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Articles

THE POLITICIZATION OF THE PULPIT IN SEVENTEENTH-CENTURY ENGLAND: THANKSGIVING SERMONS AFTER THE DUKE OF MONMOUTH'S REBELLION

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I

The last years of Charles II's reign were seriously affected by the growing polarization of English public opinion. However, once the Popish Plot hysteria and the Exclusion Crisis were over,¹ there was a general need —mainly among the nobility and gentry— for peace and order. The Whigs had been discredited, and new laws were now passed against religious dissenters in an attempt to reinforce the government and the official Church. Charles II's illegitimate son, the Duke of Monmouth, had been active throughout these years, promoting himself as a Protestant leader who could save the monarchy from the Catholic threat.² His involvement in several plots against his father, and his ensuing exile in the Low Countries in April 1684 anticipated the 1685 rebellion he would lead against the new monarch James II. The insurrection proved a complete failure and Monmouth was imprisoned in the Tower of London on 12 July to be executed three days later.³

In order to celebrate James's victory over the conspirators, the English authorities declared an official day for public thanksgiving. A number of sermons were then composed and delivered in different parts of the country, which also offered an opportunity to stand by the new monarch in his line of government. Many of these homilies were printed and published soon afterwards with the purpose of spreading the official version of the events and counteracting any remaining opposition to the

Stuart sovereign. This paper considers a variety of the printed sermons delivered on the occasion, such as Charles Allestree's *A Sermon Preached at Oxford before Sir William Walker, Mayor of the Said City upon the 26th of July* (Oxford, 1685), Obadiah Lee's, *Sermon Preached on Sunday the XXVI of July, 1685* (Wakefield, 1685), Thomas Long's *The Unreasonableness of Rebellion in a Sermon Preached at St. Peters, Exon on the 26th of July, 1685* (London, 1685), Edward Pelling's *A Sermon Preached at Westminster-Abbey on the 26th of July 1685* (London, 1685), John Scott's *A Sermon Preached before the Right Honourable the Lord Mayor and Aldermen of the City of London at St Mary le Bow, July 26. 1685* (London, 1685) and John Williams's *A Sermon Preached July 26 1685 [...] in the Parish Churches of St. Mildred's Poultry and St. Ann's Aldersgate* (London, 1685).

These texts respond to the social disorders which had been caused since the 1670s by radical groups who tried to revive the democratic ideas of the Civil War period in Restoration London. This civic opposition was closely connected to the Whig party during the Exclusion Crisis and had been active since the mid 1670s.⁴ Most of these rioters supported Monmouth as the Protestant alternative to James. Hence, the Duke's rebellion only three years later was not an isolated event, but the result of a long period of resistance to the authorities.

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These thanksgiving sermons share the same critical attitude towards Monmouth's rebellion and try to convince their respective audiences of the evils of insurrection. They also reproduce many of the arguments that had been previously employed by the Tories in alliance with the government to discredit the Whig opponents of James's succession. They thus participate in the controversies that both political factions had developed a few years before and assume the official position that had permitted James's succession to the throne. Although the difficult question of James's Catholicism is referred to in practically all these texts, only two of the preachers seem to point out the monarch's possible responsibility. This is the case with Thomas Long and John Williams, who delivered their sermons in Exeter, Poultry and Aldersgate, respectively. The town of Exeter, in the South-West of England, had supported the rebellion against James, while Poultry and Aldersgate were close to Cheapside, in the heart of the city of London, where many pro-Monmouth disturbances had taken place in 1682. These sermons addressed to such prejudiced brethren no doubt implied a different response to the official program on the part of both the preachers and the congregation.

II

In general terms, the preachers organize their speech around two main subjects: God's Providence in preserving England from the rebels, and the condemnation of rebellion and regicide. With regard to the first, Monmouth's defeat makes clear

The Politicization of the Pulpit in Seventeenth-Century England

God's position towards those who do not respect his authority. Rebellion is described as useless and doomed to fail as it challenges divine prerogatives:

This ought to caution us not to engage our selves in any Factious, Disloyal or Rebellious design against our Prince and Government; because in so doing, we take the most effectual course that it's possible for men to do, to oblige the Almighty Providence of Heaven to fight against us. For there is no one sin in all the black Catalogue of the works of darkness, which God is more concerned to punish in this life, than this of Treason and Rebellion. (Scott 1685: 23)⁵

Those who follow rebels are portrayed as ignorant and blind subjects unable to see they are walking towards their self-destruction (Lee 1685: 15; Long 1685: 13, 19).⁶ The conspirators themselves are demonized and shown as malicious, sanguinary evil spirits unwilling to submit to any established order and therefore, dangerous for the general welfare. Their arguments for rebellion —religion and liberty— are here discredited as proofs of their pride and falsity:

And where men have no regard to God and Religion, what will they not adventure upon, though it be to their own destruction? And therefore having the example of so many pious, good and wise Kings Rebell'd against, and that under the fair disguise of Piety, Religion and Liberty it may make us the less wonder that such there should be in our days. (Lee 1685: 14)⁷

Religious arguments are used, instead, to condemn rebellion under the threat of eternal damnation and to forestall any possible link between regicide and Protestantism: "And in Conformity to this, are the Confessions of Faith in all the Protestant and Reformed Churches, from which there can nothing be drawn, that will justifie Opposition or Rebellion against Civil Authority; but they expressly declare against it" (Williams 1685: 22-23).⁸

This discourse, nevertheless, can turn problematic when it is used to praise the obedient subjects instead of the monarch. Thomas Long, for instance, refers in Exeter to the need to obey even heathenish or evil kings, since they may have been sent by God to check his people's loyalty:

Though a King may be a Heathen, he is Gods anointed; and though they call themselves the godly people that oppose him, God counts them but Heathen [...] yet must the people be subject to them with all fear, this being a duty worthy of thanks, if a man for conscience towards God endure grief, though he suffer wrongfully, I Pet. 2. 18, 19. For if we do well (i.e.) live in obedience and subiection, and suffer for it patiently, this is acceptable to God. (Long 1685: 5)

The allusions to Christ's and the apostles' submission to Pilate or Nero, as well as to King David's loyalty to Saul (Long 1685: 5-7) highlight the contradictions of James II's image as a tyrannical monarch.

The same problematic position appears in John William's homily in the parish churches of St. Mildred's Poultry and St. Ann's Aldersgate when he criticizes resorting to evil for a good cause (Williams 1685: 8-9). Though the preacher attacks rebellion and exposes the general confusion and uncertainty it can generate, the absence of any explicit condemnation of the rebels' purpose is revealing and may imply some sympathy with their cause. The fact that the author decided to publish his sermon in order to defend his reputation and to silence the accusations against him for not delivering a proper homily for the day, reveals the complex reception his words could have provoked:

I haue already appealed to my Superiours as my Iudg; to you [his audience and readers] as my witnesses: To them whether the matter be either true in it self, or fitted to the occasion: To you whether it be the sermon I preached. I cannot expect that euen the most attentive should remember euery particular then delivered; but I am confident, that you will be able generally to say, that this was the sermon I at that time entertained you with. And if this be so (as so it is) then I need say no more, to answer those that haue too rashly censured and traduced it as not at all suitable to the occasion it was Preached upon. (Williams 1685: A4r-A4v)

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However, this is not the common attitude of the ministers, who generally understand Monmouth's defeat as a sign of God's support of James's legitimacy. They are aware, nonetheless, of the paradoxical position of a Catholic king as the head of the Anglican Church, but insist on the need to trust James's promise to preserve the Protestant settlement:

We cannot therefore have any colour to doubt of the continuation of our Religion, or suspect the faithfulness of that Declaration, which of his meer Grace and voluntary motion, he was pleas'd upon his first coming to the crown to make to his Honourable Privy Council, and renewed again in the same Terms in a greater solemnity, before the Three Estates assembled in Parliament. (Allestree 1685: 16-17)⁹

God's help to the Stuart monarch is interpreted as a reason for obeying the sovereign so the principle of submission to superiors prevails over any religious difference.

Another way to authorize James's position is through his comparison to King David, a model of pious and just king in the Old Testament who also had to endure several insurrections. The first of them, by Sheba, a discontented subject who brought about a civil war in Israel and was providentially killed by a woman who deceived him and cut his head off while he was sleeping (Allestree 1685: 3; Pelling 1685: 4-6).¹⁰ The possible associations between this biblical figure and contemporary Englishmen involved in several plots against the monarch, such as the Earl of Argyll¹¹ or the Earl of Shaftesbury,¹² are not openly developed, though

they would probably remain in the mind of the audience. However, the clearest parallelism between the Bible and England's current situation would be found in the rebellion of Absalom against his father, King David. Absalom's ingratitude, pride and ambition are compared to Monmouth's, who also went on exile and manipulated the disaffected people abroad and at home with the intention of deposing the rightful sovereign (Pelling 1685: 4-7; Lee 1685: 4-7).

The figure of Absalom had been used with this same meaning since the early Jacobean period and had been explicitly associated with the Duke of Monmouth in some works published after his return from Utrecht in November 1679.¹³ Among these texts, Dryden's narrative poem *Absalom and Achitophel*, a sharp criticism on the Whig party during the Exclusion Crisis, had been extremely popular and widely read, thus contributing to the mechanical identification between the two protagonists of the poem and contemporary political figures, such as the Protestant Duke and Shaftesbury. In fact, Pelling's sermon employs the same analogies to attack Shaftesbury's influence on Monmouth, though the latter's responsibility is never minimized. Hence, the monarch's nephew is shown as an instrument of the interests of the Whig factions and as a victim of those discontented masses of people he had tried to manipulate:

Some people even against demonstration, will have that which makes for their interest, and suits best to their inclinations, pass for truth; or at least they will lay hold of it and embrace it as such, because it may contribute to promote their Revenge and Ambition, or advance some other secular concernment: So that when the misguided Prince had suck'd in these false principles, and landed in the West to make good his claim, his Abettors flock'd to him in so great shoals & numbers, & saluted him with such cheerfulness and acclamations of joy, that in a very little time he grew so strong, that neither he nor any of his followers dreaded the event of the War, or apprehended a defeat of so numerous a body of Men, of proportionable courage and Resolution. (Allestree 1685: 24-25)

The divided interests of such a heterogeneous army —composed, according to some preachers, of malcontents, mercenary foreign powers and radical sects—, are also presented as a main cause of their failure. Despite their strength, their lack of union and cooperation was fatal. The threat they represented was not over, though, and seemed to reveal some anxiety about the growing number of disaffected people and the alleged support of the rebels by the ordinary forces (Pelling 1685: 15-16). In spite of the ministers' attempts at minimizing the enemy's power, the allusions to contemporary popular unrest were unavoidable (Long 1685: 20).

In order to silence commentaries of this sort which may disturb the audience, the preachers tried to unite their listeners against any insurrection that could bring about not just the government's fall, but complete chaos. Memories of the social disorders in the aftermath of the Popish Plot would have come to the minds of the

congregation. In fact, even after the plot had been discredited, the anti-Catholic paranoia continued to spread and there had been serious riots in the streets of London (Cressy 1989: 183). Consequently, the preacher in effect involved his congregation in the preservation of their country and constantly reminded them of the horrors of rebellion —atheism, confusion, perpetual war, weakness and division— as these could offer a perfect opportunity for any foreign power to invade England. The rebels' main charges against the monarchy —irreligion and arbitrary government— are thus turned against them:

Now what a Load and oppression of Grief must there needs have been upon the Spirits of the present Generation of Men in the late REBELS success [...] Majesty it self and the Royal Dignity must have been Sacrific'd, and trodden under Foot. All the religious parts of our Devotion would have been prostituted to His, and his Accomplices superstitious Avarice; the Revenue of the Church must have been alienated, and made an Oblation to his greedy Appetite and Sacrilegious Desire. All the properties of the Subject would have been expos'd, and lain wholly at the mercy of these Invaders. The Liberties of a Free-born People would have been Subject to his Arbitrary Will and pleasure [...] (Allestree 1685: 33)¹⁴

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The memories of the Civil War are revived in order to warn Englishmen against repeating past mistakes. Hence, the sense of menace and the need to be permanently watchful are always present (Williams 1685: 20-21). Some preachers even took the opportunity to honour Charles I's memory and describe his execution as a sacrifice for the welfare of his nation. His death is then seen as God's lesson to England so they may understand and act against the plotters' wickedness:

It is true (a most sad and shameful Truth, God knows) such was the monstrous impiety of the Last Age, that it afforded one unrepresented, unparallel'd instance of Gods wrath, when that imparable Monarch, the Glory of our Reformation, and the Honour of the World, was forced to bow his head down, and to fall a Sacrifice to the Lusts of the most barbarous Villains, as if God had forsaken him. Yet I cannot tell, but that God, who draweth Good many times out of the greatest Evil, did in that terrible juncture design to shew men the excessive sinfulness of their Follies, in throwing away a Felicity, always to be reflected on, but hardly ever to be recover'd to the Worlds End. (Pelling 1685: 11-12)

By discrediting the actions and motives of the Civil War rebels, the preachers appeal to the audience's capacity to discover and reject similar attitudes in the present. In so doing, they would understand the need to punish them all in order to ensure an everlasting peace for the English nation. Thus, the advantages of a peaceful settlement perfectly justify the conspirators' execution:

in the Affluence of peace, we may [...] enjoy a cheerful serenity, and parteciate of all the Desirable blessings that God and Nature can furnish us with, whilst all the

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world around us is in Darkness and Confusion. The Land prospers and flows with milk and hony, Commerce and Trade are improv'd, the reputation of a Nation exalted, the Sacred person of our King rever'd at home, and ador'd abroad for his Grandure and Magnificence, the honour of God & his Religion promoted, and the great business of Devotion carry'd quietly on without interruption or molestation [...]. (Allestree 1685: 29)

Finally and typically of the last part in the structure of any sermon, the English are called upon to repent and lead a godly life to secure God's favour.¹⁵ In fact, some authors interpret Monmouth's insurrection as a punishment for England's irreligious attitude and stress the need to reform manners as a condition sine qua non for not enraging the Almighty.¹⁶ This didactic and moral tone encourages the listeners to make a Christian use of the rebellion and to consider it a lesson or a warning from God to change:

And yet I may say truly, but to our great shame, that since the Creation of the Universe there never was such an Atheistical generation, no not in the most dark, in the most distant, in the most infidel parts of the World, as this Nation hath groaned under of late years. And yet 'tis observable, though it be very strange that none among us have pretended greater concernment for the Reformation, for the interest, for the security of our establishd Religion than those who have bid open defiance to all Religion whatsoever [...] In which respect God was so kind and good to those his Enemies too, that he made their very Punishment to instruct them, and took a direct course to convince the Atheist by defeating, and plaguing, and delivering up the Traytor. (Pelling 1685: 23-24)

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III

In conclusion, these thanksgiving texts exemplify the continuing politicization of the English sermon in the seventeenth century, when the religious discourse began to be used as a vehicle for political debates about tyranny, regicide and rebellion. After the Civil War and the Restoration the country experienced a deep process of division into increasingly opposed groups, and sermon literature became a useful instrument to create and influence public opinion. These thanksgiving homilies stand as an example of how they could support official discourses without fully abandoning, in certain cases, a critical and even resentful attitude towards the authorities.

The works considered also exemplify the alliance between the Anglican establishment and the Tory faction in the aftermath of the Exclusion Crisis and the early years of James's reign, when both collaborated to isolate the Whigs and prevent any radical attack against the monarchy. These preachers were more or less

compelled to involve their brethren in the new project of the nation started with James II, and to a certain extent, they were successful. James's problems would start not long after when he departed from this alliance. In fact, the image of order invoked in these sermons would turn against the sovereign in 1688 when similar arguments would be used to justify his deposition.

Notes

1. The Popish Plot (1678-1681) was an alleged Catholic conspiracy invented by two English clergymen named Titus Oates and Israel Tongue. According to them, there was an international Catholic alliance led by France and the Jesuits, who intended to depose Charles II and replace him with his Catholic brother, the Duke of York. Dissenters rushed to support the Whigs, who won a majority in the House of Commons. On 11 May 1679, Anthony Ashley Cooper, first Earl of Shaftesbury, introduced the Exclusion Bill in the House of Commons with the intention of preventing a Catholic succession to the English throne. Charles dissolved Parliament and subsequent attempts to pass the bill were equally frustrated. The Whigs responded with a propaganda campaign designed to involve the whole country in support of the exclusion. They mostly used the hysteria produced by the Popish Plot to provoke a general reaction against a Catholic successor, but by 1681, it was discovered that Oates and Tongue had lied and the Whigs' popularity soon declined. The mass movement against the Duke of York was then over and the bill was defeated in the House of Lords. On the Popish Plot and the Exclusion Crisis, see Kenyon 2001; Knights 1994; De Krey 2005: 157-331; Harris 1987, 1993: 80-116; Green 1977; Jones 1961; and Miller 1973: 154-88.

2. In fact, Monmouth was supported by many opponents to James's succession, who used to further the Duke's cause in public demonstrations, such as those on 5 and 17 November, two key dates in the Protestant calendar being the anniversary of the Gunpowder Plot and Queen Elizabeth's day,

respectively. On Monmouth's popularity in contemporary London, see Harris 1987: 115-117, 124, 158-61 and De Krey 2005: 181-182.

3. For further information about Monmouth's rebellion, see Clifton 1984 and Earle 1978.

4. At this time, most radical groups were formed by nonconformists protesting against the enforcement of penal laws against them. During the Exclusion Crisis, however, Charles's pro-French policy, his attempts to control parliament, the promotion of a standing army and the Duke of York's conversion to Catholicism contributed to the alliance between those dissenters and the Whig party, who made use of petitioning campaigns, illegal printing and mass anti-Catholic demonstrations to declare their fierce opposition to government measures (De Krey 1990, Harris 2001: 205-207, Miller 1995: 360-367).

5. John Scott (1638/9-1695) was a Church of England clergyman, appointed prebendary at St. Paul's in March 1685, by which time he had gained a reputation for preaching and had strong links with important Tories in London (Ginn 2004).

6. Thomas Long (1621-1707) had become the prebendary of Exeter Cathedral in 1660. He was a prolific writer, especially against dissenters and in favour of passive obedience (Chamberlain 2004a).

7. No doubt the preacher is responding here to the demands of many dissenters for further reformation in the Church

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of England. Indeed, these groups considered the government's persecutions as an assault upon English liberties. The fact that Monmouth's army was largely composed of nonconformists is relevant to understand the ideological basis of his rebellion and the counter-arguments the Anglican preachers used against them. On the appeal to English liberties by Monmouth's supporters, see De Krey 1996: 234–235, 238.

⁸. John Williams (1633-1709) had been a prolific writer and controversialist clearly committed to the Protestant cause. In the early 1680s he had favoured the Exclusion Bill, though he showed no sympathy for rebels either at the time of Monmouth's insurrection or in the 1688 rebellion (Chamberlain 2004c).

⁹. Allestree is implicitly alluding here to the legalist arguments which had been used by the Tory faction during the Exclusion Crisis. According to them, King Charles II was doing everything legally and so the subjects were compelled to obey the Crown and respect succession. In this case, James had legally occupied the throne of England and he had promised to keep the Protestant religion. Up to this moment, he had done no wrong and therefore could not be deposed. On the use of the legalist argument by the Tories in the late 1670s, see Harris 1993: 96–101.

¹⁰. Edward Pelling (1640-1718) had become a prebendary of Westminster in 1683. As J. S. Chamberlain explains, "he defended divine-right monarchy, indefeasible hereditary right, and passive obedience". However and despite his disagreement with the Whig arguments for exclusion, he became the new majesties' chaplain in the early 1690s (Chamberlain 2004b).

¹¹. Argyll landed in Scotland in May 1685 and published a declaration against James II's legitimacy. Soon after that his army was suppressed by royal troops. He was captured and executed in Edinburgh without trial.

¹². Shaftesbury (1621-1683) had been concerned with the threat of a Catholic succession from the late 1670s and became one

of the main promoters of the three Exclusion Bills proposed to Charles II in the last years of his reign. He had also organized a petitioning campaign against King Charles's successive prorogations of parliament in 1679-1680. As a result, he was arrested on 2 July 1681 on the charge of high treason, but was finally declared not guilty. On his role in the Exclusion Crisis, see Knights 1994: 16–28, 92–103, 112–44 and De Krey 2005: 182–83, 193.

¹³. See the anonymous *A Letter to his Grace the D. of Monmouth, this 15th of July, 1680* (London, 1680), *Absalom's Conspiracy; or the Tragedy of Reason* (London, 1680) and John Dryden's *Absalom and Achitophel* (London, 1681). On the use of this biblical character in the seventeenth century, see Swedenberg 1972: 230–33.

¹⁴. The minister may be implicitly alluding here to the arguments employed by the Tories against the theory of the ancient constitution. According to them, the king had never signed a contract with his people and was only accountable to God for his actions (Harris 1993: 96–98).

¹⁵. The image of a sinful world to be righted through an alliance between ruler, ministers and subjects had frequently appeared in English sermons since the second half of the sixteenth century. They all insisted on the need for a general repentance and reformation to improve the present state of affairs. For the use of the motif of the sinful city in Early Modern English sermons, see Lake and Questier 2002: 335–60.

¹⁶. The reform of morals had always been associated with the Apocalyptic rhetoric and the sermon genre. Moral reformation as part of a political program to ensure the nation's safety had also been proposed since the early seventeenth century by King James and moderate Anglican authors. After the Glorious Revolution in 1688, it would be further developed by the Whigs to promote the new Orangist regime. This motif was increasingly politicized by the end of the century and became a basic point in the political agenda of Tories and Whigs in the Augustan Age. On this topic, see Burr 1995 and Hayton 1990.

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COPERNICAN REVOLUTIONS: MARY JO SALTER'S INTERTEXTUAL INTERPRETATION OF *PARADISE LOST* IN *FALLING BODIES*

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I. Milton's Copernican Revolution

In the lines from *Ars Poetica* “Nec gemino bellum Troianum orditur ab ovo;/ semper ad eventum festinat et in medias res/ non secus ac notas auditorem rapit” (147–149) Horace singled out the narrative technique in which preliminaries are dropped, and recognized it as a distinguishing feature of epic poetry. Insofar as *Paradise Lost* complies with this traditional pattern, its very structure has often been considered a declaration of poetics. Yet, such a view downplays Milton's masterpiece, which —far from being a mere imitation of Homer and Virgil— was meant to be a Christian epic challenging in grandeur the pagan canon. The goal Milton had set himself demanded a substantial revision of the legacy he had been handed down by the classics, and this need turns out to be in line with the basic principle of intertextuality¹ as illustrated by T.S. Eliot in “Tradition and Individual Talent” (1919):

We dwell with satisfaction upon the poet's difference from his predecessors, especially his immediate predecessors; we endeavour to find something that can be isolated in order to be enjoyed. Whereas if we approach a poet without this prejudice we shall often find that not only the best, but the most individual parts of his work may be those in which the dead poets, his ancestors, assert their immortality most vigorously. [...] Yet if the only form of tradition, of handing down, consisted in following the ways of the immediate generation before us in a blind or timid adherence to its

success, “tradition” should positively be discouraged. [...] This historical sense, which is a sense of the timeless as well as of the temporal and of the timeless and of the temporal together, is what makes a writer traditional. And it is at the same time what makes a writer most acutely conscious of his place in time, of his contemporaneity. (1971: 14)

Eliot maintains that tradition is not the same as slavish imitation; rather, it is a confrontation with one’s own ancestors which shapes the very meaning of a text through balancing emulation and opposition. Accordingly, intertextuality should not be seen as a set of immutable references, but as a form of imitation bringing forth the recreation of meanings through the manipulation of given commonplaces and structures. Leo Spitzer, the father of stylistics, focused on these idiosyncratic deviations from traditional usage as elements of great moment for identifying the peculiarities of a writer’s style. He also devised a method for examining style; this is based on the linguistic analysis of a text for its distinctive traits, whose actual distinctiveness has to be verified in the light of data taken from literary history so as to make a contrast whose final aim is the authentication of the author’s deviations from tradition. The detection of these deviations results in the construction of a “psychogram” (1948: 15) enabling the critic to sift relevant features (“the inward life-center” [19]) from irrelevant ones and, thus, to detect the writer’s *intentio dicendi* in modifying while imitating with a view to enriching traditional structures with new meanings.

26

Analogously, Arthur Barker claims that *Paradise Lost* needs to be examined for the modifications Milton intended to make to his main structural model, the *Aeneid*. According to Barker, the augmented edition Milton produced in 1674 by adding two books to the 1667 edition (thus matching the number of books of Virgil’s *magnum opus*) was not exclusively meant to stick to the Virgilian model, but was also designed to shift the stress from the war between good and evil to Christ’s ultimate triumph and God’s mercy. “It is here” —Barker claims (1965: 143)— “that *Paradise Lost* reproduces while modifying the large structural pattern of the *Aeneid*”. Although the structure of *Paradise Lost* is overtly heir to the tradition of ancient epic poetry, it also serves as a means for conveying a set of different values than those the Greek and Roman *Weltanschauung* rested on. This is no trifling consideration when analyzing such a complex poem as *Paradise Lost*, whose structure and contents have been determined by theological as well as literary paradoxes. The very label of “Christian epic” —traditionally assigned to *Paradise Lost*— is itself paradoxical on the grounds of the different ethical values pagan and Christian cultures are based on. However, Milton was urged to look back on heathen models to write the masterpiece of Christian literature in English because they were the only means he could avail himself of for lending his work the greatness it demanded. In consequence, he displaced the conventions of pagan epic

poetry into the framework of a Christian narration for the sole purpose of having them work as *auctoritates* connoting the Fall with the same tragic grandeur that characterizes the *Iliad*, the *Odyssey* and the *Aeneid*.

Still, Milton intended to reassess the classical concept of heroism those works epitomize. In order to reach this goal not only did he tap into Homer's and Virgil's poems; he also drew inspiration from Torquato Tasso, whose *Gerusalemme Liberata* had been meant to serve an analogous purpose. Following the model provided by Tasso, Milton used classical allusions as markers of negative implication connoting the devils as heroes of yore, whose bravery is debased because ruled by the pagan principle of unrestrained self-realization (embodied in the *Iliad* by the character of Achilles):

From the outset, then, the traditional language, characters, and events of epic tradition are associated with the works of Satan. Satan expresses the values of ancient heroic literature, and the narrative of his rebellion against God and his subsequent "ruin" are the embodiment of the traditional epic subject matter within *Paradise Lost*. [...] Thus, in the creation of the figure of Satan and the fallen angels and in the entire recounting of the war in heaven, Milton simultaneously imitates and radically criticizes the classical heroic tradition. (Kates 1974: 306)

27

Conversely, positive characters are often described by explicitly reversing the epithets used in epic poetry for connoting heroism. Among them is the so-called "attendance motif": this is easily recognizable in Homer's poems thanks to a linguistic clue, i.e. the formulaic *incipit* "not alone", used for describing the apparition of a main character surrounded by his/her train of attendants. As Neil Forsyth points out, this motif has a highly gender-bound meaning which —when applied to men— works as an indicator of the characters' social status. Yet, in *Paradise Lost* Milton uses this Homeric *topos* with a view to reversing its original meaning, as in the case of the description of Adam given in V. 350–357:

The allusion is one of the many ways in which he [Milton] asserts his independence of the epic tradition, even while he uses his techniques. A Homeric hero was not complete without his attendants; they mark his dignity, status, his dependence on his subordinates. [...] But when Raphael comes to visit Adam, in a scene which otherwise imitates closely the type-scene of a Homeric guest's arrival and the hospitality he normally receives, Milton expressly renounces the tradition of regal pomp (by now, of course, the mark of a social system he had come to despise in King Charles). [...] The dramatic situation calls for these new creatures to be alone, but it does not demand such proud insistence on the point. (Forsyth 1981: 141–142)

Milton's ambivalent attitude towards the sources of inspiration of ancient poetry heals the breach between the conventional means of expression of heroism and the new meaning Christendom attached to this virtue. This is what John M. Steadman

(1967: 174) has defined as the “Copernican Revolution” of heroic poetry, “a literary *renversement* that overthrows and displaces its predecessors”, thus building up a literary paradox swerving from tradition while sticking to it. As we are going to see in greater detail, this oxymoronic genre of “Christian epic” is in turn the paradoxical receptacle of a series of dichotomies related to Christian faith which constitute the very gist the poem.

II. Paradoxical Forms for Paradoxical Contents

Not only is *Paradise Lost* paradoxical in the way it hands down traditional commonplaces and structures while altering them; its formal paradoxicality also doubles as a mirror of its contents, i.e. the contradictory mysteries of Christian doctrine. Rosalie L. Colie claims that although *Paradise Lost* bristles with the numerous paradoxes of Christian Creed, only two of them can be viewed as cornerstones of the poem: the existence at once of foreknowledge on God’s part and of free will on man’s part, as well as the presence of time within eternity. In particular, the latter paradox is so relevant to the overall meaning of the poem as to have left an indelible mark on its structure in the form of its beginning *in medias res*. This formal device turns out to be not simply a learned reference to the classics, but an instrument to outline the parentheses of time within eternity:

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Although *Paradise Lost* begins according to the orthodox literary doctrine of Horace, *in medias res*, it could not by its nature begin otherwise: the Christian material it presents outdoes the material of Troy or Latium by its appropriateness. For however precise its focus on man, the whole narrative of *Paradise Lost*, from the elevation of Christ in heaven to the vision of the New Heaven and the New Earth is *in medias res*, since in the chronology of eternity there is neither beginning nor end, and time is, in Browne’s phrase, but a parenthesis in eternity. Nonetheless, though the metaphysical sense in which Milton’s material was by its nature *in mediis rebus* may help to explain its extraordinary suitability to the epic pattern he inherited from the ancients, the material itself was not by definition thus made tractable to poetic laws. For the purposes of his narrative, Milton had to establish a chronology of motivation in the events prior to the creation of measured time: after the elevation of Christ, Satan knew jealousy, incited the third part of heaven to rebel, fought the great war in heaven, and fell into hell. (130)

The dichotomies of Christian doctrine which form the bedrock of *Paradise Lost*’s theology, however, do not pertain to the order of time only, but to that of space, too, as the ambivalent setting of Eden demonstrates. In effect, this location is evidently characterized by a mingling of wondrous and ordinary elements. In some passages this causes the reader to feel wrong-footed by the bewildering atmosphere of such an environment, which is earthly and godly at once.²

Yet, in books VIII and IX the atmosphere slowly (but inexorably) grows disturbing: discomfort increasingly replaces bewilderment as the reader is seized by a grim sense of foreboding. Evil is going to stain the immaculate world of Eden, and the reader feels its crawling approach as unavoidably impending through Milton's sharp use of Sophoclean irony.³ By means of this technique, Eden comes out as the place of innocence where sensuality sneakily pierces through virtue until it finally manages to corrupt it by resorting to the serpent's temptation. This sensation suffuses the scene in which Eve departs from Adam and Raphael shortly before the Fall: this passage displays Milton's craftsmanship in using the devices inherited by classical tradition to his own purposes. In particular, we can consider VIII.59–65 an example of Sophoclean irony, since the use of the Homeric attendance motif applied to Eve suggests to the reader the threatening approach of sin, which Eve—who's going to be brought to ruin by it—is completely unaware of:

With goddess-like demeanor forth she went;
Not unattended, for on her as queen
A pomp of winning Graces waited still,
And from about her shot darts of desire
Into all eyes to wish her still in sight.
And Raphael now to Adam's doubt proposed
Benevolent and facile thus replied.

29

While the description of Adam as divested of any train whatsoever aims at reversing the original meaning of the attendance motif, here Milton echoes the formulaic *incipit* of ancient tradition with a view to restoring its original meaning. As mentioned above, the attendance motif is highly gender-bound in Homer's poems, and—whenever applied to women—is burdened with erotic connotations. Milton does attach this very same meaning of seductiveness to the description of Eve attended by the Graces. In addition, he further strengthens this connotation by styling these graces “winning”, an anaphoric reference designed to remind the reader of the goddess Sin, who was born out of Satan's left side to seduce him with her “attractive graces” (II.762–65) and ensnare him in temptation exactly as Eve herself is about to do with her mate. But the passage also enmeshes the reader into the disturbing atmosphere of an Eden on the verge of corruption, so that he is forced to give up the privileged position of detached observer to become (against his own will) an admirer gazing longingly at Eve:

Appropriately enough, given the connection with Aphrodite/Venus and with Sin, the “winning Graces” of Eve shoot those “Darts of Desire”, and this is how we first read the passage. [...] By this point in the poem, the reader should be alert to the shock of finding sexual language used in innocent ways before the Fall. [...] The reader must immediately cancel all these lascivious ideas, however, for the sentence does not end with the line, nor even with the desire-pierced eyes. Instead the word “desire”

turns out to be modified by the infinitive clause, “to wish her still in sight”. So this is not, after all, the “Carnal desire” which erupts after the apple is eaten (IX.1013), still less the fierce desire to which Satan confesses on first seeing Adam and Eve make love (IV.509), but merely that Latinate and rather stilted word that means “to wish for”. [...] The reader’s error prepares him to be sympathetic when Adam confesses the same error to Raphael (Forsyth 1981: 149–150).

The atmosphere grows ominous as the narration proceeds. After Eve’s departure, Adam reveals to Raphael his weakness for her beauty so openly as to be rebuked by the Archangel, who admonishes him to beware of nurturing this penchant, lest it should be changed into lust. Such a reproach engenders abashment in Adam (VIII.595), who is seized by a fit of decency; this feeling surfaces again in the same scene in which Raphael warns man not to transgress God’s command by yielding to temptation (VIII.635–644). Obviously, here Milton resorts again to Sophoclean irony in order to foreshadow the human couple’s impending fall, but the passage will bear another reading.

Although it is anachronistic to quote Kierkegaard’s philosophy in order to explain Milton’s theology, such an anachronism may be useful to shed new light on Milton’s notion of sin. In *The Concept of Dread* (1844) the Danish philosopher defines decency as one of the outer manifestations of dread, that is, the feeling of dizziness caused by the insight into infinity disclosed by complete and utter freedom, which represents possibility for possibility itself. The cause of this dizziness is the void ignorance that hangs in; since ignorance means innocence, then ignorance (though guiltless) entails an unavoidable predisposition to sinfulness. Adam’s bashful decency reveals that the germ of dread has already taken hold within him, and Raphael’s prohibition simply makes him fully aware of the boundless possibility of freedom which is the apogee of dread. Hence the false note struck by the passage thanks to the device of Sophoclean irony, used for focusing on the fact that the prohibition is soon to be disobeyed.

