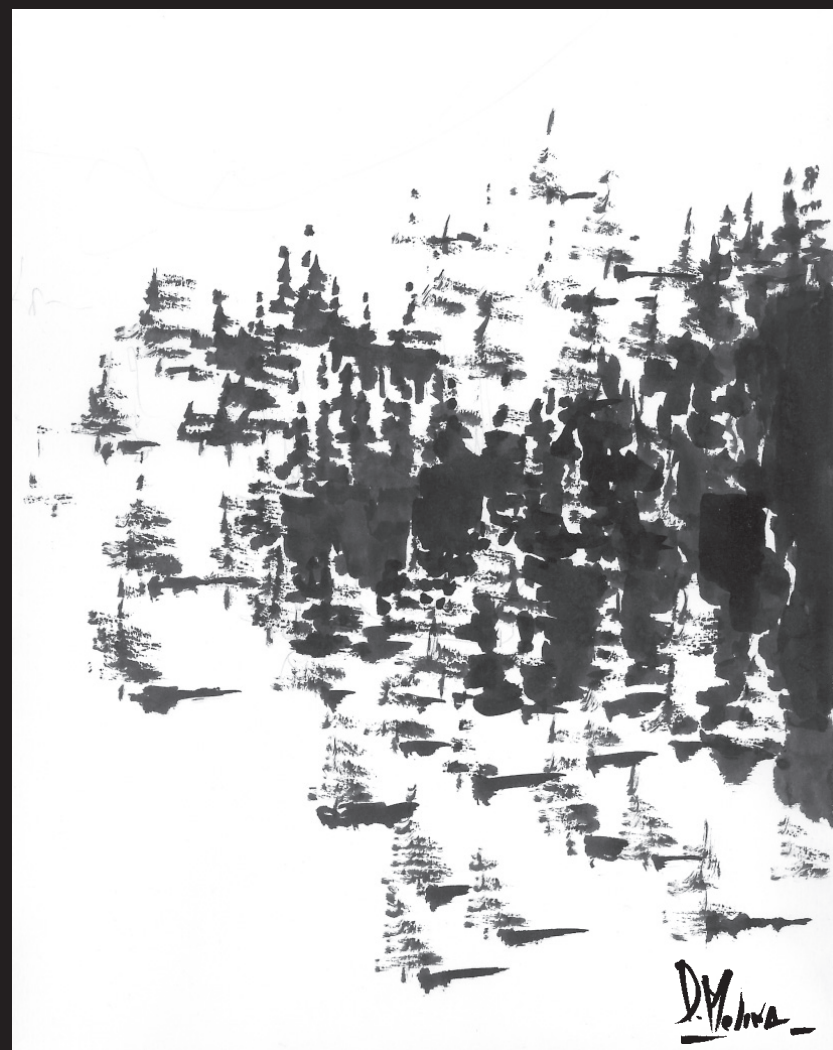


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**POEMS**

1.  
Draw the mountains near.  
With the touch  
of an outstretched finger  
smooth the blue blanket folds.

2.  
On icy January nights  
Dark giants slumber  
Under cold star blankets  
Patient, petrified.  
Waiting for daybreak.

In icy seas and sand  
Stone giants seem to sleep  
Their fringed green tonsures seen.  
Their feet, fifty fathoms deep.  
Waiting for tideturn.

It breaks. It turns.  
Day breaks. Tide turns  
Day turns. Tide breaks.  
Night turns into day  
Moon turns the tide  
Night day night day  
Light day dark night  
Earth turns  
And turns,  
And turns again.

3.  
Lemon mountains  
Pink mountains  
Blue mountains  
Green  
Near mountains  
Far mountains  
Mystic mountains  
Dream

*(Elizabeth Adams. 2001)*

Elizabeth Adams teaches at the University of Jaén. Her interests include teaching methodologies and approaches which maximise and enrich the teaching / learning experience in general, and more specifically, the teaching and learning of foreign languages. Links between teaching processes and creative processes in art is an area of particular interest, rising out of a long experience of teaching both art & design and EFL in a variety of different situations. She has published various articles on topics such as creativity in teaching, the use of poetry in language classrooms, humanistic and holistic approaches to teaching and learning as well as the use of imagery and imagination in teaching and learning.





