawn and Nights grow old and all the while this curious cat / Lies crouching on the Chinese mat with eyes of satin rimmed with gold. [...] Get hence, you loathsome mystery! Hideous animal, get hence! / You wake in me each bestial sense, you make me what I would not be. / You make my creed a barren sham, you wake foul dreams of sensual life" (vv. 8-9 and 167-169). The incongruity of this decision lies in the use of the poem. We might accept that a reference to Oscar Wilde in the film itself would be enlightening to the American audiences the film was being released to. We might also understand that Chopin be fused together with the "Goodbye Little Yellow Bird" score to evoke certain associations in the viewing public. However, the use of a poem by Wilde for its mere mention of a cat to support the choice of an insignificant film prop seems quite excessive. In effect, verses 8 and 9 of the poem allude to a cat, even so, verses 167 to 169, which are the last part of Dorian's on-screen recitation, deal not with the cat, but with the Sphinx that gives its name to the poem and to whom the apostrophe makes reference to.

#### 3.3.4. Fourth dyad: Blackmailing Alan

**Text:** chapter XIV, pp. 140-44.

**Audiovisual clip location:** 1h 14min into the film, when Alan Campbell is introduced by the butler.

**Audiovisual clip length:** 3m 45s, until Alan grasps the blackmail letter, defeated.

Lewin's cinematic version has preserved most of the original text and turned into a somewhat stilted dialogic exchange on the part of two of the most inexpressive members of the cast. The role of the narrator, absent in the film for this particular scene, helps the reader to imagine how the action is taking place and gives access to the minds of both characters, revealing the inner and outer feelings of aggression. With respect to

the role Alan Campbell plays in the resolution of Basil's murder, of whose load Dorian wishes to be unburdened, Seagroatt (1998: 746) comments:

Campbell's importance to the plot is relatively small, which makes Wilde's descriptions especially suggestive. We glimpse Dorian's past through their interaction, and we get the unmistakable hint that scientists are more useful with dead bodies than they are with the souls or minds of living beings.

From the original text we may gather that Dorian and Alan were friends in the past, but, as occurred to those people of his acquaintance who are still alive after meeting him, a great chasm now separates them. The letter Dorian writes to blackmail his old friend remains a secret both in the original and in the film adaptation, however, the screenwriters make up a few lines of dialogue through which Alan Campbell allows the spectators to know that it has something to do with a woman who is very close to him: "It would kill her", he says, "to have her name involved in such a scandal". The rest is so cryptic that to put forward a plausible explanation would hardly leave the realm of pure conjecture.

As had happened earlier with the introduction of one of Wilde's poems to support a plot line which did not exist in the original, on this occasion Alan's arrival triggers another episode of poetic fourth wall breaks. Once again, Dorian commands one of his guests to listen to his recitation: "I sent my Soul through the Invisible, / Some letter of that after-life to spell: / And by and by my soul returned to me / And answered: "I myself am Heaven and hell". These verses belong to the *Rubáiyát of Omar Khayyám*, translated by Edward Fitzgerald from Persian into English for the first time around 1857-58. If Wilde's "The Sphinx" had been cherry-picked to relate the verses to the on-screen presence of an Egyptian cat idol, Khayyám's canto is probably featured in the film adaptation because of the inclusion of a number of buzz words that would prove effective after the semiotic transference: soul, after-life, heaven, and hell. However, Karlin's interpretation of the cantos (in FitzGerald 2009: xvi) might modify the average viewer's conception of the verses, at least when they are not presented in isolation:

The poem is governed by his [Omar Khayyám's] heterodox scorn; as well as ridiculing attempts to dogmatize about the afterlife, it questions the justice of the divine order in terms that unmistakably refer to Christianity as much as to Islam, the notional target; this aspect of the poem reaches a scandalous apotheosis in stanza LVIII, where God is offered man's forgiveness.

And this comes from a 12<sup>th</sup> century Persian astronomer and poet. The controversial stanza (45) reads as follows: "Oh, Thou, who Man of baser Earth didst make, / And who with Eden didst devise the Snake; / For all the Sin wherewith the Face of Man / Is blacken'd, Man's Forgiveness give –and take!" This is to show how the entity which undergoes a process of semiotic transformation hardly ever remains as it was before the process started. "The Sphinx" became a short poem about mystical cats, and the



*Rubáiyát* left behind its heterodoxy to give way to a more hermetic reading intended as a continuation of the discourse surrounding Dorian Gray's temporal stagnation.

A cursory overview of the differences between the novel and the film would once again lead us to three premises and one preliminary conclusion: (1) every instance of environmental description in the written text has been preserved in the audiovisual text, "He kept his hands in the pockets of his Astrakhan coat"; (2) reflections of the characters' state of mind have been almost completely suppressed in the film adaptation, "He felt as if his heart was beating himself to death in some empty hollow", "[...] dividing time into separate atoms of agony each of which was too terrible to be borne", both of them absent from the actor's performances; (3) the verses of Omar Khayyám have no *raison d'être*; therefore, all poetry insertions in the film so far have rendered the adaptation more incongruous and made the spectator disengaged from the development of the action. To put it another way, when the interpretative process is complicated in excess, free adaptation may be detrimental for the new version of the initial product.

#### **4. Conclusion**

Before commencing our analytical approach to Wilde's work and Lewin's adaptation we had conjectured that it would be possible to draw the line between the director's commitment to faithfulness and his artistic concessions. In fact, our first impression after re-reading the novel and finding an audiovisual counterpart in a production that was released more than fifty years after the novel was published had been that of a recreation rather than a complete and integral transference from the page to the screen.

Literary references and allusions that were absent in the original text have been introduced with the intention of enriching the primary and secondary sources. As we have put forward in our careful study of each of the dyads, the units of analysis that we established to pinpoint the similarities and potential divergences between the excerpts taken from the novel and their cinematic mirror images, this pretension of improvement has given way to diverse effects on the adaptation, often successful –as in the case of Sibyl's change of profession and the inspired performance of a remarkably foreshadowing musical score–, sometimes insufficiently justified –two instances of which would be the insertion of fragments from the *Rubáiyát of Omar Khayyám* and Wilde's own *The Ballad of Reading Gaol*, a true anachronism, even for a film set in 1886 as the director makes clear after the introductory credits–, and inescapably laden with intertextuality –let us just think, for example, of the melodrama in which the spectators are immersed when they are forced to bear witness to not one but two failed love stories.

From the outset, the study pursued the objective of assessing not simply the level of achievement of semiotic transmutation, but also the degree to which the researcher's own preconceptions might have certain repercussions and, in consequence, affect the way the dyads were looked at, thought of, and reflected upon.

Whenever reference was made to the isotopies or alternative paths of interpretation that were open for the observer to choose from, special attention was being paid to the necessity for the researcher to remain self-aware. Determining the screenwriters' possible dilemmas may have involved some degree of hypothesising and even a touch of speculation, but the steps that were followed at every stage to make sure that no hint went unnoticed are there to ensure replicability and therefore leaves a collection of symbols available for future reconsiderations.

This comparative semiotic study could be synthesised into a total of six fundamental points, which serve as conclusions: (1) Wilde's work, *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, in light of its successive textual transformations in the period early-1890 to late-1891 cannot be perceived as an unchanging cultural artefact that is in any way fixed or permanent; (2) contemporary criticism up until 1945 may be labelled as an 'original' source for Lewin in the same terms as Wilde's work by itself; (3) Wilde's personal and professional affairs can never be completely separated from the textual fruits his creativity bore; (4) Lewin's adaptation fictionalises the author in the exact same way it fictionalises the text; (5) the attempt to gauge from the present how an adaptation of a novel published in 1891 may have been received by the average cinemagoer in 1945 might perhaps require an infinite number of analytical iterations, and; (6) some semiotic readings may have lost all applicability by now owing to the passage of time, that is to say, some past realities are inevitably irrecoverable.

In our case, from Wilde's page to Lewin's screen, the author has changed position relative to the characters he created to the extreme of being able to look them in the eye and control their actions from the inside. This, in essence, has been the most impressive in our palimpsest of semiotic transmutations.

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## **The Aesthetics of Healing in the Sacredness of the African American Female's Bible: Zora Neale Hurston's *Moses, Man of the Mountain***

Vicent Cucarella-Ramon  
Universitat de València  
Vicent.Cucarella@uv.es

### ABSTRACT

Zora Neale Hurston's *Moses, Man of the Mountain* (1939) stands in the tradition of African American use of the biblical musings that aims to relativize and yet uphold a new version of the sacred story under the gaze of a black woman that manipulates and admonishes the characters of the gospel to offer a feminist side of the Bible. The novel discloses Hurston's mastering of the aesthetics that black folklore infused to the African American cultural experience and her accommodation to bring to the fore the needed voice of black women. Rejecting the role of religion as a reductive mode of social protest, the novel extends its jeremiadic ethos and evolves into a black feminist manifesto in which a world without women equates disruption and instability. Hurston showcases the importance of an inclusive and ethic sacred femininity to reclaim a new type of womanhood both socially and aesthetically. Three decades before the post-colonial era, Hurston's bold representation of the sacred femininity recasts the jeremiad tradition to pin down notions of humanitarianism, social justice and the recognition of politics of art. All in all, in an era of a manly social protest literature Hurston opts for portraying the folkloric aesthetics of spirituality as creative agency simply to acknowledge the leadership of the sacred femininity that black women could remodel into art.

**Keywords:** Sacred femininity, Zora Neale Hurston, African American jeremiad, Aesthetics, Healing

Prayer seems to me a cry of weakness, and an attempt to avoid, by trickery, the rules of the game as laid down. I do not choose to admit weakness. I accept the challenge of responsibility.

Zora Neale Hurston, "Religion," from *Dust Tracks on a Road*

## 1. Introduction

Although in her classic essay "Characteristics of Negro Expression" Zora Neale Hurston sarcastically claimed that "(t)he Negro is not a Christian really" (1997: 56), her third novel, *Moses, Man of the Mountain* (1939), stands in the tradition of a long history of African American use of the biblical musings that aims to relativize and yet uphold a new version of the sacred story under the gaze of a black woman that manipulates and admonishes the characters of the gospel to offer a feminist side of the Bible. The novel is densely interwoven and richly textured with literary and cultural allusions. It has been analyzed as a meditation on the nature of the authoritarian state and of absolute political power especially when these ideas apply to the reality of black people in the US. Published in 1939 it is no wonder that, as Deborah E. McDowell highlights, "Hurston's *Moses* can be read as an intervention in the discourses about race ranging throughout the 1920s and 1930s, but also discourses used to justify...the utter extinction of Jews under Nazi Germany" (1991: 17) since 1939 was the year Hitler ordered the attack on Poland which led Germany into a World War. But if, as Judylyn S. Ryan explains (2005: 29), "cultural identity and spiritual identity are coterminous", Hurston's *Moses, Man of the Mountain* can also be read as an exercise that foregrounds the status and future direction of African American liberation discourses, in which black women priestesses play a central role. In this vein, and following black historian Albert Raboteau, Afro-Christianity "could become a double-edged sword" (1978: 290) for it can be used to foster black liberation theology and to engender a black feminist aesthetics akin to a sacred femininity embodied by a black priestess.

*Moses, Man of the Mountain* is divided into two complementary parts: the first one takes place in Egypt and follows the whereabouts of Moses, his coming-of-age and his transformation into the leader of his real people, the Hebrews, to whom he will lead into their liberating adventure. The second part bears testimony of Moses's power vis-à-vis the prophetess Miriam's and the subsequent moment of declension after his conversion into a totalitarian religious leader that turns a blind eye to the spiritual necessities of his townspeople. The doleful rhetoric precludes the final declension of the flawed society is done at the expense of Miriam's sacred femininity and her ultimate destruction due to a much spread corruption that shuns the inclusive ethos that the new society winds up lacking. By the end of the story both parts complement each other since the bigotry and exclusion that triggers the Hebrews on the move is absorbed by the free people and gets out of hand of Moses's but also Miriam's leadership. I submit that the result is the literary verification of the necessity to rethink the nation through the paramount participation of black womanhood. At the same time, the novel discloses Hurston's mastering of the aesthetics that black folklore infuse to the African American

cultural experience and her accommodation to bring to the fore the needed voice of black women.

## **2. *Moses, Man of the Mountain*: Healing, Affective Sacredness and Inclusion towards a Black Female Epistemology**

The novel opens with a quote from Deuteronomy that brings the focus to the “signs and wonders” that Moses is to find in the land of the Pharaoh. Indeed, signs of the bigotry with which the United States has tried to corner black people are present throughout the story but so are the wonders that make this black people unite in fraternity to overcome them. The aesthetics of the sacred story as reshaped within the cultural paradigms of African America is told in a figurative lyrical narrative voice loosely based on the regional black vernacular that black authors appropriated during the Harlem Renaissance. Indeed, although Hurston draws on the historical events as told in the Old Testament that revolve around the figure of Moses as the liberator of the Jewish people from the bondage endured under the Egyptian regime, the characters of the novel are created following the cultural models that the African American folklore offered. Thus, Hurston’s interpolating exercise and interpellation of the biblical episode drives the reader into a layered narrative that folklorizes the typological ethnogenesis as a trope in African American literature whilst it promotes the so needed affect as healing within African American women.

Through the aesthetics of the biblical typology, Hurston sharpens her narrative to a status of biblical black drama, that is, it reshapes the biblical message to create a black feminine aesthetics akin to the folkloric status that the cultural movement of the Harlem Renaissance summoned. In her article “Seeing the World as it is” –included in her autobiographical notes *Dust Track on a Road*– Hurston, then, makes use of the biblical story to weave an interconnected web in which, through the analogy relating the biblical Israel with the United States, she intermixes a stark critique of the imperialist and expansionist politics of her own country:

The Old Testament is devoted to what was right and just from the point of view of the Ancient Hebrews. All of their enemies were twenty-two carat evil. They, the Hebrews, were never aggressors. The Lord wanted his children to have a country full big of grapes and tall corn. Incidentally, while they were getting it, they might as well get rid of some trashy tribes that He did not think much of, anyway... If the conquest looked like a bloody rape to the Canaanites, that was because their evil ways would not let them see appoint that was right upon their nose... We, too, consider machine gun bullets good laxatives for heathen who get constipated with toxic ideas about a country of their own... there is a geographical boundary to our principles. They are not to leave the United States unless we take them ourselves. (Hurston, 2003: 254, 255-260).

The hedging with Hurston’s contemporary reality follows the cultural legacy based on a feminist aesthetic appraisal of creating a cultural message that can live up to the

democratic ideals of inclusion and respectability. To do so, *Moses, Man of the Mountain* is firmly grounded in the alleged tradition of African American culture and, as such, reinterprets the Bible to make its story fit into the real experience that black people endured in North America. Besides, Hurston's feminist appropriation of the Exodus motif enlarges the African American cultural basin by positioning sacredness and spirituality as the best support so that a black feminist aesthetics be properly conveyed. In this way, the African American woman can openly prove her sense of mastering the black vernacular culture and simultaneously proffer a message of brightness by showcasing the ability of creating a new type of artistic tenet out of a commonly used trope within African American culture. Hurston equates the evolving bonds of sacredness with creation and feels like the transceiver of a cultural chain which poses spirituality within the politics of the affect to unite the polyvocal experience of African American women. In so doing, she gives a new reading to the identity-building process of black women since her focus on the sacred knowledge of the self reveals a new face of spirituality that is displayed into an artistic form that constitutes a new turn in the religious aesthetics that black women created. Transcending the role of Christian religion and its creed as mere tools for sociopolitical resistance, what Hurston does, in Seyyed Hossein Nasr's words, is to reel off "sacred knowledge directly to sacred Scripture" and articulates the idea "that it is the function of spiritual beings to discover this inner meaning of revealed truth and to use their intelligence in the contemplation of spiritual realities" (1989: 18).

As Judylyn S. Ryan (2005: 66) rightly notes, "Hurston does not emphasize the typological significance of the Exodus story" but, though she sees Hurston's literary output as a reconceptualization of "a liberation narrative centered on Moses" who, on top of that, "is theorized as culturally Black", I consider Hurston's novel as a literary exercise of further pressure to the feminist process of identity-building for black women. Assuredly, the novel manipulates the Exodus theme blended with the African American culture not only to offer a new interoperation of history that can live up to the standards of the black community but also, I contend, as a unique way to show how sacredness and affective bonds can create and/or fray the epistemology of African American women.

Accordingly, in my reading of *Moses, Man of the Mountain*, Hurston's main preoccupation is the necessity to create a feminist subjectivity for black women. A creation that will result, and thereby develop, a feminist aesthetic that accounts sacredness as a tentative agent that shapes up the role of African American women along the twentieth century by propelling the idea of gender healing within the black community. Thus, black women's sacred reading of Christianity not only "proposes a new identity" (Ryan, 2005: 31) for African American women but surpasses the paradigm of resistance, that is "the framework within which Western interpretations of African diaspora artistic and expressive culture have been traditionally located" (11). Zora Neale Hurston's linking of spirituality and epistemology brings forth a feminist cosmology in which black women, even if they simply, or apparently, frame the text—as it is the case of *Moses, Man of the Mountain*—play a central role in the stylistic, cultural



and thematic elements of the novel. In other words, in Hurston's artistic procedure "spirituality serves epistemological functions and assists ideological objectives...that begin with healing" (23).

Interestingly, Hurston's conception of epistemology as applied to black women impels spirituality to exceed its theoretical conception and to commute into a principle of art that models, and adds up, the concept of knowing so deeply attached to epistemology. If, as Timothy Nicholas Laurie (2012: 1) expounds, "in structuralist frameworks influenced by Michel Foucault, Louis Althusser and others the episteme (without its -ology) can be a powerful critical concept for historicizing and politicizing the institutional basis of 'methods of knowing'", Hurston proposes the aesthetics of sacredness and spirituality as another way to dispatch knowing (episteme). In the context of what Walter D. Mignolo calls 'coloniality/modernity', the dissociation between "epistemology and the episteme leads to some difficulties in accounting for the work of gathering sources and organising knowledge claims that are required to critique other's way of knowing" (Laurie, 2012: 2). Advancing such theories, Hurston boldly states an alternative way of acquiring (self-)knowledge through the centrality of spirituality but, also, presents a feminist way for the epistemic reconfiguration of the black female self. She does so by combining spirituality and feminine affective bonds for, as Lévi-Strauss acutely declares, human emotions can help us "undergo in an ordered and intelligible form a real experience that would otherwise be chaotic and inexpressible" (1977: 198).

Due to this, from the outset of the narration Hurston clears things up and informs the reader about the "role that ultranationalism plays as a religious faith" (Thompson, 2004: 395). And so, she states how women are the ones to suffer the most when it comes down to enduring bigotry and authority:

The Hebrew womb had fallen under the heel of Pharaoh. A ruler great in his newness and new in his greatness had arisen in Egypt and he had said, 'This is law. Hebrew boys shall not be born. All offenders against this law shall suffer death by drowning'. So women in the pains of labor hid in caves and rocks (Hurston, 1991: 1).

Women emerge as the victims par excellence since they –considered as wombs in a perfect analogy of the Pharaoh as slave master– and their offspring are the ones to challenge, by standing the chance to subvert the social order, the religious-based society. Hurston intersperses the rewriting of the Bible's story with the most poignant moments that African American women suffered: the conflicting relationship between black female slaves and their children as the product of rape. The black woman, as a womb carrying the legacy of new generation of African Americans, equates problems and social tension. In this way, although this is not solely its aim, the story works inevitably like a mirror to North American history.

Extending the heritage of slavery into the conception of black aesthetics, Hurston's *speakerly* narrative voice, which evolves from standard English to a free indirect speech amalgamating both standard and vernacular characteristics to eventually blend the characters' black speech, warns the reader about the distinguishable facts that separate the sacred conception of whites and blacks: "He says their gods ain't our gods" (5). The

stylized and rhetorically sophisticated black vernacular voice not only acknowledges the authority of black subjectivity from the start but also establishes the sacred domain in which the story is going to revolve around. Besides, by pointing to the multiple interpretation of multiple gods opposite to the concept of an almighty God, Hurston extrapolates the idea of sacredness with regards to inner spirituality –akin to the African folklore– instead of clinging to the notion of a solely creator of humankind.

Hurston aesthetics of the biblical episode reflects the flaws of the North American nation and exposes the crevices of the injured democracy. Not only does the author drag into the light the mischiefs of the Reconstruction regarding black rights: “Some of them even thought that they might get back their houses and lands” (15) but she also turns her gaze to upbraid the multiethnic reality that casted the formation of the nation. If Egypt equates United States, Hurston implores the recognition of the spiritual beliefs of Native Americans and their forgotten extermination: “What god you talking about, Jochebed? These gods was here in Egypt long before we ever thought of coming here. Don’t look to them for too much, honey. Then you won’t be disappointed” (17). It is in this way when the author aims to reshape the falsely acclaimed version that attests to describe the birth of the nation and mediates in the reconfiguration of the African American cultural discourse. Furthermore, with such a move Hurston takes on a new level within the jeremiadic rhetoric and inscribes her narrative in the second stance of the allegorical tradition of the jeremiad: “criticism of present declension or retrogression from the promise” (Howard-Pitney, 2003: 8). Hurston posits the stark critique that reads the United States in terms of racial purity also within the African American community.

Hurston’s attention to the folklorist black vernacular directs her discourse out of the border of what the country boasts about. Religion now is not solely an empowering tool but rather it helps to signal the pitfalls of a society unable to cater for each other. By creating an Africanist rereading of the Exodus motif, Hurston pledges her own characters to commit the same mistakes that their biblical counterparts did. The Pharaoh manifests the repulsion he feels towards the Hebrews because of her racial category, something that turns them into fake citizens:

Here they were. Hebrews, who had come down into Egypt as the allies and aides of those oppressors of the Egyptian people, and as such had trampled on the proud breast of Egyptian liberty for more than hundred years. But the gods had used the magnificent courage of the real Egyptians to finally conquer and expel those sheep-herding interlopers whom the Hebrews had aided in every way they could to deprive the real Egyptians of their homes and their liberties. (19, emphasis added)

Egypt metamorphoses into a slave plantation that mistreats Hebrews and corners their self-assertion. It is Jochebed who openly defies the social hierarchy that tries to erase Hebrew –or black– epistemologies and she does so by rethinking the sacred order that theology prescribes: “If the gods want the life of my innocent boy, then they got to make a move and show me” (23). This maternal resistance is the first example in which sacredness and affect become intertwined in the hands of a (black) woman not only to challenge the national conventions but also to set the movement in motion for other

black women to follow. The legacy of miscegenation –that is the real image of United States– falls back in Princess, the Pharaoh’s daughter, who finds Jochebed’s babyboy inside a straw basket and adopts him as a his own child. When Miriam, Jochebed’s daughter, who has witnessed such a feat, informs her mother of the whereabouts of her little brother, Jochebed is asked to be the boy’s nurse with little surprise. After all, the palace is no exempt to miscegenation as one of the eldest Hebrew women confesses to Jochebed: “(t)here is plenty of Hebrew blood in that family already. That is why that Pharaoh wants to kill us all off. He is scared somebody will come along and tell who his real folks are” (33). The Biblical story is aptly used by Hurston to willingly express the mixed-race origins of her nation. Also, aestheticizing the biblical story to make it fit into the African American tempestuous historical past, the author is overtly criticizing the one drop rule and showcasing the injustice that represents the racial categorization in the process of identity-building. However, just as the United States is absolutely inconceivable without the manifold contributions of African Americans, the old woman hastens to admit that “(t)his country can’t make out without us” (34).

Indeed, the intricate relationships that belie the unity under the Pharaoh’s regime act as the perfect analogy of the slave system. Hurston’s aesthetics also reveal her acute sense of cooking up the social conflicts of the world into an interconnected amalgam of power relations. As such, the Pharaoh seems to embody the flesh and bones of a cruel master of the plantation but also, and taking into account that the novel was published when the Third Reich had already ascended to power, the reminiscences of the Pharaoh’s obstinacy with social purity bring the figure of Adolf Hitler to mind. Hurston makes this analogy crystal clear: “The Pharaoh had his programs, national and international. At home he worked to reorganize the county into a unit intensely loyal to the new regime. Externally he strove to bulwark the country against outside attack” (36). The author blends the exclusionist and utterly racist theories of Hitler with the exclusionist creed that Puritans also manifested in their intellectual construction of a nation –as noted in John Winthrop’s words to envision a hierarchical community: “If we here be a corporation established by free consent, if the place of our co-habitation be our owne, then no man hath right to come into us ... without our consent” (qtd. in Vaughan, 1972: 199). That the Pharaoh, with its religious symbolism, can get associated with the sacred zeal of Puritans and Hitler’s hatred of Jewish beliefs attests to prove that *Moses, Man of the Mountain* is Hurston’s artistic way to portray the aforementioned “retrogression from the promise”.

The opposite male role in the novel is Moses, son of the Princess and second in line for the throne of Egypt. The creation of a subjectivity that can counteract that of the Pharaoh is modelled following the cultural outlets that the African American tradition offered. Contrarily to what the Pharaoh haughtily professes, the old prophet Mantu, who appears here as the griot in the black oral folklore, teaches Moses that “all love is tempered with something” (43). Mantu’s preservation and re-mythologizing of the legend of origins - “In the beginning ... there was neither nothing nor anything. Darkness hid in darkness – shrouded in nothingness” (43, emphasis added) - contemplate the idea of creating a new version of History and seems to foretell that the

novel poses a threat to the canonical version of the Exodus episode. So, although the Pharaoh insists on ensuring Moses's "military genius" (50), the old prophets stand out the Prince's allurements towards "temple magic" (44). Just as slaveholders completely overlooked the power that spirituals held for African American slaves, Moses regains here not a physical but a spiritual power that will eventually make him a cultural leader within the Hebrew crew. Again, the folklore that Africans brought along with them to the so-called New World is the mold in which Hurston reshapes the subjectivity of African Americans in the story. The paradigm Jews/Egyptians fits perfectly as an aestheticized binary opposition American/African American in religious terms. Religion is not –solely– an asset of empowerment but the cultural line that draws differences in identity-building and cultural representation in the US.

The power for self-assertion, Hurston implies, can be found in the African American cultural emblems and imagery that conforms their own folkloric net, such as the trope of the Talking Book. As Moses is told when paging a traditional volume: "When you read only two pages in this book you will enchant the heavens, the earth, the abyss, the mountain, and the sea. You will know what the birds of the air and the creeping things are saying. You will know the secrets of the deep because the power is there to bring them to you" (53). The Talking Book constituted a foundational trope for the African American literary tradition in which, to denounce the illiteracy that slaves were shamefully submitted to, when Africans were presented with a book the outcome revealed the lack of reading skills of blacks and so: "the text does not recognize his presence and so refuses to share its secrets or decipher its coded message" (1988: 127), as Henry Louis Gates Jr. explains.

The supernatural power of the *speakerly*<sup>1</sup> nature of the Talking Book manifests itself through the Book of Thoth<sup>2</sup>, a book that, Jethro confesses to Moses, "if you read it, will bring you to the gods. When you read only two pages in this book you will enchant the heavens, the earth, the abyss, the mountain, and the sea... You will know the secrets of the deep because the power is there to bring them to you" (53). In depicting a book that not only talks but also reveals the sacred mysteries of the world Hurston embellishes the cultural tenet with sacredness and magical folklore, that is, it highlights its vernacular characteristics whilst it foresees Moses's destiny. By aestheticizing the Talking Book with sacredness, she also subverts and reinvents the trope, allowing black Americans "to define their own reality instead of allowing others to define it for them" (Andrews, 2001: 285), and focuses its power on the spiritual conception it reflects to Moses. In this way, and inspired in the conception of wisdom as it is depicted in the Bible's First Epistle to the Corinthians, Mentu warns Moses that "(l)earning without wisdom is a load of books on a donkey's back" (54). Hurston's signifies upon the revision of the trope of the Talking Book by making it a shared experience of discovery whereas in the original trope the slave alone had to find out about its transcendence. The African American folkloric motif is thus aestheticized following the ethics of care that the affective turn of Hurston's spirituality ponders. Therefore, Mentu's passing on spiritual musings of wisdom encapsulate Spinoza's affectio because, according to Megan Walkins (2004: 269), "(a)ffectio may be fleeting

but it may also leave a residue, a lasting impression that produces particular kinds of bodily capacities". Through Spinoza's theory, spirituality, reason and affect intermingle into a politics of healing and, duly, the old griot's affectio will allow Moses to a "capacity of affect to be retained, to accumulate, to form dispositions and thus shape subjectivities" (Walkins, 2004: 269). Certainly, as Egypt –that is United States– enlarges its empire as the North American nation did along the nineteenth and twentieth century: "The might of Egypt was stretching across the world. Ethiopia was conquered; Assyria kept in fear, Babylonia was terrorized. All tribes flowed towards Rameses and Memphis" (57), Moses reshapes his identity, or episteme following structuralists, according to the folkloric roots of the African American cultural experience. This conflicting identity-building follows inevitably W.E.B. Du Bois' double consciousness theory and, therefore, roots Moses's subjectivity within the black cultural matrix: "Long ago before he was twenty, he had found out that he was two beings. In short, he was everybody boiled down to a drop. Everybody is two beings: one lives and flourishes in the day-light and stands guard. The other being walks and howls at night" (60). Torn apart at the discovery that he really is a Hebrew, his doleful rhetoric á la Sojourner Truth –"Am I a Hebrew?" (68)– triggers Moses's real command to her own townspeople and leads his regained crew towards the desert. It is then when Moses definitely crosses the color line and wraps up his double consciousness into one or, in other words, as a proper African American: "Moses had crossed over. He was not in Egypt. He had crossed over and now he was not an Egyptian. He had crossed over" (78). The lyrical passage responds to the aestheticized signification of Moses into a black character. In Judylyn S. Ryan's apt words (2005: 68), "(t)his passage both manifests and encapsulates Hurston's narrative project: to overturn the concept, leaving it empty –but full of potential– ready for a new investment that is facilitated by Moses's "new" cultural, theological, and political investiture".

Moses, now part of the Hebrews, will develop his leadership obsessed with the book containing the serpent that Mentu told him about and decided to master the language, black vernacular, of his people: I want to talk the dialect of your people. Its no use of talking unless people understand what you say" (92). Moses's adoption of the expressiveness of folk diction symbolizes how to Hurston, as to Frantz Fanon, "(t)o speak a language is to take a world, a culture" (Fanon, 1967: 38). He thereby fully embraces African American folkloric culture and so Hurston's vernacular aesthetics embark upon the unfolding of a narrative of healing and cultural pride. The reformulation of black culture following the aesthetics of the folkloric tradition is upheld by Hurston after her research period in Haiti. In her now canonical book *Tell My Horse: Voodoo and Life in Haiti and Jamaica*, which appeared in 1938, a year before the publication of *Moses, Man of the Mountain*, Hurston already establishes the sacred connections of Moses and his folkloric aesthetics of the black Caribbean: "All over Haiti it is well established that Damballah is identified as Moses, whose symbol was the serpent. This worship of Moses recalls the hard-to-explain fact that whatever the Negro is found, there are traditional tales of Moses and his supernatural powers that are not in the Bible" (1990b: 16).

In Hurston's hands then Moses enlarges his biblical characterization and his ethos is molded harmonizing the folkloric aspects of the black vernacular tradition. In this way Moses, just as Mark Christian Thompson (2004: 397) argues, not only "signifies a hybrid iconographic genealogy that manifests itself as the locus of a new pantheon apart from Voodoo or Christian churches" but his ascendancy as leader within the black community shatters the concept of racial purity that the Pharaoh longed to preserve. This newly-conceived cultural move was rather striking considering the protean purity that Marcus Mosiah Garvey's ideology – the Garveyite movement- spread throughout the black community in the first decades of the twentieth century with his black nationalist political programs. Thompson also sees clear how "in Hurston's Moses there is no understanding of the new nation in terms of a biological conception of race, and therefore there is no positive evaluation of the Garveyite movement" (2004: 398). It is rather the contrary, as Thompson (2004: 398) himself further contends: "Hurston's Moses offers a radicalization of commonplace readings of the Harlem Renaissance's cultural aesthetic of an authentic African American being that permits racial détente". Moses's magical powers are but a prominent trait that put African folklore within the aesthetic discourse of African America. The power that the Hebrews grant him is not based on political force. Rather, Moses becomes "to them power in itself" (116) due to his developed folkloric skills. Featuring himself "like the voice of God" (116), that is a black God, the Hebrew people "came to believe that the hand of Moses held all of the powers of the supernatural in its grasp" and unable to decipher such folkloric roots, he "became divine" (116). The Hebrews' mesmerizing response to Moses's supernatural powers acts as a mirror to the real exposition of the true hues of Africa's weight on the African American. In this sense, *Moses, Man of the Mountain's* blending of folklore and tendency towards affective bonds foreruns Gloria Naylor's *Mama Day* since in both novels, as María Ruth Noriega Sánchez (2002: 64) considers about the latter, "the magic is attributed to a mysterious sense of collective relatedness rather than to individual memories or dermas/visions". Thus, this "folk heritage" (1995: 18), as Erik D. Curren puts it, situates Moses as the mediator of a tradition that merges pagan superstition with religious fervor, probably Hurston's major contribution to the aesthetics of the Harlem Renaissance cultural movement. The sacred and divine conception of the lead male character is, henceforth, "the gateway between the spiritual and material worlds" (King 2008: 61).

However, and though it seems that "(t)he rule of law ... is not passed from one ruler to the next by blood lineage, but by the cultural inheritance of sovereign masculinity" (Thompson 2004: 397), Hurston's leaning on affect brings Moses's subjectivity thoroughly attached to that of his lover Zipporah and Miriam. Although Miriam is not presented as the main character of the story, her presence illuminates Hurston's theological recasting of the biblical plot. Moses and Miriam's epistemology become intertwined from the exact moment in which both reunite when Moses comes back to Egypt as his redemptory mission God commanded to him. When he is asked to liberate the Hebrews from Egyptian bondage, Moses finds Miriam's role as a priestess within her crew as a driving force. Her presence looms over her fellow citizens showcasing a

sacred feminist function that, triggering black women's affective turn, standing out as a referent and social leader aims to bring together the whole community as Aaron makes clear to Moses: "My sister Miriam is a great prophetess, Moses. Talking about influence, she's got plenty. We couldn't make out without her, that's all. Everybody comes to her to get things straightened out. She's a two-headed woman with power" (135). Miriam's revered power that allows her to be able to "handle anybody" (135) and her home assumes to be the central site of a matrix of healing for the Hebrew community: "her house is full every night of the people who come to her house to get help" (135). Moses's leadership and embracement of folklore has to be inevitably shared with a feminist figure that resorts to spirituality to be acclaimed as a leader and also as a means to unfurl the poetics of healing: "Miriam is called to prophesy to Israel and I am called to save Israel, our paths don't conflict at all" (136).

Judylyn S. Ryan (2005: 68) justly points out that "Moses's strategy centers on developing a religious ideology that would enable the Hebrews to rediscover and reclaim their own expropriated creative agency". However, this creative agency might as well be upheld, I contend, thanks, to a great extent, to Miriam's leadership within her community that positions her subjectivity at the crossroads of a sacred feminine authority that draws its aesthetics as much from the black Christian creed as from the folkloric strands of African –magical and supernatural– beliefs. Resultantly, by re-mythologizing and expanding the novel's cultural milieu, Miriam displays a narrative gesture that links the US and Africa and brings to the front black women's spiritual and intellectual leadership across the Black Atlantic overshadowing, in such a move, the burdensome effects of slavery and Reconstruction along centuries.

Hurston points to the reductive theological power of Moses as the main protagonist and offers Miriam as his spiritual contraposition. When Moses publicly claims Miriam's leadership in his eulogy: "all about those days back in Egypt when the house of the prophetess Miriam was the meeting place of all those who were willing to work for freedom. How she had gathered folks together by two and threes and changed weakness into resolution" (265, emphasis added) he accepts her status as a leader in Israel and thus certifies her inclusive spirituality as a force of empowerment. Miriam embodies Hurston's preeminence towards the Sanctified Church for black women in which they not only took central stage but also, as W.E.B. Du Bois (1994: 118) accepts, stood as "real conservers of morals, a strengthener of family life, and the final authority on what is God and Right".

However, once the Hebrews have been set free and get relocated into an autonomous setting –a literary analogy of the so called Great Migration– the particular cosmology that Goshen epitomized for the unfolding of their black folkloric culture is definitively left behind. The blurring of an exact geography comes to represent the blemishes of a sacred aesthetics if this is not based on inclusion and African (ancestral) folklore. Or else, the African part is lesser nourished to the American one. It is Miriam, "the leader of Israel's womanhood" (218), the one who openly challenges Moses's prostituted commanding to the exclusionary arms of the American exceptionalism. Hurston's spiritual rendition of the fallacy of the African American jeremiad not only

points out to the way black American leaders have systematically imitated the Puritans rhetoric of abusive leadership but also highlights how women leaders have historically been shunned from participating in the reclamation of a genuine African American place in sacred history. Moses's iconic model of spiritual leadership daringly turns him into a black John Winthrop and therefore impends his fellow citizens with a highly Puritan rhetoric that brings to mind the historical covenant between the founding fathers and God: "You ain't talking to me, you know. It wasn't my idea to bring you out of Egypt. Your God commanded me to bring you. Go talk to Him. But I'm telling you now your attitude is a temptation to God to punish you, and punish you to death" (207).

Hurston proposes a feminist discourse to counterpart the tainted message that African American absorbed against their own aesthetic powers. It is also her way to boost sacred femininity as the means to both reclaim and collect black women's contribution to the (African) American cultural arena. Hence, Miriam's sanctioning rhetoric entails to retain her place in society as a sacred feminist leader focusing on the communal benefit of her entire townspeople: "I don't aim to be robbed out of my labor like that" (219). Just as Moses adopts his role as the Chosen Man of God, his leadership role gets out of hand and blows out the egalitarian position he initially claimed to hold. The eventual equation of his figure with God himself is Hurston's literary strategy to signal African Americans' digression from the path of transracial multivocality within the same community – the aforementioned "criticism of present declension or retrogression from the promise" (Howard-Pitney, 2003: 8). Moses unveils himself as a neo-Puritan pretending to overreach his power not with but against his people by emblazing Jethro's words in his mindset: "God to the folks, Moses. That's what you was born to be" (223). Hurston implies that Moses's subjectivity vis-à-vis God forecasts the declension that the jeremiad tradition underscores since it puts a leadership akin to the mission of exceptionalist endeavor before the social and cultural necessities of people, as Jethro keeps on reminding him: "...but the mission Moses, the mission" (224). In other words, Moses winds up accepting the North American exceptionalism that praises individualism against the bonds of the communal black folklore. It is in that precise moment when Miriam gives up her backing on Moses and veers the perception of his subjectivity grounding it out of the margins of the black vernacular tradition and, consequently, out of the sacred vision that accompanies her affective realization of the African American cultural experience. In an openly feminist speech, Miriam lavishes and exhausts her retaliatory anger on Moses rolling up spirituality and affect:

Yes, that no-count Egyptian come with his mealy mouth and talked me and Aaron into bringing you all off. We was the ones that done all the work because he ain't one of us sure enough. He couldn't have got nobody to follow him. Here I was a big prophetess in Israel and Aaron was a leader, so the people followed us on and off now he done took full credit for everything...Why, it's awful. I never seen such a caper cut in all my born days (230, emphasis added).

Miriam's rhetoric exhortation interpolates her own townfolks by stirring their inner emotions while building upon Tomlinson's theorization which proclaims how



“(c)ultural ways of responding to gender that portray women as emotional and concerned with the personal sphere interpretations of feminist discourse” outline the power relations through a “rhetorical model” (2010: 45). Furthermore, Hurston’s use of Miriam’s punning black vernacular speech objectivizes the cultural gap between Moses and the prophetess. The transcultural move of relying into a single and almighty God breaks through as a dire contradiction to the African-based cultural conjuring of several Gods. Put shortly, Hurston deplors the debunking of folkloric beliefs within the Puritan copied ethos of African Americans: “(b)ut we do know something about our gods back in Egypt...Maybe that’s how come we having such a hard time, because we done give up our gods” (230). Against the exclusionary, puritan-like and individualist ethos that Moses finally adopts, Miriam wraps her sacred wings around her community and acting as a spiritual guide and mentor longing people to cling to each other as a means to collectively overcome their underestimated status and recollect the scattered pieces that shimmer under the delusion of the jeremiad rhetoric device. A collective move that needs, necessarily, to be contemplated within the folkloric aesthetics of her feminist vision to simply “consulate us out here in this wilderness where we been dragged for nothing” (231).

Hurston’s rendition of the post-demise momentum of the African American jeremiad is all the more championed when, forestalling the shortcomings of the structuralist development of the episteme, she posits the fallen nature of the exclusionist ethos also within the Hebrew –black– community. The declension comes fully unfolded when, out of nationalist bigotry - which is presented as the North American national sin- even Miriam, the leader priestess that aimed to compose herself as the counterpart of the assimilationist subjectivity of Moses, woefully evolves into a racist commander unable to accept Moses’s wife, Zipporah, because of the color of her skin. In a scene of boasting faux she outcries: “Look how dark her skin is. We don’t want people like that among us mixing up our blood and all” (243). To put this point another way, Miriam culminates her life participating in a “history of national weakness and decadence” (Thompson, 2004: 402).

When two competing ideologies cohabit in an overlapped system of power relations in which the distinction between the ruler and the masses is inevitably imbalanced, Deleuze & Guattari observe that

(t)he masses certainly do not passively submit to power; nor do they ‘want’ to be repressed, in a kind of masochistic hysteria; nor are they tricked by ideological lure...It’s too easy to be antifacist on the molar level, and not even see the fascist inside you, the fascist you yourself sustain and nourish and cherish with molecules both personal and collective (qtd. in Laurie, 2012: 5).

With such a move, Hurston departs then from Lévi-Strauss and warns, in tune with Deleuze & Guattari, that if not handled through a transnational, transracial and inclusive perspective, “affective bonds between people make revolutionary groups capable of becoming micro-fascistic, or transform a sound principle into a damaging social practice” (Laurie, 2012: 5). Furthermore, Miriam’s strategy of imposed skin color

hierarchy foreruns, and validates, Homi Bhabha's mimicry in which the discriminated against winds up imitating the exclusionary ethos by adopting the ideas of the oppressor. So, if Moses thoroughly tried to cajole Hebrews into the appropriation of the Puritan ideological legacy, Miriam equally attests to draw difference to foster exclusion due to skin color. Hurston seems to put the critique forward to the lack of diversity within the same black community. At a moment in which black nationalism was gaining social impulse, Zora Neale Hurston's trenchant exercise of folkloric aesthetics surpasses the social protest literature mastered by her black male fellow writers and feminizes the national discourse consecrating Bhabha's perception of a nation understood as a "heterogeneous, changeable, grouping, ambivalent in its constitution, split by otherness within, and hybridized at its every contact with the Other" (Childs, 1997: 140).

When Miriam relinquishes her inclusive sacred role and opts to follow the discriminatory nature of the exceptionalist North American creed, Hurston's 'politics of recognition', paraphrasing Charles Taylor, sanctions the corruption of sacred femininity through a divine and magical punishment that turns the priestess into the Other, epitomizing Emmanuel Levinas' ethical core of Otherness and essence. As the French philosopher ponders (1998: 10), "(t)he responsibility for the other is the locus in which is situated the null-site of subjectivity" and the aggressive exclusion that Miriam stands up for does away with the sacred femininity that had defined her social role and subjectivity. As a consequence, the punishment arrives in the transformation, and predestined destruction, of her own essence because eventually, as Levinas (1998: 13) acquaints, (i)n its being subjectivity undoes essence by substituting itself for another". Miriam's inclusionary being is therefore commuted into the essence of exclusion and the sacred sanction transmogrifies her self.

Through this ontological move that addresses the splintering and/or gelling of the structuralist era with a healthy dollop of existentialism and a larding of black aesthetics, Hurston contemplates a sacred femininity shaped by a core ethical movement towards inclusion and democracy—with "imbrications of emotions and ethical concerns" (2010: 45) to put it in Tomlinson's words— so, in the end, Miriam's divine punishment falls upon her in the form of a leprosy which magically, yet dreadfully, whitens her skin and turns her into "a horrible sight in her leprous whiteness" (246) that relegates her as an outcast within her own black community. Hurston confirms this way her compromise with sacred femininity as "confrontation with abjection" (Kristeva, 2001: 37) forward marching the Levinasian line that offers "(t)he exposedness to affection and vulnerability" as the best way to conjure up a black female subject ethically located "between cognition of the individual and of the universal" (Levinas, 1998: 62).

Additionally, Hurston's sacredness can be regarded as perfect example of what Ronald Neal (2011: 732) coins as spirit of pragmatism in his article "Democracy, Difference, and Reconstruction: Religion, Theology, and the Spirit of Pragmatism". In it Deal explains that pragmatism "emerged as a philosophical tradition whose sole purpose was to offset tyrannical forces in American life". Just in line with Charles Sanders, William James or John Dewey who appear as classic pragmatists, Hurston

main's critique through the tyrannical evolution of both Moses and Miriam gets entrenched with a pragmatic reading of spirituality as a healing and encompassing force since religious pragmatism, Neal contends, proceeds to render "a vision of America marked by the virtue of plurality or difference" (2011: 732).

In *Moses, Man of the Mountain*, the sacred declension of female sacredness as portrayed by Miriam underscores the necessity to develop a new kind of female subjectivity related to the sacred femininity that the Sanctified Church offered. Miriam's primeval role gets wrecked over her greed for power and imposed leadership and so her essence as a sacred healing protector for the black community vanishes. Hurston implies that the equation of sacred womanhood with the Puritan rhetoric of exclusion culminates in the destruction of spirituality as a driving force. Indeed, Miriam, unable to get to grips with her fallen subjectivity will end up trading death. A death that she foresees as inevitable: "Something will happen from this" (258). Miriam's pleading to die resolves her role into that of the sacred martyr that redeems her fellow female citizens pointing to the reconfiguration of a brand new conception of sacred femininity. Her latest words of wisdom acknowledge her pitfall and the failure that has finally engulfed her sacred essence:

Ever since I spent that week outside the camp when, er –when I was a leper. When I was unclean and the leprosy and looked at myself all over and I was shut out from everything and from the living. That was when I got to thinking with only certain places in my head and I got to fleeing all over with fear (262).

Just as Hannah Crafts did with Mrs. Wheeler, Hurston's final transformation of Miriam into bare life attests to state the role of spirituality and sacredness as a major source of empowerment and a reliable force of creating a female subjectivity and feminist aesthetics that can guarantee the survival of black women's artistic power. As such, Miriam reminisces on her early days when she really was a prophetess who privileged her role to nuance and cater for the benefit of her people: "You see, I was a prophetess back in Egypt and I had power, that is what the people told me, anyhow" (263). The moment of final epiphany reveals the importance of sacredness as healing and unfolding mechanism to breed the paradigm of growth for black women. So, it is rather a fact that "Miriam had lived on hopes where other women lived on memories" and, precisely for that very reason, at the moment of her death –when her act as a redeemer has thus been accomplished– Moses publicly declares and requires social credit for her role as a leader: "Is she had not come to the palace gates to ask for him and to claim him as a brother, would he have left Egypt as he did? He doubted it" (265).

Miriam's death unravels the final destruction of a community premised on the declension that the jeremiad heralded. Moses, the leader of her people who acknowledges himself to have struggled "to make a nation out of you" (252) blurts his exclusionary nature in front of an astonished Aaron unable to grasp the nationalist bigotry and individualism that has definitely brought social havoc and the destruction of the sacred realm: "I haven't spared myself Aaron. I had to quit being a person a long time ago, and I had to become a thing, a tool, an instrument for a cause." (274).

The novel seems to be initially shaped following the jeremiad rhetoric in which the hope and the promise are to be disclosed by the next generation: “The Voice had said to take a nation across the Jordan, and the generation which he had brought out of Egypt had failed him. ‘The third generation will feel free and noble. Then I can mold a nation’” (260). However, the declension that is forecasted from the outset seems not to be reassigned as long as there are no affective bonds that can uniformly recognize the various subjectivities that compose the nation, as Moses dolefully decrees: “How can a nation speak with one voice if they are not one?” (278-279). Although this can be understood as Moses’s final acceptance of a social need that balances individualism and inclusion (Fraile Marcos, 2003: 44) I consider that Moses’s crestfallen words are to be fathomed in the context of Miriam’s death – when they are uttered. In this manner, the disappearance of Miriam is Hurston’s wily shove to grind the deluded sacred story to a halt. By and large, as a result of the lack of counterbalance of Moses’s overpower that she represented there is not only an unresolved lapse regarding gender-related conflicts but it also the moment to accept that the reality of the dream deferred has taken over: “...dreams had in no way been completely fulfilled” (282). Through the missed presence of Miriam at the very end of the story Hurston aims to convey how there is no option left to offset Moses, considering that “(n)o man on earth had ever wielded so much power” (283). The cohesive relationship that Miriam, as a sacred leader, patterned by a humanity that relates to the emotions of her fellow citizens, is broken with the imposing leadership of Moses. The declension thereby crystallizes because, in Giorgio Agamben’s terms, “breaking the identity between human and the citizen...brings the originary friction of sovereignty to crisis” (2002: 20).

Accordingly, I consider Deborah E. McDowell’s (1991: 13) assumption that in the novel “(t)he ‘place’ of women...is to be followers, and the places in which they figure ... are perhaps its most troubling” somehow reductive. Rather, I believe that Miriam’s role as a prophetess who brings to public view her sacred leadership throughout the story is by no means negligible. Slavery alongside the outcome of colonialism instituted a fresh European paradigm that established new models of leadership that were upheld at the expense of black women’s right to contribute. Here, conversely, Miriam confronts, shows off, builds upon and even transgresses Moses’s divine power only through her accorded authority. In so doing, Hurston advocates to elevate the sacredness of black feminine aesthetics vis-à-vis the folkloric ethos that got spread along the -chiefly male- intellectual quarters of the Harlem Renaissance. Nevertheless, Hurston directly forewarns, such sacred femininity needs to be always nuanced following the politics of affect, inclusion and respectability.

Through the sacred femininity that the character of Miriam personifies, we get to listen all the more to Janie’s musing in Hurston’s masterpiece *Their Eyes Were Watching God* when she confesses to Jodie that “sometimes God gits familiar wind us womenfolks too and talks his inside business” (1990a: 70). In this case what God seems to eventually argue is that without the presence of women in an egalitarian dreamed society, the result is nonetheless chaotic. That is why in the last lines we get to read how the declension has been manifestly displayed and “(e)verything ended in riddles” (283).

Paradoxically powerless at the handling of his own townspeople, Moses's last moments in the story are bitterly portrayed as the metaphor of the declension per excellence. This is the resort that Hurston uses to claim the importance of female leadership within the black community –it is no wonder thus that, in a preparatory act, a female voice opens the novel.

Likewise, the scene shows, as Judylyn Ryan (2005: 71) pinpoints, how “Miriam’s influence on Moses’s life illustrates that the vision of interconnectedness persists even in relationships that are hegemonic”. Indeed, black female headship as standard bearers became pivotal for the affective spreading of the sacred message that the Sanctified Church promulgated.

If Miriam’s spiritual leadership had for so long served to appease and rule the community, Moses’s interference brings barbaric splendor to a society in which the roles of participation had already been commonly established. The bigotry of the imposed religious laws appears as a refractory tenet to a spiritual-based society directed by a woman. This idea links *Moses, Man of the Mountain* to the social reality that African American women were experiencing in the Sanctified Church. In this institution women could, as Miriam in the novel, “exercise their gifts” (2001: 82) through a shared leadership, as Cheryl Townsend Gilkes affirms. She further asserts that “(b)ecause of the special role played by these women, they often carried more authority” (Gilkes, 2001: 83) something that, again, echoes in Miriam’s first depiction. Moreover, Miriam’s affective bonds with her townspeople are likewise mirrored in the role that spiritual black women played in the Sanctified Church for they “had made cultural choices in favor of tradition to maintain their choice within the context of a like-minded constituency” (85). Put briefly, mixing spirituality, affect and black artistic aesthetics. This is precisely Hurston’s portrayal in *Moses, Man of the Mountain*.

Also, Hurston leaves no doubt in conveying the idea of social disruption in all almost male-centered society. Moses’s regret conforms the last throes of a leader that in his manly vision of power and individualism -the man in the mountain- has but shattered the dream of a communal society based on equality. For that very reason Moses finishes his appearance certain that “he would always feel bad about this great failure” (284). His lonely regret is also the best way to focus his guilt for premising his ideal society after the corrupted nature that goes along the exceptionalist and individualism of the white-centered North American creed as understood under his supremacy. Affect functions to debunk the “tropes of contempt” (Tomlinson, 2010: 54) that a society premised on an exclusive male leadership puts on display. Hurston’s narrative echoes Tomlinson’s theory which reads affect as a “part of the authority of a text as it is constructed within a complex matrix of institutional norms, authorial statuses, privileges, and textual features that work together” (2010: 56).

In dire contrast to individualism, Hurston elaborates her poignant critique partaking from the cultural matrix that the black vernacular tradition offered. Diverging from her contemporary fellow writers Langston Hughes’s and Richard Wright’s proletarian literature of social protest<sup>3</sup>, so popular in the Depression, Zora Neale Hurston departs her narrative from the social realism of the thirties that bolstered up the Romanticized

literary figure of the black *isolato* as the epitome of the black male hero and leader. Contrarily, Hurston opts for a feminist view of social inclusion and shared responsibilities within the heterogeneous black community and evinces that “(a)ffect is deeply entwined with creation of textual authority” (Tomlinson, 2010: 56). Through the mastering of what Henry Louis Gates Jr. calls “Hurston’s mythic realism” (1988: 293) her work engages the perfect conjunction that links the lyrical black idiom with the aesthetics of a certain type of black womanhood that resists to follow the ruling judgements of her black male partners. Although it has been stated that “(i)f Wright, Ellison, Brown, and Hurston were engaged in a battle over ideal fictional modes with which to represent the Negro, clearly Hurston lost the battle” (Gates, 2009: 293), the southern writer’s richly elaborated imagery has paved the path for other African American writers and has undergirded many of the topics that these actual black women have drawn from<sup>4</sup>.