Dread ceaselessly increases until it finally reaches its height in the scene of Eve’s temptation. The serpent’s bombast proves to be effective on the mother of mankind because it discloses to her the possibility of finding relief from the anguish of ignorance by choosing knowledge. So, she pays no heed to the serpent’s promise of power and beauty, and interrupts his speech with a question betraying her ignorance and, at once, her craving to be rid of it:

What may this mean? Language of man pronounced
By tongue of brute, and human sense expressed?
[...] How cam’st thou speakable of Mute; and how
To me so friendly grown upon the rest
Of brutal kind, that daily are in sight?
Say, for such wonder claims attention due. (IX.553–566)

It is this question that enables Satan to choose the right path towards his wicked goal: the woman is to fall through her painful ignorance that demands knowledge. He promises knowledge as the source of freedom —i.e. of indeterminate (and therefore unlimited) possibility for possibility itself—, thus making her dread reach its apogee and causing her to beget sin as he did.

Unlike dread, sin is not a state, but an instant as short as the blinking of an eye: “Forth reaching to the fruit, she plucked, she eat [*sic*]” (IX.781). Every single word Eve speaks after tasting the fruit reveals that she is prey to a more specific dread produced by knowledge. This effect is created by means of numerous echoes of Satan’s own speeches, which show to what extent Eve has changed immediately after the Fall and, apparently, without any explicit prompting on Satan’s part. After referring to God as “our Creator” throughout the whole poem, now she suddenly drops this term and calls him “our great Forbidder” (IX.815), thus unknowingly branding her disobedience as a revolt akin to Satan’s. Eve also wonders in what form she should appear to Adam (IX.83–96), a doubt that necessarily echoes the Tempter’s when he first approached the Earthly Paradise with the aim of bringing his foes Adam and Eve to woe and despair. While considering what to do about her mate, she even entertains the possibility of not sharing with him her powerful gift (IX.816–17), thus involuntarily disclosing to the reader the fact that gaining knowledge entails losing innocence. In addition, Eve turns out to be so swollen with pride that she could be mistaken for an emanation of the Father of Lies, as the rhetorical question “for inferior who is free?” shows (IX.825, echoing I.248–63 and V.790–97). This language fraught with allusions to Satan’s own rhetoric may be slightly misleading, for it seems to depict human sin as an unavoidable contamination. Yet, Milton doesn’t allow the reader to revel in self-indulgence through such a facile explanation, for the speech Eve delivers before eating the fruit (IX.745–779) proves that—at the crossroads between good and evil— her option for evil was the result of free choice as well as fraud.

Therefore, Milton’s narration suggests an underlying ambivalence that is to be found in Genesis, too, as John Tanner points out. Tanner claims that *Paradise Lost* should be viewed as an etiological poem investigating the murky origins of evil, for “to the question ‘Whence cometh evil?’ the muse supplies [...] the entire complex poem as answer” (1988: 45). Following closely in the footsteps of Genesis, *Paradise Lost* suggests that human iniquity contaminated the world through three different outbreaks: Satanic evil, Adamic evil and Historical evil. Each of them grows more predetermined (and therefore less voluntary) than the previous one, but in each one outward predetermination and inward willpower collaborate—though to different extents—to bring forth evil. The first case shows evil coming to Satan in the form of the goddess Sin, who—as soon as she leaps out of his head—is raped by her father-lover. Yet, Satan does not appear so much to choose

an idea from within as to yield to a power from without, as though Sin had bewitched him. In the second manifestation, evil emerges under the active pressure of seduction: Satan tempts Eve who, in turn, entices her mate. Although evil assaults both sinners from without, they are prone to yield to temptation, and therefore they choose evil as well as they are chosen by it. The same can be said of historical evil, which appears to be biologically determined, but which can be chosen or shunned by each man, who is granted full freedom by the Creator (See Tanner 1988: 45–46). This paradoxical etiology of evil as both inherited and voluntary is faithful to the description provided by Genesis: accordingly, the poet succeeds in respecting the ultimate inexplicability of evil characteristic of the Scriptures.⁴

This ultimate inexplicability calls for a further elucidation that can also explain the paradoxical contents and structure of *Paradise Lost*. Such an elucidation is provided by the psychoanalyst Ignacio Matte Blanco in *The Unconscious as Infinite Sets* (1975), an essay that analyzes the mechanisms ruling the unconscious. According to Matte Blanco, the unconscious is a system governed by a logic other than the “bivalent logic” of rational reasoning, based on asymmetric relations in which the terms of an opposition are mutually exclusive (what is godly cannot be earthly, what is guilty cannot be innocent, and so forth). In effect, the unconscious follows a symmetrical logic of its own in which the converse of any relation is identical with the relation itself. In a clarifying example, Matte Blanco illustrates symmetrical logic thus: “‘the arm is part of the body’ is identical with ‘the body is part of the arm.’ In other words, the part is identical with the whole, from which it follows logically that it is also identical with any other part. [...] All these assertions may appear absurd, but according to what we may call *the logic of symmetrical thinking* they are perfectly legitimate” (1975: 43; author’s emphasis).

This principle of symmetry can be equally applied to the idea conveyed by the narration of Genesis and of *Paradise Lost* that sinfulness is compulsive and freely chosen alike. Since such a symmetrical relation does not pertain to rationality, but to faith—a condition in which the believer comes to terms with the dogma without comprehending it logically—it follows that it cannot be expressed except through symbols, which represent the reconciliation of dichotomies into a wholeness that reason cannot explain, but which the unconscious instinctively grasps. The structural device of the beginning *in medias res* is likewise subservient to this purpose, for it enables the poet to represent the paradox of time unfolding within eternity, as well as to shift the cause of evil and sin ceaselessly backwards without clearing up the ambiguity of the coexistence of inheritance and free will.

In the following sections, I intend to analyze the way Milton uses the backward-oriented structure inherited from the classical epic tradition for conducting an etiological study into the bilogic of sinfulness (morals-centrism).

Then, I will examine the development of this structure in Mary Jo Salter's play *Falling Bodies*, which will be interpreted as a representation of the very mechanisms of intertextuality (literature-centrism).

III. The Fall in the Light of Milton's *Tragische Analysis* and Galileo's Reasoning *Ex Suppositione*

It is now necessary to examine more closely the way the *in medias res* structure works. A narration beginning *in medias res* and following a backward-oriented structure is known in German as *tragische Analysis*, and its peculiarity lies in giving action a *post factum* collocation.⁵ This structure is commonly viewed as a typical feature of epics, but it also characterizes Sophocles's *Oedipus the King*. In this tragedy the king of Thebes Oedipus tries to save his city from the plague through taking heed of the soothsayer Tiresias's prophecy designed to discover the killer of his predecessor, king Laius. Thus, Oedipus ferrets out the fact that he himself is guilty of this murder, for —unaware of Laius's identity— he killed his father and married his own mother, queen Jocasta. This backward-structured play is considered the first example of a whodunit in literary history, and —after being viewed as a *Schicksalstragödie* for a long time— Guido Paduano has highlighted the role played by *tragische Analysis* in shifting the focus from the unavoidability of destiny (given voice by the oracle) to Oedipus's voluntary search for knowledge (See 1994: 71–124). Accordingly, the interplay between compulsion and freedom comes to the fore as the veritable core of Sophocles's tragedy exactly as in *Paradise Lost*.

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This whodunit *ante litteram* was the starting point from which Freud developed the very kernel of the Oedipus complex, for he saw in Oedipus' ignorance the representation of that unconsciousness which, for every person, the Oedipus complex is cloaked in.⁶ Not only did *Oedipus the King* prompt Freud to postulate the relationship between the Ego and the Id; it also provided him with a crucial clue for the theorization of the method of psychoanalytical investigation, following which —like the detective in a whodunit— the therapist analyzes tangible symptoms so as to go backwards to their invisible causes.⁷ Such a method is evidently etiological in principle, and it was precisely this etiological perspective that was considered the guarantee of its scientific nature. We can now sum up the above-mentioned concepts in a syllogism: an etiological perspective entails investigating the consequences and then going backwards to their causes (following the same structure as *tragische Analysis*), and since the method of modern science takes on this very same backward-oriented structure, then modern science is essentially etiological in principle, and so is *Paradise Lost*.

But what does the etiological research of modern science —whose forefather is claimed to be the 17th-century physicist Galileo Galilei— rest on? William A. Wallace argues that Galileo’s method was based on the necessity to investigate the immutable causes of natural phenomena in spite of their mutable manifestations:

The reason [behind some defective processes] is that the processes whereby perfect organisms are produced are radically contingent, or, stated otherwise, that natural causes are sometimes impeded from attaining their effects. But if one starts with an effect that is normally attained, he can formulate this as an ideal *suppositio*, and from this reason back to the causes that are able to (virtually) produce it. Stated otherwise, one can use his experience with nature to reason on the supposition of an effect’s attainment (*ex suppositione*) to the various antecedent causes that will be required for its production. This way, scientists are enabled to investigate the causes behind natural phenomena and can reason apodictically to the requirements for the production of similar effects in the future even despite the fact that nature and its processes sometimes fail in their *de facto* attainment. (83)

This reasoning *ex suppositione* can be summarized in the formula “If P, then Q”, in which P stands for a result that is physically verifiable, while Q is the antecedent cause or condition producing the appearances observed. Even though the antecedent cause cannot be experienced empirically, it can be inferred by means of mathematical reasoning, which is the only guarantee a scientist can rely on.

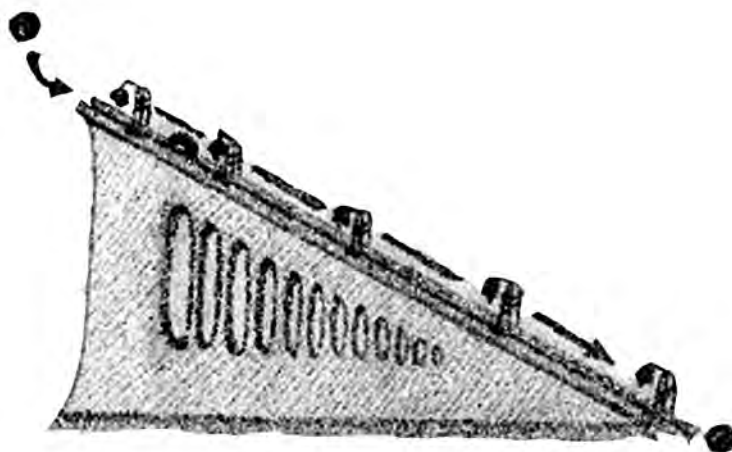
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Therefore, the etiological method of science is meant to trace a tangible effect back to its intangible cause, which is exactly what psychoanalytic hermeneutics does when tracing a symptom back to the Id’s unsaid. Still, this is also the method followed by Milton in *Paradise Lost*: in all these cases, the first cause stays unfathomable, and this ultimate unfathomableness cannot be expressed except by means of symbols. Just as the physical fall of bodies can be studied mathematically in its phenomenal manifestations, but not in its noumenon, likewise everyman’s fall in the face of sin can be empirically observed, but its origin continues to be shrouded in mystery. Such an analogy between the physical fall of bodies and the Fall of man is implied in the very title of Mary Jo Salter’s *Falling Bodies*,⁸ a play whose plot rests precisely on the relationships between Galilei’s science and Milton’s poetry.

IV. A New Copernican Revolution: from Morals-Centrism to Literature-Centrism

“A large, triangular scientific instrument, about the size and —though angular, the shape— of a harp, which we will call the accelerator. This is a model of an actual device Galileo used to measure the speed of falling bodies”:⁹ it is on this object that the curtain opens at the very beginning of *Falling Bodies*. This scientific measurer

in the shape of a musical instrument turns out to be as crucial to *Falling Bodies* as the handkerchief is to *Othello*, since it is the ultimate representation of the close relationship between Galileo and Milton the play stages. Just as Galileo gauged the speed of falling bodies by means of this instrument, so did Milton with the Fall of man through the measurement of iambic pentameter. This analogy is fully developed in I.v, where Edward Phillips —Milton's actual nephew and biographer— is shown the accelerator. In this instrument balls are caused to roll down a slide, thus hitting five bells positioned at an increasing distance from each other: it was thanks to this ingenious instrument that Galileo was able to demonstrate the natural acceleration of falling bodies.



Galileo's inclined plane —referred to in the play as the "accelerator"— drawn after a 19th-century model held in the Museo di Storia della Scienza (Florence).

As soon as Edward Phillips hears the music produced by this tool, he immediately recognizes the rhythm of iambic pentameter, thus drawing an explicit parallel between Galileo's scientific researches and Milton's theological poem. It is interesting to note that the character who elucidates this parallel is Edward Phillips, whose role is that of an omniscient narrator allowed to cross the boundaries of time and space. However, before discussing the role of time and space in connection with this character, it might be useful to give a brief overview of the play.

Falling Bodies is based on the combination of historical scenes (such as Milton's arrest, or the lecture on the physical measurement of Dante's *Inferno* Galileo gave in Florence in 1588) and whimsical situations in which the present fades into the past and is at the same time projected into the future. It lacks a traditional plot; instead, it is built on the juxtaposition of anecdotes taken from Milton and Galileo's lives, with a view of highlighting an uncanny series of parallels between their biographies and works. Appropriately, these parallels are not arranged in a chronological order, but shift backwards and forwards in time. This peculiar disarray is further complicated by the presence of an incongruous cluster of characters, showing that not only are different times and places mixed up in the play, but that the boundaries between reality and literary fiction, too, have been blurred. Accordingly, some characters of *Paradise Lost* such as Satan, Adam and Eve are presented side by side with the historical characters of Virginia and Mary (respectively, Galileo's and Milton's daughters) and with stock characters from contemporary times such as the News Announcer and the Museum Guide.

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Phillips plays a central role as both a historical character and a narrator ceaselessly crossing time-space boundaries (it is precisely on a time-space voyage to a modern museum that he is shown the accelerator), and this power transfigures him into the very embodiment of the Writer. There are two main reasons for this: as a historical figure Phillips wrote his uncle's biography in 1694, while as a character in the play he can be considered Mary Jo Salter's alter ego. In effect, the scene featuring Phillips at the museum is reminiscent of Salter's own experience in the Museo di Storia della Scienza in Florence, where she herself thought that the "music" of the accelerator had the same rhythm as iambic pentameter.¹⁰ The fact that Phillips can be seen as the figure of the Writer also accounts for the declaration he makes at I.ii, in which he explains the structure of the play in a metatheatrical soliloquy: "We begin, as epics do, *in medias res*. A phrase my uncle taught me in our Latin lessons long ago. *In medias res*—in the middle of things. Why is it, do you suppose, that in this world and even in Heaven, the middle of things always means the middle of a war?" In this way, Phillips underlines the fact that the play begins *in medias res* from Milton's old age, thus making a self-referential remark about the play he is a character in. But this self-referential remark is also enclosed within the broader frame of the intertextual relationship the play has with *Paradise Lost* (which begins *in medias res* with the war between Heaven and Hell) and—broader still—the metaliterary frame of epic tradition, with particular reference to the *Iliad* (beginning in the midst of the Trojan war).

This passage foregrounds the fact that *Falling Bodies* reconstructs the inception of *Paradise Lost* while staging some of its episodes, and that it does so by consciously using the device of the beginning *in medias res* for attaching to the Miltonic legacy a set of new meanings. So, Mary Jo Salter's use of the *in medias res* device inherited

by Milton may be conceived of as an instrument for representing the paradoxical mechanism of intertextuality (which entails sticking to tradition while swerving from it) in a play which is itself intertextual. This is evident from the very prologue, in which Milton's poem is quoted with a view to creating a beginning *in medias res* reproducing the outset of *Paradise Lost*. The war between Heaven and Hell is here staged in the form of a dance that turns out to be the whirlwind of Milton's dreams furnishing the poet with the images for his masterpiece:

SATAN: Is this the region, this is the Soil, the Clime –
VIRGINIA: Said then the lost Arch-Angel, this the seat –
MARY: That we must change for Heaven, this mournful gloom –
GUARD 1: For that celestial light? Be it so, since he –
NEWS ANNOUNCER: Who now is sovereign can dispose and bid –
EVE: What shall be right: farthest from him is best –
ADAM: Whom reason hath equaled, force hath made supreme –
GUARD 2: Above his equals. Farewell happy Fields –
MUSEUM GUIDE: Where joy forever dwells –
ALL: Hail horrors, hail –
MICHAEL: Infernal world, and thou profoundest Hell –
(*The circuit of speakers begins again, at right*)
SATAN: Receive thy new Possessor: One who brings –
VIRGINIA: A mind not to be changed by Place or Time.
MARY: The mind is its own place, and in itself –
GUARD 1: Can make a Heaven of Hell, a Hell of Heaven.
NEWS ANNOUNCER: What matter where, if I be still the same –
EVE: And what I should be, all but less than he –
ADAM: Whom Thunder hath made greater? Here at least –
GUARD 2: We shall be free; the Almighty hath not built –
MUSEUM GUIDE: Here for his envy, will not drive us hence.
MICHAEL: Here we may reign secure, and in my choice –
ALL: To reign is worth ambition, though in Hell:

Better to reign in Hell than serve in Heaven!

The music rises in volume again, and the nine speakers divide (five on one side, four on the other) to stand lined up on right and left sides of the stage, facing the other side. As they do this, The News Announcer, who has been at the center, lifts and displays the face-down large "book" we had seen on the glass table: we now see that these are angel-wings, scribbled with words. Meanwhile, Galileo rises and walks diagonally upstage to sit at his little telescope-table, and begins looking up through his telescope, sometimes taking notes. Milton stays seated, his eyes closed: he is sleeping. The lighting and music suggest that Heaven is in danger. While the speaker looks on, a dance of angels, using all of the stage, begins – and we realize quickly that this dance is a war. Video projections may add to the tumult. The angels' costumes may employ wings that remind

us of open books; they might also indicate somehow a difference between God's obedient angels and the rebel angels. These angels are figments of a literary imagination.

This prologue introduces Milton's waking up and dictating *Paradise Lost* to his nephew while waiting for his own arrest. When this takes place, Phillips soothes his uncle by saying that this is not the end, but Milton replies: "No, it is the middle. This is the hard part". These words occur again in I.xiii, the scene in which Phillips enters the narration of the Fall and is subject to that envy Satan himself felt while gazing at the human lovers in the Earthly Paradise. It is in this scene that —after experiencing the physical fall of bodies on the accelerator— he also goes through the moral and religious experience of the Fall.

EVE: (*as she raises the apple that has somehow materialized from her garlands*)

"She plucked, she et". (*And she bites into the apple, lasciviously*)

EDWARD: Completion. The deed is done for Eve. "She plucked, she et". Nothing pithier in English, apart from "Jesus wept".

(*Eve's movements convey that she is tempting Adam with the apple*)

Completion. A twentieth-century medical term, I understand, for a common illusion experienced by those who are going blind. A hand reaches for something in its accustomed place —a pen on the desk, a key on its hook, two eyes in the mirror— and they appear for an instant to be there. Completion. My uncle had put off —completion— for decades, with every possible work of prose. Vituperations against his political enemies, brilliant tracts of political and religious insight, not to mention every clever and —by the way, immortal— sonnet he could think up. He put it off until he was blind. Give him credit: he put off the Fall of Man as long as he could.

(*Adam accepts the apple from Eve and bites into it*)

Until it burnt as bright as the sun.

(*Bright light on Satan*)

But for us, the Fall of Man is only the middle.

This is the hard part.

Finally, the last occurrence of this expression is at the end of the play (II.v), a scene set in Florence on the occasion of the meeting between Galileo and Milton in 1638.¹¹ At that time Milton was a budding poet who intended to write the English national epic about King Arthur, while Galileo —who was as old and blind as Milton was in the first scene— was waiting for *The Two New Sciences* to be printed in Leyden. After meeting Milton, Galileo is asked by his servant about the young poet, and answers: "He is not so young. He thinks he's at the beginning. But it is the middle. That is the hard part". This net of repetitions creates a circular structure in which the end of the narration turns out to be the beginning of the narrated events, so that the play comes out as a whodunit in which the mystery to be

unveiled is the way in which a poet manages to conceive his masterpiece. In this perspective, the circularity of *Falling Bodies* is a means for narrating the poet's search for inspiration, and thus it turns out to be a mirror text.

The self-reflecting power of the play is further strengthened by the fact that the "middle" of the artist's quest for inspiration (the core of the poem itself) refers to Milton, whose masterpiece—as Phillips suggests at the end of I.xiii—recounts precisely the "middle" of human history, the Fall, which is the watershed between life in the Earthly Paradise and History. This "middle" called for a backward-oriented structure allowing the poet to put off the inevitable as long as he could, and this is what Salter does, too, in narrating the way Milton's faltering inspiration swerved from an epic about King Arthur to one about the Fall. In order to reach this goal, Salter makes use of that *in medias res* structure of epic tradition and of science as well, thus creating an interesting contrast: while a scientific discovery such as Galileo's entailed the rejection of the Aristotelic theories about motion until then accredited, Milton's creation didn't turn upside down the system it belonged to. Milton did not upset the conventions of epic tradition he had been handed down, but manipulated them so as to make them convey new meanings and values. Salter does the same in her attempt to reconstruct the inception of *Paradise Lost* while employing the very same devices (and often words) used in the model she looks back on. In effect, Salter does not rewrite *Paradise Lost* into a play, but shifts its original bilogic of the coexistence between inheritance and free will from the level of morals to that of literature. Hence, in the play she uses the *in medias res* structure for representing the way intertextuality entails sticking to a traditional legacy (inheritance) while at the very same time modifying its given significances (free will).

It follows that *Falling Bodies* may be read not only as an intertextual play, but also as a mirror text which—while describing the composition of a work of art it draws inspiration from— ceaselessly reflects its own structure. This peculiar self-referentiality is easily detectable in *Falling Bodies* thanks to the presence of Edward Phillips, who is often entrusted with making metaliterary remarks; in consequence, he can be considered a figure of the Writer and, more specifically, Salter's alter-ego. Therefore, through the enchanted mirror of intertextuality, the reader can see the very author of the play, Mary Jo Salter, peeping out from the paper-and-ink screen of Edward Phillips, and with her Milton, Tasso, Virgil, Homer, and each of those authors who have interwoven thread by thread the huge tissue/text of literature.

Notes

1. Labelling this passage as an illustration of intertextuality is anachronistic, as when T.S. Eliot wrote this essay the word didn't exist. Yet, the literary practice of referring to earlier works dates from ancestral times, and had been used—as well as debated—since long before Julia Kristeva coined for it the label “intertextuality” in *Séméiōtiké: recherches pour une sémanalyse* (1969).

2. “In Book V, Raphael is entertained by Adam and Eve to a vegetarian meal that might remind gourmets of the nouvelle cuisine (Eve does not believe in adulterating flavors, 334–35). The episode has embarrassed some of the poet's friends, and one infamous detail aroused snorts of derision from Bentley. [...] It can, however, be defended. Paradise is at once ordinary and wondrous, and if that is not our imagining, then the poet might complain of our moral attitudes as much as of our literary tastes” (Martindale 1985: 325–327).

3. “‘Sophoclean irony’ [is a device] by which a speaker is made to use words bearing to the audience, in addition to his own meaning, a further and ominous sense, hidden from himself and, usually, from the other persons on the stage. The very first words uttered by Macbeth, ‘So foul and fair a day I have not seen,’ are an example to which attention has often been drawn; for they startle the reader by recalling the words of the Witches in the first scene, ‘Fair is foul and foul is fair’” (Bradley 1966: 283). The definition “Sophoclean” comes from the use Sophocles made of this device in *Oedipus the King*, a play that will be discussed later in this article. It is interesting to note that Bradley explains Sophoclean irony by referring to *Macbeth*, a play that has been interpreted as the staging of the psychological mechanisms triggering off dread in King-Kok (1984: 430–439).

4. See Kierkegaard: “Just as the relation of dread to its object, to something which is nothing [...] is altogether ambiguous, so will the transition here from innocence to

guilt be correspondingly so dialectical that the explanation is and must be psychological. The qualitative leap is outside of ambiguity, but he who through dread becomes guilty is innocent, for it was not he himself but dread, an alien power, which laid hold of him, a power he did not love but dreaded — and yet he is guilty, for he sank in the dread which he loved even while he feared it” (Kierkegaard 1944: 39).

5. The definition *tragische Analysis* was coined by Schiller in a letter written to Goethe on October 2nd, 1797: “Der Oedipus ist gleichsam nur eine tragische Analysis. Alles ist schon da, und es wird nur herausgewickelt. Das kann in der einfachsten Handlung und in einem sehr kleinen Zeitmoment geschehen, wenn die Begebenheiten auch noch so kompliziert und von Umständen abhängig waren” (“Oedipus is a *tragische Analysis* as well. Everything is there, and is ready to be unraveled. It can happen in the simplest of actions and for the briefest of instants, even though it is complicated and dependent on the circumstances”; Goethe 1949: 435; my translation).

6. The Oedipus complex was first mentioned in a letter to Wilhelm Fliess dating October 15th, 1897 (Freud, 1985). The relationship between Oedipus’ *Unwissenheit* (unknowingness) and everyman’s *Unbewußtheit* (unconsciousness) is illustrated in *An Outline of Psychoanalysis* (1940).

7. The analogy between the activity of the psychoanalyst/psychoanalytic critic and the detective’s researches is elucidated in: Lavagetto (2003). See also: Bertoli (2008: 7–30).

8. For further details about Mary Jo Salter, see: Bacigalupo (2004-2005: 145–149); Benthall, (2003: 265–271); Post (2008); Taylor, (2002 II: 297–310).

9. The play was premiered at Mount Holyoke College (Holyoke, MA) in November 2004 under the direction of Holger Teschke. The text is unpublished; the excerpts here quoted

are taken from the original manuscript, kindly provided by the author.

¹⁰. The author highlighted this resemblance during an interview given in Bellagio (Italy) on June 11th, 2007. This interview is reported in: Bertoli, Mariacristina

Natalia. *An Insight into Mary Jo Salter's Poetry*. Dissertation (Tesi di Laurea). Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore di Brescia, 2007.

¹¹. Mary Jo Salter's source for this episode is: Sobel (1999).

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J.M. Coetzee's *Diary of a Bad Year*: Ethical and Novelistic Awareness

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In a recent study of J.M. Coetzee's works entitled *Old Myths—Modern Empires*, Michela Canepari-Labib makes reference to the strong inclination that Coetzee has for “rethinking the same issues in different ways” (2005: 18). This tendency is most evident in his latest work, *Diary of a Bad Year* (2007), which contains many of the topics recurrent in his previous fiction and essays, and emphasizes a few which his present circumstances probably help magnify. A conventional novelistic structure would not have enabled Coetzee to have included such a large number of topics and ideas that seem crucially important for him at this moment. Instead, the design of *Diary of a Bad Year* renders a book that is paradigmatic and all embracing. In this book, we find J.M. Coetzee the novelist, the intellectual, the critic and the human being in a kind of synthesis of the multi-faceted figure Coetzee.

At this point we remember another prominent contemporary writer, Salman Rushdie, who in his novel *Midnight's Children* reflects: “To understand just one life, you have to swallow the world” (1981: 109). Coetzee's *Diary of a Bad Year* may be seen as an attempt to ‘swallow the world’. The author establishes a correspondence between the macrocosm —the world at large, and the microcosm— the life of the aging protagonist, the writer Señor C. In this way, Coetzee's critical thoughts, his personal reflections and his literary creativity are interconnected within a frame of fictional experimentation with rewarding results. Kathryn Harrison says:

In his most recent “novel”, we are deliberately manipulated by a form that is coy as well as playful, and it’s hard not to conclude Coetzee is more invested in his relationship with his readers than in his characters’ credibility and interactions with one another. (2007: 3)

In conversation with Richard Begam, Coetzee manifested, in 1992, his awareness of the fact that with the type of novels that he was writing then, he could be “cutting himself off” from his contemporary readership. Still, Coetzee was convinced of the propriety of what he was doing. He said: “What I am engaged in doing is more important than maintaining that contact” (Begam 1992: 430). Peter D. McDonald comments on that point:

To Coetzee it looked at that time as if his particular literary project was imperilled by two very different and especially intrusive kinds of reader: the judgmental, wholly unliterary censor, on the one hand; and the appropriative, politicised literary critic, on the other. (2006: 56)

It is my contention that, although the literary continues to be ‘the site of struggle’ for Coetzee (McDonald, 2006: 58), at this moment he knows that he has gathered a large number of almost unconditional readers who follow him precisely to appreciate the vitality of the novel as such in his literary experimentation. Coetzee, like Rushdie, assumes that the risk of any artist is “in pushing the work to the limits of what is possible” (Rushdie 1991: 15). In *Diary of a Bad Year*, the author creates new spaces for his imagination, his intellect and his ethical commitment —and expands on the relationship between the ethical and the novelistic discourses.

Diary of a Bad Year is an example of non-sequential writing. It offers three texts visually separated on the pages, but with a dynamic organization of the topics. This device has elicited different responses among critics. For example, Boyd Tonkin refers to the three levels as “hypertextual polyphony” (2007: 2); Kathryn Harrison says that the page “looks like a highbrow alternative to split-screen TV” (2007: 2). The novelist Maggie Gee calls attention to the fact that “the personal stories are made more interesting by their extended, Bach-like counterpoint with the essay” (2007: 2) while for Jennifer Rutherford it is “melancholy” which is offered as “the counterpoint of rational discourse” (2009: 176). Indeed, the device of the split page is powerful in itself, but Coetzee’s mastery is shown not only in the way the texts relate, but also in the way they are finally integrated.

Coetzee has always shown interest in narrative and textual issues as well as in the shape and significance of the novel. Back in 1987 in a public address with the title of “The Novel Today”, after having made reference to “the higher truth of fiction” (1988: 2), Coetzee asserted that: “Storytelling is not a way of making messages more ‘effective’. Storytelling is another, an other mode of thinking” (1988: 4). His challenge as a novelist has been to reflect his historical reality within the mode of

the novel, while that 'reality' gives shape to a world of fiction. Coetzee is deeply concerned with our global world and in a global world, of course, historical reality cannot but be broad and varied.

In *Diary of a Bad Year* the theme of writing is present in each of its three texts. But, while the debate that the book probably generates among readers is whether it can be considered a novel, Señor C reflects on whether he himself is actually a novelist in the first place. He wonders whether those who say that he is a "pedant who dabbles in fiction" are not right, and whether all the time he thought that he was "going about in disguise", he was in fact "naked" (191). The standards for a serious novelist are clear, though difficult to reach, according to Señor C. Tolstoy and Dostoevsky are the masters. To them, he dedicates the last paragraph of his 'opinions':

By their example one becomes a better artist; and by better I do not mean more skilful but ethically better. They annihilate one's impurer pretensions; they clear one's eyesight; they fortify one's arm. (227)

A related question in the book is whether the novelist as such has a role in society at the present time. Señor C thinks that society no longer values novelists for their creativity —instead, it exhibits them as if they were a trophy. He, like Coetzee, despises and dreads the prospect of becoming a "distinguished figure". He expresses it in this way: "One of these days some state official or other will pin a ribbon on my shrunken chest and my re-assimilation into society will be complete" (191). We remember that Coetzee has always wanted to remain independent and use his freedom to say what he wants to say about any subject and do it in the way he considers most appropriate.

The first of Señor C's 'strong opinions' entitled "On the origins of the state", according to Brian Worsfold, gives us a wide referential frame for the analysis of the book as a whole. Worsfold also thinks that this section gives important keys to the followers of Coetzee's works for a better understanding of everything that he had written up to that moment (2008: 169). This critic asserts explicitly that "[t]he relationship between the individual and the state constitutes a powerful thread present in all the writings of J.M. Coetzee" (Worsfold 2008: 172).¹ The historical perspective that we have now, thirty-five years after the publication of his first novel, has made us aware of the relevance of Coetzee as a writer and committed intellectual who has developed his own strategies to maintain his independence. We are also cognizant of the large number of critics who have made reference to his aloofness when discussing and analysing his works.²

It is well known now that from the moment of the publication of his first novels up to the year 2003 when he was awarded the Nobel Prize, Coetzee was

persistently accused of lack of political commitment.³ After the publication of his first twenty-first century novel, *Elizabeth Costello* (2003),⁴ David Attwell, still in the wake of that debate, said: “She [Elizabeth Costello] enables Coetzee to fictionalise the writer-as-public-intellectual more directly” and then added:

There is also a kind of hubris: the game is, in a sense, to absorb the public domain into the codes of fiction, as a form of *reprisal* [...]. The narrative contract Coetzee creates in these stories is simply the latest in a series of efforts to give to fictionality an authority to challenge the demand for public accountability. (2006: 33–34)

Coetzee has always tried to reflect historical reality within the mode of the novel, but how does Coetzee at this moment address the insistence of some critics on his becoming more of a public figure? In *Diary of a Bad Year*, in the section “On the origins of the state”, which can almost be seen as a soliloquy, Señor C, after his analysis of the lack of freedom that the citizen has vis-à-vis the state, adds this corollary:

Why is it so hard to say anything about politics from outside politics? Why can there be no discourse about politics that is not itself political? To Aristotle the answer is that politics is built into human nature, that is, is part of our fate, as monarchy is the fate of bees. To strive for a systematic supra-political discourse about politics is futile”. (9)

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For Coetzee, insisting on the difficulties that writers have in dealing with political systems or power structures is not futile. By questioning premises generally accepted and by inviting readers to reflect upon new possible considerations, he continues to keep his independence as a writer despite his books being placed at the centre of public controversy. *Diary of a Bad Year* shows that he continues his creative process from the same liminal position that has allowed him to be both in and outside a given situation, both close to and far away from his characters. Such a position, up to the moment of writing his last book, had given him the opportunity to express himself as a committed intellectual and a free creative writer. However, we can say that *Diary of a Bad Year* represents a further step in Coetzee’s strategy because on this occasion he allows readers to take his writing as confession. For Brian Worsfold it is a “late confession” because it says things that Coetzee “had wanted to say for a long time” (2008: 181).⁵ The character-author of the controversial opinions, Señor C, is much closer to the writer Coetzee than the character-author Elizabeth Costello, though in both books political issues are dealt with inside a work of fiction. We can thus conclude that Coetzee definitely disregards warnings such as this: “If intellectuals [do] not want to be political they should stay out of the public sphere” (Jean Genet, qtd. in Attwell 2006: 34). Coetzee has been striving to achieve “a systematic, supra-political discourse about politics” (BY: 9), and in this book as in others has succeeded notably.