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# INSTRUCTED LINGUISTIC COMPETENCE: USING GRAMMAR, VOCABULARY, AND PRONUNCIATION TO PROMOTE FLUENT COMMUNICATION IN ENGLISH

Antonio Bueno González  
*Universidad de Jaén*

## **Abstract**

*The paper starts from the concept of communicative competence and analyses one of its components, linguistic competence, aiming to provide a more meaningful and communicative proposal to teach grammar, vocabulary and pronunciation, on the basis of their need for instruction. A functional approach to the teaching of grammar is presented, bearing in mind learner and instructional variables and considering grammar as a useful tool to express notions and functions. Vocabulary presentation techniques and acquisition strategies are offered in order to help students to acquire lexis in a contextualized, experiential way, taking advantage of the several aspects which account for the knowledge of words. Pronunciation is focused in a feasible and realistic way with special attention to the role of students and teacher and to the particular techniques related to the presentation and practice of sounds, stress, rhythm, and intonation. The paper also contributes suggested classroom activities in all the three areas.*

## **1. Communicative competence**

My starting point is Chomsky's (1957) distinction between *competence* (a speaker's intuitive knowledge of the rules of his/her native language) and *performance* (what s/he actually does when s/he applies the rules and uses the language). In other words, *linguistic competence*

constitutes an abstract system underlying the concrete behaviour or *performance*. If we limit the concept of competence to the purely grammatical field, the picture is incomplete. Language does not occur in a vacuum. Knowledge of the rules is not enough, because we have to take into account the social context in which language occurs and the social relations it expresses. This is why Campbell & Wales (1970) and Hymes (1972) added the concept of *communicative competence* to the purely linguistic one proposed by Chomsky. The native speaker does not only know the abstract system but also what is socially appropriate or inappropriate, “when and when not to speak, what to talk about with whom, when, where and in what manner” (Hymes, 1972:277), that is to say, the functional and social perspective of the language. This also includes a paralinguistic dimension or non-verbal communication, which is culturally-conditioned, as Fernández Cuesta (1992:246) rightly points out.

*Communicative competence* has been defined as a more general communicative ability concerning *usage* (the knowledge of the formal system), *use* (using that formal system to achieve some kind of communicative purpose), and the socio-cultural interactional context in which language takes place. It also implies an awareness of, and a sensitivity towards, the values and traditions of the language, i.e., the socio-cultural dimension. It is this kind of competence the native speaker has at which our teaching efforts should be aimed. Communicative competence should not be identified with actual communication, although it is an essential part of it. Due to limiting conditions, such as memory, fatigue or nervousness, sometimes communicative competence is reflected only indirectly or imperfectly in actual communication (cf. Canale, 1983).

*Communicative competence* comprises several *competencies* and the objective should be to avoid the phenomenon with which many teachers of English are familiar, i.e. the “structurally competent but communicatively incompetent” student (able to produce grammatically correct sentences but unable to perform a communicative task).

In this respect, and drawing on Canale & Swain (1980) and Canale (1983) it has been customary to consider communicative competence as comprising four aspects: *grammatical* competence, *sociolinguistic*

competence, *discourse* competence, and *strategic* competence.<sup>1</sup> All of them are important but not sufficient in themselves, integration of all the four being the ideal aim for communication to be effective. In this paper attention will be focused on the instruction of the grammatical one, here called *linguistic* so as to include not only grammar but also vocabulary and pronunciation.

## 2. Linguistic competence

This refers to the mastery of the language code, including aspects such as vocabulary, word formation, sentence formation, pronunciation, and spelling, that is to say, the formal linguistic side of language use (phonology and orthography, grammar -syntax and morphology-, and lexis). For years this was the only kind of knowledge thought to be necessary to be proficient in a language. It is clear by now that language is more than simply a system of rules and that knowledge about a second language is not sufficient for effective use of it in actual communication situations.