### 3. Conclusion

With *Moses, Man of the Mountain*, Zora Neale Hurston’s narrative endeavor not only demonstrated that “it was viable for the Afro-American writer to acknowledge the folkloric oral tradition as the foundation of a genuine Afro-American writing tradition” (1997: 29) in Ana María Fraile Marcos’ words, but also warranted the importance of black women’s sacred aesthetic within the inclusionary nature of an egalitarian nation. The novel, then, extends its jeremiadic ethos and evolves into a black feminist manifesto in which a world without women equates disruption and instability. Rejecting the role of religion as a reductive mode of social protest and a technical assault of black people’s miseries— it is not in vain that she declared not to “belong to the sobbing school of Negrohood” (1979: 153) - Hurston’s mastering of sacred femininity attends to tog up black female subjectivity with the aesthetics that revolve around the vernacular ethos and the folkloric schemes “thus carrying art to the altitudes of folk-gif” (Fraile Marcos 1997: 30). By fixing African spiritual modes in the North American sacred domain Hurston places the reconfiguration of sacred femininity across the Black Atlantic. Hurston’s *Moses, Man of the Mountain* acknowledges the stark difficulty of the realization of the Black City upon a Hill and foregrounds its declension by pointing to the limits of its social representation with regards to black women’s contribution.

Hurston also showcases the importance of an inclusive and ethic sacred femininity to reclaim a new type of womanhood both socially and aesthetically. Long before Daniel Coleman minted the term *white civility* to acknowledge the ways in which white North Americans had disavowed the ethnic epistemologies from participating in the construction of an egalitarian ethos of different nations<sup>5</sup>, Hurston’s novel focuses on a certain idea of civility within the black community. The aesthetics of the rise and fall of sacred femininity aims to collect the pieces of mutual dignity represented as a “joint responsibility of all” (Tomlinson, 2010: 57) and points home crucial points of Edward Shils’ moral concept of civility as a “feature of civil society [that] considers others as

fellow-citizens of equal dignity in their rights and obligations as members of civil society; it means regarding other persons, including one's adversaries, as members of the same inclusive collectivity" (1987: 12). Ideas that resonate aesthetically in *Moses, Man of the Mountain*. For the southern writer, then, the expense in affect becomes central to the definition and reconfiguration of the sacred female ethos so that, as Sara Ahmed (2004: 24) supports, with such communal force their "bodies and worlds materialise and take shape".

Three decades before the post-colonial era, Hurston's bold representation of the sacred femininity applied to the black priestess discloses the unapologetic role of the African spirituality within the realm of the African American women and transcends Spivak's sanctioned ignorance when it comes to assure the transnational fate of the black woman. Hurston's sacred message that recasts the jeremiad tradition to pin down notions of humanitarianism, social justice and the recognition of politics of art. Affect and emotions are the tools through which Hurston's reviews and rethinks the sacred femininity offering a picture of "less the United States of promise and progress" but rather a big "community whose fundamental asset is humane recognition" (Berlant, 2004: 3).

Furthermore, the author aims to expose and revitalize the creative and healing role of black women that, as Anthonia Kalu (2002: 89) rightly asserts, were taken for granted, if not removed, "from the scene of invention and participation during a significant transitional moment in Africa's history on both sides of the Atlantic". *With Moses, Man of the Mountain* Zora Neale Hurston continues to offer her feminist rendition of the new black female self that she had outlined in *Their Eyes Were Watching God* but in this occasion portraying the folkloric aesthetics of spirituality as creative agency simply to acknowledge the leadership of the sacred femininity that black women could remodel into art.

## Notes

1. In *The Signifying Monkey* Henry Louis Gates Jr. coined the neologism 'speakerly text' to refer to texts that privilege black dialect as an artistic mode. Though the term has been used to convey the manifold ways in which African American writers have openly challenged imposed language and discourses, Hurston's *speakerly* representation in *Moses, Man of the Mountain*, however, aims to demarcate the contours of a genuine black female aesthetics.

2. Thoth was one of the deities of the Egyptian pantheon considered as the God of magic and learning. Magic and learning are the two cultural tools that will convert Moses into a national leader. Hurston's predilection for Egyptian sources in the appraisal of black (female) subjectivity has been studied by Tina Barr in her essay "'Queen of Niggerati' and the Nile: The Isis-Osiris Myth in Zora Neale Hurston's *Their Eyes Were Watching God*".

3. Zora Neale Hurston's anticommunist fervor alongside her decry of social protest literature turned her into a political and literary opposite to Richard Wright, the literary champion of the social protest literature. Hurston's preeminence for the unfolding of a black feminine aesthetics make her reject Wright's preponderance towards violence and hatred, his dismissal to create different black female stereotypes, his equation of art with Marxist

propaganda and his diminished capacity to accept the folkloric and artistic ethos of black dialect.

4. The literary influence of sacred femininity and biblical recasting can be grasped in, for example, Gloria Naylor's *Bailey's Café*, Ntozake Shange's *Sassafras, Cypress, Indigo* or Toni Morrison's *Paradise*.

5. Coleman's rendition of white civility elucidates how whiteness, in an inchoately imperial context, became attached to the ethos of North America ever since colonial times. In this way, Coleman (2006: 10) contends, the idea of civilization gained significance through an exclusionary model of civility that adjusted "a diverse population around the standardizing ideals of whiteness, masculinity, and Britishness". The fact that Moses focuses on this white civility while Miriam draws on African spirituality is Hurston's compromise of rooting feminist aesthetics within a genuine black folklore.

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## **An Analysis of Octave Ségur's Translation of Maria Edgeworth's *Belinda* (1801) into French**

Carmen Fernández Rodríguez  
EOI A Coruña  
c28fernandez@gmail.com

### ABSTRACT

The Anglo-Irish author Maria Edgeworth (1768-1849) became very famous in Britain at the turn of the nineteenth century thanks to her pedagogical works, regionalist and feminocentric novels, whose translations were eagerly awaited on the Continent. This paper analyses a hitherto totally unexplored field of research within Edgeworth studies: the French translation of Edgeworth's most important English society novel, *Belinda* (1801), from the point of view of gender and translation studies. For this purpose, we will take into account the particular context of the work, its main features in English and French, and the particular procedures adopted by the French translator to transform Edgeworth's tale into moral fiction for women. Octave-Henri Gabriel, comte de Ségur, adapts *Belinda* to the taste of French readers by sacrificing both the macrostructural and microstructural features of the source text. Despite the success of the book in France, *Bélinde* (1802) is not comparable to the author's original idea, as the textual history of *Belinda* reveals. Edgeworth's book deals with controversial issues at that time and features her most memorable female character, which is distorted in the French text. Ultimately, this paper confirms that the publication of Ségur's translation has consequences on the transmission of Edgeworth's *oeuvre* in other European literatures and on her image as a feminist writer.

**Keywords:** Maria Edgeworth, *Belinda*, translation studies, gender studies, Anglo-Irish literature

## 1. Introduction

Maria Edgeworth (1768-1849) is better known as a regionalist novelist rather than as a writer devoted to fiction for women. Thanks to *Castle Rackrent* (1800), *Ennui* (1809) or *The Absentee* (1812), Edgeworth introduced Ireland to nineteenth-century readers, and she became a reference for later novelists, like Ivan Turgenev. The Anglo-Irish author produced pedagogical tales and essays (*The Parent's Assistant* 1796, *Practical Education* 1798), plays (*Comic Dramas* 1817), and feminocentric works, like *Belinda* (1801), *Leonora* (1806) and *Helen* (1834). Edgeworth's popularity reached the French-speaking world, and most of her productions were translated into French. This paper explores the French translation of *Belinda* (1801), one of Edgeworth's most popular feminocentric works, which can be very revealing to understand better the transmission of Edgeworth's *oeuvre* on the Continent and her consideration within gender studies as a woman novelist interested in the portrait of women's problems. For our purpose, we will describe the main features of the source text and the plot, and then we will move to a detailed examination of the target text within the framework of gender and translation studies, more specifically, Itamar Even-Zohar's theory of the literary system and Mary Snell-Hornby's approach to the macro and microtextual aspects of the text. The first ones refer to the narrative point of view, prologues, footnotes, etc; and the second include the study of units of analysis or the segments established between texts, as well as the deviations or modifications operated in them (Snell-Hornby, 1995).

## 2. The source text: Maria Edgeworth and her success in feminocentric fiction

After *Castle Rackrent*, *Belinda* has been Edgeworth's second best, and critical attention has focused on two points in this production: education (Kowaleski-Wallace, 1998; Yates, 1988) and colonialism (Perera, 1991: 15; Kirkpatrick, 1993: 343; Lightfoot, 1994: 119). These two topics are intermingled in *Belinda*, as Marjorie Lightfoot (1994) states: *Belinda* is a satire of colonialism, didacticism, urban society, comedy of manners, rationalism, Gothic literature and sentimentalism. Edgeworth's didacticism has already been discussed by Wilfrid Ward (1909), or Patrick Murray (1971), and the later relates Edgeworth to William Thackeray (1971: 53). For Ian Edward Topliss, in *Belinda* Edgeworth X-rayed society, like in *Letters for Literary Ladies* (1799) or in *Almeria* (1809) (1981: 29-30; see also Butler, 1972: 317), and Ria Omasreiter supports that Edgeworth humanized and applied Adam Smith's, Thomas R. Malthus's and Jeremy Bentham's theories to fiction (1984). Intertextuality and the mixture between the comic and the tragic element in women's lives have also been subject to debate (Ní Chuilleanáin, 1996: 30-3; Lightfoot, 1994: 122). Mitzi Myers points out what aspects are yet to be explored in *Belinda*:

[...] what genius Austen found in it or to unpack its political codings, its allusive narrative complexities, or its remarkable crosshatchings of the wildly romantic with the solidly

referential, the visual with the verbal —the multiple prints, paintings, miniatures, inserted letters, and reported scandals that proliferate through its pages (2000: 105).

When Edgeworth introduces *Belinda* to her readers, she is very aware of the kind of fiction she is dealing with, and she relates it to prestigious authors. The novel genre still had some detractors and the connotations of not being serious literature, and authors resorted to paratexts of various sorts to defend their writings. In the “Advertisement” of *Belinda* dated the 20th of April 1801, *Belinda* is labelled a “Moral Tale”, and not a novel, and Edgeworth places her work along with Mme. de Crousaz’s, Burney’s, Inchbald’s and Dr. Moore’s ones with a clear aim to give a didactic turn to her production: “[...] so much folly, error [sic], and vice are disseminated in books classed under this denomination [novel], that it is hoped the wish to assume another title will be attributed to feelings that are laudable, and not fastidious”(Edgeworth, 1994: n.p.).

The story begins when Mrs. Stanhope, the protagonist’s matchmaking aunt decides to send her still unmarried niece, Belinda Portman, to Lady Delacour’s home in London. Belinda is an *ingénue*, the antithesis of a worldly lady, and Stanhope considers it is time that Belinda enters the *haut monde* in the hands of an admired sophisticated wit. Stanhope envisions marriage as an economic transaction and explains to Belinda that it is in her interests to avoid competition with Lady Delacour. Belinda discovers that behind Lady Delacour’s fascinating façade there is a miserable woman who feels detached from her drunkard husband and only feels happy when courted in society by Clarence Hervey, a narcissistic beau who is afraid of marriage. Lady Delacour’s maid, Marriot, exercises a dominating influence on her mistress and is in charge of Lady Delacour’s mysterious boudoir. As the narrative progresses, Belinda sees that people regard her as a “composition of art and affectation” (Edgeworth, 1994: 26). Obtaining Belinda’s heart represents obtaining a prize, and she is courted by the most dissipated men in town. Belinda is told Lady Delacour’s story in the one of the best scenes in Edgeworth’s *oeuvre*: she was a coquettish heiress whom Lord Delacour married for money though her true love was Lord Percival, the embodiment of the English gentleman in *Belinda* and now married to Lady Anne Percival, the opposite of Lady Delacour. It seems that things began going wrong in Lady Delacour’s marriage when she risked familiar economy by spending a lot. Apart from this, Lady Delacour feels she has not fulfilled her role as a mother: after having two miscarriages, she gave birth to a girl, Helena, who was brought up in the countryside and is totally estranged from her mother. To complete the picture, Lady Delacour is persuaded of having an incurable disease in her breast as a result of a duel with her political rival is Mrs. Luttridge, and her most intimate female friend, Mrs. Freke, is a masculine lady who sometimes is attired in men’s clothes.

As Belinda’s relationship with Hervey becomes closer, Lady Delacour feels jealous and sees Belinda as a rival. At the same time, Lady Delacour would like to recover Helena’s affection, and Hervey also wants to rehabilitate Lady Delacour, who needs to be examined by a doctor as a result of an accident. Both Lady Delacour and Belinda are the victims of suspicions. The woman of the world and Helena feel closer than ever, but Lady Delacour begins to think that Belinda wants to seduce Lord Delacour and occupy

her place in the family. Belinda cannot bear the situation and goes to live with the Percivals at Oakly Park. In this estate, Belinda enjoys family life and meets a Creole, Mr. Vincent, who is immediately attracted to Belinda and opens his heart to her. However, Belinda discovers that Mr. Vincent is a gambler and refuses to marry him, so he immediately flees to Germany. On the other hand, Belinda's suspicious that Hervey has a mistress are confirmed since he is in charge of a beautiful young girl called Virginia Saint Pierre. Hervey has educated Virginia at Windsor to make her his wife in the future. Unfortunately, the girl is not in love with Hervey, but is only grateful to him. At the end of the story, Virginia's wealthy father returns from the West Indies and she marries Captain Sunderland. Once Belinda is told that Lady Delacour's health has got worse, Belinda comes back to see her friend. It is discovered that Mrs. Lutridge and Lord Delacour are lovers and Lady Delacour allows his husband to read her correspondence with Hervey to show him that there was not a *liaison* between them. Lady Delacour's surgery is a success, she recovers her husband's heart, and, in the end, Belinda is married to Hervey.

Attention must be paid to the editorial history of Edgeworth's *Belinda*. Together with *The Modern Griselda*, *Belinda* was included in Mrs. Barbauld's anthology *British Novelists Series* (1810) where Edgeworth was considered a model to follow. According to Kirkpatrick, Edgeworth revised the text and Johnson printed a third edition in 1811 (1994: xxxiii). The source text we are using here is Kathryn J. Kirkpatrick edition of *Belinda* for Oxford University Press (1994), and it is based on the second edition of 1802. It is closest to Ségur's source text since the most famous edition is of 1810 and is heavily superseded. According to Kirkpatrick, Edgeworth had slightly revised it from the first edition of 1801, and she summarized the changes in a letter to her sister Harriet appended as "Note on the Text":

We have explained that the picture with which Virginia fell in love was some *time* in her possession—we have detailed Lady Delacour's recovery, and we have added a few sentences to explain that Belinda would have loved Clarence better than any other person always if he had declared any attachment to her, but that she had turned her thoughts from him when he made no declaration of love to her. In the last scene he is *now* distinctly to avow passion for her—there may be other faults but we did not think it would be wise to *botch* (Edgeworth, 1994: xxvi).

Therefore, Edgeworth later developed certain elements, such as Virginia's love, Lady Delacour's recovery, the motives for Belinda's behavior towards her first suitor—which were far-fetched according to *The Monthly Review* (1801: 368-74)—, and Edgeworth made that suitor more vocal about his passion. Nevertheless, for the 1802 edition, she did not want to revise much (Edgeworth, 1994: xxvi).

### 3. The target text

Maria was aware that her book would soon appear in Paris, and she revealed her impressions to her relatives. According to Marilyn Butler, Edgeworth's Parisian friends sometimes assured the Edgeworths they had enjoyed reading *Belinda* and that they did not know about the extracts from *Castle Rackrent* and *Irish Bulls* which had been translated by the Pictets in *Bibliothèque Britannique* (Butler, 1972: 199; Fernández Rodríguez, 2004, 2006, 2008). Charlotte Edgeworth wrote to Harriet and Louisa Beaufort: "We have seen a gentleman who has translated *Belinda* not only into french language, but french taste for he has altered the story. He intends to publish a translation which shall be literal" (Colvin, 1979: 25; 2 Nov 1802). The Anglo-Irish author complained about Octave Gabriel comte de Segur's 1802 translation of *Belinda* in a letter to Mary Sneyd:

At the bottom of it was written *Belinda*, or else indeed I never should have guessed that it had any relation to *Belinda*. The print is in a ladies memorandum book and if it was in your hands it would infallibly put you in passion—that is into a great a passion as you can be put. Lady Delacour is a fat vulgar housekeeper and *Belinda* a stick worse a hundred times than sprawling Virginia. In many booksellers shops at Bruges, Gent and Brussels we found the translation of *Belinda* by Miss Edgewortz as they call her and print her. I have not yet had time to see whether it is well or ill translated (Colvin, 1979: 16; 20 October 1802).

Edgeworth's translator was Octave-Henri Gabriel, comte de Ségur (1779-1818), a French soldier and famous suicide. The eldest son of Louis Philippe, comte de Ségur, and Antoinette Élisabeth d'Aguesseau, he served in Italy and Spain, and, apart from *Belinda*, he translated Priscilla Wakefield's *An Introduction to Botany, in a Series of Familiar Letters* (1796) as *Flore des jeunes personnes* or *Lettres familières sur la botanique* (1801) and Horsley Curties's *Ethelvina* (1802).

Segur's translation was published in four volumes in Paris by François Maradan, one of the major publishers of the revolutionary period and former Paris Book Guild member. Carla Hesse explains that Maradan had specialized in the theater before the Revolution, and, in 1790, like many publishers, he ventured briefly into periodical publishing and went bankrupt. In 1797, three English novels in translation appeared at the *dépôt* in his name, as well as two works of contemporary political history. The newspaper *Amis des lois* reported that in 1800 Maradan's light literary publications had captured the Parisian literary market (Hesse, 1991: 196-7)

The complete title of the book is *Bélinde, conte morale de Maria Edgeworth traduit de l'anglais par l'auteur d'Ethelwina, par L.S. et par F. S.*, and the first volume is preceded by two revealing paratexts (Genette, 1987: 7-8): "Avertissement de l'auteur" and "Avertissement du traducteur". The first one corresponds with Edgeworth's English "Advertisement" with one typographical mistake: "Burnet" for Burney. "Avertissement du traducteur" is a digression about the novel with the aim to place *Bélinde* as something apart from the general novel stream: *Bélinde* is considered as a remarkable production and with this translation they have tried to "donner une utile leçon aux

coquettes, aux joueurs, et à tous ce qui ne prennent pas pour base de leur conduit une pieuse morale” (Edgeworth, 1802, I: iv). In the first chapter there is a footnote telling that some extracts have already been translated in *Bibliothèque Britannique* and that the translator wants to preserve some parts of the source text: “Nous n’avons pas voulu changer le style de ces morceaux, traduits par une plume aussi élégante que facile: c’eût été défiguré; et nous respectons trop ce qui peut plaire au public” (Edgeworth, 1802, I I: 1).

For Even-Zohar, six interrelated factors are involved in the production of a text: a CONSUMER, to whom a PRODUCT is addressed; a PRODUCER, who creates the text for a MARKET; and the INSTITUTION, which determines the usability of the product considering the existing REPERTOIRE in a given polysystem (1990: 34). This paradigm is here applied to *Bélinde* regarding Ségur’s translation, which became quite popular. During Edgeworth’s visit to Paris in 1802, she found everyone reading it and “elderly ladies recommending it to their nieces and granddaughters as a model of what a young lady of the world ought to be” (Inglis-Jones, 1959: 71). Edgeworth was also supported by the institution in France, that is, the critics, publishing houses and journals. The rationalist philosopher André Morellet noted: “À Paris on lit votre livre sur l’éducation —à Genève on l’avale— à Paris on admire vos principes —à Genève on les suit” (Butler, 1972: 190). British fiction was in fashion at the time and domestic novels similar to Edgeworth’s tale were translated into French. It is the case of Elizabeth Inchbald’s and Frances Burney’s, to name just a few. Even so, Wil Verhoeven points out:

Until the 1750s, roughly, the dissemination of French translations of English novels suffered from the marginal status that the domestic novel had in France. Being a hybrid form of prose writing, the novel was generally regarded as an undesirable form of literary expression and was only deemed fit for idle entertainment. That said, the English novel had a formidable sponsor in Voltaire. As a result, the ‘genre anglais’, as it was known, attracted a steadily growing readership in France (2015: 581).

### 3.1. *Bélinde* and French poetics

Editorial constraints probably account for the remarkable difference in the presentation of volumes. The source text is divided into three volumes containing 12, 11 and 8 chapters while the French translation comprises four volumes with 10, 8, 7 and 6 chapters, respectively. Besides, both the beginning of some chapters and their titles do not correspond with English: “L’horoscope” becomes “Sortes Virgilianae”.

The translator tries to accommodate the work to the French taste in some points, namely by introducing sentimental details and erasing those aspects that would shock polite readers. The aim is to present texts that are pleasing to read, as the French critic Élie-Catherine Fréron stated:

On ne considère pas le roman étranger comme un objet d’art qu’on tente de reproduire avec tout le respect et tout le soin qu’il mérite, mais comme une carrière d’où il s’agit de tirer le



plus des pierres possible pour les vendre au meilleur prix [...] Il n'est question que de trouver une main assez habile pour lever l'écorce, c'est-à-dire pour établir l'ordre, retrancher les superfluités, corriger les traits, et ne laisser voir enfin ce qui mérite effectivement de l'admiration (qtd. in Van Tieghem, 1966: 17, see also Fernández Rodríguez, 2014).

Ségur prefers to tell the story of the relationship between Hervey and Virginia as an intradiegetic first-person narrative (Edgeworth, 1802, IV: 14). This part is transformed into a memoir or repentant criminal's confessional narrative which is placed at the same level as Lady Delacour's one. Virginia Saint-Pierre is named after J.H. Bernardin de Saint-Pierre's *Paul et Virginie* (1788) and this subplot becomes relevant because it is based on Thomas Day's attempt to educate the foundling Sabrina Sidney and mould her into his perfect wife (Butler, 1972: 309; see also Moore, 2013). In the French translation Virginia's speeches are tinged by the effusion of feeling, for instance, when Mr. Hartley immediately approves of Virginia's marriage:

M. Hartley approuva Virginia, et lui exprima le désir de jouir de la satisfaction de M. Hervey.

Je voudrais le voir content, s'écria Virginie; mais, hélas! Il est toujours mélancolique avec moi, toujours distrait; une peine secrète semble oppresser son cœur; et ce n'est que lorsqu'il me croit triste qu'il me dit qu'il m'aime (Edgeworth, 1802, IV: 104).

Other examples of cultural adaptation show how the text is catered for the taste of the French audience. Clarence wants to find a Julie (Edgeworth, 1801, IV: 15), not a Sophia (Edgeworth, 1994: 362). Both the idea of getting rid of Virginia with money (Edgeworth 1994: 379) and the paragraph about female virtue and chastity (Edgeworth, 1994: 380) are missing, and the happens with Mrs. Ormond's words about Virginia falling in love: "Ah! thought Mrs. Ormond, she has not forgotten how I checked her sensibility some time ago. Poor girl! she is become afraid of me, and I have taught her to dissemble; but she betrays herself every moment" (Edgeworth, 1994: 381).

The *British Catalogue* disapproved of the character of Virginia, whose final ending was said "to outrage all probability" (1801: 85). As a matter of fact, in French this subplot is reversed: after contemplating a man disguised as Paul in a picture, Virginia confesses she is not in love with Clarence, but with Captain Sunderland whom she met some years ago and whose portrait she has seen. In French, it is the portrait of a child (Edgeworth, 1802, IV: 30), not of Captain Sunderland (Edgeworth, 1994: 369). The original text features Clarence and Sunderland as former friends in Jamaica, and the first feels free to declare his love to Belinda in England. While Lady Delacour closes the narrative explaining that all the couples were happy at the end, in the target text Virginia insists on Clarence and Belinda's marriage and sacrifices her happiness for theirs: "Les affaires de mon père l'appellent dans les Indes. Je serai sa compagne de voyage. Il ne tiendra qu'à vous, chère Bélinde, ainsi qu'à Clarence, d'adoucir pour moi l'amertume de l'absence. C'est en me donnant souvent de vos nouvelles, en

m'apprenant que votre union rend aussi heureux que je le desire" (Edgeworth, 1802, IV: 184-5).

French poetics required the suppression of secondary characters, especially if they belonged to the lower classes or were servants. In a relatively long narrative like *Bélinde*, this does not only imply compressing information, but also some displacements, which is revealed in many different ways. For instance, the explanation about Lady Delacour's operation which is graphically delivered by Marriott (Edgeworth, 1994: 313) is reported by Belinda in the target text (Edgeworth, 1802, III: 110). Also, the gossip about Clarence as being already married passes through lots of filters: "Positive! as I said before, positive! Madam, my woman had it from Lady Newland's Swiss, who had it from Lady Singleton's Frenchwoman, who had it from Longueville, the hairdresser, who had it from Lady Almeria's own woman, who was present at the ceremony, and must know if anybody does" (Edgeworth, 1994: 456). This corresponds with French "La chose n'est pas douteuse, madame; c'es le suisse de lady Newland qui l'a dit à la femme-de-chambre de lady Singleton" (Edgeworth, 1802, IV: 169). Interestingly, it is women's speeches that are modified, especially Marriot's, for example, after Lady Delacour's duel:

'She must, —to be sure, she must, ma'am,' cried Marriott, putting her hand upon her bosom. 'But let her be ever so much hurt, my lady will keep it to herself: the footmen swear she did not give a scream, not a single scream; so it's their opinion she was no ways hurt —but that, I know, can't be— and, indeed, they are thinking so much about the carriage, that they can't give one any rational account of any thing; and, as for myself, I'm sure I'm in such a flutter. Lord knows, I advised my lady not to go with the young horses, no later than—' (Edgeworth, 1994: 127)

Elle doit l'être, répondit Mariette en montrant son sein. Les domestiques assurent qu'elle n'a pas jeté un seul cri; mais je connais son courage.—Dieu sait comme je l'avais priée de me point se servir de ces maudits chevaux! (Edgeworth, 1802, I: 208).

The same applies to parts relative to children and science. Like *Helen*, *Belinda* tells the story of a frustrated marriage and motherhood: both works focus on the disruption or absence of affective ties in the family unit and the unhappiness that this engenders (Fernández Rodríguez, 2012: 15). There is a considerable part missing about Helena's fishes eating together (Edgeworth, 1802, III: 66), which refers to the conciliation of the Delacours reported by Marriott: "Miss Portman, they're eating it! Ma'am they're eating it as fast as they can!" (Edgeworth, 1994: 285). The conversation about fishes between the old gardener and Helena is later reported and has more nuances in the source text:

Helena, who did not know the share which Belinda's aunt and her own mother had in the transaction, began with great eagerness to tell the story of the poor gardener, who had been cheated by some fine ladies out of his aloe, &c. She then related how kind lady Anne Percival and her aunt Margaret had been to this old man; that they had gotten him a place as a gardener at Twickenham; and that he had pleased the family to whom he was

recommended so much by his good behaviour, that, as they were leaving the house, and obliged to part with him, they had given him all the geraniums and balsams out of the green-house of which he had the care, and these he had been this day selling to the young ladies at Mrs Dumont's (Edgeworth, 1994: 290).

Helène aussitôt, qui ignorait la part que sa mère et la tante de Bélinde avaient dans l'histoire de cet homme, la raconta avec feu, disant qu'il avait été trompé et chassé par des belles dames; que lady Anne Percival, et sa tante Margareta étaient venues au secours de ce pauvre homme, et l'avaient placé jardinier à Twickenham; qu'il venait vendre des fleurs aux pensionnaires de mistriss Dumont, et qu'elle s'était chargée de le payer, lorsque l'arrivée de miss Portman l'en avait empêchée (Edgeworth, 1802, III: 74).

The Edgeworths' stance in the debate about the abolition of slavery is represented in *Belinda* through the black slave Juba, a relevant figure in our study for two reasons. First, following the contemporary fashion of naming both dogs and slaves for fallen kings (Perera, 1991: 24), Vincent's dog is called Juba in the source text while in French the dog is called Tomy (Edgeworth, 1994, III: 176) and is never equated with a man, so this dialogue is eliminated:

"But, really, Juba is the best creature in the world," repeated Mr. Vincent, with great eagerness. "Juba is, without exception, the best creature in the universe." "Juba, the dog, or Juba, the man?" said Belinda: "you know, they cannot be both the best creatures" "Well! Juba, the man, is the best man—and Juba, the dog, is the best dog, in the universe," said Mr. Vincent, laughing, with his usual candour, at his own foible, when it was pointed out to him (Edgeworth, 1994: 346).

Like women, black slaves were favourite objects of sympathy in British and French nineteenth-century fiction. "Grateful negroes", the title of one of Edgeworth's stories in *Popular Tales* (1804), populated sentimental and autobiographical narratives at the turn of the century vindicating the humanity of black people, also in France (Boulukos, 1999; Fernández Rodríguez, 2015). However, when we turn to this French translation, we see that Juba's sentimentalism at parting from Vincent disappears:

"I shall see you again, Juba, soon, at your cottage."

"But massa will not be there – massa is gone! When shall we see massa again? Never – never!"

He sobbed like an infant.

No torments, in the power of human cruelty to inflict, could, in all probability have extorted from this negro one of the tears, which affection wrung from him so plentifully (Edgeworth, 1994: 449).

Second, one of the most critical points suppressed in later editions was the story about Juba and Lucy's marriage. Edgeworth relied on Richard Lovell Edgeworth's advice:

In the second volume 'Jackson' is substituted for the husband of Lucy instead of 'Juba', many people having been scandalised at the idea of a black man marrying a white woman;

my father says that gentlemen have horrors upon this subject, and would draw conclusions very unfavourable to a female writer who appeared to recommend such unions; as I do not understand the subject, I trust to his better judgment and end — for Juba read Jackson (qtd. Perera, 1991: 16-7).

Kathryn Kirkpatrick points out that, with this subplot, Edgeworth questioned endogamy considered essential to the colonial control and “her challenge to the dominant cultural values also advocated women’s control of their bodies and destinies through the marriage choice” (1993: 343). In the French text, the story told by the old woman inhabiting the porter’s lodge built by the Percivals is considerably shorter than in English and evades the issue:

‘Oh, yes, my lady! We are not afraid of Juba’s now; we are grown very great friends. This pretty cane chair for my good man was his handiwork, and these baskets he made for me. Indeed, he’s a most industrious, ingenious, good-natured youth; and our Lucy takes no offence at his courting her now, my lady, I can assure you. That necklace, which is never off her neck now, he turned for her, my lady; it is a present of his. So I tell him he need not be discouraged, though so be she did not take to him at the first; for she’s a good girl, and a sensible girl — I say it, though she’s my own; and the eyes are used to a face after a time, and then it’s nothing. They say, fancy’s all in all in love: now in my judgment, fancy’s little or nothing with girls that have sense. But I beg pardon for prating at this rate, more especially when I am so old as to have forgot all the little I ever knew about such things.’

*‘But you have the best right in the world to speak about such things, and your granddaughter has the best reason in the world to listen to you,’ said Lady Anne, ‘because, in spite of all the crosses of fortune, you have been an excellent and happy wife, at least ever since I can remember.’*

*‘And ever since I can remember, that’s more; no offence to your ladyship,’ said the old man, striking his crutch against the ground. ‘Ever since I can remember, she has made me the happiest man in the whole world, in the whole parish, as every body knows, and I best of all!’ cried he, with a degree of enthusiasm that lighted up his aged countenance, and animated his feeble voice.* (Edgeworth, 1994: 244, my italics)

Oh! Madame, dit la vieille femme, elle commence à s’y accoutumer; et d’ailleurs Juba est si aimable pour elle et pour nous; c’est lui qui a fait tous les petits meubles que vous voyez ici. Le collier de bois d’ébène qui est au cou de Lucie, c’est encore son ouvrage, et un présent de lui. Dans le premier moment, Lucie pensait que jamais elle ne pourrit le regarder sans frayeur, mais c’est une idée, et je ne désespère pas de les voir s’aimer beaucoup. C’est si fou de ne pas croire qu’avec de la raison et de la patience on vienne à bout de vaincre l’indifférence! On m’a souvent dit cela dans ma jeunesse; ma je suis si vieille, qu’à peine je puis me ressouvenir de ce que je pensais dans ce temps-la. Madame, pardonnez-moi si je vous importune, quand croyez-vous que Juba reviendra? (Edgeworth, 1802, II: 209- 10)

Taboo topics, like travestism and adultery, do not appear in French in consonance with moral essayists. Feminist scholar Mary Poovey explains that certain activities like coqueting, dressing provocatively, gambling or reading novels were considered “unnatural” because they might jeopardize conjugal fidelity (1984: 19). The episode of Clarence dressed up as a Countess of Pomenars is deleted in French and also an allusion

to it (Edgeworth, 1802, II: 7). In the source text Clarence confesses to the Doctor that he has a mistress (Edgeworth, 1994: 135) while in French he simply says “j’ai des autres raisons pour de ne point écrire à Bélinda” (Edgeworth, 1802, I: 221). Unfeminine behaviour is condemned, and Lord Delacour’s speech about witty women is compressed:

‘A woman may have too much wit —now too much is as bad as too little, and in a woman, worse ; and when two people come to quarrel, then wit on either side, but more especially on the wife’s, you know is very provoking— ’tis like concealed weapons, which are wisely forbidden by law. If a person kill another in a fray, with a concealed weapon, ma’am, by a sword in a cane, for instance, ’tis murder by the law. Now even if it were not contrary to law, I would never have such a thing in my cane to carry about with me; for when a man’s in a passion he forgets every thing, and would as soon lay about him with a sword as with a cane: so it is better such a thing should not be in his power. And it is the same with wit, which would be safest and best out of the power of some people’ (Edgeworth, 1994: 155).

C’est une nouvelle preuve de votre esprit et de votre bonté; je voudrais que mylady fût de votre gout: je reconnais son mérite; mais, soit dit entre nous, je lui voudrais plus de raison; il est aussi malheureux, pour une femme, d’avoir trop d’esprit que d’en manqué. Rien n’est plus dangereux que d’avoir les moyens de soutenir une mauvaise cause (Edgeworth, 1802, II: 30).

Didacticism in *Bélinda* takes the form of moralistic running commentary of the third person omniscient narrator, which in French is more marked than in the original. Sometimes comments of the narrator are amplified and charged with moral reflections, for instance, when Belinda’s awakening is reported in the source text: “Belinda saw things in a new light; and for the first time in her life she reasoned for herself upon what she saw and felt. It is sometimes safer for young people to see than to hear of certain characters” (Edgeworth, 1994: 69). In the target text, Edgeworth’s natural prose is abruptly interrupted:

Auprès de mylady? — Bélinda se forma des idées, des jugements à elle pour la première fois de sa vie. — On fait un bien bon cours de morale, lorsqu’on a toujours devant ses yeux une victime de l’immoralité, de l’inconséquence et de la folie du monde. Les exemples des malheurs, ou le vice extrême, sont aussi puissans [sic] pour donner horreur du vice, que les exemples du vice triomphant, heureux et tranquille, sont pernicieux. — Bélinda sut profiter de ces grandes leçons (Edgeworth, 1802: 116)

The opposite procedure is also adopted, so the long narrative about Champfort’s sad end comprising two long paragraphs at the beginning of chapter twenty-five (Edgeworth, 1994: 342-3) is summed up in one with an appeal to the reader:

Nos lecteurs seront charmés d’apprendre que lord Delacour trouva les moyens de prouver que la lettre anonyme avait été envoyée par Champfort; la justice s’empara de cet infâme calomniateur. Pendant ce temps, mistriss Freke payait par d’horribles souffrances le prix de

son acharnement à vouloir nuire à lady Delacour. Mais laissons ce deux personnages; leur sort est digne d'eux (Edgeworth, 1802, III: 170).

Moral comments added in French are related to characters representing rationality and the voice of patriarchy in the story. In the French text Dr. X— says something that does not appear in English: “Arrêtez. Lui dit le docteur X, modérez vos transports, l'intérêt de mylady exige qu'on lui évite toute espèce d'émotion; je prononce à regret cet arrêt; vous serez quinze jours sans la voir” (Edgeworth, 1802, III: 111), and the same happens after Lady Delacour's operation:de

Le chirurgien était parti aussitôt après l'opération: il était essential, pour garder le secret de mylady, qu'il ne prolongeât point son séjour chez elle. Le docteur X. la soigna avec un zèle que chaque jour semblait couronner de succès.

Cet homme, estimable autant qu'habile, ne se contentait pas de lui prodiguer les secours de son art: remontant aux causes morales, il cherchait à rendre lady Delacour à elle-même, en même temps qu'à la santé.

Il lui prescrivit un régime sévère, lui défendit absolument l'opium. Son séjour à la champagne lui permettait un genre de vie aussi réglé que sain; elle n'avait plus d'inquiétude sur sa santé, plus de tourmens [sic] à cacher (Edgeworth, 1802, III: 113).

### 3.2. Feminity in *Bélinde*

At the beginning of *Belinda*, and shortly after a brief presentation of the protagonist, the reader finds Aunt Stanhope's letter to her niece. This lady's speech is characterized by a certain amount of economic vocabulary which is missing in French:

[...] nothing to my mind can be more miserable than the situation of a poor girl, who, *after spending not only the interest, but the solid capital of her small fortune in dress, and frivolous extravagance, fails in her matrimonial expectations (as many do merely from not beginning to speculate in time)*. She finds herself at five or six-and-thirty a burden to her friends, destitute of the means of rendering herself independent (for the girls I speak of never think of learning to play cards), de trop in society, yet obliged to hang upon all her acquaintance, who wish her in heaven, because she is unqualified to make the expected return for civilities, having no home, I mean no establishment, no house, &c. fit for the reception of company of a certain rank (Edgeworth, 1994: 8, my italics).

Mais concevez-vous une position plus affreuse que celle d'une jeune mademoiselle pauvre, quand elle a dépensé en pompons et en rubans l'intérêt et le capital de sa modique fortune? Elle pense alors au mariage: un engagement convenable, une heureuse union, fuient devant elle avec le Bonheur et le repos, et pourquoi? parce qu'elle n'a pas trace le plan de sa vie de manière qu'un établissement solide et convenable en soit toujours le but. Elle se trouve, à trente-cinq ou trente-six ans, à charge à ses connaissances, à charge à toute la société, où l'instinct de l'habitude la pousse (Edgeworth, 1802, I: 6-7).

Teresa Michals considers Aunt Stanhope a speculator in domesticity since, for her, the family neither preserves a paternalist hierarchy nor is a private alternative to the

unstable marketplace (1994:14). Edgeworth purposefully opens her narrative presenting Aunt Stanhope's particular view of femininity, but, for the French audience, she remains an unmarked character. She explains that "I have covered my old carpet with a handsome green baize, and every stranger who comes to see me, I observe, takes it for granted that I have a rich carpet under it" (Edgeworth, 1994: 9), which is eliminated in French —also the label that the narrator applies to her "match-making" (Edgeworth, 1994: 9)—, and her advice about separated wives "as long as the lady continued under the protection of her husband, the world might whisper, but would not speak out" (Edgeworth 1994: 16). Stanhope is called "Cette femme adroite" (Edgeworth, 1802, II: 151) instead of "manoeuvring lady" (Edgeworth, 1994: 212), and the narrator's ironic comment "In the whole extent of Mrs. Stanhope's politic imagination (Edgeworth, 1994: 212) is rendered as "Dans toute l'étendue de sa politique" (Edgeworth, 1802, II: 151).

Belinda is definitely the most insipid character in Edgeworth's canon since she makes no mistakes and, most of the times, she looks rational. Though Edgeworth devoted time and effort to its composition, she was not very happy with the protagonist, as she revealed in a letter to Sophy Ruxton: "[...] I really was so provoked with the cold tameness of that stick or stone Belinda, that I could have torn the pages to pieces: and really, I have not the heart or the patience to *correct* her. As the hackney coachman said, 'Mend *you!* better make a new one.'" (qtd. Hare, 1894, I: 169; December 1809). The terms in which Belinda is introduced are either transformed or erased in French, so the heroine is advertised as "Packwood's razor strops" (Edgeworth, 1994: 25) —which in French becomes "comme l'on annonce de jolies mousselines" (Edgeworth, 1802, I: 41; 122) —, and men's quips are omitted:

'Mrs. Stanhope overdid the business, I think,' resumed the gentleman who began the conversation: 'girls brought to the hammer this way don't go off well. It's true; Christie himself is no match for dame Stanhope. Many of my acquaintance were tempted to go and look at the premises, but not one, you may be sure, had a thought of becoming a tenant for life' (Edgeworth, 1994: 25).

Edgeworth wanted to show the character's introspection in the novel and used focalization to show Belinda's thoughts to the reader. Nevertheless, in French, the way the narrator presents Belinda is significantly compressed:

The result of Belinda's reflections upon Lady Delacour's history was a resolution to benefit by her had example; but this resolution it was more easy [sic] to form than to keep... Her ladyship, where she wished to please or to govern, had fascinating manners, and could alternately use the sarcastic powers of wit, and the fond tone of persuasion, to accomplish her purposes. It was Belinda's intention, in pursuance of her new plans of life, to spend, whilst she remained in London, as little money as possible upon superfluities and dress (Edgeworth, 1994: 70).

Elle résolut d'imiter lady Delacour dans ses bons momens [sic], et de suivre un autre plan de vie en général. Elle ne voulut dépenser que très-peu de chose pour sa toilette (Edgeworth, 1802, I: 117).

In the translation, Belinda is less hesitating than in English due to some changes, and her virtues pass unnoticed to the French readers. In the French text chapter twenty-five is abruptly reduced, so the conversation between Lady Delacour and Belinda on whether she loves Vincent or Clarence (Edgeworth, 1994: 356-61) appears in the first chapter of volume four (Edgeworth, 1802, IV: 1). The beginning of chapter thirty about Lady Delacour's impression of Vincent and Belinda's civil courage (Edgeworth, 1994: 452) is summarized in two paragraphs in French (Edgeworth, 1802, IV: 162).

*Belinda* contains Edgeworth's most powerful female character which is mainly portrayed directly through her discourse. The femininity represented by Lady Delacour does not correspond with the model promoted by conduct books either in England or France, as Poovey points out:

Femininity branded as "monstrous" any unconventional attempt to explore, develop, or express the female self, and, while it granted women considerable influence in society, this image effectively inhibited many women's ability to understand, much less to satisfy, their own desires or needs [...] What autonomy a woman earned was often purchased at the cost of either social ostracism or personal denial of inadmissible aspects of herself (1984: 35).

A complex character, Lady Delacour meant a creative challenge for Edgeworth, who wanted to literally kill her in her drafts, as Kirkpatrick explains in an appendix to her edition (Edgeworth, 1994: 479-483). Lady Delacour is excessive, she lacks rationality: "Lady Delacour was governed by pride, by sentiment, by whim, by enthusiasm, by passion —by anything but reason" (Butler, 1975: 142), and Butler even compares her with Henry James's women since she is "meretricious and superb" (1996: 92).

As a *bel esprit* and a woman of fashion, Lady Delacour is all the time using lines of different sources, ranging from well-known poets to popular rhymes contributing to the polyphony of the text. A good deal of this material is pruned in French:

'If you have made any appointment for the rest of the evening in Berkley-square, I'll set you down, certainly, if you insist upon it, my dear — for punctuality is a virtue; but prudence is a virtue too, in a young lady ; who, as your aunt Stanhope would say, has to establish herself in the world. Why these tears, Belinda? — or are they tears? for by the light of the lamps I can scarcely tell; though I'll swear I saw the handkerchief at the eyes. What is the meaning of all this? You'd best trust me — for I know as much of men and manners as your aunt Stanhope at least; and in one word, you have nothing to fear from me, and every thing to hope from yourself, if you will only dry up your tears, keep on your mash, and take my advice; you'll find it as good as your aunt Stanhope's' (Edgeworth 1994: 28).

Si vous avez quelque engagement pour Berkeley-Square, je vous y descendrai, certainement, ma chère; mais pourquoi rentrer? Ayez confiance en moi, Bélinda; je connais aussi bien le monde que mistriss Stanhope, je vous promets que vous pouvez tout espérer de vous, et que vous devez ne rien craindre de moi. Croyez-moi, essayez ces pleurs que je crois voir couler, et remettez votre masque (Edgeworth, 1802, I: 47).



Lady Delacour is constantly displaying her assertive self. She dares to trespass certain limits and even claims to have used Colonel Lawless to make his husband jealous, a detail which is skipped in French:

I should not have suffered half as much as I did if he had been a man of a stronger understanding; but he was a poor, vain, weak creature, that I actually drew on and duped with my own coquetry, whilst all the time I was endeavouring only to plague Lord Delacour. I was punished enough by the airs his lordship doubly gave himself, upon the strength of his valour and his judgment—they roused me completely; and I blamed him with all my might, and got an enormous party of my friends, I mean my acquaintance, to run him down full cry, for having fought for me. It was absurd—it was rash—it was want of proper confidence in his wife; thus we said. Lord Delacour had his partisans, it is true; amongst whom the loudest was odious Mrs. Luttridge (Edgeworth, 1994: 52-3).

J'en détestait plus lord Delacour, don't l'orgueil était enflé para le succès de ses armes (Edgeworth, 1802, I: 96)

Information relative to her duel is considerably reduced (Edgeworth, 1802, I: 99) and also her cynical attitude about the artificiality and uselessness of the World she belongs to. One of Lady Delacour's comments is paramount to understand her, but it is not rendered into French: “‘How stupid it is,’ said Lady Delacour to Belinda, ‘to hear congratulatory speeches from people, who would not care if I were in the black hole at Calcutta this minute; but we must take the world as it goes — dirt and precious stones mixed together’” (Edgeworth, 1994: 142).

In the French version we simply find: “Elle aimait le monde, et cependant elle le connaissait” (Edgeworth, 1802, II: 11), but in English Lady Delacour lectures Belinda about men and the girl's marriageability:

‘Oh, as a common acquaintance, no doubt—but we'll pass over all those pretty speeches: I was going to say that this ‘mistress in the wood’ can be of no consequence to your happiness, because, whatever that fool Sir Philip may think, Clarence Hervey is not a man to go and marry a girl who has been his mistress for half a dozen of years—do not look so shocked, my dear, I really cannot help laughing—I congratulate you, however, that the thing is no worse—when a man marries, he sets up new equipages, and casts off old mistresses; or if you like to see the thing as a woman of sentiment rather than as a woman of the world, here is the prettiest opportunity for your lover's making a sacrifice’ (Edgeworth, 1994: 149).

This is totally skipped, and also Lady Delacour's self-perception applying male terms “You see I am absolutely a reformed *rake*” (Edgeworth, 1994: 176, my italics). She later thinks she has not totally changed, which does not appear in French:

‘Observe, my lord,’ continued she, smiling, ‘I said won, not tamed!—A tame Lady Delacour would be a sorry animal, not worth looking at. Were she even to become domesticated, she would fare the worse.’ ‘How so?—How so, my dear?’ said Lord Delacour and Belinda almost in the same breath. ‘How so?—Why, if Lady Delacour were

to wash off her rouge, and lay aside her air, and be as gentle, good, and kind as Belinda Portman, for instance, her lord would certainly say to her,' So alter'd are your face and mind, 'Twere perjury to love you now'" (Edgeworth, 1994: 314).

The author depicts female physical pain in *Belinda* in an almost naturalistic way, but, in the target text, there is a tendency to avoid descriptive detail and scenes about physical violence or fits of illness. For instance, Marriot's account of Lady Delacour's fever is importantly reduced:

'The house was quite in a state of distraction for some days. I never would sit down to the same table, ma'am, with Mr. Champfort, nor speak to him, nor look at him, and parties ran high above and below stairs. And at last my lady, who had been getting better, took to her bed again with a nervous fever, which brought her almost to death's door; she having been so much weakened before by the quack medicines and convulsions, and all her sufferings in secret. She would not see my lord on no account, and Champfort persuaded him her illness was pretence, to bring him to her purpose; which was the more readily believed, because nobody was ever let into my lady's bedchamber but myself' (Edgeworth, 1994: 261).

'Ma maîtresse fut irritée de ce refus. Sa fièvre redoubla, et la mit dans le plus grand danger: elle refusa de voir milord, à qui Champfort persuadait que cette maladie était feinte. C'était assez vraisemblable, puisque personne que moi n'entraît dans la chambre de my lady' (Edgeworth, 1801, III: 20).

Lady Delacour has the richest range of registers in the novel. Few readers could remain unaffected when Lady Delacour tells her life to Belinda, or when she reveals her anxiety before the operation. She also contemplates her life nostalgically as a rotten tree, which in French inexplicably changes into a clock:

'Ah, my dear!' said Lady Delacour, 'you forget, and so do I at times, what I have to go through. It is in vain to talk, to think of making home, or any place, or any thing, or any person, agreeable to me now. What am I? The outside rind is left—the sap is gone. The tree lasts from day to day by miracle – it cannot last long. You would not wonder to hear me talk in this way, if you knew the terrible time I had last night after we parted. But I have these nights constantly now. Let us talk of something else. What have you there—a manuscript?' (Edgeworth, 1994: 286)

O ma chère! S'écria lady Delacour, vous oubliez ma position: qui peut encore m'être agréable? La cloche fatale a sonné pour moi, ma tomber est entr'ouverte; chaque jour ma vie est un miracle qui ne peut se prolonger. Si vous saviez combien mes nuits sont cruelles! Mais laissons ce triste sujet de conversation. Quel est ce manuscrit ? (Edgeworth, 1802, III: 66-7)

Changes affecting the characterization of women are not restricted to Lady Delacour. The conversation between Mr Percival and Harriet Freke about female prudence and public opinion (Edgeworth, 1994: 229-30) is eliminated, and Mr. Percival's opinion about the heroine of romance (Edgeworth, 1994: 251) and female delicacy (Edgeworth, 1994: 255) is also suppressed. The same happens with two

anecdotes about Freke (Edgeworth, 1994: 252), and Miss Moreton's elopement with Freke is much more detailed in English (Edgeworth, 1994: 252-3)

In Poovey's terms, Lady Delacour is a desiring subject, a blankness that comes into view only when it interferes with the ideal woman who cannot be seen at all (1984: 22) and is embodied by Lady Anne Percival in *Belinda*. When the latter is described, there is a footnote about English ladies which aims to approximate the French reader to a familiar French author: "On croirait que l'auteur anglais a voulu peindre ici la vertueuse femme du célèbre Lavoisier" (Edgeworth, 1802, II: 160). Dr. X— reshapes the feminine ideal, and, the first time Lady Percival is alluded to, there is a reference to Griselda, a well-known literary figure for any English reader:

'Now,' said Dr. X—, looking at his watch, 'it will be eight o'clock by the time we get to upper Grosvenor street, and lady Anne will probably have waited dinner for us about two hours, which I apprehend is sufficient to try the patience of any woman but Griselda. Do not,' continued he, turning to Clarence Hervey, 'expect to see an old-fashioned, spiritless, patient Griselda, in lady Anne Percival — I can assure you that she is — but I will neither tell you what she is, nor what she is not. Every man who has any abilities likes to have the pleasure and honour of finding out a character by his own penetration, instead of having it forced upon him at full length in capital letters of gold, finely emblazoned and illuminated by the hand of some injudicious friend: every child thinks the violet of his own finding the sweetest. I spare you any farther allusions and illustrations,' concluded Dr. X—, 'for here we are, thank God, in upper Grosvenor street' (Edgeworth, 1994: 97).

A present, allons retrouver lady Anne; dit le docteur X. C'est une femme dont l'amabilité... — Mais je ne veux point vous dire ce qu'elle est, ou ce qu'elle n'est pas; tout home d'esprit aime à juger par lui-même: nous serons bientôt arrives; partons (Edgeworth, I, 1802: 157).

Information related to the ideal English family personified by the Percivals is altered. Three conversations with the Percival children about the fishes are missing (Edgeworth, 1994: 98-100; 235; 248-9), and the story Lady Anne tells them about the old gardener and the aloe tree is summed up (Edgeworth, 1994: 106-7). When Mrs. Delacour accuses her daughter-in-law of having "cambrick-handkerchief sensibility", as well as neglecting her second child and being an unfeeling mother, Lady Anne supports Lady Delacour, and this part is reduced:

'And mine, so much,' said Lady Anne, 'that I cannot believe such a being to exist in the world—notwithstanding all the descriptions I have heard of it: as you say, my dear Mrs. Delacour, it passes my powers of imagination. Let us leave it in Mr. Hervey's apocryphal chapter of animals, and he will excuse us if I never admit it into true history, at least without some better evidence than I have yet heard.' (Edgeworth, 1994: 103)

'Et les miennes aussi, dit lady Anne; et tellement même, que je ne puis concevoir qu'un être pareil existe. —Malgré tout ce que j'en ai entendu dire, ma chère mistress Delacour, je répéterai avec vous que je ne puis le comprendre' (Edgeworth, 1802, I: 165).

Edgeworth is not particularly keen on metaphorical language in her *oeuvre*, but *Belinda* exhibits this feature which is registered when Lady Anne gives her opinion

about children's feelings. The subtle quality of her discourse does not match the French translation:

'If we tear the rosebud open we spoil the flower.' Belinda smiled at this parable of the rosebud, which, she said, might be applied to men and women, as well as to children. 'And yet, upon reflection,' said Lady Anne, 'the heart has nothing in common with a rosebud. Nonsensical allusions pass off very prettily in conversation I mean, when we converse with partial friends: but we should reason ill, and conduct our selves worse, if we were to trust implicitly to poetical analogies. Our affections,' continued Lady Anne, 'arise from circumstances totally independent of our will.'

'That is the very thing I meant to say,' interrupted Belinda eagerly.

'They are excited by the agreeable or useful qualities that we discover in things or in persons.'

'Undoubtedly,' said Belinda.

'Or by those which our fancies discover,' said lady Anne (Edgeworth, 1994: 239).