In his collection of “Strong Opinions”, Señor C is committed to giving a response to “the present in which he finds himself” (67). He feels compelled to comment on what is wrong with today’s world (21). This is in itself a “titanic” duty whose painful process is qualified by Señor C as “a dark passage” (161). He assumes the premise that he is irremissibly caught in and contaminated by his historical period, a period that he describes as “shameful” (101).⁶ This dark perception of the present is recurrent in Coetzee’s work. For instance, in *Age of Iron* we read, “When madness climbs the throne, who in the land escapes contagion?” (1998: 97), in *The Master of Petersburg*, Ivanov says: “Tragedy has become the way of the world” (1994: 87), and in *In the Heart of the Country*, its protagonist thinks that “We are all falling apart” (1977: 99). Canepari-Labib says that in most of Coetzee’s novels, one gets the impression “that it is already too late for our society to reach the future, as the threat of extinction is too imminent to leave room for hope. Yet, this hope is a possibility” (2005: 273).

Señor C, in his conversations with Anya, the typist of his ‘opinions’, has the chance to talk about, expand and even defend some of his most controversial comments. Señor C, like Coetzee, does not approve of being identified with his writings.⁷ He warns Anya of the danger of jumping to conclusions about him when reading his ‘opinions’ and gives her advice: “Tread carefully [...]. You may be seeing less of my inmost depths than you believe. The opinions you happen to be typing do not necessarily come from my inmost depths” (91). In an attempt to distance himself from the content of his opinions, and foreseeing controversy, Señor C adds: “What interests the reader more, anyhow, is the quality of the opinions themselves—their variety, their power to startle, the ways in which they match or do not match the reputation of their authors” (132–133). Anyhow, Anya’s judgement does not cause him to change his position, though it contributes significantly to his being able to understand ‘the other’ better, and Señor C says: “What has begun to change since I moved into the orbit of Anya is not my opinions themselves so much as my opinion of my opinions” (136).

Should writers trust or even pay attention to the opinions of critics and readers? Coetzee seems to favour a validation of this writing at the hands of the ordinary genuine reader. Anya, the first reader of the writer’s ‘opinions’, at some moments reacts almost as a censor, at other moments, as an ordinary reader, but she always shows that “critical independence” is a part of her nature (Eder 2008: 3). Anya has the privilege not only of reading the opinions first, but also of confronting the author directly and frankly. At one moment she tells him: “OK. This may sound brutal, but it isn’t meant that way. There is a tone—I don’t know the best word to describe it—a tone that really turns people off. A know-it-all tone. Everything is cut and dried” (70). Anya finds the set of opinions boring, especially those related to politics, and wonders why the writer, already a famous novelist, does not stick

to that genre. The downcast answer of the author matches the state of mind of the unhealthy seventy-two-year-old Señor C, but we cannot say whether or not it expresses Coetzee's thoughts:

A novel? No. I don't have the endurance any more. To write a novel you have to be like Atlas, holding up the whole world on your shoulders and supporting it there for months and years while its affairs work themselves out. It is too much for me as I am today [...]. I could do that when I was younger. I could wait patiently for months on end. Nowadays I get tired. My attention wanders. (54–55)

In conversation with Alan, the third character of the narrative and Anya's partner, Señor C, using the terminology of a military strategist, reiterates that he has no plans for a new book: "I am calling a halt to operations for the time being, to regroup. Then I will see what might be possible in the future" (166).

Possibly, Coetzee does not consider himself a novelist with brimming fantasy in the style of Gabriel García Márquez. In this book Señor C says: "Once or twice in a lifetime I have known the flight of the soul that García Márquez describes" (192). Rather, Coetzee writes from an ethical and intellectual position, which has given a sombre tone to most of his novels. Jane Poyner states: "The ethical responsibilities of the writer are what preoccupies Coetzee in all his novels" (2006: 3). Adam Kirsch considers that intellectually and spiritually, Coetzee has been shaped by "the stringent, self-interrogating moralism of his Calvinist ancestors, and by the intolerable political dilemmas of apartheid South Africa" (2007: 2). In *Diary of a Bad Year*, Coetzee makes unambiguous reference to that 'shameful' background. Señor C says: "The generation of white South Africans to which I belong, and the next generation, and perhaps the generation after that too, will go bowed under the shame of crimes that were committed in their name" (44). However, his concern with the suffering of living creatures and with the situations of injustice is not restricted to one geographical area or period, but rather it encompasses many different parts of the world in different moments of history.

The direct consequence of the situation of abuse on the part of Western countries/governments is the 'shame' that many citizens feel at this time. In *Diary of a Bad Year*, shame is especially associated with "the citizens of the countries that attacked Iraq and subscribed to Guantanamo Bay" (Gee 2007: 2). Coetzee denounces the situation of those "men in orange suits, shackled and hooded, shuffling about like zombies behind the barbed wire of Guantanamo Bay" (BY: 140) and also the less well-known situation of Australia's refugees in Baxter detention Centre (113). His 'strong opinions' on the state, on democracy, on terrorism, or on politics, elicit interest because in fact, Coetzee's facet as a critic has always attracted great attention. That interest may in part be an attempt, by readers, to discover more about his personality and his role as a novelist, since

Coetzee is not inclined to talk about himself or defend his opinions. Jane Poyner in her Introduction to the book *J.M. Coetzee and the Idea of the Public Intellectual* says:

The apparently paradoxical nature of Coetzee's work —his insistence on fleshing out debates about the role of the intellectual while at the same time refusing to make his politics explicitly or publicly known— constitutes his scrupulously orchestrated ethical position. (2006: 5)

His move to Australia in 2002 has opened new possibilities for his writing, as Coetzee himself categorically confirmed in an interview published in 2006 (Poyner 2006: 24). Although his interests have not changed, his way of dealing with his topics and the frame within which he presents and develops them have varied. His evolution as a novelist can be seen in line with the idea expressed by Salman Rushdie in *Imaginary Homelands*. There, Rushdie said that literature “is in part the business of finding new angles at which to enter reality” (1991: 15). According to Peter Craven, Coetzee “has divested himself of much of the narrative and dramatic resource of the novels that made him famous” in Australia (2007: 1). Coetzee's work, Craven (2007: 1) adds, has become “minimalist, self-reflective and concerned with the micro-dramas of a novelistic sensibility with an intimate resemblance to his own”.

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Indeed, in *Diary of a Bad Year*, Coetzee moves on two different planes. Señor C, as the writer of ‘Strong Opinions’, revises and broods over many of the conflicts of the world of today, but as a protagonist of the narrative, he appears as an ordinary old man concerned with his increasing limitations and facing an uncertain future. At the personal level what is most important for him is the feeling he now has of being redundant. He poses this question: “Are old men with doddering intellect and poor eyesight and arthritic hands allowed on the trading floor, or will we just get in the way of the young?” (144). That is a question that Coetzee may have been tempted to pose to himself, but in spite of the doubts that Coetzee, as an aging human being, may have, his self-imposed duty as a writer outstrips them. Once more Coetzee shows his moral strength by writing.

Alan, who acts as Señor C's foe in the narrative, in conversation with his partner Anya, states that Señor C is physically, intellectually and ethically outdated and consequently “people like [him] have taken over the world from people like [Señor C]” (159). From the perspective of Siddhartha Deb, Alan is “the devil we all know”, that is, representative of the type of people who have contributed to developing the unfair structure of the western world (2008: 4). It is towards the end of the book that, under the effects of alcohol, Alan confronts Señor C and accuses him of being a schemer, of pretending to be what he is not. In the presence of Anya, he says:

You put yourself forward as a lone voice of conscience speaking up for human rights and so forth, but I ask myself, if he really believes in these human rights, why isn't he out in the real world fighting for them? What is his track record? (197)

That moment is the turning point in the relation between Anya and Alan and it also reinforces the respect and appreciation that Anya has gradually built up towards Señor C. She is convinced that his heart is “with the downtrodden and oppressed, with the voiceless ones, with the humble beasts” (172). After leaving Alan and moving from Sydney to Brisbane, she becomes a kind of guardian angel for Señor C. She gets in touch with one of the writer's neighbours, asking to be informed about his health. Anya is in fact ready to be at his side in his last moments, and hold his hand “as far as the gate” (226).

That is also a crucial moment in the relationship between the novel and the reader. The upper text, the essays which started as ‘strong opinions’ and in the second part become a ‘gentler set of opinions’, are in a sense fading in the mind of the reader, who now is more interested in the denouement of the story—in the fate of a weak, marginalized character who is close to his death.

Poets have made us aware of ‘twilight’ as the moment when nature speaks its truth. Other transitional moments have attracted the attention of writers like Coetzee, who, in several of his novels, tries to show how at the threshold of death human beings reach their moment of truth. It seems to be then that one's vision of the significance and value of life becomes most clear. It is interesting to notice that although the crossing of the gate is done alone, Coetzee also explores the role of the person who is by the side of the dying person. Two great subjects of literature, Love and Death, are thus united. In *Diary of a Bad Year*, Anya is perceived by Señor C as an “earthly incarnation of heavenly beauty” (190). Her relationship with Señor C begins as a frivolous flirtatious game and ends up being a disinterested, generous manifestation of love. Kathryn Harrison makes us aware that Anya is “an integrated being” who can represent salvation for Señor C, “whose split nature [mind/body] is displayed on either side of a line that literally divides the page” (2007: 2). But her emotional relationship with Señor C also achieves synthesis—Anya is both Eros and Agape. She is actually the unifying element in the denouement of the three texts of the book.

In *Diary of a Bad Year* J.M. Coetzee, once more, from an ethical angle, deals with the evils of the present world and with the basics of human existence. Throughout his work, Coetzee gives the reader the chance to question and expiate; at the same time he creates a fitting space for debate and hope in the mode of literature.

Notes

¹. All the quotations from Brian Worsfold's article have been translated by the author of this article.

². For example, the critic Pankaj Mishra refers to Coetzee as "the most self-effacing of writers" (2005: 1).

³. The critic Dana Dragunoiu, however, states a different view by saying: "Though Coetzee has been roundly criticized for eschewing an explicit *littérature engagée*, his fiction ceaselessly explores the moral foundations of imperialism" (2006: 81).

⁴. His book *Youth* published in 2002 is considered fictionalized autobiography.

⁵. The 'bad year' could in fact be taken as a period that goes from the moment he published his first novel *Dusklands* (1974)

till the year of the publication of *Diary of a Bad Year* (2007).

⁶. Other twenty-first century novelists apply negative adjectives to the present period of time. For example in Paul Auster's novel *Travels in the Scriptorium* (2008), Mr. Blank says: "These are treacherous times" (49). And in Chris Abani's novel *GraceLand* (2004), the 15-year-old protagonist has trouble living in what for him are "confusing times" (155).

⁷. However, in the opinion of Brian Worsfold "Diaries permit, or even stimulate, subliminal readings which often betray the subconscious of the person who writes them. *Diary of a Bad Year* is not an exception" (2008: 167).

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TREACHEROUS 'SARACENS' AND INTEGRATED MUSLIMS: THE ISLAMIC OUTLAW IN ROBIN HOOD'S BAND AND THE RE-IMAGINING OF ENGLISH IDENTITY, 1800 TO THE PRESENT¹

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In a recent Associated Press article on the impending decay of Sherwood Forest, a director of the conservancy forestry commission remarked, "If you ask someone to think of something typically English or British, they think of the Sherwood Forest and Robin Hood... They are part of our national identity" (Schuman 2007: 1). As this quote suggests, Robin Hood has become an integral component of what it means to be English. Yet the solidification of Robin Hood as a national symbol only dates from the 19th century. The Robin Hood legend is an evolving narrative. Each generation has been free to appropriate Robin Hood for its own purposes and to graft elements of its contemporary society onto Robin's medieval world. In this process, modern society has re-imagined the past to suit various needs. One of the needs for which Robin Hood has been re-imagined during late modern history has been the refashioning of English identity. What it means to be English has not been static, but rather in a constant state of revision during the past two centuries. Therefore, Robin Hood has been adjusted accordingly.

Fictional narratives erase the incongruities through which national identity was formed into a linear and seemingly inevitable progression, thereby fashioning modern national consciousness. As social scientist Étienne Balibar argues, the "formation of the nation thus appears as the fulfillment of a 'project' stretching over centuries, in which there are different stages and moments of coming to self-awareness" (1991: 86). Nations, as imaginary constructions whose

authentication rests on a system of cultural fictions, rely in part on popular media, such as literature and now television, to help preserve stories of national origin and evolution. Robin Hood, as a popular fictional narrative of history, plays a significant role in the development of modern social cohesion and English identity.

Within the larger shaping of Robin Hood to help form changing imaginations of English identity is one of the most overlooked additions to the legend since 1800: a Muslim character who becomes a member of Robin's band. In this article, I propose two interpretive arguments that are unique to studies on Robin Hood. First, the different Muslim characters, despite their diverse names, constitute variations of the same character, which has become a fixture in the legend. Second, we can divide this character's variations into two general types: the treacherous "Saracen" and the integrated Muslim. The first type is characteristic of 19th-century England as part of the British Empire, while the second type is characteristic of postwar (and post-Empire) England. Both types of the Muslim character, but in different ways, contributed to the re-imagining of English identity. This article seeks to trace how the transformation of this character from treacherous "Saracen" to integrated Muslim within the context of the development of Robin Hood reflects changing conceptions of Englishness.

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The treacherous "Saracen" variation, characteristic of 19th-century England, likely dates to the literary work of Joachim Stocqueler in the 1840s. Due to the lack of studies on the addition of Muslim characters to Robin Hood and scholars' failure to associate them as variations of one character, it is hard to be certain. Stocqueler's work contains the earliest version of this character of which I am aware. Nevertheless, even if an earlier version exists, Stocqueler's work provides a clear prototype of the treacherous "Saracen", and subsequent literary versions of this type follow Stocqueler's lead. The treacherous "Saracen" possesses certain common characteristics, including the fact that he cannot be trusted, has a strange religion and/or magic, and has a corrupting influence on England.

During the 19th century, Robin Hood was used to promote political stances, including advocating isolationism and criticizing the amount of resources used for the Empire, by connecting the Crusades with modern imperialism. To further negative views of colonialism, the treacherous "Saracen" was portrayed as an evil colonial "Other", a term that evokes French philosopher Michel Foucault's notion (derived from the antagonistic subject/object relationship established by Freud and Lacan) that nations establish the Other as a "bad race" or "inferior race (or the degenerate, or the abnormal)" whose elimination "will make life in general [...] healthier and purer" (1997: 255). Historians have shown how individual European identities were formed earlier through interaction with its colonial peoples (examples: Hall and Rose 2006; Hall 2000). Historian Linda Colley has argued

that the English, while leading the establishment of an empire, “came to define themselves as a single people not because of any political or cultural consensus at home, but rather in reaction to the Other beyond their shores” (1992: 6). Therefore, the identity in the metropole was formed in a process of consolidation that defined what Englishness was in opposition to what it was not as seen outside Britain.

The integrated Muslim variation, characteristic of postwar (and post-Empire) England, represents the character's radical transformation. The integrated Muslim emerged in the 1980s in the television series *Robin of Sherwood* (ITV, 1984-6). Versions of this character have appeared in all subsequent British or British-linked adaptations, including *Robin Hood: Prince of Thieves* (1991), *Maid Marian and Her Merry Men* (BBC, 1989-94), and *Robin Hood* (BBC, 2006-2009). Robin Hood studies have largely ignored the links between these characters or how they reflect the image of Englishness that has emerged as a cornerstone of the legend.² The integrated Muslim possesses certain common characteristics, including that he or she is trustworthy, loyal, has a religion that should be respected, and although not born in England, is a welcomed and equal member of English society.

The transformation of the treacherous “Saracen” to the integrated Muslim reflects the need to re-imagine a national identity that incorporates the changing composition of England. England has become increasingly culturally diverse in the wake of decolonization and large-scale immigration of subjects from the former British colonies following World War II. Agitation for social equality by growing minority groups, which began in earnest in the 1960s and continues to the present, has forced England to reconsider who and what constitutes the nation. Therefore, as studies have shown, contemporary English identity has been engaged in an ongoing process of re-imagination (examples: Morely and Robins 2001; Julios 2008; Storey and Childs 2008; Behlmer and Leventhal 2000). The interaction between England and the Empire's colonial peoples has undergone a fundamental shift. Rather than defining identity in opposition to the colonial Other “beyond their shores”, English identity now has to learn how to assimilate the colonial Other. The formation of this new identity is crucial for social cohesion.

In order to clarify terminology, it is important to indicate that this article will use England and Englishness because they are the identity references used in the Robin Hood adaptations examined here and because these versions are concerned with England rather than the rest of the British Isles. In the 19th century, nationalism led to the assertion of Englishness (as well as Scottishness and Irishness) over the sporadic uses of Britishness made since the Scottish Stuarts' accession to the English throne in 1603. Being British was regarded more as a uniting civil identity than a “racial” (or ethnic) one like English. Numerous 19th-century histories of England

for the English public praised England and its institutions. Historian Stephanie Barczewski has noted that these accounts gave a cursory acknowledgement of other parts of the British Isles, focusing on “triumphal English expansion” that in their view rescued the rest of the Isles from a fate “as provincial backwaters”. Consequently, Wales, Scotland, and Ireland “were blessed to be parts —albeit subordinate ones— of the greatest nation on [...] earth”. This “British” history remained dominant during much of the 20th century. Amidst the recent dual challenges of a multiethnic Britain and the 1990s push for greater autonomy in “the Celtic fringe”, political circles have renewed efforts to foster a more equal supranational British identity. Yet, national identities (such as English) still compete in usage (see: Barczewski 2000: 48–49; Cannadine 1995: 12–30; Jones 1998). Recent research from the Institute for Public Policy Research and the Office of National Statistics suggests that current minorities prefer British to English, even though nearly all minorities reside in England. The same research notes that the white population favors English, Scottish, Irish, or Welsh (John 2004: 1–2; Taher 2007: 1–2). Current white resistance to a supranational Britishness implies a degree of hostility toward diversity. Such evidence, combined with the fact that the Robin Hood adaptations with the integrated Muslim depict white Englishmen learning to accept “foreigners” as part of the new English nation (rather than the other way round), suggests that this character is directed at the white majority rather than the minorities themselves.

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The Treacherous “Saracen”

Before tracing the specific evolution of the treacherous “Saracen”, it is first important to establish how Robin Hood emerged as a national symbol. If Robin Hood had never become a “national” legend, it could not be used as a fictional narrative of history within which conceptions of national identity could be forged.

Robin Hood first became important to the construction of national identity in the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Robin Hood was likely chosen for national appropriation because of its renown and long development in English culture. The Age of Revolutions (1789-1848) witnessed competition to appropriate the medieval past. In this period, Romantic nationalism emphasized the role of tradition and myth in national development and led to efforts to trace the nation’s cultural origins. The medieval past became a battleground between competing visions of what the nation had been and what it should be. In the 1800s, intellectuals considered race an “important component of national identity”. Invented “blood” ties allowed nations to create identities for themselves.³ Following this intellectual current, the English came to perceive themselves as

Anglo-Saxons (Knight 2006: 155–156; Knight 2003: 98–118; Barczewski 2000: 8, 124–161).

Sir Walter Scott's novel *Ivanhoe* (1819-20) was the single greatest influence on Robin Hood as a nationalist legend. It replaced loyalty to previous symbols of identity (such as the king) by introducing notions of race, solidifying Robin as a Saxon hero in the era of Richard I (see: Lampe 2000: 129–140; Knight 2006: 155). Scott incorporated the notion of the Norman “yoke”, which dates from the 17th century (see: Hill 1965: 50–112). Influenced by England's struggles with France in the French Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars, Scott made parallels between the Normans and the French, who emerge as the Other. He depicts Robin Hood as a story of racial struggle between the oppressed (English) Saxons and their conquerors, the (French) Normans (see: Knight 2003: 110–116). As Scott writes, “four generations had not sufficed to blend the hostile blood of the Normans and Anglo-Saxons, or to unite, by common language and mutual interests, two hostile races” (2004: 2). Robin, distinctly Saxon, functions as a symbol of patriotic resistance to Norman oppression. Thus, *Ivanhoe* re-imagined Englishness in opposition to the French. By dating this feud to the 1066 Norman conquest of England, Scott retrospectively created an age-long battle that continued to his time. However, Scott's use of the French in this manner contradicted “the most respected contemporary historical scholarship” (see: Barczewski 2000: 129; Knight 2006: 155; Knight 2003: 111–112; Bartlett 2000).

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In the 1800s, as Britain was creating a global empire, its island status created a sense of distinctiveness and separation. In creating an English Robin Hood whose essential components included untainted Saxon blood, 19th-century authors reinforced notions of Englishness that implied exclusivity. Such writers opposed miscegenation in the colonies and the presence of colonial peoples in England. This distinction and separation were maintained by depicting subjugated colonial peoples as the Other and that intimate interactions between the two would have dire consequences (example: Philips 2006).

In the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, Robin Hood was used to criticize imperialism. In the creative imagination, Sherwood became a place of freedom in which normal social constraints were suspended. This “escapist value of the forest” enabled Robin Hood to serve as a “possible critique of the present” (Pollard 2004: 184–210; Knight 2003: 107). The domestic chaos caused by King Richard's absence on the Crusades made excellent fodder for those arguing that governments should focus on home. Just as Richard had deserted his country and squandered its resources abroad, so the government was in danger of wasting its resources on imperialist ventures. For example, the anonymous *History and Famous Exploits of Robin Hood* (1806) tells that Richard, “transported with a blind and religious zeal,

ruined himself and almost his whole nation, to carry on a war against the Infidels [...] and during his absence England was filled with intestine troubles” (iv).

The Muslim character emerged within this context of the appropriation of the Robin Hood story for nationalist and anti-imperialist pursuits. The Muslim character’s first variation, the treacherous “Saracen”, shows features mentioned in Edward Said’s *Orientalism*. Said argues that Western writings on the Orient depict a Eurocentric bias against the peoples and cultures of Asia and the Middle East. This bias was depicted through a tradition of incorrect, romanticized images in literature and non-fiction writing that constructed artificial divisions between the East and West that could be attributed to unchangeable “essences” in the Oriental character and composition. In this process, the West was depicted as culturally superior, placing Europe as the norm from which the “exotic” and “inscrutable” Orient deviates (Said 2003).

Adding a Muslim character to Robin’s band situated a contemporary colonial Other in the context of the medieval military conflict between the English and Muslims to make allusions between the past and present. In all cases, a Muslim character is brought from the Holy Land to England. The character is portrayed as sinister and having a negative impact on English society. As negative characters, they are described as “Saracens”, which implied the same as “barbarians” or destroyers of civilization. While they initially appear to be good, they are in fact not to be trusted. Englishness was consolidated by juxtaposing the heroics of the “English” Robin and his band with the evil and alien nature of the Muslim character. The readers (mostly white Englishmen) were meant to perceive the superiority of the English and that intimate social relations between the two would be detrimental to England. Furthermore, these negative images of the Muslim character fostered distrust among the English of colonial peoples and the notion that their presence in England was something to be avoided.

The first versions of the treacherous “Saracen” were developed by Joachim Stocqueler, a minor writer who pursued various careers in journalism, government, and business. He traveled in various parts of the British Empire in Africa and Asia and worked in India for twenty years (1821-41). Stocqueler’s cynical views on imperialism and colonial peoples influenced his work, which depicts contact with “infidels” as disruptive, dangerous, and to be avoided (see: Knight 2003: 124-132). His representation of the effects of “Oriental perversity” on English society was common in Victorian thought. Further, as Said argues, a 19th-century Englishman’s interests in Asia and North Africa could not be “tinged and impressed with, [even] violated” by viewing these areas as colonies (see: Lindeborg 1994: 382-387; Said 2003: 11). Before writing his two versions of Robin Hood, Stocqueler had written many works on the Empire (and areas under its influence) and military history (see: Peers 2007).⁴

Stocqueler's first attempt at Robin Hood was *Robin Hood and Richard Coeur de Lion*, which he co-wrote in 1846 with fellow writers C.W. Brooks and C.L. Kearney. It was a theatrical comedy piece in which Robin is backed by Abd El Kadir, referred to as the "Old Man of the Mountains". Abd El Kadir's character was anachronistic, since he was a 19th-century Algerian political figure who opposed French imperialist forces. The label "Old Man of the Mountains" referred to the leader of the Ismailis, or Assassins, who plagued Crusaders in the Middle East. By combining Abd El Kadir with the "Old Man of the Mountains", Stocqueler was making a general connection between the European imperialism of the Crusades with that of the 19th century. By associating his fictitious Islamic figure with Robin and, ostensibly, justice, he was castigating European imperialism and advocating isolationism (Knight 2003: 147–148; Brooks, Kearney, and Stocqueler 1859).

Stocqueler's *Maid Marian, or, The Forest Queen* (1849) had a larger impact because of its popularity as a sequel to contemporary illustrator and popular writer Pierce Egan's best-selling *Robin Hood and Little John, or, The Merry Men of Sherwood Forest* (1840). *Maid Marian* opens with a description of the problems associated with King Richard's absence, which "threw the kingdom into commotion" (2005: 21). Robin is fighting in the Crusades with Richard. During the siege of Acre, the Christians engage in pillaging. Yet, Robin "remembered that he was the avowed follower of the Great Teacher of Humanity" (2005: 5). He stumbles upon a wounded Suleiman, a Muslim chief and "noble figure" about "35 or 40 years of age". Suleiman was being helped by his daughter, Leila, a "beautiful girl, whose olive complexion [...] bespoke [...] of a high-souled Moor". Suleiman attempts to fight, but collapses due to loss of blood. Robin tells Suleiman that he comes in peace and protects him until recovery (2005: 16–18).

Robin saves the king's life and is allowed to return home as reward. The king grants Robin his "prisoners", Suleiman and Leila, as slaves. Although Robin prefers gold, the king has none. Robin therefore accepts possession of Suleiman and Leila and contemplates ransoming them. However, all Suleiman's wealth and friends were lost in the siege. Robin is reluctant to sell them, for the two would likely be separated (not because the act of selling them was perceived as wrong). Consequently, Robin gives them the "option whether they would have their liberty [...] or accompany" him to England. Suleiman and Leila, "lured by Robin's talk of 'bonnie England'" decide to follow him home (2005: 79–80). After several adventures, the three arrive in Sherwood. A celebration is held, during which Suleiman, "regardless of the prophet's injunctions", indulges in drinking alcohol and Leila performs an "Oriental" dance. The dance is described as "sexual" and "passionate" (2005: 78, 83–86). Thus, from early on, Suleiman, described as "a dark and swarthy man [...] costumed [...] in the Oriental style", and Leila are depicted in the manner Said outlined as "Orientals", or stereotypes of Asian and

Middle Eastern peoples formed via Orientalism. Male Orientals are depicted as weak and/or strangely dangerous, while female Orientals are depicted as eager to be sexually dominated and exotic (Stocqueler 2005: 75; Said 2003: 1–110, 113–197).

Suleiman and Leila are also depicted as having a strange religion. On first meeting, Tuck believes that Suleiman works for “the Evil One” and declares Arabic to be a “beautiful language”. Yet, it is a “heathen tongue” because it is used to worship “false gods”. Suleiman gets angry at such insults, yet Robin, despite outward gestures of friendship toward the Muslims, agrees with Tuck’s assessment of Islam’s inferiority and “Orientals” when he chastises Suleiman for lifting his “hand in anger to a Christian”. Robin announces that he and Suleiman had brokered a deal: Suleiman would conform to the laws of Sherwood provided his religion “be respected so long as he continues a stranger to the Light of Gospel Truth”. Robin encourages his men “never to allude to the errors of the Orientals” in Suleiman’s presence (2005: 80, 83). Robin’s phrasing does not inspire respect. Suleiman tells his daughter that “not a day has passed [...] in which some one [...] has not mocked at our devotion”. After Leila reveals Marian’s attempts to convert her, Suleiman and his daughter become enraged by “religious fanaticism” (2005: 89–90, 93). Although Robin and his band have violated their word, they have done no wrong because Islam is perceived as a religion unworthy of respect. Further, Suleiman is depicted as a religious hypocrite. Although he is angered by the outlaws’ disrespect toward Islam, he repeatedly breaks Islamic laws regarding alcohol (2005: 78, 82).

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As was to be expected of the treacherous “Saracen”, Suleiman cannot be trusted. Robin’s efforts to convert the “Saracen chief into a forester” are unsuccessful because of innate differences between Englishmen and Oriental Others. At first, it seems that they are adjusting to their new environment, but beneath the surface all is not well. If a “mortal eye [could] have penetrated [Suleiman’s] heart, even in moments of apparent hilarity, it would have traced disquietude and lurking evil passions which craved expression and indulgence” (2005: 88). Robin and Marian ask Suleiman and Leila if there is anything that they can do for them, even offering to take them back to Palestine. Yet, Suleiman is depicted as duplicitous, smiling at Robin while conspiring against him and the outlaws (2005: 89, 93).

Suleiman and Leila invoke the sanction of their “Creator to a deed of blood”. They seek out Sherwood’s Witch of Deathwood to make a poison in exchange for Leila’s mother’s jewelry. After Suleiman and Leila leave, the witch conspires against them, for even to a witch, Muslims are “heathens” (2005: 90–92). Marian, afraid Robin will succumb to Leila’s exoticism, requests a love potion from the witch. The witch gives Marian a love potion, which is actually the poison that Suleiman and Leila requested, and tells her to share it secretly with the outlaws (including Suleiman

and Leila) to end the “estrangement in the forest society” (2005: 124). Robin and Little John, who were spying on the Muslims and Marian during their visits to the witch, believe that Suleiman is involved in a plot. They confront Suleiman and put him on trial after Leila flees. Robin asks Suleiman, now possessing the “devil’s chuckle”, why he would attempt to harm his English “friends”, none of whom “willfully did [... him] wrong” (2005: 131). Thus, the Oriental Other, despite outward appearances, is seen to be nothing but a treacherous demon.

Suleiman is banished from Sherwood. Meanwhile, Leila falls in with Prince John, who is conspiring against his brother, King Richard. Suleiman’s treachery continues. He rejoins his daughter and plots to kill the Crusader who wounded him in the Holy Land, a chief supporter of Richard, at a tournament. There, Robin disrupts the plot and slays Suleiman with an arrow. Leila dies of grief. The two are buried in an unmarked grave and “no one wept [...] or prayed for [...] their souls” (2005: 201).

Stocqueler depicts Suleiman and Leila as disruptive influences on English society. The forest and its inhabitants are negatively altered by their arrival. As Stocqueler writes, with reference to the period shortly after their arrival in Sherwood, “the utter absence of care which their bronzed and good-natured faces evinced, was now exchanged for a partial gloominess and uneasiness, for which few of them could very satisfactorily account” (2005: 118). Robin suspects that Suleiman and Leila are corrupting influences. He remarks to Little John, “I more than half repent [...] that I brought [Suleiman] to England” and that Leila “disturbs the serenity of some of our younger fellows” who have vowed chastity (2005: 108). Yet, after the removal of Suleiman and Leila, “life in the greenwood [...] resumed its ancient cheerfulness” (2005: 144). They were alien to England and their presence magically cast a dark spell over the country. Therefore, the presence of colonial peoples in England, and intimate social interaction between colonial peoples and Englishmen, were to be avoided.

The notion that contact with “exotic” foreigners was dangerous lingered into the early 20th century. In *For Richard and the Right* (1901-1906?), Tuck attempts to rescue Marian from an evil baron. En route, Tuck is tricked by Melchior “the Saracen”, who uses magic to stun him. Clearly, Melchior is the evil, alien Other, who is treacherous, has a “foreign” religion, uses “magic”, and whose presence has disruptive effects on England. As Tuck is helpless, he sees “an evil, mocking light” glowing in the eyes of “the dark-visaged stranger”. Later, the two battle. The “Oriental’s eyes flamed with passion” as he slashed “his keen scimitar”. Tuck gives him a blow with his quarterstaff, and “with a loud cry to Allah and Mahomet [...] Melchior [...] went down like a felled ox” (Brand 1901-1906?: 19, 27). Such a depiction of the Muslim character consolidated the view that a colonial presence in England would have negative effects and furthered the exclusivity of Englishness.

The treacherous “Saracen” was not depicted often in 19th- and early-20th-century novels. Yet, the versions of the treacherous “Saracen” were significant in adding the first new major character to Robin Hood in the past 300 years and in helping to define Englishness. In all cases, the treacherous “Saracen” was perceived distinctly as the Other and as having a corrupting influence on England. As a result, such Robin Hood adaptations were used to criticize a multicultural England that would occur as a result of its Empire. Ironically, it was precisely this multicultural England that was to emerge as a result of postwar decolonization.

The Integrated Muslim

In postwar England, Robin Hood and popular fictional narratives of history maintained their roles in developing social cohesion and national identity. In the late 20th century, it became increasingly common in Robin Hood to replace the Saxon-Norman conflict, which reflected tensions between the English and an external group, with an English-Muslim conflict to reflect contemporary internal social tensions in England. However, the English-Muslim conflict depicted in late 20th-century Robin Hood adaptations, unlike the 19th-century depictions of the Saxon-Norman conflict, did not seek to consolidate Englishness in opposition to an external Other. Rather, the English-Muslim conflict sought to build on the early 20th-century depictions of the Saxon-Norman conflict in which the social tensions between the two are overcome.

In the early 20th century, this shift in the relations between Normans and Saxons occurred in Robin Hood as World War I approached. Normans and Saxons set aside their enmity in the interest of national unity. During the early 20th century, which was dominated by world war, France, now a British ally, was replaced by Germany as the European Other. It was imperative to stress the similarities between Saxons and Normans rather than their differences. For example, in *Sherwood* (1911), Alfred Noyes writes, “There shall be no more talk of rich and poor/ Norman and Saxon. We shall be one people/ One family, clustering all with happy hands” (84).

This Saxon-Norman union marks the beginning in Robin Hood of the notion of inclusion, or unity of diverse elements, in the constitution of Englishness. In the first and last paragraphs of Major Charles Gilson’s *The Adventures of Robin Hood* (1940), this development is articulated clearly. The novel states that at the time of the 1066 Norman invasion, “the England that we know to-day had even then been for centuries in the making”. The English are a “mongrel race” for “the blood that flows in their veins is that of many conquering adventurers who” thought England worth conquering. “For thus [...] was our England formed and moulded” (1971: 9, 124).

In portraying Robin Hood as a force to overcome social divisions, a member of the “opposition” is depicted as one of Robin’s band. In some versions, such as that of Noyes, this role is reserved for Robin, who as a Norman noble sides with the Saxon people. In some, such as Paul Creswick’s *Robin Hood* (1917), it is Will Scarlet. In many others, this role is reserved for Marian and thus the marriage between the Saxon Robin and the Norman Marian symbolizes the union between the two groups.