A knowledge of the grammatical system -the skeleton of the language- is essential in order to perform any kind of communicative task. With respect to the traditional -structural- syllabus, a change of focus is proposed. The structural syllabus put grammar items first, designing courses with grammatical contents. The syllabus was designed in terms of contents and not in terms of objectives. However, grammar is not an end in itself, but a means to achieve functional objectives in the language. And this is what the communicative syllabus advocates. We want to learn a language to *function* with it. In this sense, *notions* (abstract concepts) and communicative *functions* (the purpose, why we use the language) are seen as primary objectives. The syllabus is designed in terms of objectives. Grammar is necessary in the form of language exponents to express those notions and functions, a means to achieve a

---

<sup>1</sup> Bachman (1991) reorganized this classification, distinguishing three aspects of *communicative language proficiency*: *language competence*, *strategic competence*, and *psychomotor skills*. *Language competence* comprises *organizational competence* (which, in turn, is subdivided into *grammatical competence* and *textual competence*) and *pragmatic competence* (including *illocutionary competence* and *sociolinguistic competence*). The model may be more adequate from a descriptive point of view but I consciously ignore it here because I consider the one by Canale (1983) still adequate, simpler, and clearer.

communicative goal. In this line, grammar can be perceived as a useful tool by the students and not as an invention on the part of teachers and theoreticians. At the same time, it is clear that it should not be displaced from the teaching scene.

### **3. Grammar instruction**

#### *3.1. The need to teach grammar*

The ultimate purpose in learning a language is to be able to communicate in it both orally and in a written way and it is obvious that in order to speak or write correctly one needs to know the mechanisms of that language. In the case of the mother tongue we learn to speak (and partly to write) in an almost unconscious way. But this does not happen in the case of a foreign language, which means that some formal instruction is needed. It goes without saying that this need is not the same depending on the different skills, in other words, grammatical consciousness-raising behaves in a different way for each skill (cf. Rutherford, 1987:169-175). It can be said that grammar instruction is more needed in the case of productive (creative) skills than in that of receptive (interpretative) ones. In the former it becomes essential in writing (a sort of “grammatical metaphor” in Halliday’s (1989:93-96) words) but it may not be so necessary in speaking. With regard to the receptive skills, students are supposed to recognise structural elements in order to understand and it is evident that they grasp them better in the case of reading.

Extreme versions of the communicative approach in its first years neglected the teaching of grammar (probably having in mind a total immersion context where the need to explain grammatical structures is certainly reduced to a minimum, something which does not happen in the case of a foreign language not spoken in the country). There is no scientific evidence that an exclusively communicative classroom, without any reference to the grammatical skeleton of the language, can produce better speakers than those who can be derived from a more or less traditional classroom. Sometimes, in the first case the result may be a sort of pidginized language (a set of unconnected agrammatical set phrases) which can become fossilized. I am, therefore, convinced of the need to teach grammar formally in the Spanish context, where English is a foreign language, though with a new focus.

### 3.2. *Variables affecting the teaching of grammar*

Deciding how much grammar instruction should be given and how intense grammar practice should be depends on many variables (cf. Celce-Murcia, 1991), the skill practised being one of them (as stated above). Some variables have to do with students themselves, such as learning style (some students prefer more instruction concerning language usage while others prefer practical language use; besides, some may prefer a deductive approach while others lend themselves better to an inductive one), age (children and teenagers do not need so much grammar instruction as adults do), level (upper-intermediate and advanced students require more insistence on structural aspects), and previous instruction (particularly grammar instruction in their mother tongue). Other variables are related to aspects such as register (more grammar accuracy is demanded in formal contexts), need, and use (students who intend to make a professional use of the language, e.g. English Philology students, need more grammar). It goes without saying that the treatment of grammar instruction cannot be the same in all the cases and teachers should be aware of that fact.

### 3.3. *Towards a more functional methodology in the teaching of grammar*

There are two possible ways to present grammatical structures, inductively and deductively (*discovery learning* and *rule-driven learning*, respectively, according to Thornbury, 1999:29). In the case of the *inductive* procedure, students are exposed to a series of examples which show the grammatical point at issue so that they can recognize and become familiar with it; then some practice should follow and at the end rules and exceptions are given. The *deductive* one follows the inverse order: rules, examples, and practice.