La douleur qui lui cause le départ de son ami M. Vincent ne l'empêche pas de penser à ses fleurs, dit lady Percival: ceux qui s'attendent à trouver un sentiment profond dans un enfant de six ans se trompent bien. S'ils veulent le faire paraître. Ils ne produisent que de l'affectation. Il faut laisser leur âme s'ouvrir. Le cœur des enfants est un bouton de rose; si on veut l'épanouir trop tôt, la fleur est perdue.

Bélinde sourit à cette comparaison, qui pouvait, disait elle, s'appliquer aux hommes et aux femmes comme aux enfants: elle pensait que les sentimens [sic] se développaient spontanément (Edgeworth, 1802, II: 197).

The scene in which Belinda is pulling a carnation into pieces while Lady Delacour is asking her if Clarence has declared himself (Edgeworth, 1994: 194) and the comparison between Lady Delacour and Lady Anne are more elaborated in English, though not necessarily longer:

Mrs. Freke's wit, thought she, is like a noisy squib, the momentary terror of passengers; Lady Delacour's like an elegant firework, which we crowd to see, and cannot forbear to applaud; but Lady Anne Percival's wit is like the refulgent moon, we 'Love the mild rays, and bless the useful light' (Edgeworth, 1994: 232).

Aidée par ses aimables hôtes, Bélinde fit d'utiles réflexions sur la conversation de mistriss Freke; elle apprit à distinguer l'esprit juste de celui qui n'est que brillant, et à préférer toujours la raison à l'esprit. Elle compara celui de mistriss Freke au ver luisant qui fait courir les enfants; celui de lady Delacour, au brillant feu d'artifice qui attire l'admiration du moment; et enfin, celui de lady Anne Percival, à la douce lueur de la lune qui éclaire sans éblouir (Edgeworth, 1802, II: 185).

#### **4. Conclusion**

The analysis of the translation of this feminocentric work delves into the analysis which gender studies have already carried out on Edgeworth as a feminist writer. We have

seen that, due to its complexity and ambitious thematic scope, *Belinda* sets Edgeworth apart from the mainstream of women novelist in nineteenth-century Britain. Edgeworth adopted the canonic form of the tale and related her work to prestigious authors, which drew Ségur's attention quickly and his translation certainly enticed French readers. However, *Bélinde* as presented to the French audience is not on a par with Edgeworth's text.

At microstructural level, Ségur turns *Belinda* into a moralistic narrative adapted to French consumers. French poetics determined pruning narrative passages and those parts which would shock French readers. Scenes are heightened with hackneyed sentimental language and secondary characters are not as prominent as in English. Edgeworth's story is censored in the sense that it does away with free indirect discourse and with the irony in some character's discourse, which is not rendered as in *Belinda*. The moral aim of the text is deeply felt in the form of declarative statements by the omniscient narrator at the cost of sacrificing both focalization from characters and narratorial irony. Also, there is a tendency towards the amplification of moral speeches and explication.

Edgeworth had many reasons to object to Ségur's translation of her memorable feminocentric work. Ségur's version proves to be a watered-down version of Edgeworth's powerful critique because it is less ambiguous and more politically correct while she was consciously tackling with many hot issues: the treatment of the black people, the rights of woman and their role in courtship, marriage and as mothers. All of them place Edgeworth in an outstanding position as a novelist highly aware of the role of literature as a vehicle to denounce social problems from a woman's point of view.

The translator's adaptation of Edgeworth's *Belinda* has important consequences in the transmission of Edgeworth's works and ideas on the Continent. Edgeworth slipped into other literatures after the publication of her *oeuvre* in France, which had an enormous cultural influence at the beginning of the nineteenth century. Unfortunately, the image French readers obtained of *Bélinde* and of her author diverges from the one Edgeworth had in Britain and places her as a writer of complacent domestic stories for women.

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## Women Entrapment and Flight in Gilman's "The Yellow Wallpaper"

Azra Ghandeharion  
Milad Mazari  
Ferdowsi University of Mashhad  
ghandeharion@um.ac.ir

### ABSTRACT

This paper attempts to yield a critical reading of "The Yellow Wallpaper" (1892), which is one of the pioneering feminist works of American literature. Attempts have been made at finding affinities between the specific characterization of the story and the stereotypical male and female figures as defined by patriarchy and in terms of traditional gender roles. The paper tries to draw on Lacan's conceptions of language, Cixous' ideas about *écriture féminine*, and Freud's misconception about women's conditions. Drawing critical attention to this information, the paper focuses on the main unnamed female character and the fact that her anonymity helps the readers, specifically female readers, to identify themselves with her.

**Keywords:** The Yellow Wallpaper, patriarchal society, gender roles, confinement and escape, imagination, feminism

### 1. Introduction

This paper aims at finding the feminist elements in Charlotte Perkins Gilman's short story, *The Yellow Wallpaper* (1892); first, by suggesting how this story can be taken as a feminist work of fiction, and then by trying to identify these feminist elements with

ideas discussed by the second-wave feminists, as referred to in Betty Friedan's *The Feminine Mystique* (1974), ideas suggesting and criticizing the concept that women, as they are perceived by the patriarchal society, are nothing but the products of such a society, i.e., they are constructed in this fashion by men.

We then attempt to shed light on the issue of traditional gender roles as an inseparable part of any patriarchal society, in particular the American society during the nineteenth century, the same society in which our narrator and her husband are living. An analogy is drawn between the logical, analytical and rational role conferred upon men, the narrator's husband and other men mentioned in the story, as opposed to the subjective, irrational and illogical role bestowed on women, embedded in the characterization of the female narrator, and the fact that these roles are assigned by the patriarchy of the aforementioned society. We go on to probe men's emphasis on the material and the visible, specifically the physical symptoms of the narrator's condition, as opposed to women's stress on the imaginative and the inexplicable, particularly the narrator's feelings and her condition as was exacerbated by the wrong and institutionalized diagnosis of her husband. It is noteworthy to say that her world of imagination is inexplicable only in terms of male dominated language and premises. These sexist gender roles and their inhibiting nature repressing women –the narrator is confined in a room resembling a prison– are represented by the pattern of the wallpaper in which there is a front pattern, implying the bars of a prison constructed by the society in which women are confined, and a sub-pattern resembling the body of a woman trying to escape, which embodies all the women restricted by the rules and regulations of a patriarchy.

Furthermore, this paper explores the idea of feminine writing or *écriture féminine* as has been put forward by Cixous, discussed in Bray (2004) and Jacobus & Barreca (1999), as a way to liberate women from the yokes of the patriarchal mindset usually internalized by patriarchal women. Accordingly, the female narrator of the story secretly keeps a journal which proposes two ideas: first, the genre preference of women and their discursive type of writing, discursive in the eyes of male dominated language; secondly, it is the secrecy with which she is keeping that journal that suggests that women are not supposed to carry out intellectual undertakings such as painting and writing, if they desire to be seen as the perfect mother, wife and/or housewife in such patriarchal societies.

In terms of language, Jacques Lacan's ideas of the *imaginary* and the *symbolic orders* (Homer, 2005), have been used to cast light on the binary opposition present in the story between the narrator's husband's rule-oriented universe in which word and emotion are separate and the narrator's imaginary universe in which she roams free and tries to flee from the "Law of the Father", as embodied in the diagnosis of his physician husband (Tyson, 2006: 94).

Moreover, we investigate the ways in which Gilman has worked out interwoven relationships and affinities between this story and her own autobiography, in which she explains about herself having the same condition, in terms of discussing the

stereotypical diagnosis of serious women ailments, psychological or physical, simply as hysteria, as was suggested by Freud and many other physicians to be a routine female trouble at the time.

Finally, the paper attempts to indicate if the female narrator of this story was successful in liberating herself or the final scene in the story was just a temporary phase in the process of her entrapment, physically, socially and emotionally.

## 2. Review of the literature

The focus of attention has been put on feminism; that is, Betty Friedan's ideas as have been posited in *The Feminine Mystique* (1977), Helene Cixous' concepts about *écriture féminine* (Jacobus & Barreca, 1999; Bray, 2004), Foucault's notion of Panopticon (Mills, 2003), Kristeva's conception about the future generations of feminism (McAfee, 2004), Freud's idea about hysteria (Thurschwell, 2000), Lacan's notions on language as elaborated in Homer (2005), Showalter's beliefs about female writers (1977), and finally Beauvoir's opinions in her *The second sex* (1953).

Feminist approaches toward literature are taken from Tyson (2006) and Guerin (2011). The idea of imprisonment and surveillance has been probed as mentioned by Bak (1994). The reason why this story can be regarded as a feminist piece of literature was explored in Shumaker (1985). The concept of *écriture féminine* was taken into consideration while examining Haney-Peritz (1986). Rena Korb's ideas discussing female entrapment and flight (Korb, 1997), Greg Johnson's arguments on the narrator's final breakdown as an outcome of ages of repressed anger (Johnson, 1989), and Linda Wagner-Martin's sight on women's conflicting roles in patriarchal societies (Wagner-Martin, 1989) have also been considered in this paper. The issues of discourse differences between men and women have been analyzed by concentrating on Treichler (1984). Lanser (1989) has also been instrumental in the analysis at issue. In addition, the much debated concept of the cult of true womanhood in the nineteenth century was focused upon in Quawas (2006). The issue that the story has biographical elements was stated by Hamilton (2015). Oyeboode (2011) has talked about the rest cure which was prescribed to women who suffered from the same nervous breakdown as both the narrator and the author of the story and that this was an ill judgment for such cases. Finally, Battisti and Fiorato (2012) have concentrated on the question of women's identity and how it remains under the shadow of their male counterparts in patriarchal societies.

## 3. Discussion

### 3.1. A feminist story

"The Yellow Wallpaper" is a feminist story in that it shows women's confinement by

the use of the yellow wallpaper which in turn becomes a symbol of surveillance; the female narrator of the story is in a prison cell, the nursery room which has solid signs of imprisonment, such as barred windows, and is being under scrutiny by his physician husband to see if she shows the proper behaviour expected of her. This story has been viewed by many critics as a feminist declaration of liberty. The paranoia of being under an incessant watch makes the narrator go mad; however, this seeming madness liberates her from patriarchal concepts of appropriate feminine behavior. Gilman herself noted in her autobiography that her aim when writing this Gothic story was to warn her own physician, Dr. S. Weir Mitchel, in fact against his wrong diagnosis of women's conditions (Bak, 1994: 6).

As was indirectly mentioned above and as has been stated by second-wave feminists, women are not essentially born as weak, irrational and subjective. According to de Beauvoir, a woman's sole anatomy does not suffice to determine her as male or female; rather, these entities are formed by the conscious awareness of individuals through the roles they play at the very heart of the society in which they live (Beauvoir, 1953: 63).

The role that society plays in this respect is quite evident during the post Second World War years, in the fifties. As Friedan proposes, the feminine mystique suggests that the most elevated value and the sole commitment that a woman can bear is that her femininity be fulfilled. This mystique argues that the origin of women's plight is that they envied men and tried to follow their paths; rather, they should have accepted the true essence of their nature, that is, cultivating maternal love, male superiority, and sexual passivity. The new visage that the mystique provides women with is in fact the old one; according to this visage a woman's occupation is that of a housewife (Friedan, 1977: 37-38).

It is notable that this work of fiction is autobiographical. Charlotte Perkins Gilman put herself in care of a prominent nerve specialist, Dr. S. Weir Mitchel, because of her complaint of depression. Her doctor diagnosed her with "postpartum depression" as a result of her daughter's birth. During that period of time, the world of medicine had not yet differentiated between the ailments of the body and the afflictions of the mind; thus, psychological conditions such as depression were diagnosed and treated by neurologists like Dr. Mitchell. Her doctor's prescription for her situation was as follows: "Live as domestic a life as possible. Have your child with you all the time. Lie down an hour after every meal. Have but two hours intellectual life a day. And never touch pen, brush or pencil as long as you live" (Gilman, 1935: 96). As a result, his treatment included isolation of the patient from family and everyday surroundings and she was forced to go through total rest in the bed. Moreover, she was warned by her doctor against undertaking any intellectual attempts such as writing or painting. In this story, Gilman indicates the terror of such kind of treatment and how being isolated from everyday life can drive someone, all women, to total madness (Korb, 1997: 284).

It is notable to know that if they had let her openly keep a personal diary and write about her innermost feelings on her ailment, it would have had decreased the amount of

unbearable pressure which was on her. Also, writing is a process of self-assertion and helps individuals to find their status in the society and in turn acknowledge their unique identity, something that women were searching for during the time that the story was written.

However, the story is not only about the enhancement of just one aspect of women's life; on the contrary, it speaks of various issues pertinent to the sufferings of nineteenth-century women, in particular their being limited by restricting conventional gender roles. Since Gilman herself suffered from a form of nervous breakdown as a result of a rest treatment, which was quite identical to what was prescribed for the narrator, she stated that she had written the story to help people not to become insane. As a consequence, one can claim that this story is about women's entrapment and flight (Korb, 1997: 284).

Additionally, Gilman has said that she did not regard this work of fiction as a piece of literature and that she wrote everything for a specific purpose; here, the purpose has been to show the perils of a specific medical treatment (Shumaker, 1985: 589). The narrator proposes that the diagnosis *per se*, is the one reason why her condition does not improve, since it underestimates her own belief that her state is in fact very serious and material (Treichler, 1984: 61). As is obvious, the female narrator is physically trapped in a nursery room, more reminiscent of a prison cell, and also she is mentally and emotionally restrained by her husband's tyrannical diagnosis of and prescription for her condition. Moreover, critics have regarded the relationship between John, the narrator's husband, and the narrator herself as embodying the imbalanced power structure present in the society at the time between men and women: the suppression and impotency of women in nineteenth century America (Gilman, 84-85).

Elaine Hedges views the story as a "feminist document," as "one of the rare pieces of literature we have by a nineteenth-century woman which directly confronts the sexual politics of the male-female, husband-wife relationship" (Haney-Peritz, 1986: 114). Inevitably, a feminist-oriented reading of the story focuses on the socioeconomic factors that force the narrator, and by contrast all women of the same era, to insanity (Treichler, 1984: 64).

When her symptoms of the illness tended to exacerbate, Gilman herself found out that the conventional domestic role had had a partial role in the emergence of her sickness. Thus, she abandoned her husband and along with her baby moved to California, where she became a full-time writer and also a feminist activist. After living in California for three years, she put her pen to paper and wrote *The Yellow Wallpaper* (1892). After the publication of the book, she sent a copy to her physician to show him the detrimental aftermath of his wrong diagnosis and treatment. Her use of Dr. Mitchel's real name in the narration diverts the reader's attention to the outside world (Treichler, 1984: 8).

### 3.2. Feminine Imagination vs. Masculine Factuality

Drawing an analogy between men and women's role in the nineteenth century, one must, first, focus on how men and women view the outside universe differently. Women have been said to view the universe through an imaginative and fanciful lens, while men look at the world in terms of reality and factuality; one could say they have a materialistic viewpoint toward everything. In the story as well, one can follow a pattern of binary oppositions as found in the characterization of both main and secondary characters. The husband is a physician who only concentrates on what can be seen and touched, the tangible; nevertheless, his wife is supposedly a writer who uses her creative power in order to flee from the harsh realities imposed upon her by her husband and society, being forced to stay in room and not being allowed to write, which is her one and only getaway (Shumaker, 1985: 589-590). So, one may wonder what happens to one's imaginative powers when they are seen as feminine and frail by a society that only prizes the actual and the practical? Gilman herself had experienced the same pattern of imposition during her earlier life when she used her imagination to escape the bitterness of life, but one of her mother's friends warned her against such illusive imagination as perilous. Consequently, Charlotte, who was just a fine, obedient New England girl, closed all the doors shut to her world of dreams and imagination in order to remain the lady on the pedestal, as was suggested by the 19<sup>th</sup> century "Cult of True Womanhood" (Guerin et al., 2011: 255).

The female narrator of the story is struggling with the same problem, that is, from the very first words of the story she shows her gift of imagination by imagining that the house they have rented is in fact a haunted house; in addition, by looking at the wallpaper she is taken far back into her childhood when she could entertain herself just by looking at the walls and the furniture of her childhood house. At the same time, she is repeatedly reminded by her husband that she had better not succumb to her fanciful imagination at all (Shumaker, 1985: 590). There are two vivid examples in the text itself which show the aforementioned pattern: firstly, when she asks her husband to change the wallpaper since she does not like its ugly pattern, he answers: "nothing was worse for a nervous patient than to give way to such fancies" (Gilman & Dock, 1998: 31). By doing so, he makes her feel as if the fact that she does not like the wallpaper for its ugliness were just a whimsical feminine impulse that must be curbed. The second instance occurs when she sees the curious pattern in the wallpaper and requests that she be taken to another room, but her husband, a rational, practical man, sticks to the tangible and the visible and refuses to do so by saying: "You are gaining flesh and colour, your appetite is better, I feel really better about you," (36) here he fails to pay attention to his wife's emotional needs.

In this tale, two separate universes exist which are worlds apart, that is, that of the female narrator and that of her husband and sister-in-law. In order to elucidate on this matter, it must be said that the narrator gradually crawls and creeps into the mystical world of her imagination, a mythical world which helps her liberate herself from all the

fetters of the materialistic universe of male domination. On the other hand, there is the daylight universe of masculinity, that of rules and regulations which exists only in terms of whatever can be observed and focuses on empiricism rather than subjectivity; a world which belittles and condemns women's dependence on fancy as frenzy (Johnson, 1989: 524-525).

Thus, because of all these contrastive contradictions which flow from the very beginning all the way down to the end of the story, the thoroughly masculine husband, representative of the patriarchal society of the time, incessantly tries to repress his wife's fanciful imagination and calls it perilous; furthermore, his institutional diagnosis sees her creative power as the sole source of her deteriorating condition, a diagnosis which is based on the medical profession's surefire experimentations of that time that took men's experience as a universal standard and applicable to both genders.

As an inevitable result, the narrator unconsciously struggles to create a balance between her incipient need for immersion into the world of fancy and her husband's disparaging comments on the matter (Johnson, 1989: 524-525). This internal conflict of choosing between the daylight world of masculinity and the night-time universe of fascination is evident in the following excerpt:

I will take a nap, I guess. I don't know why I should write this. I don't want to. I don't feel able. And I know John would think it absurd. But I *must* say what I feel and think in some way – It is such a relief! But the effort is getting to be greater than the relief. (34-35)

When, for the first time, she looks at the wallpaper in the mesmerizing gleam of the moonlight she starts to recognize the front and sub-pattern and just submerges herself step by step in her gaping world of night-time imagination. So she goes on to say: "There are things in that paper that nobody knows but me, or ever will" (35). Then she describes that in the moonlight she sees that the pattern in the wallpaper "creeps" in and out of the windows and that she "hated" to wake John up, maybe because it will be shallow and illusive to him.

### 3.3. Traditional Gender Roles

Traditional gender roles are based on biological essentialism, that is, biology decides the essence of the individual in terms of femininity and masculinity; in other words, it posits that a woman is biologically born a woman and is not constructed a woman in the society. This issue is of utmost importance since it is an alibi used by patriarchy to say that women are the weaker sex. Hence, ideological discrimination hides behind a seemingly biological fact (Bray, 2004: 28-29).

All the articles, publications, and editorials by specialists were suggesting that women have to try to find gratification as mothers and housewives. They were taught that a genuinely feminine lady does not aspire to have a career, better education, rights

in the political sphere, and so forth. In the fifties many girls quit college since they assumed that higher education could hamper their marriage. Girls did not want to study physics, as it was thought to be unfeminine. All an American girl ever desired was to be married, to give birth to four children and reside in a pleasant home in the suburb. After the Second World War, the glamour of feminine satisfaction turned out to be the heart of the culture in America (Friedan, 1977: 11-14).

By presenting a room every inch of which projects the image of a prison, windows with metal bars and a vicious looking bed that is fixed to the floor, the image of crawling women all around the room and the house and the presence of overbearing men, her husband and all other male characters, the story heralds the issue of sexist gender roles and foreshadows further feminist literature to emerge later on (Shumaker, 1985: 589).

It was in 1962 that the problem of the trapped housewife in America came to be a commonplace issue. Nevertheless, many people, including men and women, did not believe that it was a real problem (Friedan, 1977: 21). So, it might be wise to say that Gilman, many years prior to the emergence of the matter, had predicted the plight of women and analyzed this issue to the smallest detail in her elaborate narrative.

By definition, when a woman has internalized the standards and conventions of patriarchy she is called a patriarchal woman. Moreover, a patriarchy is a society in which the dominant culture bestows privileges onto male members of the society by advocating traditional gender roles. Traditional gender roles project women as irrational, powerless, unassertive, and passionate, while representing men as logical, powerful, defensive, and strong-minded (Tyson, 2006: 85).

Earlier in this paper the problem of the trapped housewife in America was mentioned. As Friedan proposes, the real fetters that trap her in the role of the submissive suburban housewife are the ones that she harbors in her mind and attitude. These chains are not readily identified and thus cannot be broken with ease. As a result, she refers to this issue as the “the problem that has no name”; this plight of American housewives rings a sentence in their mind: “I want something more than my husband and my children and my home”, yet, they could not pinpoint what it really was (Friedan, 1977: 26-27).

As a clear example, Freud did not seem to be concerned with the situation of women, instead, he formulated his ideas based on the situation of men and used male psychological patterns as the standard (Beauvoir, 1953: 66). The story very appropriately posits that the American society of the time was replete with such men, that is, Dr. Mitchel, John, who is Dr. Mitchel’s exact double in the narrative, and also there is the narrator’s brother.

In *The Yellow Wallpaper* the female narrator is apparently misinterpreting her environment and one way or another, here and there, she succumbs to her husband’s domineering ideas, those of traditional gender roles. For example, when she tries to convince her husband, John, to change the gruesome wallpaper, not only does he reject to give in to her request, but also he declares his strong power over his wife when he



implies that after changing the wallpaper, he might have to change the "heavy bedstead" and then the "barred windows" and finally all the other things just because he has a whimsical wife who always nags just like a pampered child.

Here, obviously, he is founding his dominion in the matter and suggesting the fact that she must be under her supremacy. The problem is that, being a patriarchal woman, she fails to see the delicate pattern of sovereignty in this context and instead of asserting her objection she relies on him as a figure of authority (Korb, 1997: 286). Yet, in another part of the story, she thinks that writing might relieve her psychological affliction, but she is reminded of what John has said, what institutionalized authority has put forth, that writing is forbidden for her, since it makes her tired, and then she decides not to do so.

Just as a normal member of a patriarchal society which champions traditional gender roles, John, who is a representative of such a society, believes only in the physical and practical aspects of life and renders the narrator's reactions against his mentality as unreasonable, which is again totally understandable for the male dominated society in terms of her condition as a woman.

The story condemns the sexist viewpoint of the nineteenth-century society toward women and censures the materialism upon which the cornerstones of this society are founded (Shumaker, 1985: 598). Thus, the narrator is inevitably entrapped by having unconsciously accepted that John is the epitome of logic and reason, and that she is acting erroneously, according to the standards of the same society that John and his lookalikes stand for.

The tragic truth that Gilman has pointed a finger to is that not only the narrator but also all the other women have somehow internalized and shared the patriarchal values as a normal and natural part of their lives. For instance, as has been mentioned before, John has banned his wife from committing to any writing, as she herself says: "There comes John, and I must put this away, he hates to have me write a word" (31). She also implies that her husband believes that because she has strong "imaginative power" she has to use her "good sense" and control her inclination to make illusive stories.

So, as is obvious in the above mentioned excerpts, she somehow believes in what her husband puts forth, but the problem arises when the narrator describes her sister-in-law as a woman who is "so good with the baby" (31) and also as an individual who can be seen as a "perfect and enthusiastic housekeeper and hopes for no better profession" (33). So far, her sister-in-law is solely a unique housewife, but the narrator does not stop here and continues to say that even her sister-in-law shares one destructive idea with all the male characters in the story, that is, writing is the sole cause of the narrator's sickness (Korb, 1997: 286), which shows that both of these women have accepted their doomed fate of being the ruled-over, the subordinates who are at the mercy of their imagination. Moreover, her sister-in-law is perfectly satisfied with being a mere housekeeper, which is exactly what a patriarchal society aims to achieve, i.e., to keep women busy with the household chores and to make them stay away from the social life, the social sphere which is already replete with men.

Another aspect of the story which suggests and indirectly condemns the concept of gender roles is the times when the female narrator is treated like a little child and the perfect role described for her is that of father's favorite little girl (Wagner-Martin, 1989: 51-52). The new cheerful housewife female heroes, as appearing in the fifties publications and magazines, are curiously younger than the lively girls who had careers during the forties and the thirties. They appear to become even younger any time they emerge in the books and magazines and they have an almost childish dependence on their male counterparts. They have no insight about the future (Friedan, 1977: 38-39). This tendency in the media of the fifties may be referred to as the infantilization of women. That is to say, they are little girls and their only goal is to give birth to a future generation of more babies, and this is supposed to be the only way to become a female hero according to the standards of the fifties.

A further side effect of the process of infantilization is identity crisis. Friedan claims that the culture prevalent during the Victorian time did not allow women to satisfy or acknowledge their primary sexual desires; similarly the American culture during the fifties does not allow women to satisfy or acknowledge their primary desires to mature and gratify their latent powers as equal human beings (Friedan, 1977: 69).

She has to be an infant-like character whose job is to remain in a room, formerly a nursery, and just stare at the walls and the ceiling. In this line: "Then he took me in his arms and called me a blessed little goose" (32), it is shown how her husband calls her his "little goose", a dumb animal, and treats her as if she were a defenseless creature who is at the mercy of patriarchal premises.

Overall, the ideal woman would be the one who plays the role of the submissive girl who is not a trouble maker, one who stays in the room and tries her best to curb what he does best, i.e., using her imaginative power.

The word "diagnosis" has also been cleverly used to represent the voice of male dominated scientific world of medicine that tries to describe women's serious psychological conditions just in physical terms. This specific word projects institutional authority and privileges the logical, the practicable and the empirical. It is the same voice which renders the narrator's idea that the house is haunted as superficial and superstitious and tries its best not see women's conditions as serious (Treichler, 1984: 65). This diagnosis has been legalized by being incorporated in the institutional frameworks of matrimony and the medical profession.

### 3.4. Feminine Writing as a Liberating Power

In *A Literature of their own* (1977), Showalter posits that for women to work essentially meant to toil for the sake of others. Thus, any type of work which indicated self-development would be in stark opposition with the feminine value of the time, which suggested suppression and submissiveness. It is clear that writing, a self-centered career, was considered a threat, since it called for the enhancement of the individual's ego instead of its rebuttal (Showalter, 1977: 22). So, it is quite pardonable why her husband and her sister-in-law are so positive on the fact that she is better off without putting her pen on paper; furthermore, she is in a state of censorship in terms of her own writing, that is, she does not want others to find out that she is keeping a diary.

Thus, it was for a reason that Gilman forced the major character of her story to continue writing against all oppositions. She wanted her character's feminine imagination to crawl beneath her skin and to muster all its strength so that in the final scene it could leap up against the suppression and revolt. Gilman helped her nameless character to put forth her concealed identity that has been kept a secret for many oppressive years of a truly patriarchal marriage.

As stated in the conceptions of Cixous, if women are not inclined to become just like patriarchal men, they must not think in their mode of language. Cixous asks women to survey their suppressed identities and employ a system of writing that does away with the standards of phallogocentric discourse. Since the patriarchal discourse has forced women to ignore their bodies, Cixous considers the conventional mode of writing to have close affinities with an objective discourse that expresses ideas concerning women's bodies but would protest against it speaking on its own behalf. Therefore, Cixous summons all women to jot down the feminine body. This form of writing, that is, *écriture féminine*, is closely related to the mother's ancient voice prior to being disrupted by the symbolic order's emergence (Jacobus & Barreca, 1999; 59).

As has been posited by Lacan, within the "Imaginary order" the infant does not differentiate itself from its mother because it has not yet acquired language, which is to be taught by its father, and which is called the "Symbolic Order". The Imaginary stage is the essential origin of language which later on is domesticated by the Laws of the Father (Guerin et al., 2011: 261). As stated by Lacan, the symbolic order is Phallogocentric and is ruled by the paternal body of laws (Homer, 2005: 57). What violates the close relationship between mother and child when the infant sets foot in the realm of the symbolic order is termed by Jacques Lacan as the "Name-of-the-Father"; in addition, any individual's superego is formed through identification with the father (Homer, 2005: 51). Consequently, women do need a language of their own in order to express themselves in feminine terms and to get in line with their primordial bond with their ancestral mother.

In line with the feminine writing, the narrator's brand of writing is to a certain extent discursive and usually jumps from one issue to something different. It is based on contradictions and internal conflicts; once, she talks about the fact that writing makes

her tired, and next she wishes that she were in a good condition that she could write, as though writing could do her good. Also, there are some great gaps in her writing which has been labeled, by the narrator herself, as “unheard of contradictions” (31); i.e., the very moments when she tries to oppose her husband, but she lacks the specific language which is required to enable her liberating powers. So, matters are left unsaid (Haney-Peritz, 1986: 117). Therefore, as mentioned earlier, she is following the guidelines of feminine writing, that is, her writing is freely associative and does not follow a linear type of reasoning, as is advised by male sort of writing. It opposes patriarchal method of writing which celebrates laws of logic and dismisses emotionality (Tyson, 2006: 101).

The wallpaper itself can be seen as the embodiment of feminine discourse, what seems, at first glance, “repellent”, “revolting”, and ‘...committing every artistic sin” (31); but, when one delves deep into its fascinating world, just as the narrator rips it off the wall, the hidden corners and patterns, which patriarchy tends to overlook, oppress, or fails to recognize all together, are unveiled. Furthermore, her association with the wallpaper is equivalent to a line of work which women has been deprived of, i.e., women’s writing (Treichler, 1984: 62).

### 3.5. The Wallpaper

In her essay on *The Yellow Wallpaper*, Treichler has said: “In these (feminist) readings, the yellow wallpaper represents (1) the narrator’s own mind, (2) the narrator’s unconscious, (3) the “pattern” of social and economic dependence which reduces women to domestic slavery.” In addition, she goes on to say: “The woman in the wallpaper represents (1) the narrator herself, gone mad, (2) the narrator’s unconscious, (3) all women” (Treichler, 1984: 64). One can state that the wallpaper is the central and the most important element in the story, and therefore it deserves further interpretation.

Initially the female narrator is not comfortable with the wallpaper, but no sooner than she recognizes the two sets of patterns in the wallpaper, the front one projecting the idea of prison bars and the sub-pattern representing the shape of a woman who is “stooping down and creeping about” (31), and shaking the bars and trying to get out of that prison cell, she identifies herself with the figure and all the initial repulsive feelings are forever gone. Her seeing the sub-pattern in the wallpaper suggests her own gradually emerging selfhood (Johnson, 1989: 523). The figure in the sub-pattern is a perpetual reflection of the narrator: “She is all the time trying to climb through. But nobody could climb through the pattern- it strangles so.” However, when the story comes to an end, the unnamed narrator, representing all women of her time, finally finds a way out, that is to say by starting to creep around the room she, in essence, has become the woman behind the bars trying to get out. Thus, she is trying to escape all the places of entrapment. Ironically, her tyrannical husband who used to exert patriarchal force upon her, is now a lifeless object on the ground in her way: “so that she had to creep over him” (Korb, 1997: 287).

In the above paragraph, among the excerpts taken from the story, keywords stand out such as “stooping down” and “strangle”. One of the definitions of stooping down is: “to lower your moral values so as to do something disgraceful”. The brilliant use of this word conveys the idea that, by now, women have realized that their traditional role as the submissive housewife/mother is by definition reprehensible, so they have to find a way out of this situation, even if it means madness as happened to the narrator of the story. The other fabulous choice of word is that of “strangle”. This word also proposes the ideas of gender roles and how women are stifled behind bars set upon them by the male dominated society. All of the above ideas and concepts are skilfully embedded in the central element of the story, the wallpaper.

Yet, the wallpaper has a ghostly quality which adds up to the narrator's description of it, a description which confirms her saying that the house is haunted by creeping women and also all the interpretations which perceived the room to be a prison, a place where the individual is under interminable surveillance. The repeated use of the word “eyes” in the following selections is testimony to the above-mentioned remarks:

There is a recurrent spot where the pattern lolls like a broken neck and two bulbous eyes stare at you upside down.

... Up and down and sideways they crawl, and those absurd, unblinking eyes are everywhere. There is one place where the two breadths didn't match, and the eyes go all up and down the line, one a little higher than the other. (32)

Moreover, the idea of eyes all around the room is reminiscent of the concept of “male gaze” in which the patriarchal power is obvious. This idea communicates that the male members of the patriarchal society look and the female members of such a society are looked at. The ones who are looking take over and are in control, while the ones who are being looked at are solely objects, as if in a window, to be watched, hence their position of powerlessness within their society (Tyson, 2006: 102).

This concept of male gaze is reminiscent of Michel Foucault's Panopticon. According to his perception, the structure of factories, prisons and schools are built in a specific way so that it makes possible maximal visibility; as a result, the person within that structure internalizes a new form of discipline. This new form forces the subject to assume that he is under a constant watch, while he may not. It follows that the individual, unconsciously, is playing the role of the oppressor and the role of the prisoner simultaneously (Mills, 2003: 45-46).

### 3.6. Routine Female Trouble

Nowadays, postpartum depression, the same illness from which Gilman herself and the narrator of her story suffered, major depression and other similar psychological complaints reported by women are to be addressed and treated as major health problems

which are curable if the patients receive help from both realms of medicine and psychology. But psychologists such as Freud, and his other contemporaries, had disregarded these complaints as routine “female trouble” and labeled them as hysterical tendencies (Guerin et al., 2011: 261).

It has been accepted recently, from a historical viewpoint, that hysteria was an ailment which could not be separated from the social status of the nineteenth century middle-class women at that time. Hysteria functioned in a twofold manner, that is, it drew the attention toward them that women were not supposed to ask for and at the same time it doubled her dependency upon the male-oriented medical profession that saw her in a way as if she were a malingeringer (Thurschwell, 2000: 17-18).

Consequently, a typical nineteenth-century middle-class housewife would be seen as a desperate attention-seeker who acts just as irrationally and sentimentally as a spoiled infant to be the center of attention, and her serious case of nervous breakdown would be viewed as trivial.

Thus, Charlotte Perkins Gilman and the narrator of her story were diagnosed accordingly, since they both lived in the nineteenth-century, and they both were prescribed to have complete rest; furthermore, according to their treatment, they were not to receive intellectual stimulation and were not allowed to touch pen, meaning that they were deprived from what they did best, i.e., writing. As a consequence, when Gilman herself finally recovered from her sick bed, she did put her pen on paper and wrote this autobiographical story to show the gradual psychological journey of women from sanity to madness as a result of this inappropriate diagnosis of the time (Bak, 1994: 1).

### 3.7. A Final Twist

Yet, there is a twist in the story. One might ask why the unnamed female character did not leave the house or her husband at the final scene. To answer such a question it would be wise to refer to the fact that this story paved the way for the consequent feminist movements; thus, the name of Julia Kristeva might occur to the reader. According to Kristeva, the future generations of feminism will try to find various pathways to make women’s manifold yearnings come to a unified understanding; that is, to reconcile their familial and reproductive desire and their longing for the world of career and productive social life (McAfee, 2004: 100). Consequently, the female character in the story tries not to live, instead she is circling around the room so as to find a way to keep both her familial life and her future social life.

Furthermore, Kristeva argues that the third generation feminists should not try to condemn patriarchy and/or men as the sole culprits for the oppression of women, instead the members of both sexes are guilty in an equal manner. Hence, they are equally responsible for establishing a new way of viewing the relevant issues and work out new solutions (McAfee, 2004: 102).

#### 4. Conclusion

According to all the issues which were mentioned earlier in this paper, the unnamed female narrator of the story, *The Yellow Wallpaper* (1892), tries, first, to attain her state of selfhood, that is, find herself and her place in patriarchy, and then to defy all the rules and regulations, norms and standards, and values of this male-dominated society and finally to find a way out. Her being an anonymous character casts light on the fact that the story is not just about one specific woman in a particular setting; rather, it relates and accounts the story about female sufferings which have taken place and still can occur in any part of the world.

This story has paved the way for later feminist literature and the continuation of the feminist movement by drawing the story to an end in an almost optimistic way. As is obvious from the last scene of the story, the female narrator has changed her position from staying dormant in her bed to the position of crawling and creeping all around the room, even now she is able to surpass her biggest obstacle, that is, her tyrannical patriarchal husband. It can be implied that feminism has now moved on from its infancy and has begun a long, yet promising way.

The female narrator of the story has now the strength and determination to go for seeming madness and insanity over living a sad life of muffled acceptance. She is for the very first time in her entire life, free from all the shackles and chains of patriarchal society and has liberated from whatever masculine concept that this society has previously inculcated in her mind.

Insanity in this final scene, can thus be seen in both positive and negative lights. It can be rendered as positive if one views this final deed of the female narrator as a liberating act of selfhood and assertiveness. By the same token, de Beauvoir argues that a society that is systematized by men edicts that the female subjects are inferior; thus, she can destroy that inferiority through doing away with the superiority of men. She can do that by dominating, negating, and contradicting him through denying the very values and truths that he champions (Beauvoir, 1953: 674).

Cixous, similar to de Beauvoir, asks women to welcome their liberty and to say no to the idealization of reliance on men. She adds that there is a fortitude in being on one's own, not having a man to look after her. Instead of seeing herself as castrated by not having a man, woman should embrace the fact that she has to nurture herself and bring forth their own freedom (Bray, 2004: 57).

On the other hand, it is a negative ending, since it indicates that whoever attempts to defy the order which has been set by the patriarchy will arrive at final madness; yet, as mentioned earlier, this madness is prized over silenced sanity.

Nonetheless, Cixous postulates that the individual has to undergo the process of alienation in order to gain the truths of her entity (Bray, 2004: 58-59).

To conclude, Charlotte Perkins Gilman's *The Yellow Wallpaper* (1892) is more of a feminist political declaration of independence for women than a work of fiction; Moreover, it tries to save women from the gradual process toward madness and helps

them escape the suffering from the cruel oppression of patriarchy which strangle whomever who does not abide by its tyrannical doctrine. It has successfully condemned the wrong notions about women and has shown a way out of the baffling labyrinth of domineering masculinity.

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## **A Contrastive Study of Stancetaking in Obama's Political Discourse**

Conchi Hernández-Guerra  
Universidad de Las Palmas de Gran Canaria  
conchi.hernandez@ulpgc.es

### **ABSTRACT**

An analysis of stancetaking in discourses enables us to analyze the implicit attitude of the speaker in a message. Although this is interesting in itself when dealing with general texts, it is even more important when dealing with political discourse. As it is well-known, President Barack Obama is known as one of the best orators and many studies corroborate this. The aim of this paper is to analyze three different speeches by Obama over a period of two years, delivered in three different countries, to analyze the differences in the stances used in order to determine his implication in the message. Secondly, I shall apply the Chi-square statistical method ( $\chi^2$ ) to compare the expected frequency of using stance markers with the stated frequency to reveal the possible incongruences.

**Keywords:** stancetaking, political discourse, epistemic approach

### **1. Introduction**

The aim of the paper is twofold: on the one hand, I want to make a contrastive study between the three texts analyzed in order to determine the frequency level of the different stances, both epistemic and effective, in them. In this way, I can interpret Obama's attitude in each venue, regardless of the message or expressions used. The second aim is to compare the epistemic and effective stances in each text following the Chi-square statistical model to reveal the common aspects.

This research is based on the theoretical framework where epistemic and effective stances are described in discourses. Stance has been defined as all those expressions

that reveal “personal feelings, attitudes, value judgments, or assessments” (Biber et al., 1999: 966). This field is always revealing to the extent that subliminal messages can be appreciated. To cite only one example, some authors analyze those stances in different languages (Durant, 1990; Cavanaugh, 2012) to reveal the syntactic mechanisms that reflect those elements. Zupnik (1994) focuses her analysis on the personal pronoun as a deictical element in political discourse. Gastil (1992) makes an analysis of political discourse from a syntactic viewpoint. He includes rhetorical strategies and conversational tactics from a theoretical perspective.

This stated, the scope of our analysis looks original insofar the speeches by President Obama are the object. Indeed, what I am trying to do is expose whether the use of stance markers in his speeches provides some revealing information. That is, whether his attitude and personal implication varies depending on the venue. To do this, I shall base the study on Biber et al.’s proposal of stances with Marín-Arrese’s improvements. The reason is that they consider as a starting point that any political speech contains a personal role, cultural component and intentionality. The distinction between epistemic and deontic offered by them identifies the position of the speaker and the expression of the events themselves, key concepts in the corpus of this study.

Biber et al. considered four different types but offered no subdivisions. Nevertheless, Marín-Arrese chose the two most relevant of Biber’s types and widened them into different sub-types. In her study she is comparing two different British politicians talking with reference to the very same topics, so every subtle element of distinction is relevant. Also, Alonso-Almeida proposed this model for his study on seventeenth century prefaces on obstetrics, as we shall see later.

The structure of the paper is as follows: first, I shall offer a theoretical frame of stancetaking. In this, I shall explain the different stance features and Marín-Arrese’s model will be described. Secondly, the corpus and method will be illustrated. Finally, results and discussion of findings will be presented.

## **2. Theoretical frame**

The term “stance” refers to the expressions, registers and elements that reflect the attitude of the speaker towards the message he/she is transmitting. Although this concept may seem somewhat recent, the same idea was widely used some decades ago as “mood” by Jakobson. For him, mood signals the speaker’s view of the action being referred to (see Kockelman, 2004). Lately, the analysis of stance markers in texts has had different considerations according to the type of texts analyzed. So, Biber et al. (2000) state that we must consider not only syntactic but also paralinguistic devices. The first type is easy to recognize though not the second in which affective and evaluative word choice are included. Trying to classify this, Biber et al. distinguish between epistemic stance to mark certainty, actuality, precision or limitation, and attitudinal stance to report personal attitudes and feelings.

Being abstract concepts as they are, researchers do not agree completely in the scope of every term. Kockelman prefers to distinguish between epistemic and deontic categories while recognizing that “even when divisions used by linguists break with the deontic versus epistemic distinction, they turn to another widely used and analogous distinction: affective versus epistemic” (2004: 130). For him, deontic stancetaking is used to refer to the speaker's mood or feeling.

Other writers like Alonso-Almeida et al. (2014) and Marín-Arrese (2009) prefer to distinguish between effective and epistemic stance. Alonso-Almeida did research under this umbrella on seventeenth century prefaces on obstetrics and Marín-Arrese on some British political speeches. The latter also studied the differing degrees of subjectivity and intersubjectivity in these speeches. For both authors, effective strategies are related to the notions of necessity and obligation and Biber et al.'s attitudinal stances are included as a subgroup, so they widen the scope of possibilities. To sum up, attitudinal, deontic and effective are the names for three categories with some elements in common but with slight differences for the different authors.

The proposal offered by Marín-Arrese (2009) was influenced by Langacker's distinction between effective and epistemic stance (2007). Plainly speaking, she considers that the effective level “pertains to the actual occurrence of events” (Marín-Arrese, 2009: 27; Langacker, 2007: 6), whereas the epistemic level concerns “our presumed knowledge of these events” (Marín-Arrese, 2009: 27; Langacker, 2007: 6). Put differently, she considers the attitudinal stance, in which effective stancetaking would be included, to be the one that reports personal attitudes or feelings, whereas the epistemic stance presents “speakers' comments on the status of information in a proposition” (Biber et al., 2000: 972).

Added to this, Biber et al. (2000) organizes the different syntactic devices that can be included into stance adverbials (single adverbs, hedges, prepositional phrases, adverbial clauses and comment clauses), complement clauses (controlled by a verb, by an adjective, extraposed structures and controlled by a noun), modals and semi-modals, stance noun plus a prepositional phrase (the case of “deny the possibility of...”), and premodifying stance adverbs (the case of “I am so happy for you. I'm really happy”). Next, I shall offer a brief overview of the different categories with their sub-categories.

### 2.1. Epistemic stances

Epistemic stances refer to the knowledge that the speaker has of the realization of the event and also of the validity that the speaker gives to that proposition designating the event. So, it has not only to do with the assertion of an event but also with the evaluation given to that event.

These stances are rather objective as they refer to real and tested events. In a way, it indicates the personal attitude of a speaker. For the analysis of this domain, researchers have offered several strategies: epistemic modality, communicative evidentials, experiential evidentials and cognitive evidentials.

*Epistemic modality* reflects the degree of certainty or uncertainty the speaker shows in an assertion. Here, modal verbs are the syntactic elements that reflect this sort of stance. At the same time, there can be three different degrees: when there is a high degree of certainty, the modal verbs “must” and “cannot” are some examples; when there is a medium probability according to the writer, “will”, “would” or “shall” could be some examples; and when there is a low possibility, “may” or “could” can be considered. The use of sentences with a low possibility of occurrence should not be very common.

Secondly, *communicative evidentials* cover those expressions that make a self-reference in the message. As a consequence, the speaker reveals his/her implication in the message. An example could be “as I said”. *Experiential evidentials*, on the contrary, reflect the way the speaker receives the message, how the information is gained through senses. The role is passive as he/ she is just a witness of the information offered. Some examples would be “I see” and “clearly”. Finally, *cognitive evidentials* include those cognitive verbs representing modes of knowing. Some examples would be “I believe” or “we consider”.

## 2.2. Effective or attitudinal stances

They deal with the realization of the facts themselves or how we deliver them. As we see, these are extraordinarily interesting to the extent that they reveal those attitudinal differences of the same subject. The division is the following: deontic modality, volitive modality, participant internal and external possibility, participant internal and external necessity, attitudinal expressions, communicative evidentials and imperative mood.

*Deontic modality* is mainly performative and the context influences greatly. Yet, roughly speaking, “may” and “can” are the appropriate modals to give possibility, permission or, in some examples, command; “must” would be the modal to state necessity and is said to urge or impose an obligation on oneself, as would be the case of “I must say”. *Volitive modality* reveals the ways of expressing the future and the intention in the event realization. “Will” and “shall” are the most common modals. Next, *participant internal and external possibility* reflects the ability of the speaker to carry out the event designated, considering the external circumstances. A clear example of this in our author’s speeches is his famous sentence “Yes, we can”. On the other hand, *participant internal and external necessity* is fairly similar to the previous category but focused on the urgency in the development of an event. “Need” is the clearest example.

*Attitudinal expressions* are the fifth subgroup and the range of possibilities is reasonably large. In it the speaker reflects his interest that something will happen, regardless the options of success. “I want” is the most commonly used, and others like “it is important” or “hopefully” are also examples in this subclass. To end with, *communicative evidentials* comprise all those performative verbs such as “I say to you” or “I urge you to” and, finally, the *imperative mood* typically functions to give directives. In this sort of text, “let” is often used and any imperative verb.

### **3. Corpus and Method**

I shall base the study on three different speeches by President Barack Obama in the years 2008 and 2009. The relevance of these speeches lies in the fact that they were delivered in three different countries (Ghana, France and the USA) belonging to three different continents with different purposes: on the one hand, in Ghana he offered economic support as long as the country avoids corruption; in the second example, he needed European support for the Iraqi war; and in the third speech, he had to defend the man who had been his religious leader for years against the criticism of him for his polemical words.

As we might guess, not only the purpose but also the connotations of the speech are important: in Ghana we find relevant affective connotations for the blood ties; in France his position is difficult as he is demanding economic and logistic support for the uncomfortable task of supporting a war; and in the USA we are dealing with his famous speech on race where he talks about something as controversial as being black in America.

#### **3.1. The speech in Europe**

The purpose of this trip was to persuade the Europeans of the need to increase the number of troops and resources to solve the military conflict in Afghanistan in 2009. Two concepts are central in this text: crossroads and boundaries. He uses crossroads as a concept that describes Strasbourg (where the speech was delivered) geographically and as a consequence of living in an increasingly connected world. Secondly, this speech is based on the need for boundaries between Europe and America in order to achieve important global results. He offers an overview of the events that have linked both continents since the Marshall Plan and the need to continue with these ties. After that, he refers to the purpose for this visit: to renew the partnership between America and Europe, to explore the reasons why they are fighting in Afghanistan and, thirdly, to ask for more support. He finishes with a hopeful note.

Taken as a whole, this does not fit the register we are used to so the speech can be considered as an untypical. Traditionally, President Obama's speeches are positive and give hope even in hard times. In this case, however, he focuses on terror and threats. The tone is pessimistic and the main purpose is to discuss the problems of globalization and the reasons why the USA and NATO have attacked Afghanistan.

Obama uses plain English with blunt messages to approach the young audience. As a consequence, he is more concerned with the message than the structures used so grammar is simple and repetitive. Despite the pessimistic tone, negative adjectives are not frequent. Moreover, positive words and the need for collaboration open the speech and a hopeful message closes it. Added to this, every threat made in the body of the message is mixed with references to the countless times the United States has offered help to Europe (Hernández-Guerra, 2012).

### 3.2. The speech in the United States

The model will be applied to a speech delivered on March 18, 2008 by Barack Obama at the Constitution Center in Pennsylvania, Philadelphia. *In it, Obama responds to the criticism of Reverend Jeremiah Wright, an unpaid campaign adviser and pastor at Obama's Chicago church. Wright had made inflammatory remarks in matters of war and racism in the States and Obama uses this as an opportunity to challenge Americans to take a closer look at race relations.*

The thread of Obama's speech is the unity of all Americans: black, white and Hispanic. He starts and finishes with a reference to the American Declaration of Independence. The speech is well-constructed and balanced between what he agrees with and what he disapproves of, inserting some well-known American quotations and references to the Bible. He speaks openly with reference to race as an African-American with a white mother and deals cleverly with both sides of the race question.

Obama was at a crucial moment in his campaign because of the difficulty in the task he faced with this speech, as not only had he to explain why Reverend Wright had been his spiritual leader for so long, but also justify some declarations he disagreed with. At the same time, he was aware that he could not afford to disappoint the African American community. To do all this, it was absolutely necessary to be straightforward in his message and avoid any misunderstanding that could extend the debate. The final result is a clear and balanced message.

This text has some characteristics of written discourse in the effective linkage of the different angles the topic contains. The message has been carefully organized and the well-chosen quotations are also denotative of a prepared text. At the same time, Obama has tried to create a colloquial mood by using common expressions. He has avoided complex structures and sophisticated vocabulary in order to reach people. Plain language is seen not only in the limited use of adjectives but in the frequent use of the verb "to be" and simple tenses.

Finally, "offbeat" is the word that best defines the structure of the text to denote the complexities of the society Americans live in. Historical contrasts between blacks and whites in Obama's own family and between Reverend Wright's words and his own opinion of the matter are the axis of the speech. (Hernández-Guerra, 2011).

### 3.3. The speech in Ghana

The third speech was delivered in the town of Accra in Ghana in 2009, the same year that Barack Obama was elected President of the United States. This speech encompasses the following parts: firstly, President Obama opens the dissertation by explaining the reason for his visit to Ghana. The tone is positive and hopeful. He remarks on the mutual responsibility that both countries have in the progress of Africans. This encouraging presentation is reinforced with personal reference to his own family in Africa. The second part of the speech covers the present reality: the unfulfilled promises and the responsibility that the country itself has to solve its own



problems: Obama condemns corruption but offers hope to youngsters. After that, he expresses the four issues he will deal with in the speech: democracy, opportunity, health, and the resolution of conflicts. In all of them he discusses the current problems exemplified in other African countries. To the second and third predicaments he offers economic solutions and to the fourth, a promise. He ends with a hopeful and encouraging message and a quote from Martin Luther King in a visit to the country.

After a comprehensive analysis of the text we recognize that Obama has created a close network between the messages he wants to transmit and a conciliatory atmosphere. The affective bundle of boundaries, links, common knowledge of the country and understanding is more straightforward than the stylistic devices he exploits.

This interconnection is reflected, firstly, in the ties so often repeated in the initial paragraphs and translated into connections in the following. Undoubtedly, his roots are used not so much as a tool to show his understanding and knowledge of the country but as a means to show his determination to fulfill the agreed commitments.

Secondly, the high frequency of references to Africa opens the message. The use of informal language and simple structures creates a colloquial environment where the first person singular pronoun is noticeable. The use of simple present also reflects the degree of improvisation in the text. The orator feels self-confident enough to speak to an audience whose past and present he knows well. It is this knowledge what allows him to have these literary conventions throughout the text. Lastly, criticisms are always in opposition to praises. References to problems are always followed by an appreciation of achievements.

To carry out the first aim of this paper, texts were analyzed and examined manually. This process was done carefully as three readings were carried out. The examples found were tagged according to the main stance types and sub-types to be analyzed. For the second aim the concluding data were then analyzed from a statistical perspective. To do this I have used the Chi Square method ( $X^2$ ). With Chi Square, a value is calculated from the data using Chi Square procedures and then compared to a critical value from a Chi Square table with degrees of freedom corresponding to that of the data. If the calculated value is equal to or greater than the critical value, the null hypothesis ( $H_0$ ) is rejected. If the calculated value is less than the critical value, the null hypothesis is accepted. The advantage of using this is that it can be employed to test the difference between an actual sample and another hypothetical or previously established distribution such as that which may be expected due to chance or probability. Chi Square has also been used to test differences between the different samples (Key, 1997).