In building on this early 20th-century depiction of the Saxon-Norman conflict, late 20th-century Robin Hood adaptations depict Robin and his band working to form one nation by eliminating social tensions between Muslims and Englishmen. By making tensions between Englishmen and Muslims a central component, a character from the “opposition” as a member of Robin’s band becomes more important in facilitating the message that this division is to be overcome. For this purpose, the Muslim character has assumed an increasingly prominent position in Robin Hood. The Muslim character is perceived initially by Robin’s men as the Other. Yet, Robin becomes an advocate of equality and integration. In the forest utopia, all are equal, regardless of skin color or religion, as members of English society. Thus, inspired by Robin, his band seeks to eliminate English-Muslim tensions.

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Yet, why was there a need to replace the Saxon-Norman conflict with one between the English and Muslims? What were some of the social changes occurring in mid-20th-century England? After World War II, Great Britain encouraged immigration from its territories in Asia, Africa, and the Caribbean. In 1948, the British Nationality Act granted full British citizenship to imperial or Commonwealth subjects. Around the same time, England in particular was experiencing a labor shortage and America was tightening immigration laws. Such factors encouraged migration to England. Huge waves of immigration began in the 1950s and 1960s. Although blacks and Muslims had existed in England for centuries, their numbers had never been so large.⁵ The influx of immigrants brought new social struggles for access to education, legal rights, and social equality. Early Muslim immigrants arrived from South Asia (India and Pakistan), yet Muslim immigrants in the 1970s came from West Asia and North Africa (see: Katznelson 1973; Brock 1986; Paul 1997; Baxter 2006: 164–192; Joly 1995; Lewis 1994).

Increasing numbers of immigrants in England led to amplified sentiments of racism and xenophobia. Such sentiments were demonstrated by anti-minority rioting in England in 1958 and the passing of the first Commonwealth Immigrants Bill in 1961. The Conservative bill reduced non-white immigrants’ entry. Furthermore, it reclassified as “immigrants” many dark-skinned citizens. Reformers believed that

the ignorance of the white majority caused racist sentiment, while racial violence was the recourse of an irrational minority. Consequently, some felt that “educating” white Englishmen about the historic cultural connections between England and the British colonies in Asia, Africa, and the Caribbean would help to reduce the perceived “foreignness” of non-white residents. For this purpose, interracial organizations were set up in urban areas to improve race relations through education and social interaction.

Minorities had viewed Labour as their political champion. However, the Labour government’s 1965 restriction on immigration tarnished this belief, despite simultaneously passing the first Race Relations Act. Although the Act recognized minority rights, minorities continued to face racism in the form of police brutality and employment discrimination throughout the 1970s and 1980s. Immigration was restricted through further legislation in 1968, 1973, and 1981. Consequently, minorities developed their own political and cultural organizations. In addition, newer generations of English-born minorities were becoming increasingly assertive in demanding equality (see: Pryce 1985: 35–52; Small 1994; Whitfield 2004).

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In 1981, black Britons marched in London to protest what they considered to be the police department’s inadequate investigation of a Deptford house fire in which thirteen black youths had died. Minorities believed that the fire was an act of racially-motivated arson. As the Brixton police became involved, they were met with violent resistance. Rioting spread to other cities, including Manchester, Birmingham, Leeds, Liverpool, and Bristol. The riots shook Britain and authorities realized that the treatment of minorities needed to be addressed (on minorities in Britain, see: Fryer 1984; Gilroy 1987; Hiro 1991; Paul 1997; Runnymede Trust 2000; Tabili 1994).

In an attempt to reduce and, eventually, eradicate the racist and xenophobic divisions in English society, a new conception of an integrated England needed to be formed. Rejecting assimilation in favor of multiculturalism, England promoted tolerance and integration, while allowing immigrants and ethnic groups to maintain cultural identities and customs. Building on earlier notions that racism resulted from the ignorance of the white majority, the re-imagining of Englishness became primarily concerned with “educating” white Englishmen on the historic and integrative cultural connections between England and the former British colonies in Asia, Africa, and the Caribbean to diminish the “foreignness” of non-white citizens.

In building an integrated England, revised fictional narratives of history were needed to further new senses of national ancestry, tradition, and citizenship amongst the people. In the 19th century, literature was the most important form of popular media in the development of national consciousness. However, as

historian Stephanie Barczewski has argued, in the 20th century, new technology replaced literature in this role with film and television (2000: 52). Through TV watching, viewers at different locations are connected to each other by the images before them, thus laying the foundations for an “imagined community” (Anderson 2006). A 2002 television regulatory report indicated that people believed minority representation on television should be increased to portray “social cohesion and inclusivity” (Hargrave 2002: 5, 60, 66, 93). A 2005 poll revealed similar views, with 62 percent of the general population favoring multiculturalism (Casciani 2005: 1–3; Sullivan 2005: 1–2). The late 20th-century Robin Hood adaptations and their Muslim character are of vital importance for providing a new fictional historical narrative to build an integrated England. The transition from the treacherous “Saracen” to the integrated Muslim was not completed immediately, but developed gradually. At first, the character is viewed as being a resident in England with equal rights, but not as being English. Later, the character is viewed as “English”.

The first contemporary depiction of a Muslim character in Robin’s band emerged in the ITV series *Robin of Sherwood* (1984–86), written by Richard Carpenter. The Muslim character, Nasir, depicted as a West Asian, marked the transition of the treacherous “Saracen” to the integrated Muslim. This transition, as will be discussed, was not planned initially. Having a Muslim hero figure in a national legend like Robin Hood went a long way toward diluting the notion of the Muslim as the Other and offered a significant counter to the “reel bad Arabs” analyzed by scholars (Shaheen 2003: 171–193).

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Scholars often describe the much-praised *Robin of Sherwood* as “innovative” and “compelling”. Yet, scholars do not cite the contribution of a Muslim member of Robin’s band as contributing to this view (example: Knight 1994: 240). What is notable to them is that the series, which followed Scott’s model of Saxon-Norman conflict, reinvigorated Robin as a social rebel and as an advocate of what can be interpreted as left-wing politics in opposition to the conservatism of 1980s Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher (Blunk 2000: 29, 30; Knight 2003: xiv, 164, 207; Knight 2000: 128; Knight 2006: 156). However, the perception of Robin as social rebel was not unique, as current politics had influenced earlier Robin Hoods (Harty 2000: 87–100).

Like the 19th-century treacherous “Saracen”, a Crusader brings Nasir to England as a servant. In this instance, the Crusader is an evil Baron who practices magic. Nasir is dressed in black and has a dark, sober presence. He rarely speaks. Thus, he is “foreign”, practices a “strange” religion, and has a mysterious aura that initially makes his character reminiscent of the treacherous “Saracen”. The end of the pilot episode follows the pattern outlined above when discussing the treacherous

“Saracen” in *For Richard and the Right*: The evil Baron kidnaps Marian with the ostensible intention of marrying her against her will. In actuality, he wants to use her as a sacrifice. Robin goes to save her and encounters the “Saracen” Nasir. Like previous Saracen Others, Nasir was fated to be killed but the actor playing Nasir, Mark Ryan, was popular with the cast and producers. Consequently, Nasir lives and we learn that he only served the Baron because he was under a spell. Once Robin kills the Baron, Nasir is freed. Having respect for Robin’s prowess in battle, Nasir joins Robin’s band (Carpenter 1984b; Wright 1998b: 2–4; Wright 1998a: 2).

Carpenter, as he later wrote, hoped to remain “true to the spirit of Robin Hood while [...] providing a few new ideas” (Carpenter 1985d: 5). These new ideas included incorporating issues relevant to contemporary England. Once Nasir became a regular, Ryan collaborated with Carpenter to develop the character in accordance with this agenda (Wright 1998b: 4, 5, 6–7).⁶ Carpenter perceives the Crusades as having “a huge cultural influence on Europe” (Wright 1998a: 2). In building on the 19th-century tradition that connected the Crusades to colonialism, Carpenter continued the allusion to the era of decolonization. He portrays the Crusades as having an effect on Europe similar to that of decolonization: the influx into England of peoples and cultures from other parts of the world, in which England had historical ties. Nasir represents this demographic and cultural influx. Yet, unlike the 19th-century treacherous “Saracen”, this influx is portrayed as positive. Thus, a more inclusive notion of Englishness was emerging.

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Nasir is depicted as brave and loyal. A memorable aspect of Nasir’s character was that he always fought with a scimitar in each hand. He is regarded as a skilled fighter who always attempts to help his friends, at times even planning rescue attempts of the entire band single-handedly (Carpenter 1985b). None of the outlaws doubt Nasir’s loyalty. For example, in one episode, Will Scarlet spies Nasir secretly going off into Sherwood with two Arabic-speaking men. When Will tells his comrades Tuck and Little John about it, none of them doubt that he will return or suspect that he is up to anything; they are not proven wrong in their assumptions (Carpenter 1985b).

Since the series focuses on the Saxon-Norman conflict, the issues of discrimination against Muslims and modern racism are not developed in detail. Following the 19th-century models, Nasir is, however, often given the pejorative name of “Saracen”. The frequent use of this term highlights the fact that the character is a transition between the “treacherous” Saracen and the integrated Muslim, and also suggests that England in the early 1980s was at a crossroads. In general, however, the name “Saracen” is not used by Robin or the outlaws or the “common” people of England. The name is usually used by the villains: the sheriff; the sheriff’s brother, Abbot Hugo; the sheriff’s henchman, Sir Guy; and Norman lords. At times, the sheriff adds

an expletive, such as “filthy Saracen”, to accentuate Nasir’s “barbarianness” (Carpenter 1986a). On encountering the (French) Norman king in disguise, the king remarks to Robin that he could “buy four Saracens in the slave markets” with the prized horse that Robin is about to steal. Robin calls Nasir to his side as an equal and says, “Here’s a Saracen... Try buying him with a thousand horses [...]. In Sherwood, we know the difference between men and animals” (Carpenter 1984a).

Nasir is often shown among the band, partaking in its decisions. Thus, he is shown as an integrated and welcomed member of (Saxon) England rather than an Other. Carpenter’s “Time of the Wolf” novelization declares that “Robin and Nasir moved swiftly through the forest in the half light. This was their world. They were part of it” (Carpenter 1988: 76). Thus, Robin and Nasir are part of the same world, equals, in Sherwood, which, free of Norman control, is the “true” England. In the episode “Lord of the Trees”, English peasants and the outlaws celebrate a Saxon religious festival. Nasir is greeted warmly by the peasants as the band arrives to celebrate with them (Carpenter 1985c). Despite this equal treatment, Nasir is not regarded as “English”. In “Herne’s Son”, for example, the temporarily-dispersed band is trying to regroup. When the band wonders where Nasir might be, Will Scarlet suggests that he was “back with his own people” (Carpenter 1986a).

Since *Robin of Sherwood* retains the traditional Saxon-Norman conflict, it does not emphasize Robin’s role in “educating” his men to overcome religious or racial bigotry, yet it does present the view that all religions (with the exception of devil worship) are to be respected. In the series, religion is one of the causes of the Saxon-Norman conflict. The Saxons practice a pre-Christian religion based on nature and Robin is the son of Herne, the horned-god of the forest. The Saxons maintain their religion as part of their defiance of the Normans and their Christianity, despite the historical fact that the Saxons had been Christianized centuries prior to the Norman invasion. Further, Nasir is shown observing Islamic practices, such as refraining from eating pork, without negative reactions from his peers or other Englishmen (Carpenter 1986b). In depicting Robin and his band as practitioners of different religions, the series advocates respect and tolerance for all faiths.

Religious tolerance is an issue in “The Children of Israel”, which comments on contemporary Jewish-Muslim conflict over the creation of modern Israel. The sheriff falls in debt to a Jewish moneylender. Unable to pay, he rouses anti-Semitic sentiments and incites a riot against the local Jewish community. The moneylender and his family escape to Sherwood, where they are rescued by Robin and his band. Nasir speaks to the children in “their tongue” and then says, “Ash-shalom alaykum”. He then becomes the Jewish children’s protector. In showing Robin and his band as protectors of all religious groups, the series advocates respect for all religions. While chasing the Jewish moneylender, the sheriff remarks that there is not much difference “between outlaws and outcasts”. Connecting the people on

the margins of society with the heroes furthers the need for understanding between different groups and that the wrongs committed against the “heroes” are equal to the wrongs committed against all social minorities (Carpenter 1985a).

The character of Nasir inspired subsequent variations of the character, including Barrington in the BBC spoof *Maid Marian and Her Merry Men* (1989-94).⁷ Nasir was so established that a variation of him was included in the film *Robin Hood: Prince of Thieves* (1991). While *Prince of Thieves* is an American production, the film’s English screenwriters/ producers borrowed heavily from *Robin of Sherwood*, and *Prince of Thieves* had a strong influence on later British television Robin Hoods (Pearce 1991: 61–63). Despite Nasir’s influence on *Prince of Thieves*’ Azeem, only Stephen Knight refers to connections between the two (2003: 168). Knight suggests that Azeem was made African (rather than West or South Asian) to generate greater resonance with Americans (1994: 243). The film’s multicultural aspect was noticed as novel in reviews that were unlikely to be familiar with British television (Alleva 1991: 485; “What, no tights?” 1991: 91; Klawans 1991: 64–65). Yet, the scholar Richard Clouet, who features Nasir in his Robin Hood essay, perceives no connection between the two and bafflingly declares that *Prince of Thieves* introduced “a non-European character into Robin Hood’s band” to reflect contemporary “multicultural realities”. Strangely, he does not perceive the “Arab” Nasir as a “non-European character” (2001-2002: 44).

Significantly, *Prince of Thieves* omits the Saxon-Norman conflict, replacing this central component with an English-Muslim conflict that derives from the Crusades. Azeem occupies the role of a member of the “opposition” who joins the band to abolish social divisions. This change enables Robin Hood to incorporate earlier notions of English reformers that ethnic bigotry is rooted in ignorance, and presents Robin as an educator seeking to create greater understanding between white Englishmen and Muslims: a role that Robin will play in subsequent versions.

The character of Azeem added components that would become customary in future variations of the Muslim character, including the possession of advanced scientific knowledge and being black.⁸ Like Nasir, Azeem is brought back from the Crusades, but this time by Robin, who rescues Azeem when they break free from a Jerusalem prison. Azeem believes that he owes his life to Robin; thus, he must stay with Robin until he has saved his. The two travel to England, where Robin discovers his father’s murder and is outlawed. Azeem joins Robin’s band as his primary confidant.

Azeem is depicted as trustworthy and loyal, even though Robin initially views Muslims negatively. The impression of Robin as an “English” hero is established at the beginning of the film, set in Jerusalem, where a frightening Muslim guard is about to sever Robin’s hand for stealing bread. As he prepares for his punishment, Robin declares, “This is English courage”. Later, this “English” Robin reveals his bigotry,

stating his surprise that a “barbarian” Muslim could have such “clarity of thinking”. Yet, as Robin gets to know Azeem better, he comes to respect him and abandons his prejudice. Thus, racism is rooted in ignorance and defeated through education. In the film, Azeem is constantly at Robin’s side. In the finale, the two save Marian together. After Robin defeats the evil sheriff, Azeem kills the sheriff’s sorceress to save Robin (Densham and Watson 1991). Thus, Azeem occupies the position often reserved for Little John as Robin’s confidant, and their mutual respect and friendship represents the ideal relationship between white Englishmen and Muslims.

The Saxon-Norman conflict is replaced by an English-Muslim conflict, which exists as a result of the Crusades. When Robin and Azeem first arrive in England, Azeem walks behind Robin, for there he is “the infidel”. Thus, Azeem must “pretend” that he and Robin are not equals to be socially acceptable. Although Azeem is described as a “barbarian”, he is depicted as more civilized than the English. For example, when Robin and Azeem are searching for the sheriff’s soldiers, Azeem pulls out a telescope to locate them. He hands the telescope to Robin, who jumps and draws his sword. Azeem asks, “How did your ignorant kind ever take Jerusalem?” (Densham and Watson 1991).

The outlaws’ racism derives from the propaganda of the Crusades and their own ignorance. Robin’s men, backward and uneducated, perceive Azeem as the Other. The ignorance of Robin’s men is demonstrated when Robin tells them that five guards are approaching when in fact there are twenty. When Azeem looks at Robin to question his lie, Robin explains that his men cannot count, “so why scare them?” Drinking mead around a campfire, one outlaw passes the jug over Azeem because he is a “savage”. Robin replies, “Of course he’s a savage. But no more than you or I” (Densham and Watson 1991). Thus, Robin tries to reverse his band’s xenophobic behavior. Yet, the outlaws have difficulty accepting Azeem. In the film novelization, Azeem’s “dark skin” is described as bringing him “attention that would have made anyone else uncomfortable”. Yet, once the outlaws “discovered he was a fugitive [...] like them, they accepted him... *More or less*” (Green 1991: 85–86). Thus, although they “accept” Azeem, they are suspicious of him. Although progress is being made in depicting an “integrated” Muslim, much needs to be done. Yet, the film makes the viewer sympathize with Azeem and perceive the men’s actions as wrong. In this process, the viewer is made to question his or her own beliefs.

Azeem’s uneasy acceptance by the band is demonstrated when Little John’s wife has difficulties giving birth. Azeem attempts to deliver the breech baby by caesarean section. Little John’s wife screams, and Tuck, with anti-Muslim malice, declares, “I tell you the barbarian is killing her”. Yet, the healthy baby is delivered. Robin declares Azeem “truly [...] a great one”. Tuck admits that he is “not worldly” and recognizes his error (Densham and Watson 1991). Thus, as the band interacts with Azeem and learns more about him, they come to respect him. He is considered

an equal member of English society and an equal to any Englishman, but not “English”. For example, Robin declares Azeem an honor to “his countrymen”, not the English. Also, in the finale, Azeem calls out to the English, “I am not one of you, but I fight!” (Densham and Watson 1991).

By the time of the BBC’s *Robin Hood* (2006), there were concerted efforts to achieve greater socio-cultural cohesion amongst the diverse groups in Great Britain (see: Julios 2008; Storey and Childs 2008; Morely and Robins 2001). *Robin Hood* chronicled the adventures of the English noble, Robin, on his return from the Crusades with his servant, Much. The series includes a Muslim character in Robin’s band named Djaq. Being a woman, Djaq is unique in the *Robin Hood* tradition. She is a dark-skinned Muslim slave and is the most integrated version of the Muslim character thus far. The sheriff brings Djaq to England to work in a mine and she helps Robin free her fellow slaves. In the series, Djaq is portrayed as a good, equal, and integrated member of her adopted English community.

English-Muslim tensions, which exist as a result of the Crusades, again replace Saxon-Norman tensions. Robin and his band struggle to overcome these tensions. Building on earlier notions that bigotry resulted from the ignorance of the white majority, Robin advocates equality through respect for all cultures and “educates” his band to reduce the perceived “foreignness” of Muslims in England. In the series, Robin demonstrates knowledge of Islam and admiration for Muslim practices, including an episode in which Robin shows consideration for the religious customs of rescued Muslim slaves and one in which he quotes from the Quran (Oates 2006; Wadlow 2006). Robin also bears a “Saracen” sword throughout. In this simple act, Robin connects himself with the “foreign” culture, making his image synonymous with integration.

Despite Robin’s esteem for Muslims (and Djaq’s status as a member of the outlaws), his band commonly perceives Muslims as the Other at first meeting. As in *Prince of Thieves*, Robin directs them to rise above these perceptions. In *Robin Hood*, Robin is generally successful in convincing his men that their suspicions of Muslims or “foreigners” are wrong. Thus, it becomes heroic to accept those who seem different. In “Turk Flu”, for example, the sheriff imports Muslim slaves from the Holy Land. The slave trader perceives the slaves as dirty, contagious, and subhuman—to him, they are the Other. He warns the outlaws to stay away from them. Robin’s band, believing the trader’s rhetoric, views the Muslims as foreign and strange. Robin angrily declares that Muslims have no disease; “ignorance and superstition” further this view. Much asks the slaves to convert and give up their native customs (i.e. assimilate), for enslaving Christians was forbidden. Robin remarks that they should not have to abandon their customs and that “people fear what they do not understand” (Oates 2006). In another episode, the outlaws find a mask belonging to a Muslim ambassador. Little John and Allan A’Dale think the

mask, later revealed to be a tool for practicing acupuncture, is strange; thus, associating “strange”, or “foreign”, with evil, they assume the mask must be used for witchcraft. Robin indicates that superstition and ignorance “build on fear” (Kurti and Doyle 2006).

Unlike Robin’s band, the sheriff and his men regard Muslims as the Other, thereby perpetuating their evilness. In one episode, the sheriff believes Robin’s behavior must result from a mind “perverted” in the Holy Land through contact with Muslims (Minghella 2006). In another episode, Robin and his band use the villains’ fear of Muslims to devise a plan for defeating them, claiming Muslim slaves have a fictitious contagion. Thus, the soldiers’ racism leads to their defeat (Oates 2006). When hosting a Muslim ambassador, the sheriff serves goat brains, believing rumors spread in ignorance about Muslims that they eat such “barbaric” foods. Yet, the ambassador, with a sour face, comments that he has never had such “exotic” food. Such a comment reinforces the ignorance underlying the villains’ racism. Later, Sir Guy, the sheriff’s henchman, snidely remarks, “Be careful they don’t cheat us. You know what these Saracens are like”. It is clear that the villains have no idea what Muslims are like, and this is the cause of their villainous racism. As Robin declares, “listening” leads to understanding, and through this, unity (Kurti and Doyle 2006).

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Although not born in England, Djaq is a welcomed and equal member of the band. In Djaq’s debut, she saves Little John’s life. In this act, she proved her loyalty to England and that she could be trusted as an equal. Afterward, Robin asks Djaq to “join them” (Oates 2006). Thus, she emerges as a crucial link in bridging the English-Muslim divide. When later questioned why the band includes a Muslim, Much declares her “one of the lads” (Kurti and Doyle 2006). Thus, there is no reason why a Muslim or anyone of a different race should not be welcome in the Sherwood fellowship. More importantly, her status as “one of the lads” suggests that she is an integrated and full member. Moreover, both Allan A’Dale and Will Scarlett develop romantic feelings for her (Mitchell 2006). Djaq is thus depicted as an equal, suitable love interest for her white companions. Further, England is declared “her home”, underlining the concept of a diverse England becoming one nation.

Conclusion

Robin Hood, as a popular fictional narrative of history, occupies a crucial role in the development of modern social cohesion and has emerged as a useful way to re-imagine Englishness. The Muslim character added to Robin Hood is a crucial step in the re-imagining of English history. By inserting a character from the former colonies in medieval England who functions in a band of (white) English heroes,

the late 20th-century Robin Hood adaptations reviewed in this study occupy a crucial role in creating a “retrospective illusion” for the white majority that minority groups from the former colonies have existed in England for centuries, functioning as equals and (English) heroes. In other words, in the construction of an imagined reality imposed on the past through the visual retellings of Robin Hood, an unreal reality become more real than the real (to paraphrase philosopher Jean Baudrillard) in reflecting a planned multiethnic England. By pointing to ancestral heroes from whom the nation’s present inhabitants are purportedly descended, it suggests continuity. In addition, it displays the past as a mirror of the future. Thus, the re-imagined England is implied as the culmination of an ongoing, predestined process.

Notes

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1. I would like to dedicate this article to my Canadian grandparents, Ronald and Winifred Cordery, who exposed me to English history and culture when I was a boy, thereby encouraging my love of European history. I would like to thank Thomas Balcerski, Mark Rice, and the reviewers for *Miscelánea* for their comments on earlier drafts. I would also like to thank Mildred Martinez for her Spanish translation of the abstract.

2. For example, Robin Hood scholar Stephen Knight is one of the few to mention the *possible* connections between the characters (2003: 168, 171).

3. Theories of racial conflict date from 17th-century debates about innate differences between what we would today call ethnicities. In the 18th century, differences amongst human groups became a subject of scientific study. The merging of folk beliefs about group differences with scientific explanations produced notions that races were primordial, natural, enduring, and distinct. During the 19th century, attempts were made to change race from a taxonomic to a biological concept. Several natural scientists wrote on race seeking to explain the

behavioral and cultural differences that they attributed to groups. These scientists, in general, made several claims about race, including that races are objective, there is a strong relationship between biological races and other human phenomena, and that race is a valid scientific category that can be used to explain and predict behavior of certain groups or individuals from a certain group. Races were distinguished by such characteristics as skin color, facial types, cranial size, and hair texture. In addition, races were considered to demonstrate group differences in morality and sophistication.

4. Examples include: *Fifteen Months Pilgrimage through Untrodden Tracts in Khuzistan and Persia* (1832), *Handbook for India and Egypt* (1841), and *Memorials of Afghanistan* (1843).

5. Many former British colonies became independent (although some retained ties to Britain as members of the Commonwealth) following the end of the Empire after World War II. At this time, “black” referred to those from the former colonies in India, Africa, and the Caribbean. In current Britain, “black” is used generally to describe

British residents of African descent who identify themselves as "black," "African," or "Afro-Caribbean." "Black" can also be used to signify all minority groups. Thus, the term has been used to refer to South Asians and others of non-European descent. This paper uses the expansive connotation of "black," which includes those originating from the former colonies in Asia, Africa, and the Caribbean.

⁶. Mark Ryan later wrote a story about Robin Hood for the *Green Arrow Annual* #4 (1991), which celebrated the fiftieth anniversary of the DC Comics superhero. The story includes a Muslim character, similar to Nasir, named Rassan.

⁷. *Maid Marian and Her Merry Men*, a BBC children's television series (1989-94), was a unique comic take on Robin Hood

drawing inspiration from *Robin of Sherwood* and later from *Prince of Thieves*. In the series, Barrington, while not a Muslim, falls within the same category of character. Barrington, as a black Rastafarian from the British Caribbean, is also a character from an area formerly part of the Empire and his incorporation as a member of the band fulfills the same objective of portraying a multi-cultural England and of offering comments against racism, for there was substantial social and pop-cultural commentary within the episodes (Martone 2009: 450-452).

⁸. Azeem also influenced American variations of the Muslim character, including Kemal on TNT's *New Adventures of Robin Hood* (1997-99), and Achoo and Asneeze in Mel Brooks's spoof *Robin Hood: Men in Tights* (1993).

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“WIFE. MOTHER. CRIMINAL(?)”: REPRESENTATIONS OF ABORTION IN MIKE LEIGH’S *VERA DRAKE* (2004)

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Mike Leigh’s *Vera Drake* (2004) is a “tight-budget”, period film (Lawrenson 2005: 12) set in the early 50s in a working-class area in London. Acclaimed by critics and winner of the Golden Lion for best director and of the *Copa Volpi* for best lead actress, *Vera Drake* remains largely unexplored in scholarly terms. Leigh’s film focuses on the life of the protagonist Vera Drake (Imelda Staunton), a working-class woman in her fifties, and her family: husband Stan (Phil Davies), and grown-up children Ethel (Alex Kelly) and Sid (Daniel Mays), who still live with their parents. While to the eyes of her family Vera lives a very ‘normal’ life as an exemplary, devoted housewife and mother, she keeps a very dark secret: she performs abortions on working-class and lower-middle-class women, and it is around this secret, its discovery, and consequences that the whole narrative revolves.

Generically, *Vera Drake* can be examined in the context of a whole tradition of British social realist cinema. It draws on some elements of the late 40s and early 50s British social problem films, recalling in some thematic and formal respects works such as David MacDonald’s *Good Time Girl* (1948), Montgomery Tully’s *The Boys in Brown* (1949), Ralph Smart’s *A Boy, A Girl and a Bike* (1949), or Basil Dearden’s very popular *The Blue Lamp* (1950) and *I believe in You* (1952), among others. These early social problem films, especially concerned with criminality and crime detection (Landy 1991: 442; Bell-Williams 2006: 270), developed further

and gave rise to the British kitchen-sink film tradition (or “Free Cinema” film tradition) of the mid-to-late 50s and early 60s. *Vera Drake* could also be said to fit in within such a tradition (O’Hagan Hardy 2006: 211). Represented by classics such as Tony Richardson’s *Look Back in Anger* (1959), and *The Loneliness of the Long Distance Runner* (1962) and Karel Reisz’s *Saturday Night and Sunday Morning* (1960), to name just a few, this kitchen-sink trend used realism to dramatise the alienation experienced by individuals living in a hostile environment (Monterde 2001: 79; Farré 2005).¹ In particular, these films often showed a strong “commitment to addressing contemporary social realities”, especially those of the working class (Hill 1997: 1). The fashion of social realism anticipated by the 50s and 60s kitchen-sink tradition has been taken up and developed by more contemporary British social realist filmmakers (Lay 2002: 2, 3; Sargeant 2005: 342). Examples of this more recent social realist trend of films (to which *Vera Drake* also belongs) include works by consolidated directors: among others, Mike Leigh’s *Meantime* (1984), *High Hopes* (1988), and *Secrets and Lies* (1996), and Ken Loach’s *Riff-Raff* (1990), and *Ladybird, Ladybird* (1994) (Lay 2002: 102). Likewise, the contemporary trend of British social realism encompasses works by ‘new’ directors like Gary Oldman’s *Nil by Mouth* (1997), Lynne Ramsey’s *Ratcatcher*, (1999) and *Morvern Callar* (2002) or Paul Pawlikowski’s *My Summer of Love* (2004) (Lay 2002: 102).

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An important difference between *Vera Drake* and the other ‘social problem’ films mentioned here, however —regardless of year of production and release—, is that the former is a *period* film made in 2004, whereas the others deal with *contemporary* settings; for example, the kitchen-sink films of the mid-to-late 50s deal with 1950s Britain. While period films are a fairly common phenomenon in British cinema (Sargeant 2005: 326-330), it should nevertheless be noted that *Vera Drake* is quite different from many other British *period* dramas. During the 30s and up until the late 40s, such dramas, often set in the distant past, were very popular in Britain (Higson 1998: 503). Many of them were mainly concerned with representations of the upper classes, the aristocracy and the monarchy, as was the case, for example, in Basil Dearden’s *Saraband for Dead Lovers* (1948) or Marc Allégret’s *Blanche Fury* (1948) (Harper 1994: 5, 9; Cook 1996: 64, 65). Even later, more recent period productions (which are usually set before World War II) show a special interest in the upper-middle classes and the upper classes and, unlike *Vera Drake*, often leave the working class in the background when not completely to one side. This is the case, for instance, with David Lean’s *A Passage to India* (1984), Joe Wright’s *Atonement* (2007), and many of the filmic adaptations of Jane Austen’s work, including Joe Wright’s *Pride and Prejudice* (2005).

This particular ‘period quality’ of *Vera Drake* needs therefore some attention. As Landy notes, “there is by no means unanimous agreement about the [...] role of

historicising” (2001: 2). In fact, the use of the past in different films may have specific, different roles and connotations in each case. A recuperation and retelling of aspects neglected in mainstream, official, historical versions of the past are often main preoccupations for authors who use ‘historicising’. This can certainly be the case with *Vera Drake*, a serious, well-documented film which apparently aims to address and therefore shed light upon a fairly common phenomenon of contemporary British social history, namely, abortion. This problem mainly affected working class women, but has neither been approached in depth in British cinema, nor has it figured in many mainstream historical accounts. The search for other motivations behind Leigh’s decision to create a period piece rather than a contemporary drama remains a speculative exercise. Still, this tentative exercise deserves to be carried out, even if in passing. This is especially so considering the film’s subject matter: the (for many) thorny issue of abortion. In fact, this film’s ‘period quality’ may be likely to affect the way it works for audiences and the way it approaches issues of abortion. Several plausible reasons behind this particular ‘period quality’ might include the following: a desire to attract a wider number of audiences on the part of the director, with the effect of promoting widespread serious debates on abortion (and, of course, increasing box office profits). It should be remembered that, apart from *Topsy-Turvy* (1999), Leigh’s incursions into the making of ‘period films’ have been few. Thus, *Vera Drake* could be seen as a breath of fresh air, as an apparently atypical film in Leigh’s repertoire, and perhaps as able to take onboard not only his faithful devotees, but also, potentially, other types of audiences. In this respect we should also remember that, in the last few decades especially, period films have often been associated with ‘quality’ films, probably thus appealing to a wider British *and foreign* audience; furthermore, at least since the 80s and to judge by the amount of period feature films produced in Britain since then, a large number of domestic and international viewers seem to have felt attracted to the exoticism of the costumes, landscapes (urban and provincial) and stories of characters from the past (Sargeant 2005: 297-301). Likewise, it should be noted that the setting reconstructed in *Vera Drake*, the immediate post-World War Two period, is a scenario which has attracted (and still attracts) a lot of attention in audiences in the West. At a different level it is also noticeable that post World War Two Britain is a rather ‘extreme’ setting in which anti-abortion laws were particularly severe. Post-war London was an especially harsh habitat for the working classes, who forcibly led a life of austerity, rationing and poverty. In such a severe milieu where survival was often at stake, (some) audiences might have felt more understanding and sympathy towards the stories of the women involved in the narrative, and towards their decision to have an abortion —as I shall argue, these feelings of sympathy for Vera and for many of her ‘patients’ are triggered in the film in other ways as well—, which in turn may have raised the issue with some

audiences of the morality/immorality of abortion practices more generally. Moreover, it is also worth noting that, in spite of the fact that *Vera Drake* presents abortion as a piece of history, it is still a current topic, suggesting, as Landy puts it, that “the media’s representations of the past are a barometer of the social and cultural life” of contemporary settings (2001: 1). It is perhaps a piece of history in the British context in the sense that, today, Vera’s abortion practices would have been permitted in the UK if carried out by medical specialists in hospitals or clinics. Yet, the film is not outdated, since it poses very interesting questions for contemporary societies, as we witness a period of history marked by heated debates on the subject and by very strong anti-abortion feelings among some circles in the West, as the emergence of movements like the *Society for the Protection of the Unborn Child*, the *UK Life League*, or the *Comment on Reproductive Ethics*, all of them operating in the UK, suggest.²

As this paper will show, there are two other important related differences between *Vera Drake* and other social problem films, especially between Leigh’s film and the ‘social problem’ films of the late 40s and early 50s and the kitchen-sink film tradition of the 50s and 60s, both of which *Vera Drake* most explicitly and accurately recalls and tries to evoke, both formally and thematically. The first difference refers to the film’s concern with women and women’s issues, and its allusions to and representations of abortion. The second (closely related) difference concerns *Vera Drake*’s approach to the causes of ‘crime’ and criminal abortion, which, as I shall argue, greatly differs from that offered in the social problem and the kitchen-sink film traditions of the 40s, 50s and 60s. By and large, the latter “adopt a psychological treatment of the characters” and link their problems with their environments (including those of unwanted pregnancy and abortion) to essentially individual and personal weaknesses and/or moral prostration, which often ultimately reveal “unresolved oedipal conflicts and [...] repressed sexuality” (Landy 1991: 438). *Vera Drake*, however, mainly concentrates on the economic, institutional, social and class issues and structures that shape and determine the different characters’ approach to abortion.