Both of them are useful, although the first one seems more attractive from all angles, since the starting point is examples of the language itself, which allows students to see first of all the communicative need and afterwards, and only afterwards, the grammatical tools needed in order to express that need. Grammar, then, becomes a means and not an end and its learning is a sort of discovery (see Hall & Shephard, 1991). The deductive procedure, however, is also valid and is certainly successful with some students. It has been customary to associate inductive presentation with children and teenagers (examples of real use rather

than unnecessarily complicated and lengthy rules) and deductive procedures with adults (since they feel more secure when they have clear rules, examples, and exceptions at hand). Nevertheless, younger students may sometimes have serious difficulties to infer the rules, an ability which adults have developed more consistently. It is also true that some structures lend more easily to one procedure or to the other. This is the reason why a combination of both is often preferred by teachers. In my own teaching experience, speaking in general terms, I presented grammar basically inductively when I was teaching Secondary students some years ago, while at University level, where I am teaching now, students prefer clear rules (together with useful reference grammar books), followed by exceptions and abundant examples.

An important turning point in the methodology of grammar has been the acceptance that it does not only mean the teaching of formal aspects of the language. At least, form has to be combined with semantic, discursive, and communicative factors. Linguistic exponents are important because they respond to a communicative need. First of all, we feel the need to tell something to somebody who was not there and then we make use of reported speech. Facing the need of asking for permission, speaking about the possibility of something to happen, we make use of modal verbs. If we want to express position, direction, etc., we resort to prepositions. It is evident that in the foreign language (also in the mother tongue) the communicative need appears before the form in which it is expressed. The first steps in any language can limit themselves -and in fact they do- to vocabulary games with scarce or null grammatical structure. As a matter of fact, learning materials of a foreign language for Primary students closely resemble those used with children in their mother tongue (word games, word puzzles, guessing activities, spelling games, listening and drawing, *symbol dictation*, *Total Physical Response*, and short oral exchanges using lexical phrases with almost no grammar at all -see in this respect Tejada Molina, 1994).

When we want to communicate something we do not use isolated sentences. Although it may be like that at the beginning, the ultimate purpose is what is known as *connected oral / written speech*, conversations, and more or less complete texts. It is the context, both linguistic and situational, that gives sense to concrete linguistic structures and helps us to understand their meaning. Whenever possible, examples and grammatical exercises have to be contextualized.

The language is the social vehicle *par excellence* and the classroom becomes the social setting where interaction has to take place. Communication arises as a consequence of these interactive patterns. The teaching of grammar will not make any sense if it does not lead the students to communicate with their classmates and with the teacher by means of learnt structures.

As for grammar activities, some traditional formats, such as fill in the blanks, conversion/transformation, completion, combining, rewriting, multiple choice or unscrambling, may still be valid and they are preferred especially by adults and advanced students. These activities should be combined with more functional exercises (cf. Celce-Murcia & Hilles, 1988). Some of them are especially recommended for children, such as those involving *Total Physical Response* (to practise imperatives and prepositions) or *symbol dictation* (for prepositions). Other suggestions ranging from pre-intermediate to upper-intermediate levels are teacher-generated stories (descriptions and narratives provide an opportunity to practise tenses and linkers), creative stories, role-play and drama (which emphasize the communicative side), dictation, text manipulation (unscrambling, changing tenses), graphs and diagrams (in order to practise comparatives, time expressions or tenses), and a variety of grammar games (see Rinvoluceri, 1985). For advanced students activities such as problem-solving tasks, recognition exercises (taking the script of a conversation or any other written text as a basis), song (see Hancock, 1998) and poem grammatical exploitation (activities which are highly motivating), grammatical judgements or text editing may be useful.

## **4. Presenting and practising vocabulary**

### *4.1. The purposes of vocabulary teaching*

First of all, we have to speak of two general objectives: to enlarge the students' vocabulary store and to widen the knowledge of the lexical items they have already acquired, through the exploitation of the many aspects implicit in a word. Some other more specific objectives can be added:

- To cover areas of interest and usefulness for students, i.e. to respond to their needs and wants.

- To present items not in isolation, but in groups (phrases, sentences, expressions, phrasal verbs, binominal and trinomial constructions, etc.).
- To focus on interaction and association with words (personal relationship with them).
- To contextualize presentation, making students aware of contextual clues.
- To enrich their own vocabulary store with that of classmates through pair and group work.
- To offer them suggestions in order to store and retain acquired words.

These are the principles that should inspire vocabulary activities. Vocabulary acquisition, therefore, becomes a branching, intensely personal, social, and experiential process (cf. A. Maley in the Prologue to Morgan & Rinvolucrí, 1986).