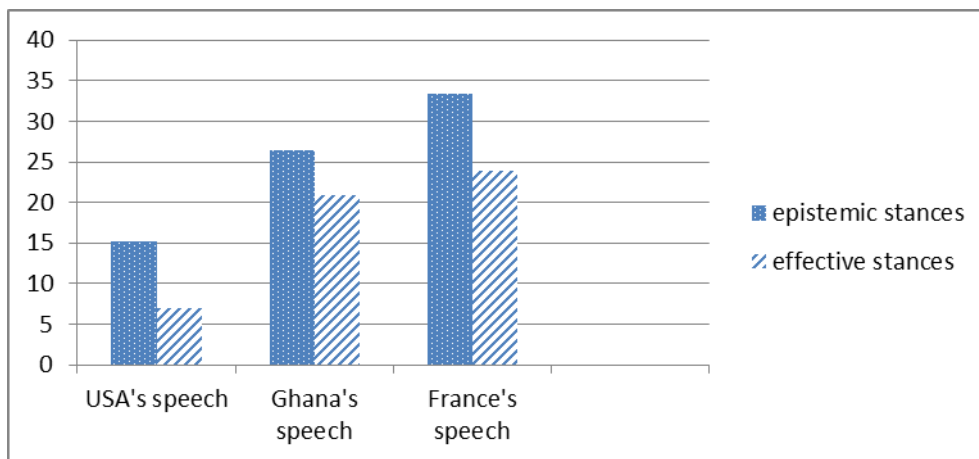
**Fig. 1.** Chi square formula

$$X^2 = \sum \frac{(\text{Observed frequency} - \text{Expected frequency})^2}{\text{Expected frequency}}$$

#### 4. Results and Discussion

The general results of the study of the corpus concerning epistemic and effective stance with frequencies per 1,000 words are expressed in Figure 2:

**Fig.2.** Epistemic and effective stances in the speeches (frequencies to 1,000 words)



In raw numbers, we can see how speeches delivered in foreign countries (Ghana and France) are largely similar as far as stancetaking is concerned, while the speech on race, delivered in the States, contains fewer examples. Even more remarkable is the limited number of effective stances in this last speech.

If we analyze the different stance markers and give the frequency of occurrence per 1,000 words, the result will be the following:

**Table 1.** Distribution of epistemic and effective stance strategies per 1,000 words in the corpus

<b>Epistemic stances</b>	<b>USA</b>	<b>Ghana</b>	<b>France</b>
Epistemic modality			
High	3.86	9.13	13.40
Medium	2.84	7.10	4.44
Low	0.81	0	0.89
Communicative evidentials	1.01	1.52	0.29
Experiential evidentials	3.66	6.34	6.25
Cognitive evidentials	3.05	2.28	8.04
<b>Effective stances</b>	<b>USA</b>	<b>Ghana</b>	<b>France</b>
Deontic modality	1.01	4.06	7.74
Volitive modality	1.42	6.59	2.97
Part. Int. Ext. possibility	2.44	6.59	8.93
Part. Int. Ext. necessity	1.01	0.50	0.29
Attitudinal experience	0.20	2.53	2.97
Communicative evidentials	0	0	0
Imperative mood	0.81	0.50	0.89

This table confirms the facts in figure two broken down into the different subcategories. Again, we can see how the speech delivered in the States widens the gap between this speech and the others as the number of frequency in every item differs greatly from the others. A closer view deserves the following comments:

- *Epistemic stances.* Roughly speaking, the pronoun mostly used is “I” as the speaker reflects his attitude towards the evidential, but it is interesting to notice how in the speech in Ghana the subject is not “I”, as would be expected, but “America” or “foreign assistance” with the purpose of showing not a personal interest towards the country but that of the States.

*Epistemic modality.* We see in table one that high epistemic modality is remarkable in the three speeches, France's being the highest (13,40/1000). Examples in this speech like “we cannot fail”, or “we must seek the solutions to the challenges of this young century” reflect the speaker's desirability about the proposition. On the contrary, in the USA text we find very few examples of epistemic modality. Clearly, the purpose is different: in France he wants to carry out actions in common and in the USA's speech he wants to clarify his position towards a topic.

*Communicative evidentials.* As we can see in the table, the expression of self-reference is higher in Ghana's speech and the lowest in France's. “I am speaking to you”, “I am particularly speaking to the young people all across Africa” are some examples. On the contrary, in France he avoids using that self-recognition as an individual in the task to be performed. Added to this, in the USA text the use of “we” instead of “I” is widespread, expressing the feeling that his experiences have been undergone by every Afro-American not only himself with some exceptions like “I have already condemned, in unequivocal terms, the statements that Reverend Wright...”; “I confess that If all that I knew of R.W. were the snippets of those sermons...”. In this last example the use of a verb related to religious matters cannot be considered a coincidence. But, in general terms, it is not a matter of personal opinion but of given facts. Furthermore, in the expression “you strongly disagreed” he means the community.

*Experiential evidentials.* The number of this category is quite similar in Ghana's and France's but lower in USA's. In Ghana's it has a positive bias in spite of the terrible problems the country faces. For example, at the beginning of the speech he said, “I do not see the countries and peoples of Africa as a world apart; I see Africa as a fundamental part of our interconnected world.” The repetition of a structure using the core negative words and their positive is quite common. Even though other ways of signaling negation are possible, the use of the primary negative words gives a clear and straightforward message. In France he said “we find ourselves at a crossroads as well” or “we ensured our shared security” using once more the first person plural pronoun. So, even though the purpose and atmosphere is quite different in both countries the load of experiential evidentials is remarkable. Obama considered it necessary to have an active implication in both messages. On the other hand, the plural pronoun is also used in rare examples in America's by saying “we saw racial tensions bubble to the surface”, or “we've heard the implication that my candidacy is somehow an exercise in

affirmative action". Again, he tries to give facts rather than personal visions of the racial battle kept in the States during last decades.

*Cognitive evidentials* are not very common in Ghana though it is frequently used in the first part of the speech. Secondly, they are widely used in the speech in France to highlight the idea that the problem we face today was originated in the past. The structures "what we thought was important was for me to have an opportunity to not only speak with you", "we've known for a long time that the revolutions in communication" and "now, we take for granted a peace of a Europe that's united", "I know it can be tempting to turn inward, and I understand how many people and nations have been left behind by the global economy" are some examples in this speech with the purpose of reminding the historical reasons that have led to these military ties.

- *Effective stances*. The number of examples in the USA text is very low. Here Obama prefers the use of the passive voice or different subjects to bias the personal implication or simply deliver the information as factual.

*Deontic modality*. The speech delivered in France contains the highest number of examples and the American speech, the lowest. As deontic modality is concerned with necessity as obligation ("must") or possibility as some form of enablement ("may") this finding is not strange. Expressions like "we must forge", "we must not erect" or "we should all be proud" are spread throughout the whole text due to the need for unity during difficult times.

*Volitive modality*. In this case, the speech delivered in Ghana is the text with the highest number of examples. Modals that express high expectations and personal wish about future events are widely used in this text. Unequivocal sentences like "that will be a commitment of my administration", "we will carry forward the fight against HIV/AIDS" or "we will invest in public health systems" are some of the examples not found so clear-cut in the other speeches. In France, for example, the sentences "we will provide new markets, we will drive the growth of the future" are more vague.

*Participant internal and external possibility*. The speeches delivered in France and Ghana are the texts with the higher number of examples. Due to the characteristics of the speech delivered in the USA, it is fairly understandable to find an absence of examples as this speech is much more expositive than the others. In France the use of the modal "could" is common: "the theft of nuclear weapons could lead to the extermination of any city", "discoveries that could help us lead richer and fuller lives" but in Ghana "this is a responsibility that can only be met by Africans" or "if police can be bought off by drug traffickers" the modal "can" is used because even though not always the message is nice the personal responsibility is absent.

*Participant internal and external necessity*. This element is not much used in any of the speeches. In the USA example the modal "need" is repeated several times as in the example "we do not need to recite here the history of racial injustice in this country".

*Attitudinal experience*. I have hardly found any examples of attitudinal expressions in the speech delivered in America while there are ten in each of the others. "We applaud France's decision to expand and deepen its participation in NATO", "we support a strong European defense", "we welcome Croatia and Albania into the fold"

are some examples found in the speech delivered in France, trying to be supportive and encouraging.

*Communicative evidentials.* No examples have been found.

*Imperative mood.* The examples found in the different texts are not relevant but in France, for instance, the imperative verb “let” is used: “let us resolve that when future generations look back on ours”, “let us meet that responsibility together” softening the commanding bias.

Focusing now on the second purpose of this paper, if we omit the results extracted from the USA text and consider only the other two cases, null hypothesis should be accepted as the Chi square is below 0,05. That is, the expectations created by these texts are fulfilled in the analysis. Interestingly, both texts have different intentions (the speech in France was to demand support for a war while in Ghana there was an offer of help if some rules were accepted) but the use of stance markers can be considered as predictable. This is due to several reasons:

1. Both of them belong to political speeches with their implications
2. They were delivered in foreign countries in the same year
3. They also belong to a long trip made as a presentation of his presidency. So they have a common purpose.

But, as said above, the speech delivered in the States breaks with this tendency.

## **5. Conclusions**

The first purpose of the paper was to compare three speeches delivered in the time span of two years: the first in the USA before being elected President and the other two abroad as recently elected President of the United States. We have seen in the discussion of the findings that the American speech rejects the characteristics found in the others. This represented the turning point in the campaign but the fact of not having been elected yet and that the purpose is not to make promises makes it have different characteristics. On the other hand, in Ghana the self-reference, volitive and attitudinal elements are high, added to the participation internal-external possibility; that is, it is full of promises. In France, self-reference is lower but deontic modality and the necessity of carrying out actions in common permeate throughout all the speech.

Taking the three speeches individually, the USA epistemic stances double the number of effective stances, while the frequency of both data is quite low. The low frequency of both types of stances in the text considered “more personal” is also quite remarkable. Contrary to what we might have expected, Obama wanted to put aside his personal feelings and focus on the historical facts of the issue from an objective position.

In contrast, the speech delivered in Ghana contains the highest number of stances, epistemic and effective, in a fairly balanced number. Here, as the already elected President of the United States, he did not hesitate in demonstrating his positive attitude towards the country. Seemingly, in the text from France, despite being delivered in an

uncomfortable environment, the number of epistemic stances is even higher than in the previous example and the effective, quite similar. In a way, we could conclude that the President felt confident and relaxed in these venues compared with his feeling in the States before being elected.

Next, patterns not being varied they are repetitive. As the sample is composed of oral speeches, repetition of the same structure is a fairly common resource in this type of discourse and in the author of our study. Every message is repeated more than once so the stance, even using a different pattern, is commonly repeated. This explains the high number in some of the types and the almost null use of others. As a consequence, the richness of the speeches does not lie in the combination of those stances, but rather in the vocabulary and images used to discuss the messages. These images are partly presented through familiar anecdotes.

On the other hand, we have seen above the number of times every stance marker is repeated. In these facts we can see how null hypothesis is rejected and so, random hypothesis must be accepted while, interestingly, this is due to the low number of examples that the USA text has in contrast with the other two. This means that even if the study had been done with only the two foreign speeches, the result would have been completely different. The reasons why the USA text does not fit with the study may include the following:

1. Obama had not been elected President yet
2. It was a speech delivered in the States, where he would be elected President of the United States
3. The intention was to clarify and not to demand, as in the other examples

This study deserves a mention apart for the communicative evidentials. As we said above, they imply the self-reference of the author himself. And it is remarkable how the personal implication in texts is almost absent. That is, President expresses his wish to the performing of some actions without a personal implication. This break between what the States wish and what he as an individual would wish is outstanding. By saying “I have said” or “I have expressed” there is not an affective implication as it would be “I urged to do”. This balance is quite measured in all the speeches but, as it would be expected, in the epistemic sample in Ghana he uses them more often than in France, for instance. An interesting conclusion arises from this detection: the attitude and stancetaking in the USA text cannot be considered spontaneous but well studied, much more so than in the other two cases.

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## **“Childhood Cuts Festered and Never Scabbed Over”: Child Abuse in Toni Morrison’s *God Help the Child***

Manuela López Ramírez  
IES Alto Palancia  
lopez.ramirez.manuela@gmail.com

### ABSTRACT

Toni Morrison revisits one of the main thematic concerns, child abuse and trauma, of her premier novel, *The Bluest Eye*, in her latest book *God Help the Child*. She has actually dealt profusely with all sorts of child maltreatment in her oeuvre. In her recent narrative, Morrison weaves a tangled web of childhood trauma stories, in which all of the characters have suffered some kind of abuse: neglect, witnessing domestic violence, emotional and psychological abuse, molestation, sexual abuse, etc. She shows how the child’s exposure to traumatic experiences has dramatic far-reaching effects into adulthood, such as psychological, emotional, behavioral and social problems. Morrison explores the curse of the past, the legacy of slavery and its aftermath, and its hold on the present, through the phenomenon of colorism. Racism and intra-racial discrimination based on the skin color result in childhood trauma. Children may adopt coping strategies to resist maltreatment or they may internalize oppression and accept self-loathing. Violence generates violence, a vicious cycle which will eventually make the victims future victimizers. Nonetheless, *God Help the Child* is not only about childhood abuse and trauma, but it is also about transformation and healing. Morrison describes the characters’ restorative journeys towards redemption.

**Keywords:** child abuse, childhood trauma, racism, colorism or shadism, healing

## 1. Introduction

Toni Morrison has always been truly concerned about children and the way we treat them, which is really important to her. In “Remarks Given at Howard University Charter Day Convocation,” a speech she delivered on March 2, 1995, Morrison asserts:

It’s important to know that nothing is more important than our children. And if our children don’t think they are important to us, if they don’t think they are important to themselves, if they don’t think they are important to the world, it’s because we have not told them. We have not told them that they are our immortality. (1995: 760)

Morrison’s own experiences as a child highlight the paramount importance of protecting children. In an interview with Terry Gross (2015), she tells the story of how her father, who was not a violent man, threw a white man down the stairs thinking he was after his daughters, and how Morrison felt protected:

I think his [Morrison’s father’s] own experience in Georgia would have made him think that any white man bumbling up the stairs toward our apartment was not there for any good. And since we were little girls, he assumed that. I think he made a mistake. I mean, I really think the man was drunk. I don’t think he was really trailing us. But the interesting thing was, A, the white man was—he survived. B, the real thing for me was I thought—I felt profoundly protected and defended [. . .]. So I didn’t think of it as, oh, look, my father’s a violent man. He never, you know, spanked us. He never quarreled with us. He never argued with us. He was dedicated, and he was sweet. So he did this thing to protect his children.

Morrison appears frustrated with the extreme suffering and abuse many children undergo. As Hope Wabuke (2015) writes: “Why do adults hurt children? Why do we, as a society, stand back and let it happen, ignoring our responsibility to do something, anything, to help these most precious little lives? And what can we do to help, if we choose to care?” In her fiction, Morrison emphasizes the need to tackle the appalling phenomenon of child abuse, so it can be prevented. In an interview with Charles Ruas, she says:

Certainly since *Sula* I have thought that the children are in real danger. Nobody likes them, all children, but particularly black children. It seems stark to me, because it wasn’t true when I was growing up [. . .]. Everywhere, everywhere, everywhere, children are the scorned people of the earth. There may be a whole lot of scorned people, but particularly children. The teachers have jobs, no missions. Even in the best schools, the disrespect for children is unbelievable. You don’t have to go to the exploitation, the ten-year-old model and child porn—that’s obvious. Even in the orderly parts of society it is staggering. Children are committing suicide, they are tearing up the schools, they are running away from home. They are beaten and molested; it’s an epidemic. I’ve never seen so many movies in which children are the monsters, children are the ones to be killed. (1994: 103)

Child abuse is at the core of *The Bluest Eye*, Morrison's first novel. She tells the story of Pecola, a girl that succumbs to insanity after the terrible maltreatment and abuse she goes through in her family and community. In fact, child abuse, racism and long-standing victimization, both domestic and communal, have been dealt with extensively in Morrison's oeuvre. Her latest narrative, *God Help the Child*, which echoes her premier work, revisits the evils of child molestation, neglect and abuse: "In that novel, too, children bear the brunt of all of society's illnesses, the truest victims of poverty and racial prejudice" (Umrigar, 2015). Thus Morrison exposes the damage adults (family, community and the society in general) inflict upon children and the lasting impact it has on their lives, and how "[w]hat you do to children matters. And they might never forget" (Morrison, 2015: 43). As she explains to Carol Off in *As It Happens*, a Canadian interview show, "in this book, I [Morrison] was very interested in childhood trauma paralyzing us in the contemporary world" (2015). However, Morrison is also interested in figuring out ways to actually heal from the horrors of the past. She shows us how her characters confront their pain and suffering and reclaim their lives. *God Help the Child* is a tale of childhood abuse and trauma, but it is also a tale of healing and redemption.

## 2. Childhood Abuse and Trauma: "Violence Begets Violence"

Violence, as a whole, is central to the African American experience. Blacks have suffered all kinds of victimization and oppression, alienating them from their own culture. As Cathy Spatz Widom contends, "violence begets violence" (1989: 160). The intergenerational transmission of violence brings about childhood trauma and maltreatment. Children and youth in the United States experience an alarming rate of exposure to violence and molestation, a phenomenon that is even higher for black individuals. According to *Childhelp* (2017), every year child protection agencies receive more than 3.6 million child abuse referrals, which involve more than 6.6 million children (a referral can include multiple children). The United States has one of the worst records among industrialized nations: an average of between four and seven children suffer child abuse and neglect every day. Studies by David Finkelhor, Director of the *Crimes Against Children Research Center*, show that 1 in 5 girls and 1 in 20 boys is a victim of child sexual abuse, 20% of adult females and 5-10% of adult males recall a childhood sexual assault or sexual abuse incident (*The National Center for Victims of Crime*, 2012). The exact numbers are difficult to determine because child sexual abuse is often not reported. According to a 2012 UNICEF report, the United States was ranked seventh out of 10 countries that represent more than half of all child homicides (*UNICEF*, 2014: 37). Reported abuse and crimes do not often account for many of the other horrors that children face: racism, insults, neglect, guilt, etc.

Before the mid-19<sup>th</sup>-century, child abuse was a socially unspeakable phenomenon. In the 1960s, C. Henry Kempe and his colleagues identified and recognized 'child abuse,' creating awareness and exposing its reality. They conceptualized the "battered-

child syndrome,” which characterizes the clinical manifestations of severe physical abuse in young children. By the 1970s, doctors started to work on the detection of child abuse, and in 1974, Congress passed the Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act (CAPTA), which provides support for the prevention, assessment, investigation, prosecution and treatment of child abuse. The concepts of child abuse and neglect depend on cultural values and beliefs about appropriate childrearing and parenting. The World Health Organization (1999) defines child abuse in the following terms: “Child abuse or maltreatment constitutes all forms of physical and/or emotional ill-treatment, sexual abuse, neglect or negligent treatment or commercial or other exploitation, resulting in actual or potential harm to the child’s health, survival, development or dignity in the context of a relationship of responsibility, trust or power” (Butchart et al., 2006: 9).

Child abuse is a global problem. It can be a single incident, but it is usually constant in time. According to James Garbarino, what is truly harmful is the chronic pattern that “erodes and corrodes a child” (qtd. in Palusci & Fischer, 2010: 144). Hence, traumatic stress occurs when children or adolescents are exposed to a long-term abuse or traumatic situations, and this exposure overwhelms their ability to cope with these experiences. It can take many forms: neglect or negligent treatment, emotional/psychological, physical or sexual abuse, witnessing or experiencing family violence, other adverse childhood situations. Children often suffer from damaging behaviors of different categories of abuse (Higgins, 2004). The type of abuse as well as the duration of the child’s exposure to traumatic experiences determine the long-term effects of these into adulthood (Higgins & McCabe, 2000). Child abuse not only occurs in a variety of forms, but also is deeply rooted in cultural, economic and social practices.

Children are ill-treated by people who have some power over them. They are weak, so they can be easily oppressed psychologically or physically. They become, per excellence, the victims of scapegoating. Child abuse can be perpetrated by the family or someone from the community, when trust has an important role, or even from other people. Children are completely dependent on their parents or caregivers. Their world revolves around them, as they are the primary source of love, safety, nurturance, encouragement, acceptance, positive attention, support, etc. Even though most parents want the best for their offspring, some of them may emotionally, psychologically or even physically harm their children because of stress, poor parenting skills, social isolation, racial self-loathing, lack of available resources, etc.; or because they were also victims of abuse.

When a child is hurt by his/her primary caregivers, the violation of the trust at the core of the infant’s relationship with the world dramatically increases the level of trauma that the victim endures. Domestic violence is greatly influenced by the community and histories of the family members. Children who grow up in dysfunctional families are more prone to suffer from a range of psychological, emotional and social problems, which will last in their adulthood. As John Briere (1992) argues, neglect and abuse, sexual or not, at home, as well as witnessing and

experiencing family violence have been linked with subsequent psychological disturbances:

Repeated trauma in adult life erodes the structure of the personality already formed, but repeated trauma in childhood forms and deforms the personality. The child trapped in an abusive environment is faced with formidable tasks of adaptation. She must find a way to preserve a sense of trust in people who are untrustworthy, safety in a situation that is unsafe, control in a situation that is terrifyingly unpredictable, power in a situation of helplessness. (Herman, 1992: 96)

Domestic violence can lead to the child having difficulty in maintaining relationships, or to having unhealthy relationships in their lives due to fear of being controlled or abused. In addition, as Eve Buzawa claims, “[c]hildren in abusive families appear to be the more susceptible to the impact of domestic violence [. . .]. Exposure to family violence apparently is associated with the development of positive feelings towards using violence to ‘solve’ problems and hence indirectly to violent offending” (2003: 23-26). Consequently, children who are exposed to domestic violence may become dysfunctional members of society.

Domestic violence in African American families can be traced back to the days of slavery and the inhuman treatment blacks received from their white masters. For both black males and females, slavery was a devastating experience. And yet, black women were doubly oppressed because of their race and gender, especially dramatic is the abuse black female children faced inside and outside their home. bell hooks believes that male supremacy encourages the use of abusive force to keep domination of females in the family. The Western philosophical notion of male coercive rule is linked to all acts of violence, especially those against women and children, “between the powerful and powerless, the dominant and the dominated” (2015: 118). Abused or damaged children may develop coping strategies to resist maltreatment or they can internalize oppression and feel unworthy and accept self-loathing. This is a vicious cycle in which the victims will eventually become victimizers.

### **3. Lula Ann's Childhood: Shadism and Parental Neglect**

*God Help the Child* “is a novel rooted in the real world of violence, prejudice, and abuse” (Umrigar, 2015). John Strawn (2015) thinks that “Morrison’s title riffs on the Billie Holiday song, ‘God Bless the Child,’ conjuring the great singer, whose own life was filled with the kinds of abuse and mistreatment the very timbre of her voice laid bare.” In her latest novel, Morrison deals profusely with the atrocities of child abuse. Nearly every character is a witness or a primary/secondary victim of molestation, sexual assault, emotional or psychological abuse, neglect, etc.

In historical terms, the horrors of slavery and its legacy resonate in the struggles of the lives of Morrison’s traumatized characters: “The scars inflicted on Bride and Booker by their childhoods are metaphors of sorts for the calamities of history and the

hold they can exert over a country's or a people's dreams" (Kakutani, 2015). Morrison stresses how the abuse and neglect suffered during infancy result in psychological impaired adults: "[C]hildhood wounds [. . .] leave a lasting mark, even into adulthood [. . .]. *God Help The Child* is about young adults still healing from wounds inflicted during their childhood by parents or predators" (Gross, 2015). According to Kara Walker, "childhood is the perfect condition to be manipulated by adult power because it is self-perpetuating. Children become adults and carry with them a trauma imprinted on the body and memory" (2015).

In *God Help the Child*, Morrison emphasizes how family's dysfunctionality strongly affects children's identity and their relationships with the community and the society in general. Lula Ann Bridewell is "mistreated as a child by her light-skinned mother" (Strawn, 2015). The oppressive institution of patriarchal motherhood often exerts violence against children, which can be manifested in child neglect and abuse (O'Reilly, 2004: 8). Lula Ann's mother, Sweetness, a light-skinned black, "with good hair, what we call high yellow," (3) has "been poisoned by that strain of color and class anxiety still present in black communities" (Walker, 2015), the legacy of slavery and its aftermath. Sweetness feels terribly embarrassed and scared of her baby's "[m]idnight black, Sudanese black" skin (3). She feels revulsion when she nurses her daughter and considers giving her away to an orphanage or even killing her.

Domestic violence can be expressed by means of various types of maltreatment, which can be characterized as acts of commission and omission. Act of commissions involve actual abusive behavior toward the child (Briere, 2002: 1), which can be physical, sexual or even psychological, resulting in longstanding traumatic effects and psychological disorders in the child. On the other hand, the acts of omission most typically consist of psychological neglect, which "generally refers to sustained parental nonresponsiveness and psychological or physical unavailability, such that the child is deprived of normal psychological stimulation, soothing, and support" (Briere, 2002: 1). Sweetness's toxic parenting is an example of emotional abuse, as in Douglass J. Besharov's definition: "[A]n assault on the child's psyche, just as physical abuse is an assault on the child's body" (1990: 9), with mostly acts of omission.

Sweetness fails to provide her daughter Lula Ann with an appropriate and supportive environment, since she transfers the contempt she feels for her own race to her child: "Parents unwittingly pass hatred to their children, thereby 'reproducing the enemy who has humiliated them over and over'" (Sacks, 2015). Her life and parenting are inordinately impacted by a racially-prejudiced society. Her

fear of producing a dark black baby, muses on the 20 per cent of white people who have 'Negro' blood running in their veins, the legacy of slavery—in this, the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of its abolition in the US. The fault lines of contemporary racism are ever-present, but the complexity of racism internalized by African Americans is also there. The impact of that secondary hierarchy of racism is the backbone of Lula Ann's story. (Iqbal, 2015)

Morrison explores the curse of the past and its hold on the present. She critiques society's racism and the black community's intra-racism, which engender child abuse

and trauma. Racism and its expression, colorism or shadism, are an integral part of Lula Ann's reality as a black abused girl. Lillie Fears defines colorism as a pattern of interaction between African Americans in which those light-skinned reject the darker ones and, as a reaction, dark-skinned blacks criticize light-skinned ones as not being "black enough" (1998: 30). Morrison remarks that, in her latest novel, she wanted to separate color from race. In *God Help the Child*, she tackles the privileges of having a light skin:

Distinguishing color—light, black, in between—as the marker for race is really an error: It's socially constructed, it's culturally enforced and it has some advantages for certain people. But this is really skin privilege—the ranking of color in terms of its closeness to white people or white-skinned people and its devaluation according to how dark one is and the impact that has on people who are dedicated to the privileges of certain levels of skin color. (Gross, 2015)

Victims of colorism become victimizers. Sweetness's destructive patriarchal mode of motherhood transmits racist ideologies and attitudes. Her self-hatred makes her unable to hand down a positive racial image to her daughter. Her strictness and lack of affection destroy Lula Ann's sense of self. And yet, Sweetness wants to believe that she was trying to protect her child from a racist society. We can see her feelings of guilt when she attempts to convince herself that she was not a bad mother. Her words, at the beginning of the narrative, "[b]ut it's not my fault. It's not my fault. It's not my fault. It's not" (7), are revealing. Her feelings of guilt are concealed beneath her patriarchal toxic motherhood.

Sweetness excuses the lovelessness in raising her daughter on the challenging circumstances black individuals had to live at the time. Despite recognizing her lack of maternal love and nurture, she does not take full responsibility for the damage and pain she has inflicted on Lula Ann. Notwithstanding, as Roxane Gay (2015) pinpoints, "it is difficult to judge Sweetness's choices. She should know better, but is painfully clear her choices have been shaped by the realities of being black in a white world—a world where the lighter your skin, the higher you might climb."

Sweetness believes Lula Ann's blue-black skin will be her cross, so she has to protect her daughter from society's racial prejudice, "to prepare [her] [. . .] for the malicious slurs her black skin seemed certain to summon" (Strawn, 2015). Apparently, her intentions are to teach Lula Ann coping skills so she can survive people's cruel racism, which Sweetness has also experienced, as an observer, in her life. She recalls witnessing a group of white boys bullying a girl, almost as black as her daughter. Nevertheless, it seems more likely that Sweetness, at least in part, neglects her maternal duties so as not to confront the rejection of society. She does not want other people to know that Lula Ann is her daughter. That is why Sweetness tells the girl to call her by her name, instead of "Mother" or "Mama." She does not take her out much afraid of people's reactions at seeing the black baby. Neither does she attend school events.

Colorism has negative effects on children's overall life outcomes in relation to emotional and psychological well-being, self-concept, self-esteem and identity

formation. The impact of shadism on Sweetness and Lula Ann, as victimizer and victim, is appalling. Sweetness's constant rejection of her daughter as a result of her skin color is the most insidious form of emotional abuse. Danya Glaser considers that emotional abuse can be "more strongly predictive of subsequent impairments in the children's development than the severity of physical abuse" (2002: 698-699). Lula Ann remembers how Sweetness avoided touching her dark skin, "[d]istaste was all over her face when I was little and she had to bathe me" (31). She consciously misbehaved so her mother would chastise her. However, Sweetness found ways to punish her without touching her. Lula Ann is happy the day her mother slaps her when she stains her bed sheets with her first menstruation.

Children who are constantly ignored, shamed, terrorized and humiliated suffer as much, or even more, than those who are assaulted or exposed to physical abuse. In *God Help the Child*, Sweetness, with her ironic name, rears Lula Ann without any affection. Her acts have an adverse effect on her daughter's emotional health and development as a child. As Sam Sacks (2015) states, "[c]hildren are most vulnerable to the 'death of self-esteem' [. . .] and black girls in particular are likely to be imprinted with a sense of racial and sexual self-loathing." Sweetness's habitual emotional and psychological maltreatment severs the mother-daughter bond. Lula Ann misses her unavailable and unresponsive mother. She remembers how, as a child, she used to hide behind a door to hear her mother hum some blues songs, which she would have loved to share with her. Besides, Lula Ann grows up alone with her mother, as her father, Louis, abandons them both when she was just a baby. Owing to his daughter's dark complexion, Louis thinks that Sweetness has cheated on him, and he cannot bring himself to love her. And yet, fathers and fathering are part of the nurturing that guarantees children's psychological growth: "[T]here must be shared responsibility [both parents], for the child to begin to approach wholeness" (Samuels & Hudson-Weems, 1990: 75).

Everyone around Lula Ann is also "implicated in an endless web of mistreatment" (Strawn, 2015). During her infancy, Lula Ann, desperately needed of love, falsely testifies against a teacher, Sofia Huxley. She is a third-grader and, in collusion with her classmates, she accuses the white woman of being a child molester "to get the attention of her mother, whose 'abuse' takes the form of a far more insidious lovelessness" (Pistelli, 2015). The untruthful accusations of child abuse destroy Sofia's life, for fifteen years, Sofia suffers contempt or even violence from the other inmates, as "[h]urting little children was their idea of the lowest of the low" (66). Furthermore, even when she is finally released from prison, she cannot get near children. Moreover, she is shunned by her husband and parents, as "[i]n their world of God and Devil no innocent person is sentenced to prison" (68).

As a witness in the trial, Lula Ann "is both an agent of destruction—as a child, she had falsely fingered Sofia for participating in the sexual abuse of young students—and a victim" (Strawn, 2015). Bereft of maternal love, she recalls how Sweetness was "kind of motherlike" the day she points at Sofia. She smiled at Lula Ann and even held her hand when they left the courthouse, which she had never done before. At school, Lula Ann is called or shouted at bad names, ape sounds or monkey mimicry: "They treated



me like a freak, strange, soiling like a spill of ink on white paper” (56). Lula Ann learns her mother’s lessons and grows a thick skin: “So I let the name-calling, the bullying travel like poison, like lethal viruses through [her] veins, with no antibiotic available [. . .] buil[ding] up immunity so tough that not being a ‘nigger girl’ was all [she] needed to win” (57).

The racial self-contempt that Sweetness inculcates in her daughter does not allow her to have a sense of belonging or identity: “Sweetness’s horror at her daughter’s ‘blue-black’ color and ‘too-thick lips’ has saddled Bride [Lula Ann] with a crushing load of insecurity and guilt” (Sacks, 2015). Lula Ann has to struggle her whole life for self-definition, trying to protect herself from being hurt. At the age of sixteen, she drops out of school and flees home. Lula Ann changes her “dumb countrified name” and calls herself Bride, reinventing herself. She runs a prosperous cosmetics business and leads a glamorous life. Like Jadine in *Tar Baby*, “Bride is shallow, emotionally stunted, and enamored of the glitzy professional world she lives and works in” (Umrigar, 2015). She “stitch[es] together: personal glamour, control in an exciting even creative profession, sexual freedom and most of all a shield that protect[s] her from any overly intense feeling” (79). Emotionally abused children often grow up believing that they are deficient in some way. As an adult, Bride finds, ironically, vengeance from her tormenting childhood ghosts in her alluring blackness and in her successful career.

*God Help the Child* is “about young adults still healing from wounds inflicted during their childhood by parents or predators” (Gross, 2015). Healing the deep scars of child abuse is a complex and harsh process. To get through childhood trauma is necessary to connect to other people and finally tell someone about your traumatic experiences. Booker Starbern, Bride’s boyfriend, is the only one she has been able to spill her guts to. She confides everything to him: “every fear, every hurt, every accomplishment, however small” (53). Bride thinks she has gotten over all that and moved on, but she realizes that while talking to him all those repressed buried memories of her childhood sufferings come up “fresh as though [she] was seeing them for the first time” (53).

Bride discloses to Booker that, as a child, she witnessed how Mr. Leigh, their landlord, raped an anonymous little boy. When he saw Bride, who was only six years old, he called her, “little nigger cunt!” (55). Although she had never heard the words before, she felt the hate and revulsion they carried with them. Bride wonders if when she accused Sofia Huxley, she was really pointing at the idea of Mr. Leigh: “His nastiness or the curse he threw at me?” (56). The emotional toll on children who witness threats or violence of any kind against others can be considerable. Secondary victims, witnesses, often experience the effects of trauma, sometimes with the same symptoms of those of the primary victims. Figley and Kleber define “a secondary traumatic stressor” as “the knowledge of a traumatizing event experience by a significant other” (1995: 79). It is true that Bride does not watch the rape of a family member or a relative, but watching the rape of a little boy can really trigger sympathy and empathy from another child.

When Bride told her mother, she got furious and instructed her daughter not to say anything about the rape, because she was worried about keeping an apartment that was in a safe location. Thus the criminal offence got unpunished. Pressure from family members to remain silent about a sexual assault can be very damaging for the secondary victim/witness, especially when they are children, as they may feel responsible for the harm done. When Bride confesses her long-kept secret, her eyes are burning and her tears welled. Booker just says: “Now five people know. The boy, the freak, your mother, you and now me. Five is better than two but it should be five thousand” (55). Even as an adult, Bride feels the guilt and shame at not having done anything regarding the rape. Only by speaking about it, she experiences relief. For those who have witnessed sexual assaults, being listened to and believed can be extremely invigorating and curative.

#### **4. Bride’s Search for Self-Definition: Web of Childhood Trauma Stories**

Bride, as an adult, wants to reclaim control over her life by confronting the past. To heal from her feelings of guilt or self-blame for lying about Sofia Huxley, she decides to visit her former teacher the day she is released from Decagon Women’s Correctional Center, the prison where Sofia has spent the last fifteen years. For a year Bride plans it carefully. She brings the ex-con money and some gifts. Her attempt to make amends, an act devoid of true kindness and sympathy, does not go the way she expects. Sofia beats her to the point that Bride needs reconstructive plastic surgery. This encounter triggers the abrupt departure of Booker, who rejects her, “You not the woman I want” (10), and runs away.

Like Bride, Booker also struggles with a childhood trauma. He is a “tortured black trumpet player [. . .] who has his own dark past regarding child abuse. Booker’s elder brother, who he worshipped, was murdered by a pedophile, a serial killer, when the two were kids, a tragedy to which Booker has clung” (Shriver, 2015). Thus, Booker is a secondary victim, who is deeply affected by a sexual assault in his family and its aftermath. The murder of his brother, Adam, breaks his heart, and his happy tight-knit family crushes as a result of it. Morrison vividly evokes Booker’s idolized older brother, whom he saw last time skateboarding down the sidewalk in twilight, “Adam floated, a spot of gold moving down a shadowy tunnel toward the mouth of a living sun” (115). After his brother’s death, Booker’s father refuses to play any music. Very despondent, Booker feels that living without Louis’s trumpet is too much, so he asks his father if he could take trumpet lessons. Music is one way Booker copes with the trauma that Adam’s loss represents in his life. That is why he gets rid of his trumpet at the end of the book when he no longer needs it.

After months of his disappearance, Adam is found. Booker and his father identify his filthy, rat-gnawed body with no pants or shoes. Adam was more than a brother to Booker, “[h]e was the one who knew what Booker was thinking, feeling [. . .] the smartest one who loved each of his siblings but especially Booker” (115-6). His elder

brother had replaced the twin brother he has never met. Adam's murder leaves him alone. Then, after six years, when Booker is fourteen, Adam's killer, Mr. Humboldt, is caught and convicted of the sexually stimulated slaughter (SSS) of six boys, whose names were tattooed across his shoulders. Booker is as distressed about the murderer's sentence, as he was about Adam's demise. His desire for vengeance makes him think that Mr. Humboldt's execution is too a facile solution, and he imagines scenarios, in which he has to suffer endlessly. He remembers an African tribe that lashed the dead body to the back of its murderer. Booker believes that justice would be served if, in conjunction with public shame and damnation, the criminal carried a physical burden.

When Booker thinks about the pervert, he realizes how normal-looking he was, "[p]robably an otherwise nice man—they always were. The 'nicest man in the world,' the neighbors always said. 'He wouldn't hurt a fly.' Where did that cliché come from? Why not hurt a fly? Did it mean he was too tender to take the life of a disease-carrying insect but could happily ax the life of a child" (111). Sexual child molesters or offenders are not usually the stereotypical low-life individuals people imagine. There is no generic profile: They "cut across economic, social, and educational lines. They may be rich or poor, well-educated or ignorant, blue-collar or white, married or single" (qtd. in Kelly, 1985: 1021). Adam's killer was a retired auto-mechanic, who did home repairs. He had a welcoming, attractive smile and always traveled with a cute little dog, called "Boy," which he used to lure children. Sexual offenders normally gain access to their victims through deception and enticement. The Gothic details of Mr. Humboldt's atrocities include molestation and torture, and even conducting some amputations on the children. He even kept the boys' small penises in a decorated candy tin.

At Adam's funeral, Booker misinterprets the words of his wise and eccentric aunt Queen, who trying to comfort him, tells him to mourn his brother as long as he needed, the validation for "the unfairness of the censure he was feeling from his family" (117), and for making Adam's death his own life. From then on, Booker adopts a moral position from which he can identify other people's signs of imperfection. He gets a tattoo of a small "orangish" rose on his shoulder, as the one he threw at his brother's coffin.<sup>1</sup> Booker is incapable of understanding or forgiving his family, who try to move on after the tragedy: "How could they pretend it was over? How could they forget and just go on?" (117). Booker leaves them and goes away. His traumatic recollections consume his whole life afterwards.

Booker is so distressed and afflicted by what happened to his brother that he becomes a defender of sexual abuse victims and a punisher of their victimizers, a sort of "superhero," "Batman," as his previous girlfriend Felicity calls him. Booker seems to seek to right the wrongs of those who abuse or maltreat children in different ways. He beats a stranger, who was masturbating at the sight of the faculty children, in a university campus playground. Booker thinks of how

[o]bviously the sight of the children was as pleasurable to the man as touching them because just as obviously, in his warped mind, they were calling to him and he was answering their plump thighs and their tight little behinds, beckoning in panties or shorts as they climbed up to the slide or pumped air on the swing. (109)

On another occasion, Booker witnesses a situation of child abuse. He sees a couple that is exposing their baby to illegal drug activity. They are sucking on a crack pipe, while a two-year-old infant is screaming and crying in the backseat of their parked car. Booker attacks the man, and then the three of them have a fight. They all get arrested and the baby girl is given to childcare services.

Like Son in *Tar Baby*, Booker “is [. . .] unable to function in the real world, but grounded and in touch with his ancestral roots” (Umrigar, 2015). He meets Bride, his ““midnight Galatea,”” when he is still “trying to comprehend the emotional levy exacted by the murder of his beloved older brother” (Strawn, 2015). When Booker first sees her, he feels “the disintegration of the haunt and gloom in which for years Adam’s death had clouded him” (132). Bride and Booker are made for each other: “The many parallels between Bride and Booker’s lives—including childhood trauma, and direct or indirect confrontations with accused child molesters—underscore how much they share” (Kakutani, 2015). Booker is mesmerized by Bride’s obsidian blackness and they become lovers. The couple has an argument when he learns that she wants to pay a visit to Sofia, whom he believes is a child molester. Booker finally abandons her “to cope with his own lurid childhood trauma, the murder of his brother” (Sacks, 2015).

After Booker’s departure, Bride “begins to unravel both physically and emotionally; her miserable, loveless childhood begins to resurface” (Anrig, 2015). Even though she tries to put the pain she has suffered in childhood behind her, her breakup with Booker and being beaten by Sofia Huxley make her feel “[d]ismissed” and “[e]rased” (38). She believes that she is undergoing a physical regression “back into a scared little black girl” (142). Morrison uses magical realism, Bride’s inexplicable body changes (losing her pubic and underarm hair, her breasts and her ear piercings; even shrinking to the size of a child) to express the black woman’s identity crisis.<sup>2</sup>

Bride realizes how her self-confidence was just a “thrilling successful corporate woman façade of complete control” (134). She also becomes aware of the superficiality of her world: “[S]he had counted on her looks for so long—how well beauty worked. She had not known its shallowness of her own cowardice the vital lesson Sweetness taught and nailed to her spine to curve it” (151). Bride cannot pretend to be a self-reliant woman anymore. She is haunted by Booker’s last words, and only the stroke of his shaving brush soothes her. Bride’s life is crumbling down and she seeks solace in drugs, drinking and sex.

Ultimately, Bride decides to find Booker and face him, “which was the same as confronting herself, standing up for herself” (98). She sets out on a restorative identity quest for self-forgiveness and self-definition, a journey “both literal and metaphorical—that involves the laying of old ghosts to rest for both of them” (Scholes, 2015). Her search takes Bride to the woods of northern rural California, symbolically her inner self, where she wrecks her car and needs to convalesce with an old hippy couple, Steve and Evelyn. Bride’s glamorous, materialistic and superficial view of life comes up against their anti-capitalist ideals, their simple and more real way of living, “a point of intersection between atomistic cultures” (Sturgeon, 2015). The couple’s austere existence makes her wonder: “What did she know anyway about good for its own sake,

or love without things?" (92). During her recovery, Bride has time to ponder about her life, and how "she had been scorned and rejected by everybody all her life" (98).

Bride's rendezvous with Queen makes her feel as if she had been stripped of her beauty and glamour and taken back to the past when she was "the ugly, too-black little girl in her mother's house" (144). Booker's rational words about race, when she was complaining about Sweetness's hatred for her black skin, comes to her mind:

'It's just a color,' Booker had said. 'A genetic trait—not a flaw, not a curse, not a blessing nor a sin.'

'But,' she countered, 'other people think racial—'

Booker cut her off. 'Scientifically there's no such thing as race, Bride, so racism without race is a choice. Taught of course, by those who need it, but still a choice. Folks who practice it would be nothing without it.' (143)

Queen's life also exemplifies child neglect: "[S]he abandoned some of them [her children] to marry other men. Lots of other men. And she didn't or couldn't take the kids with her. Their fathers made sure of that" (169). According to Booker, all of Queen's offspring hated her for different reasons. As a young woman, Queen thought that being pretty was enough, but it was not, a lesson she learnt too late for her children. She married multiple times, and her "husbands" took all of her babies. She could not raise any of them beyond the age of twelve. Despite having a lot of children, Queen lives alone in the wilderness, and she has no close relationship with any of them. She just has their photographs to look at.

Queen is also responsible for not protecting her daughter Hannah from the sexual abuse inflicted on her, while she was under her care. At the hospital, Queen, who is badly burned and drugged, mistakes Bride for Hannah, and starts talking to her about her life. Rumor in the family has it that Queen had dismissed the girl's complaint about her father, whom she said fondled her. However, her mother did not believe her. Hannah, like Pecola in *The Bluest Eye*, suffers from sexual abuse at the hands of primary caregivers. Denial by family members of a victim, who has been exposed to sexual abuse, can have extremely profound negative effects on the child, and can lead to the annihilation of families. After the sexual maltreatment, "[t]he ice between them [Queen and Hannah] never melted" (170). Queen fails some of the main tasks of motherhood: she does not keep her daughter safe, does not acknowledge the sexual abuse or support her afterwards.

Queen quite never forgives herself for her negligence. As Figley and Kleber contend:

Nearly all publications focusing on people confronted with extreme stress events exclude those who have experienced the event indirectly or secondarily and concentrate on those who were directly traumatized (i.e. the "victim" or "survivor"). Yet, diagnostic descriptions of what constitutes a traumatic event [. . .] clearly suggest that mere knowledge of the exposure of a loved one to a traumatic event can be traumatizing as well. (1995: 77)

Figley and Kleber call “secondary traumatic stressor” the behaviors and emotions that result from the knowledge of the traumatizing event (1995: 78). “Vicarious or secondary traumatization” refers to the ripple effects of sexual abuse and assault that affect other people that are close to the victim of the traumatic event, such as his/her family, friends, colleagues, community or even the wider society. According to Jennifer Foster, parents of victims of sexual abuse have to cope with their reactions to the abuse, such as anger, self-blame and feeling overwhelmed (qtd. in Fuller, 2016), along with feelings of confusion, anxiety, depression, numbness or shock, common symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). A feeling of failure is the prevailing long-term response of non-offending parents, usually the consequence of a sense of guilt at not realizing what was happening and stop it. Parents’ denial aggravates the situation, as they would not provide support after their children’s disclosure. The photo display Queen has at her house, most of them Hannah’s photos, are “[m]ore like a memorial than a gallery” (171), which exposes her grieving and guilt. Like Pauline in *The Bluest Eye*, Queen fails to protect or support her daughter when she confesses that she has been molested by her father, of which she repents until the final hours of her life.

In California, Bride also meets an emotionally wounded foundling child, Rain, who an old hippy couple, Steve and Evelyn, have taken in. Rain “has known her own brand of torment” (Gay, 2015). She has suffered from sexual molestation and abuse. Rain was prostituted by her own mother, and never met her father. She is sexually exploited since she is a little girl. Rain remembers how an old man hurt her so badly that she bled. Sexual abuse is appalling if it occurs at the hands of someone the child knows and trusts, close relatives or caregivers, but it is also really monstrous if it is accepted and allowed by them. Sexual molestation is especially traumatic for the victim because of the guilt and shame that usually accompany it. The emotional component is powerful and pervasive. The repercussions of prolonged child sexual abuse are devastating: low self-esteem, a feeling of worthlessness, an abnormal or distorted view of sex, withdrawn, depression, suicidal wishes, etc.

At the age of six, Rain’s mother kicks her out after she injures a man, one of her regular costumers, who was molesting the girl. She bit his penis when he stuck it into her mouth. Homeless children and youth, also called “unaccompanied youth,” live on the streets unsupervised, deprived from parental, foster or institutional care. Rain’s account of her tough street life manifests her courage and resilience:

You had to find out where the public toilets were [. . .] how to avoid children’s services, police, how to escape drunks, dope heads. But knowing where sleep was safe was the most important thing. It took time and she had to learn what kinds of people would give you money and what for, and remember the back doors of which food pantries or restaurants had kind and generous servers. The biggest problem was finding food and storing it for later. She deliberately made no friend of any kind—young or old, stable or wandering nuts. Anybody could turn you in or hurt you. (103)

Homeless children are vulnerable to sexual exploitation, victimization, substance abuse and other kinds of adverse outcomes: they are more likely to have health, mental

or behavioral problems; they may have less or not at all access to medical care; they may witness violent events. Steve and Evelyn find Rain in the streets, and rescue her.

Children, who are victims of sexual abuse, may have intimacy or sexual issues, or/and dysfunctional adult relationships, as they grow older. They are more likely to show fear or anxiety in response to people who share characteristics of the abuser. Rain is scared of men. They make her feel sick. She recalls when she first met the hippy couple. At Steve's simple touch, Rain "thought of the men who came to her mother's house, so she had to run off, miss the food lady [Evelyn] and hide" (103). Survivors of childhood sexual abuse may feel anger, betrayal and an inability to trust adults because someone they depended on harmed them or failed to protect them. Rain is so dreadfully hurt that when Steve and Evelyn take her in, she wants to kill everybody.

The aging couple does not want to hear about Rain's experiences at her mother's house or about her street life, so she has to tell everything to her kitten, and later to Bride. The feral girl finds in the black woman the only person she can confide in. Bride is horrified to hear the trials and tribulations Rain has gone through in her short life. She wonders "[h]ow could anybody do that to a child, any child, and one's own?" (102). Compared to the girl's prostitute mother, Bride's own mother does not seem so bad: "Even Sweetness, who for years couldn't bear to look at or touch her, never threw her out" (101). Bride cannot believe how dauntlessly this "tough little girl, who wasted no time on self-pity" (103), has lead her life.

Bride's encounter with Rain, a transformative and restorative episode, affects the woman deeply. Sharing a traumatic childhood makes them connect emotionally. Rain "conjures her [Bride's] repressed feelings of racial rejection at the hands of Sweetness" (Sturgeon, 2015). In the conversation that Bride and Rain have in the woods, there is a sort of mother-daughter communion, which is mirrored in the fawn that nestles her doe's flank. In their brief relationship, Rain feels strong affection for the blue-black woman, who risks her life to safeguard the girl from being hurt by some men. In her low self-esteem, Rain is surprised at Bride's disinterested and generous act, since "nobody [had] put their own self in danger to save me. Save my life" (105-6). Bride and Rain's true companionship and Bride's endangerment of her own life to protect the girl are a healing experience for the woman, a true act of restitution.

## **5. Conclusion: "A Path From Self-Hatred to Self-Acceptance"**

At the end of the novel, Bride faces Booker and confesses why she paid a visit to a "child molester" in prison; how she lied and helped convict Sofia to get some love from her mother. Booker, on the other hand, explains to her about his brother being killed by a sexual predator. Watching the lovers' fight, Queen wonders if redemption is possible for them. She thinks "they will blow it" (158), as she did it:

Each will cling to a sad little story of hurt and sorrow—some long-ago trouble and pain life dumped on their pure and innocent selves. And each one will rewrite that story forever, knowing the plot, guessing the theme, inventing its meaning and dismissing its origin.

What waste. She knew from personal experience how hard loving was, how selfish and how easily sundered. Withholding sex or relying on it, ignoring children or devouring them, rerouting true feelings or locking them out. Youth being the excuse for that fortune-cookie love—until it wasn't, until it became pure adult stupidity. (158)

Nevertheless, Queen seems to be quite wrong. Finally, Booker, apparently, lays to rest the ghosts of the past. He apologizes to his brother, who “is probably weary of being my burden and cross” (161), for using him. He writes in his notebook:

I don't miss you anymore adam rather i miss the emotion that your dying produced a feeling so strong it defined me while it erased you leaving only your absence for me to live in like the silence of the japanese gong that is more thrilling than whatever sound may follow. I apologize for enslaving you in order to chain myself to the illusion of control and the cheap seduction of power. No slave owner could have done it better. (161)

On the other hand, Bride, after acknowledging her childhood sins, has a deep restorative sleep. She “felt newly born”: “No longer forced to relive, no, outlive the disdain of her mother and the abandonment of her father” (162). Sharing childhood traumatic life events with empathic listeners is really helpful, a healing coping strategy. True repentance and taking control of her life bring about the magical return of Bride's feminine attributes, which heralds her renewed self. The first successful step of Bride and Booker's resumed relationship as a couple consists of working together to help someone without thinking of themselves. They show unselfish love when they take care of Queen at the hospital. Eventually, Bride tells Booker that she is pregnant and he offers her “the hand she had craved all her life, the hand that did not need a lie to deserve it, the hand of trust and caring for—a combination that some call natural love” (175). At the end of the novel, they vow that things will be different for them: “A child. New life. Immune to evil or illness, protected from kidnap, beatings, rape, racism, insult, hurt, self-loathing, abandonment. Error-free. All goodness. Minus wrath” (175).

The sunny ending of *God Help the Child* displays substantial optimism. There is no doubt that the psychological and emotional childhood scars that populate this narrative are somehow finally mended. Most of the main characters, true survivors of child abuse, experience a cathartic transformation in their lives. Rain finds in the hippy couple the possibility of growing up and healing from her childhood wounds. Queen also seems to attain some kind of redemption in her role as Booker's Daedalic guide. Likewise, Bride and Booker appear to come to terms with their traumatic histories. They both finally realize that childhood trauma has hurled them away from the “rip and wave of life” (174). Now, they are expecting a baby, and they envision a hopeful future for them. Nonetheless, Sweetness's last words, “[y]ou are about to find out what it takes, how the world is, how it works and how it changes when you are a parent” (178), deliver “the kind of warning that is sounded across Ms. Morrison's novels—that trying to protect children from the world's unsleeping hatreds is a generational job” (Sacks, 2015). As Leo Robson (2015) argues: “Morrison tries to ward off a fairytale ending by threatening Bride's rainbow with yet more storm clouds, but it's a half-hearted gesture,



at odds with the novel's prevailing message that trauma can be overcome, scars can mutate into beauty spots, life can be remade."

To sum up, in *God Help the Child* Morrison delves again into one of her most powerful themes, cruelties visited upon children and their repercussions in adulthood. Her main characters all, in one way or another, carry the burden of childhood trauma: "[A] set of connections, which extend from her [Bride] to Booker and on to a semi-feral girl named Rain [. . .]: a cycle of abuse, of molestation" (Ulin, 2015). Morrison "masterfully explores the nature of victimhood and the consequences of child abuse through a series of fascinating and believable narrators" (Anrig, 2015). She unveils how

our culture is so attuned to the horror stories of childhood abuse, and so often when they appear there is the attendant desire for retribution. There is a quiet reflection of the legacy of abuse in this novel—how the damage is hidden, but lingers in every encounter an abused person has as an adult. And there is much to be admired here: perspective, luminous language, and courage in confronting the difficulty of the big subject. (Iqbal, 2015)

Morrison does not shrink from exposing the harsh realities children face, and how the traumatic past is constantly shaping their lives. She returns to questions of race and manages to lay bare how much slavery and its legacy still today impact blacks' lives, uncovering the emotional and psychological chokehold their histories have on them.