Regarding the first difference noted above, it should be stressed that, while concerned with the working classes, films belonging to the ‘social problem’ and the ‘kitchen-sink’ film traditions were mainly preoccupied with the *male* working class and often presented rather male(-centred) perspectives (Lay 2002: 108; Murphy 1992: 32; O’Hagan Hardy 2006: 212).³ In this respect, Leigh’s *Vera Drake* is completely different and, as this article will try to show, could be read as an attempt to offer a ‘feminine/-ist-oriented’ film of the type that was rarely found in the ‘original’ social problem film and kitchen-sink film traditions of the 40s, 50s and 60s. Regarding more specifically the topic of abortion, it should be noted that a few films of the 50s and 60s belonging to the ‘kitchen sink’ film tradition did

occasionally make allusions to the (not infrequent in real life) fact of unwanted pregnancies and to the possibility of termination (e.g. Reisz’s *Saturday Night and Sunday Morning* [1960] or Gilbert’s *Alfie* [1966]). Yet, in such films, abortion, which was a criminal offence in Britain up until 1967, remained a totally secondary concern and was also often demonised *a priori* and treated simplistically, moralistically, and/or as unrealizable. A notable, unique exception is Tony Richardson’s *A Taste of Honey* (1961), in which the unwanted pregnancy of the protagonist Jo (Rita Tushingham) and her consideration of abortion (finally discarded) becomes a central theme mediated through her own perspective and sensitivity. Leaving aside the exceptional *A Taste of Honey*, however, the usual treatment of abortion in these kitchen-sink films is well exemplified, for instance, in *Saturday Night and Sunday Morning*, where the main character’s attempt to terminate her pregnancy fails and abortion is criminalised and presented as morally despicable. Brenda (Rachel Roberts), the protagonist’s married lover who becomes pregnant does not really gain the spectators’ sympathy: she is depicted as hedonistic, ethically dubious and unfaithful to her hard-working husband. When talking to her lover Arthur (Albert Finney) about her ‘problem’ she asks: “What do you think having a kid means? You’re dull and sick for nine months, your clothes don’t fit, nobody look at you”. In *Look Back in Anger*, Alison Porter (Mary Ure), the protagonist’s abused wife asks her doctor about the possibility of having an abortion, but she is immediately told to forget about it:

—Doctor ...is it too late to... I mean... to do anything? [She says this without looking at him, as if ashamed of her question.]

—I didn’t hear that question [Answers looking at her angrily].

—I’m sorry.

—I hope you won’t ask it again, or anyone. Or try to do anything foolish.
[Comments in brackets added by the author].

In the classic *Alfie*, abortion is also linked to adultery and criminalised as the film concentrates on the male protagonist’s distress when shown his married lover’s dead foetus. At the most obvious level, *Vera Drake* differs from its generic predecessors in its *central* focus on abortion and on its consequences for women (and, secondarily, for men), and there lies part of its strength and courage. By 2004, when the film was released, (medical) abortion had already been legalised in Britain, although it remained, and still remains, a crime in many other countries. As suggested earlier, however, even in those societies in which (medical) abortion under certain conditions is not a criminal offence anymore, it often continues to be a thorny issue, if not a social taboo (Strickler and Danigelis 2002: 188). Moreover, as Icart, Rozas et al. note, when considering the film’s content it should be remembered that abortion is an ideologically charged ‘problem’ about which spectators usually hold rather fixed and rigid pro- or anti- views and positions

(2007: 113).⁴ In this article I will argue that one of the most interesting aspects of Leigh's *Vera Drake*, beyond the prominence given to the issue of abortion, is its apparent ability to potentially upset (some) spectators' pre-conceived thoughts on abortion and abortionists, and its successful questioning of simplistic, longstanding, *a priori* links between abortion, "crime" and evil (Alward 2007: 183-4). To this end, I shall first try to show how the film deconstructs and partly problematises the notion of abortion as crime while pointing to the existence of links between notions of crime and power at different levels. All this is achieved through the use of a number of narrative and formal (visual) strategies, which interact with one another in complex ways and provide a very powerful whole. In this article I will concentrate on the former, its narrative devices. As I shall argue, narratively, this partial 'decriminalisation' of abortion relies on, among other things, the film's characterisation of Vera and particular treatment of time, its salient emphasis on Vera's abortion method, and on the prominence given to Susan Wells' abortion. As I shall finally argue, what the film ultimately seems to be doing (though not in an uncritical fashion) is to criticise the social and juridical criminalisation of an individual (Vera Drake), suggesting that a "social harm theory" rather than a "crime theory" (Pemberton 2007: 28; Hillyard and Tombs 2007: 16) could explain the problems surrounding abortion in the context of the film.

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According to Carney and Quart (2000: 1), Leigh acknowledges his tendency to "posit questions rather than provide answers" in his films. In *Vera Drake* such a tendency is especially noticeable. In terms of narrative, Leigh seems to lead audiences to question official discourses on the *a priori* immorality and evil of abortion through, among other devices, the protagonist's characterisation.⁵ Vera is characterised through her name, speech, and, especially, through her acts. "Vera" is a name of Latin origin meaning "true", "truthful", "faithful". Although in the eyes of the legal system and of some members of her family she is not "truthful" in so far as she has kept secret her illegal activities, she is certainly true to herself and faithful to her own moral standards, which, as she shows throughout, are anything but low. As her speech and that of her family and neighbours reveal, Vera is working class and lives in a working-class environment, but she does not incarnate the problematic, working-class woman living in a broken home. In fact, her family circle is depicted as extremely close and loving. Nor does she embody the stereotype of the back-street abortionist which prevailed in Britain in the early 1950s.⁶ As Brookes notes, such a stereotype depicted these women abortionists as "slovenly and avaricious back-street operators providing services for promiscuous single women" (1988: 163). Vera's acts in general, and abortion activities in particular, are not driven by avarice or selfishness, but rather by altruism, love and sympathy for others, and especially for the most vulnerable and disadvantaged

individuals of society. She is extremely hard working, and her goodness and piety are highlighted from the very beginning of the film. She is first shown walking vigorously, humming and with a smile on her face as she goes to the bleak home of one of her neighbours: George, who cannot move and sits in a wheelchair. Vera gets him tea and does some tidying up in the house for him. More importantly, she tries to alleviate his loneliness by speaking to him gently and affectionately. In one of the first shots, the camera moves to show *a close up* of Vera’s hands as she gently puts George’s feet, which had fallen on the floor, back on his wheelchair footrests. The shot lasts long enough to underline this particular aspect of Vera’s character, and to help spectators broadly associate Vera’s piety, kindness and compassion with that of Jesus Christ, who washed his disciples’ feet with his own hands. Vera’s selflessness, truthfulness and naivety are such that when her secret is finally discovered by the police, her first worry is that her daughter’s engagement celebration is being ruined because of her: “we were having a party today... I do not want to spoil it for my family”. Moreover, when questioned by the police inspectors, she puts herself into more trouble by candidly revealing that she practises abortions regularly, and that she has treated many women “for about twenty years”, instead of keeping to the facts of the case for which she is being accused.

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Besides this characterisation of Vera as a kind, good-hearted, and naïve woman, the film’s particular treatment (or, rather, manipulation) of time may also lead spectators to question long established, official discourses that link abortion with criminality and immorality. When considering the film’s treatment of time, which coherently accompanies the story narrated, the existence of three rather distinct parts can be noted. The first one goes up to minute twenty. The second part starts around minute twenty-one and runs up to minute fifty-six, when the third and final section begins. The general feeling that spectators are likely to experience when watching the film is that the initial slow pace of the narrative seems to be succeeded by a speeding up of time, only to be slowed down again and ‘stretched out’ significantly around minute fifty-six. In the first ‘section’ of the film, Vera’s ‘decriminalisation’, as it were, is partly achieved through the use of strategies of delay and then a gradual revelation of information, strategies that last until up to the end of the first half of the film’s runtime. It is not until minute twenty-one that spectators learn of Vera’s hidden business. Nothing much seems to happen in the first twenty minutes of the film, if ‘action’ is considered in its traditional sense and as a succession of important events that help significantly in the development of the narrative. As noted earlier, this first part is mainly devoted to showing Vera’s love for others, her altruism and good spirits with her family, neighbours, and employers —she works as a cleaning lady in a number of wealthy houses; nothing in her behaviour leads audiences to suspect her double life.

Spectators are thus left disarmed from the very beginning by Vera's charm and goodness as a person, only to be shocked and disturbed later when they discover her 'darker' side. Such a discovery only comes when the spectators' opinions about Vera are already likely to have been almost fully shaped in very positive terms. Viewers would have probably felt 'on alert' if her secret role as an abortionist had been revealed right at the beginning of the film, or earlier in time. This seemingly deliberate late revelation of her secret probably serves to unsettle those moral axioms which identify abortion with crime and evil. Yet audiences' empathy towards Vera may be shaken later in the film when spectators learn of her activity as an abortionist, since it remains uncertain whether or not she receives money for her practices. It is only after minute forty-four, when the film has already presented a number of abortions practised by Vera, that we learn it is not a money-making endeavour on her part and, moreover, that she is being cheated by Lily (Ruth Sheen), the person who puts her in contact with the pregnant women, whom she considers her good friend but who turns out to be an unscrupulous black marketeer. In fact, Vera is totally unaware of the fact that Lily is charging women who go to her for help:

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Lily: Have you got the money?

Pregnant woman: I've got the two pounds.

Lily: Two pound?

Pregnant woman: That's what she told me.

Lily: Well, she told you wrong. It's two guineas.

Pregnant woman: Oh, I'm sorry.

Lily: Ain't no use being sorry [...]

Pregnant woman: Two guineas.

Lily: Thank you very much. [...] *She'll be there at five o'clock* [referring to Vera now]. *Don't mention the money. That's between me and you. Understood?* [emphasis added]

Vera's naivety and altruism become totally explicit later in the film, once she is discovered by the police:

Police Inspector Webster: How much do you charge, Mrs. Drake?

Vera: What?

Police Inspector Webster: How much do they pay you?

Vera: I don't take money [...] I never take money. I wouldn't... That's not why...

Police Inspector Webster: You do it for nothing?

Vera: Course I do. They need help.

While this depiction of Vera as an angelic 'victim' of the system, and more particularly of Lily's greediness, may seem unrealistic, her case might well have been grounded on real facts (Brookes 1988: 138-9).⁷ In fact, most women admitted to prison for criminal abortion during the 1950s "were housewives or retired pensioners aged between 50 and 70" (Brookes 1988: 138).

Furthermore, Vera’s refusal to accept payment for abortion is realistic (Woodside 1971: 128); “for most of the older, working-class women jailed for abortion in the 1950s money was but a minor consideration” (*American Historical Review* 2005).

Time is also manipulated in other ways (though apparently for the same purposes) in *Vera Drake*. From the moment spectators discover Vera’s secret (minute twenty-one), time seems to speed up. During the following thirty minutes, viewers witness seven abortions in various degrees of explicitness. Six of them are practised by Vera and the seventh, carried out on Susan Wells (Sally Hawkins), is performed by medical doctors in a private clinic. Regarding the abortions practised by Vera, it is immediately noticeable how fast they succeed one another in the film, suggesting that abortion, even though illegal, was a fairly common phenomenon in 1950s Britain. In fact, abortion was the third most popular method of birth control (Brookes 1988: 6), withdrawal being “the method used by the majority” (Cook 2004: 300), and the sheath “a much less popular second preference” (Brookes 1988: 6), partly due to its unreliability and high price (Cook 2004: 138). The film is set during the peak of illegal abortions in the UK, a period “between 1945, when the wartime conditions brought a reassertion of traditional social values, and 1960, when the moral climate began to change and contraception was more readily available” (Murphy 2005: 16). Hence, as contraception methods at the time were neither safe nor easily available for the poorest classes and sexual ignorance was still a reality in 1950s Britain (Cook 2004: 123), abortion was especially “common and apparently increasing in working-class urban areas” (Brookes 1988: 5), as reflected in *Vera Drake*. The high incidence of abortion among the working classes is not insignificant, especially when considering that “at least two-thirds of the population were working class in 1951” (Gillet 2003: 8). The links between Vera’s abortion practices and working class poverty are emphatically underlined in the case of the wretched, haggard-looking, working class mother of seven who, with almost no resources, can do nothing but procure herself an abortion in her dirty, badly-lit bedroom while complaining that her ailing husband is “always on top of [her]”. Poverty and squalor are also protagonists in the case of a young mulatto immigrant of Jamaican origin whom Vera assists: her abortion is performed in the house where the mulatto woman lives, in a dark, badly-painted bedroom with only one piece of furniture: an old, rusty bed.

Vera’s secret is disclosed around minute fifty-six, after one of Vera’s ‘patients’, Pamela Barnes (Liz White), a young, single woman in her late teens, becomes seriously ill as a result of the abortion. Once in hospital, Pamela has to be operated on urgently to save her life and the doctor reports the case to the police. Vera’s family get to know about her secret shortly after. Once Vera’s clandestine activity

has been revealed, the rhythm of the action suddenly slows down. The film is one hundred and twenty-five minutes long, which means that it devotes about seventy minutes, that is, almost half of its whole run time, to show the legal consequences of Vera's activities as an abortionist. This deliberate 'deceleration' suggests once again a well-planned, ideological intention on the director's part. Whereas the time span represented in these thirty minutes dedicated to Vera's 'Friday activities' (i.e. practising abortions) is, *at least*, a month and a half in the 'real' lives of the characters, the whole police investigation and judicial process in which Vera gets involved as a defendant last less than two months, starting after 17th November 1950 (the date of Pamela's operation), and ending on 10th January 1951, when the Central Criminal Court sentences Vera to prison.⁸ The 'stretching out' of time in the last part of the film seems to help create a feeling of sympathy and even empathy towards Vera; it recreates well the trauma experienced by the protagonist and her family; the psychological time which spectators are obliged to share as they endure the long, difficult, tedious, belittling and exhausting process that culminates in Vera's imprisonment. Such a feeling of sympathy/empathy towards Vera, apparently created through Leigh's particular treatment of time, is also heightened visually, as spectators are often shown long-lasting close-ups of Vera crying and suffering deeply, both for the fate of Pamela, and for the well-being of Stan, Ethel and Sid once she is not with them. In contrast, by having most figures of authority shown only through medium and wide shots, a distance that is not only physical but also emotional, is created between these figures and the spectators.

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In addition to the film's treatment of time, its concern with Vera's abortion method also prompts a 'questioning' of the protagonist's criminality. In this respect, it is noteworthy that she only treats women in the very early stages of their pregnancy.⁹ In fact, when asked by the police inspectors whether she performs abortions, which they immediately equate with helping women "to get rid of the *baby*" [emphasis added], Vera denies it, stating that "that's not what I do, dear [...] *that's what you call it*, but..." "when they can't manage... *I help them start their bleeding again*", "they need help [...] Who else are they going to turn to? They got no-one. I help them out" [emphasis added]. Interestingly, Vera's words point to the strong connection that exists between language and power: while those in authority use eloquent expressions to criminalise her and her acts, Vera does not see herself as killing babies. In fact, by showing the discrepancies between Vera's point of view and that represented by the Police, the Judiciary, and society in general, the film highlights how, as noted by Newman (1996: 5), linguistic choices are extremely important, since language and rhetoric not only shape reality but our attitudes towards this reality, and, more specifically in this particular case, our attitudes in favour of or against abortion. When "helping young women out", Vera makes use of a Higginson syringe, a bottle of disinfectant and some carbolic soap. With such

ingredients, she prepares a bowl of soapy water, a preparation which she then syringes into the women’s vagina. It is significant that her ‘hygienic’ measures (thoroughly washing her hands), her equipment and procedure are carefully shown in the film right from the beginning during her first abortion. These early, lengthily drawn-out *close-ups* enable spectators to appreciate for themselves that she is not using any sharp, apparently dangerous object. In fact, perhaps in Vera’s view, the items and products she uses are innocuous. As a housewife and cleaning lady, she is used to handling disinfectants on a daily basis. It is also likely that she uses carbolic soap at home, this being an apparently harmless cleansing product available in many shops at the time (and still commercialised today) which people often used for personal hygiene. Hence, when asked whether she uses any sharp objects, which were obviously unsafe but not infrequent amongst abortionists of all kinds at the time—even among some doctors—(Newman 1996) she denies it assertively: “No, I wouldn’t do that”. It seems therefore that Vera is inadvertently jeopardising her patients’ lives out of piety *and* ignorance. Although apparently careful with hygiene at domestic standards, Vera does not seem to be familiar with the concepts of medical asepsis and sterilisation and uses the same syringe once and again on all the women she treats, unaware as she is of the huge risks involved in so doing. Nevertheless, as compared to some of the most common methods of abortion used in Britain at the time, Vera’s ‘technique’ seems to lose some of its aggressiveness:

‘Simple means’ to procure an abortion [...] included infusions made from soaking nails and pennies in water, gunpowder, gold leaf from painters’ shops, lead scraped from lead plaster, and rat poison. These home remedies were supplemented with a range of commercial cures: ergoapiol, quinine [etc.] (Brookes 1988: 117)

And yet, as Worth, for example, claims: “the idea that Drake had used this method for 20 years is sheer fantasy [...] I was a midwife in London in the 1950s and I certainly never saw a survivor of that method” (2005). She argues that, as a writer and film-maker, Mike Leigh

can be excused for not knowing, but his medical adviser should certainly have known that Vera’s method of procuring an abortion—flushing out the uterus with soap and water—was invariably fatal. One of the most severe pains a human being can endure is the sudden distension of a hollow organ. Inflating the uterus with liquid will induce primary obstetric shock, a dramatic fall in blood pressure, and heart failure. Thousands of women have died instantly from this abortion method. (Worth 2005)

Other ethnographic sources, however, seem to contradict Worth’s blunt claims and suggest that this type of abortion method rarely resulted in death. Thus, when an English woman called “Minnie Roberts came to trial for the death of Beatrice Hill, she stated that she had ‘treated 800 cases in twenty-five years’ and that Beatrice was her first fatality” (Brookes 1988: 34).

The film's depiction of Vera's abortion practices and the circumstances under which they take place raise more than a few questions. Although Vera jeopardises women's lives with her abortions, she is totally confident of the safety of her method. Furthermore, she treats women for free, risking her freedom and family life and stability in the process (and eventually losing them). Some of the questions that arise are whether she is committing crimes or whether her acts are morally right or wrong. The inclusion of Susan Well's abortion case pushes these questions even further. In fact, the constructedness of 'crime' and the connections existing between 'crime' and power are not only suggested in the film through the previously-mentioned link between language and ideology (i.e. killing babies vs. start one's bleeding again), but also, and more importantly, through the prominence given to Susan's story. As against Vera's usual, working-class 'cliente', Miss Wells is the daughter of one of the rich and powerful families for whom Vera works as a cleaner, a situation that enables Leigh to focus on the abortion issue in upper-class circles. Living in an uncaring home (unlike Vera's children) and being naïve, shy and insecure to the extreme, Susan is raped by the boy she likes. As a consequence, she gets pregnant. Yet, her destiny is totally different from that awaiting Pamela Barnes. Susan's father "works in the Ministry of Defence" and she can therefore afford an expensive, private clinic in which she will be treated professionally and with total discretion for "over a hundred pounds". She can meet the expense of visiting a doctor, a psychiatrist whose report that an abortion was necessary to preserve the mother's mental health was a requisite at that time, and an obstetrician. Her "operation" takes place at an expensive, elegant and clean nursing home, in a private, nicely decorated room with an open fire which looks more like a hotel room than a hospital ward. Leigh's depiction of Susan's case seems to be well grounded in reality. As Brookes notes, "when an unplanned pregnancy occurred [...] women in the upper income bracket were likely to ask their doctor for a 'small operation'. If they were sufficiently well informed to ask the right doctor, and could pay a substantial fee, they could expect to have a 'routine' dilatation and curettage at a private nursing home" (1988: 137). As could be expected, Susan is operated on successfully, although she also has to suffer some of the consequences of living in a world led mostly by and for males. Unlike Vera's 'patients', who feel her care and support and are not asked questions, Susan is treated by her male (money-driven) doctors in a cold, extremely paternalistic and moralistic manner. In fact, every time she visits a doctor, she undergoes gratuitous police-like interrogations, aggravated by the slow pace of the enquiries, as if the doctors were gloating over Susan's embarrassment and feelings of shame and guilt. Both the apparent ease with which Susan is able to procure herself a safe, medical abortion and the doctors' behaviour point to the direct connections between power and crime along class and gender lines. They first reveal

the official hypocrisy of the time, which allowed well-off women ‘in trouble’ to get rid of their ‘problem’ safely (and with the help of institutional, medical discourses), but criminalised abortion when performed by and on working class women. In fact, part of Brookes’ denunciation is that the “access which middle-class women had to safe abortion may well have slowed down the impetus for reform [of the anti-abortion laws]” (1988: 137). Secondly, *Vera Drake* also seems to demonstrate that most of the hegemonic discourses which criminalise abortion (those coming from the Police, the Judiciary and, paradoxically, from doctors) are created, shaped and enforced by males. Hence audiences witness the feminisation of abortion as a crime, while they are also allowed to see that, when it is the male doctors that perform abortions, their procedures are not criminalised by the legal system, but are actually protected by it.¹⁰ In fact, what the film seems to insist on throughout is that, “‘crime’ serves to maintain power relations” (Hillyard and Tombs 2007: 15) and that, as Friedrichs and Schwartz note, the (male) “privileged segments of society” (embodied in the film by the Judiciary, the Police and the medical practitioners) are those with power “to define crime, and to support enforcement of laws in accord with their particular interests” (2007: 4).¹¹ At the time *Vera Drake* is set, “population size was considered an indicator of national vitality” and the country was “afflicted by a relatively weak demographic performance and the ‘menace’ of an ageing population” (Thane 1990: 292). Hence anti-abortion laws were maintained while policies aiming at raising the birth rate were strongly encouraged:

In a broadcast delivered in March 1943, Winston Churchill warned that if Great Britain were “to maintain its leadership of the world and survive as a great power that can hold its own against external pressure, our people must be encouraged by every means to have larger families”. (Brookes 1988: 134)

Yet, as the film makes clear, in the early 50s, keeping a family, let alone one of these large, officially-sanctioned families, was too heavy a financial burden for many members of the working class, and especially for female working class individuals, whether married or single (the latter also having to face social exclusion). In fact, the “period of British post-war austerity” “did not entirely disappear until the mid-1950s. Many commodities were impossible to obtain or were highly priced, *and although food rationing was eased by stages, it was not abolished until 1954*” (Robertson 1999: 17) [emphasis added]. Thus, Ethel’s fiancé Reg (Eddie Marsan) protests following Vera’s arrest: “it don’t seem fair. Look at my mum. Six of us in two rooms. It’s alright if you’re rich. But if you can’t feed them... you can’t love them, can you?” Yet, Leigh’s piece is far from being the “tendentious” “pro-abortion statement” that critics such as Rodríguez Chico (2005) claim. Instead, it is an extremely complex text. Some of Vera’s patients are not

characterised as naïve, helpless victims, but rather as frivolous, irresponsible individuals, whose behaviour apparently problematises radical, *a priori* pro-abortion positions. This is the case, for example, of a rather cynical (unnamed) woman in her late thirties who is shown laughing, listening to music, drinking and smoking while Vera is getting things ready to ‘help her out’. In fact, it is suggested that this is not the first time that she has got rid of an unwanted pregnancy by means of abortion, and her frivolous manners make audiences feel detached from her and from what she is doing. Still, while *Vera Drake* presents a nuanced, wide variety of cases of women who seek abortion —some of which seem morally more problematic than others—the film’s deep purposes conspire to reveal the intimate links between squalor, poverty and abortion: many of the women who resort to abortion in the film do so out of necessity, because they see themselves trapped in highly unfavourable socio-economic circumstances. In fact, unlike many 40s, 50s and 60s ‘social problem’ and ‘kitchen-sink’ films whose “concern [was] finally less with the social aspects of crime, with legal crime and punishment, than with the underlying psychology” (often pathological and sexually motivated) of the offenders (Landy 1991: 445), *Vera Drake* focuses on the social context and structures that give rise to unlawful behaviour. By emphasising this highly unfavourable socio-economic milieu that conditions people’s behaviour, the film appears to criticise “crime theories”, which, as Hillyard and Tombs note (2007: 17) focus solely “on the individual” and on the ‘criminal’ acts committed by the individual. Instead, and in line with the theories on criminology endorsed by Hillyard and Tombs (2007: 16) and Pemberton (2007: 28), the film seems to stress that, rather than committing crimes, Vera is inadvertently causing *harm* to others in a heartfelt attempt to counteract the poverty, deprivation and despair of women, most of whom are presented as victims of the system in which they live.

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Notes

1. These films were mostly adaptations with scripts often written by the authors of the source text.

2. Information about these groups can be found, for example, on their Internet official websites <http://www.uklifeleague.com/>, <http://www.spuc.org.uk/>, <http://www.corethics.org/>. Needless to say,

anti-abortion movements and campaigns are even more powerful in the USA, although medical abortion is legal in many of the States.

3. Even contemporary social realism tends “to focus on male protagonists” and “few social realist texts centre on working class female protagonists” (Lay 2002: 108).

“Notable exceptions include *Stella Does Tricks*, *The Girl with Brains in Her Feet*, *Secrets and Lies*, *Ladybird*, *Ladybird*, *Bhaji on the Beach*, and *BabyMother*” (Lay 2002: 108).

4. Pro- and anti-abortion positions are in turn often linked to moral debates “about personhood” (Newman 1996: 18), which consider “whether or not the biologically human organism, which comes into existence at conception, acquires the status of moral personhood before birth” (Alward 2007: 183). If that is the case, then “abortion is seriously wrong at that time” and, if not, “it is more or less morally unproblematic at the time” (Alward 2007: 183–4). As Newman notes, radical anti-abortion positions have been to a great extent shaped by the history of “anatomical illustration and sculpture” and early obstetrics, which expressed “the medical belief in ‘preformation’, in which the fetus was conceived of as a pre-formed [...] tiny adult that simply grew in size” (1996: 26, 33). Moreover, until the late 18th century, “the uterus was believed to be passive and the fetus active during labour, with birth taking place thanks to the autonomous efforts of the fetus” (Newman 1996: 33).

5. The reading of *Vera Drake* offered here is just a plausible interpretation of how (some) audiences may have received and understood the film. Further future research into the film might include ethnographic work (e.g.: interviews, focus group meetings) to explore reception of the film in particular viewers.

6. As Gillet notes, in the British context speech is an especially significant class-marker, as it often appears “as the most frequently-used way of ranking people by class” (2003: 19). Vera’s speech and that of her family, friends and neighbours is full of localisms and non-standard grammatical structures which can be associated with working class registers: “innit?”, “we done demolition before the war” “my brother won’t

talk about it, neither” “was you?” “he don’t talk about it, Stan”.

7. Further details can be found, for example, in Woodside (1971: 126–137).

8. As Brookes notes, “imprisonment was the typical penalty for breaking the abortion law” (1988: 144).

9. An early abortion is for many less problematic morally, as it can be argued that the foetus has not acquired “moral personhood” yet (Alward 2007: 183–4).

10. As noted earlier, the law allowed doctors at the time to procure abortions if they were “necessary” to preserve the mother’s mental health. This covering of psychological grounds was introduced in 1938 under the Bourne Ruling (United Kingdom, R. v. Bourne, 1939, 1 K.B. 687). In *Guidance on the Termination of Pregnancy: The Law and Clinical Practice in Northern Ireland*. Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety. <http://www.dhsspsni.gov.uk> [Accessed 12 April 2009].

11. The fact that the word “crime” was popularised with the beginning of the industrial revolution and was associated with working-class crowds in big cities is rather telling and far from innocent (Lee 2007: 36). The hypocrisy of official responses towards abortion throughout British history has become increasingly clear. Thus, birth control policies have clearly been informed by political agendas and have accordingly changed over the decades, even when extreme cases such as infanticide were at stake. Such a practice was not uncommon in Victorian times (Briggs, Harrison et al. 1996: 180; Robinson 2002: 153) and was often criminalised. Yet, when fears of overpopulation affected the powerful and ruling classes “infanticide was quietly accepted as an unpleasant but necessary action to lower effective fertility” [emphasis added] (Robinson 2002: 167).

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Interview

“LITERATURE HAS VANISHED IN THE GLOBAL WORLD” INTERVIEW WITH IHAB HASSAN¹

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Ihab Hassan is undoubtedly one of the most important theorists of the post-modern. The French philosopher Jean-François Lyotard and the American architectural theorist Charles Jencks, among others, have recognized their debt to him. Born in Cairo in 1926, he moved to the United States after his graduation in electrical engineering. “But I don’t like engineering”, he declares, “I love literature”; so he studied English literature and earned his Ph.D. in 1953. He has taught in two universities—in Wesleyan University from 1954 to 1970 and in the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee since 1970—and has written fifteen books and thousands of articles. His most important contributions to post-modern theory are perhaps: *The Dismemberment of Orpheus: Toward a Postmodern Literature* (1971), *Paracriticisms: Seven Speculations of the Times* (1975), *The Right Promethean Fire: Imagination, Science, and Cultural Change* (1980) or *The Postmodern Turn: Essays in Postmodern Theory and Culture* (1987). But he is not interested in postmodernism anymore. He moved in 1986 to autobiography (*Out of Egypt: Fragments of an Autobiography*), and in recent times he has progressively approached fiction. “I write only fiction now, I do not write essays anymore”.

You have recently written an essay—in fact, your last essay—entitled “Of Changelings: Academic and Otherwise”. A very appealing topic...

I am very interested in the idea of the changeling. It is a word in English that means “a child who has been secretly substituted for the parents’ real child”. Most people now around the world are interested in the question of identity—who I am—and they define themselves in relation to a very specific culture, or language, or group. I am interested in the person who crosses over from one identity to another, from one language to another, from one nation to another, because that is my experience: I was born in Egypt, but I have spent most of my life in America. The “changeling” is a metaphor of that identity. Identity in English means “the same as”, but I ask myself “The same as what? What I am supposed to be the same as?” I like the idea of displacement, of changeling, uncertainty about who I am, not being defined by an outside group.

In 1986 you wrote a memoir entitled *Out of Egypt*. Would you say it is an academic autobiography?

No. Shirley Lim really was correct in saying that there are no rules to define academic autobiography. I doubt whether all academics take the same kind of approach to their own lives. We have maybe the same profession, we all teach, read books a lot, and probably write. But all the dentists have the same profession too... Besides, even though I spent most of my life being a professor, I think that it is not the most important thing in my life, other things have been more important to me, and so my profession as an academic is not the defining element.

Why an academic life? There are plenty of possible lives...

I began as an electrical engineer. And as an electrical engineer I was sent by the Egyptian government to study in America. When I came to America I decided two things: the first one was “I don’t want to be an engineer”, and the second one, “I don’t want to go back to Egypt, I want to stay in America”. I became an engineer because in Egypt being a person studying literature is not taken seriously. You have to be an engineer, or a scientist, or a doctor. As I had good grades in mathematics and sciences, I was chosen to come here. But I loved literature. Finally, I became an academic because I wanted to write poetry and fiction, but I found it easier to write and publish essays. I came to the academic profession by the back door, now I am going back again. I write only fiction now, I do not write essays anymore.

Your “style” is unusual in the academic world. You do not write typical articles or books. What do you think about the academic institution? And what do you think about the ways in which we write and think nowadays at the university?

Of course my academic career is very long and things have changed a great deal. But I do not like the style of writing that is associated now with the university. I think it is too abstract, too full of jargon. Everybody wants to be theoretical, so they use words in order to be impressive instead of being elegant, or exact, or poetic. Therefore, I am sorry to see that the style of writing in the university has become so abstract. It was influenced mostly, about twenty or thirty years ago, by structuralism and post-structuralism, so we say words like *discourse* when we mean *writing* or *speaking*. There is a whole list of words like that.

The painter Mark Rothko said that he was not interested in abstraction, because he was not interested in a work of art in which life does not palpitate. We can say that you are not interested in an essay in which life does not palpitate.

Very good. I agree.

But for a young academic it is not easy to escape from that “jargon” or “abstraction”...

I know exactly what you mean and I am sorry. I say “I am sorry” because you are beginning in this. You have to find approval from people older than you are in the profession, otherwise they will not accept you, they will not give you a job or promote you. Now I have finished with all this; the struggle is in front of you. Another thing that I do not like about the university other than the style is the conformity. Every profession has some degree of conformity. Remember the medieval guild in the 12th century. The apprentice of carpenter, for instance, had to produce a master work, which was a piece that would show that he had mastered the medium of wood and of carpentry, and then he was accepted in the guild. The same thing, perhaps more rigorous, happens in the university. But conformity is not good for somebody who thinks the way you do.

How important was autobiography in the books before *Out of Egypt?* Could autobiography find its place in a theoretical book, for example?

I wrote two books, *Paracriticism* and *The Right of Promethean Fire*, in which I tried to experiment with the style called *para-criticism*, which is not exactly criticism, it is outside of criticism. In this style I tried to do many things: I tried to tell stories, to have anecdotes and poetic passages, to cut off from different sources. So instead of having a completely logical and continuous discourse, where B follows from A, C from B, etc., it was like a mosaic. When I first did it, it was not approved, people said that it was not scientific or scholar-like, but after a while it became accepted. Then I found that I could not go on repeating the same thing. Now I am writing fiction, but a fiction that it is not completely traditional.

Why is your autobiographic style so fragmentary, quotational, intertextual? Why this insistence on the *fragment*—you speak about the “dismemberment of Orpheus” or the “scattered bones of Osiris”?

Because I think that you have to make a space between things, you have to create silence as well as discourse. I think that silence is very important.

Would you say that postmodernism is autobiographical, as you suggested in your essay “Beyond Postmodernism”?

You could say that in postmodernism the subjective element has come into the picture. In modernist architecture, for instance, you find geometrical, cold, rigorous elements; in post-modern architecture there is an element of play, of personal expression. So you could say that postmodernism accepts the subjective element, more than modernism does.