#### 4.2. *Active and passive vocabulary*

We know more words than those we actually use. The former we call *passive* vocabulary, and the latter *active* vocabulary. In most cases what has to be done is to help the students with activities that allow them to awaken their passive vocabulary. Our duty is to design activities which can help the student to convert passive vocabulary into active. The following suggestions seem to be useful:

- To select some items in the mother tongue which students are able to recognize but unable to use them.
- To remember words in English which were probably passive and that have become active.
- Brainstorming on the blackboard: they can see words and expressions which they recognize but which they did not probably remember at that moment.
- A list of isolated words and then those words in a context: probably they can recognize them with the help of the context.

#### 4.3. *Getting to know words*

Knowing a word involves more than its meaning(s) (cf. Harmer, 1991:156-158). At least four other aspects have to be considered: use,



word formation process, spelling and pronunciation, and word grammar. The more completely we know a word the better we will remember and use it.

Meaning should always be contextualized, allowing the students to see the word integrated in a text, to make associations with words through lexical fields or to establish connections with personal aspects (your country, your classroom, your friends, your family, your preferences, similar words in your language, etc.). We should, therefore, avoid the presentation of isolated words and, when we use word lists, they should be meaningful for the student (order them according to your personal preferences, group them into positive and negative, etc.). Likewise, words should be presented in lexical fields, grouped by topics (education, work, food, arts, environment, etc.), notional concepts (number, time, distance, possession, etc.), feelings, actions, etc. Once the difficulty of vocabulary items is adapted to the different levels, the use of sense relations, such as synonymy, antonymy, polysemy, hyperonymy, and hyponymy can constitute an invaluable help. From pre-intermediate level upwards, students should be accustomed to understanding definitions in progressively more difficult English, for which the use of an appropriate monolingual dictionary is recommended. These last two suggestions are particularly useful for *Bachillerato* students in order to prepare their English University entrance exam (*Selectividad*). Some concrete activities can be the following:

- To recognize nuances of words belonging to the same lexical field through the context.
- To guess the meaning of words underlined in the text with or without the help of illustrations.
- Cloze texts.
- To anticipate the meaning of partly-known words and to check it by reading the text.
- To look for synonyms of given words.
- To provide antonyms, according to the context.
- To locate items in the text on the basis of definitions in English.

Words can be used in a literal or a figurative way. In the second case, we refer to metaphorical or idiomatic uses (set phrases, idioms, similes, proverbs), lexical collocations, style, and register. Exercises should be devised, for instance, to distinguish, at least, literal or figurative, formal or informal uses.

Getting familiar with word formation processes allows the students to widen their vocabulary store, since with the use of prefixes and suffixes they can create new words on the basis of those they already know. Besides, they can remember lexical items better through their morphological affinity<sup>2</sup>. It is essential for the students to recognize the part of speech the item belongs to, in order to use it properly. Similarly, students should be familiar with the physical appearance of words, when they are heard (pronunciation) or written (spelling) so as to be able to use them correctly both in speaking and writing. Special attention should be paid to *false friends*.

Some aspects related to the grammar of the word also have to be taken into account in order to be familiar with their usage: countability/uncountability, phrasal verbs, position in the case of adjectives and adverbs, catenative structures, etc. Activities designed to practise these features necessarily resemble grammatical exercises such as those with sentence and text linkers, countable and uncountable nouns, verbs + particle, etc.

#### 4.4. Vocabulary presentation techniques

Variety should be introduced when presenting vocabulary, not only because it is more motivating but also because not all words or expressions can be presented in the same way. We will suggest the following: exemplification, contextualization, explanation, visual help through illustrations, definition, classification and grouping, grading, lexical collocation, sense relations, tables according to parts of speech, lexical trees, nets and diagrams, and *realia*.

#### 4.5. Vocabulary acquisition strategies

Something which has been fashionable in the last years is the idea of training the students so that they can develop learning strategies and become autonomous (*learner autonomy*), an idea which is central in

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<sup>2</sup> In an article published in *GRETA* (Bueno González, 1998), I drew on the notion of *cognates* to assert that the common origin of words in different languages (for instance their Latin or Greek roots, prefixes or suffixes) can help students and may turn the notion of *false friends* into that of *true friends* due to their morphological affinity.

vocabulary acquisition. Students should be convinced that it is not necessary to understand all the words in order to grasp the main ideas of a text and should also make use of the following strategies:

- Guessing the meaning through contextual clues.
- Drawing on already learnt techniques.
- Taking advantage of background knowledge.
- Using bilingual and monolingual dictionaries.
- Revising learnt vocabulary in an active way.
- Designing a personal system to store and retain words, which can help memory: a notebook, vocabulary cards in a file, grouping words through lexical fields, according to the part of speech or any other type of association (word grammar, root, etc.).