In her latest novel, Morrison repeats the number six time and again: Lula Ann is six years old when she witnesses a little boy's rape; Sofia is six feet tall; Lula Ann drops out of school and flees her home at the age of sixteen; Bride's company sells six cosmetic lines; Bride and Booker spend six months together before he leaves; Booker pronounces six words before he departs; the total amount on the reminder invoice for Booker's repaired horn is sixty-eight dollars; Adam is one of six victims of a sexual predator; Booker's family has to wait six months before their son's body is found and six years until his murderer is caught; Rain is six when the hippy couple finds her; Bride spends six difficult weeks with Steve and Evelyn; Dr. Muskie tells Bride that she would need six weeks to recover from her accident. According to Barbara M. Fisher, numbers in a text might be called "principles of linguistic impotence," statements that cannot be expressed through language; inexpressibility that applies to suffering and pain, to those things that are unspeakable because they cannot be articulated by the words we use for ordinary experiences (1997: 124-5). The concentration of sixes in *God Help the Child* seems to have the same purpose it had in *Beloved*, which was dedicated to "Sixty Million and more," linking two experiences of profound affliction, the Middle Passage and the millions of people exterminated by the Nazis. By means of the number six, Morrison's latest novel depicts the unspeakable suffering of all those children who have undergone molestation or victimization of any kind or any traumatic event. *God Help the Child* is a homage to all the uncountable victims of child abuse, an ongoing horrifying drama that does not have an end.

And yet, Morrison's "fundamental message is as clear and deliberate in *God Help the Child* as it has ever been. Ms. Morrison's 'project'—the word is her own—is to empower her readers by exposing the psychic toll of cultural oppression and to chart a

path from self-hatred to self-acceptance” (Sacks, 2015). She urges her characters to deal with their trauma and “move along. It’s not all about you and your little trauma” (Off, 2015). Morrison focuses on the need to put down the traumatic past, and the need of self-forgiveness and self-acceptance. She seems to hope that, despite the deep-rooted damage inflicted by child abuse, black individuals can overcome it and live the present fully and intensely.

## Notes

1. “Orangish” is the closest color to the dazzling yellow of the day Adam was skating, Booker’s last memory of him.

2. Jonathon Sturgeon argues that the disappearance of Bride’s pubic hair and the fact that she stops having her period are “two events that are less surrealist modifiers than indications of psychosomatic violence caused to the body by racial rejection” (2015).

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## **Rationalist tendencies in the translation of Slovak historiography into English**

Danica Maleková  
Catholic University, Slovakia  
danica.malekova@ku.sk

### ABSTRACT

The paper investigates how dominant epistemic frames backed by the methods of materialist science appropriate a translated text, thus changing its imagery and patterns of meaning. It discusses the language / culture determinants in the process of translation and relates the findings to the tendency towards hegemony in understanding what constitutes legitimate knowledge representation. Employing the tools of the cognitive approach to translation, the analysis is based on a case study of a translation of a Slovak historical text into English. More specifically, the paper explores translation of verbs related to the historical agents and their symbols. The cognitive framework accommodating the analysis shifts the perspective to the imagery invoked, and it is shown that the original imagery is significantly reduced in the target text. The analysis tracks the reductionist processes down to schematization, or what could be called *abstractification*, with an effect of disengaging the reader from the scene, as well as renormalization of agency, whereby semantic relationships are conventionalized. It is argued that such reduction is not a 'natural' process, nor is it necessitated by the variation in the target language structure, and it ultimately serves ideological ends.

**Keywords:** rationalism, *abstractification*, knowledge representation, historical agents, translated historiography

## 1. Introduction

The epistemic framework guided by scientific rationalism and empirical positivism is being seriously undermined an increasing range of fields of human activity. In the area of translation studies, Tymoczko (2002: 22) points to the growing realization that in fact all scientific research is subjective as it relies on certain “frames of reference, interpretation, mental concepts and received meanings”.

Notwithstanding the impact of epistemic challenges triggered largely by the developments in physics, it can be claimed that the neoliberal ideology with its Cartesian worldview still constitutes the dominant framework, and, by defining the legitimate meaning patterns, aspires to hegemony. As pointed out by Bennet (2007a: 191),

[b]olstered by capitalism and technology, the scientific worldview at present determines what might legitimately be considered as knowledge, and its gatekeepers [...] ensure that aliens are either domesticated or kept out.

In this connection, Verschueren (2012: 9) speaks about ideology as meaning in service of power, which serves as a tool in the hands of dominant classes “to avoid coercion by obtaining the consent of the oppressed, i.e. by successfully making certain patterns and frames of interpretation ... seem natural” (Verschueren, 2012: 11). Appreciating the social basis of ideology, he postulates that

[t]he wider the society or community, and the wider the range of discourse genres in which a given pattern of meaning or frame of interpretation escapes questioning, the more ‘hegemonic’ it may be. (Verschueren, 2012: 13)

Inasmuch as there is an intricate connection between culture and language, this would imply that any translation into English as the main language of globalization will be more prone to serve the hegemonic tendencies than a translation in the opposite direction. It is thus only natural that the question of power relationships features prominently in Anglo-American thought on translation, with Venuti as one of its strongest proponents. Venuti (1995: 20) describes much of the practice of translation into English as dominated by what he calls domesticating strategies:

By producing the illusion of transparency, a fluent translation masquerades as true semantic equivalence when it in fact inscribes the foreign text with a partial interpretation, partial to English language values.

In this way, translation becomes a tool for appropriating meaning to fit uniform frames as defined by the target culture dominant values, a process that not only endangers the vitality of value systems tied to minor cultures, but, in consequence, the balance sustained by the diversity. It is from this perspective that hegemony equalled to the dominance of one ideology is undesirable as much as it is dangerous.

## **2. Hegemony, translation universals and cognitive translatology**

In the area of language and its use, what is the hegemonic discourse that casts its spell over the majority of academic endeavours characterized by? Associated with what Venuti (1995: 5) calls the ‘authoritative plain style’, it strives for clarity marked by explicitness and absence of ambiguity, coherence, structured rational argument supported by impartial evidence, objectivity and impersonality (cf. Bennet, 2007b: 152). Figures of speech or any other ornamental language should be avoided. However, do not these qualities correlate with universal tendencies in any act of translation?

Halverson (2013: 49) lists simplification, explicitation, normalization or conservatism and levelling out as candidates for translation universals. Similarly, Mauranen and Kujamäki (2004) hypothesize the influence of universals in the process of translation, with simplification and explicitation in the forefront. The generalizations are supported by various studies on translation shifts – higher proportions of grammatical words and high frequency words in translations were detected by Laviosa (1998); less diverse collocation patterns were identified by Dayrell (2007) and Balaskó (2008) to give but a few examples.

However, the methodology by means of which the postulates are arrived at as much as the practice itself might be influenced by the Western values and the fact that the majority of the studies look into translation between European languages. This would specifically hold for the theories based on the functionalist approach, as noted by Muñoz Martín (2013: 81), who claims that functionalist translologies ‘ground the notion of translating in Western traditional, folk-psychological theories of instrumental rationality’. Tabakowska’s (2013) study of the translation of a poem by Emily Dickinson actually demonstrates that the translator has brought richer and more detailed imagery is brought into the Polish version of the poem, which would hardly concord with the universals as evidenced by the quantitative studies carried out so far.

In fact, if the perspective of cognitive linguistics (CL) is brought to enrich translation theory, the notion of translation universals becomes even less clearly defined and largely unsupported as it replaces the focus on functional/contextual features of the linguistic signs with the study of the construals related to the ability of the human mind to use imagery to construe the situation in alternate ways (cf. Langacker, 2009). Such indeterminacy of grammar and the inherent subjectivity of meaning are premises that might be more adequate to respond to the challenges put forward by the epistemic perspectives now sprouting. The validation of subjectivity and bodily basis of meaning contradicts the argument that reducing the richness of meaning in the service of technocratic uniformity is an inevitable and natural process, let alone a desirable one.

In the framework of cognitive translatology, translational act is understood as “activation and selective use of several particular kinds of knowledge filtered through the cognitive process” (Rojo, 2013: 13). Equivalence is thus based on activating similar conceptual frames (Rojo, 2002). Here, the central role is played by imagery triggered by situated imagination (cf. Martín de León, 2013: 113), as it is fundamental to

understanding. Consequently, if the translator changes the imagery, the reader will have a different understanding. If the frames applied in the process of translation are accountable to a certain ideology, then the resulting meaning patterns will be supplied by the respective ideology rather than by reproducing the original experience, because, as asserted by Verschueren (2012: 14), ideology “may be highly immune to experience and observation”. As a knowledge filter, the dictate of an ideology can actually change what counts as schema-refreshment into schema-affirmation (Jeffries, 2010: 132-133), or reduce what Hatim and Mason (1997: 27) call ‘communicative turbulence’ to stable and predictable patterns.

Rather than assuming that the process of translation is always ipso facto observant of translation universals, it can be perceived as a potential tool to resist them, or a “weapon against hegemonic powers” (House, 2005: 23). To work in this way, translation needs to rely on the inherent subjectivity of the representation of the text in the translator’s mind. The imagery thus arrived at would provide the grounding for the process of translation and replaces the notion of invariant given by the function the text should serve in the target culture.

In reference to translation, it is not unreasonable to assume that a visualization might also arise in the translator’s mind to function as the notorious *tertium comparationis* involved in the translation process. (Tabakowska, 2013: 231)

Thus the degree to which individual translators are able to and/or allowed to gain complex and informed access to the imagery triggered by the source text is the degree to which collective ideologies might be defied. As House (2005: 210) points out, “[s]peakers are not imprisoned by the language they speak. There is always an escape through the creative potential of language itself, and through the creativity of its users”.

The central place of imagery in cognitive translatology is grounded in the basic tenets of cognitive linguistics, where imagination is perceived as the fundamental mechanism for the production of any meaning and rationality. In their seminal work, Lakoff and Johnson (1999) ground any complex thinking in metaphoric projections that can be traced to the way human bodies function in the world. It is therefore impossible to draw a clear line between the concept of imagery operating in everyday language and imagery as a creative linguistic process (cf. Rojo, 2013: 8). This in fact deletes a clear distinction between the artistic (literary) and other (non-literary) use of language, including, necessarily, the discourses of art and science as their respective manifestations.

### 3. Science versus art

Blurring the distinction between the literary and non-literary uses of language is not an entirely new avenue of thought, as Snell-Hornby’s (1995) ‘prototype’ approach where the categories literary and non-literary form a continuum can be brought to witness. In fact, Snell-Hornby preserves the distinction, as, supposedly, there are prototypical



specimen, or better or worse representatives of various text genres. However, what the continuum approach brings into spotlight are the borderline cases dwelling on the intersections, and these cannot be simply excluded to make our classifications neat.

In fact, Halliday (1994/2001: 143) speaks of two value systems applying to scientific writing and a work of literature, with the scientific one privileging ideational meaning and uniformity of the system, and the humanistic one highlighting interpersonal meaning, uniqueness and diversity of natural processes. Notwithstanding the distinction, he makes an allowance for in-between cases, granting them legitimacy in both contexts:

There are some texts which by their own birthright lie at the intersection of science and verbal art: which are not merely reconstituted in this dual mode by us as readers, but are themselves constituted out of the impact between scientific and poetic sources of meaning. (Halliday, 1994/2001: 144)

Taking the point of view of value systems and competing ideologies, the debate boils down to whether what Halliday (1994/2001: 144) calls ‘poetic sources of meaning’ is allowed as a legitimate element in the process of encoding objective knowledge. In the field of translation studies, what we are actually asking is whether translators are allowed to strip academic source texts of their poetic aspects of meaning in the name of science as defined by the Western values and what is actually the ethos that is served thereby.

Throughout the present paper it is hypothesised that by weakening unconventional imagery unique to the author of the text, not only the goal of translation equivalence as defined in the framework of cognitive translatology is compromised, but, what is worse, hegemony related to the existing power relations is unduly reinforced, with the very ‘diversity’ niche colonized by the uniformity of the dominant value system. The aim of the case based analysis offered below is to track some of the persistent linguistic patterns which feed such appropriation.

#### **4. The analysed text**

The text selected for analysis was written by Ľubomír Lipták, one of the most respected historiographers in Slovakia whose theoretical work managed to surmount the barriers of the totalitarian regime. As a consequence, Lipták was expelled from the Slovak Academy of Science and the publication of his works was restricted for almost 20 years. It is partly the deep questioning of the communist ideology that charges Lipták’s texts with a sparkle of fruitful polemics, complex and problematizing insights into the workings of the system, or dialogic character in Bakhtin’s sense.

In opposition to formal and distanced objectivity typical of the scientific discourse, Lipták’s texts display a subjective touch. The reader is constantly reminded of the author’s subtle self-irony that actually transcends his individual personality to become something of a national characteristic. Reverberating on the humour of his literary

contemporaries such as Rudolf Sloboda or Pavel Vilikovský, it represents a tactic through which a small nation is trying to come to terms with its entrapment in a history of subjugation. In fact, this position stands against other frequently exploited strategies represented by pseudopatriotic or sentimental historical interpretations.

Lipták's text *Rošády na piedestáloch* [Castlings on pedestals] provides a systematic account of the shifts of power symbols throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century Slovakia. Lipták describes how susceptible the idols people worship are to changes of ideology. Great heroes are raised and knocked down from plinths as need be, high ideals are dressed into low materiality. No one ends up in sanctity. Historical personalities are presented as caricatures, carnal little figures that mirror our own helplessness. All of this is masterfully rendered by specific use of language, ranging from first person accounts to a comic portrayal of the events. It can thus be stated that the text stands on the intersection between science and art in the sense suggested above.

As will be demonstrated by the analysis, in her English translation titled *Monuments of political changes and political changes of monuments*, S. Miklošová largely downplays the 'artistic' dimension, thus redirecting the sources of meaning towards values such as uniformity and normalcy.

## 5. The 'pull' of the genre prestige

As genres and their prestige might be one of the determinants in the process of translation, an excursion into the position of the genre of the analyzed text – an essay – in the cultures concerned should be made at this point.

The Anglo-American prejudice against the essay as a genre striving for factual credibility can be glossed by looking at the Webster dictionary definition, where 'essay' is

an analytic, interpretative or critical literary composition usu. **much shorter and less systematic** and formal than a dissertation or thesis and usu. dealing with its subject **from a limited often personal point of view** (*Webster's Third New International Dictionary of the English Language* (1993)) (emphasis added)

The evaluation inherent in the definition highlights a downgrade in systematicity and formality compared to affiliated genres, as well as inferiority in the breadth of perspective. Its adjectival derivative 'essayistic' follows suit, implicitly positioning the essay below its generic competitors in terms of seriousness, as

more **informal, discursive** or **personal** in its exposition of an idea than a dissertation or a treatise (*Webster's Third New International Dictionary of the English Language* (1993)) (emphasis added)

The dictionary evaluation is commensurate with the one that can be found in *Routledge Dictionary of Literary Terms*, where the essay is, again, belittled in terms of credibility compared to alternative forms:

a polished and sophisticated form of **fireside chat**, a smooth way of putting over moral reflections, aphorisms and obiter dicta in a **less rigorous** and rebarbative manner than the treatise or ethical disquisition permits (*Routledge Dictionary of Literary Terms* (2006)) (emphasis added)

The cultural bias can be evidenced by a comparison to the definition in the Slovak canonic dictionary, where the word ‘esej’ is delineated as

an **artistic** reflection on the **topical** issues of social, cultural, scientific or economic life (the author’s translation) (emphasis added)

[umelecky spracovaná úvaha o aktuálnych otázkach spoločenského, kultúrneho, vedeckého a. hospodárskeho života] (*Slovník súčasného slovenského jazyka* (2006))

Here the inherent evaluation is concentrated in the adjectives ‘artistic’ and ‘topical’, which attribute a positive value, rather than a negative one associated with an inferior perspective as is the case with the English definition. Similarly, its adverbial and adjectival affiliates ‘esejisticky’ and ‘esejistický’ highlight the qualities of ‘interesting, witty, humorous, and yet as-a-matter-of fact’, with no hint at its less serious position in comparison with the related genres.

Explicit positioning of the essay on the scale with other genres, both literary and non-literary, can be traced in Findra’s (2004) *Štylistika slovenčiny* [Stylistics of Slovak] where the essay is enlisted under ‘theory’ genre models together with the dissertation and the study. Findra’s (2004: 212-213) description of the essay accentuates the author’s personality and his ‘brilliant individual style’ with which he treats specialized issues in a ‘soulful manner’, giving them a fresh evaluation, subjective interpretation, and a new order and perspective. In the process, the writer is not only concerned with the content, but also the form and a cultivated, even ornamental expression. All of this points to a much more positive evaluation of the personal aspect in the Slovak cultural environment compared to its Anglo-Saxon counterpart.

The Slovak attitude might be seen as mirroring the situation in other European countries with strong Catholic tradition such as Spain or Portugal. As claimed by Bennet (2007b: 177) claims,

a whole different attitude to knowledge and discourse has indeed prevailed [in the countries that are] inevitably strongly Catholic, and thus bypassed the Protestant-led scientific revolution that propelled the Northern Europe into the new paradigm.

According to Bennet, the value attributed to ‘soulfulness’ by a particular culture is the very degree to which genres allowing for subjectivity and emotions, or artistic expression in the most general sense, are granted academic prestige, given the fact that “‘soulfulness’ [...] is inherently antagonistic to the Cartesian or scientific account of the

world', as there is 'no valid concept' in the language of science for the 'intangible moral dimension that the religious know as 'soul'"(Bennet, 2007b: 178).

Indeed, while 'soulfulness' associated with the subjective, poetic dimension of the text might be valued in the humanities academic writing in one culture, it can be frowned upon as undermining the scientific validity in the other culture. Therefore, when translating from the former to the latter, the translator might have a motivation (or even a publication order) to re-muscle the text onto a more 'prestigious' skeleton, i.e. his/her translation choices can come under the dictate of the values common to the more 'objective' scientific writing.

## **6. The analysis**

The focus of the analysis are verbs related to the activities of the historical personalities as represented by their statues and other ideological symbols such as monuments and commemorative tablets of various kind. Verbs play a prominent role in the selected text, which is given by the lively and dynamic style of the writer and his general approach to the historical material. Another reason for restricting the analysis to the category of verbs is the scope of the present study, as a more encompassing survey would require a much larger space.

In terms of methodology, the research is predicated on the tenets of cognitive translatology, as suggested above, where translation equivalence is understood as equivalence in imagery triggered by the conceptual make-up. This puts shifts of imagery into the foreground of attention. In particular, the level of specificity related to the construals evoked in the reader's mind and the issue of agency should serve as a general guideline for comparing the source and target text.

In order to be able to deal with a fairly extensive text (39 pages in the original version) the method of sampling is employed, where two page samples (Lipták, 1998: 311-312, 317-318, 349-350) are taken from the beginning, the middle, and the end of the source text. The whole selection contains 80 verbs denoting activities related to the heroes and monuments, all of which are translated by verbal structures into the target language. A significant shift in imagery occurs in 25 items, which is almost one third. The shifts share the basic characteristic of creating a distance between the scene and the viewer, enhancing emotional distance and neutralization, and conventionalizing the imagery. The following account will treat the basic outline in more detail.

One of the dimensions of alternate construals of the scene is the level of specificity mapped onto the scale running from the most schematic to the most detailed. This is commensurate with what Langacker (2009: 194-195) terms viewing arrangement, which constitutes one facet of the conceptual substrate related to every linguistic expression. Tabakowska (2013: 234) argues that the level of specificity is "connected with the situation (spatial and/or temporal) of the viewer and the viewed". This, in turn, gives us the parameter of 'distance' (Tabakowska, 2013: 234), as can be demonstrated on the following event representations:

- (1) a. vláda robotníkov a roľníkov ich **zosadila** z podstavcov  
b. the government of workers and peasants **has removed** them from their plinths

where on the literal level, the Slovak verb includes the manner of movement, i.e. ‘to put down from a high chair/seat’. Arguably, such level of detail can only be perceived when the distance from the scene does not exceed certain level, while the more schematic construal triggered by the English verb ‘remove’ does not require such closeness.

Being placed at a closer distance, the viewer is more involved in the scene, while zooming out of the situation in the target text provides the viewer with distance and thus more detachment. As pointed out by Sweetser (1991: 39), “the objective and intellectual domain is understood as being an area of personal distance, in contrast to the intimacy or closeness of the subjective and emotional domain”. The translation shifts the construal towards intellectualization, or rationalization, as it entails a change in the level of categorization from a basic level category to a superordinate one. From the point of view of imagery, one of the relevant psychological attributes of basic level categories concerning motor movements is that “it is only on the basic level that organisms and objects are marked by characteristic actions” (Ungerer and Schmid, 1996: 69), while the most obvious deficiency of superordinate categories is lack of an ‘underlying gestalt that applies to all category members’ (Ungerer and Schmid, 1996: 74). On the other hand, their ‘collective’ function is crucial for scientific work.

The analyzed sample includes 23 verbs expressing motion events used in the literal sense. Out of these, 8 are rendered as less specific in the target language, with the ‘manner of motion’ deleted from the conceptual structure, thus modifying the nature of imagery making it more schematic. There is not a single case undergoing the opposite process, i.e. zooming in the target language. Apart from the above mentioned example, the respective translation shifts include:

- (2) a. Boli dokladom nemeckej pedantnosti, že ich niekde **nezapatrošili**  
b. It was testimony to the Germans’ pedantism that they **had not misplaced** them

In this example, the sememe ‘in a careless manner’ is missing from the English translation.

- (3) a. ležali však a **postávali**, ktorý ako  
b. but some lay and others **stood**

Here, the sememe ‘in an idle manner’ is levelled out.

- (4) a. Cisár Caligula dal **doviezť** do Ríma sochy gréckych bohov  
b. Emperor Caligula had statues of Greek gods **brought** to Rome

where ‘means of transport (a wheeled vehicle)’ is coded in the source text, while it does not feature in the target text.

- (5) a. **pritesat'** svoju vlastnú podobu  
 b. **replaced** with his own likeness

Again, the specific construal of the manner in which the gods' heads were replaced, i.e. by 'carving onto' is missing in the English version. Interestingly, the use of the same lexical item with the same denotation a line below is already rendered with a greater level of specificity:

- (6) a. Aké hlavy **pritesali** na grécke importy  
 b. what heads they **sculpted** onto the Greek imports

where instead of the more down-to-earth connotations of the expression 'carve', which would be a more literal match with the Slovak 'tesat' readily tied to the profession of a carpenter, associations with art or higher forms of human activity are triggered by alluding to the profession of a sculptor. Notably, a word of Latin origin is preferred over an Anglo-Saxon one – a choice that is hardly in accordance with the carnal effect intended in the source text.

- (7) a. kde roku 1863 za bližšie neznámych alebo radšej nespomínaných okolností **vypadol**  
 z kočiara starosta  
 b. where in 1863 in almost unknown or rather unmentioned circumstances the mayor **fell** from his carriage

Here, the internal structure of the Slovak verb consists of the prefix 'vy-' triggering the construal of involuntarily moving out from an inside space and landing on the ground. Although Slovak verbs, given their more complex morphological structure, are generally more concrete and definite than their English counterparts, which tend to be more polysemic, the imagery signalled by the inside-out meaning element provided by the prefix can still be considered marked, especially in comparison with a more neutral 'spadnúť', where the prefix 's-' just signals the top-down orientation and finiteness of the movement. Arguably, the imagery of falling out from a closed space produces humorous effect, very much in partnership with the local context, which insinuates that the mayor is drunk ('when returning from the May festivities'). This element is levelled out in the English translation, as the movement is represented in a more schematic way – as though viewed from a larger distance.

- (8) a. Hrobmi jednotlivcov, táborov i celých plukov, **odvelených** neodvolateľne na druhý svet.  
 b. The graves of individuals, battalions and whole regiments **posted** irrevocably to the other side.

In this case, the Slovak expression is more specific about the agent of the process of 'posting', which is a military authority. The English translation does not feature the concept.

- (9) a. do povedomia dnešných generácií **sa dostávajú** iba vďaka tomu, že...  
 b. they often **enter** the consciousness of today's generation only thanks to the fact that...

While the Slovak verb activates the construal of 'slowly and with difficulty', which is even emphasized by its imperfective form, the English verb, etymologically a borrowing from French, does not express manner, and is thus more arid in imagery. As there is no adjunct compensation, with the adverb *often* denoting frequency rather than manner, the event of movement undergoes the process of zooming out.

To tackle the question of whether the tendency of the shifts might be necessitated by the different structure of English language as opposed to its Slovak counterpart, as

[w]ords in a language with a synthetic structure (such as Czech, Slovak) usually have a more definite meaning than words in a language with an analytical structure (such as English or French) (Peprník, 2000: 138)

we can point to Slobin's (2000, 2007) research into the semantic properties of verbs coming from different language families. Slobin makes a major distinction between the so called satellite-framed and verb-framed languages (s-languages and v-languages respectively), depending on how manner of motion events is coded. While Germanic languages would be an example of the former, Romance languages would represent the latter:

Manner is highly codable in English, because it is carried by the main verb. Every clause requires a verb, and it is just as easy to say go in as run in. [...] English speakers get manner 'for free', and make widespread communicative and cognitive use of this dimension. In French, by contrast, manner is an adjunct – an optional addition to a clause that is already complete. (Slobin, 2007: 906)

Slobin comes to the conclusion that speakers of s-languages will have 'rich mental imagery of manner of motion' and it will be prominent in memory for events (cf. Slobin, 2007: 907). With regard to translation, referring to the study of translations of a chapter from *The Hobbit* by Tolkien, he outlines the following tendencies:

Manner verbs tend to be retained in translations into other s-languages: German, Dutch, Russian, and Serbo-Croatian [...] and they tend to be neutralized, diminished, or omitted in translations into verb-framed languages: French, Spanish, Italian, and Portuguese; Turkish; and Hebrew. (Slobin, 2000: 124)

Slovak, belonging to the family of Slavonic languages, is, like English an s-language. This means that the speakers of both Slovak and English will dispose of "rich mental imagery of the manner of motion", and according to Slobin's study the imagery tends to be retained in translations from English to other s-languages, so we can reasonably expect Slovak would be no exception. If this is not the case with Lipták's text, the structural differences in the way the two languages code motion events cannot account for the respective shift of the level of specificity in translation from Slovak into English, and other contributing factors need to be sought.

Although the sample containing verbs of motion is not large enough to draw general conclusions, the number of shifts in perception with the effect of zooming out (one third of the total number of items) is sufficiently significant to indicate a tendency in the analyzed text. This can be further validated by looking into the occurrence of lexical items with the roots ‘move’ and ‘place’, both having their origin in verb-framed languages – not coding the manner and being marked by a highly schematic character.

In the whole text, there are 39 lexemes in the English version with the root ‘move’ featuring three word classes – verbs, nouns and adjectives. Apart from suffixes changing the word class, the prefix ‘re-’ is used with the meaning ‘away’. A comparison with the Slovak lexical items as their source language equivalents displays an array of 11 different roots combined with 8 different prefixes. Moreover, 14 out of the 39 source language analogues are marked by a higher level of specificity, e.g. ‘vy-kroč-e-nie’, literally ‘up-step-ing’ translated as ‘moves’ or ‘vy-ber-a-nie’, literally ‘out-take-ing’ translated as removing. Indeed, the sample suggests that the process of zooming out on the way from Slovak into English occurs in almost one third of the cases, which is comparable with the results described above. Obviously, apart from the tendency to zoom out, the levelling out in terms of lexical variety is also significant. Again, the root inventory reduction cannot be explained away by structural differences between the two languages, as English, being an analytical language whose lexicon draws on etymologically varied sources, displays relatively high root variability.

The root ‘place’ was identified in 23 lexical items of the English version of the text. Similarly to the word set defined by the root ‘move’, apart from suffixes changing the word class, only the prefix ‘re-’ is used. The Slovak counterparts, on the other hand, are sourced by as many as 10 different roots, combined with a variety of 8 prefixes. The process of reducing the level of specificity, i.e. zooming out, concerns 9 Slovak-English pairs (e.g. ‘za-mur-ova-nej’, literally ‘covered-by-wall-perfective-feminine’ translated by ‘placed’ or ‘vy-kroč-i-li’, literally ‘up-step-ed’ translated as ‘were placed’), which is slightly more than one third of the total. This means that a similar ratio has been arrived at via three different comparisons, which secures its high reliability.

Although both ‘move’ and ‘place’ are perfectly established and legitimate items of the English lexicon, there is no reason why the translator should not reach for solutions into the wealth of various English verbs representing motion, many of which belong to the layer of concrete short words of Anglo-Saxon origin. This would also be in closer equivalence with the more carnal imagery of the Slovak original.

Apart from the shifts identified in the verbs denoting motion, there is a set of verb shifts that can be described as prolonging emotional distance between the viewer and the event targeted. These cases are marked by neutralization in the sense that it involves the change of stylistic value to a more neutral, or conventional. This might involve a less expressive, less exotic or otherwise less emotionally charged representation of an event bearing consequences on the emotional layer of the construal in the reader’s mind and body. In the analyzed sample, the phenomenon is manifested in the following cases:



- (10) a. Ľudia vždy boli a sú pre ich postavenie mnoho obetovať, [...] ba **dať sa aj zabiť**.  
b. People have always been prepared to sacrifice a lot for their creation, [...] even to **die**.

where the kind of death (letting oneself be killed), entailing violence and aggression is included in the Slovak word.

- (11) a. od chvíle, ako sa sochy začali stavať, hneď sa začali aj búrať a všelijako **preinačovať**.  
b. from the moment statues started to be built, they started to be demolished and **modified** in all sorts of ways.

where ‘slightly and gradually’ is missing in the English version, as well as the colloquial stylistic value of the Slovak lexeme, which underwrites folk associations, as opposed to the Latinate ‘modify’ with the learned stratum ramifications. As has already been suggested, such intellectualization leads to emotional detachment.

- (12) a. Mnohé z nich **sú** už zabudnuté, **spustnuté**  
b. Many of them **have** already **been** forgotten and **abandoned**

Interestingly, the Slovak participle denoting the state ‘no longer taken care of; desolate’ is translated as a motion verb in English, which does not immediately trigger an image related to the condition of the monuments. In terms of the focus of attention, the emotional aspects of ‘forlorn’ and ‘desolate’ are redirected towards a more neutral ‘no longer visited’, thus neutralizing the emotional charge associated with the image of the scene.

- (13) a. Postupne **vyplnili** aj ďalšie dve **strany** udalosťami dvadsiateho storočia.  
b. They gradually **filled** a further two **pages** with events from the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

In this example, the translator resists unconventional imagery is highly marked. While in the Slovak version, the word ‘strany’ refers to ‘sides’ in the most concrete spatial sense which are filled ‘up’ (made completely full as signalled by the prefix ‘vy-’ in the word ‘vy-plnili’), the English translation not only fails to signal completeness, thus reducing the dramatic effect, but also the image of burghers in Spišská Sobota filling two sides of an object with ‘events’ is resisted by opting for a different meaning of the original polysemic expression, i.e. changing ‘sides’ into ‘pages’. The scenery is thus, again, rationalized, now from the physical handling of the symbols to the intellectual process of writing.

- (14) a. Kiežby čerstvé kvetiny **vydržali** pri pomníkoch až do najbližšej revolúcie v pop-music.  
b. Let’s hope that fresh flowers **remain** at the monuments until the next revolution in pop-music.

Here, the meaning aspect ‘against resistance’ contained in the conceptual structure of the Slovak expression is deleted via using the more neutral ‘remain’ in English, thus taking the original emotional charge off.

- (15) a. pri prechádzke v Postupime **objavil som** vo vzdialenom kúte parku podivné zhromaždenie.  
 b. on a walk through Postdam I **came across** a strange group in a remote corner of the park.

Although this time the value of the two verbs is not marked by any significant shift, as both the English and the Slovak lexical items express the manner in which the object was met, i.e. ‘by accident’, the example is worthwhile listing because of the placement of the particle ‘som’, which is marked in the Slovak clause. In an unmarked situation, it should appear before the main verb, i.e. ‘v Postupime **som** objavil’. Its marked placement after the verb has archaic connotations and could be described as an instance of idiolect in Lipták’s otherwise modern contemporary Slovak. Such treatment of the verb particles is systematic in the essay, and it is not compensated in the English translation in any way, thereby weakening the subjective element in the style of the author.

- (16) a. miesto, kde filozfoval, **muzicíroval**, písal listy Voltairovi  
 b. the place where he philosophied, **made music**, wrote letters to Voltaire

Similarly to the example (11) above, the colloquial value of the Slovak lexeme is lost in the English version, which uses a neutral expression, thereby ignoring the ‘home-made’, ‘informal’ tinge inherent to the construal.

- (17) a. suverénne tvrdenie, že Cyril a Metod práve tu, v Komárne **“museli” prechádzať** cez Dunaj  
 b. confidently claimed that Cyril and Methodius **had to have crossed** the Danube precisely here

In this example, the confident claim by the authorities is undermined by quotation marks in the source text, cuing irony and thus a subjective view of the credibility of the authorities in question, which is completely deleted from the English version

Another set of lexical choices that can be associated with the move towards greater schematism is the tendency is to use Latinate expressions in situations where a synonymous Anglo-Saxon expression would be a relevant paradigmatic choice. Although the proportion of the words of Latinate origin in the English lexicon is greater than in its Slovak analogue, both languages profit from a layer of learned, abstract vocabulary that can be traced to the knowledge accumulated in the Greco-Roman world of the antiquity. These include: ‘zastupovať’ - ‘represent’; ‘búrať’ - ‘demolish’; ‘preinačovať’ - ‘modify’; ‘vznikať’ - ‘establish’; ‘chýbať’ - ‘be absent’; ‘pripomínať’ - ‘commemorate’.

Indeed, in Slovak, most of the Latinate expressions are also readily available (‘reprezentovať’, ‘demolovať’, ‘modifikovať’, ‘etablovať sa’, ‘absentovať’,

'komemorácia'), and yet they were not selected, even though they would be considered unmarked in academic style. The English translation thus shifts the text towards a greater normalcy or conventionality in terms of genre to the detriment of preserving the carnality of the original text, although the latter is an important feature of the ideational make-up of Lipták's essay.

Last but not least, the imagery activated in the reader is normalized by means of shifting the agency to fit a more prototypical model of agenthood as applied in the framework of Western values defined by the qualities of animacy, intention, cause, and human (cf. MacWhinney, 1982: 217). Endowing inanimate objects with agency, however, is a common and natural linguistic phenomenon, an instantiation of grammatical metaphor. With regard to English, Bernárdez (2013) quoting Yang's (2008) study of grammatical metaphor across languages even concludes that

English, in a higher degree than many or most other languages, seems to be extremely fond of metaphor and metonymy using them when other languages would prefer a literal form of expression (Bernárdez, 2013: 314),

attributing this to the 'matter of culture'. Normalization of agency patterns in the examples quoted thus cannot be attributed to the resistance on the part of the target language structural make-up.

In the example (1) quoted above, the construal of the participants in the event is shifted on the way from Slovak to English, as the semantic element of 'human' is cognitively de-activated. While in the Slovak expression, the monuments are specifically construed as human beings which can be 'de-seat-ed' ('zo-sad-ený') from their plinths, the English verb 'removed' invites a construal with an inanimate participant, thereby re-configuring the monuments as inanimate objects.

In the example

- (18) a. **velili** k útoku na všetky svetové strany  
b. [they] **signalled** attack in all directions

the activity of 'commanding', largely a human capability, is ascribed to the statues in the Slovak version, and, again, conventionalized in the English translation by an expression that can entail inanimate participants. A similar pattern can be identified in the following example:

- (19) a. po prevrate **pribudol** aj generál Štefánik  
b. General Štefánik **was added** after the revolution

While in the original text an active structure is used and the personality appears of its own accord, the English translation assigns the semantic role of 'patient' to the statue, leaving the role of 'agent', though not overtly expressed, to a human actor.

Rather than to the structural differences, such conventionalization might be attributed to the lack of acceptability of ambiguous or even absurd imagery in the target culture genre equivalent. Another cultural determinant might be the varying degree of

tolerance towards ambiguity in the presentation of facts, as claimed by Balaban (1999: 130)

Thoughts or actions that are inconsistent or contradictory are considered troubling in American society. These notions of agency map on to conceptions of mental health and illness in American culture, where there are folk beliefs that people are agents with coherent intentions.

In small nations such as the Slovak where people feel as patients rather than agents in terms of historical processes, the relevant folk beliefs may not be so strong.

## 7. Conclusion

Stripping an academic text of its 'poetic sources of meaning' in the process of translation into English as the language of globalization might be motivated by hegemonic appropriation of knowledge representation rather than being a natural process owing to translation universals and structural differences between languages and language families. In terms of specific linguistic patterns, the analysis demonstrated that the 'rationalizing' tendencies include producing distance by reducing specificity and materiality of the meaning construals, schematization, Latinization, levelling out of expressive meaning, as well as re-normalizing agenthood to match prototypical Western perceptions. As claimed by Berman (1995: 296), such tendencies

[a]re not ahistorical. [...] From the very beginning, western translation has been an embellishing restitution of meaning, based on the typically Platonic separation between spirit and letter, sense and word, content and form, the sensible from the non-sensible,

with the result that the translated text is 'more "clear", more "elegant", more "fluent", more "pure" than the original.' (Berman, 1995: 296-297).

Grounding the notion of translation equivalence in cognitive translatology with imagery as a *tertium comparationis*, it is argued that rather than appropriating translations to the functional requirements of the genre and its prestige in the target language culture, the translator should attempt to resist the hegemonic tendencies by staying confident to the original imagery underlying the meaning patterns, especially in cases such as the analyzed one, where 'scientific register' is not an explicit publication order.

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## **Getting it All in the Right Order: the Love Plot, Trauma and Ethical Uncertainty in Rachel Seiffert's *Afterwards***

Andrew Monnickendam  
Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona  
andrew.monnickendam@uab.cat

### ABSTRACT

This article analyzes Seiffert's *Afterwards* (2007), which, in marked contrast to her debut publication, *The Dark Room* (2001), has received scarce critical attention. Set in anodyne suburbia, *Afterwards* narrates the fate of two unglamorous ex-combatants and their trauma. Seiffert's complex narrative binds together romance and PTSD in a double plot that intertwines the fate of a "squaddy" involved in a shooting incident in the Northern Ireland Troubles with that of a former RAF officer stationed in colonial Kenya.

This article argues that beyond subjective issues of judgment, Seiffert shows an awareness that modern romance cannot combine with trauma, as the idea of healing is nonsensical in a world ruled by ethical uncertainty. Furthermore, Seiffert's examination of trauma indicates that in fiction –as in life– author and reader have to confront questions of guilt, responsibility and the absence of forgiveness. Seiffert, drawing on ideas similar to Primo Levi's, concludes the novel with the tragic irony that the more humane the perpetrator, the more distant closure becomes, leaving her main character locked in trauma and the reader ensnared in uncertainty.

**Keywords:** fiction, war, trauma, love-plot

### **1. Introduction**

To most readers, an examination of Rachel Seiffert's war fiction would infer her first publication *The Dark Room* (2001), a collection of three novellas set before, during and after the Second World War. It brought certain fame and prestige; in 2003 she made

*Granta's* list of most promising young novelists. The common motif in the three novellas is photography, a resonant echo of Christopher Isherwood's *Goodbye to Berlin* (1939), the city where the first tale is set. In addition, she takes on board the implications of Isherwood's pronouncement "I am a camera with its shutter open" (7). The phrase suggests that veracity can never be an absolute for the photographer, shifting the onus of interpretation on to the viewer or reader.

Two additional factors provoked interest. In critical terms, *The Dark Room* was published at a time when photography had already been the subject of in-depth analysis, most notably by Susan Sontag in *On Photography* (1977) and, two decades later, by Marianne Hirsch in *Family Frames: Photography, Narrative, and Postmemory* (1997). In other words, what in Isherwood were nuances, suggestions and implications, had, by 2001, been articulated into academic discourse. Furthermore, Seiffert's family background, her German and Australian parents, placed her in that very same community which Hirsch describes:

In my reading, postmemory is distinguished from memory by generational distance and from history by deep personal connections [...] Postmemory characterizes the experience of those who grow up dominated by narratives that preceded their birth, whose own belated stories are evacuated by the stories of the previous generation shaped by traumatic events that can be neither understood nor recreated. (22)

*The Dark Room* structurally bridges the gap between the two kinds of memory, and attempts, in its final story, to articulate a contemporary case of *Vergangenheitsbewältigung* –coming to terms with the past. In sum, this first publication had an easily definable way into public attention for both its appealing subject matter and its location within an identifiable critical space.

Although her first book received wide praise, was listed for several literary prizes, and was analyzed in several academic articles, her collection of short stories, *Field Studies* (2003), and second novel *Afterwards* (2007), have had little impact and neither has, to my knowledge, been subject to similar attention. In the case of *Afterwards*, the lack of critical interest might spring from the fact that it avoids the typical subjects of war literature, such as admirable heroism, courageous resistance, or sacrifice. Instead, its subject matter is ignominy, and it remains, as I shall illustrate, a stubbornly elusive text, which is the result of its engagement in the controversy inherent in narratives focused on perpetrator trauma.

My point of departure is that *Afterwards* has had little critical attention because it cannot successfully bring together a love plot and trauma narrative, a combination that is made even more complex by its double plot. This article, however, will not simply become an extended review, because it recognises that the insolvability of the enigmas presented is recurrent in war fiction, as illustrated by several potent intertextual moments. *Afterwards* shows an acute awareness of the development of war narratives and a desire to position itself in the contemporary debate such writing has generated.

A brief summary is now provided for those unfamiliar with the text. The character who opens and closes the action is Joseph; the first pages depict him shooting dead a



suspect in a car at a checkpoint in Northern Ireland during The Troubles; the concluding ones describe how Alice, with whom he has had an uneasy relationship throughout the novel, literally walks out of his life. We could say then that the novel moves from Mars to Venus, but Mars so nearly traumatizes Venus that she wants no part, indeed, all relationships beyond the temporary and the flirtatious are shown as fragile; fulfillment has dropped off the radar. The plot combines this failed contemporary romance with the story of Alice's grandfather David, an ex-serviceman who served in Kenya at the time of the Mau Mau uprising. He is a rather aloof figure, yet his suburban house has acted as Alice's home; in this dysfunctional family, her parents are almost absent during her upbringing. This gap draws trauma and postmemory generations closer at the cost of making the one in-between rather unforgettable and practically irrelevant to the story. During the time that Alice and Joseph's relationship progresses reasonably satisfactorily, she remarks that her grandfather is thinking of redecorating his home; as Joseph is a painter by trade, he takes on the job. Both ex-servicemen have a lot in common and get on well to begin with. Seiffert then employs one of her favorite narrative strategies: to draw an apparent parallel that turns out not to be one at all; the dissimilarities outweigh the similarities. In this case, reminiscence makes David more loquacious and likeable, able to overcome trauma through expressing it, whereas Joseph becomes increasingly taciturn, uncommunicative and eventually violent. He wrecks the decorating job, manically hurling paint everywhere. For Alice, reconciliation with Joseph becomes impossible; he is left alone with his memories.

The book was not as widely reviewed as *The Dark Room*. This selection of its early reception shows that it radiated a certain degree of perplexity, perhaps because adapting the Isherwood approaches, it places a considerable burden on its readers. No clearer example is shown by *The Guardian* when it affirmed that "[e]ach sentence is stripped to its bare minimum and often beyond, and there is a notable lack of description that makes it difficult to engage emotionally with the characters [...] Although occasionally lacking the sophistication one might hope for, it provokes questions, even if some are without answers" (Segal). *The Independent* wrote that "[c]onversational boundaries are vague, with reported speech mingling with direct speech and internal monologue. Sometimes it can be confusing, but the technique shows that sometimes it is unclear just what has been said" (Guest). These two examples are hardly enthusiastic; in both cases the review expresses the opinion that the 2001 volume was better. More laudatory was *The New York Times* reviewer, Kathryn Harrison, herself a novelist, who wrote that "her prose functions as a camera might, with the added power to reveal unvoiced thought as well as dialogue [...] her characters' internal reflections seem utterly authentic, never devolving into the inconsequential babble often presented as stream-of-consciousness" (Harrison). What all reviews share is the belief that one outstanding feature is the novel's enigmatic nature, whether this is considered slightly confusing, engaging, or just a true reflection of the nature of human relationships. In short, the novel, to differing degrees, bewildered its reviewers.

## 2. Setting up the parameters

The epistemological problems are introduced in the novel's early chapters. The reviews highlighted Seiffert's clipped style, but that does not necessarily convey how radically she goes about her task, as is evident from the opening scene:

Winter afternoon, five hours patrolling, seventeen minutes on the vehicle checkpoint and counting. Rain. Two cars, two drivers: one man, one woman. She was in the white car, three children with her. One adult passenger, male, in the other car, the red one. One multiple: four men on the rise, four in the fields, and four on the road. Two us by the first car, two by the second. One round fired. (3)

This minimalist narrative –verbless sentences, one word-sentences– builds up to what is –no pun intended– the trigger moment: “one round fired”. The rest of the book unravels the consequences of that one round. Such writing obeys a mimetic imperative, namely that a passage that requires only a few seconds to read corresponds to the split second in which decisions are taken and events are played out, putting into doubt whether agency is really an adequate term in such circumstances. In addition, such minimalism reflects Jane Seaton's point that it appears “as if memory works better with frozen images” (102). For Joseph, using Seaton's terms, the event is a “reality death” (185), whereas for the reader it is just a statistic, the distinction being that the former has a history and content, whereas the latter is simply a mere number, communicating little if anything at all. It therefore lacks drama and trauma, conveying neither information nor feeling.

The incident is followed by Joseph's debriefing, a process which, if successful, would lessen if not extinguish trauma. Yet debriefing is a word of some complexity on which I would like to dwell momentarily. *The Chambers Dictionary* states that the verb means “to gather information from a soldier or astronaut, etc, on return from a mission” (435), the affix, “indicating a reversal of process, or deprivation” (432), in this case concerning the verb *brief*, meaning “to give information or issue instructions to” (208). However, in what seems an extraordinary case of Freudian *Unheimlichkeit*, brief and debrief start off as dictionary opposites and fall into each other. That Joseph yields information to his superiors is not in doubt, but what dominates the second scene of this opening chapter is anxiety and confusion: “it was hard to get it all in the right order” (Seiffert, 3). The implications and outcome of this linguistically simple, almost monosyllabic sentence, become Joseph's insoluble problem. Bit by bit, it becomes clear that he is the person to whom instructions are being given: “Draw it. Birds-eye view” (5). The debriefing turns into a cross-examination, and his failure to articulate what he has witnessed and participated in reads more like the accused undergoing interrogation for a crime –hence the ambivalent presence of an army solicitor– than anything else. It would be a relatively simple task to give the process an overtly political reading: the soldier is shown just to be a number, just a dehumanized general issue rather than a person. More specifically, we could maintain that British policy molds events to suits its policy of forced occupation in Northern Ireland therefore compelling Joseph to accept

the official account. This is not the case, as the officers try to obtain full details of what is going on and hence reduce the possibility of long-lasting trauma on a person who, militarily, was simply doing his job. In short, just as briefing and debriefing collide into each other, so do trauma and the avoidance of trauma, because the debriefing fails miserably in its aim to assist. We are therefore brought to a situation which has been lucidly described by Eric L. Santner in his account of narrative fetishism, which he defines as “the construction and deployment of a narrative consciously or unconsciously designed to expunge the traces of the trauma or loss that called the narrative into being in the first place” (144). Furthermore, the passage shows that at this point Joseph is inarticulate because he is incapable of describing his experience; he is therefore asked to draw, as if that were simpler! Surely, the verbal sparseness of the text indicates that the mind is unable to function so soon after the traumatic moment. This episode can be envisaged both as descriptive and as a lengthy exploration of the malleability of language, a strategy which the narrative extends to two key concerns, the love plot and trauma, terms whose meaning drifts back and forwards from the certain to the inexact.

Immediately afterwards, the double plot begins. It takes us to a completely different literary landscape via David's memory of the Mau Mau campaign (1952-1960). He took part in the bombing of the Aberdare Mountains, the Kikuyus' homeland. Extending the use of resonant numbers, the narrative reveals that David did not fire one single round but “five five-hundred-pound bombs and five one-thousand-bombs” (7), a far deadlier cargo. The use of numbers welds the two plots together. Seiffert makes two further significant links or comparisons. First, the presence of a spotter in the plane, the flares, added to the fact that David notes that “[i]t was too dense to see much, the forest” (8), ensure that he never witnesses the outcome: he can only imagine what might have happened, which may or may not have been of much consequence. Paul Fussell, for example, makes it very clear that the claim for the accuracy of precision bombing has always been vastly exaggerated. Writing about World War Two, he states that it “became a comical oxymoron relished by bomber crews with a sense of black humor” (14).

The second move occurs at the moment intertextuality enters the scene: Seiffert's landscape is deeply reminiscent of Joseph Conrad's iconic *Heart of Darkness*:

Once, I remember, we came upon a man-of-war anchored off the coast. There wasn't even a shed there, and she was shelling the bush. It appears the French had one of their wars going on thereabouts [...] In the empty immensity of earth, sky, and water, there she was, incomprehensible, firing into a continent. Pop, would go one of the six-inch guns; a small flame would dart and vanish, a little white smoke would disappear, a tiny projectile would give a feeble screech –and nothing happened. Nothing could happen. There was a touch of insanity in the proceeding, a sense of lugubrious drollery in the sight; and it was not dissipated by somebody on board assuring me earnestly there was a camp of natives –he called them enemies!– hidden out of sight somewhere. (40-1)

It would be difficult to maintain that Seiffert was not recalling this highly iconic description. It comes from different century, it describes a different form of war (naval

in the case of Conrad), but in both circumstances bombardment into the invisible forest assumes that the colonial enemy is “hidden out of sight somewhere”. With the use of such terms as “incomprehensible”, “a touch of insanity”, the Conradian narrative expresses a value judgement, whereas Seiffert’s non-committed voice refrains, and whether David or the text as a whole shares similar views on war remains to be seen. Seiffert’s Conradian opening projects its dark shadow over the rest of the Seiffert’s exploration of horror: neither text will generate catharsis. Subsequently, the novel is not simply an account of contemporaneity but one that is keenly aware that there are literary ancestors and representational difficulties that stretch back over time.

### 3. The love plot

The hermeneutic uncertainty in *Afterwards* stems from the love plot, as the novel shifts between the conventions of romance and post-trauma, two genres that do not easily match. Although it is outside the scope of this paper to undertake a thorough account of the subject, some contextualization is necessary. De Rougemont’s highly influential hypothesis, expressed at the opening of his classic *L'Amour et l'Occident* (1939), that happy love has no history, is based on the solid foundation that Western archetypes are essentially tragic, as passion is located outside marriage, the consequences thereafter are predictably fatal. In contrast, much mainstream fiction resists such pessimism and champions the value and possibility of love-in-marriage, even if this is achieved—in the time-honored style of Jane Austen and the great Victorian triple-deckers—at the expense of omitting post-marriage scenes. In *To the Lighthouse*, one of Virginia Woolf’s characters ruminates “that the whole of life did not consist in going to bed with a woman” (162), a view which seemingly reflects Woolf’s uncompromising views, as set out in her 1919 essay on modern fiction. She insists that the modern novel should contain no distracting love interest. It would be fair to place Seiffert close to this skeptical school of thinking.

However, Seiffert is writing almost a century after Woolf, so other factors must play a role too. I would propose the following: first, the fact that libraries, publishers, bookshops, and Amazon catalogue “fiction” as distinct from “literary fiction” indicates a significant difference between fiction in which the love plot often plays a vital role and fiction where it does not. Second, I am aware that that sounds like a sweeping generalization; nonetheless, it is true that the love plot features little in criticism of the contemporary novel. A representative example is provided by Richard Lane, Rod Mengham and Philip Tew, who divide their influential *Contemporary British Fiction* (2003) into four sections, “Myth and History”, “Urban Thematics”, “Cultural Hybridity”, and “Pathological Subjects”, a division that shows that other concerns are of greater importance. In the introduction, it is stated that “[a]n alternative template, in which the organizing tensions of the writing are still primarily psychological in their mode of operation, comes from the historical version of Oedipal conflict” (4), in other words, the contemporary writer wants to kill not Sigmund Freud but the influence of

critical and novelistic forerunners. A similar lack of interest in the love plot is evident in other studies, such as Tew (2004), Head (2002), Hutchinson (2008) or Driscoll (2009).

If the explanation is Oedipal, Anita Brookner, whose novelistic career is almost exclusively focused on the examination of female desire and the love plot, has a lot to answer for. *A Start in Life* begins with a declamatory pronouncement that “Dr Weiss, at forty, knew that her life had been ruined by literature” (7). In other words, she has been greatly damaged by the misinformation enclosed in the love plot, a situation exacerbated by her career as literary scholar. Throughout the novel she suffers the consequences that belief in it ineluctably produces to such an extent that even at closure she is unable to make a start in life. Brookner’s all-engaging self-referentiality suggests that literary fiction should deal with other matters.

Third, current philosophical inquiries shed light on the subject, particularly the recent work by Byung-Chul Han (2012). He argues that the erosion of the other, which is basically the consequence of the Narcissism of the digital age, reduces if not eliminates the figure of the lover and the concept of eroticism; pornography inexorably extends its influence. This does not completely match the situation here, but Seiffert depicts a society that has likewise exiled Eros to its margins.

This is well illustrated in approaching the episode in *Afterwards* that is the closest to emotional or physical fulfillment; in line with Han, the impossibility of knowing the other becomes apparent. Joseph and Alice’s time together, I doubt we could call it happiness, is spent on a walking holiday in Scotland: there is mention of granite houses and the memory of ceilidhs. They spend their last night together at a B & B, which Joseph describes as “damp [...] but peaceful”.