I am interested in a statement that you made in another interview: Postmodernism has mutated in a wider movement called *postmodernity*. What is *postmodernity*?

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I can define it in one word: globalization. It is how digital technology, how media have now become a global phenomenon, and you can find Madonna, for instance, in the Sudan. So when postmodernism, as an artistic or cultural phenomenon, becomes a geo-political phenomenon, then I use the word *postmodernity*. It is the global side of postmodernism.

Has post-modern literature mutated, too?

Literature has vanished, it has become a media event. What has become more common than literature is rock singing. Literature has a too specific and individualistic element in it, and it does not work in the global world. In the new world something like Michael Jackson is necessary. Once, my wife and I were in Pakistan and two children started to talk about Michael Jackson. They know about Michael Jackson and not about Hemingway, you see?

I perceive a shared topic in the novels of some contemporary writers. The main characters of the novels written by Auster, Ishiguro, Kundera or Sebald have lost their place in the world. We can say that they are “homeless” characters, displaced subjects. Why this coincidence? Has this theme something to do with postmodernity?

This theme of homelessness is one of the big, big themes of the late 20th century and the early 21st century. It is a result of this tremendous migration. It began after

the Second World War and the collapse of the colonial system. People are everywhere; I mean there are more Pakistanis in England than in any one city in Pakistan. The theme of homelessness is very important to so many writers, like Sebald, Rushdie, Ishiguro, Auster... but in Paul Auster the homelessness is personal, is inside, like in the work of Kafka.

Perhaps it is due to the fact that, as Dean Maccannell points out in his book *Empty Meeting Grounds*, the “homeless” are the soul of the post-modern world?

Yes, because the boundaries are no longer fixed, the walls are broken. The Berlin wall, which no longer exists, or the wall that we are now trying to build with Mexico... it is not going to work. The boundaries do not work any more. You can see this in your own generation. I used to have to go through the customs when I went from Spain to France and now you do not have to do that...

This “lost” characters make me think about the romantic characters. What are the links between Romanticism and Postmodernism?

This is a very difficult question: the differences and similarities between Romanticism and postmodernism. But I can simplify. When a romantic talks about homelessness, he goes like this [*he brings his hands to his head in a pathetic gesture*]. When a post-modern talks about homelessness he says: “So, what? I am homeless, this is good”. There is a tragic, heroic element in Romanticism, but for a post-modern homelessness is not a bad condition. It is a way of life. Postmodernism is not nostalgic, it has no nostalgia for origins, for rules, for something lost.

In one of your latest works about postmodernism you use a very “anti-post-modern” vocabulary: you speak about *truth, realism, spirit*. What is “*beyond postmodernism*”?

I became tired of postmodernism. I worked with it for a long time and I was repeating myself and, more important, the writers are repeating themselves. When you are young and you go and discover postmodernism this is exciting, isn't it? But if you live with postmodernism, post-modern theory and post-modern texts for twenty years, you want to do something else. This is one point. The second point is that postmodernism became too easy for people, it became a formal play, but at a low level, so it became what we call frivolous. You see a post-modern work and think, “OK, it is post-modern, so what?” But the most important thing is that I was not ready to give up completely on the notion of truth. I think truth is very complicated, but I think it is important to have an idea of it, and to make a

distinction between lying and truth. I think that it is important to have a notion of *integrity* or a notion of *trust*. An American philosopher called William James became important for me because he was the father of pragmatism in America. He was not like Kant or Hegel, he did not speak about Truth with capital T, but he thought that it was important for people to trust one another and create truth together, not from outside. So this is the direction that I want to take after postmodernism.

In your autobiography you recall a dream in which God and his Viceroy fetch you “through mountains and valleys, through rivers, caves and chasms”, to a “misty, craggy place by a white sea”, and you add that when you woke up you felt... an immense compassion. There is something strange about this passage. Why compassion? Could you tell me something else about that?

No, when you wake up after a dream you do not always remember the exact things that happen in it. What you remember is the feeling of the dream: you remember that the dream was sad, or happy, or terrifying, but you are not quite sure why. The only thing that stayed with me was this feeling of compassion. If you want to ask about my feeling after intellectualizing it, I would say that it was a feeling of being one with all of creation, of being the same as everything. It is like Buddhism.

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Notes

¹. This interview took place at the University of Navarra on March 26, 2009 in the context of a Conference entitled «Academic Autobiography, Intellectual History and Cultural Memory in the 20th Century» (http://www.unav.es/leng_modernas/acadauto biography).

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Reviews

A CELEBRATION OF FRANCES BURNEY

Lorna J. Clark, ed.

Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2007.

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Eighteenth-century women writers represent a very attractive area of literary studies, and analyses of their work are always interesting even if these writers already belong to the canon. This is the case of *A Celebration*, a compilation of papers presented at a conference in 2002, when one hundred and twenty people gathered at Westminster Abbey to celebrate the installation of Frances Burney's memorial window at Poets' Corner. The event meant Burney's ranking with female authors such as Jane Austen or George Eliot.

As students of eighteenth-century English literature know, Frances Burney (1752-1840) —also known as Fanny Burney or as Mme. d'Arblay— was the daughter of a musicologist and the author of *The History of Music* (1776-89), Dr. Charles Burney. The Burney household was a meeting point for celebrities, such as the lexicographer Samuel Johnson and the actor David Garrick, and Frances also frequented Hester Thrale Piozzi and the Bluestocking circle. She portrayed society better than any writer of her age, and, if she did not see her comedies on stage, it was because her mentors and the theatrical producers feared the reaction of the upper classes. During some years at Windsor as Second Keeper of the Robes to Queen Charlotte, she composed a great part of her dramatic tragedies. Burney's marriage to Alexandre Piochard d'Arblay and her maternity brought some joy to her life until she underwent an appalling mastectomy and finally returned to England after thirteen years in exile in France.

Both nineteenth- and twentieth-century critics have cherished Burney for *Evelina* (1778) and *Cecilia* (1782), but have left *Camilla* (1796) and *The Wanderer* (1814) aside. However, it should not be forgotten that, despite early assumptions, Burney is not just the necessary transition between the Fathers of the Novel and Jane Austen. She added wit and social satire to a tradition of women's writing inherited from Aphra Behn and Elizabeth Haywood, for instance. Burney was very conscious of her creative potential, and she encapsulated the essence of the eighteenth-century writer as Paula LaBeck Stepankowsky highlights in the "Foreword" of *A Celebration*: "Students of history, literature, language, medicine, music and theatre all bump into Frances Burney sooner or later" (xii). Brimley Johnson (1918), Ernest E. Baker (1929) and Virginia Wolf (1942) already vindicated her craft, and, in the 1980s and 1990s, attention was paid to her last two novels. Margaret A. Doody (1988) wrote another biography of Burney and a host of feminist works appeared following Patricia Meyer Spacks (1976) and Sandra M. Gilbert and Susan Gubar (1984). Thus, Julia Epstein (1989), Katherine Rogers (1990) and Joanne Cutting-Gray (1992) recovered Burney as a writer concerned with the female sphere. Nowadays, other dimensions—biographical (based on the edition of Frances's journals), her dramatic works, or analyses of her presence in European literatures—are highlighted by researchers of diverse tendencies under the umbrella of Burney Studies.

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There are many reasons to praise a volume which is directly and expressly related to The Burney Society (TBS) founded in 1994, now an affiliate of ASECS (The American Society of Eighteenth-Century Studies). TBS publishes *The Burney Letter* and *The Burney Journal*—the former also edited by Clark—and its almost one hundred members from all over the world meet twice a year, in the UK and in the US.

Bearing in mind the contributors—renowned eighteenth-century scholars (Peter Sabor, Betty Rizzo and John Wiltshire) together with new researchers who are gaining more and more status in Burney Studies (Marilyn Francus or Justine Crump)—, *A Celebration* is a carefully edited piece of scholarship. The editor of the volume is Dr. Lorna Clark, who has written extensively on the Burneys and is a Research Adjunct Professor at Carleton University (Ottawa). Clark has recently edited *The Romance of Private Life* (1839), a novel by Sarah Harriet Burney, Frances's half-sister and a successful novelist too, thanks to Pickering and Chatto and the Chawton House Library Series. She has experience with eighteenth-century manuscripts and is currently enjoying a three-year grant from the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada to prepare the six-volume edition of *The Court Journals of Frances Burney* for Oxford University Press together with Peter Sabor, Stewart J. Cooke, Geoffrey Sill and Nancy Johnson.

A Celebration is deservedly dedicated to Joyce Hemlow, who began the McGill Burney Project and published the biography *The History of Fanny Burney* (1958) after examining the great mass of Burney's manuscripts. Much later she brought to light the twelve-volume *The Journals and Letters of Fanny Burney (Mme. D'Arblay), 1791-1839* (1972-84) and *A Catalogue of the Burney Family Correspondence* (1971). After a "Preface with Acknowledgements" written by the editor, we find an "Introduction" by Dr. Sabor. There are additional features, such as the bibliography which includes secondary sources and the list of contributors at the end of the volume, as well as nine illustrations related to Burney's epoch.

Given the disparity of approaches, the contributions are arranged in six interrelated categories: "Journals and Letters", "The Family", "The Novels", "Comedy and Tragedy", "Life" and "Context". While there are revisionist and feminist articles, and most contributions are based on Burney's impressions in her journals and letters, aspects such as the representation of multiculturalism in Burney do not appear. As a whole, we are offered a great variety of insightful readings of Burney's texts from different perspectives.

The first three articles focus on Burney's journals and letters. Lars Troide traces a complete history of the McGill University Project since Joyce Hemlow embraced the idea of studying Burney. Leslie Robertson defends an approach to Burney's early journals and juvenilia that sees it as a material less crafted than her mature writings but still necessary for Burney to improve her technique and be more self-confident as a writer. Linda Katrizky takes up a similar argument, stressing the importance of Burney's first writings and her readings of classical and popular literature.

The next part is devoted to the Burneys. Lorna Clark rediscovers Sarah Harriet and insists on the literary similarities and personal relationship with her half sister Frances. Elizabeth Allen Burney's alienation within the Burney household and her influence as stepmother on Burney's personality and work is the main point of Marilyn Frankus's paper. Kevin Jordan presents an issue largely ignored in Burney Studies: how Alexandre d'Arblay's unconventional behaviour provided the model for the hero in *The Wanderer*.

Three articles debate Burney's novels. Justine Crump centres on the responses to novel reading at the time and as reflected in her novels, and Barbara K. Seeber compares the position of animals in Burney's fiction with the entrapment of woman in late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century England. Finally, Helen Cooper's feminist article focuses once more on how both male and female mentors try to manipulate the heroine in Burney's novels.

The part dealing with Burney's comic wit and potential as a dramatic writer is very appealing. *A Busy Day* was successfully performed in Bristol (1993) and the West

End (2000), and the same was the case with *The Woman Hater* in Richmond (2007-2008) (see Kelly [2004] and Pitofski [2005]). Audrey Bilger studies the effects and uses of laughter as an instrument of satire. Similarly, Alexander H. Pitofsky insists on Burney's anti-capitalist critique in the comedy *Love and Fashion* (1798) and observes a change regarding her contemporaries: for Burney, retrenchment could help to secure and appreciate affection and ambition to rise socially (139). Francesca Saggini's approach becomes an innovative attempt to analyse *The Wanderer* as a dramatic piece with different levels of reading.

The fourth part is related to Burney's personal experiences: Hester Davenport centres on Burney's interest in sea-bathing as depicted in several scenes in *Evelina*, *Camilla* and *The Wanderer*. Two articles dealing with Burney's patrons follow: the late Betty Rizzo analyses the intimate friendship between Hester Thrale and Burney, and Freya Johnston focuses on Burney's relation with the influential Samuel Johnson.

In the last section, both Brian McCrea and Victoria Kortes-Papp are concerned with the medical world with a difference: the former deals with the doctors in Burney's opus and in Burney's life, and the later analyses real and fictional illness in novels such as *Evelina* or *Cecilia*. John Wiltshire closes the volume by insisting that Burney "opened for Jane Austen the possibilities of the contemporary female, domestic, comic novel" (222) and that the character of Miss Bates in *Northanger Abbey* (published in 1818) is modelled on Miss Larolles in *Camilla*.

A Celebration constitutes a highly commendable volume written with scholarly rigour, useful for specialists as well as novices in the field alike. Apart from its pluralistic scope, a notable strength is its comprehensive bibliography covering primary and secondary works. Unfortunately, five years elapsed between the conference and the publication of *A Celebration*, and some topics have already been discussed elsewhere in literary journals. Nevertheless, there is no doubt that this edition is a welcome addition to existing criticism and a stimulus for further research on this fascinating woman writer. The great merit of *A Celebration* is its attempt to analyse Burney as a prolific, versatile writer, and it testifies to the vitality and actuality of her *oeuvre*, whose literary merit remains unquestioned.

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THE SECRET LIFE OF ROMANTIC COMEDY

Celestino Deleyto

Manchester and New York: Manchester U.P., 2009.

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Romantic comedy is a genre traditionally neglected by critics: generally considered to be predictable, trivial and lowbrow, it has been systematically devalued and frequently deemed as undeserving of critical analysis. Because of this, the amount of critical work on romantic comedy is considerably smaller in comparison with other, “more serious” film genres. In addition to this, it is also remarkably repetitive, as most monographs limit themselves to offering well-trodden theories and chronologies of the genre, focusing always on “canonical” films. Another common “modality” of romantic comedy literature is the edited compilation of articles on the topic. These volumes are usually interesting as far as individual texts are concerned, but they do not generally offer global insights about the genre. For these reasons, Celestino Deleyto’s *The Secret Life of Romantic Comedy* (2009) is a particularly valuable contribution to the literature on the genre and a much-needed update on dominant theories. Deleyto’s approach is innovative for two reasons: firstly, unlike most publications about romantic comedy, it provides an original, fully-fledged theory about this genre; and secondly, it deals with films never analysed before from the point of view of romantic comedy.

The book is formally divided into four chapters, but it actually consists of two parts: the first quarter is devoted to the exposition of the author’s theory on romantic comedy, while the remainder of the book puts into practice this theory through the textual analysis of a number of films. Both parts are equally interesting, but I

will be mainly commenting on the former, since the general insights Deleyto's theory provides about the genre seems to me the most significant contribution to the field. *The Secret Life of Romantic Comedy* opens with a highly interesting introductory chapter in which the author expounds a more general theory on film genre, taking issue with the dominant notion of genre as "belonging". With the exceptions of Rick Altman (1999) and James Naremore (1998), most film studies scholars have traditionally regarded genres as fixed categories in which individual texts are neatly "piled up". Deleyto contradicts this notion, replacing the idea of "belonging" with that of "participation". His theory is based on chaos theory and Jacques Derrida's critique of generic purity (1980), which argues that "a text cannot belong to no genre, it cannot be without or less a genre. Every text participates in one or several genres, there is no genreless text; there is always a genre and genres, yet such participation never amounts to belonging" (Derrida, qtd in Deleyto 2009: 10). This notion, together with Altman's ideas about generic cartography lead Deleyto to conclude that films do not *belong* to genres but are not fully independent from them either because they are necessarily generic, always participating in them in one way or another (12). Consequently, Deleyto concludes that "[g]eneric analysis should, therefore, concern itself less with issues of belonging and generic purity (or impurity) and more with the actual workings of generic elements in films" (13). Hence the assumption that genre mixing is the rule rather than the exception in film genres and hence it is that an intrinsic part of its evolution is used by the author as a springboard for the formulation of his theory on romantic comedy, developed in the next chapter.

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The main novelty of Deleyto's theory lies in its approach, which departs radically from previous conceptualisations of the genre. This approach basically takes issue with the common assumptions that humour is not an essential part of romantic comedy and that this genre generally upholds a conservative ideology. Deleyto, on the contrary, grounds his theory on the fundamental role played by comedy and on the notion that romantic comedy as a genre does not have a specific ideology.

Regarding the importance of humour, the author points out how comedy has traditionally been divided into two kinds: comedian comedy and romantic comedy. These two "types" have usually been regarded as incompatible by critics, as the former is supposed to be about the generation of laughter, while the latter is generally seen as more concerned with a narrative whose ultimate preoccupation is the happy ending. Deleyto calls into question this division, arguing that humour is an integral part of narrativity: jokes are frequently dependent on the narrative and, more importantly, the plot is crucially affected by the comic moments. Both elements are thus inextricably linked, which reinforces the author's general view of film genres not as fixed categories but as shifting entities.

Deleyto's theory is also based on the idea that romantic comedy does not uphold a specific ideological discourse as a whole. He thus shifts the emphasis from ideology to thematic specialisation, arguing that the genre simply deals with the topics of "love and romance, intimacy and friendship, sexual choice and orientation" (18), without offering a unified ideological positioning on them. In his view, the importance traditionally allotted to the happy ending has not only obscured the relevance of humour and the middle section of the narrative: it has also provided the genre with an apparent ideological homogeneity by providing what critics generally assume to be a conservative conclusion. For Deleyto, on the contrary, romantic comedy is not so much about the happy ending, but about the emotional and sexual vicissitudes the characters undergo during the central section of the narrative. It is in this part that contemporary discourses about love, sex and marriage are articulated, not in the (frequently conventional) conclusion.

Deleyto's view of romantic comedy is thus firmly based upon humour and the articulation of a discourse about love, but there is a third feature that shapes his definition of the genre: the construction of a special space outside history, the space of romantic comedy. The presence of a magic space of transformation which shelters the lovers from the dangers that the social space represents is a paramount requisite of romantic comedy. In this erotic utopia, humour is an integral element, not a by-product of our experience of the genre. Likewise, this space of transformation created by the text is ideology-free. This does not mean that individual films cannot endorse specific ideological discourses —particular instances of the genre may choose to align with certain ideological stands— but the magical space that frames romantic comedy is "an empty formal concept, not an ideologically charged one" (36).

In this way, Deleyto provides a revised definition of the genre, which he describes as the intersection of three elements: the articulation of culturally specific discourses on relationships between the sexes, a space of transformation in which this articulation takes place, and a comic perspective which filters the whole narrative. However, this definition does not imply that all the films featuring these characteristics are romantic comedies, because for him, "films as texts are not romantic comedies but, rather, use the conventions of romantic comedy in specific ways" (46). His theory of romantic comedy is an all-encompassing one which regards genres as fluid categories. It is with this idea in mind that the author proceeds to analyse a group of films never considered as part of the genre's canon before. The three remaining chapters of the book are thus devoted to the textual analysis of five films belonging to different historical moments with the aim of exploring how romantic comedy intersects with conventions from other genres in order to produce meaning.

Chapter Two, "Comic negotiations", analyses *To Be or Not to Be* (1942) and *Kiss me, Stupid* (1964), two films which brought to a close two of the most relevant

cycles of Hollywood romantic comedy: the screwball and the sex comedy, respectively. Both films flopped at the box-office and were harshly treated by critics: in the case of the former, due to its “offensive” mixture of realism and romance in a war story dealing with the very thorny (and contemporaneous) topic of the invasion of Poland, and the latter because of its excessively “progressive” view of sexuality and the relationships between the sexes at a time when the genre was not yet ready to incorporate such social changes. In this chapter, Deleyto explores the combination in these films of the conventions of romantic comedy with those from other comic sub-genres, especially satire. The author’s analysis of these two films reinforces his general view that films do not have to be confined to a specific genre, but that they may “belong” to different categories at the same time by virtue of their specific use of generic conventions.

In this analysis, Deleyto shows how romantic comedy frequently becomes “invisible” to critics when mixed with other genres. However, this “phenomenon” is even more acute when combined with more “serious” genres like the thriller or melodrama. The author explores this generic intersection in Chapter Three, “Romantic comedy on the dark side”, in which *Rear Window* (1954) and *Crimes and Misdemeanors* (1989) are analysed. In the case of the former, Deleyto takes an innovative approach to the film. Rather than concentrate on the action happening outside, he concentrates on what is going on inside the flat from which the protagonist, Jeff (Cary Grant), peeps into his neighbours’. The focus on his girlfriend’s (Grace Kelly) perspective rather than on Jeff’s reveals the important role played by romantic comedy in the film, which has frequently been overlooked by critics, always subordinated to the suspense plot. Woody Allen’s film also shows a remarkable mixture of the thriller and the romantic comedy conventions. Once again, the author goes off the beaten track in the analysis of the movie by leaving aside its “serious” and philosophical dimension in order to focus on the romantic comedy elements. However, unlike Hitchcock’s film, *Crimes and Misdemeanors* exhibits a much gloomier perspective, since the social and the comic space cannot be reconciled, ultimately remaining isolated from one another. The result is a devastating view of love and sex, which makes the film closer to melodrama and existential tragedy.

Chapter Four, “Contemporary romantic comedy and the discourse of independence”, deals with the latest developments in the genre. The chapter’s main thesis is that, in recent years, romantic comedy has incorporated a great diversity of narrative and ideological approaches to intimate matters, which accounts for the genre’s enduring popularity. Deleyto argues that this variety of perspectives may be attributed “to the growing impact of independent cinema on the mainstream and the subsequent all-but-complete absorption of the former by the latter” (150). In order to exemplify this, he analyses *Before Sunset* (2004), a confessional comedy

which mixes realism with romantic comedy and the discourse of independence discussed in the chapter. The author concludes the book with an invitation to a more flexible view of romantic comedy: one which acknowledges the complexity and richness of a genre consistently disregarded by academia.

Considering romantic comedy's unmatched popularity throughout the decades despite critical opprobrium, together with the scarcity of insightful critical works it produces in comparison with more 'respectable' genres, and the repetitive and generally deterministic nature of the existent ones, *The Secret Life of Romantic Comedy* is a remarkable contribution to the body of critical literature about the genre on account of its innovative approach and the fully-fledged theory it proposes. What might follow in the wake of Deleyto's book remains to be seen, but it constitutes a valuable first step towards a more open approach to one of the most enduringly popular genres in film history.

Notes

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**INSIDE OUT: WOMEN NEGOTIATING, SUBVERTING,
APPROPRIATING PUBLIC AND PRIVATE SPACE**

Teresa Gómez Reus and Aránzazu Usandizaga, eds.

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Teresa Gómez Reus and Aránzazu Usandizaga's collection of essays forms part of *Spatial Practices: An Interdisciplinary Series in Cultural History, Geography and Literature*, published by Rodopi and edited by Robert Burden and Stephan Kohl. *Spatial Practices* includes contributions on spatial studies from different disciplines: literature, cultural history, cultural studies, geography and literature, with the aim of showing the ways in which spaces and places are connected to the construction of identity and cultural meanings. The first volume of the collection, *Landscape and Englishness*, edited by Robert Burden and Stephan Kohl in 2006, is a compilation of essays that analyse some of the spaces that have been influential in the construction of Englishness. This first volume was followed in 2007 by Christoph Ehland's *Thinking Northern* (Volume 2) and Elizabeth Jones' *Spaces of Belonging* (Volume 3). The former is a collection of essays that centres on issues of regional identity formation in Northern England and the latter is a book that investigates the interconnections between geography and literature in the study of questions of space, place and identity and applies them to the analysis of French life writing texts.

Gómez Reus and Usandizaga's *Inside Out* is the fourth volume of the collection and continues the thematic trend of the previous book by analysing, in this case, British and American literary representations of women's relation to public and private spaces. Gómez Reus and Usandizaga's collection was followed, in the same

year, by Paul Newland's book *The Cultural Construction of London's East End*, which focuses on the ways in which the East End has been created and re-created in novels, poetry, films and television shows. In 2009 three other books have been released: Catrin Gersdorf's *The Poetics and Politics of the Desert*, a text that studies how the desert has been connected to the construction of images and concepts of America; Rusell West-Pavlov's *Space in Theory*, a theoretical approach to the works of French thinkers Kristeva, Foucault and Deleuze on the concept of space; and, finally, Alexandra Ganser's *Roads of Her Own*, a study of the spatial discourse in American women's road narratives.

In *Inside Out: Women Negotiating, Subverting, Appropriating Public and Private Spaces*, Gómez Reus and Usandizaga have succeeded in bringing together a wide array of scholarly voices and essays on the portrayal of women's engagement with space. Contributors from America, Australia, Great Britain, Spain, Switzerland and Greece approach the concepts of public and private space, and the manners in which this traditional spatial divide has influenced women's social positioning. Through the analysis of literary texts produced by British and American modern and contemporary women writers, the contributors observe the oversimplifications that have often accompanied debates around the relation of women to private and public spaces, and illustrate the complexities and ambiguities that arise in dealing with women's experiences in space.

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The book is composed of sixteen essays expertly divided into six thematic blocks that guide the reader through different spaces where women's presence has conventionally been denied, obliterated or deceptively inscribed. The first two blocks of the collection, entitled respectively "Early Escapes into Public Spaces" and "Women on Display", cover the spaces of the sick-room, the Turkish bath, the East End of London during the later decades of the Victorian period, the Victorian drawing-room, the public depiction of women on trial, and the representation of the female body as a public space during the American Gilded Age. These essays reverse the dichotomy of public/private and inside/outside by showing instances of public activities held in private spaces while at the same time unearthing the experiences of early women (both real and fictional characters) in public spaces. Such experiences paved the way to twentieth century women's increasing access to public spaces. The writers explored in the six essays that form these two first sections include Harriet Martineau, Lady Mary Wortley Montagu, Lady Esther Stanhope, Julia Pardoe, Octavia Hill, Beatrice Webb, Mary Augusta Ward, L.T. Meade, George Eliot, Edith Wharton, Gertrude Atherton and F. Tennyson Jesse. The third block, "Approaching the City", explores the trope of the flâneur in three essays and deconstructs it not only in terms of gender specificities —by providing examples of female flânerie in the writings of Eliza Lynn Linton, Ella Hepworth Dixon, George Paston and Dorothy Richardson—, but also puts an emphasis on

the need to acknowledge race, class, culture and ethnicity as mediating factors. This is highlighted by the analysis of instances of flânerie in colonial women writers such as Janet Frame, Doris Lessing or Jean Rhys. Ranging from theoretical debates and traditional views of the flâneur, as described by Walter Benjamin's *One Way Street and Other Writings* (1979), to feminist analysis of women walking the streets as flâneuses as in Janet Wolff's essay "The Invisible Flâneuse: Women and the Literature of Modernity" (1985), Elizabeth Wilson's "The Invisible Flâneur" (1992), and more recently, Deborah Parson's *Street Walking the Metropolis: Women, the City and Modernity* (2000), the essays of this section problematise the private and public divide by showing cases of women negotiating a sense of space in the public sphere.

The three essays included in the fourth block, "Conquering the Spaces of War", offer insight into women's public presence and participation during World War I. Through the analysis of Edith Wharton's and Vera Brittain's literary testimony of war in *Fighting France* and *Testament of Youth*, respectively, and through the personal war journal of May Sinclair, the essays reveal the spatial opportunities that the disruption of the traditional social order gave women at the time, as well as the scant attention that has been given to women's recording of the war. The fifth block entitled "Transformations in Nature" includes two essays that investigate women's solitary encounters with natural spaces and their literary portrayals in both contemporary and late eighteenth-century American writings through the analysis of the work of Gretchen Legler in the case of the former and Romantic women's literature in the case of the latter. In the last section of the collection, "Negotiating the city", the public space of the city is further explored in the first essay, which deals with the poetic production of Adrienne Rich. In it, this traditional male space is deconstructed and presented as a locus of possibility and inscription for women. Likewise, the second essay of this final section places an emphasis on the need to assess the significance of spaces that have conventionally been devalued such as the suburbs and domestic spaces, by means of an analysis of Eavan Boland's poems on domestic interiors and marginalised Dublin areas.

Inside Out thus celebrates a diversity of approaches to women's relation to public and private space that is strengthened by the fact that, in addition to providing analyses of literary inscriptions of space in different genres and discourses, some essays in the collection also examine the ambivalent relation that women writers have established with the real spaces where they were located. Such is the case of Valerie Felhbaum's study of journalists Ella Hepworth Dixon and George Paston, Teresa Gómez Reus and Peter Lauber's analysis of Edith Wharton's experiences of war, Laurel Foster's essay on May Sinclair's recording of the war, and Stephen Hunts' revision of Mary Robinson's, Charlotte Smith's, Helen Maria Williams' and Mary Wollstonecraft's personal engagement with natural spaces.

Inside Out engages in an interdisciplinary discussion with critical work on space by social theorists and feminist geographers who defend a view of space as a social construct that is inscribed with meanings that are not innocent or arbitrary but the product of specific social constructions. It then moves on to apply those debates to the analysis of literary works. In this connection, the collection makes appropriate use of previous critical work on space such as that of early thinkers like Gaston Bachelard's *The Poetics of Space* (1964) or Michael de Certeau's "Walking the City" (2001) and more recent ones such as Michael Keith and Steve Pile's *Place and the Politics of Identity* (1993), Gillian Rose's *Feminism and Geography* (1993), Alison Blunt and Gillian Rose's *Writing Women and Space* (1994), Mike Crang and Nigel Thrift's *Thinking Space* (2000), Mona Domosh and Joni Seager's *Putting Women in Place* (2001), or Joan Scott and Debra Keates' *Going Public: Feminism and the Shifting Boundaries of the Private Sphere* (2004), among others.

The essays included in *Inside Out* prove inspirational, for they depart from the traditional idea of a division into private and public spheres and the gender segregation that was enforced by such division in order to subvert it and show its inadequacy for accounting for the historical and social circumstances of women. The collection provides examples of how women have found fissures into public space and outside the spaces in which they have socially been placed and confined. The initial remarks of the editors on the need to blur the differences between public and private spheres and the final idea, explored in the concluding remarks by Janet Floyd, of turning "inside out" traditional assumptions connected with the terms *public* and *private*, frame the theoretical interests of the essays that form this collection. *Inside Out* contributes to dismantling traditionally constructed beliefs about women's positioning in space and reveals the connections, interactions and intersections that are established between the public and the private divide, thus disclosing its fluidity. Hence, the collection offers thought-provoking examples of private and public spaces where both public and private activities are embedded. Traditional private spaces such as the ballroom or the bed-sitter room become ambivalent spaces that can be used as public locations, while at the same time the street or natural environments turn into private spaces of mental and physical shelter.

The essays in Gómez Reus and Usandizaga's book apply spatial theory and feminist geography to literary studies to show the connections between them and provide a grounded, innovative analysis of the codification of space by women in literature. In this sense, the collection opens up room for debate that enriches academic thinking on literature as a discourse that reshapes our understanding of space and spaces. Following French thinker Henri Lefebvre's conceptual triad, put forward in his book *The Production of Space* (1991), the essays in this compilation point clearly towards the importance of "conceived space" as a way of producing and

changing “lived space”. *Inside Out* exemplifies how through the symbolic space of literature women may escape the confines in which social conventions have placed them, and, in turn, provide alternative ways of imagining space, and contribute to the transformation of spatially constructed meanings.

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ON THEIR OWN PREMISES: SOUTHERN WOMEN WRITERS AND THE HOMEPLACE

Constante González Groba

Valencia: Biblioteca Javier Coy d'estudis nord-americans, Universitat de València, 2008.

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Mississippi author Kathryn Stockett has successfully described in her debut novel *The Help: A Novel* (2009) the social and political centrality of family, home and community in the history of the American South. This is a topic that still interests and appeals to both writers and readers as proven by the acclaim with which the book has been received. Southern writer Eudora Welty, commenting on Jane Austen's works, had already recognized the interest of home and the homeplace: "Jane Austen was born knowing a great deal—for one thing, that the interesting situations of life can, and notably do, take place at home" (1969: 5). Welty went even further when she pointed out the need to relate issues such as time, place, and society to Austen's condition as a woman: "As all her work testifies, her time, her place, her location in society, are no more matters to be taken in question than the fact that she was a woman" (1969: 4).

What Constante González Groba offers in *On Their Own Premises: Southern Women Writers and the Homeplace* is, precisely, a carefully planned and convincingly developed theoretical study of the centrality of domesticity in relation to female experience in the literature of the American South. González Groba's vindication of the social and political relevance of family, home and community is judiciously presented and analyzed in its duality and ambivalence. Therefore, in the author's own words "Home and the domestic are most often portrayed as both restrictive and liberating, as something that both oppresses and expresses women" (17).

Even though the book is centered on the study of the portrayal of the domestic space by Southern women writers since the 1890s, and the author devotes different chapters to the analysis of works by Kate Chopin, Elizabeth Madox Roberts, Zora Neale Hurston, Lillian Smith, Eudora Welty, Alice Walker, Lee Smith, Jill McCorkle, and Bobbie Ann Mason, Chapter One entitled “Theories and Contexts” is useful and enlightening to any literary critic interested in the meaning and usage in literature in general, and in American literature in particular, of notions such as place, space, house, or home and their relation to women. The same chapter offers a documented analysis of the unfixed, contested and multiple meanings of home.

The chapter begins by locating the social and cultural construction of home as a woman’s place in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries as a product of the new urban industrial order, the separation of public life from the private sphere and the increasing expansion of the suburban middle-classes. In this first chapter, González Groba makes the issue of home in Southern fiction revolve around the axes of gender, class, and race; and he also takes very much into account the evolution of gender relations to home and the household after the Civil War. Finally, he focuses on the contemporary debate that separates those critics who maintain the empowering, liberating and even subversive potential of home and family to be detected in Southern fiction written by women, from those who defend the particular interest of contemporary white and black Southern women writers in vindicating women’s need to break away from the nightmarish trap of their dwellings.

On their Own Premises offers what can be considered a history of Southern literature by women in the twentieth century. Therefore, its author appropriately begins his analysis on the eve of the twentieth century with a study of Kate Chopin’s *The Awakening* published in 1899, at a moment of transition in which the traditional Victorian imposition of separate spheres was beginning to be seriously questioned. The author cautiously analyses the complex relationship of Edna Pontellier to the different spaces that surround her and her preference for liminal and open spaces such as the sea or the streets.

Chapter Three advances in the twentieth century and offers a study of Elizabeth Madox Roberts’s *The Time of Man* (1926). If closeness, routine and convention suffocated the protagonist of *The Awakening*, González Groba provides a counterpoint with his analysis of the relationship between space and Ellen Chesser, the protagonist of Roberts’s novel, a southern female tenant farmer forced to lead an itinerant life. Madox Robert’s novel provides a well-chosen instance of how an ideal of domesticity —and the formality, fixity and repetition spiritually or metaphorically related to it— can occasionally provide women with reassurance, comfort and security.

Chapter Four provides another example of an itinerant female protagonist, Janie, the protagonist of Zora Neale Hurston's *Their Eyes Were Watching God* (1978). Gates and fences, the store and the parlour, are new liminal spaces in which mulatta Janie strives to find an identity and a voice of her own.