#### *4.6. Vocabulary exercises*

A variety of formats can be suggested here. Apart from those already mentioned, the following proposals can be found in the literature: locating vocabulary errors; fill-in the blanks; completing a table, a diagram or a lexical tree; *odd one out* (four words are given, only three of them belonging to the same semantic field, and students have to locate the one that does not fit); transforming sentences or texts by changing lexical elements; discovering the difference between two words or expressions through context; matching; rewriting; crossword puzzles; unscrambling jumbled letters to form a word; writing an extended text with learnt vocabulary; asking/answering questions which require particular lexical items; labelling; recognizing words in a text; completing conversations; saying the same with different words; and guessing through context.

## **5. Pronunciation**

### *5.1. Methodological issues*

We start from the need for an explicit teaching of pronunciation because of its importance for speaking. It has to be presented not in a highly scientific way but attractively emphasizing its usefulness, without too much theory but focusing on the real problems and offering effective solutions. These are some of the objectives:

- To make oneself understood (“comfortably intelligible”, as Kenworthy (2000a) puts it), even with a foreign accent. To reach a native-like pronunciation is a little utopian at certain levels.
- To relate the importance given to pronunciation with the future use students are going to make of the language.
- Errors that produce a communication breakdown should be avoided.

On the part of students, they should show effort and willingness in order to perceive the sounds in English terms and be ready to repeat difficult sounds. They should take advantage of any opportunity to be exposed to spoken English (audio/video tapes) and be willing to respond and make special efforts to speak English and check if they are understood. They are also expected to monitor their own learning process little by little so as to find their own solutions (*learning to learn, learner autonomy*).

The teacher’s role has to start from helping students hear but it is obvious that reception and perception are not enough. We have to train them to produce the sounds, with plenty of exercises, especially concerning those sounds not existing in their mother tongue. Likewise, teachers and materials writers should design activities which isolate the sound in a word (rather than alone) and, immediately, contextualize it in a sentence and in the spoken chain. One of the teacher’s duties is to offer students feedback, to make them see how they progress, to correct them and to provide solutions and remedial work.

### 5.2. *Presentation and practice*

Techniques and activities for the teaching of pronunciation should cover two fields: the sound system, on the one hand, and the suprasegmental morphemes (stress, rhythm, and intonation), on the other. At beginner and intermediate levels it does not make too much sense to make a highly detailed scientific description of the articulatory system. We should limit our description to simple positions of the lips and the tongue, for example.

Generally we do not need to present the sound in isolation (except if it is to be compared to another) but in words and sentences. We should insist on those sounds which present special difficulty for our students.

The sound has to be practised in initial, medial, and final position and in combination with others. A possible procedure can be the following (cf. Doff, 1988:114):

- The teacher pronounces the sound in isolation in a clear way and immediately afterwards in two or three words.
- Students repeat in chorus and then individually.
- If students mix two similar sounds, minimal pairs should be used to contrast them.
- If the description of the sound becomes necessary it should be done in simple terms, even in the students' mother tongue, or emphasizing the similarity and/or difference with sounds in their own language.

Once the sounds have been presented and the main difficulties solved, we move towards practical exercises such as the following: analytic awareness-building oral activities (saying the number of words which are heard and/or repeating exactly what is heard), minimal pairs (1 or 2 / Same or Different), locate a given word, match words with pictures, mark the order in which particular sounds appear, *odd one out*), complete sentences (the missing words share the same sound), sentence building on the basis of some words (the words can exemplify the same sound or minimal pairs), activities to practise *consonant clusters* and *sound linking* exercises.