They stayed late in the pub next door, but Alice wasn't tired when she got into bed. She felt the loss of her: permanent, final. She dozed and then later she cried. Tried to be quiet about it, though Joseph was sleeping in the other bed. But then he reached over in the dark found the crook of her arm, rested his fingertips there. A bit later he took her hand and held it until she stopped crying, and longer. It wasn't what she expected, Joseph didn't come into her bed, but it was gentle, soothing somehow, and Alice was grateful to have him lying awake with her. They got up with the alarm for the first time in a week and dressed slowly, without speaking. Handing stray socks and jumpers across the beds to one another, packing and tidying. Sun just rising and they could see each other in the half-light, both puffy-eyed. (160)

They are puffy-eyed, a condition that could equally be the upshot of stress or a hangover. A parallel is apparently being drawn between Alice’s sadness and Joseph’s trauma: in this instance, she suffers, she cries, she cannot sleep, but again this is just another situation where initial convergence cedes to divergence. Surely, a comparison between moments of sadness caused by memories of a dead relative and Joseph’s PTSD is completely disproportionate. At this particular juncture, tenderness is evoked by Alice finding comfort in Joseph’s caresses, by the exchange of the stray clothing, and other details that hover between affection and despair, as little more can be expected

from human relationships. This is precisely the knowledge Brookner's Dr Weiss did not secure.

The Alice-Joseph relationship is paralleled by David's marriage to Alice's grandmother, itself a second marriage, and consequently a highly unconventional one for its time and place.

Alice couldn't believe he [David] had nothing to tell: he'd fallen in love with a married woman at a time when divorce was still considered scandalous. His superiors admonished him, his friends in the air force advised him to end the affair. His parents refused to come to the wedding, and didn't speak to him for years because he went ahead regardless. (108)

Of course, what gives the marriage a romantic sheen, for Alice at least, is the colonial setting in Kenya, in her view, a much more exotic place than deepest suburbia or County Armagh. The narratives are stitched together by a series of mirror-like patterns, such as having them sitting in the suburban garden while David recalls the Nairobi garden (118); by passing remarks which certainly have a wider significance than their apparent banality, for example, "things out there were familiar and unfamiliar at the same time" (118); by Joseph hearing David describe his recovery from serious illness as "a lonely business" (119), an epithet which describes his own personal circumstances; and by David marrying a divorced woman while Joseph's relationship with Alice is his second serious affair. These –added to other parallels– are too numerous and thematically similar to be unpremeditated or to pass unnoticed, but there is a major dissimilarity: while David's move to suburbia with Isobel, the woman he loves, enables him to lead a reasonably sane life, such comfort will remain completely out of Joseph's reach. Although the double plot draws the two couples together, it also highlights their differences. Why love, desire or eroticism have no restorative power for Joseph is not articulated within the fictional context and therefore remains one of the novel's many disheartening enigmas. The most logical explanation is that more time is required for Joseph to reach a situation similar to David's, but however much that might respond to common sense or knowledge of psychology, it is not an interpretation that the text itself yields.

Where does an apparently lacklustre plot in a severely lustless novel leave us? The deliberate lustlessness accentuates the novel's concern with a series of issues surrounding both the modern love-plot and questions of guilt and responsibility in postwar scenarios. In *Essays in Love*, written in his inimitable hybrid style mixing fiction and philosophy, Alain de Botton's narrator expresses the following principle:

With the modern love affair, the adventure loses its hegemony, what happens can no longer be a reflection of the character's inner states. Chloe and I were moderns, inner monologuers rather than adventurers. The world had been largely stripped of capacities for romantic struggle [...] sex was a duty, not a crime. (132)

The consequence of this is that the therapeutic "night duty" depicted in Hemingway's *A Farewell to Arms*, (the nexus of wounded soldier–hospital bed–

Catherine Barkley), forms a completely different setup through its adherence to traditional tropes of desire within the De Rougemont parameters: the tragic love plot holds ground, modified, arguably in this instance, through an incongruous vision of gender and sexuality. Seiffert, it must be noted, is bleaker in her outlook than either Hemingway or de Botton, as the notion of a common history is something that the couple really does not have, reducing the cachet of sexuality to a bare minimum and heightening the importance of “inner monologues” as surrogate. The past remains another country and the present an uncharted one. Seiffert’s couple seem so distant that they do not even get involved in what de Botton calls romantic terrorism, that is, the constant vigilance of the partner’s actions and words that reads any suspicious remark or gesture as proof of unfaithfulness. If they have become “inner monologues”, they will never communicate meaningfully. Indeed, the word couple, too, has been emptied of its meaning. My first major conclusion therefore has to be that Seiffert judges the love plot to be irrelevant in modern narratives of war and its aftermath. It neither heals the warrior’s wounds nor has any beneficial or restorative function.

#### **4. Trauma**

David only starts talking after meeting Joseph. We are told –in a sentence which reads like a perfect metonym for trauma– of Joseph’s opinion of David’s account of colonial life: “His small head must have been full of it” (143), an echo of Joseph’s difficulty, “it was hard to get it all in the right order” (3), to which I referred previously. Whereas David is able to relive his earlier life and expurgate his sins, Joseph’s head is so full of it that the following pages, dedicated to his experience in Armagh, show that memory surfaces as nightmare rather than exorcism.

Joseph does externalize his anger and frustration shortly afterwards, in chapter eleven, which is again structured along the line of previous ones, that is to say, by the juxtaposition of seemingly similar events with scarce if any judgment from the narrator. From the first incident, a conversation between Alice and her mother, we learn that David’s Conradian account of firing into the jungle is a white lie. In fact, he was involved in an extremely dramatic incident of what is euphemistically called “[s]ympathetic detonation” (239). An aerial bomb detonated too early, causing all the other bombs to detonate (sympathetically) with such devastating circumstances that, with the bomb-bay still open, shrapnel ripped its way through David’s plane. With an emphasis that tries to widen conceptions of witnessing beyond the purely visual, David hears “everything” (239), while a flight engineer bleeds to death. David had previously only told his wife about it; the fact she was a nurse by profession is perhaps rather too overt symbolism. To a certain extent, Joseph has acquired that function, for this reason David apologizes for “running on the way I have” and admits “I used to talk about it with her” (243). While Joseph remains silent, he then proceeds to chatter for a lot longer about his own personal happiness during these years, mixing feelings of guilt with

lingering incomprehension of certain events. Once David has left, Joseph hurls paint everywhere:

The old man must have heard it all but he never came back. Joseph stood at the door with the shock of what he'd done. Cold, outside air filling the hallway. Paint flung across the floor and walls and the windows and seeping into the carpet. (251)

There is nothing problematic here, as such displacement of wartime rage has its roots in classical literature, from Achilles onwards. David is aware that his own stream of consciousness has triggered off an emotional outburst, another sympathetic detonation, and as before, he will not witness, but will again hear everything. His empathy, his awareness of trauma in another ex-combatant, explains his refusal to blame Joseph at all; he is conscious that his own recovery has come at the cost of precipitating another person's breakdown.

The rest of the novel deals with Joseph's fruitless attempt to expel his sense of guilt, unaware that David achieved this desirable goal only decades later. Joseph talks to his former Corporal but gets no relief, even when it is made abundantly clear that everyone in the car was armed. The argument that the British Army was at war with the IRA goes into one of Joseph's ears and straight out of the other. We are told that his former girlfriend could not tolerate his long periods of moodiness and introspection: "Just a substitute. Fucking for talking. No good having one without the other" (290), she laconically tells him. Venus will never ever overcome Mars, a premise that becomes gains credibility when Joseph and Alice have their final encounter. After a mundane conversation, she gets up, and walks out of the door without looking back; it is perhaps unnecessary to add that forgiveness at one minute before midnight is a quite common cultural cliché. Even the motif of sight, watching and witnessing falls away; she will not even look at him. In short he is back to square one if not even farther back than before, as Alice's family are probably going on a trip to Africa to revisit past scenes. They have bonded.

## **5. Death, Guilt and Responsibility**

Ruth Kluger's *Landscapes of Memory: A Holocaust Girlhood Remembered* begins:

Their secret was death, not sex. That's what the grown-ups were talking about, sitting up late round the table [...] I wanted to get in on the forbidden news, the horror stories, fascinating though incomplete as they always were – or perhaps even more fascinating for their opaqueness, that whiff of fantasy they had about them, though one knew they were true. Some were about strangers, others were about relatives, all were about Jews. (3)

The passage describes a realistic representation of awareness of what is, in this instance, both an estrangement of sexual knowledge and the presentation of the real taboo subject in Kluger's case: deportation and mass murder. Seiffert's novel adds



weight to the argument that the “secret” of modern times for adults is once again, death. This is also borne out in recent Man Booker prize winners, such as Hilary Mantel (2009 and 2012), Howard Jacobson (2010) or Julian Barnes (2011), whose central subject is decline and death, whether in Tudor times or the present day. Again, Seaton is particularly eloquent on the subject. How ironic it is, she states, that “in a century in which the developed world seeks more than ever to keep any direct experience of physical violence at arm’s length, images and representations of violent behaviour have become harder to escape than at any previous time in history” (287). Yet her emphasis on the strict constraints on reporting have been contested. Violence, it would seem, does make news, or in Jean Baudrillard’s terms, “[t]he media promotes the war, the war promotes the media” (31), nonetheless his demotion of action to staginess approaching virtual reality is less convincing than Seaton’s detailed account of what may and may not be shown.

Such existential bleakness may be temporarily pushed to one side if we concentrate on the interconnected questions of guilt and responsibility. In this passage, Primo Levi is very plainspoken:

The memory of a trauma suffered or inflicted is itself traumatic because recalling it is painful or at least disturbing [...] Here, as with other phenomena, we are dealing with a paradoxical analogy between victim and oppressor, and we are anxious to be clear: both are in the same trap, but is the oppressor, and he alone, who has prepared it and activated it; and if he suffers from this, it is right that he should suffer; and it is iniquitous that the victim should suffer from it, as indeed he does suffer from it, even at a distance of decades. (12)

Levi’s unshakeable conviction that an oppressor remains an oppressor, and the victim a victim not solely during the act of torture but for ever, is a response to the growth of ethical relativeness, a situation which the text ostensibly tries to avoid. *The Drowned and the Saved* was first published in 1986, and may have exercised an influence over Seiffert’s novel, but if that is not the case, they undoubtedly share similar concerns. *Afterwards* recounts the experience of two oppressors during several stages of their attempted but inevitably doomed wish to live as free from recall as possible. The double plot’s inextricable threads suggest that each story reflects on the other, despite their radically different conclusions. David has as happy an ending as possible: he has become relatively human, whereas Joseph has got nowhere on the road to recovery or to coming to terms with his military past.

The question that leaves us with is whether Seiffert’s novel appraises the Levi template, concluding along the same lines that it is right that Joseph suffers. This is a distinct possibility, due to Seiffert’s keen sensibility to official discourse and its nuances, revealing examples being the exploration of brief/debrief, or the ironical significance of sympathetic detonation. Joseph, both in his debriefing and in the encounter with his corporal, is told more or less the same thing: that he has done his duty. Peter Haidu’s analysis of Nazi language and particularly a speech by Himmler provides interesting evidence. He argues that the “desubjectification of the victim was a

programmed precondition for his or her victimization, a precondition enabling the perpetrators' enactment of the narrative program of exterminations" (291). One death in Armagh is a long way from the holocaust, yet there is a similarity. Joseph feels guilty because he is aware that the process of desubjectification does not function. He does not accept that the victim was either, in human terms, simply someone out to get him, or else, a desubjectified being. To say that Seiffert is hard on Joseph is to completely miss the point. Joseph's suffering derives precisely from both the medical awareness of "long term effects on personality and adjustment" (Joseph et al., 2) and also from the creative insight and irony that it is his humanity –his refusal to see death as an inevitable outcome or as a statistical item– that torments him. In short, he suffers because he cannot envisage his action as other than bringing about what is, in Seaton's terms, a reality death. David, in contrast, is able to function properly because he never saw the Mau Mau –in the most literal sense of the word, they were either hidden by dense foliage or not there at all– hence he does not imagine them as life-threatening, which would inevitably facilitate their desubjectification. This is why, ironically, David looks more kindhearted than Joseph; the former's increased sociability is the result of an ambivalent stance towards death which Joseph's humanity will not provide him with. This is a very cruel situation, but it is a completely coherent one. As a consequence, redemption and forgiveness have become immaterial.

The sparseness of *Afterwards* brings to the fore the whole subject of witnessing. Bernard-Donals and Richard Geljzer, picking up on Levi's awareness of the "self-consciousness of the written witness" (60), argue that written memoirs, due to their plasticity, afford the witness the possibility of redefining reality. Oral testimony is qualified by different phenomena, the first is the knowledge that the record is destined for posterity, which conditions the witness's discourse. In any case, they add, the reporter and witness are separated by a "vast imaginative space" (73). Consequently, Bernard-Donals and Geljzer emphasize the importance of gaps, stutters and hesitance, namely those parts of speech that lack a denotation and which will remain stubbornly inaccessible to their audience; they "can only be glimpsed" (58). *Afterwards* shows exactly that awareness of the nature of memory, and subsequently bases its portrayal of Joseph principally on glimpses, gaps, stutters and hesitance. Only David, for having lived through a similar situation, is capable of turning pointers of inarticulateness into fuller meaning. What distinguishes the two characters is specifically the extent to which David himself learns how to fill the gaps, even if this costs Joseph his sanity. Levi's forceful assertion that torturers suffer and deserve to do so is therefore not put in doubt by Seiffert's text at any moment, a pointed rejoinder to the ethical vagaries of Bernhard Schlink's hugely successful *The Reader* (1997). On the contrary, the fact that we can analyze the reasons for Joseph's trauma while simultaneously acknowledging that he will not possess a successful exit strategy is indeed the reason why there will be no closure. Hayden White, in his discussion of Woolf, argues that "literary modernism was a product of an effort to represent a historical reality for which the older, classical realist modes of representation were inadequate" (51). This can be extended, as it is surely the case that in the line of succession, the Seiffert style, informed by postmemory, informed

by our better understanding of PTSD, is also aware of the dangers of a Baudrillardian approach to conflict in which the discursive and virtual play such an important role, and, mistakenly or otherwise, whittle away at questions of responsibility and guilt. Conceivably, in Seiffert's text, such an approach would become the ultimate form of literary fetishism in a viewing society; for this reason, I conclude that Joseph must be seen to suffer, as it is ethical that he should do so. This is why Seiffert designs her book on misleading parallels, as the text continually asks us to judge to what extent war and trauma should be approached through contrastive analysis. In the end, following Levi's template, such an approach is seen to be toxic, because it looks askance at the key issues. It contributes nothing to our understanding of trauma, or, as the case of Joseph shows, just makes matters worse.

## **6. Conclusion**

In closing, I believe it is necessary to answer a question that readers of this article might have been asking themselves: it is really acceptable to constantly back up arguments about *Afterwards* by reference to Holocaust studies? In a recent article, Sue Vice stated, "Others [commentators] may follow the view that to understand or analyze a perpetrator perspective is to exonerate or to encourage inappropriate identification" (15), and clearly a combatant involved in bombing in a colonial war or a "squaddy" who shoots a suspected member of the IRA are irrefutably perpetrators who suffer from "perpetration-induced traumatic stress (PITS)" (22). Seiffert is a writer whose work, by moving from Germany in World War Two to Britain at the time of *The Troubles*, invites us to consider such teasing problems. Is Seiffert really trying to extend Holocaust parameters to conflicts recounted in *Afterwards*? As I have noted, Seiffert's pared-down narration is one strategy which makes it difficult if not impossible to discover if the narrative voice or author herself has identifiable views on perpetrator trauma that would enable us to articulate a convincing judgement about the text's ethical and moral polemics. The problem can be framed in the following question: given that the text focuses on two heads which are so "full of it", does that imply that these are two variations on the same theme?

I would argue that the highly detailed account of their case history makes the jump from the individual to the general impossible without recourse to speculation on issues the text itself does not engage with. Therefore, Seiffert's withdrawal of sympathy from her characters, rather than serve to link the events her characters are involved in to Holocaust literature or the shadow of Conrad, contributes to separation, thus reinforcing the specificity of colonialism and the uniqueness of the Holocaust. This becomes, therefore, a perfectly coherent warning about potential intellectual incoherence, what we perhaps could call critical relativism. Seiffert's text thus adheres closely to Primo Levi's reiterated beliefs in the dangers of exoneration, also outlined by Vice, but that proximity does not make for engaging reading: at the risk of repetition, the double plot resists, more than encourages, a contrastive approach. Joseph found it impossible to put

things in order, just as the reader has to untangle questions that cannot be solved by a loose comparison to others with enticingly similar structures but different histories and contexts; the latter are much more important than the former. Specificity must be the decisive factor, else we confront the danger of drawing misleading parallels, or what is, to adopt Seiffert's use of military terms, a sympathetic detonation.

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**Conferenciante:** Jeroen Vandaele, Universidad de Gante (Bélgica).  
**Título:** How comedy makes us feel.  
**Fecha y hora:** Lunes, 3 de abril de 2017, a las 12 horas.  
**Lugar:** Aula Magna, Facultad de Filosofía y Letras, edificio Geografía e Historia.




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**CURSO EL ACTOR ANTE LA CÁMARA: LA MIRADA EN LA INTERPRETACIÓN AUDIOVISUAL** 20/12/2016

## **A Rhetorical Approach to the Literary Essay: Pedagogical Implications**

Margarita Esther Sánchez Cuervo  
Universidad de Las Palmas de Gran Canaria  
margaritaesther.sanchez@ulpgc.es

### ABSTRACT

The teaching of the literary essay is usually ignored in many universities due to its probing and inconclusive form which has not favoured the existence of models of analysis. However, the argumentative nature of this discourse can be examined through a reading that allows the recognition of some rhetorical operations like the invention of arguments (*inuentio*), their arrangement (*dispositio*) and expressive manifestation (*elocutio*). This article proposes a model of analysis following this rhetorical approach. In particular, I apply this analysis to a short essay by Virginia Woolf, 'Royalty'. Woolf has been considered a major writer of the twentieth century. Although the style of her novels has been extensively researched from diverse perspectives, the style of her essays has not received much critical attention. Throughout my study, I indicate how the recognition and interpretation of arguments and rhetorical figures can help to define the style of this essay. Furthermore, I provide some guidelines for the identification and further interpretation of these rhetorical elements. Both the analysis and the guidelines can be useful in the literature and composition classes.

**Keywords:** teaching literature, literary essay, argumentative discourse, rhetorical figures, Virginia Woolf

## 1. Introduction

The teaching of literature in many universities is usually restricted to the major literary genres: narrative, poetry and drama. As a result, the essay has often been neglected in contemporary literature teaching programmes.<sup>1</sup> The literary essay has been traditionally considered a hybrid genre that comprises different types of genre such as the expository, the descriptive, the narrative and the argumentative. The essay presents an exploratory, experiential and inconclusive form that has restrained the existence of precise models of analysis and, for this reason, the teaching of the essay as a genre is not very common. In this respect, Saloman (2012: 13) states that the absence of the literary essay in the classroom is due to the indifference that many scholars feel towards this genre, and the fact that they aren't able to recognise either its literary value or its significance to modern writers. Furthermore, the openness of this genre has favoured the writers' autonomy and the reader's participation in the essayistic process, which has encouraged the existence of diverse interpretive responses (Saloman, 2013: 56). Although it is a genre that is difficult to categorise, the argumentative nature of the essayistic act is usually preponderant and the essay can be then approached following a rhetorical model of analysis.

In this study I propose a model of analysis based on Virginia Woolf's essay 'Royalty'. In order to carry out the study of this text, it is advisable that students are familiar with Woolf's context of production of her non-fiction work. As an essayist, Woolf is renowned for her feminist stance, her ideas about literature in general and the essay in particular and, in many cases, her essays are also a pretext for acquiring a better understanding of her novels.<sup>2</sup>

Apart from her long celebrated essays *A Room of One's Own*, which is mainly concerned with the relations between women and fiction throughout history, and *Three Guineas*, which deals with political issues on the verge of the second world war, she wrote hundreds of shorter essays for the press in which she reviewed the works of both famous and little known women writers. As a literary reviewer, Woolf reformulates the traditional definition of the essay as an 'expository' genre and rejects her contemporaries' conception of the critic as a privileged reader that should judge one's critical work as an objective science. Instead, the essay represents for Woolf "the expression of personal opinion" (Woolf, 1992: 6), and an aesthetic end in itself that should possess a flexible form capable of holding every aspect of human experience (Lojo, 2001: 78). These Woolf's shorter essays can be read following a rhetorical model of analysis. Through this model, some principles related to the invention of arguments (*inuentio*), their arrangement (*dispositio*) and expressive manifestation (*elocutio*) are useful in the construction of argumentative texts like the modern essay (Arenas, 1997: 134).

The following section of this article discusses the essay within a rhetorical context and offers an outline of the rhetorical levels encountered in Woolf's essay: *inuentio*, *dispositio* and *elocutio*. After this explanation I apply the rhetorical model to her essay 'Royalty'. In the last section of this study I try to point out how the account of arguments and figures found can help to define the style of 'Royalty', and I offer some



guidelines for the identification of these elements in Woolf's and other authors' essays (Sánchez Cuervo, fc.).

## **2. Theoretical framework: the essay from a rhetorical perspective**

Before conducting the analysis, it is necessary to possess some knowledge about the rhetorical tradition as regards to its historical background and more modern conceptions of this discipline. Although students are used to recognising and evaluating the rhetorical figures that are present in poetic texts, it is uncertain whether they have acquired the operations of classical rhetoric that are an essential part of the production of rhetorical speech, and that will be pointed out in the analysis of the essay.

In his *Rhetoric*, Aristotle refers to a semantic and pragmatic conception of *logos* immersed in a construction of the speaker, the spoken content and the hearer (Aristotle 1909: I.3). In a wide sense, Rhetoric is at the same time a general model for the production of texts and an instrument of textual analysis (Albadalejo 1989: 11; Lausberg 1983: 83-84). The textual model of Rhetoric thus possesses a semiotic nature that includes the formal construction of the text (syntax) deriving from its referential elements (semantics) and that confers a relevant place to all intervening elements in the communication of the text (pragmatics): addresser, addressee and the contexts of production and reception. In Woolf's essays, the pragmatic dimension is particularly important because of the explicit presence of the essayist wishing to concur with the "common reader" to whom she dedicates her first published volume of essays.<sup>3</sup>

But *Rhetoric* also becomes a theory of argumentation such as that devised by Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca (1969), who studied both the rational and linguistic mechanisms present in argumentation and the effects of the text upon the audience. In this line, arguments can be defined as linguistic patterns that transfer acceptability from premises to conclusions. Similarly, rhetorical figures can also serve as arguments because of the ways they are constructed to engage the audience thanks to their effective nature and their capacity for attracting attention (Tindale, 2004: 63).

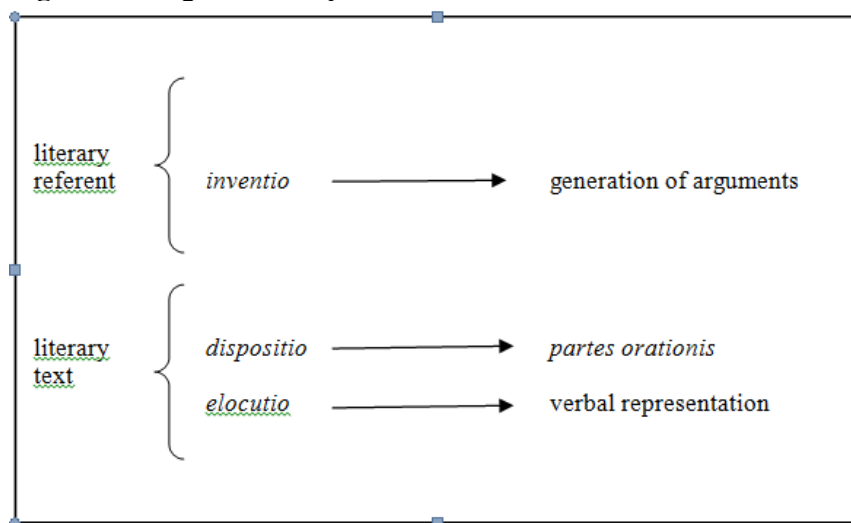
### *2.1. Partes artis*

Classical rhetoric recognises five operations or *partes artis* in the production of rhetorical speech: *inuentio*, *dispositio*, *elocutio*, *memoria* and *actio* ([Cicero] 1981: I.7; Quintilian 1920: III.3). In argumentative texts like the essay, the levels of *memoria* and *actio* are usually absent since they have to do with the memorisation of the text and its oral reproduction, respectively. The inventive and dispositive levels are represented linguistically by means of the elocutive or verbal manifestation of the text. Through *inuentio*, the author selects those elements that comprise the referent of discourse and that allows different types of arguments to be chosen and constructed (Crosswhite, 2011: 200-201). In essays like 'Royalty', the central argument is the act/person interaction. With this reasoning, the reaction of the act that corresponds to the person's

artistic output, judgement, or reaction, is meant to revise our conception of that individual (Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca, 1969: 297-98). In this essay, Woolf reviews the queen Marie of Roumania's autobiography. Therefore, the interaction will be made between this monarch and her life story (Fahnestock, 2005: 219-20).

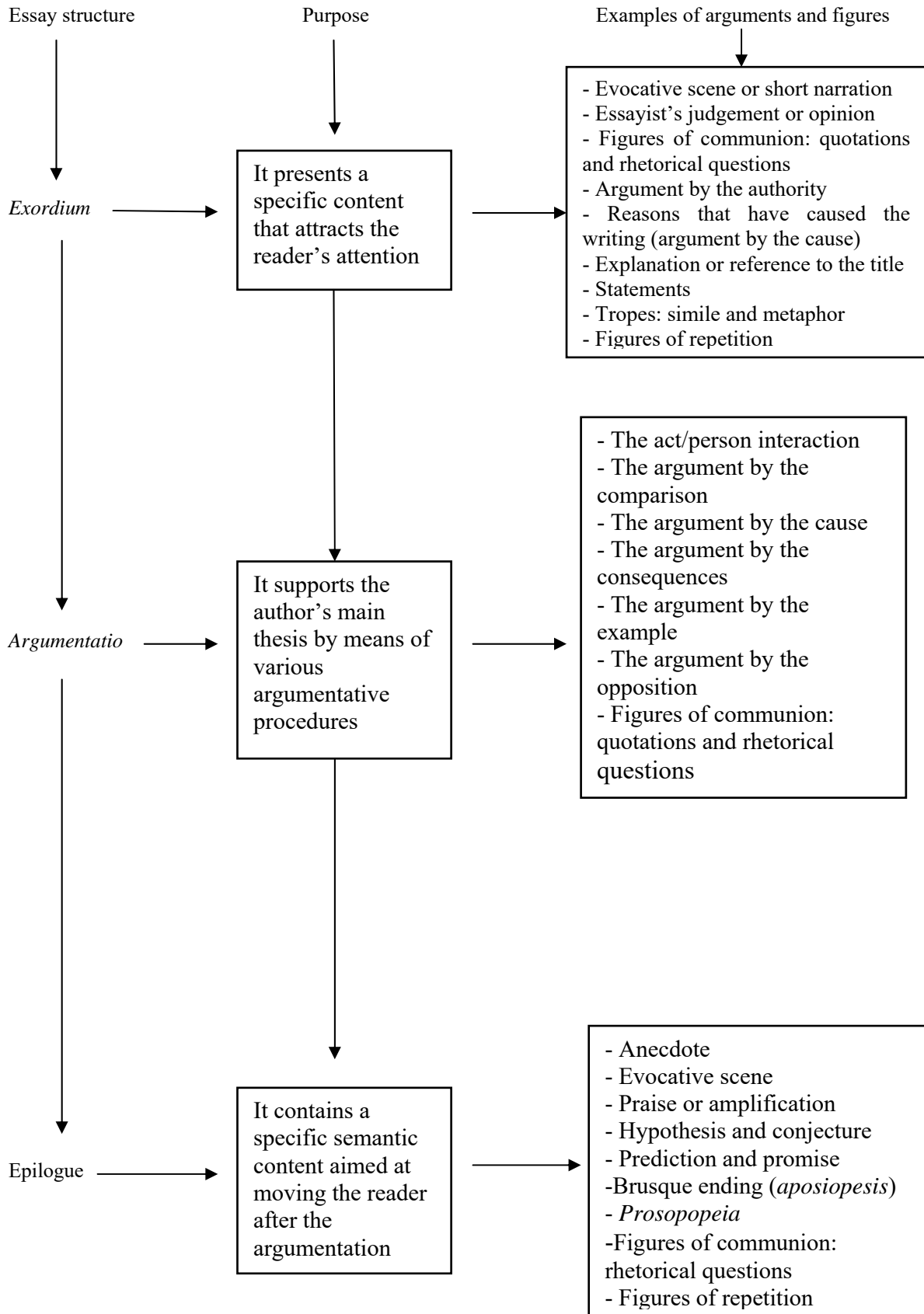
Through *dispositio*, the syntactic and semantic conceptual elements deriving from inuentio are structured. The *partes orationis* are located in the *dispositio* level, which vertebrates the rhetorical organisation of the essay and its referent. The essay, which is a more spontaneous form than the classical rhetorical speech, can be organised into four *partes orationis*: *exordium* or introduction, *narratio/expositio* or narration/exposition, *argumentatio* or argumentation and epilogue (Barthes, 1982: 66).<sup>4</sup> The second and third categories in particular contribute to the syntactic organisation of the text. There are two main ways in which the *partes orationis* can be ordered: the *ordo naturalis*, which follows the order of the four categories, and the *ordo artificialis*, which does not. In 'Royalty' an *ordo artificialis* prevails because *narratio* does not fulfil its classical function of illustrating some subsequent reasoning but rather merges with the author's observations. As a result, *narratio* becomes argumentation proper (Sánchez-Cuervo 2004: 265-266; 2010: 269-70).

**Figure 1:** Diagram of the *partes artis*



By means of *elocutio*, the reader recognises possible expressive devices such as rhetorical figures. The essayist, when building this *elocutio* level, activates the aesthetic function using *ornatus*. The component of implicit pleasure in the concept of elocutive ornatus is responsible for the reader's aesthetic experience and it is an important criterion for specifying the literariness of a text. In the literary essay, ornatus has a simultaneous double intention: aesthetic, due to a peculiar textual form that may cause literary specificity, and argumentative, since it can lead a reader to reflect on the way he/she thinks (Arenas, 1997: 361-362). This view of indissolubility between arguments and figures is supported by some scholars (Vickers, 1988: 314-15; Zulick, 1998; Fahnestock, 2005: 218; Plantin, 2009: 327).

Figure 2: Diagram of the *partes orationis*



### 3. Rhetorical analysis of 'Royalty'

This essay reviews *The Story of My Life* by Marie, Queen of Roumania, first published in the *Time and Tide* newspaper, 1 December 1934.<sup>5</sup> Apart from offering a portrait of this woman through her autobiography, Woolf introduces some criticism to the monarchy institution, as I will show with the analysis of some passages. In the essay, Woolf refers to the royal family as “lions and tigers” that are kept “in a beautiful brightly lit room behind bars”. The identification of these people with caged animals involves a metaphorical process that students should recognise and evaluate. This trope will be recurrent in the text and entails an effective rhetorical device in the essay. Its presence in the levels of *inuentio* and *dispositio* is complemented by other rhetorical figures in *elocutio*, as I point out below in my analysis of the *partes orationis*.

#### 3.1. *Exordium*

The first paragraph introduces the reasons why the essayist considers this particular review worthy of attention: “The reasons seem to be that she is royal; that she can write; that no royal person has ever been able to write before; and that the consequences may well be extremely serious”.

In offering these motives, the author anticipates some of the ideas that the reader will be able to discover, like the criticism towards royalty and Marie’s gentle portrait. Furthermore, the explicit mention of the noun “reason” should help the reader realise that these lines can be analysed as an argument by the cause. This argument is a semantic content typical of the *exordium* that tries to catch the reader’s interest and predispose him/her favourably.

#### 3.2. *Argumentatio*

This is the longest section and comprises six paragraphs. In the first one, Woolf offers a metaphorical definition of royalty that equals the regal members to wild animals that have been confined in a luxury cage for ages:

Royalty to begin with, merely as an experiment in the breeding of human nature, is of great psychological interest. For centuries a certain family has been segregated; bred with a care only lavished upon race-horses; splendidly housed, clothed, and fed; abnormally stimulated in some ways, suppressed in others; worshipped, stared at, and kept shut up, as lions and tigers are kept, in a beautiful brightly lit room behind bars.

In the second paragraph, Woolf continues using the same metaphorical elements to describe Queen Marie, the writer that she is assessing: “Now one of these royal animals, Queen Marie of Roumania, has done what had never been done before; she has opened the door of the cage and sauntered out into the street. Queen Marie can write; in a second, therefore, the bars are down.”

Readers should reflect on the criticism to the regal institution that the essayist exposes when she states that Marie can escape from her prison due to her ability to write, probably meaning that other royals cannot excel at anything so worthwhile. The development of the argument by the person/act interaction is described by means of some quotes that Woolf introduces from Marie's autobiography where she describes her grandmother, Queen Victoria:

Queen Victoria's teeth were 'small like those of a mouse'; she had a way of shrugging her shoulders when she laughed; when they rode on the sands at evening 'the shadows become so long that it is as though our horses were walking on stilts'; there was a marvellous stone in the museum, like a large piece of shortbread, that 'swayed slightly up and down when held at one end'.

Some other comments by Woolf summarise her views about these excerpts: "This little girl, in short, smelt, touched, and saw as other children do; but she had an unusual power of following her feeling until she had coined the word for it. That is to say, she can write". These observations represent an example of the interaction between Marie of Roumania and her work, of how her life affects her literary work and vice versa. The use of these attributed quotations reveals the use of a figure of communion that tries to bring about or increase communion with the audience by evoking Marie's presence throughout the text (Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca, 1969; Tindale, 2004; Graff and Winn, 2006).

In the third paragraph, Woolf presents an argument by the comparison to reflect the differences between Queen Victoria and Marie's writing. While the first had to write out of duty, the second could indulge in her written work: "If we want an example of the difference between writing and non-writing we have only to compare a page of Queen Marie with a page of Queen Victoria". The essayist affirms that Queen Victoria's writing "was forced by the exigencies of her profession to fill an immense number of pages, and some of these have been printed and bound between covers". In the course of her explanation, Woolf uses a simile that exposes the queen's endeavour tellingly: "She has to express herself in words; but words will not come to her call. When she feels strongly and tries to say so, it is like hearing an old savage beating with a wooden spoon on a drum". After the inclusion of more quoted examples that support her opinion about Victoria's poor writing, Woolf adds a sentence that also reinforces her negative vision of royalty as an institution that is detached from people: "The majority of her subjects, knowing her through her writing, came to feel that only a woman immune from the usual frailties and passions of human nature could write as Queen Victoria wrote. It added to her royalty".

In contrast, Victoria's granddaughter, Marie of Roumania, "has been born with a pen in her hand. Words do her bidding". This is the beginning of the fourth paragraph in which Woolf praises Marie's ability to reflect her experiences in the autobiography that she is reviewing. More extracts from the book are exposed so that readers can continue feeling Marie's presence in the essay. In the passage, Marie explains how she decided to write about herself:

'Even as a child', she says, 'I possessed a vivid imagination and I liked telling stories to my sisters . . . . Then one of my children said to me: "Mama, you ought to write all this down, it is a pity to allow so many beautiful pictures to fade away" . . . . I knew nothing whatever about writing, about style or composition, or about the "rules of the game", but I did know how to conjure up beauty, also at times, emotion. I also had a vast store of words.'

The essayist underlines that “she is able to hit off a moment's impression, a vivid detail” and that “she has the rarer power of sweeping these figures along in a torrent of language; lives grow and change beneath our eyes; scenes form themselves; details arrange themselves; all the actors come alive”. In this example, some rhetorical figures of repetition are used to emphasise Marie's writing style through the rhythmical sequence of the sentences. The reiteration of symmetrical short sentences that are of approximately equal length and corresponding structure can be analysed as *isocolon* (Lanham 1991: 93). Furthermore, the repetition of the same word at the end of a sequence of clauses or sentences as in “scenes form themselves; details arrange themselves” is called *epistrophe* and suggests the queen's ability to create a coherent text starting from different elements (Lanham, 1991: 16).

The fifth paragraph is intent on offering some details about Marie's portrait of her royal relative Elizabeth of Roumania. The essayist provides a summary of how Marie sees this “dear charming Queen” through a narrative that includes excerpts like this one:

She becomes a complex, contradictory human being, wearing floating veils and a motoring cap, at once ‘splendid and absurd’. We see her posing in bed under a top light; dramatizing herself melodramatically; luxuriating in the flattery of sycophants; declaiming poetry through a megaphone to ships at sea; waving a napkin to grazing cows whom she mistakes for loyal subjects – deluded and fantastic, but at the same time generous and sincere.

In the description of this queen's doings, Woolf uses several –ing verbs that denote action and grant the passage a dynamic quality. The repetition of similar endings to words, phrases or sentences can be analysed as *homoioteleuton* (Lanham, 1991: 83-85). Although this section of the essay is entirely devoted to the description of this grand character, the reader should be reminded that Woolf still continues to show more evidence of how Marie's work can contribute to characterising her personality by using the act/person interaction.

The sixth paragraph introduces Woolf's consideration that “nobody is going to claim that Queen Marie ranks with Saint Simon or with Proust”. But maybe this lesser compliment is replaced by her next remark that extends the opening metaphor that likens Marie to caged animals, by means of which “it would be equally absurd to deny that by virtue of her pen she has won her freedom”. As a result of this liberation, “She is no longer a royal queen in a cage. She ranges the world, free like any other human being to laugh, to scold, to say what she likes, to be what she is. And if she has escaped, so too, thanks to her, have we. Royalty is no longer quite royal.”

This extract contains more rhetorical figures of repetition. Firstly, the isocolon that underscores the queen's “newly” mundane activities by the reiteration of several

infinitive verbs: “free like any other human being to laugh, to scold, to say what she likes, to be what she is”. Secondly, through *polyptoton*, which repeats a word in a different form in the negative statement “Royalty is no longer royal”. In *polyptoton*, a change of form and a change of function occur at the same time (Fahnestock, 1999: 168-177; 2011: 30). The lexeme “royalty” appears first as a noun and then as an adjective in “royal”. In this example the negation that is present in the predicate deprives the term “royalty” of all its otherworldly qualities and, as a result, it is “no longer royal”. Thirdly, the *isocolon* that, once more, stresses the rhythmical movements of Marie’s relatives as if they were puppets, which supports her unfavourable image of monarchy: “Uncle Bertie, Onkel, Aunty, Nando, and the rest are not mere effigies bowing and smiling, opening bazaars, expressing exalted sentiments, and remembering faces always with the same sweet smile”. And, finally, the same figure is used to define them as “violent and eccentric; charming and ill-tempered; some have bloodshot eyes; others handle flowers with a peculiar tenderness. In short, they are very like ourselves. They live as we do”.

### 3.3. Epilogue

The final paragraph contains several rhetorical questions that can make the reader ponder about the future of monarchy and, at the same time, they can be interpreted as an irony that questions the value of the longstanding institution. The rhetorical question is a figure of communion that also tries to empathise with the audience. It does not try to provoke an immediate answer even if the author obtains the audience’s agreement. It is not a real question, but a statement intoned or punctuated as a question (Fahnestock, 2011: 298-299). In the essays selected, this procedure involves series of reflections on Woolf’s part about, in the first place, the utility of the institution and the respect that we must owe to people that seem to be like us:

But what will be the consequences if this familiarity between them and us increases? Can we go on bowing and curtsying to people who are just like ourselves? Are we not already a little ashamed of the pushing and the staring now that we know from these two stout volumes that one at least of the animals can talk?

In the second place, another set of questions hints at the possibility of Marie’s gift being inherited by her descendants. Consequently, monarchy may lose its strength if their members start to have talents of their own or if we start to realise that they are more than living statues who salute and whom we salute:

[...] and if Queen Marie's descendants improve upon her gift as much as she has improved upon Queen Victoria's is it not quite possible that a real poet will be King of England in a hundred years' time? And suppose that among the autumn books of 2034 is Prometheus Unbound, by George the Sixth, or Wuthering Heights, by Elizabeth the Second, what will be the effect upon their loyal subjects? Will the British Empire survive? Will Buckingham Palace look as solid then as it does now?

These rhetorical questions pose at the same time a hypothesis about the future literary accomplishments of some royal members and the citizens' new views towards the institution if this happens. The two final sentences suggest a change of mind deriving from this fateful prediction that can place monarchy in jeopardy: "Words are dangerous things, let us remember. A republic might be brought into being by a poem". The use of both rhetorical questions and hypotheses is a semantic content representative of the epilogue as regards to obtaining the reader's good disposition even in the last lines of the text and making them reflect on the ideas exposed.

#### 4. Discussion and conclusions

After the analysis, readers can examine the form of the essay and recognise the *partes orationis* but, are they capable of saying why the text is persuasive, or even emotive, in that case? Can they, in brief, describe the style of 'Royalty'? In this respect, style is more than choosing certain word forms and recognising some rhetorical figures. Style has to do with the conjunction of all the elements encountered at the levels of *inuentio*, *dispositio* and *elocutio* (Gross and Dearin, 2003: 135). Students should then assess how the choice of specific structures helps to transmit a certain thought and whether this thought is significant in the text.

In the case of 'Royalty', the reader can make the following account of single effects that are meant to acquire a global meaning and, as a result, produce expressive force in the essay:

1. At the level of *inuentio*, the person/act interaction is the main argument that allows Woolf her particular review of Marie's work.
2. In arrangement or *dispositio*, a specific ordering of arguments and rhetorical figures is followed:
  - a. *Exordium*: the reader has identified an argument by the cause as the main semantic content that tries to attract the reader's good favour. Furthermore, the causes exposed point at an allegedly negative conception of monarchy.
  - b. *Argumentatio*: the reader has recognised several arguments and figures in order to sustain a definite image of the character that is being portrayed:
    - i. The metaphor that identifies the members of the royal family with wild animals imprisoned in a cage. This metaphor is extended and appears in several fragments of the essay.
    - ii. Quotes from Marie's autobiography that represent figures of communion with the audience.
    - iii. Comments by the essayist starting from those quotes that redefine Queen Marie.
    - iv. An argument by the comparison between Marie and her grandmother, Queen Victoria.
    - v. A simile that shows Queen Victoria's poor use of words.



- vi. Figures of repetition like *isocolon* and *epistrophe* in order to emphasise Marie's talent with words; *homoiooteleuton*, in order to describe some of Marie's family portraits, and *polyptoton*, in order to criticise the notion of royalty.
- c. Epilogue: the reader has distinguished the inclusion of rhetorical questions as figures of communion that can be interpreted as ironical pleas as to the future of royalty, and hypotheses about the achievements of their members. Both the questions and the hypotheses are regarded as semantic contents of the epilogue.

This sequence of arguments and figures in arrangement or *dispositio* can become persuasive if the students are trained to perceive the following conditions (Gross and Dearing, 2003: 99-113):

- The logical order of arguments into *exordium*, *argumentatio* and epilogue.
- The psychological order of arguments by means of which the essayist redefines Marie as a vivid and charming character that does not live in an inaccessible palace like some of her other royal relatives. As a result, Marie is presented as a gentle person through the unfolding of quotes from her autobiography and the essayist's positive comments.
- The self-referential nature of Woolf's essay that is related with the audience's consciousness of a specific arrangement. In particular, Woolf's readers of this and other essays will look for an introduction, a development of ideas and a conclusion in those texts concerned with the review of an author and/or his/her work, and this arrangement can favour their receptivity.

3. In *elocutio* or style, a set of arguments and rhetorical figures is offered throughout the *partes orationis*:

- a. The initial argument by the cause that gives the reasons for writing the essay.
- b. Metaphor and simile are tropes used for different purposes: the first figure offers a novel way of presenting royalty, and the second describes the queen Victoria's writing habits.
- c. The quotes from Marie's autobiography and the rhetorical questions are interpreted as figures of communion with readers.
- d. Some figures of repetition are inserted in *argumentatio* to underline several notions. The figures examined are *isocolon*, *epistrophe*, *homoiooteleuton* and *polyptoton*.

In relation to other Woolf's essays, a close reading of her literary reviews confirms that she usually keeps the same order: she starts by offering an introductory argument to attract her readers' good favour and present the character and/or the work that she is talking about. Then she develops the argumentation by means of the act/person

interaction, offering quotes from the work that she is reviewing as well and anecdotes and personal details of the character under discussion that can bring him/her to presence. Finally, she concludes with reasonings that are also representative of the epilogue.

Once readers have identified and interpreted the group of arguments and rhetorical figures, they can finally try to explain why 'Royalty' is emotive or expressive. They should conclude that, bearing in mind all the devices analysed above at the levels of *inuentio*, *dispositio* and *elocutio*, Woolf presents Marie of Roumania as a capable writer who could escape from her royal prison due to her way with words, as reflected by metaphor; who became a freer person because of this literary talent, as remarked by several figures of repetition; and who could enjoy life as she wished, as read in the quotations from her autobiography and the essayist's further comments. Hence, Marie's final image as a remarkable woman who could do as she wished despite her royal condition is the result of the conjunction of all these rhetorical elements.

#### 4.1. Some guidelines for the analysis

My purpose with this article has been to offer a model of analysis that can be applied not only to Woolf's essays but also to other authors', with the subsequent variations in their nonfiction work. The rhetorical approach is especially apt for the reading and interpretation of the argumentative discourse, and allows both the identification of *partes artis*, which requires some knowledge of the author's context pertaining to the motivations for his/her essay writing at the level of *inuentio*, and the *partes orationis* that are found in *dispositio*.

I include below a list of questions that may be used as training for approaching the essay from a rhetorical perspective. These questions can be adapted to essays dealing with topics that do not necessarily include the review of an author or his/her work. However, the recognition of *partes artis* and *partes orationis* should be possible in those essays that contain an argumentative nature.

- Which is the main argument generated by *inuentio*?
- Can you identify all the *partes orationis*? Which arguments are prevalent in each category?
- Do the *partes orationis* follow a logical order into introduction, narration/exposition, argumentation and epilogue?
- How can arrangement or *dispositio* become persuasive? Which conditions should be recognised?
- Which rhetorical figures can you distinguish at the level of *elocutio*?
- Are these rhetorical arguments and figures intended for giving a positive or a negative image of the theme/character/work under consideration? Can you give some examples that hint at one or the other possibility?
- Would you say that these devices contribute to praising the character/work that is being reviewed? If the answer is affirmative/negative, in which way does the essayist achieve that?

- After enumerating all the arguments and figures that you have previously identified, can you explain in which way they help to define the expressive or emotive force of the essay? Which final image do you perceive of the theme/character/work reviewed?

## Notes

1. Some studies on the style of the essay are “James Baldwin’s Style: A Prospectus for the Classroom”, by J. F. Fleischauer (1975), “‘Shooting an Elephant’ – An Essay to Teach”, by K. Keskinen (1966), and “On the Neglect of Twentieth-Century Nonfiction: A Writing Teacher’s View”, by D. Rygiel (1984).

2. For a recent treatment of critical studies on Woolf’s essay writing, see Leila Brosnan (1997), *Reading Virginia Woolf’s Essays and Journalism. Breaking the Surface of Silence*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press; Beth Carole Rosenberg and Jeanne Dubino (Eds.) (1997), *Virginia Woolf and the Essay*. New York: St. Martin’s Press; Elena Gualtieri (2000), *Virginia Woolf’s Essays: Sketching the Past*. London: Macmillan; Anne Fernald (2006), *Virginia Woolf. Feminism and the Reader*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan; Judith Allen (2010), *Virginia Woolf and the Politics of Language*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press; Randi Saloman (2012), *Virginia Woolf’s Essayism*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.

3. See Virginia Woolf (1984). *The Common Reader. First Series*. New York: Harcourt Brace.

4. In *Rhetorica ad Herennium* the following *partes orationis* are discussed: *exordium* or introduction, *narratio* or statement of facts, *divisio* or division, *confirmatio* or proof, *confutatio* or refutation, and *conclusio* or conclusion ([Cicero] 1981: I.3). Quintilian distinguishes five main *partes orationis*: *proemium* or introduction, statement of facts, proof, refutation and peroration (Quintilian 1920: III.8).

5. The text was then reprinted in *The Moment and Other Essays* (1947), edited by the Hogarth Press; in the fourth volume of *Collected Essays* (1967) also edited by the Hogarth Press; in the anthology *Women and Writing*, edited by Michèle Barrett in 1979; the anthology *A Woman’s Essays*, edited by Rachel Bowlby in 1992, which is the one used for this study and, finally, in the sixth and last volume of *The Essays of Virginia Woolf*, edited by Stuart Clarke in 2011.

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## **Ellen M. Rogers as a Feminist and Orientalist Travel Writer: A Study of her *A Winter in Algeria: 1863-4* (1865)**

Mouloud Siber  
University of Tizi-Ouzou, Algeria  
siberm@yahoo.fr

### ABSTRACT

This article studies the Orientalist and Feminist discourses that underlay Ellen M. Rogers's *A Winter in Algeria: 1863-4* (1865). Her conception of Algeria reproduces the Victorian imperialist attitude toward the Algerian as inferior to the European in order to celebrate British imperial power. Underneath this colonial discourse, the writer proclaims her feminist point of view about empire and juxtaposes feminist attitudes in Victorian Britain with the degraded condition of the Oriental woman. To contribute to Victorian feminist struggle for gender equality, she identifies with the suffering of Muslim Algerian women under male domination and compares their confinement to the harem and their veiling to Victorian "separate spheres" ideology. From this perspective, Rogers presents the profiles of the Orientalist as defined by Edward Said (1978) and the feminist as defined by Antoinette Burton (1994). Said limits his discussion of Orientalism to male writers and travelers who construct imperialist views about the colonial world and its people. However, Burton argues that many Victorian travel writers were women who not only circulated Orientalist ideas but also constructed a feminist discourse. Women writers found in the colonial world ways to cross the boundaries of gender and power in order to criticize male writers who insisted on women's inferior status. In sum, the major claim made in this article is that Ellen M. Rogers projects a feminist-Orientalist view in her travel account about French Algeria.

**Keywords:** Feminism, Orientalism, Victorian travel writing, Algeria, Rogers, Oriental woman, Victorian woman

## 1. Introduction

In postcolonial studies, questions concerning gender polemics and the power of empire often go hand in hand. The intersection of these two realms is substantial in Victorian literature which generated controversy about women authors' place in the literature of empire. In *Orientalism*, Edward Said argues that the burgeoning interest in empire during Queen Victoria's reign created a type of literature that founded an imperial, Orientalist tradition. His discussion of Orientalism focuses more on men's writings than women's. Thus, in *Burdens of History: British Feminists, Indian Women, and Imperial Culture*, Antoinette Burton concentrates on women's travel writing and periodicals which she considers to be contributing to the construction of the Orientalist tradition. She asserts that Victorian women profited from the imperial enterprise by confirming in their writings the Orientalist tradition which, in turn, they used to express their feminist struggle against their male-defined inferior status at home (Burton, 1994: 5). This resulted in a new, ground-breaking genre, namely Feminist Orientalism advanced, for instance, in women's travel writing.<sup>1</sup> Even if many such writers were concerned with British colonies like India, other women like Ellen M. Rogers, Matilda Betham Edwards and Lloyd Evans looked to non-British colonies which constituted the same repository for their feminist and Orientalist ideas as the British ones did.

In *A Winter in Algeria: 1863-4* (1865), Ellen M. Rogers accounts for her travels in French Algeria.<sup>2</sup> Frustratingly, little is known about her. She was the wife of Rev. George Albert Rogers, with whom she co-authored *The Folded Lamb: or, Memorials of an Infant Son* (1852). She also wrote *The Coronation Stone and England's Interest in It* (1880). However, *A Winter in Algeria: 1863-4* seems to be the text which most promotes Orientalist ideas since it narrates her tours in colonial Algeria during a period known for Orientalism. She and her husband traveled to Algeria and visited Algiers and its vicinity from October 1863 to May 1864. They spent the first six months in Algiers; then they visited the neighboring towns of Blida, Medéa and Melliana after which they returned to Algiers for their departure to England. Her husband was in Algiers for an Evangelical mission; she had missionary motivations and the desire to visit exotic Algeria. Once in Algiers, she grew more interested in the condition of Algerian women.

Scholarly attention to Rogers's travel account or to those of other women travelers to Algeria is sparse. The existing scholarship tends to overemphasize writings about Victorian travelers in India and other British colonies and to overlook those writings about Algeria, which became a destination for Victorian women travelers. For instance, Sara Mills in *Discourses of Difference: an Analysis of Women's Travel Writings and Colonialism* (1991) makes no reference to Victorian travel writings about Algeria although there were many women who crossed the boundaries of the British Empire to voice their feminist and imperialist/ Orientalist interests in Algeria. Rogers, Edwards, and Evans were among the forerunners of Victorian women travelers. Deborah Cherry in "Earth into World, Land into Landscape: the Worldling of Algeria in Nineteenth-Century British Feminism" (2002) argues that Victorian women travelers viewed Algeria as an exotic site for feminist engagement; the sale of their "cultural forms"<sup>3</sup>

helped them to fund the feminist activities in Britain. However, Cherry overlooks the discursive aspects of their writings, especially the intersection of the feminist stance with the Orientalist one. These two works do not analyze Rogers's text which frustratingly lacks scholarly attention. To fill this gap, Sadia Seddiki's "Mrs. Ellen G. Rogers's *A Winter in Algeria* and the Perpetuation of Colonial Discourse"<sup>4</sup> (2010) studies Rogers's work as an example of colonialist discourse on the French domination of Algeria. Seddiki's main argument is that Rogers reproduces the cultural and social stereotypes set up by the French to describe Algerians in order to justify their imperial domination. However, there is room for further debate on the significance of the text's allusions to Britain's imperial power and the intersection of gender and empire in it.