The South as a Segregated House is the topic of Chapter Five in which white and black women and the connotations of their respective bodies and sexuality are related to the dichotomy Coloured Town vs. White Town analyzed in Lillian Smith's work.

The ambivalent attitude of Southern women writers towards home and the homeplace, that González Groba theoretically exposed in the first chapter of the book, is proven most pertinent in the chapter that he devotes to the analysis of Eudora Welty's short fiction where he studies the rootlessness of mobility as well as the rootedness of domesticity in stories such as "Death of a Traveling Salesman", "Clytie", "Livvie", and in the novella *The Optimist's Daughter*.

Chapter Seven focuses on quilting and domesticity in the work of Alice Walker, making thus explicit the two main topics studied in *On Their Own Premises* in relation to women: space and art. Notwithstanding its subtitle, place and home are not the only axes around which the book whirls but also the relationship between women and art and the spatial implications of this pair. Therefore, the artistic aspirations of Edna Pontellier in *The Awakening*, Janie's powers of oratory in *Their Eyes Were Watching God*, or Laurel's creativity in *The Optimist's Daughter* are appropriately accounted for in relation to women's need of a place, a room of their own in which to develop their creativity.

Female domestic art is precisely a recurrent topic in Lee Smith's short stories and novels. Chapter Eight proves Smith's interest in portraying women's traditional vindication of the domestication of art as a source of satisfaction and even empowerment as against an elitist conception of art and of the figure of the artist. Recalling Maurice Beebe's seminal distinction between the image of the artist on an Ivory Tower as opposed to the creator as a Sacred Fount (1964), one might conclude that Smith is claiming the homeplace as a Sacred Fount at which women can nourish their artistic appetites.

As the book advances in the twentieth century, we find the protagonists having to come to terms with the transition and flux involved in modernization. Thus, Jill McCorkle's *Tending to Virginia*, studied in Chapter Nine, offers a good instance of how Southern women have had to learn to overcome both the protection and nurturing of the homeplace but also its backwardness and limitations.

Finally, Bobbie Ann Mason is studied in the last chapter of the book as an example of a Southern writer who has clearly described in positive terms the consequences for women of entering what is called the "house of modern America" (276). In Mason's short stories women's identity is no longer necessarily attached to a

physical place in which they are forced to remain but is rather related to the “sense of place” that Irish Poet Seamus Heaney defined as a marriage between a geographical place and a spiritual one (1980). This “sense of place” allows Southern women to freely choose whether to remain at home, to transcend it or to come back whenever they feel that need.

On Their Own Premises, therefore, displays the great distance Southern women have covered from their confinement to the domestic sphere to having the chance to choose a space of their own. And this trajectory has been studied with reference to distinctions of gender, class and race as is pertinent to the literature of the American South. However, we should not forget that in the particular the universal is contained, and much of what we learn in the book can be very well applied to other traditional regions and even countries in which women have undergone similar spatial restrictions, and to the literature which has accounted for them.

I have already pointed out that *On their Own Premises: Southern Women Writers and the Homeplace* is more than a judicious study of the poetics of space in relation to women in Southern literature, that the book is also an analysis of women’s interest in art and a reflection of women’s artistry as dealt with in fiction, and that it may, in fact, be considered a comprehensive history of Southern literature by women. This last point is finally grounded in the representative dimension of the authors and works included and studied: the author has carefully chosen authors who are witnesses of changes in the twentieth century, and well-known representative figures who have contributed to endowing the literature of the American South with a distinctive social and artistic flavour. Beside the nine Southern writers included, many others are mentioned, and this together with the constant allusions to historical and social changes in the history of the South as well as the impressive bibliography consulted, makes the volume a valuable contribution by a well-known specialist in Southern literature.

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CONTEMPORARY DEBATES ON THE SHORT STORY

José R. Ibañez, José Francisco Fernández and Carmen M. Bretones, eds.

Bern: Peter Lang, 2007.

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In spite of the long tradition of short fiction, criticism devoted to the study of the shorter literary forms is much younger, as the short story has been seen as the novel's underdeveloped little sister, and, thus, as a non-serious kind of subgenre. Self-consciousness in the literary theory devoted to the short-story forms increased towards the end of the nineteenth century, and this acknowledgment became crucial to the understanding of the genre. Nevertheless, the early Formalist studies mostly tackled the old length-issue (how many words should a short story have in order to be considered a short story?) or rigid structural requirements (based on precepts such as the classic idea that short stories mostly follow the three unities of the French classic drama, and present one character, one event and one emotion [Matthews 1901: 16]).

Later on, as it became clear that twenty-first century short stories did not fulfil these strict requisites, critics started to focus on varied aspects such as characterisation, ideology, social function, identity, voice, etc. In the last few decades, short-story criticism has abandoned the attempt to define the genre in strict formal or thematic terms, and has concentrated instead on diverse features of the genre. The collection of essays *Contemporary Debates on the Short Story* (2007) displays a plurality of approaches that sometimes take the form of essays that deal with very specific aspects of certain short stories—such as those by Lepaludier or Fly Junquera—, or of more general essays that cover the diversity of the genre and its wide-ranging criticism—thanks to the contrast of perspectives in the collection.

The present collection, edited by José R. Ibañez, José Francisco Fernández, —also editor of the collection entitled *Breves e Intensos. Artículos sobre Relatos Cortos de Autores Británicos Contemporáneos* (2001)—, and Carmen M. Bretones, gathers articles by nine outstanding scholars in the field of short-story criticism, such as Farhat Iftekharuddin and Charles E. May, and offers a plural critical perspective on the genre.

José Jiménez Lozano opens the book with some general reflections on the nature of the short-story form that have populated the pages of short-story criticism from its beginnings. The essay, written both in Spanish and in English, is an excellent introduction to “the slippery nature of the short story”, as Rodríguez Salas has put it (2008: 198), since it emphasises the genre’s mutability; as “su naturaleza propia es la del encuentro radical con lo que ocurre” (Ibañez *et al.* 2007: 17).

The next two chapters are devoted to classic figures in short-story writing, such as Henry James and Edgar Allan Poe. José Antonio Álvarez Amorós’ brilliant chapter applies Deconstructive and Dialogic theories to Henry James’ “The Coxon Fund”. Álvarez Amorós focuses on the “relativization of reference, and [...] extra-textual (fictional) reality” in James’ short story (2007: 49). The selves in James’ stories are not presented as fixed substances but “rather constructed through the interplay and clash of perspectives, contrasts [...] and the multiplicity of cognitive positions” (2007: 56). As Henry James put it in *The Art of Fiction* (1884), the short story is an organic form in which “character and action [...] are inseparable” (in Shaw 1992: 118). Like the theories used for the analysis, James’ narration suggests a self-other relation that reveals itself as an indispensable movement in the creation of meaning, since it is understood as inter-action, which is always a dynamic and provisional process. James’ narrative embodiments of psychic processes could be read as the impressionistic influence “of the romantic trend that began the short story form [...] in the nineteenth century” (May 2002: 51). After this chapter on the short fiction of Henry James, there follows Thomas Leitch’s essay, which focuses on Edgar Allan Poe’s under-valued detective stories, which would have shaped the evolution of the subgenre. Especially remarkable is Leitch’s analysis of the mystery story and the detective story.

Farhat Iftekharuddin has co-edited with Mary Rohrberger and Maurice Lee a series of interviews with short story writers, entitled *Speaking of the Short Story: Interviews with Contemporary Writers* (1997); and is author of the wide-ranging collection *The Postmodern Short Story. Forms and Issues* (2003), together with Joseph Boyden, Mary Rohrberger and Jaie Claudet. His chapter focuses on the shorter fiction of Salman Rushdie, which has not been as widely analysed as Rushdie’s longer fiction, and examines the nine stories in the collection *East, West Stories* (1994). Iftekharuddin illuminates the parallelism of Rushdie’s political stand and the dialogue between West and East in the collection. The short-story form, classically

thought to be a genre detached from society—as stated by O’Connor, who saw a “romantic, individualistic and intransigent” nature in the short story (1985: 21)—, clearly establishes an ethical bond with the world, since, as the author of the essay states, “[t]he content of these stories attain universal relevance” (Ibáñez *et al.* 2007: 152).

In the next chapter, Eibhear Walshe studies the work of Frank O’Connor—author of the essential study *The Lonely Voice* (1962)— in the context of the modern Irish short story. According to Walshe, O’Connor is a marginal figure who “remains [...] remote from the community”, like his short-story characters (O’Connor 1985: 21). This individualism exceeds the written page and engulfs the figure of the Irish writer, whose “body of work can be read as a critique of the new state’s self image” (Ibáñez *et al.* 2007: 109).

Laurent Lepaludier’s essay starts from the association of the short-story form to the visual, an idea that has been fostered by the criticism focused on the genre’s impressionistic inclination, present in classic writers such as Chekhov, whose stories presented a “fugitive impression focused with the swiftness of a snapshot” (May 2002: 51). Lepaludier examines the violently energetic images in Wyndham Lewis’ “Bestre”, where forces collide, amplify and overflow into “excess and exuberance” (Ibáñez *et al.* 2007: 97). His analysis shows that some contemporary short stories cannot be compared to fixed snapshots but to dynamic and even grotesque visual vortexes, and that the genre continues to represent “our own attitude to life” (O’Connor 1985: 13).

In line with this analysis of more contemporary forms, we find Carmen Flys Junquera’s essay, devoted to the analysis of Judith Ortiz Cofer’s *Silent Dancing* (1990), an inter-genre work that combines poetry, fiction and essay. The hybrid text, Junquera argues, allows the portrayal of a relational self, since “[t]he disconnected, fragmented, multidimensional texts are patterned in a diffusion and diversity of relationships” (Ibáñez *et al.* 2007: 169).

Adrienne E. Gavin continues with the visual and examines the graphic short story “come down town” by Carol Swain. The essay uncovers the difficulties of analysing graphic stories due to criticism’s traditional lack of interest in these forms, and it also asserts the richness of texts that combine different codes, and the necessity of an adjusted or renewed theoretical framework that enables serious study of such forms.

By way of conclusion, Charles E. May, author of the influential and exhaustive study on the short story entitled *The Short Story. The Reality of Artifice* (2002), closes the collection with his essay on the modern short story: “The Secret Life in the Modern Short Story”. The short-story genre changed profoundly with Modernism, as the emphasis on identity and character construction further

developed. “The secret life” of an individual became partially revealed in the modern text. As May states, “[t]his discovery of the hidden, secret self is a persistent characteristic of the modern short story as a genre”; and, in my opinion, it continues to be an essential element in many contemporary short stories (2007: 219).

But the truth is that the short-story form is a very heterogeneous genre, which is still evolving and changing, and so is its criticism. The present collection does not aim at providing an unambiguous definition of the genre, or at an organised presentation of the different existing perspectives. The chapters in the collection are quite disparate, but they promote debate, as the title promises, through the variety of essays. Nevertheless, it could be argued that there is a general line, as many articles included in *Contemporary Debates* seem to follow the current critical tendency that studies the short-story genre in a broad human context, that is, placing it within a social, “psychological and philosophical framework”, as proposed by Charles May (Ifterkharudin, Rohrberg and Lee 1997: 182–3).

The collection is without doubt an example of the good health of short-story criticism, and a work of great value for those who love the short-story form.

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PALABRAS EXTREMAS: ESCRITORAS GALLEGAS E IRLANDEAS DE HOY

Manuela Palacios González and Helena González Fernández, eds.

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El nacimiento en el año 2001 de la Asociación Española de Estudios Irlandeses en la Universidad de Burgos no hizo sino reafirmar el creciente interés que dicha área de estudio estaba despertando en nuestro país. Desde que en 1996 Inés Praga Terente publicara *Una Belleza Terrible: La poesía irlandesa contemporánea (1940-1995)* —volumen que incluye, de forma pionera en España, un capítulo sobre la mujer y la poesía en Irlanda (pp. 241–274)— han surgido en el ámbito filológico español rigurosos estudios sobre la presencia, hasta hace poco marginada e infravalorada, de la mujer en la literatura irlandesa. En el año 1997, destaca la publicación de Luz Mar González Arias sobre las revisiones míticas en la poesía escrita por mujeres en la Irlanda contemporánea. A este libro le suceden otros trabajos de investigadores españoles, tanto dentro como fuera de nuestras fronteras, que versan sobre la realidad de la mujer irlandesa y su representación en las distintas manifestaciones culturales (González Arias 2000; Jaime de Pablos 2007; Morales Ladrón 2007; Villar Argáiz 2007, 2008, etc.).¹

De igual modo, las últimas décadas han presenciado la difusión científica de la obra de escritoras gallegas, destacando estudios como *Literatura galega da muller* (Blanco 1991) o *Elas e o paraguas totalizador. Escritoras, xénero e nación* (González Fernández 2005). La proliferación de voces femeninas en el ámbito literario gallego se ha visto respaldada por la Asociación Internacional de Estudios Gallegos, fundada en 1985, y por el reconocimiento institucional de poetas como Luz Pozo Garza y Xohana Torres.

Dados los elementos cohesionadores entre ambas culturas célticas, se echaba en falta un estudio que abordara, bajo un mismo prisma comparativo, la obra de poetas irlandesas y gallegas. La reciente aparición en el mercado editorial del volumen *Palabras extremas: Escritoras gallegas e irlandesas de hoy*, editado por Manuela Palacios González y Helena González Fernández, constituye una brillante contribución no solo al conocimiento de la literatura gallega e irlandesa, sino también al ámbito de los estudios de las mujeres. La novedad del presente trabajo radica en varios aspectos. En primer lugar, las editoras amplían aún más los límites de dichas áreas de estudio, tradicionalmente separadas desde el punto de vista filológico. Por otra parte, el volumen destaca a su vez por ser el primer estudio que, desde un prisma comparativo, acerca la obra de escritoras gallegas e irlandesas al público español.² Tal y como se explica en la Introducción, hay una serie de circunstancias comunes a Galicia e Irlanda que permiten el análisis contrastivo y comparativo de la poesía de escritoras gallegas e irlandesas: la influencia de la religión católica, el debate sobre la identidad nacional, la herencia de la cultura celta y la tradición bárdica (predominantemente de autoría masculina), la presencia predominante del paisaje rural en el discurso poético y la confluencia, a veces conflictiva, de dos lenguas, entre otros factores culturales e históricos.³

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Con un lenguaje conciso y claro, las editoras nos ofrecen en la Introducción un análisis exhaustivo del contexto histórico y socio-cultural que explica la eclosión poética sin precedentes en ambas comunidades a partir de la década de los años ochenta. Como explican en varios momentos del libro, no se pretende homogeneizar las diferencias ideológicas o estéticas que subyacen en la obra de escritoras gallegas e irlandesas (xxviii). En consonancia con ello, se mantiene, a lo largo de todo el volumen, la idiosincrasia de cada autora y las peculiaridades de cada comunidad lingüística. El mérito radica, desde mi punto de vista, en la capacidad de las autoras de mantener dichas especificidades al tiempo que desafían las “estrictas fronteras geográficas” (xxiv) entre Irlanda y Galicia, para así sacar a relucir los nexos de unión entre generaciones y culturas que se han visto enfrentadas a estructuras colonizadoras y opresoras similares. Con un acertadísimo título, que se hace eco de los versos de Ana Romaní sobre el proceso de escritura femenina, las contribuyentes al volumen ahondan de forma sistemática en la revisión que las poetas hacen de estéticas masculinas dominantes a través de “palabras/ raras y extremas” que permiten “deshacer tejiendo” las bases en las que se asienta la tradición poética (Romaní 1996: 268).

La calidad de este trabajo se constata en su originalidad, su rigor crítico y la sistematización del análisis. Uno de los aspectos más originales y novedosos del libro es la combinación de creación y crítica literaria, ámbitos que, con frecuencia, se han mantenido distanciados. El libro está dividido en dos partes: un primer bloque de investigación literaria y un segundo bloque en el que las propias poetas

reflexionan sobre el proceso de creación artística en ensayos y entrevistas inéditas. La primera parte está constituida por seis artículos críticos que exploran la presencia de la naturaleza, el lenguaje y el mito en la poesía de ambas comunidades literarias. El análisis de dichos temas alterna la obra de poetas gallegas y la obra de poetas irlandesas, revelando la presencia de elementos recurrentes en escritoras distanciadas geográfica y lingüísticamente, como Eavan Boland y Chus Pato. Algo muy loable son las traducciones al castellano de los versos en gallego y en inglés, realizadas por las autoras e impresas a pie de página, que mantienen la belleza y sensibilidad poética de los originales y que permiten al lector disfrutar de los poemas en ambas versiones. Esto es, de por sí, bastante novedoso, ya que el público español se veía limitado a la hora de leer la poesía de autoras irlandesas, pues apenas hay traducciones españolas (con notables excepciones, como la reciente publicación de una antología bilingüe de poetas irlandesas contemporáneas, Goodby 2008).

En el primer capítulo de *Palabras extremas*, M^a Xesús Nogueira Pereira analiza el significado del paisaje rural y marítimo en la obra de las escritoras gallegas. En su detallado análisis destaca la reivindicación de un espacio femenino que al hablar del mundo rural realizan autoras como Lupe Gómez u Olga Novo, así como la desconstrucción de la visión idílica del campo que Isolda Santiago lleva a cabo en su obra. Como afirma Nogueira, “la cuestión del paisaje sigue estando [tras la influencia de Rosalía de Castro] muy vinculada a la de la identidad” (11). Tal nexo de unión entre el sujeto lírico y el entorno natural se pone también de manifiesto en la tradición lírica irlandesa, tal y como demuestra Manuela Palacios González en el segundo capítulo del volumen. Partiendo de las teorías del ecofeminismo, Palacios González analiza la desmitificación de la literatura pastoral y la utilización subversiva de la naturaleza y el paisaje urbano en la obra de Eavan Boland y Paula Meehan, poetas anglófonas reconocidas internacionalmente, y en los versos de Nuala Ní Dhomhnaill, posiblemente la autora que escribe en gaélico más celebre hoy. De forma exhaustiva, Palacios González estudia una gran variedad de poemas con vistas a explorar el tratamiento trasgresor de dichas escritoras en lo referente a “las arraigadas nociones que vinculan naturaleza, conocimiento, poder e identidad nacional” (26).

Los dos capítulos siguientes indagan sobre el uso del lenguaje, tanto lingüístico como corporal, en la obra literaria de poetas gallegas e irlandesas. En su capítulo “Encrucijadas identitarias gallegas y el laboratorio del lenguaje”, Helena González Fernández analiza el conflicto lingüístico (gallego-castellano) que subyace en la obra de las poetas gallegas. El lenguaje se visualiza, tal y como explican las editoras en su Introducción, “como un territorio creativo en el que forjar nuevas formas de comunicar y de representar(se)” (xxvi). Es precisamente tal concepción de la lengua como vehículo simbólico para reafirmar la identidad (femenina) gallega lo que se observa en la obra de autoras representativas como Chus Pato, Xela Arias o Emma Couceiro. González Fernández también analiza la necesidad que dichas escritoras

tienen de ubicar su lenguaje en el cuerpo sexuado y en la tradición oral, rompiendo moldes poéticos y subvirtiendo las convenciones del género literario. En el capítulo siguiente, Laura M^a Lojo Rodríguez continúa explorando, desde el punto de vista del lenguaje corporal, la capacidad de subversión de la escritura feminista en Irlanda. Lojo Rodríguez analiza en particular la construcción del sujeto lírico, la sexualidad y el concepto de nación en la obra de Eavan Boland, Paula Meehan, Anne Hartigan y Nuala Ní Dhomhnaill. Las teorías de Julia Kristeva y Hélène Cixous sobre la corporeidad y la ‘escritura femenina’ son empleadas con eficacia para abordar el uso subversivo de la maternidad y del cuerpo en dicho corpus poético.

Los dos últimos capítulos de este primer bloque examinan la presencia predominante del mito en la obra de las escritoras gallegas e irlandesas. M^a Xesús Lama López, en su capítulo “Tejiendo o destejiendo mitos”, utiliza la metáfora del tapiz como símbolo de una creación poética femenina que está moldeada, en gran parte, por toda una herencia procedente de la mitología clásica, la judeo-cristiana y la celta. Autoras como Chus Pato, Luz Pozo o María do Cebreiro, entre las escritoras más jóvenes, utilizan de forma recurrente personajes míticos femeninos, como Venus, Medea, Perséfone o Penélope. El fin de dicha utilización, Lama López explica, es re-escribir, desde una visión actualizadora, valores y creencias legitimadas institucionalmente. El artículo que clausura la primera sección del volumen ofrece una visión panorámica del tratamiento de los mitos grecolatinos en la poesía contemporánea irlandesa de autoría femenina. Luz Mar González Arias explica cómo, en el caso de Irlanda, la recurrencia mítica en la literatura viene marcada no solo por las aspiraciones nacionalistas de finales del siglo XIX y principios del XX, sino también por la creciente necesidad de representar y dramatizar los inminentes debates sobre etnicidad y multiculturalidad que se están produciendo en la Irlanda del siglo XXI. En el caso de la poesía de Eva Bourke, Anne Hartigan, Mary Coll, Katie Donovan y Eavan Boland, las figuras míticas grecolatinas (Penélope, Helena de Troya, Filomela, etc.) actúan como medios para canalizar las reivindicaciones de género, contrarrestando los estereotipos femeninos y abriendo nuevos espacios poéticos y personales.

El segundo bloque del volumen que nos ocupa, “Con voz propia”, combina de forma magistral la crítica literaria con el acto de creación artística, ya que está compuesto por entrevistas y ensayos de poetisas. En su sugerente relato inédito “Nuestro cuerpo es un campo de batalla”, la poeta gallega María do Cebreiro reflexiona sobre el sentido político de la poesía gallega escrita por mujeres, resaltando la importancia de lo corporal en las últimas tres décadas. A continuación, la poeta irlandesa Anne Le Marquand Hartigan nos ofrece un interesantísimo ensayo que alterna eficazmente la poesía y la prosa, y en el que trata las implicaciones, motivaciones y miedos a los que se enfrenta el sujeto femenino en todo proceso de creación literaria (ya sea una novela, un poema o una pieza teatral).

Hartigan reflexiona también sobre la confluencia de las dos lenguas en Irlanda y sobre la influencia que el gaélico ejerce en su obra.

El libro finaliza con las entrevistas realizadas a cuatro figuras femeninas representativas del panorama poético actual en Galicia e Irlanda. En primer lugar, María Xesús Nogueira Pereira entrevista a las poetas Chus Pato y Ana Romaní, de las que se ha hablado en capítulos anteriores. Ambas escritoras comentan aspectos de su propia obra así como cuestiones relacionadas con el feminismo en Galicia y la influencia de Rosalía de Castro en la literatura gallega. En segundo lugar, Luz Mar González Arias plasma sus conversaciones con la poeta, novelista y ensayista Mary O'Donnell y la poeta y dramaturga Celia de Fréine. De forma paralela, ambas escritoras reflexionan sobre la utilización del mito en su obra, la marginación de la mujer en la historia y en la literatura de su país, el uso del lenguaje, y el sentido del “lugar” tan arraigado en el imaginario cultural de Irlanda. Estas entrevistas destacan a su vez por plantear cuestiones sumamente relevantes en el contexto actual del nuevo milenio, ya que O'Donnell y de Fréine analizan las repercusiones que pueden tener sobre la literatura del país el despegue económico del llamado “Tigre Celta” o “Tigre Céltico” y el creciente multiculturalismo de la sociedad irlandesa.

En suma, la estructura del volumen es idónea, ya que permite establecer un diálogo comparativo y contrastivo entre comunidades artísticas que, hasta el momento, no se habían tratado en paralelo. El resultado es un estudio innovador que demuestra las numerosas afinidades que comparten las escritoras gallegas y las irlandesas, no solo en cuanto a las estrategias utilizadas en la construcción del discurso poético, sino también en cuanto a sus motivaciones estéticas e ideológicas. Parece evidente reconocer, por tanto, que futuras incursiones en el ámbito de los Estudios Irlandeses y los Estudios Gallegos tendrán que tomar este volumen como referencia indispensable.

Notes

1. Mención obligada son los volúmenes publicados anualmente (desde 1997 hasta la actualidad) con motivo de los encuentros periódicos de la Asociación Española de Estudios Irlandeses, volúmenes en los que destacan interesantes contribuciones sobre el género y la literatura irlandesa.

2. Posterior a este estudio, Manuela Palacios González coeditó junto a Laura Lojo

Rodríguez una colección de ensayos críticos en lengua inglesa, *Writing Bonds: Irish and Galician Contemporary Women Poets*, que aborda también comparativamente la obra de poetas irlandesas y gallegas (2009). En dicho trabajo se incluyen a su vez ensayos inéditos y entrevistas a las autoras. La publicación de ambos volúmenes ofrece todo un abanico de perspectivas innovadoras con el que examinar la gran riqueza literaria de ambas comunidades.

³. Tales nexos de unión entre Galicia e Irlanda han motivado la creación del "Instituto Universitario de Estudios Irlandeses *Amergin*" de la Universidad de A Coruña, cuyo objetivo es, entre otros, fomentar las

relaciones interculturales e interdisciplinares entre Galicia e Irlanda a través de la divulgación de los puntos de encuentro históricos y culturales.

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V.S. SRINIVASA SASTRI. A STUDY

Mohan Ramanan

New Delhi: Sahitya Akademi, 2007.

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In his analysis on the close connection between identity and violence, Amartya Sen affirms that:

The violent events and atrocities of the last few years have ushered in a period of terrible confusion as well as dreadful conflicts. The politics of global confrontation is frequently seen as a corollary of religious or cultural divisions in the world. Indeed, the world is increasingly seen, if only implicitly, as a federation of religions or of civilizations, thereby ignoring all the other ways in which people see themselves. (2007: xii)

Against this background, Mohan Ramanan's study on an Indian writer and politician with a "cross-bench mind" offers a crucial contribution for those anxious to go beyond confrontational monoculturalisms. These confrontations, more often than not come from a restricted reliance on the construction of people's identity within the limits of a certain community. The links that tie human beings within the frontiers of these groups are, nevertheless, imagined, to use Benedict Anderson's well-known expression (1991: 6-7). In spite of that, current nationalisms are still based on artificial constructs that are frequently created, extended and naturalised according to the interests of those in power. The use of history to make sense of a preferred present-day view of a nation is an effective and extended practice (Hall 1997: 53; Black and MacRaild 2000: 5-6; Guha 2002: 18; White 1990: 10). Hence, the recovery of relevant figures that contradict or

question a restricted and influential dominant view of the past becomes a pivotal task. This is precisely what Ramanan offers in this monograph. He reflects on the question “why should one write a book about an almost forgotten figure?”

I thought that a small tribute to his thought and values would be in order at a time when increasing globalisation and economic liberalization the Indian body politic is suffering from strains and there is a need to reorient our priorities in a rapidly changing world. What is required, I make bold to say, is the balance which Sastri set much store by, because, on the one hand we seem to have uncritically accepted globalisation which has a strong sense of American hegemony in it. On the other hand the centripetal urge makes us xenophobic and narrowly nationalist, with its attendant conceptions of a pure nationhood which aggressively excludes major collectivities in our plural culture from a reasonable stake in nationhood. (2007: 4)

An excellent piece of writing, combining almost poetic passages with a didactic and readable style, Ramanan’s study aims at encapsulating V. S. Srinivasa Sastri’s main ideas in a book addressed to the general reader. Since Sastri seems to be a “forgotten” figure overshadowed by Gandhi and other well-known agents in the independence of India, this book is an extremely useful study that may serve as a point of departure for those who want to research into that fascinating period of the history of India. On the other hand, the book can be particularly relevant not only for experts on Indian culture but also for those interested in learning about different perspectives that can broaden a dialogic conception of identity, a respectful and unrestricted construction of the concept of nationhood, a democratic view on politics and on local and global relationships across the world.

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The volume is also very well structured. Before the actual analysis of Sastri, the book includes a note on documentation with the basic source materials the author has relied on, and a helpful chronology which helps the reader situate the public figure under study within his historical and biographical background. Starting with a global view of Sastri’s life, thoughts and writings, the book is divided into eleven chapters that correspond to the main ideas held by this Indian teacher, writer and politician and a twelfth one that concludes the book with a summary and reflection on the main points put forward in the monograph.

Apart from justifying the need for rescuing Sastri’s life from historical oblivion, in the introduction Ramanan sets the main objectives of the book. Since the figure under study was not only a prominent politician but also a relevant Indian writer in English, this book sets out to make a “small contribution to Indian intellectual and cultural history” (2007: 5). After the introduction, the second chapter, entitled “Srinivasa Sastri: A Renaissance Man”, offers an overview on Sastri’s life and thoughts. In this chapter Ramanan explains that from that moment on he will add the suffix *-ar* to Sastri as a Tamil sign of respectful address. Besides, this suffix is

used in the South of India, which indicates the origins of this important figure, whose place of birth may also have contributed to his erasure from “official” historical books. Ramanan here vindicates the importance of the recuperation of conscious or unconscious historical gaps which may be the result of several factors, not only political, but also ethnic or geographical—not to mention those related to issues of gender, race and sexuality. In this sense, Ramanan’s book becomes an excellent contribution to those studies devoted to rescuing hitherto silenced people and events from the past, and thus providing different perspectives on the construction of past and present historical identities. It is not by chance that the key word frequently used in this work to describe Sastriar is *balance*:

There is no doubt that Sastriar was a deeply religious man but his religion was rational and humane and certainly had no truck on superstition, fundamentalism and fanaticism. A constant fear, though, of the darker side of the human experience, of the unknown, left him sleepless and tormented [...]. This dual nature in him—rational but also spiritual, transcendental but also deeply aware of the phenomenal— allowed him a rare and difficult balance. (2007: 7)

Taking into account Sastriar’s “down-to-earth and practical spirituality”, together with his work on politics, the reader cannot help comparing him with Mohandas Gandhi. According to Ramanan, Sastriar was Gandhi’s “conscience-keeper”. Both of them, however, had serious disagreements regarding India’s home-rule and the path to independence. Unlike Gandhi’s demand for home rule and independence, Sastriar always advocated a Dominion status for the colony. The important question that Ramanan foregrounds, though, is Sastriar’s readiness to dialogue with those who opposed his beliefs. That is why, in spite of all their differences, his relationship with Gandhi and also with Gokhale was very fruitful and a true example of dialogue, tolerance and understanding. Following the dialogic nature of the *Bhagavad Gita*, these relevant figures in Indian history and culture offer the reader a “third way” to escape the increasingly binary and fundamentalist ideologies of our contemporary world (Hardiman 2003: 6-9). This very first chapter is therefore a living proof of Amartya Sen’s thesis of the long dialogical history of India in his well-known book *The Argumentative Indian* (2005). The issue at stake is, therefore, not to agree with or propagate Sastriar’s defence of a moderate consensus, which has often been accused of revealing an old-fashioned conservative position, but rather the method he followed to develop them, his peaceful open-mindedness and the way he “spiritualised politics” in an attempt to provide peace and harmony in his country (Ramanan 2007: 8).

The third chapter, entitled “Life as a Servant of India”, gives an illuminating account of Sastriar’s life and deeds in the process that led to the independence of

India. This section offers a very good summary that exemplifies the main points and competing views that were all crucial issues at the same time in those turbulent years.

Each chapter that follows is devoted to one particular area of Sastriar's beliefs and thoughts. The first topic to be dealt with is the idea of the intellectual. Ramanan analyses Sastriar's reflections as a teacher and headmaster. The author focuses on the importance of education for the development of a country. According to Sastriar, the teacher or intellectual has the vital role of transmitting the culture of a country and thus preserving it through generations. Tradition and culture are crucial in connecting the past, present and future of a nation. Sastriar's ideas on education can be regarded as quite conservative. However, he denounced the role of teachers as mere suppliers of information and advocated interaction, debate and discussion between teacher and student. Accordingly, he highlighted the importance of encouraging pupils to develop a critical capacity that would make them question received truths. Needless to say, this notion of educational strategies is by no means obsolete. As Ramanan concludes: "Sastriar's example has a great significance for us. He represents for us, particularly the English teachers, what the teacher should be, one not only finely sensitive to the nuances of English and to literary expression, but also one concerned with the contexts of literature" (77). Likewise, the next chapter deals with education for citizenship. Following the same line of thought, Sastriar was a true defender of democracy. He particularly valued the importance of discussion and dialogue among political parties and the members of a party for the welfare of the nation. Hence the importance of taking into consideration the opponent's view rather than blindly defending one's position in political matters. Similarly, in the chapter entitled "Values in Life", Ramanan summarises Sastriar's main philosophy with the ancient Sanskrit words: *Asato ma Sadgamaya*, or "Guide me from what it is not to what it is" (89). This notion can be applied to education, politics and personal life. The ideal result would be to achieve balance and moderation, because it is through the endless dialectical process of questioning received "truths" that one acquires knowledge.

Although chapter VII is devoted to Sastriar's writings on citizenship at a time when India was a Dependency of Empire, Ramanan points out the resonance these ideas may have nowadays. Sastriar distinguished between "citizen", who enjoys rights, and "subject", who has duties. Both concepts are closely interrelated in the sense that the exercise of rights should be done without trespassing on someone else's. Ramanan indicates that this idea is not far away from the Indian conception of *Dharma*, thus exemplifying how Sastriar managed to "spiritualise" politics yet in a rational and non-fundamentalist way.

As was said before, one of the highlights of the book is its excellent structure and how the chapters are perfectly linked. After those sections devoted to citizenship,

Ramanan includes a chapter on the woman question in India based on Sastriar's 1928 speech. He vindicated gender equality and demanded more rights for women in terms of economic independence and education. Ramanan explores the opposing views on the issue, Sastriar's conservative and moderate ideas, together with his radical position in some other aspects on this question. It is a very interesting chapter because it shows the reader how the fight for gender equality in India does not come exclusively from the West but has its own history, which may legitimize contemporary feminism while also defending other traditional views of India as a nation, something that many nationalists still claim to be incompatible nowadays.

In the last chapters Ramanan makes an illuminating analysis of the difficult combination of Sastriar's thoughts, at once rational and spiritual, sceptical and mythical, and his "liberal-conservative reading of the *Ramayana*" (138). Since Sastriar devoted his last years to the study of the Indian epic and he left many of his writings in the English language, Ramanan foregrounds the importance of his figure as an ambassador of Indian culture. In the same manner, the following chapter exemplifies the dialogic relation Sastriar had with his contemporaries such as Gokhale and Gandhi, in the pieces he wrote about them. Finally, Ramanan finds it relevant to mention the high quality epistolary literature which Sastriar left, which not only enriches Indian literature in English but can also be regarded as a valuable historical and cultural record.