This article focuses on studying the Feminist and Orientalist discourses that underlay Rogers's travelogue *A Winter in Algeria: 1863-4* (1865). In her text, she re-tools the Victorian imperialist representation of Algeria as inferior to European powers, especially Britain, to participate in imperial culture. This allows her to relocate Victorian feminist ideologies<sup>5</sup> and the struggle for gender equality to the male-centered Algerian context. She does so by identifying with the suffering of Muslim women under male domination in order to promote her feminist commitment to more socio-cultural rights for Victorian women and their enfranchisement. Using popular Orientalist views of the time about the colonized "Other," she argues for female agency in Britain's imperial culture. People, it is said, live by metaphors, and one of these metaphors for Victorian women travelers is the degraded condition of Muslim women standing for that of Victorian women and the need for emancipating all women.

Thus, Rogers wears the mantles of an Orientalist as defined by Said (1978) and a feminist as defined by Burton (1994). Because Said relatively restricts Orientalism to male authors who represent the Orient the better to dominate it, Burton argues that many Victorian women travelers integrated Orientalist discourse so as to circulate a feminist one. The colonial world provided women writers with sites in which they could cross the boundaries of gender and power to criticize male writers who confirmed the status of "angels in the house" (Mills, 1991: 27) attributed to women. The "separate spheres" ideology of the time confined women to the domestic space and made them protectors of the household. The ideology of the "fair sex" also dismissed women as "weak," "emotional," "irrational," etc. Thus, women had to deflate these ideologies by appropriate devices like traveling to distant territories and writing about them. In writing about her experiences in a French colony rather than a British one, Rogers differs from other imperial feminists, but she makes references to the condition of Victorian women and to British imperial interests there.

In terms of theoretical framework, I take as a starting point ideas borrowed from Said's *Orientalism*, particularly the manner in which the Orientalist author represents Orientals as Europe's inferior "Others." His concept of Orientalist "vision" involves "the rigidly binomial opposition" of the West and the Orient, "with the former always encroaching upon the latter" (Said, 1995: 227). It attributes to Orientals a *static* (Said, 1995: 239) and backward condition, thus contrasting them to advanced and superior Europeans. This Orientalist view is created by the West, for the West, and it is "no more

than a will to power, a will to truth and interpretation and not an objective condition of history” (Said, 1995: 240). The implication is that the Orientalist interprets the Orient and Orientals and delivers them to the Western reader in a way that results from the desire to dominate it and departs from objective reality.

Because the Orient is the West’s creation, other scholars appropriate almost the same concepts as Said in their definitions of colonized populations and their relation to the colonizer. For instance, in *The Location of Culture* (2004) Homi Bhabha bases his concept of “fixity” on Said’s notion of Western vision and develops it through an analysis of corresponding stereotypes. Bhabha explains that these stereotypes are rooted in “a form of knowledge and identification that vacillates between what is always ‘in place’, ‘already known’ and something that must be anxiously repeated” (Bhabha, 2004: 94-95). Stereotypical discourse exaggerates on given representations of a category of persons as “object[s] of discrimination” (Bhabha, 2004: 114) in order to “fix” these representations as true. The stereotypes are negative, and their objective is to “construe the colonized as a population of degenerate types” (Bhabha, 2004: 101). Consequently, they are considered submissive to the moral bearing of the colonizer.

Rogers re-works the Orientalist representation of Algeria, but she overturns it to express her feminist ideas. Therefore, the ideas of Antoinette Burton will be the framework through which the author’s feminist appropriation of Orientalism will be examined. Indeed, she calls “imperial feminism” (Burton, 1994: 1) the discourse propounded by British women travelers who allied their feminist cause with the interests of empire. Burton claims that in their travel writings Victorian women engaged with “relocating British feminist ideologies in their imperial contexts” (Burton, 1994: 2). They “enlisted empire and its values so passionately and so articulately in their arguments for female emancipation” (Burton, 1994: 5) and reproduced the “languages of imperialism” (Burton, 1994: 2). The “white woman’s burden” of emancipating the Oriental woman consolidates their status as “imperial citizens” (Burton, 1994: 7). It allows them to “negotiat[e]” (Jenkins, 2004: 15) their place in the imperial tradition as women and British citizens. In other words, they support empire, its ideologies and its missionary policies to plead the cause of Victorian women.

## 2. Rogers’s Orientalist Attitude

*A Winter in Algeria* was published in 1865 under Rogers’s married name, Mrs. G. Albert Rogers. However, this does not keep her within the confines of the ideology of the “angel in the house.” Her excursions in Algeria, with or without her husband, serve her as a tool for deflating this ideology. Her voyage to Algeria allows her to gather the material to *narrate* her travel impressions on the French colony and express her feminist and Anglo-centric interest in it. As an educated woman, she has the cultural status that gives her the power to narrate about Algerians and allows her to join colonialist discourse and to affirm her “role in the national political culture” (Burton, 1994: 1). This is her first step toward crossing the boundaries set up by men in Victorian society.



Throughout her narrative, she voices the spate of Orientalist views about Algeria in Victorian Britain, and her text is steeped in references to British imperial identity as superior to the colonized Algerian to show that her discourse is part and parcel of the British Orientalist tradition.

Rogers's travelogue can be considered an Orientalist text on several counts. As soon as she arrives in Algiers, she starts viewing its people as politically, culturally, intellectually inferior to the French and other Europeans, especially the English. Due to their pretended inferiority, the 'natives' are dismissed as a subordinate race, ruled over by the supposed superior French "masters" (1865: 18). Politically, she claims that because the regime under which the Algerians were living was "despotic," they needed to be colonized. She illustrates this political inferiority by the state of Algiers where the rulers "had too often waded to the throne through blood," violence and danger (1865: 32). According to her prose, the Algerians used to live in states of anarchy because of their corrupt political regime(s). This is a rephrasing of Victorian views of Oriental countries like Algeria which are often associated with despotism. This view was cultivated by Victorian intellectuals and politicians. For example, John Stuart Mill claims that colonizers of "a superior people or a more advanced state of society" are entitled to interfere in the task of ruling less advanced people (1867: 97). He argues that Oriental despotism needs to be replaced by "enlightened" and "vigorous despotism [which] is in itself the best mode of government for training the people in what is specifically wanting to render them capable of higher civilization" (1867: 345-46). Furthermore, Said (Said, 1995: 32) quotes Arthur James Balfour's assertion that "Oriental despotism" is a historical fact of the East. This stimulated Europeans to claim for themselves the duty to help Orientals to get rid of their despots and put in place Western-like regimes.

Living in a state of anarchy due to despotism and tyranny is a contributing factor to the static condition of the colonized. Rogers asserts that even the Algerian people contribute to their country's "backwardness." For instance, she insists that they are often "lazy" (1865: 37). Thus, they do not endeavor to improve their condition and thus foster in advancement. They remain backward while the English are progressive. Therefore, they are caught in perpetual states of subordination and should look to the English in order to find the 'fittest' race for their rule. The average Englishmen engaged in Algiers "take infinite pains in training the *ouvriers* under them," but the "Arabs are usually so *lazy*" that they have to be trained with an iron fist (53). To flesh out her stereotype of the lazy 'native,' she contrasts the ingenuity and energy of Europeans with the impotence of the 'natives' stating that all that is European "is life and animation, all but these poor torpid, purposeless, and degraded-looking natives" (40). To her, the laziness of the Arabs is such that they need to be taught "the value of systematic work" (188) by Europeans.

Laziness and impotence are not the only stereotypes she appropriates in order to conform to the imperial tradition. She also adheres to the Victorian view of colonized people as morally degraded. For instance, the Algerians are associated with *lying*: "It is

impossible to trust a word these people say” (Rogers, 1865: 30). Because of the Arabs’ disposition to lying, they are also suspicious. She writes:

It is not so, that if you are known to take an Arab into your confidence, and friendship, at once some other Arab will warn you to beware of trusting him? ‘He is a liar—he will deceive you—he will rob you’, and so on. (184)

Arguably, the author uses this stereotype of lying and suspicion as its consequence in order to affirm an imperative of English imperial power. To her, this would be achieved through the teachings of the Gospels: “By this shall all men know that ye are My disciples, if you have love to one another” (184).<sup>6</sup> Said asserts that the stereotypes of lying and suspicion are British (and French) Orientalist constructs whose aim is to legitimate imperial domination on moral grounds (Said, 1995: 39). Additionally, the dialectical thinking of Orientalism juxtaposes the immorality of the ‘natives’ with the moral bearing of Europeans who invest themselves with the “burden” or duty of disciplining the Oriental.<sup>7</sup> Clearly, Rogers dwells so much on the stereotype of the Arab as an “inveterate liar” and “fixes” it, to borrow Bhabha’s word, as a moral defect that needs amendment by the power of English discipline and morality.

Rogers’s stereotypes do not stop at her portrayal of the Arabs, but they extend to the Moors. She argues that miscegenation engendered the Moors, who are the descendants of all the races that alternately landed on the shores of Algeria. Thus, they represent the Algerian equivalent for Eurasians. Adopting Orientalist vision, she describes them as “mean, cringing, indolent, false, cowardly, boasting, and void of strength, either mental or physical” (Rogers, 1865: 45). The transposition of this representation of the Moors to Europe’s half-castes in the Orient agrees with Benita Parry’s statement that in “popular fiction Eurasians were shown as debased and without dignity, as shrill and cringing, a warning against the mixing of the races” (Parry, 1972: 32). Like Eurasians who are compared to colonized Asians in British colonial discourse, the Moors join the Orientalist stereotyping of the Algerian as backward. Rogers’s text portrays the Algerian Arabs and Moors as decadent to legitimate their need to be disciplined by English power that is present in Algeria through the economic and missionary enterprises.

To Rogers, the Algerians beseech the intervention of Europeans for their cultural and intellectual salvation. She states: “the poor Arabs begin to excite *our* interest greatly ... Would that these poor Arabs knew the value of the Lamp of Life!” (29; italics added) Given their backward condition, they need to be integrated into the enlightened work of the English, who contribute to implementing Victorian progress<sup>8</sup> in Algeria. She celebrates the comforts that are taken by the English to Algeria. She writes: “the railroad, by the way, is entirely the work of English talent, aided by English capital” (38). The author reflectively dwells on the thought that “with English comforts, Algiers, or its vicinity, would be a charming residence for some ten months out of the twelve” (67). It was in Victorian Britain that the idea of England’s mission to take the blessings of progress to non-European countries blossomed, and Algeria was one such

country where “real work”<sup>9</sup> was achieved by the English despite its status as a French colony.

Rogers argues that since Algeria profits from England’s progress, the genius of the English race and Queen Victoria deserves to be celebrated. On the symbolic level, she wonders about the possibility of “the effigy of our beloved Queen” (39) in order to emphasize that Algeria would be better off as a British colony rather than a French one. This is her way of consolidating British imperial power. Again, Rogers assumes that if monuments are to be erected to commemorate the work of the colonizer in Algeria, it is more appropriate to direct them toward that of the English than that of the French. The Algerians insist on their “prefer[ence of] seeing one erected to Sir M. Peto” an Englishman “who had really *provided* the people with work, and *benefited* the town” (Rogers, 1865: 53). Said argues that colonial discourse consolidates imperial power through “ideological formations that include notions that certain territories and people *require* and beseech domination” (Said, 1994: 8). In her writing, Rogers maintains that Algeria “requires” the intervention of the English to improve its people’s conditions. They, in turn, become the “white man’s burden” for Britain.

Imperial activities generally concern political governance and administrative work, Christian/ civilizing missions and economic interests. In *A Winter in Algeria*, the British presence involves two areas of activity: the Evangelical and/ or civilizing mission and the economic activity. The English capitalist Sir Morton Peto represents the latter. In Algeria, he invests his capital to create economic opportunities and profit his nation. Rogers writes: “The terms upon which Sir Morton Peto has undertaken this national work are equally advantageous to himself, and to the Government” (Rogers, 1865: 28). Therefore, as one of the successful “English capitalists [he] is said to *own* half the town of Algiers” (28; emphasis added). This involves “the proprietary attitude” of Orientalism and the idea that “the geographical space of the Orient” is “penetrated, worked over, taken hold of” (Said, 1995: 211) as Sir M. Peto does in Algiers. The other area to which the English oriented their imperial experience is the Evangelical mission. In the text, this is represented by Rev. George Albert Rogers, Rev. W. Ginsbury and other missionaries who are in Algeria for the “spread of the Gospel” (Rogers, 1865: 175). The aim was not only religious but also philanthropic since the missionaries opened up schools and libraries for Algerians. Rogers celebrates English ingenuity which is imported to Algeria informally through these instructional structures.

This interest in Algeria as an improved colony if subjected to the English is “[d]erived from the British view of themselves as ‘natural leaders’ and ... [Orientals] as children” (Greenberger, 1969: 57). Rogers extends this British “paternalism” to Algeria. Thus, she goes beyond the limits of the British Empire, but she keeps loyal to its discursive sites and imperialist ideologies. Besides, she joins the British view that the French were weak and effeminate in their imperial affairs, a view that was cultivated by other British travelers to Algeria like Thomas Campbell.<sup>10</sup> As a matter of fact, Algeria becomes a paradigmatic colony almost in the same way as British India was for the majority of colonial writers.

To Rogers, too, Algeria could have been the North African British Raj.<sup>11</sup> Throughout her text, she makes reference to India and draws many analogies between the two colonies. For instance, the ‘natives’ of both are important for preserving the hierarchical structure of empire. She writes: “All our movables were forthwith brought down, and placed thereupon by the sturdy Arabs, without whom Algeria could get on no better than could British India without the natives” (Rogers, 1865: 123). Since the “sturdy Arabs” are viewed as the servants of Mrs. and Mr. Rogers and compared to the Indians, it is obvious that she consolidates the hierarchy of colonizer and colonized. It is true that the Indian Mutiny of 1857-8 grew as a traumatic event for the Britons since it revealed to them the instability of their rule in India. This idea was by and large popularized in the literature of empire, and Rogers is no less different from other colonialist authors. Thus, in the preface to her travelogue, she compares the “widespread insurrection that broke out in Algeria” (viii) to the Indian Mutiny. She elaborates her analogy by claiming that “the threats of the Arabs, about ‘driving the French into the sea,’ are as likely of fulfilment, as those of the Sepoys regarding the English in India” (Rogers, 1865: 273-74).<sup>12</sup> Obviously, Algeria provides Rogers a paradigmatic colony for her Anglo-centric imperial desire which is projected on India, the British Empire’s “jewel in the crown.”<sup>13</sup>

### **3. Rogers’s Feminist Stance**

Burton claims that Victorian women’s “quest for inclusion in the imperial state” was “an extension of the call for representation in the nation” (Burton, 1994: 7). Because they did not have the right to suffrage, they enjoyed almost no representation in the English government just like colonized Algerians. Rogers emphasizes the deplorable state of Algerian women as they wait for “the representation of their plight and the redress of their condition” by “their sisters in the metropole” (7). Rogers’s feminist discourse is expressed on a metaphorical level by emphasizing Oriental women’s status as “subjects in need of salvation by their British feminist ‘sisters’” (1). This was a common belief among Victorian female travelers, but less prevalent in texts by males. Thus, as a Victorian woman writer she sets women, Victorian or Muslim, at the heart of her travelogue.

Dwelling on what she feels are the superior Christian values of British colonizers, Rogers highlights in her travelogue how Algerian women have been hampered in social hierarchy by their Muslim faith. They are barred from the public space and are confined to the harem or *zenana*.<sup>14</sup> Their “existence outside [the domestic space] is considered an anomaly, a transgression” (Mernissi, 1978: 139) that obliges them to wear the veil. Rogers asserts that the veil “indeed applies to all Moslem women without exception” (Rogers, 1865: 84). Each time she meets ‘native’ women in the streets of Algiers or other towns, she is surprised by their veiling: “We saw several veiled figures eagerly crowding around this little aperture” (23). She continues: “one of the most singular sights here is that of the Moslem veiled women, who are to be seen in every direction.

They never leave their homes without a sort of handkerchief across the face fastened below the eyes" (40). Mernissi states that the "veil means that the woman is present in the men's world, but invisible; she has no right to be in the street" (1978: 143). A cultural parallel can be drawn between the Oriental woman's "seclusion" (140) and the Victorian ideology of the "angel in the house." The separate spheres ideology kept many Victorian women inside the limits of private space. Thus, both groups of women will never enjoy the public liberty men have unless their cause is pleaded.

In Rogers's text, this analogy is explained by the fact that some British female travelers she meets in Algeria prefer to remain anonymous since they are apprehensive about assuming a public face even when away from home. Rogers notes: "We had the pleasure of making acquaintance this evening of Miss L. who had been Miss Crawford's companion in Algeria" (Rogers, 1865: 3). In other statements she persists in not identifying Miss L. while she names others. She writes: "Miss L. is a sort of rival to Miss Pardoe" (3). In the text, we repeatedly encounter such words as Mrs. ----" (67), "Mrs. C." (78), "Mrs. E." (238) and numerous similar expressions. Rogers explains that she deliberately chooses not to name some of the ladies she meets in Algeria because of the rules of patriarchy and male-defined negative stereotypes for entrepreneurial and venturesome women. She writes: "I have not heard of a single instance, as far as I remember, in which Englishmen have given the slightest *countenance* to speculative emigration, on the part of their *fair* countrywomen" (302; emphasis added). The implication is that English men do not encourage women to travel, for they still believe that they are the 'fair and weak sex' and are physically and morally incapable of bearing the difficulties of travel. Traveling means entering the public arena, and this runs counter to the private constructions of space defined by Victorian society for women.

The private sphere for Oriental women concerns their role as protectors of the harem or zenana. As such, they had no right to (or need for) education according to the rules of Muslim societies. Such obscurantism is gender-bound as Muslim women are not entitled to receive education. The male 'masters' do not allow their daughters or sisters to go to school,<sup>15</sup> and school rules do not allow girls in. Rogers states that schools are only allowed for Muslim boys, "girls being of course deemed incapable of education" (Rogers, 1865: 298). She adds that the Algerian "officials saw no manner of good in educating Moorish women" (198). Thus, she paraphrases Tennyson's words<sup>16</sup> in commenting that "they did not believe that 'as the wife is so the husband is'" (198). To them, there is no equality between men and women. Edwards explains this idea by the fact that men "do not like their wives and daughters to be more learned than themselves" (1976: 17). Besides, due to domestic confinement, women have no right to receive education in the public space. Muslim women's bondage and the denial of their rights to education and social or economic freedom are linked to their veiling. Franz Fanon claims that the "woman seen in her white veil unifies the perception that one has of Algerian feminine society" (Fanon, 1965: 36).<sup>17</sup> Missionaries like Rogers perceived the veil as the fabric with which Muslim women's socio-political repression was woven.

An additional topic explored in Rogers's writing raises the political issue of indigenous women's rights in the traditional legal structures such as the Muslim tribunal. These are viewed as institutions which hinder women's rights and deny them public and political existence. She claims that "Moslem women are not allowed to enter the Mahakma, or tribunal. A little window, with iron gratings, is reserved for their use when they have a cause to plead" (Rogers, 1865: 22-23). They are not allowed to participate in the processing of such serious matters as justice and human rights. To their male 'masters', their words count for nothing, so they have to be unseen when they are entitled to take part in legal proceedings. Women's lack of political and legal enfranchisement in Algerian society contributes to their inferior family status. Rogers notes that the most glaring aspect of this lack enfranchisement lies in the fact that a Muslim man has the right to marry four wives and repudiate the marriage bond whenever he wants to without the consent of his wife or wives or due process of the law. Rogers dwells on an anecdotal Kabyle man whose connubial life is divided among four wives who make up his "acquisitions" (Rogers, 1865: 42). The word 'acquisition' denotes property which for Rogers is anathema; equivalent to the social structures of master-slave which, by this time, Britain had renounced. As for repudiation, she gives us another example which shows that polygamy followed in many cases by repudiation serves more the power of the husband than the 'wives.' Another anecdotal account focuses on "Hassan [who has] four wives" (105), and while he pays very careful attention to the last and youngest wife the first three are forced to experience their "repudiation" (106). Repudiation, exercised solely by male whim, is for nothing but domestic tyranny; yet another instance that abrogates the social and political rights of women.

Women have to undergo the domestic tyranny of men as they are always 'slaves' to their male 'masters'. Marriage makes 'wives' subservient to dominant husbands who act more as 'masters' than as husbands; women are slaves to their "future lords or masters" (84), states Rogers. Again, anecdotally speaking, she recounts an instance of a "savage husband [who] threw his wife on the ground, fastened her by ... cords to ... four stakes, and then, taking a long stick, began dealing heavy blow on the person of the unfortunate creature" (60). Before marriage, women, young or aged, are dominated by their fathers or brothers. Boys when grown up become the Oriental woman's "superiors and masters, if not tyrants. With them she may no longer eat, when their years permit them to share the father's meal" (59). Muslim women undergo a double exclusion from power. Being barred from the public sphere, they are "deprived of power even within the world in which they are confined, since it is the man who wields authority within the family" (Mernissi, 1978: 139).

Rogers contends that as Algerian women were unfortunate under male domination, their condition beseeched the salvation of British women in the framework of the feminist branch of Christian missions. She laments with sympathy: "Oh, Christianity, haste to tear the fetters, and rend the veil from these degraded ones: no meaner power can save them" (Rogers, 1865: 59). Actions of salvation are not scarce in Algiers. For instance, to introduce Muslim women to education and enlightenment, a library is

opened up in Algiers by English women who “had kindly undertaken the offices of librarians” (145). In Algeria, British feminists contributed to the evangelical mission by working for the enlightenment of Muslim women. As a feminist traveler and a missionary’s wife, Rogers emphasizes the missionary work focused on the enlightenment of Algerian women facilitated by British (and French) ladies. Providing for the education of Algerian women relies on inculcating civil notions like equality between the sexes in order to defend against the violence of patriarchal rules.

Rogers felt that further missionary work warranted the attention of Victorian ladies because the improvement of the condition of their Algerian ‘sisters’ was still imperative. The author calls upon British women to “try to adopt Miss Whately’s plan, and get the New Testament thus read to them,” which would introduce them to religious enlightenment (29). In addition to British religious instruction, Rogers notes that French ladies have also established schools for them. She emphasizes that she will not leave Algiers without paying a “visit of inspection and encouragement to Mme Luce’s school” (199) for women. The words ‘inspection’ and ‘encouragement’ imply that Rogers has some influence and authority as a Victorian feminist and a missionary. ‘To inspect’ generally implies ‘supervision’, and ‘to encourage’ means moral ‘support’. These words underscore her prerogative as a feminist and a missionary woman whose voice often took precedent over other committed English (and French) feminists and missionaries in Algeria.

Emancipation of Algerian women would lead to opening up a dialogue about women’s empowerment in Victorian society. Along with the “separate spheres ideology,” the ideology of the “fair sex” attributed to Victorian women the features of “emotion, passivity, submission, dependence, and selflessness” (Kent, 1999: 179) while upholding the idea of their natural subordination to men. Working-class women, caught in the throes of the industrial revolution in England, were doubly hindered by Victorian social constructions. They endured domestic dominance by their husbands and exploitation by factory owners. It is true that to every rule there are exceptions, so there were also many Victorian women who enjoyed liberty and independence and felt urged by the necessity of saving their sisters. They started by fostering debate over “the legal subordination of one sex to the other” (Mill, 1998: 520). However, this was not restricted to feminists. They were joined by male intellectuals like J. S. Mill who argued against gender inequality and John Ruskin who defended it.<sup>18</sup>

Oriental women’s subordination to men becomes a metaphor through which the feminist struggle in Britain expresses itself. In Rogers’s texts, the desire to emancipate Algerian women from the limits of gender roles construed by socio-religious rules fuels even more the female Victorian traveler’s desire to improve the condition of all Victorian women.<sup>19</sup> Algerian women serve the Victorian traveler as “a mirror of their desire” (Jenkins, 2004: 16) to improve the status of women in their society. The push for education for Algerian women is mirrored in Victorian women’s call for more socio-political and economic rights. Challenging men’s power over women in the Algerian context is echoed in Victorian women’s questioning of their inferior status as household protectors, impeded from enjoying rights to suffrage like men. According to

Burton, the majority of Victorian travelers were suffragists, who worked for the promotion of the right for “women’s suffrage” (Burton, 1994: 3), so defending Oriental women’s political rights reflects their commitment to women’s political enfranchisement at home.

A further parallel to note with respect to similar gendered issues between Victorian and Algerian women is related to class. Rogers contends that gender roles are class-bound in Muslim societies. She writes:

Amongst the richer Moslems the degradation of the women is mental and moral. Superadded to this, amongst the poor classes the husband lays upon the shoulders of his wife, every conceivable burden. As far as possible, he lives the most perfect idleness, as one of the lords of creation. To the lot of the Arab woman it falls, to till the ground, to reap the harvest, to grind the corn, to knead the bread. (Rogers, 1865: 58-59)

Similarly, Victorianist scholars also believe that gender roles were class-bound in Victorian society. For instance, Josephine M. Guy (1998: 466-67) argues that there was a substantial difference between the condition of working-class women and those of the middle class. Working-class women were almost slaves to their husbands and factory owners (yet, ironically they were opening in public space), whereas middle-class women were confined to the home and they did not enjoy equal status with men.

In addition to drawing parallels between Algerian and Victorian women, Rogers focuses on the *independence* of women travelers as *entrepreneurs* to question the metaphor of the “angel in the house” and the ensuing stereotype it engendered for women as “the weaker sex.” Mills claims that traveling to distant countries allowed women to demonstrate that they were “strong, exceptional [and] somehow managed to escape the structure of patriarchy” (1991: 29). Rogers argues for this point by drawing on her personal experiences as a traveler and those of other Victorian women she meets in Algiers. Her observations and actions in Algiers show that she is a strong and independent woman who breaks down the barriers of the household in order to venture into the unknown. Her independence stems from the cultural position she acquired as author and her class status as wife of Rev. Rogers. In Algeria, her main travel companion is her husband, but she tells us that on several occasions she moves from one place to another all alone or with other Victorian ladies, and she does so as a “pedestrian” (Rogers, 1865: 107). This shows that she is physically disposed to bear the difficulties of travel. To reinforce this idea, she claims that her husband has more difficulties than she. When they have experienced fever, she manages to “subdue it” while her husband “has been less fortunate. He has been, and is still suffering in various ways” (54). Her travels and those of other women like Miss L., an “*enterprising* traveler” and “a sort of *rival* to Miss Pardoe” (3; Italics added), show that women are entrepreneurial and independent. This departs from their male-defined roles as weak and incapable of physically enduring the difficulties of activities like travel.

“Travel broadens the mind” the saying goes. So do Rogers’s travels in Algeria which allow her to open herself to new horizons and widen her knowledge of the world. In her travelogue, she casts herself as a learned *authority* on Algeria by sharing her



experiences with future female visitors. The knowledge she transmits to the reader falls into different categories that are geographical, ethnological, botanical and zoological. For instance, it is her expertise on the Algerian climate that makes her integrate into her text a list of recommendations for English travelers. She writes:

Three special hints I *must* here commit to paper, for the benefit of those who may visit Algiers: --

1. Be well provided with warm clothing, and wraps.
2. Take rooms facing the south. Hot though the climate be, eschew a northern aspect for the winter.
3. Never remain out at this season between the hours of three and five, when the temperature gets suddenly, and sensibly chilly. The doctors are very particular in enforcing this injunction.\* [emphasis added] (53)

The *asterisk* reads “For further particulars relating to the climate, see Appendix” (53), and it shows that Rogers has expert geographical knowledge about Algiers which she aspires to share with other travelers. The separate spheres ideology offers a few opportunities to women to participate in the public sphere of knowledge. However, Rogers’s expert knowledge which she puts in circulation after the publication of her travelogue challenges this ideology.

#### 4. Conclusion

In conclusion, Rogers’s travelogue obviously combines Orientalist and Feminist discourses in order to cross discursive boundaries and to subvert gender roles. Most Victorian women travelers wrote about British colonies, but she writes about French Algeria. However, she refers to British imperial prestige and Queen Victoria’s glory as empress so as to project Britain’s imperial desire on Algeria. As a woman traveler challenging patriarchy, she focuses on the need for liberating Algerian women which will, in turn, liberate Victorian women from gender restrictions. Some male writers allude to the condition of Oriental women only to consolidate superior English identity. They celebrate British imperial heroes who are “determined that they themselves should act as the protectors of ... [Oriental] women” (Metcalf, 1994: 94) to legitimate empire. She like other female travelers wants to affirm her heroism as a woman challenging patriarchal rules and working for subverting gender roles.

This feminist-Orientalist attitude finds intertexts in contemporary writings about neo-colonialism and patriarchy or misogyny. Parallel to recent Western military intervention in Afghanistan, many feminists and humanitarians went there to help Afghan women in their struggle against the misogynist violence of the Taliban regime. Arguably, Sally Armstrong’s Afghan-set works like *Veiled Threat: the Hidden Power of the Women of Afghanistan* (2003) epitomize this feminist commitment to the cause of Afghan women. This shows that feminist struggle is not ‘time-or-place-specific;’

whatever the time or place, the terminologies change but the objectives remain the same as long as misogyny and patriarchy prevail.

## Notes

1. In the beginning of the second half of the nineteenth century, Victorian travelers started to be widely interested in India and other colonies and produced a discourse that had Orientalist and feminist undertones. Mary Carpenter's *Six Months in India* (1866) and Emily Eden's *Up Country: Letters Written to Her Sister from the Upper Provinces of India* (1867) held such views about India. These travelers were preceded by female authors like Emily Brontë and her sister in their allusions to colonial India in *Wuthering Heights* (1847) and *Jane Eyre* (1847). This colonial interest induced writers like Ellen M. Rogers and others to write about Algeria, and in painting Barbara Bodichon produced most of her tableaux on Algeria in the period between 1850 and 1870.

2. From 1830 to 1962, Algeria was a French colony, and it assumed the same pivotal role as Anglo-India did for the second British Empire. Both colonies provided the frame of reference in terms of the ideologies of Orientalism when other French or British colonies were approached. French Algeria, then, offers a metaphor for Anglo-India, and the fact that Rogers makes enough references to the latter substantiates this idea.

3. In *Culture and Imperialism* (1993: 81-82), Edward Said uses this concept to refer to the works of art that were produced within the culture of imperialism. Photography, painting, opera, and literary works constitute important examples of these cultural forms.

4. Seddiki has chosen Mrs. Ellen G. Rogers as the name of the author, but it must be Mrs. G. Albert Rogers as it is inside the original book. This borrows from her husband's name George Albert Rogers. I choose, however, Ellen M. Rogers for the feminist bearing of her text, and it sounds more appropriate to the essay's main argument. When the text was first digitalized by Google, her name was changed for Ellen M. Rogers. In August 2012, it was published another time by Ulan Press, and this name was kept.

5. Among other ideas, British feminist authors in the Victorian period advocated women's substantial participation in the public sphere of power and knowledge. Thus, they called for more education opportunities for women and their right to vote.

6. This is rooted in Puritanical Christian teaching which was used, in the British colonies, to spread brotherly love among the colonized and to induce them to love the colonizer. In Algeria, Catholic or Papist teachings were rather used to dissipate Muslim religion as a component of Algerian identity. In her text, Rogers emphasizes this distinction by constantly referring to Christian England and Catholic France.

7. In *Discipline and Punish: the Birth of the Prison* (1979), Michel Foucault argues that modern society functions like a prison, and the state disciplines its subjects without punishing them. Similarly, the 'natives' have to be disciplined by the imperial state, and the Christian mission is one apparatus for disciplining them by teaching them the values of respect and love.

8. Progress was one of the principal attributes of Victorian society. The Industrial Revolution brought about technological changes which, in turn, created a revolution in ideas. The Victorians believed in their mission to take this progress to societies which did not profit from its blessings. This is why empire blossomed during this period. In *Heart of Darkness* (1902: 36), Joseph Conrad uses the expression "pioneers of progress" to name the Victorian men (and women) who ventured to the colonial world to take progress and its blessings.

9. In *Heart of Darkness*, Conrad uses this expression to celebrate the work achieved in the name of progress by the English in Africa in contrast with the failure of other European powers to take civilization and progress to the colonized (1902: 36). For instance, he suggests that the French are rather detrimental to the colonized Africans (1902: 40).

10. Osman Bencherif argues that Thomas Campbell was “one of the first English travellers to visit Algeria after the French occupation” (1997: 105). In his writings, he expresses “a complacent sense of national [English] superiority as he counts up the blessings of his native country” (1997: 105).

11. *British Raj* is the name given to India soon after it turned a formal British colony following the Indian Mutiny of 1857-8 and Britain’s success to contain the Sepoy rebellion.

12. In Haiti, the French were literally thrown ‘into the sea’ after Toussaint L’Ouverture’s rebellion, followed by Jean Jacques Dessalines, who declared Haitian independence in 1804. Arguably, this was weighing on the minds of the French in Algeria. Likewise, the Indian Mutiny was traumatizing the English whenever the colonized rebelled.

13. It is Paul Scott who uses this expression for the first time in his *The Raj Quartet, Volume 1: The Jewel in the Crown* (1966).

14. Harem or zenana refers to the specific place in the Oriental house where women are confined in order to keep them out of men’s sight. In feminist studies, they are used as generic terms for Oriental women’s bondage and their confinement in the domestic sphere.

15. The Muslim schools of the time were religious. They are called *zaouïa*, and they intend(ed) to teach Muslim boys how to read and write through the *Quran*.

16. In “Locksley Hall” (1835), Lord Alfred Tennyson writes the following lines: “As the husband is, the wife is: thou art mated with a clown, / And the grossness of his nature will have weight to drag thee down.”

17. In “Algeria Unveiled,” the first chapter of *A Dying Colonialism*, Frantz Fanon deals with how socio-political the veil is in defining the extent to which the Algerian woman has or has not power.

18. In *Sesame and Lilies*, John Ruskin adheres to the separate spheres ideology. To him, “man’s power is active, progressive, defensive” and woman’s power is “rule” (1998: 506) of the house. However, John Stuart Mill opposes this idea and states that “the principle which regulates existing social relations between the two sexes ... is wrong in itself” (1998: 520).

19. Josephine M. Guy claims that “Victorian debates about sex and gender were class-based” (1998: 466). Working class women were less concerned with their degraded condition because they were submerged by their duties as factory workers, wives, mothers or daughters. The only women to have risen against it were from the middle class (1998: 467).

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## **iCap: Intralingual Captioning for Writing and Vocabulary Enhancement**

Noa Talaván  
Jennifer Lertola  
Tomás Costal

Universidad Nacional de Educación a Distancia (UNED)

University of Bologna, Italy

ntalavan@flog.uned.es, jennifer.lertola@gmail.com, xuncoenglish@gmail.com

### ABSTRACT

The research on the use of active captioning or subtitling in foreign language learning has considerably increased in the course of the last decade, although there is still lack of evidence as regards the potential advantages of intralingual captioning in this context. The present project attempts to fill this void by analysing the didactic use of intralingual subtitling in a distance learning environment both in terms of written production and vocabulary acquisition. To this end, a total number of 41 undergraduate English B1 students have been working on 10 sequenced subtitling activities using short pre-selected videos taken from an American sitcom in the course of a month and a half. Peer-to-peer assessment has also been fostered during the project through active use of online forums. The conclusions confirm the expected benefits as far as writing and vocabulary skills enhancement is concerned and provide further insights into how to best implement this practice.

**Keywords:** audiovisual translation, intralingual subtitling, distance language learning, written production, vocabulary acquisition

## **1. Introduction**

iCap, Intralingual Captioning in Foreign Language Education, was a project undertaken during the course 2013-14 at the UNED, Universidad Nacional de Educación a Distancia, in Spain. Within an online collaborative context, students were asked to provide intralingual subtitles (English-English) for ten videos extracted from an American TV series. This task-based oriented didactic approach was directed to assess the potential effects of this type of same-language subtitling to improve writing skills and vocabulary acquisition.

Although the research field that studies the pedagogical benefits of subtitling in foreign language (henceforth, L2) education has been gaining increasing attention in recent years, the study of the effects of intralingual captioning to improve written production and vocabulary learning has not been among the main foci of interest yet.

From a pedagogical point of view, when students have to produce same-language subtitles in the L2, there are a series of key elements they can profit from. When creating subtitles, they can enhance their writing-related skills, given that they will have to work on register and style selection, sequencing of ideas, correct use of cohesion and coherence (learning to guide the reader through the message) and spelling, among others. Students were asked to create intralingual subtitles (condensing and segmenting the information as appropriate) and not a mere transcription of the dialogues.

In terms of lexical acquisition, the active production of intralingual subtitles makes L2 students intensively listen<sup>1</sup> and so encounter new vocabulary, forces them to repeat some words and phrases just as they appear in the original, and gives them the opportunity to work on rephrasing, since they need to condense the message and they have to look for synonyms or alternative ways of reproducing the same semantic concept; finally, learners also need to react to the original when they look for new vocabulary, previously unknown to them. Hence, listen and repeat, typical strategies of vocabulary learning, have a key role that is complemented by more active task-based actions, such as rephrasing and reacting, that can provide learners with multiple channels of real lexical retention.

A final total number of 41 undergraduate English B1 students participated in the iCap project from beginning to end, subtitling the corresponding 10 videos using the platform ClipFlair and providing peer-to-peer feedback through the online forums. ClipFlair ([www.clipflair.net](http://www.clipflair.net)) is an online platform designed to use AVT in L2 education (Sokoli, 2015) and it contains a subtitle editor that allows teachers and students to profit from complete ready-to-use activities (including the video, the instructions, and an adaptable subtitling component to help learners with spotting whenever necessary, among other possibilities).

Through a triangulation of quantitative and qualitative methods, making use of diverse data gathering tools (writing and vocabulary pre-tests and post-tests, initial and final questionnaires, and observation), a series of relevant conclusions as far as the possible benefits of intralingual captioning as a didactic tool to improve L2 writing and vocabulary skills have been derived, as will be described in the following sections.

## **2. Theoretical framework**

The use of subtitles for didactic purposes and, more specifically, their use in the field of L2 learning has been an increasingly productive subject of discussion in the academic field over the last two decades. Given its specialised scope, the present study will only mention in passing a few of the greatly abundant applications of audiovisual translation modalities to the enhancement of language learning environments and processes. Hence, reference will be made to a number of publications in which the use of subtitles has been researched in conjunction with techniques such as dubbing, voice-over, narration, audiodescription, and other types of revoicing or combinations thereof, with very promising results derived from the careful analysis of both qualitative and quantitative data. Therein, the inclusion of ample accompanying evidence points to the convenience, appropriacy and even the urgent necessity to further exploit these valuable resources on the basis of their proven efficiency and effectiveness.

Before doing so, it must be noted that in a somewhat contradictory research study on the use of subtitling (European Commission, 2009), European institutions missed the opportunity to present subtitles as an educational and awareness-raising tool. Where it could have been stated that subtitles contribute to linguistic accessibility for all citizens and ameliorate students' competences of oral reception and production, written reception and production, translation, and mediation, the report focused to such a degree on the provisos that the overall impression was that of an encumbrance rather than an encouragement to modify traditional everyday practices. One section of the report (European Commission, 2009: 16) reads as follows:

The literature in this area states that subtitling can contribute to language learning, to a greater or lesser degree of effectiveness, depending on different variables: (a) being accustomed to subtitling [...]; (b) the learner's level [...]; (c) the objectives of the teaching [...]; (d) proximity between languages [...]

These observations, which could be applied to subtitling in the same way that they could be applied to any other language learning technique past or present, make an unjustified generalisation which imposes a series of prerequisites on the basis of few non-longitudinal, non-experimental studies. Later in the same document (European Commission, 2009: 16-17), observations are made on the alleged problems subtitles may cause learners:

For the role of subtitling to be effective, there must be a semantic correspondence between the pictures and the verbal message, even if this can give rise to comprehension problems, particularly among learners not accustomed to the techniques of subtitling. When the picture serves as the vehicle for part of the information that contributes to getting the message across (figures, names of places or persons written in the picture, etc.), comprehension problems can emerge.

Again, the presumed obstacles of subtitling, unsupported by comparative long-term analyses, are given more prominence than its advantages in a publication that was commissioned by the executive branch of a supranational organisation with the sole aim of producing a common framework to support citizenship, language policy and innovative practices in multilingual education. Notwithstanding, the most relevant contradiction comes into play when the statistical results of the intra-European battery of questionnaires are discussed at the end (European Commission, 2009: 26):

Three main conclusions may be drawn from these results (to be taken with the precautions mentioned throughout the analysis): subtitling helps to improve the mastery of foreign languages; subtitling can raise awareness and provide motivation for language learning, in both formal and informal contexts, and consequently contributes to creating an environment that encourages multilingualism; knowledge of foreign languages and university studies encourage citizens to choose subtitling rather than dubbing.

Since the extent of the aforementioned ‘precautions’ is never determined, the impact of this report is clearly detrimental to the advancement of subtitling as a technique to be used in European classrooms for several reasons: (a) the document supports its preliminary conclusions and recommendations solely on questionnaires, which provide qualitative information –thus the ‘precautions’; (b) the document is selective in its interpretation of the conclusions made public through academic papers; and (c) preferences and personal appreciations are weighted against linguistic theory, even though there was sufficient evidence at the time to advocate subtitling as a beneficial and versatile technique which could easily be implemented in the language classroom curricula providing that an adequate methodology were to be followed. In brief, one of the foundational studies at the European level, which is still being quoted, discussed and debated almost a decade over, could not manage to provide a solid groundwork from which to build up new knowledge to do with didactic applications of subtitles and subtitling.

The present study will contribute to the refutation of this unsuccessful attempt and, in light of more recent publications by the same institution, it will also bring to the fore all of those points which were neglected, omitted or forgotten in the past. It should remain clear that the prime objective of the iCap project, which ensures consistency with the references detailed below, is to advance empirical data to support the claim that the use of subtitles as a tool for language learning is beneficial. It is also important to remark that using subtitles as a tool could be considered akin to learning via subtitling – active subtitling, that is, producing subtitles for a particular purpose and to respond to a particular need. Hence, a distinction should be drawn between this study and others in which subtitles are used only as a support for language learning (cf. Danan, 2015; Vanderplank, 2015).

As specified in a report (European Commission, 2012) on crowdsourcing and translation, far from being on a pilot stage, subtitling has already become a multifaceted linguistic phenomenon. Individuals, groups of individuals and not-for-profit organisations, with or without members who are conversant in formal translation



studies, access audiovisual content in a foreign language via disinterested contributions to a common online resource pool. If audiovisual products are officially acknowledged as an ideal means for the transmission and promotion of culture, then it would immediately follow that subtitle production and dissemination, as long as it abides by the copyright legislation in force at the time, is indeed a creative linguistic activity whose impact is anything but negligible. Such exponents of communicative translation or mediation (cf. Council of Europe, 2001: 14-15), which have been able to acquire the most complex forms on its own self-regulated way through the channels of informal learning, should be taken advantage of in formal learning environments as well.

The institutional shift in discourse in later pronouncements is quite remarkable: in the 2009 study, didactic uses of subtitling came hand in hand with warnings and limitations; a few years later, popular culture phenomena were taken as a model to be looked up to, even from a theoretical standpoint. What follows is a succinct overview of the level of attention to detail that is paid to fansubbers in their collaborative crowdsourced translations (European Commission, 2012: 35-36):

Offering versions which are very faithful to the original, both from a linguistic and a cultural point of view, and subtitles on markets where dubbing is the rule, fansubbers translate into practice, at least to a certain extent, Venuti's foreignising approach and reject domestication as an impoverishment which does not allow appreciating the original to the full.

The extent to which agreed upon quality standards and particular translation theories are employed is in direct correlation to the expertise of a given fansubbing community and the goals they have set themselves. Therefore, it should be added that, if accessibility services such as subtitling or dubbing can respond to the demands of a given community, meet their expectations, and bridge the gap between two or more cultures, the question remains: why should these tools be avoided in formal educational environments and sequenced learning? This Copernican turn will eventually lead to a complete redefinition of what the institutions understand 'translation' to be, and a much needed reconsideration of what can feasibly be achieved with the help of subtitling. Let us compare the comments which opened this section with the following excerpt (European Commission, 2013: 21): "The production of subtitles can also be a mode of independent language learning, increasingly within online groups of volunteer subtitlers. There are indications that non-professional subtitlers join these groups in order to improve their language skills (Bogucki, 2009; Orrego-Carmona, 2011)."

Fansubbing and language skills improvement had already been covered in an interview with Jorge Díaz-Cintas (cf. European Commission, 2012: 65-72), where the author expressed his views on the multiple didactic uses of subtitling, which would lead us to think that the mere existence of 'indications' would be a considerable understatement. In fact, there is a growing body of specialised literature on the subject of audiovisual translation which backs the idea of fansubbing communities as blossoming spaces of cultural exchange and reflection, albeit the absence of European

norms and standards has led to the emergence of a plethora of divergent style guidelines (cf. Massidda, 2015).

Back in 2006, Talaván started to analyse the diverse applications of subtitling in second and foreign language learning, paying heed to the potential impact of this tool on the students' competences. The author, however, was very much aware of the main impediments and inexplicable prejudices which were wielded against the use of subtitles in formal learning environments: from the promotion of 'passive' learning to the presumably insignificant repercussions the technique might have on beginners and lower-intermediate students. The use of authentic materials rather than adaptations, the development of higher level audiovisual competences which bring together several of the traditional linguistic skills, the increased levels of motivation and student engagement with the task at hand, and a more in-depth understanding of cultural difference are only a few of the benefits subtitles have to offer in well-planned project-based teaching methodologies.

The effects of subtitling as an active task on language learners have been approached from different experimental perspectives: both intra- and interlingually with advanced undergraduate students of translation (Incalcaterra McLoughlin, 2009); interlingually concentrating on listening comprehension enhancement (Talaván, 2011 and Talaván & Rodríguez-Arancón, 2015); interlingually with beginner undergraduate students of a second language, paying special attention to vocabulary acquisition and recall (Lertola, 2012); intralingually with primary foreign language teachers-to-be, measuring the impact on their future eight-year-old students as well as the workflows of the undergraduates themselves (López Cirugeda & Sánchez Ruiz, 2013); intralingually with a focus on cultural and intercultural awareness (Borghetti & Lertola, 2014); statistically over a period of four years highlighting the long-term impact and degree of recall of certain vocabulary items (Incalcaterra McLoughlin & Lertola, 2014); interlingually (in its reverse form), specifically addressing written production (Talaván & Rodríguez-Arancón, 2014 and Talaván et al. 2016); and interlingually (in its reverse form) in tandem with reverse dubbing with undergraduate students of a distance university (Talaván & Ávila Cabrera, 2015).

### 3. The study

The iCap project was developed at the UNED within a Teaching Innovation Research Network together with the Universidad de Zaragoza and the National University of Ireland, Galway (NUIG). The project analyses the use of intralingual subtitling as a didactic resource in a distance learning context and its benefits both in terms of written production and vocabulary acquisition. A total number of 41 participants worked on 10 sequenced ClipFlair activities using short (2 minutes approx.) pre-selected videos taken from the American sitcom *How I Met Your Mother* (Carter Bays and Craig Thomas, 2005-2014) over a period of a month and a half. Participants were required to provide intralingual English subtitles –as condensed as possible without losing semantic

content— for each of the videos following the instructions contained in the ClipFlair activities. The study applied a mixed method design as it employed quantitative as well as qualitative data collection tools in the form of language assessment tests (writing and vocabulary pre- and post-tests), initial and final questionnaires and observation carried out by four teachers and one tutor who were monitoring the whole project (through forums, assessment and a final video conference).

### *3.1. Participants*

A total of 70 first-year undergraduate B1 English students within the English Degree at UNED requested enrolment in the iCap project. The project was presented as a complementary activity and participants could obtain one additional point to their final mark if they finished all the activities. The dropout rate was relatively high, with only 41 students completing the activities; this tendency is typically attributed to the particular characteristics of distance learning methodology (e.g., the great majority of interactions occur asynchronously, and participants may organise their work schedule as they see fit, since they normally work and study and even live in different time zones).

In order to gather background information about the participants, subjects were asked to fill in an initial questionnaire at the beginning of the project. This questionnaire revealed that the mean age was 33 years old and that the great majority of participants were female (73%) Spanish native speakers (87%). Besides, most of the students (81%) had previously used audiovisual products in the language classroom and they had also made use of interlingual (71%) and intralingual (47%) subtitles as a support. However, the majority (94%) had never experienced active subtitling before; among those who had already tried subtitling, one did it within a previous research network at UNED while the rest claimed to be fansubbers. Finally, participants' expectations about the project were to improve the following skills in this order: written production, listening comprehension, vocabulary acquisition, oral production, reading comprehension and ICT skills.

In fact, the way the pre-questionnaire was designed invited participants to express not only self-perceptions regarding linguistic expertise, but also to indicate the everyday actions they took to supplement explicit and formal language learning. The great majority of students claimed that their primary resources used to continue learning the language on their own were films and television series, rather than books or radio programmes. Genre, medium and topic selection within the iCap project was facilitated by the fact that student sample was an homogeneous group that took an interest in the target culture and relied heavily on the latest audiovisual releases to keep their English up-to-date. In addition, the researcher tried to cater for the participants' tastes in choosing the popular *How I Met Your Mother*, which was well known and well liked in Spain judging by the number of reruns at the time of the experiment, and this fact may partly explain the high levels of motivation that were achieved, with 80% of the students finding the activities enjoyable, and 90% perceiving the activities motivating and declaring that they would be glad to sign up for similar projects in future.

### 3.2. Resources and procedures

The iCap project was developed in a distance learning setting through aLF, the virtual learning platform used at UNED. In the aLF community created for the project, participants could find the project instructions, the links to the language assessment tests, the videos to be subtitled, the corresponding ClipFlair activities, the discussion forums, and other relevant information.

The project instructions included three phases: pre-activities, activities and post-activities. Participants were required to proceed as follows: (1) complete the initial questionnaire and two language tests –writing and vocabulary pre-tests– as well as become familiar with the ClipFlair platform and the tasks; (2) work on the 10 activities available in the order they were presented, subtitle the videos into English paying attention to condensation and following the instructions contained in the ClipFlair activities (detailed information on how to download the activities and use ClipFlair was also provided); (3) upload each of the finished activities to the appropriate discussion forum thread for peer-review; (4) complete the final questionnaire, the writing and vocabulary post-tests, and take part in a final video conference aimed at providing feedback about the project.

The writing pre-test had to be completed in the first phase and asked students to work on two pieces of writing in 60 minutes. The first written task was a statement to be discussed in essay form (between 100-150 words), while the second task offered three options out of which students should choose one: a blog entry, an e-mail or a magazine contribution (between 130-150 words). As far as the vocabulary pre-test is concerned, it intended to measure productive recall of meaning (Laufer et al., 2004), since students were asked to supply the L2 target word. A total of 50 target words from the 10 video clips were selected for testing. All target words belonged to the Corpus of Contemporary American English (COCA)-Academic (<http://corpus.byu.edu/coca>) and in particular they pertained to the Core academic, technical and general domains. The pre-test contained 50 target words and 25 distractors. Participants were not aware that they were to be tested again both in written production and vocabulary knowledge at the end of the project.

In the first phase, after taking the tests, participants had time to become familiar with the ten videos to be subtitled. These clips had been carefully selected from the last season of *How I Met Your Mother* and chronologically ordered. A small team of experts in audiovisual translation and language learning watched all the episodes of the last season of the American sitcom and identified possible scenes that could be fit for the present project. After identifying the scenes, team members would prepare the dialogue transcription and evaluate the scene in terms of its linguistic and paralinguistic appropriateness. Some of the scenes were then discarded and only ten were included in the study. The grounds for rejection included, among others, excessive clip length and inconsistency of content –which would have made the general audiovisual narrative less linear and therefore more difficult to follow and make sense of on the part of the students. Each of the ten selected videos features a self-contained humorous scene that

can be understood by people who do not know the television series, and it is coded according to its linguistic function (i.e. narrating, requesting, advising, announcing, complaining, justifying, etc.).

In the second phase, which lasted one month, the participants could subtitle the 10 clips at their own pace. As stated in the general instructions of each ClipFlair activity (figure 1), participants were asked to subtitle the English video extracts into English. The steps to be followed were: watch the whole video first and then write the subtitles. It was pointed out that the subtitles should be a condensation (i.e. the gist) and not a transcription of the dialogue. To this end, it was necessary to summarize the main message. In other words, the subtitles should contain the main pieces of information that could help the audience follow the story without missing the visual information. In addition, technical advice was provided and participants were suggested to segment the subtitle lines considering complete sense blocks or grammatical units. Once the video was subtitled, participants were required to upload the activity in the forum for peer-review. Collaboration was fostered during the whole project as participants were encouraged to guide and help each other in order to improve their own performance.

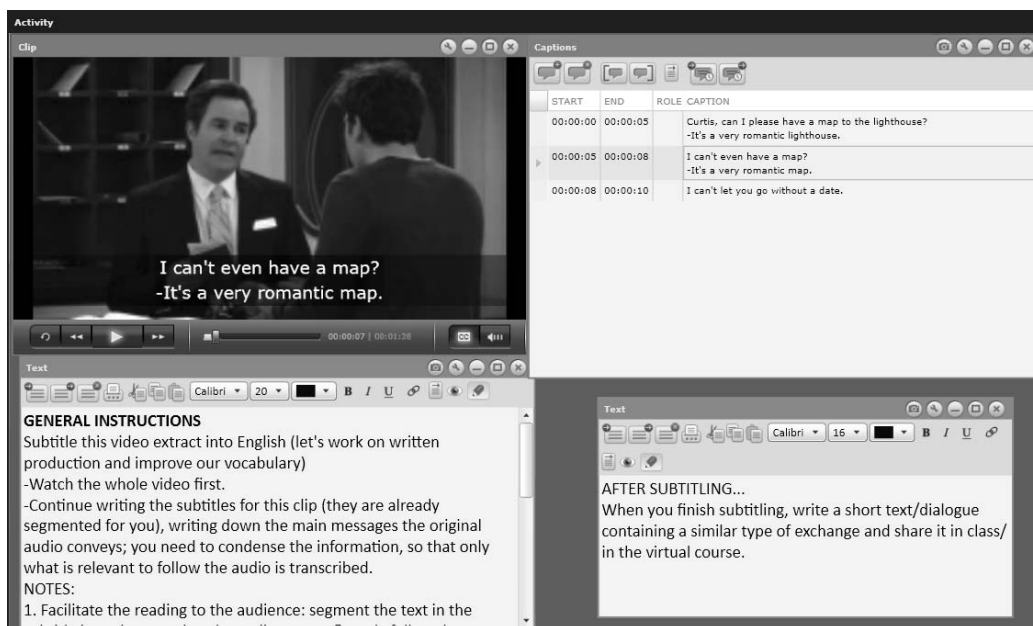


Figure 1. ClipFlair activity sample

In the third phase, participants had one week to complete the final questionnaire as well as the writing and vocabulary post-tests. The writing post-tests had the same structure as the pre-tests: participants were required to submit two pieces of writing in 60 minutes. The first task was once again a statement to be discussed in essay form (between 100-150 words), and the second gave three options out of which students should choose one: a letter of complaint, an e-mail or an online shop review (between 130-150 words). After completing the writing tasks, participants were asked to take a

vocabulary post-test, which was identical to the vocabulary pre-test but presented the 50 target words in a different order. Finally, all participants were invited to take part in a final video conference to provide feedback about the project. This online meeting was meant to be an opportunity for participants to chat with two of the teachers and other peers and to exchange their opinions about the project both in oral and written form.