In the final chapter, entitled "The Man", Ramanan reaches the conclusion that "Sastriar's life was a saga of service to India". The author foregrounds Sastriar's moderate approach to public affairs and politics, and sincerity and endless interest in dialogue in personal relationships, which made of him an important figure to be rescued from the oblivion of history. The selection and interpretation of past events are often used by nationalists for specific confrontational purposes that serve as a means of inclusion and exclusion of certain individuals in certain communities. In Ramanan's book, however, the study of a historical figure is used to illuminate different paths that lead to dialogue and moderation rather than confrontation and fanaticism. This is, in my opinion, the strongest point of the monograph. I agree with the author on the importance of studying Sastriar in the field of English studies, literature, history, culture and post-colonialism. Since the book is addressed to the general reader, I think that it would have been worthwhile adding some footnotes to help the non-specialist reader to understand some issues on Hinduism and specific historical events or people. All and all, I find Mohan Ramanan's book a great piece of writing that makes an excellent contribution to both Indian and English studies. It is, therefore, highly recommendable to all those readers interested in getting to know philosophies that manage to combine apparently opposite ideas and thus do away with the confrontational dualisms which are, sadly enough, increasing in our contemporary world.

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**ORÍGENES DEL FEMINISMO.
TEXTOS DE LOS SIGLOS XVI AL XVIII**

Lidia Taillefer de Haya, ed.

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La Doctora Lidia Taillefer de Haya ha conseguido reunir en este volumen un nutrido grupo de textos originales ingleses escritos por destacadas figuras femeninas precursoras de la lucha por la igualdad. Se trata de textos que deben ocupar un lugar importante en los estudios de género y que en muchas ocasiones no hemos podido conocer de primera mano porque se habían excluido de los cánones literarios e incluso históricos. Con su traducción al castellano, la Dra. Taillefer logra acercarlos, además, tanto a los que no conocen la lengua inglesa como a quienes tienen dificultades para entender la de los siglos XVI al XVIII. Con esta iniciativa, la autora contribuye a la eliminación de uno de los obstáculos que se aprecian en el campo del feminismo: la comprensión del discurso. Tal como señala, por ejemplo, Margaret Walters, el discurso feminista se suele plantear con un grado de dificultad tan alto, que su plena comprensión no está al alcance de la mayoría de las mujeres y llega tan sólo a una minoría de privilegiadas con un alto nivel de conocimientos (2005: 141). Así, para esta traducción, la Dra. Taillefer ha impulsado el trabajo de un equipo de profesoras e investigadoras de los estudios de género que ha hecho posible volcar los fragmentos, cuidadosamente seleccionados por ella misma, de la lengua inglesa a la española. Sin lugar a dudas, esta iniciativa resulta acorde con el contenido mismo del libro, que recoge los trabajos de mujeres interesadas en la mejora de la situación del que tradicionalmente se ha considerado el “sexo débil”, aunque eso fuera en otra época más lejana, en la que aún no eran tan frecuentes este tipo de actividades colectivas

femeninas. Por entonces no existía el feminismo como tal, aclara la propia autora en la Introducción al libro; para ella dicho movimiento fue aproximadamente coetáneo de la Ilustración francesa (2008: 1) y tanto la mayoría de las escritoras como los textos suyos incluidos en esta obra constituyeron el germen del feminismo occidental.¹ Es precisamente esto lo que hace la antología especialmente interesante, ya que la mayoría de las obras que versan sobre la historia del feminismo tienden a centrarse en las etapas más conocidas y de mayor relevancia de dicho movimiento: finales del siglo XIX y principios del XX, algo que se constata, por ejemplo, en el título mismo de obras como la de Margaret Forster, *Significant Sisters: The Grassroots of Active Feminism 1839-1939*.

Teniendo esto en cuenta, la autora nos advierte de que el contenido de algunos de los textos puede resultar chocante o contradictorio, desde un punto de vista feminista moderno, debido, por ejemplo, a sus connotaciones clasistas que se entienden mejor si no se olvida el contexto en que se gestaron y el estado embrionario de la lucha por la igualdad en que se ubican. No obstante, cuando se indaga en algunas de estas declaraciones aparentemente contradictorias, nos surge la duda de si, dado que en su mayoría se encuentran en los prefacios, no podría tratarse de una sabia estrategia mediante la que, fingiendo aceptar la subordinación al sexo masculino y la irrelevancia frente a él, las autoras buscasen ganarse el favor de la sociedad de su época, tan marcada por los valores patriarcales, e incluso el permiso de la misma para escribir. Así puede desprenderse de declaraciones como la de Margaret Lucas Cavendish: “No se puede esperar que yo escriba con tanta sabiduría e ingenio como los hombres, al ser del sexo femenino” (Taillefer 2008: 46); o de esta otra de corte similar, que la poeta Anne Bradstreet, incluyó en el Prólogo a su obra de 1650: “Men have precedence and still Excel, / It is but vain unjustly to wage war; Men can do best, and Women know it well. / Preeminence in all and each is yours; Yet grant some small acknowledgement of ours” [“Los hombres tienen precedencia y también excelencia: es inútil librar una injusta batalla; los hombres pueden hacerlo mejor, y las mujeres lo sabemos bien. La preeminencia en todo es vuestra; pero concedednos al menos algún pequeño reconocimiento”] (2006: 397); más evidente quizá sea el uso de esta estrategia en estas frases de Bathsua Reynolds Makin, refiriéndose al tema de la educación: “No permitáis que vuestra condición de damas se vea ofendida, pues yo no alego (como algunos han hecho con ingenio) la preeminencia femenina. Si se pide demasiado, te pueden negar todo” (Taillefer 2008: 63).

Para delimitar de forma clara el objetivo de su estudio, la Dra. Taillefer ha querido centrarse en un ámbito concreto de las raíces del feminismo: el Reino Unido, donde —reconoce la autora— el papel de la mujer se vio favorecido por los efectos positivos del Humanismo, efectos que la Reforma protestante también supo aprovechar para contar con su colaboración, por ejemplo, en las traducciones de textos religiosos al inglés. Esto les permitió a las mujeres de aquella época desempeñar nuevas tareas y,

de resultas, adentrarse, cada vez más profesionalmente, en terrenos relacionados con la cultura; no obstante, también tuvieron que enfrentarse, a prejuicios machistas aún vigentes, si bien en menor medida. Como constata la Dra. Taillefer, el grado de aceptación de este tipo de actividades dependía en gran medida de las clases sociales a las que las autoras pertenecían, siendo mejor visto entre las mujeres de clase social alta, como fue el caso de la Duquesa de Newcastle. Otras como Mary Hays o Mary Wollstonecraft —también incluidas en el libro— tuvieron que esperar hasta el siglo XVIII para dedicarse a la escritura de forma profesional. En este sentido, podemos comprobar cómo la situación de las escritoras inglesas era muy similar a la de las que habitaban en los Estados Unidos de América. Así, por ejemplo, Anne Bradstreet (1612-1672), que emigró allí desde Inglaterra, tuvo que recurrir a su cuñado, John Woodbridge, para publicar, en su país de origen, su obra —en la que defendía el papel de la mujer de forma muy avanzada para su época. Además, Woodbridge tuvo que defender el honor de Bradstreet en la edición de su obra, aclarando que la sacaba a la luz sin el permiso de la autora, a quien la actividad poética no había distraído de sus responsabilidades como ama de casa y esposa diligente, puesto que la había llevado a cabo únicamente durante su tiempo libre: “These poems are the fruit but of some few hours, curtailed from her sleep and other refreshments” [“Estos poemas son el fruto de sólo unas cuantas horas, restadas a su sueño y a otros descansos”] (Cowell 2006: 395).

Orígenes del feminismo confirma que, a pesar de esas dificultades, hubo mujeres luchadoras que no se amilanaron ante el ambiente adverso y consiguieron hacer públicas sus opiniones e iniciativas en diversos campos. Concretamente, el libro aborda la realidad de dieciséis mujeres: algunas se consagraron en exclusiva a la defensa de los derechos de las mujeres (Rachel Speght, Mary Hays y Mary Ann Radcliffe); otras se dedicaron a la traducción, tarea que sí se consideraba por entonces propia de las mujeres (Margaret Tyrrell Tyler, Elizabeth Carter y Mary Pierrepont Wortley Montagu; a la lingüística (Batshua Reynolds Makin); a la educación (Mary Astell y Maria Edgeworth); a la religión (Priscilla Cotton, Mary Cole y Margaret Askew Fell Fox); a la historia (Catherine Sawbridge Macaulay Graham); a la política (Mary Wollstonecraft); a la filosofía (Margaret Lucas Cavendish), y al arte (Mary Darby Robinson). Como señala la autora del libro, este número se podría haber visto incrementado fácilmente, si también se hubieran tenido en cuenta los muchos textos relacionados con la condición femenina que, en el pasado, aparecían firmados con pseudónimos y aquellos de autoría anónima o no confirmada, dado que esos casos eran muy frecuentes debido a las consecuencias negativas y al rechazo que, como antes se señalaba, podía provocar este tipo de trabajos.

La Dra. Taillefer aclara que la ausencia de hombres en su libro se debe al hecho de que son las mujeres las que tradicionalmente han escrito textos con la intención de mejorar su propia situación, y que no empezó a haber hombres que lo hicieran en

Inglaterra hasta el siglo XIX, es decir, un siglo después de los considerados por este trabajo. Resultaría interesante, pues, para futuros/as investigadores/as, retomar este estudio al objeto de ampliarlo, a partir de la fecha en que se detiene, e incluir no sólo a más escritoras, sino también los escritos de autores igualmente preocupados por la mejora de la situación de las mujeres de su tiempo, como es el caso de John Stuart Mill (1806-1873), autor de *El sometimiento de la mujer* (1869), obra que incluye declaraciones como ésta: “El principio regulador de las actuales relaciones entre los dos sexos —la subordinación legal del uno al otro— es intrínsecamente erróneo y ahora constituye uno de los obstáculos más importantes para el progreso humano; y debiera ser sustituido por un principio de perfecta igualdad que no admitiera poder ni privilegio para unos ni incapacidad para otros” (en Ocaña 2003: 1).

Además de la útil Introducción de la Dra. Taillefer, *Orígenes del feminismo* contiene una Cronología que ayuda a quien lee a situar a las autoras y a sus escritos en el contexto correspondiente, no sólo temporal e histórico, sino también cultural. De esta forma, y con una exposición clara, se relacionan los trabajos recogidos en el libro y las vidas de sus autoras con importantes acontecimientos, tales como los distintos reinados que se sucedieron en los siglos que abarca el volumen o la Primera Guerra Civil Inglesa, sobre la que escribió Catherine Sawbridge Macaulay Graham, una de las autoras mencionadas en la obra. Además, en este apartado la Dra. Taillefer no se limita al ámbito británico, sino que añade los eventos más relevantes, acaecidos en otros lugares de Europa, que guardan una estrecha relación con el contenido del libro. Entre ellos, hay que destacar la Revolución Francesa, que facilitó el surgimiento de escritos en los que tenían cabida distintas quejas femeninas. También en Francia hubo otras escritoras clave en la lucha por la mejora de la situación de la mujer, escritoras como Olympe de Gouges, que ilustra, además, lo peligroso que podía resultar en el pasado defender los derechos femeninos abiertamente: al final fue guillotinado. La consideración del ejemplo de la condesa romana Rosa Califronia corrobora el hecho de que los textos en que después se centrará el libro, aun perteneciendo al ámbito del Reino Unido, respondían a una inquietud femenina que sobrepasaba sus fronteras, formando parte de un fenómeno global que abarcaba incluso distintos continentes, como mencionamos anteriormente al referirnos a los Estados Unidos.

La cuidada estructura del libro incluye una Biografía de cada una de las escritoras, que precede a los textos traducidos, y que arroja luz sobre su contenido y resalta su valía y originalidad. A pesar de las lógicas diferencias existentes entre las escritoras, conviene conocer detalles sobre sus interesantes vidas, para descubrir las características que compartieron entonces y que les siguen siendo comunes a las escritoras contemporáneas que aún encuentran ciertos obstáculos para realizar su trabajo, según sugieren las investigadoras Weisser y Fleischner (1994: 2). Como ellas mismas reconocen, estas ideas provienen de la propia Luce Irigaray, que aseveraba: “Aunque existan grandes diferencias entre las mujeres, todas ellas sufren, incluso sin

darse cuenta, la misma explotación en sus carnes, la misma negación de sus deseos” (1985: 164); desde su punto de vista, es precisamente el reconocimiento de que les es común lo que dota de significado político a esa experiencia y la convierte así en feminismo. En esta línea de opinión parece situarse la Dra. Taillefer al dar a conocer las vidas de las escritoras mencionadas en *Orígenes del feminismo*; vidas marcadas por datos que normalmente no suelen asociarse a las mujeres de épocas tan distantes como la década de 1560, cuando Margaret Tyrrell Tyler ya se atrevía a traducir, sin modificaciones, romances, un género que, considerado frívolo y amoral, solía adaptarse a las convenciones aceptadas por la “decencia sexual” de la época; Tyrrell Tyler también se atrevía a defender la labor literaria de las mujeres, y a tratar de librarlas de las limitaciones de los temas religiosos a las que se les solía ligar exclusivamente. Pocos años después, Rachel Speght “osó” contestar, firmando con su nombre verdadero, al panfleto misógino de Joseph Swetnam que, en cambio, usó un pseudónimo, el de ‘Thomas Telthroth’. En su escrito, Speght nos sorprende con su valentía al emplear, por ejemplo, dedicatorias como: “Para el mayor de los idiotas que haya plasmado su pluma en papel, cínico ‘acosador de mujeres’ y misógino metamorfoseado, Joseph Swetnam” (Taillefer 2008: 27); y además nos asombra con una nueva interpretación de la historia del Génesis. En ella destacaba cómo la mujer fue creada para ser la igual del hombre y no su súbdita —idea también defendida en el texto de Margaret Askew Fell Fox—, con aclaraciones como: “Una vez concluida la creación, Dios mismo dio su aprobación al decir que ‘todo estaba muy bien’ (Gen. 31). ‘Todo’, incluida la mujer, que es la criatura más excelente bajo el reino de los cielos, excepto para el hombre” (Taillefer 2008: 29). Priscilla Cotton y Mary Cole, de cuyas vidas se conservan pocos detalles, nos maravillan en su texto conjunto con una astuta defensa del papel de las mujeres como predicadoras cuando aún no les estaba permitido serlo —tema al que también alude el texto de Askew. No menos impactantes resultan las sentencias de Margaret Lucas Cavendish, Duquesa de Newcastle, que ya en 1662 se dirigía a las de su mismo sexo con estas palabras: “Ojalá consiguiera persuadirlas para organizar regularmente asambleas [...] de modo que podamos aconsejarnos con prudencia las unas a las otras para ser tan libres, felices y famosas como los hombres, no como ahora, que vivimos y morimos como si fuéramos animales en lugar de seres humanos” (Taillefer 2008: 46).

El estudio de Bathsua Reynolds Makin incluido en *Orígenes del feminismo* resulta fundamental para cualquier analista de los inicios de la igualdad en la educación, tanto por el contenido teórico como por el ejemplo vital de la autora. En el aspecto teórico, Reynolds Makin defendió la formación académica de las mujeres —al igual que lo hicieron Lady Mary Pierrepont Wortley Montagu, Mary Astell, Catherine Sawbridge Macaulay Graham, Mary Wollstonecraft, Mary Hays o Mary Darby Robinson, entre otras; en el aspecto práctico, llegó a dominar hasta siete lenguas —Elizabeth Carter la superó al conocer ocho—,

fue profesora de idiomas y tutora de la princesa Isabel, hija de Carlos I, y además, madre de nueve hijos.

Con su obra, la Dra. Taillefer nos lleva en ocasiones a descubrir otra faceta distinta de la más conocida de las autoras que menciona. Estos son los casos, por ejemplo, de Mary Ann Radcliffe, especialmente famosa por su contribución novelística al género gótico, gracias a obras como *A Sicilian Romance* (1790), *The Romance of the Forest* (1791), *The Mysteries of Udolpho* (1794) y *The Italian* (1796), pero cuyo interés por la mejora de la situación de las mujeres, especialmente las más desfavorecidas de la sociedad—, se conoce bastante menos. Algo parecido ocurre en el caso de Maria Edgeworth: Tal como demuestra *Orígenes del feminismo*, tuvo una gran influencia en el campo de la educación —tema sobre el que publicó muchos ensayos innovadores—, pero sólo se le suele asociar con obras de ficción como *Castle Rackrent* (1800), *Belinda* (1801), *Leonora* (1806), *Tales of Fashionable Life* (1809), *Ennui* (1809), *Patronage* (1814), *Harrington* (1817), *Ormond* (1817), o *Helen* (1834). Otras escritoras nos sorprenden, además, por haberse adentrado en terrenos poco comunes cuyo tránsito podía comportar, en aquel tiempo, consecuencias poco gratas para la reputación de una mujer; era el caso del teatro (Walters 2005: 23), en el que destacó Mary Darby Robinson —‘Perdita’. Ella, sin embargo, logró enamorar al mismo Jorge IV, entablar amistad con Maria Antonieta y conseguir el reconocimiento de ilustres escritores como Samuel Taylor Coleridge. Tan interesante fue su vida, que necesitó cuatro volúmenes para plasmarla en una biografía titulada *Memoirs of the Late Mrs. Robinson, Written by Herself, With Some Posthumous Pieces*.

Tampoco faltan en el libro de la Dra. Taillefer autoras sobradamente conocidas en el ámbito del feminismo, como Mary Wollstonecraft, de la que se incluye la “Introducción” de su obra más destacada, *Vindicación de los derechos de la mujer*. De este modo, podemos comprobar la herencia que las autoras de los orígenes del feminismo o protofeminismo dejaron a las siguientes generaciones para servirles de inspiración y guía: Entre las sabias sentencias del citado fragmento de Wollstonecraft, encontramos ésta, muy similar a la antes citada de Rachel Speght, en la que se señala la torpeza del hombre con respecto a los genuinos planes igualitarios de Dios: “La naturaleza o, para hablar con estricta propiedad, Dios, ha hecho todas las cosas bien; pero el hombre ha inventado muchas cosas para echar a perder su trabajo” (Taillefer 2008: 191). Conforme *Orígenes del feminismo* se va adentrando en la última etapa temporal, las mujeres que estudia se presentan más valientes en la defensa del maltrecho sexo femenino, llegando incluso a considerarlo, como hizo Mary Hays —gran amiga de Wollstonecraft—, no solo igual al masculino, sino incluso superior a éste, por su sensibilidad.²

A cada una de las biografías de estas influyentes escritoras le sigue uno de sus textos más destacados en el tema de la lucha por la igualdad femenina. Estos, al igual que

las biografías, se encuentran ordenados cronológicamente, lo que nos permite también ir viendo la evolución de las distintas propuestas y teorías de aquellas pioneras. A tal fin contribuye también el hecho de que, aunque no siempre aparece el texto completo, la compiladora ha procurado que el capítulo o extracto seleccionado sea lo suficientemente extenso como para que no se pierda la idea principal del mismo. Que estos textos se publicaran prácticamente sólo a partir del siglo XVII, a pesar de que algunos de ellos se habían ya imprimido ya incluso en el XV, demuestra —como señala la Dra. Taillefer (2008: 10)— cuánto tiempo se tardó en aceptar que las obras escritas por mujeres salieran a la luz en vez de limitarse al ámbito privado. Mucho más tuvieron que esperar las escritoras para expresarse en géneros considerados pertenecientes a la “gran literatura”, lo que explica por qué la mayoría de los textos incluidos en *Orígenes del feminismo* se enmarcan dentro de la epístola o el ensayo. Es importante reseñar la importante labor de recopilación y selección llevada a cabo por la autora del libro, ya que la mayoría de dichos escritos no se encuentran en las antologías.

Por último, debemos señalar la útil Bibliografía con que se cierra el libro, en la que se distinguen las fuentes primarias, referentes a los textos traducidos, y las secundarias, que pueden resultar de innegable utilidad a quienes quieran seguir indagando en este apasionante campo de investigación relacionado con las raíces del feminismo. Sin duda, el conocimiento del pasado nos ayuda a entender mejor el presente y a procurar un futuro mejor. En relación a esta última idea, terminamos con las palabras de Mary Darby Robinson, una de las escritoras en *Orígenes del feminismo*, y aplicamos al libro aquí reseñado los mismos deseos que ella refiere a su carta: “Si esta carta sirve para influir en las mentes de aquellos a quienes me dirijo, así como para beneficiar a la próxima generación, mis fines y objetivos se habrán cumplido. [...] Para el intelectual profundo y para la crítica libre de prejuicio, esta carta se leerá con candor; asimismo, espero que su propósito se considere beneficioso para la sociedad” (Taillefer 2008: 247).

Notes

1. Otras investigadoras, como Walters (2005: 1) y Forster (1986: 327), sitúan la aparición de término ‘feminismo’ en una etapa más tardía, ya a finales del siglo XIX, en la década de 1890. No obstante, no sería del todo incorrecto considerar que las escritoras incluidas en este volumen utilizan un enfoque ‘feminista’, si tenemos en cuenta la amplia definición del concepto que nos ofrecen

especialistas como Gayle Austin: “A feminist approach to anything means paying attention to women. [...] It means taking nothing for granted because the things we take for granted are usually those that were constructed from the most powerful point of view in the culture and that is not the point of view of women” [“Aplicarle a algo un enfoque feminista quiere decir prestarles atención a las mujeres. Quiere

decir no dar nada por supuesto porque las cosas que se dan por supuestas son normalmente aquellas que se forjaron desde el punto de vista del más poderoso en la correspondiente cultura, y ese no es el punto de vista de las mujeres”] (1990: 2).

². No obstante, hay que reconocer que, incluso en épocas anteriores, hubo mujeres que se atrevieron a defender su superioridad por encima de la del hombre. Éste fue el caso, por ejemplo, de Jane Anger, que ya lo hizo a finales del siglo XVI, cuando explicaba que Eva era más pura que Adán, al haber sido hecho de sucia arcilla mientras ella

provenía de su carne, lo que “doth evidently show how far we women are more excellent than men” [“prueba de forma evidente cuánto más excelentes somos las mujeres que los hombres”]. Añadía, además, refiriéndose a sus vidas diarias, que el hombre no podía subsistir sin la existencia de la mujer (Walters 2005:9). El título de su única obra conocida es: *Jane Anger: Her Protection for Women to defend them against the scandalous reports of a late surfeiting Lover, and all other like Venerians that complain so to be overjoyed with women’s kindness, Written by Jane Anger, Gentlewoman at London, Printed by Richard Lone, and Thomas Orwin, 1589.*

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Abstracts

**THE POLITICIZATION OF THE PULPIT
IN SEVENTEENTH-CENTURY ENGLAND:
THANKSGIVING SERMONS AFTER THE DUKE
OF MONMOUTH'S REBELLION**

Leticia Álvarez Recio

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In the early 1530s, the sermon was a basic tool to teach the new Anglican doctrine to people of all social ranks. Later in the century, it would be further employed by moderate and radical ministers to debate ecclesiastical, domestic and foreign policies. This trend continued well into the seventeenth century, when sermons increasingly influenced English public opinion and encouraged actions for and against the *status quo*.

The present paper studies how this genre participated in contemporary political controversies. The date selected is 26 July 1685, the day officially appointed for a public thanksgiving for James II's victory over the Duke of Monmouth's insurrection. The sermons considered support the doctrine of the divine right of kings endorsed by James, and attempt to discredit each of the arguments for civil disobedience employed by the rebels. Nevertheless, some degree of anxiety permeates these texts, since they attempt to justify the need to obey a legitimate monarch, who, despite being the head of the Anglican Church, openly practised the Catholic faith.

Key words: Church of England, divine right, monarchy, rebellion, tyranny, moral reformation

Desde la década de 1530 el sermón había sido considerado una herramienta básica para enseñar los principios de la nueva fe anglicana a los distintos grupos sociales. A lo largo

del siglo XVI, numerosos ministros protestantes, tanto moderados como radicales, lo utilizarían también para debatir cuestiones relacionadas con la política eclesiástica, el gobierno del país y su relación con otras potencias extranjeras. Esta tendencia continuó en el siglo XVII, cuando los sermones adquirieron una influencia creciente en la opinión pública inglesa al promover actos en contra y a favor del *status quo*.

Este artículo estudia el modo en que el género homilético participaba en los debates y controversias políticas del momento. Para ello, se ha seleccionado la fecha del 26 de julio de 1685, el día en el que se celebraron actos oficiales de acción de gracias por la victoria de Jacobo II sobre la rebelión del Duque de Monmouth. Los sermones que se analizan defienden la doctrina del derecho divino de los reyes a la que apelaba Jacobo para desacreditar los distintos argumentos empleados por los rebeldes para justificar sus actos de desobediencia civil. De cualquier modo, existe un cierto grado de inquietud en todos estos textos, ya que intentan justificar la necesidad de obedecer a un monarca legítimo que, aunque fuera cabeza de la Iglesia Anglicana, practicaba de manera pública su fe católica.

Palabras clave: Iglesia de Inglaterra, monarquía de derecho divino, rebelión, tiranía, reforma moral

**COPERNICAN REVOLUTIONS
MARY JO SALTER'S INTERTEXTUAL INTERPRETATION OF
PARADISE LOST IN FALLING BODIES**

Mariacristina Natalia Bertoli

Intertextuality has often been viewed as the mere rewriting of the plot of a work of literature, thus downplaying the role of structures in creating nets of meaning which cross the boundaries of a single text. By contrast, the present study deals with the meanings attached to traditional structures such as the beginning in medias res (or tragische Analysis). In particular, this article presents the way the manipulation of this device inherited from ancient epics allowed Milton to reverse its original moral implications in *Paradise Lost*, thus bringing about what John M. Steadman has defined a "Copernican Revolution" in literature.

In addition, this study analyzes the reuse of the Miltonic model in *Falling Bodies*, a play written by the contemporary American poet Mary Jo Salter. Here tragische Analysis is used for bringing about a new Copernican Revolution in which the focus has been shifted from morals to metaliterature. In effect, this structure enables Salter to investigate the very mechanisms of intertextuality and to show that literary recreation never turns upside down the system it belongs to; rather, it enriches the tradition it has stemmed from in a ceaseless process of rewriting and manipulation.

Key Words: Salter, Milton, Intertextuality, Tragische Analysis, Dread.

La intertextualidad ha sido considerada a menudo como simple reescritura del argumento de una obra literaria. De esta manera, el papel de las estructuras en la creación de redes de significado que cruzan el límite de una obra en particular ha sido minimizado. En cambio, el presente estudio se plantea como una investigación de los significados con los que se revisten unas estructuras tradicionales como el principio *in medias res* (o *tragische Analysis*). En particular, este artículo presenta la manera en que la manipulación de este mecanismo literario —heredado de la poesía épica antigua— permitió a Milton en *Paradise Lost* cambiar radicalmente las connotaciones morales que originariamente habían caracterizado este género, ocasionando de esta manera lo que John M. Steadman definió como una “Revolución copernicana” en la literatura.

Además, este estudio analiza la reutilización del modelo miltoniano en *Falling Bodies*, pieza teatral de la poetisa americana contemporánea Mary Jo Salter. Aquí, la *tragische Analysis* se utiliza para ocasionar una nueva revolución copernicana en la cual el foco de atención se ha trasladado de la moralidad a la literatura. Esta estructura permite a Salter investigar el mismo mecanismo de la intertextualidad y también demostrar que la recreación literaria nunca desmonta el sistema al que pertenece; al contrario, la recreación literaria enriquece la tradición de la que proviene en un incesante proceso de reescritura y manipulación.

Palabras clave: Salter, Milton, Intertextualidad, *tragische Analysis*, Terror.

J.M. COETZEE'S *DIARY OF A BAD YEAR*: ETHICAL AND NOVELISTIC AWARENESS

Dolors Collellmir Morales

In *Diary of a Bad Year*, Coetzee revisits many subjects that had been recurrent in his previous work. Once more, Coetzee is concerned with textual issues and the ethical responsibilities of the writer. From his independent position, he questions and explores the nature of the novel and the craft of the novelist. This article is concerned with how Coetzee in *Diary of a Bad Year* establishes a correspondence between the macrocosm and the microcosm. Within the frame of the macrocosm, Coetzee, from a critical position, tries to give a response to what is wrong with today's world. Within the microcosm, the author explores the core and drama of humanness, through the questions, feelings and needs of a seventy-two-year-old writer who is especially aware of his decline and growing limitations. This article studies how three running texts, visually separated on the page, in the last part of the narrative, converge and achieve novelistic unity in the denouement. It proposes that with his literary experimentation Coetzee broadens the scope of the Novel.

Key words: Coetzee, diary, ethics, liminality, ageing

En *Diario de un mal año*, Coetzee retoma muchos de los temas recurrentes en su obra anterior. Una vez más Coetzee se ocupa de la autonomía de la novela y de la responsabilidad ética del escritor. Desde su posición independiente, cuestiona y explora la naturaleza de la novela y el oficio del novelista. Este artículo trata de dilucidar la manera en que Coetzee, en *Diario de un mal año*, establece correspondencias entre el macro y el microcosmos. En el ámbito global y desde una postura crítica, Coetzee señala errores del mundo de hoy. Dentro del microcosmos, el autor explora la parte más profunda y dramática de la naturaleza humana, a través de las preguntas, los sentimientos y las necesidades del protagonista, un escritor de setenta y dos años que va descubriendo sus crecientes limitaciones. Este artículo estudia la manera en que los tres textos que componen la obra, visualmente separados en la página, convergen hacia el final de la misma y alcanzan unidad en el desenlace de la historia. Además, propone que con su experimentación literaria Coetzee amplía el alcance de la Novela.

Palabras clave: Coetzee, literatura, diario, ética, liminalidad, envejecimiento.

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**TREACHEROUS 'SARACENS' AND INTEGRATED MUSLIMS:
THE ISLAMIC OUTLAW IN ROBIN HOOD'S BAND AND THE
RE-IMAGINING OF ENGLISH IDENTITY, 1800 TO THE PRESENT**

Eric Martone

Robin Hood, as a popular fictional narrative of history, has played a significant role in the development of modern social cohesion and what it means to be English. A Muslim character who becomes a member of Robin's band is one of the most overlooked additions to the evolving Robin Hood legend since 1800 in regard to its impact on shaping English identity. In this article, I propose two interpretive arguments that are unique to studies on Robin Hood. First, the different Muslim characters, despite their diverse names, constitute variations of the same character, which has become a fixture in the legend. Second, we can divide this character's variations into two general types: the treacherous "Saracen" and the integrated Muslim. The first type is characteristic of 19th-century England as part of the British Empire, while the second type is characteristic of postwar (and post-Empire) England. Both types contributed to the re-imagining of English identity in different ways. This article seeks to trace how the transformation of this character from treacherous "Saracen" to integrated Muslim within the context of the development of Robin Hood reflects changing conceptions of what it means to be English.

Key words: Robin Hood, English identity, Muslims, Islam, Imperialism

Robin Hood, como narrativa popular ficticia de la historia, ha desempeñado un papel importante en el desarrollo de la cohesión social moderna y de lo que significa ser inglés. La inclusión desde 1800 de un personaje musulmán en la banda de Robin Hood, ignorada por la crítica, constituye un elemento importante a la hora de valorar la evolución de la identidad inglesa. En este artículo, propongo dos argumentos interpretativos únicos en el estudio de Robin Hood. En primer lugar, los diferentes personajes musulmanes, a pesar de sus nombres diversos, constituyen variaciones del mismo personaje, convertido en un accesorio fijo en la leyenda. En segundo lugar, podemos dividir las variaciones de este personaje en dos tipos generales: el “sarraceno” traicionero y el musulmán integrado. El primer tipo es característico de la Inglaterra del siglo diecinueve y de su imperio, mientras que el segundo tipo es característico de la Inglaterra de la posguerra (y posimperial). Ambos tipos del personaje musulmán han contribuido a la re-imaginación de la identidad inglesa, aunque de formas diferentes. Este artículo pretende analizar cómo la transformación de este personaje de “sarraceno” traicionero a musulmán integrado, en el contexto de la evolución de Robin Hood, refleja concepciones cambiantes de lo que significa ser inglés.

Palabras clave: Robin Hood, identidad inglesa, musulmanes, Islam, imperialismo

“WIFE. MOTHER. CRIMINAL(?)”: REPRESENTATIONS OF ABORTION IN MIKE LEIGH’S *VERA DRAKE* (2004)

Esther Pérez-Villalba

Set in the early 1950s in a working-class area in London, Mike Leigh’s *Vera Drake* (2004) revolves around the life of the protagonist Vera and the discovery of her best-kept secret: her role as a backstreet abortionist. This article examines how the issue of abortion is approached in the film and how long-standing links between abortion, crime and evil are partly deconstructed, mainly through the use of different narrative strategies. As I shall argue, the partial ‘decriminalisation’ of abortion in the film stems mainly from the film’s particular treatment of time and characterisation of Vera, its salient emphasis on Vera’s abortion method, and on the prominence given to Susan Wells’ abortion case. As I will discuss, ultimately, what the film seems to criticise is the social and juridical criminalisation of an individual (*Vera Drake*), suggesting instead that a “social harm theory” rather than a “crime theory” could explain the problems surrounding abortion in the context of *Vera Drake*.

Key words: abortion, British film, crime, harm, *Vera Drake*.

Abstracts

Ambientada a principios de los años cincuenta en un barrio obrero de Londres, *Vera Drake* (2004), de Mike Leigh, gira en torno a la vida de la protagonista Vera y en torno al descubrimiento de su secreto mejor guardado: su labor como abortista clandestina. Este artículo examina cómo se trata la cuestión del aborto en la película y cómo se deconstruyen parcialmente los vínculos tradicionalmente establecidos entre el aborto, el crimen y el Mal. Como se argumenta, esta ‘descriminalización’ parcial del aborto que la película parece postular, proviene principalmente del tratamiento particular del tiempo que se hace, así como de la caracterización de Vera, el énfasis con el que la película se aproxima a su método abortivo, y a la prominencia que adquiere el aborto de Susan Wells. En última instancia, lo que la película de Leigh parece hacer es criticar la criminalización social y jurídica del individuo (de Vera Drake en este caso), para sugerir que una “teoría del daño social” en vez de una “teoría del crimen” serviría para explicar los problemas que rodean el aborto en el contexto de *Vera Drake*.

Palabras clave: aborto, cine británico, crimen, daño, *Vera Drake*.

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