#### 4. Data analysis

Two different types of language assessment tests were used as instruments of data collection, since the extent of both writing and vocabulary enhancement derived from the use of intralingual subtitling was to be assessed. Hence, the analysis below is divided into two sections, one for each L2 skill.

The observers who assessed the writing tests (pre and post) followed a specific rubric designed for the project, drawing from Cohen et al. (2011), Council of Europe (2001), Cushing (2002) and Hyland (2010). The rubric provided a total of 50 marks (25 per task) and was divided into 5 descriptors: readability, coherence, cohesion, length and general impression. Each of them was explained and detailed from 5 to 1 (with the corresponding equivalences described) and a suggested marking chart was also facilitated, as well as relevant notes on possible penalizations (for misspellings, inappropriate use of verb tenses, incorrect use of prepositions, pronoun forms confusion, etc.) to be considered for B1 level written production.

The average marks of the 41 participants and the corresponding standard deviation derived after analysing the marking charts of two observers are provided in table 1.

	<b>Pre-test</b>	<b>Post-test</b>
<b>Average mark</b>	6.77	7.21
<b>Standard deviation</b>	1.16	1.25

Table 1. Written production tests data

Although no control group was available for this study in particular, the remarkable increase regarding the students' writing skills in such a short time span (one month and a half), bearing in mind that the students worked online in a distance learning environment, is undoubtedly of notice. These results are confirmed and accompanied by information regarding marks correlation, a characterization analysis and the hypothesis testing detailed below.

A brief correlation study was used here to confirm a reasonable evidence of a causal relationship (Cohen et al., 2011) among the marks obtained in the written production tests. To characterise this correlation, Pearson's coefficient (Peña and Romo, 1997) was used to determine whether any significant correlation could be found between the marks of the pre-test and the post-test so as to check whether there was a direct relation of

improvement in the group as a whole; the correlation was quite close to 1 (0.77), which confirms that the improvement was general and consistent, so it can be derived that the course of the experiment in this regard developed as expected, as shown in figure 2.

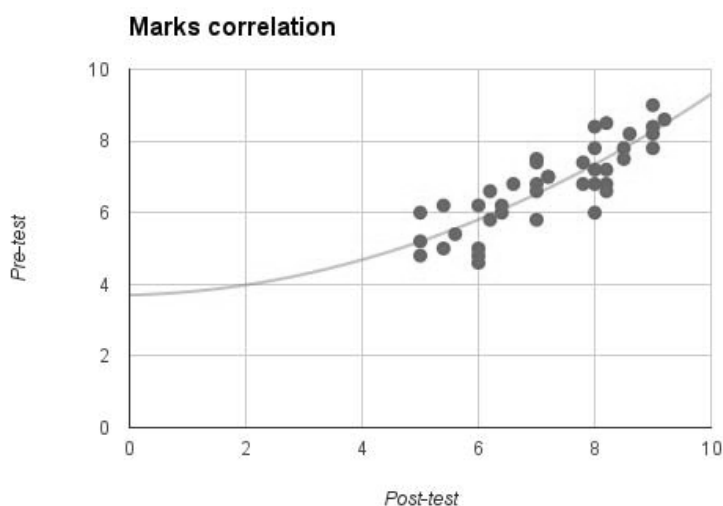


Figure 2. Written production tests direct marks correlation

A characterisation analysis of the average marks was also performed to complement the previous data. In this case, the Gaussian bell curve was used to check whether the marks followed a normal distribution. As shown in figure 3, the distribution of marks follows the expected curve, since it becomes less regular after the activity, where some students improved more than others (this goes parallel with the slight increase of the standard deviation observed in table 1).

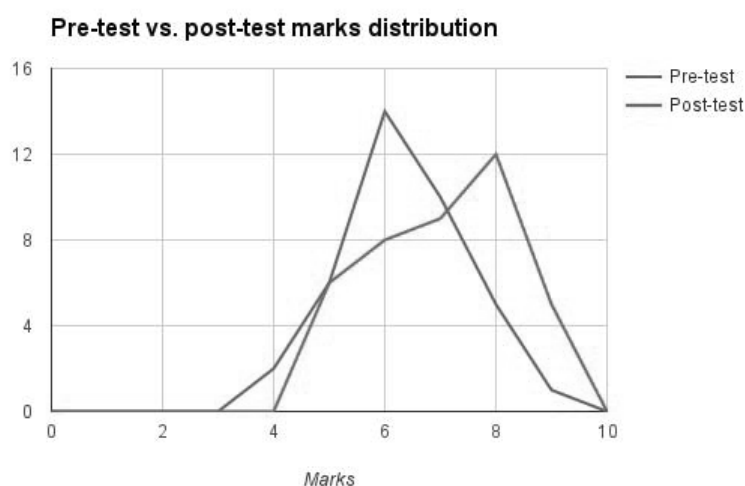


Figure 3. Pre-test vs. post-test marks distribution

To close the analysis on the written production results, a hypothesis test was carried out, where two hypotheses were established (null hypothesis and alternative hypothesis). The critical or rejection region was determined, i.e. the set of values of the test for which the null hypothesis could be rejected, and a normal distribution of the population was assumed (something that was gathered from the data provided in the previous paragraphs). Table 2 shows the set of reference levels (confidence and critical) which were applied:

<b>Confidence level <math>N_C</math></b>	90%	95%	99%
<b>Critical value <math>z_C</math></b>	1.28	1.645	2.33

Table 2: Reference levels

The hypothesis test was performed using the formula in figure 4.

$$z = \frac{(\bar{x}_B - \bar{x}_A)}{\sqrt{\frac{\sigma_A^2}{N} + \frac{\sigma_B^2}{N}}}$$

Figure 4. Critical value formula

The value obtained for  $z$ , 1.69, is compared with the critical value and so the null hypothesis is rejected with a high confidence level (95%); thus, the alternative hypothesis can be said to be true, proving that something has happened, in other words, that changes have been produced, i.e. an improvement of written production skills, confirming and triangulating the previous findings.

Hence, from a primary quantitative perspective, it could be derived that intralingual subtitling in L2 can improve writing skills in online settings. This preliminary statement will be recovered afterwards and qualitative data –obtained both from the post-questionnaire and from observation– will try to provide evidence for confirmation and contrast.

Turning now to the data obtained from the vocabulary tests, it should be noted that vocabulary knowledge involves various aspects that must be borne in mind: knowledge of form, knowledge of meaning as well as knowledge of use as stated by Nation (2001: 27). Of course form, meaning, and use of a word can be both receptive and productive. Since meaning seems to be the first and most important element involved in knowing a word, the focus here was on the meaning-form aspect. For testing purposes, Laufer et al. (2004) identified 4 degrees of knowledge of meaning based on the following two dichotomous distinctions: productive vs. receptive (active vs. passive) and recall vs. recognition. In the present scenario, the focus was on productive recall of meaning, i.e.



students were required to supply the L2 target word. As previously mentioned, a total of 50 target words from the 10 video clips were selected for testing, all of them pertaining to Core academic, technical and general domains. The pre-test included both the 50 target words as well as 25 distractors so that students did not focus and thus remembered the 50 selected items in view of the post-test. The post-test featured only the 50 target words in a different order. Although 70 participants completed the vocabulary pre-test, only 41 of them completed the post-test. Out of this group a subgroup of 9 participants, who did not know three of the target words, was selected for the analysis that is included in table 3.<sup>2</sup>

<b>Vocabulary recall sample</b>	
TW1	9
TW2	5
TW3	3

Table 3. Vocabulary data analysis (sample)

Table 3 shows how many participants of the subgroup could productively recall the meaning of three target words (TW1, TW2 and TW3) in the post-test. Target word 1 was correctly recalled by all subgroup participants (100%), while target word 2 by 55% of them and as many as 33% of the participants could provide target word 3. The difference in words recall could be due to the fact that the most recalled word was related to something relevant to the development of the story in the videos. The results from this subgroup analysis on word meaning productive recall after the experimental study are encouraging, considering that the participants did not know that they would be tested again on the target words and thus did not pay particular attention to them while carrying out the intralingual captioning tasks. It must be also noted that every target word appeared only once in a single clip. Indeed, the results from the analysis show that after one month of exposure to the words –the time allocated to the subtitling of the videos– subgroup participants could successfully recall a relevant number of target words. Therefore, further (more controlled) testing to shed more light on the effects of intralingual subtitling on vocabulary meaning productive recall is recommended. To this regard, it is advisable to implement a pilot study to determine the pool of target words and to plan a delayed vocabulary post-test to verify the level of long-term recall.

Finally, the results analysed can be contrasted and supported by qualitative data in the form of participants' responses regarding their improvement in the main L2 skills, and in particular those related to written production and vocabulary knowledge, as shown in figure 5.

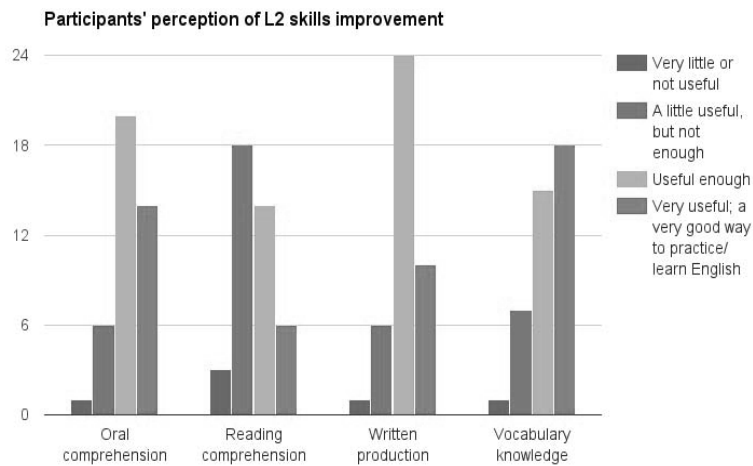


Figure 5. Participants' perception of L2 skills improvement

From the above representation, it is noticeable how most students felt listening comprehension was the skill that benefited the most from the activity of subtitling, as previous studies had already advanced (Talaván, 2011 and Talaván & Rodríguez-Arancón, 2015). However, it is also remarkable how intralingual subtitling is seen as 'useful enough' or 'very useful' to improve written production and vocabulary learning; in fact, vocabulary knowledge has the highest peak in terms of participant's perception of "a very good way to practice/learn English" so that the previous data that was taken somewhat tentatively, is hereby complemented. Hence, we can conclude that the students' perceptions confirm the data previously analysed, inasmuch as both skills are perceived as enhanced thanks to the project. In the discussion section below, further insights in this regard will be provided accompanied by the corresponding information obtained from the last instrument of data collection to be detailed: observation.

## 5. Discussion

Each of the stages in the project offered significant results to back the hypothesis that intralingual subtitling may be used as a language learning tool. It should be noted that, from start to finish, the project as a whole was a demanding endeavour both for participants and for the teaching team who designed the activities, readied the questionnaires, intervened in the forums, prepared the assessment rubrics and corrected the students' work. Notwithstanding, part of the innovative character of the project, apart from its promising results, ease of replicability and pedagogical benefits, resides in its collaborative nature: language experts from several European institutions, doctoral students and other professionals worked shoulder to shoulder for a period of over six

months from the moment the project was conceived until the final data were interpreted to obtain valid and reliable results that could later be discussed and contrasted objectively. According to the opinions reflected in the post-questionnaire, this commitment bore fruit, with 93% of participants stating that the project had met their expectations –which were improving their vocabulary, and receptive as well as productive English skills– even when 46% of them had found subtitling the clips a bit hard in linguistic terms and had stumbled upon some kind of technical problem at least on one occasion.

A total of 200 hours of work on the part of the students, forum managers and assessment experts were registered in the UNED virtual platform, which measures the number of minutes each individual stays connected –after signing in with their personal password– doing actual work, that is to say, writing comments in the forums, uploading files, or assessing work rather than simply accessing content and remaining static. In light of the relatively small size of the sample, these data reveal that quantitatively as well as qualitatively speaking such high levels of motivation are neither arbitrary nor casual. Interestingly, those 200 hours do not include the actual time participants spent subtitling the clips but only commenting on them and receiving suggestions for improvement. Platform minutes started counting only after the students uploaded draft versions and finished materials; the subtitling process itself should be accounted for separately. If we were to assume that subtitling a two to two-and-a-half minute unscripted clip takes a beginner between 35 and 50 minutes to complete on average, finishing the whole batch would take at least ten times that. Additionally, it was the participants' responsibility to discuss their idiosyncratic choices, improve their drafts with the help of their peers and teachers, re-upload their final versions, reflect upon culturally-bound elements that were challenging to understand, complete the questionnaires, the tests and participate in the final half-hour videoconference. From start to finish, then, taking part in the project meant that each student should set apart at least 12 hours over a period that effectively amounted to just half a term, holidays included. This might explain why only a third of participants could finish all of the tasks in the time allocated for that purpose.

As for the participants' reception of the project and the degree to which their expectations were met, the post-questionnaire returned very positive responses. Almost 80% of the participants indicated that their oral receptive skills (listening) and vocabulary had noticeably improved, while 70% claimed that their written production skills were better or much better after the project; it should be noted that they had been given the opportunity to carry out a regular peer-to-peer assessment through the active use of forums, they had had the possibility of discussing their choices with members of the teaching team, and they had further developed competences such as finding information independently, making sure that the information was accurate and reliable, sharing their results with others, reaching compromises, self-correcting, and identifying culture-bound linguistic items, all of which were seen as essential for the studies they were enrolled in. Subtitling a single video, or, to put it another way, receiving, processing, managing and synthesising information obtained from a diversity of

channels –visual, auditory and textual– inevitably required the activation of all these competences in simultaneity, together with rigorous terminological discernment. The participants' willingness to carry on with their subtitling work even after the project ended and their increased capacity to perceive the effort that subtitlers put into their work stands as a strong confirmation of attitudinal change. In the words of one student during the final videoconference: '[subtitling] was something I didn't really know much about before this project started, but now that I know the programmes and what it is for, I'll do it again for sure'.

For this sample of 41 students, subtitling a series of short clips intralingually taught them how to convey a message differently and more succinctly, to determine whether what they saw as the main point, the gist of a particular text fragment, was the same as that of their peers and, when that was not the case, to reconsider their own choices or to persuade others to see things another way. These aspects help explain why seven out of ten participants felt more confident using English to communicate with others than when they started. In sum, more than two thirds of participants believed the project had contributed to improving their linguistic skills, especially writing and vocabulary, that they were better able to find accurate solutions to linguistic problems while working on their own, and that subtitles were a motivating tool they would definitely try again.

## **6. Conclusions**

This paper has undertaken a groundbreaking research by exploring the potential of intralingual subtitling tasks in foreign language education using the web platform ClipFlair. Starting from the premise that producing same-language subtitles in the L2 can be beneficial to language learning, this study put forward that intralingual captioning in a distance learning context can enhance writing-related skills –such as register and style selection, sequencing of ideas, correct use of cohesion and coherence, and spelling– and vocabulary acquisition in terms of meaning recall.

In order to provide greater reliability, the present study has employed a quasi-experimental research design that has led to a triangulation of data, methods and observers. The quantitative analysis of the language assessment tests, supported by participants' answers to initial and final questionnaires, as well as to a qualitative analysis of observation, have reported encouraging results regarding the use of intralingual subtitling as an L2 learning resource both for writing skills improvement and vocabulary acquisition. Participants showed their appreciation for this innovative project by dedicating a considerable amount of their time to carry out the intralingual subtitling tasks, providing peer-to-peer assessment through the online forums and completing the required language tests and questionnaires. This was also confirmed by their interest in continuing to practise subtitling and their willingness to participate in more AVT projects. In addition, participants enjoyed the project as this task-oriented cooperative work in an online learning context boosted their motivation.

On the other hand, the study presents some limitations. As previously discussed, the iCap project was designed and developed by an international team of researchers for a period of over six months. Due to time and resources constraints, it was not possible to carry out a pilot study and this affected the vocabulary assessment test since the target word pool had to be drastically reduced. Moreover, it was not possible to have a control group. Also, although the project initially had a promising large experimental group of 70 undergraduates, the number of participants who completed all the required activities was 41. The students' withdrawal could be ascribed to the tight deadlines (the project lasted one month and a half) and the demanding tasks required (clip subtitling, peer-to-peer assessment, writing and vocabulary pre- and post-tests, and initial and final questionnaires). Likewise, an assessment of the student's subtitle production (410 subtitle files) would have provided further relevant data to complement observation.

The promising outcome of this study definitely encourages further research on intralingual captioning in language learning. Research on intralingual captioning can focus on different aspects of writing and vocabulary acquisition; on enhancing other language skills, in particular, listening comprehension and oral production; even on different learning contexts such as face-to-face and blended learning; or on language learners of diverse languages and levels over longer periods of time. Other AVT modes could also be investigated, such as subtitles for the deaf or hard-of-hearing (SDH) as another subtitling task yet to be explored, or even dubbing and audiodescription as revoicing tasks. In this regard, three recent projects have been undertaken at the UNED within a Teaching Innovation Research Network comprising a number of external partners: the RECORDS-Revoicing to Enhance Oral Production Skills project has obtained reasonably valid conclusions that shed some light on the pedagogical benefits of online collaborative audiodescription to develop oral production skills in undergraduate students of English for Specific Purposes (Talaván and Lertola, 2016); the iDub-Intralingual Dubbing project has attempted to assess the potential of dubbing using ClipFlair to develop general oral production skills in adult university students of English (B2 level) in a distance learning environment (Talaván and Costal, 2017); and the SubLITE-SUBtitles for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing project has focused on the improvement of Listening and Writing Skills in foreign language Education, and is still in the process of data gathering.

Experimental research on the feasibility of improving language learning processes in formal education has been carried out with small numbers of university graduates and undergraduates or upper-secondary students in non-longitudinal studies. The advent of a European standard norm for subtitling will perhaps be made possible once generalisable, statistically significant, reliable, valid and longitudinal studies have to offer definite conclusions on the level of enhancement this technique has for language users. Notwithstanding, higher numbers of participants and longer spans of time require larger teams of experimenters and the continued support of both public and private institutions. The promising results of the present paper, together with those studies of a similar nature which have given insight into the incontrovertible advantages of

audiovisual modalities as an essential part of language learning methodologies, invite the establishment of more ambitious research projects at a supranational level.

## Notes

1. The concept of ‘intensive listening’ is referred to here in the same terms as in Buck (2001) and Rost (2011).

2. Due to the reduced number of participants in the vocabulary post-test and the impossibility of previously conducting a vocabulary pilot study on a sample, the number of target words for the present study was reduced. Contrary to what was expected, several students knew the meaning of many target words selected. The largest group of people who did not know the same words (3 in total) was a group of 9 participants.

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# **I n t e r v i e w s**



## Telling the true Gibraltarian Story: an Interview with Gibraltarian writer M.G. Sanchez

Elena Seoane  
University of Vigo  
elena.seoane@uvigo.es

Born in Gibraltar in 1968, writer M. G. Sanchez moved to the UK to study English Literature at the age of twenty-seven, where he has lived ever since, with interludes in New Zealand (2004), India (2005-2008) and, more recently, Japan (2014-2016). He took BA, MA and PhD degrees at the University of Leeds, completing his studies in 2004 with a thesis exploring perceptions of ‘hispanicity’ in Elizabethan and Jacobean literature. His first publication was *Rock Black: Ten Gibraltarian Stories*, a collection of short narratives. Since then he has written three novels on Gibraltar – *The Escape Artist*, *Solitude House* and *Jonathan Gallardo* – as well as numerous stories and essays. His latest work, *Past: A Memoir*, was published in October 2016, and explores his own family history on the Rock.

**Elena Seoane:** Mark, our research group *Variation in English Worldwide (ViEW)* at the University of Vigo is compiling a corpus of Gibraltar English as part of the *International Corpus of English*. As sociolinguists we are fascinated by the complexity and depth of Gibraltarian identity, what you have sometimes called ‘Gibraltarianness.’ In the British political and cultural magazine *The New Statesman* (17/2/2016) you say that “if you don’t write your stories, others will.” Is this what first drew you to write about Gibraltar identity and culture?

**Mark G. Sanchez:** Yes, absolutely. I think that it is tremendously important for us as Gibraltarians to have our own stories out there in the public domain. If we don’t, then there is always a danger that people will start believing the myths and propagandistic distortions that are often told about us. I’ll give you a small example of what I mean,

Elena. In the late 80s I was a student at the University of Manchester. While there I became friends with a female student from La Línea de la Concepción. One day she introduced me to a friend of hers from Madrid. When he heard that I was from Gibraltar, this guy became angry and aggressive, saying that there was no such thing as a Gibraltarian because the real Gibraltarians had escaped to Spain when the Rock fell to the British in 1704. ‘Then what am I exactly?’ I asked him, completely taken aback by his tone. ‘*Tu, amigo mio,*’ he replied, ‘*eres un colono.*’ (‘You, my friend, are a settler.’) Can you imagine this sort of situation? There I am, in the middle of Manchester, when this boy from Madrid, who has never come anywhere near Gibraltar in his life, starts telling me that I don’t have a right to call myself Gibraltarian. An irony of ironies, considering that I can trace my family history on the Rock back to the mid-1780s!

**ES:** Was that the moment when you decided, ‘This is it: I have to start writing about Gibraltar’?

**MGS:** No, that came a few years later, in the mid-1990s, when Britain and Spain were going through one of their periodic ‘spats’ over the Rock. Gibraltar was continually in the news at the time (as it has been recently) and every day I kept hearing the same old journalistic clichés about us. That we were as Spanish as a ‘dish of paella.’ That we were nothing but a bunch of tax-evading UK expats. That we were “*más andaluces que los andaluces.*” ‘This isn’t right,’ I thought. Someone has to stand up and tell the Gibraltarian story from our own perspective, to counter the lies and crude oversimplifications that are being peddled about us by the political press. I think this was the actual point when I decided to take the plunge and start writing specifically Gibraltarian stories.

**ES:** In a number of talks in Italy, Switzerland and Spain, you have mentioned that stories play an essential role in identity formation and self-definition. I assume that your narrative rendition of Gibraltarian identity is manifold. How do the characters of your novel contribute to the formation of Gibraltarian identity?

**MGS:** I think national identity is always a very difficult subject to address, Elena, as it is tied into all kinds of subjectivities. Sure, there are certain linguistic and socio-behavioural traits that define us as Spaniards or Englishmen or Frenchmen or Gibraltarian or whatever – but at the same time there are no fixed rules for calibrating nationality, nothing set in stone, as it were. What I am interested, above all, as a Gibraltarian writer is to capture the reality of everyday life on the Rock, all the countless little peculiarities associated with living in a small, hemmed-in place where practically everybody knows each other. By focusing on the quotidian in this manner, I hope to show how life on the Rock differs, say, from life across the border in La Línea de la Concepción, or, for that matter, in a comparably sized town in mainland Britain. I hope to show, in other words, that we have our *own Gibraltarian way of thinking and doing things.*

**ES:** In your latest book, though, you delve into your own family history to try to explain what it means to be Gibraltarian, don't you?

**MGS:** Yes, that is correct - in October this year I published a memoir about the events in the summer of 2013, when my father died of a heart attack while cycling on the Spanish side of the border and we had to repatriate him in the middle of what, in retrospect, was probably the worst 'border crisis' in the last thirty years. In a certain sense, the memoir can be viewed as a tribute to his memory, but I also wanted to take the opportunity to repudiate some of the criticism that is often hurled at Gibraltarians by some sectors of the Spanish nationalist press, particularly the idea that we are '*colonos*' with no right to the land under our feet. I've heard it again and again – this idea that we are no more than land-grabbing '*colonos*' who have only been living in Gibraltar for a handful of years – and it's just so unfair. That is why I talk about my own family background in the new book. Specifically, I look at my four grandparents and at which point their ancestors came to the Rock. On my mother's side there are the Whitelocks, who came over from England in the mid-1780s, and the Schembris, who arrived in 1861 from Malta. A similar story can be seen on my father's side, with the Sanchezes coming from Spain in 1805, and the Duartes from Portugal around 1820. Nor is my family story unique in this way. Most people on the Rock have similarly mixed bloodlines.

**ES:** A lot has been written about your work, and some expressions used to describe it are "relentlessly brutal", "utterly credible" (Prof. John Stotesbury, Professor of Eastern Finland University) and "truly shocking and abrupt" (Nicholas Rankin, British historian and Fellow of the Royal Society of Literature). What part of Gibraltar history needs to be brutally described? What are you – or Gibraltarians – resentful about?

**MSG:** I wouldn't say that I am resentful about anything in particular, but I don't like how there is so much interest in the sovereignty dispute between the UK and Spain - what in Spain is commonly known as '*el contencioso de Gibraltar*' – and yet so little interest in the people who actually live on the Rock. How can you focus so much attention on a place and yet not listen to the concerns and worries of the people who live there? To me that is just plain wrong.

**ES:** I've noticed that the border between Spain and Gibraltar plays a central – one might even say dominant – role within your writing. Is it one of your missions as a writer to let people know what is happening at the border?

**MGS:** Yes, absolutely. Most people know the border from occasional footage shown on the national news, but the reality cannot easily be fitted within the parameters of a two- or three-minute news clip. Like all boundary zones, it is a space riddled with complications and inconsistencies, a real-life Pandora's box, and what you experience

there one day might be in total contrast to what you experience the next. I am reminded to a certain degree of what the American author Janette Turner Hospital says in one of her novels. “At borders,” she writes, “no amount of prior planning will necessarily avail.... In the nature of things, control is not in the hands of the traveler.” These lines were written specifically about the Canadian-American border, but they could easily apply to the border between Gibraltar and Spain. If the relationship between Britain and Spain is fluid and stable, then you can cross the border in less than a minute. But if it is bad, it directly influences the set-up at the border and you could be trapped there for hours on end. When my father died in Spain 2013 and we had to repatriate him, for instance, we had to deal with all kinds of border-related problems: three- or four-hour-long traffic queues, overzealous *guardia civiles*, all sorts of unnecessary red tape. In fact, the experience was so traumatic for me personally that I developed a type of mental block and for three years I couldn’t bring myself to go anywhere near that border. Yet when I finally crossed the border again earlier this year, would you believe, I was able to walk through without anybody even checking my passport! I think unpredictability is hard-wired into the place!

**ES:** Mark, of all the stereotypes about Gibraltar you’ve heard in your life, which one is the most outrageous of all, the one that is way out of line, insensitive or downright ignorant?

**MGS:** That’s a hard question. The truth is that I’ve heard all kinds of things in my time. That we’re all a bunch of smugglers and money-launderers, for example. That we are no more than a town of renegade Andalusians. That nobody lives on the Rock apart from British military personnel. That Gibraltar is full of reactionary British expats who are there to avoid paying tax in the UK. That the Gibraltar government is out to purposefully damage the Spanish economy. That we are a bunch of parasites sucking the lifeblood out of Spain. I could go on and on and on. If I had a pound for every distortion and propagandistic fiction I’ve heard about Gibraltar, I’d be considerably better off than I am now!

**ES:** In your novel *The Escape Artist*, the protagonist says that “in the nineteenth-century everybody used to call us “mongrels” because we were neither Spanish nor British, but a strange composite of the two with a bit of Genoese, Maltese, Irish, Portuguese and Jewish thrown into the melting pot as well”. (Sanchez 2013: 13). The hybrid nature of Gibraltar identity is unquestionable, but is it crucial to understand Gibraltarainness today?

**MSG:** Yes, I think hybridity is a key word when it comes to understanding Gibraltar identity or ‘Gibraltarianness.’ We are neither fish nor fowl, as the English saying goes, but an amalgam of the two. It’s like when you mix two colours and end up with a completely different one. To understand modern-day Gibraltar you have to understand this sense of hybridity and all the apparent craziness that comes with it – blond-haired

people with Spanish surnames, red pillar boxes beside *chiringuitos* serving *gambas a la plancha*, British bobbies speaking Spanish, et cetera, et cetera. I think this is what makes us unique and hard to categorise – the way we straddle two very different European cultures and bring them together in our mannerisms and behaviour.

**ES:** In a recent essay written for a conference at the University of Basel (8/9/2016) you talk about a hardening of attitudes towards foreigners and outsiders after the Brexit referendum. You also mention several racist incidents that you have suffered in your own person. Has all this ever made you question your own sense of British Gibraltarian identity?

**MGS:** Well, it's never pleasant to be marginalized purely on account of one's accent, but, sadly, incidents of this sort are all too common nowadays. People want conformity, sameness, and anyone who doesn't outwardly appear to belong to a national collective is automatically repudiated. We saw this in the aftermath of the Brexit referendum and we are also seeing it in the US following Trump's presidential election. Just this morning I was looking at the news and I saw an article about fake news on Facebook and another which said that 'post-truth' has been declared the international word of the year by the Oxford dictionaries. I thought to myself, 'What sort of a world are we creating here?'

**ES:** So from this I take it that you see Brexit as a very negative development?

**MGS:** For me Brexit is an incredibly retrograde and disappointing step and a decision that will bring long-term economic and political instability to both Britain and Gibraltar. I think sooner or later the people of the UK will lament the day that they fell for the divisive xenophobic rhetoric promoted by Nigel Farage and other members of the 'Leave Campaign.' As for Gibraltar, who knows how Brexit might affect us? Some right-wing politicians in Spain see Brexit as an opportunity to pressure the Gibraltarians into relinquishing their long-standing links with Britain, and one or two individuals have even gone as far as saying that the time has come for the border to be shut again. If you ask me, Brexit is bad for everybody – Gibraltar, the UK, and even Europe as a whole.

**ES:** Some exclusively linguistic questions now, if I may. According to the literature (Levey 2008, Weston 2013), the sociolinguistic landscape of Gibraltar is age-graded, divided into four distinct groups according to age. You belong to the 2nd generation, in which – according to them - the language of communication is Yanito and Spanish. English would be for you a 'high language', and, given the frequent exposure to it you would switch frequently from Spanish to Yanito and to English. Is this true in your case (when you are in Gibraltar) or is it also a question of education and profession?

**MGS:** As in most places, education and profession do influence the way that people speak, but I think that Weston and Levey are correct: the sociolinguistic landscape in Gibraltar is very much age-graded. Generally speaking, the older the person is, the less comfortable they will be speaking English. My grandmother, for instance, used to tell me that, when she was in London during the years of the evacuation (1941-1945), some of her Gibraltarian compatriots had such poor command of the language that they used to say '*Todo te lo dan con Ron*' when catching a bus and telling the bus driver they were heading towards Tottenham Court Road! The reason her generation had so much trouble speaking English was that in the 1930s and 1940s Gibraltar was still very much caught up in a colonial mindset. We had British administrators holding all the top jobs in Gibraltar, with the local civilians doing all the menial jobs under them. To maintain the status quo, British colonial administrators deliberately undereducated their subjects, hoping by doing this to keep them 'in their place.' After the war, however, there was a radical change in the way the British government viewed education in the colonies. Greater emphasis was placed on self-development and more structured curriculums were drawn up. The generation that grew up in this new climate (my parent's generation and to a certain extent my own) was much more fluent in English and could shift between both languages in a way that their forefathers would have found impossible. Now, of course, we have a completely new generation – one that speaks mostly in English and hardly switches into Spanish. They understand Spanish, yes, but they seem to be very reluctant to speak it. It's almost like they have turned into the very opposite of their great-grandparents!

**ES:** A lot has been written about *llanito*, which is a form of Spanish interspersed with English words and loanwords from other Mediterranean dialects and languages. Could you tell us something about it?

**MGS:** To an untrained ear, *llanito* sounds similar to the type of Spanish spoken in southern Andalusia, but if you listen carefully you will hear plenty of interpolations, as well as lots of code-switching. There are also many anglicisms in *llanito* – that is to say, English words which have been modified phonetically to sound 'more Spanish.' Some well-known examples are '*mebli*' ('marble'), '*kayki*' (for 'cake'), '*bateria*' ('battery'.) To give things even more of a complicated twist, there are some words in *llanito* which have been imported directly from Portuguese and Italian by way of the migrants who came to Gibraltar in the nineteenth century. A famous example is the Genovese word '*marciapê*', which is how you would refer in *llanito* to an English 'pavement', or '*la acera*' in Spanish.

**ES:** We all modify the way we talk depending on our interlocutors and context. Linguists call it *accommodation*. Are you aware of using different English accents in different settings within Gibraltar?



**MSG:** I wouldn't necessarily put on a different accent, but I would modify the amount of English/Spanish words that I use depending on who I'm speaking to. If I were talking to a labourer or some other blue-collar worker, for instance, I'd probably use more Spanish words than English ones. Alternatively, if I were talking to a judge or a lawyer or a university professor, I would modify the balance so that almost all my words would be English ones. Of course, to a certain extent I am generalizing when I say all this – since there are labourers in Gibraltar who speak exclusively in English and, conversely, there are lawyers who prefer conversing in Spanish. But as a general rule, yes, I would change how I speak depending on who is there before me.

**ES:** I live in Galicia, a bilingual community, Galician/Spanish. In the past, the situation was diglossic, with Spanish being the language of prestige and Galician being the language of rural areas to use only at home. Younger generations now do not feel that difference, because Galician is empowered by the regional government. Does this diglossic situation exist in Gibraltar, whereby Spanish would be the 'low language' and English the 'high' one?

**MGS:** Traditionally, yes - English in Gibraltar has been seen as the language of prestige, whereas Spanish could be described as '*el lenguaje de la calle*' ('the language of the streets'). There are very specific historical and political reasons for this. Until relatively recently, as I explained earlier, institutions and government departments were run by English expatriate civil servants and this ensured that Gibraltarians needed to speak good English to attain respectable jobs. Nowadays, of course, the situation is very different: Gibraltar has a large degree of political and juridical autonomy and most top jobs are done by Gibraltarians. From this, you'd assume that it is no longer as important to speak good English as it was in the old days, but in fact it's quite the reverse: English is even more of a prestige language now than it was in the old 'colonial days.' Many young parents, for example, speak to their children only in English – even though amongst themselves they would speak in *llanito*! It's a bizarre situation and one that I find a little frustrating. I think part of the explanation for it is that old habits die hard, but another part is that the relationship between Gibraltar and Spain has been very problematic in the last few years and, as a result, people are subconsciously turning away from the Spanish language, which of course is a real, real shame, as it is always better to be bilingual than monolingual.

**ES:** So do you think that the use of Spanish in Gibraltar will eventually disappear altogether?

**MGS:** I hope not, but when you consider how Gibraltar has always been in a state of linguistic flux, who knows? Personally, I would feel very sad if Spanish disappeared altogether from the Rock because I consider both the English and Spanish languages as part of my Gibraltarian heritage.

**ES:** Finally, if anybody reading this interview would like to find out more about your writing, where should they look?

**MGS:** I recommend that they visit my website: [www.mgsanchez.net](http://www.mgsanchez.net) or my facebook page [www.facebook.com/mgsanchezwriter/](http://www.facebook.com/mgsanchezwriter/).

**ES:** I'd like to thank you for your kindness to agree to this interview, and also your openness in answering my questions. We hope to have you at the University of Vigo in the spring semester 2017, but until then, we will be in touch regarding your work and opinions on Gibraltarianness.

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# **R e v i e w s**



**Moya Guijarro, Arsenio Jesús (2014). *A Multimodal Analysis of Picture Books for Children. A Systemic Functional Approach*. London: Equinox. 297 pages.**

Reviewed by María Martínez Lirola  
University of Alicante, Spain

The book *A Multimodal Analysis of Picture Books for Children. A Systemic Functional Approach* is an essential contribution to multimodal discourse studies because of the deep analysis of the intersemiosis between verbal and visual elements in a sample of nine picture books for children of different ages. The frameworks of Michael Halliday's Systemic Functional Grammar (SFG) and Kress and van Leeuwen's Visual Social Semiotics are applied to the genre of children's tales in order to offer a clear identification of the verbal and visual strategies available to the writer and the illustrator. The combination between the verbal and the visual aspects in previous analyses of picture books has normally been neglected. In this sense, the book offers an innovative aspect of study by analysing the intersemiosis between verbal and visual modes to express representational, interpersonal and textual meanings.

The book has a clear structure and organization, which can be seen in the topics covered in each of the nine chapters and in the conclusions the author presents after some of the chapters and at the end of the book. *A Multimodal Analysis of Picture Books for Children* is divided into nine chapters. The author analyses the ideational, interpersonal and textual choices used by the writer in order to create meaning in picture books in the different chapters. Having done that, Professor Moya compares them with the corresponding representational, interactive and compositional choices used by the illustrator. However, the book does not apply the visual systems proposed by Painter et al. (2013). The application of these systems of representation, interaction and composition could have been very useful to analyse the meaning created from the intersemiosis between the images and the written text in the picture books intended for children in different stages of cognitive development. The author points out that his book was finished just when Painter's et al.'s book was published.

The author makes clear that there are three different stages of cognitive development in children (Piaget, 1981, 1984): sensory-motor stage (0-2 years old), pre-operational stage (3-6 years old) and concrete operations stage (7-9 years old). Each of the stages is illustrated with the analysis of three tales. There is a very clear description of the common characteristics that define the stories that have been included in each stage of cognitive development and it is highlighted that the written text as well as the illustrations play a fundamental function in the construction of the plot. These stories are not limited to the British or North American scope, as the book also incorporates tales written in other countries of the Commonwealth. The nine selected books include some contemporary classics such as the following: *The Tale of Peter Rabbit* (1902) by Beatrix Potter, *Where the Wild Things Are* (1963) by Maurice Sendak or *The Very Hungry Caterpillar* by Eric Carle (1969).

In chapter 1 the author presents an introduction which outlines the scope of the book, its structure and its motivation. This section also offers the main characteristics of picture books as a genre. Chapter 2 justifies why SFG and Visual Social Semiotics are appropriate frameworks for a textual and visual study of picture books. The sociocultural adequacy of these approaches and their metafunctional orientations are pointed out. The author explains the reasons why he has chosen SFL instead of Functional Discourse Grammar or the Cardiff Grammar: SFL provides a model to describe how verbal language is used to create experiential, interpersonal and textual meanings simultaneously. Moreover, there are also references to the other main approaches to multimodal studies, i.e., Multimodal Discourse Analysis (O'Halloran, 2004, 2005) and Multimodal Interactional Analysis (Norris, 2004). The approach followed in this book is based on Kress and van Leeuwen's (2006) Social Semiotics because it is regarded as an approach that offers an appropriate framework to analyse other non-verbal semiotic modes which can also be assigned representational, interactive and compositional meanings. The revision of the bibliography done in this chapter is excellent; also, Professor Moya's clarity in reference to the main differences between the different approaches under consideration is outstanding.

Chapter 3, 4 and 5 analyse in detail the theoretical perspectives used for the study focusing on the categories used by Halliday (2004) and Kress and van Leeuwen (2006) within the representational, interpersonal and textual metafunctions. The author discusses the three metafunctions and focuses on one representative case study in order to exemplify each of them. In this sense, these chapters use examples extracted from the tales analysed; they are commented on so that the main theoretical aspects are clearly illustrated. The chapters finish with the analysis of the intersemiosis of verbal and visual elements in three specific tales intended for young children followed by some conclusions: *The Very Hungry Caterpillar* (chapter 3), *Where the Wild Things Are* (chapter 4) and *Gorilla* (chapter 5).

The analysis presented in chapter 3 offers a clear view of the main aspects used to offer a representation of reality in the verbiage and in the visual mode as well as the synergy of images and words. The analysis presented in chapter 4 concentrates on the interpersonal and interactive meanings. Therefore, interpersonal choices are analysed in the verbiage and interactive ones are observed in the illustrations. Furthermore, this chapter offers an overview of the meaning that is born out of the interplay of images and words in picture books. Chapter 5 concentrates on the textual metafunction and on the analysis of composition in images, which are studied in the tale *Gorilla*. This chapter offers some figures to illustrate the main aspects presented in the analysis.

Chapters 6, 7 and 8 show how the three metafunctions operate in relation to age appropriateness. The author analyses all the tales in detail in order to identify the main choices used by writers and illustrators to convey representational, interpersonal and textual meanings. Chapter 6 analyses the verbal and the visual intermodal relations in all nine picture books selected for study within a representational perspective. This chapter shows how the written and the visual mode complement each other in different

ways to express representational meanings in picture books for children in different stages of cognitive development.

Chapter 7 explores the verbal and visual choices available for writers and illustrators to generate interaction between the different characters that appear in the nine picture books analysed and between these characters and the child-reader. The main aspects analysed in this chapter are the following: a) the mood structures and the expressions of modality used by writers; b) the relations of contact, distance and perspective in the visuals; c) the ways in which the verbal and the visual mode complement each other; d) and finally, attention is paid to how the age factor may influence the interpersonal and interactive strategies used by writers and illustrators.

Chapter 8 concentrates on observing how images and words are co-deployed to create coherent messages in the nine picture books selected for analysis. In order to do so, the organization of information in the verbal component is studied to observe how the tales are coherently organized. Moreover, the compositional meaning of the picture books is explored in the visual mode and compared to the information found in the verbal mode. In this sense, aspects of theme and thematic progression, information value, framing and salience are observed in the images and in the written text. This chapter ends paying attention to the influence of age factor in the choice of the different verbal and linguistic choices. Chapters 6, 7 and 8 offer some figures with clear examples that help readers understand the features explained in the book.

Finally, chapter 9 summarizes the main ideas discussed in the book and the main results obtained. This chapter emphasizes the importance of the age factor on a picture book's creation. However, the statistical analysis done with the statistical package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) clearly shows that, although age influences the choices of writers and illustrators, gender is also an essential factor in the internal organization of the tales. This way, the author of the book shows how genre plays an important role in the representational, interpersonal and textual choices made by writers and illustrators in picture books intended for children in different stages of cognitive development. The book also provides teachers and mediators with specific tools that may help them select the most appropriate reading materials for their young learners. This last chapter emphasizes the potential of picture books to encourage reading among young children. Another of the main ideas highlighted in this book is that good picture books are a richer experience than the sum of their independent components. This justifies the use of a multimodal perspective in order to identify the main verbal and visual strategies available to writers and illustrators to create interesting and appropriate picture books for a specific readership.

The bibliography is complete and updated. All in all, his book constitutes an invaluable contribution to the task of providing empirical clues to classify picture books according to the age groups for whom they are initially intended. The way in which the author uses the tools offered by SFG and Visual Social Semiotics clearly exemplifies these two theoretical models of analysis in picture books and, in turn, offers a critical study of the difficulties the analyst may encounter when applying them to real samples of language.

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**Szpyra-Kozłowska, Jolanta. 2015. *Pronunciation in EFL Instruction. A Research-Based Approach. Multilingual Matters. 264 pages.***

Reviewed by Yolanda Joy Calvo Benzies  
Department of English Studies, University of the Balearic Islands

It is not a coincidence that the 2015 issue of *MonTI (Monographs in Translation and Interpreting)* issue is devoted to legal interpreting. This field has attracted a growing interest within the Translation and Interpreting Studies community in recent years and has allowed the discipline to widen the scope of interpreting research, which had traditionally revolved essentially around conference interpreting.

Although pronunciation has long been considered the Cinderella in EFL classrooms (Underhill, 2013), the last years have witnessed an increase in the number of volumes and studies conducted on the teaching and learning of this important language area (Walker, 2010; Lane, 2010; Celce, Brinton and Goodwin, 2010; Estebas, 2010; Rogerson, 2011 and Marks and Bowen, 2012, to mention a few). Most of these studies can be classified into the following two groups: a) studies which focus on theoretical issues regarding the teaching and learning of pronunciation, including explanations of English pronunciation at both a segmental and suprasegmental level; and, b) volumes which represent a collection of exercises and/or tips so as to help EFL learners improve their pronunciation. The present book, however, is slightly different since it “does not provide a description of English phonetics (...) nor is it a pronunciation manual which contains sets of exercises to practise particular aspects of English phonetics although it does contain numerous practical hints and suggestions how to deal with specific problems” (Szpyra, 2015: ix).

This volume is organised into four main sections: 1) *English Pronunciation Teaching: Global Versus Local Contexts*; 2) *Global and Local Pronunciation Priorities*; 3) *Pronunciation Inside and Outside the Classroom: A Holistic Multimodal Approach*; and, 4) *Concluding Remarks*. The first three of them are further subdivided into two main parts, Part A and Part B, respectively. Generally speaking, in the former subsections (Part A), the author provides readers with a general background to the topic(s) under discussion whereas the latter sections (Part B) present several experiments carried out by the author related to the theoretical issues outlined in the previous parts. Hence, in broad terms, this volume is full of both theoretical and practical sections which perfectly complement each other, making it a book that will not only interest EFL researchers interested in language teaching in general and in the teaching of spoken English in particular but it could also be considered an essential resource book on the teaching of pronunciation for EFL teachers at all levels of education.

The first section of this book, as its title indicates, could be considered a general introduction to the teaching of English pronunciation with special emphasis on the distinction between local and global contexts, i.e., differentiating ESL from EFL

teaching backgrounds. Moreover, readers can find useful information regarding many issues to bear in mind when teaching pronunciation such as: a) the reasons why pronunciation is important; b) why it has been traditionally neglected in these language-learning environments, c) pronunciation goals and models; and, d) factors which need to be taken into account when teaching and/or learning English pronunciation. Perhaps the two most important points in this section due to their innovating character are A.1.5 and A.1.8. In the former, the author describes and compares EFL backgrounds to ELF ones and then suggests the concept of NELF which, in her words “can be viewed as a kind of compromise” between EFL and ELF in the sense that “it is intended for foreign learners who wish to learn English in order to communicate in it with other speakers of this language, both native and non-native, without excluding any of these two groups of potential interlocutors” (Szpyra, 2015: 23, 24). The aforementioned approach is up to the best of my knowledge completely innovative; more specifically, I believe it is the first method that actually contemplates teaching EFL with an emphasis on intelligible communication following the ELF approach. Hence, these sections are a must-read for both teachers and researchers interested in the field of teaching pronunciation and I can truly imagine this method becoming the main one used in pronunciation classes throughout the world very soon. Section A.1.8 addresses the issue of factors that need to be taken into account when teaching and/or learning pronunciation. Such factors are divided into three main groups: 1) *EFL educational context*; 2) *EFL learner-related factors*; and 3) *EFL teacher-related factors*. It is true that this topic has already been discussed quite extensively in previous studies such as Berkil (2009), Lane (2010) or Rogerson (2011) but emphasis is normally placed on student versus teacher-related factors. On the other hand, there has been scarce research on the influence of the educational context on the way students learn pronunciation.

While reading through part B in section 1 (as well as the corresponding part B's in sections 2 and 3), it seems clear that the author of this volume has long research experience, something illustrated in the empirical experiments she thoroughly describes. In this particular section, three experiments on pronunciation goals and models are wonderfully summarised, making it very easy for the reader to establish comparisons with the theoretical issues outlined in the previous part. More specifically, in the first experiment, university students are asked to judge non-native speakers' accents according to aspects like reliability and pleasantness; in the other two experiments secondary-schools students' opinions are taken into account, first regarding accent preference and afterwards on the importance given to the teaching of pronunciation in Poland. Whilst reading these subsections, I personally strongly appreciated that the author had included long lists of explanations given by the participants when answering different questions.

Section number 2 revolves almost entirely around pronunciation priorities, i.e., on which parts of English pronunciation should teachers focus. In this part of the book, readers can find useful information on intelligibility, methods to classify pronunciation errors and to prioritise pronunciation needs (namely, Jenkins' *Lingua Franca Core*, *Amalgam English* and *International English* (both suggested by Cruttenden) and

Collins' and Mees' model), a long description of the segmental/suprasegmental debate in the last few years, a section on pronunciation and spelling in which both examples of irregular patterns and "positive effects of L2 orthographic output" (Szpyra, 2015: 105) are included, together with a few techniques to help students overcome pronunciation problems due to spelling, many instances which illustrate examples and comparisons between local and global pronunciation errors, as well as other types of complex words including false friends, mis-stressed and polysyllabic words.

Particularly interesting as well as innovative is the list of factors that can affect intelligibility, summarised in Table 2.2., factors which, as far as I am aware, have not been discussed in previous studies. Similarly, I appreciated the information displayed in Table 2.3. where readers can find the four pronunciation-priority approaches aforementioned compared at three levels: 1) *consonantal*; 2) *vocalic*; and, 3) *prosodic*. Furthermore, as in Part A in the previous main section of this book, the author does not only review previous research conducted but she also suggests her own personal approaches/opinion; in this case, she a) describes a new method called *Focus on the Pronunciation of Phonetically Difficult Words*, which, as its name indicates, entails focusing first on learning how to pronounce words considered phonetically difficult; and, b) gives her own point of view concerning the segmental/suprasegmental debate, an opinion I completely agree with since "it is impossible to generalize as to which of the two phonetic aspects of English, segmental and suprasegmental, is more important since this largely depends on the degree of similarity/difference between the learners' mother tongue and English" (Szpyra, 2015: 113).

Once again, most of the issues discussed in Part A within this second main section have been complimented by a practical study(ies) which adds some empirical data to the discussions. On this occasion, the emphasis in experiment 1 is placed on global and local pronunciation errors made by EFL learners which were graded by native English speakers according to a 1-4 scale on comprehensibility, foreign accent and annoyance as well as on intelligibility. The main focus of experiment 2 was on difficult words to pronounce in which secondary-school students were asked to write a list of words they think are difficult to pronounce and explain what aspects make them complex words. Finally, in the last experiment, native English speakers were given examples of typical Polish English learners' pronunciation mistakes which they then had to classify as important or non-important for intelligibility.

The third main section of this book, *Pronunciation Inside and Outside the Classroom: A Holistic Multimodal Approach* is the most practical of them all. In broad terms, it describes ways of putting into practice the pronunciation goals established in the previous section. Therefore, some of the most important topics dealt with here include ways of helping teachers to get students to realise how important English pronunciation is, some ideas to help their students improve by using both articulatory and auditory pronunciation training as well as cognitive phonetic and phonological training and giving feedback and correcting pronunciation mistakes. Of extreme interest for EFL teachers is the author's detailed description of a multi-sensory approach which includes techniques to combine visual, auditory and kinaesthetic/tactile learning styles

at the same time in order to benefit all our students. In the writer's words "L2 sounds must not only be heard and imitated (...) but, metaphorically speaking, they should also be seen, touched, tasted, smelled, felt, understood and appropriated, emotionally as well as intellectually, by EFL learners" (Szpyra, 2015: 145). Furthermore, readers may wish to pay special attention to subsection A.3.6 where they can find more than 10 pages on faults that still exist in current EFL textbooks regarding the teaching of pronunciation, thus making an important contribution to previous research on teaching materials and pronunciation (Tergujeff, 2010; Derwing, Diepenbroek and Foote, 2012; Tergujeff, 2013; and Henderson and Jarosz, 2014).

As mentioned in the introduction to this review, this book does not intend to be a resource full of activities for students to improve their pronunciation; however, the author does devote some pages to describing specific techniques available to teach pronunciation such as traditional transcriptions, songs, poems or games. Her contribution to this topic, although short, is well explained and full of examples; moreover, extremely practical is the fact that a whole separate sub-section is devoted to the use of new technologies for teaching pronunciation, crucial resources nowadays in the language teaching field.

Finally, the short chapter with conclusions is a must-read for both teachers and researchers. The outline, style and format is very clear. The main points developed throughout the whole book are described and the most important ideas appear in bold type so as to help the reader easily extract the most relevant information. I personally enjoyed this final chapter very much.

For future editions of this book, a few changes may be made. Firstly, although I have expressed my gratitude for the information displayed in some of the tables, I found the total number of tables quite low and perhaps more could be added in the future. Related to this suggestion, I would have appreciated a table index or list of tables in an appendix as is accustomed in books with these characteristics. Thirdly, although the list of student and teacher-related factors is quite extensive, it may have helped to divide each of these groups into different subgroups as previous studies like Berkil (2009), Lane (2010) or Rogerson (2011) have done. A longer description of the factors dependent on the educational context would also be appreciated. Another small modification could be to divide the list of techniques described into two main groups, namely, traditional versus modern techniques. In addition, perhaps more detailed descriptions of pronunciation software could be given in the section on new technologies since programmes such as Richard Caudwell's is only very briefly mentioned. Finally, it may be useful to place a list of references at the end of each main section of the book since many authors are quoted in the practical-experiment sections (Part B) and it may make it easier for the reader to find the references at the end of the corresponding main part instead of at the end of the volume since each of the main parts are quite long.

The previous shortcomings by no means undermine the great value of this book; as explained several times throughout this review, this volume wonderfully contributes to the field of teaching pronunciation in many ways, both at a theoretical and practical

level. All in all, it is full of new ideas and approaches that I am sure will be very beneficial for the language teaching field, for teachers and researchers. I would personally like to congratulate the author for her work and look forward to reading more research conducted by her.

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