As far as *stress* is concerned, first of all, we have to deal with *word stress* and make students aware of the difference between stressed or strong syllables and unstressed or weak syllables. Vowels reduce their value in weak syllables, which is more evident in the spoken chain: vowels are more reduced because whole words are unstressed. English is a stress-timed and not a syllabic language (in contrast with Spanish, for example): the time between two stressed syllables is almost always the same and if there are several weak syllables they must be pronounced more quickly. This feature is very important in spoken English (for instance in songs) and this accounts for the special difficulty in understanding it. Students have to be offered recognition exercises with words, sentences or texts in which they have to mark strong and weak syllables after listening to them. In the classroom the teacher can mark the position of the stress by exaggerating the voice intensity, with gestures or by means of symbols.

Once word stress has been presented, we have to consider that in the spoken discourse speakers sometimes decide to give more or less prominence to one particular word for emphasis. This is known as *sentence stress*, closely related to rhythm and intonation. Students should be exposed to examples where this is evident.

Then, we should familiarize students with *weak forms*. As we know, they are generally monosyllabic words which are unstressed and whose vocalic sounds become a *schwá*. This is the case of auxiliary verbs, prepositions, determiners, etc. Students have to be aware of these cases, especially because of their frequency. Exercises must be designed to recover these weak forms, although their perception is almost null.

*Rhythm* is closely related to stress in the sense that stressed syllables and words have more duration than those which are unstressed. In fact, unstressed syllables preceding the stressed one are pronounced very quickly. The group formed by a stressed syllable and the unstressed ones which accompany it, both preceding and following it, is called a *rhythmical unit*. It can be marked by patting on the table, by means of poems, songs, nursery rhymes (*Humpty Dumpty* ...) or with visual aids.

*Intonation* has to be presented as the music of the language. Teachers should insist on its importance in order to express meaning and feelings, connected with its three main functions: stress-related, grammatical (basically *rising* tone in Yes/No questions and in utterances which express surprise or disbelief; *falling* tone in Wh-questions, statements, commands), and emotional. More often than not an intonation error is communicatively more important than an error in the pronunciation of a given sound. At least the two basic tones (*falling/rising*) have to be presented, insisting on the double possibility with question tags and helping students to recognise both by means of arrows.

## 6. Conclusion

Linguistic competence is just one of the components of communicative competence, which means, above all, that getting familiar with grammar, vocabulary and pronunciation is equivalent to knowing the tools of the language. The aspects discussed here are instruments, means to convey meaning and to transmit messages, not ends in themselves since the main aim is to be able to communicate in English

as fluently as possible. Language proficiency is shown when students speak, write, listen or read and understand, i.e., through the interactive use of communicative skills. But for that successful exchange, either oral or written, to take place, they need to be exposed to a sufficient amount of language, to receive some kind of formal instruction, and to have abundant practice, always adapted to their level. The methodological suggestions I present in this paper try to advocate and justify the need for linguistic instruction, something that traditional methods such as *Grammar-Translation* seemed to support exclusively, which extreme *only-oral-communication / direct* approaches tried to rule out and which, fortunately, nowadays is part of desirable eclecticism under the all-embracing umbrella of communicative competence.

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## RICHARDSON Y LOS JUEGOS ERÓTICOS DE *MR. B*

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Partiendo de una definición muy básica por no decir pragmática de Eros (Energía Vital), hemos analizado la obra de Richardson no a la vieja usanza, sino a modo de ficción narrativa erótica que pone de relieve las obscuras necesidades sexuales de un joven adinerado y caprichoso, no el triunfo del amor por mor de la castidad de Pamela.<sup>1</sup>

Nuestra intención no es centrarnos en la joven Pamela, muy a pesar de ser ella quien capta la imaginación de la crítica, sino en Mr. B. Para muchos es un ser anodino, aburrido, carente de interés, y en este sentido el tonto de la historia. Sin embargo, nuestra forma de verlo dista mucho de la tradicional. Es un joven complejo, raro, y muy inclinado a jugar juegos amorosos. Le controla un erotismo muy rico en matices, uno que cubre un amplio campo de tendencias sexuales, rayando algunas de ellas lo patológico. Pamela lo intuye, de ahí que responda admirablemente a sus necesidades sexuales, y que Pamela, sin las inquietantes tendencias sexuales de Mr. B, no sería nada.

Si Mr. B fuese un simplón, controlado por un único afán, el de poseer a Pamela, este deseo no hubiese generado la clase de juego erótico que se establece entre ambos jóvenes, ejercicio que incluye al lector debido a

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<sup>1</sup> Aquí ofrecemos un somero bosquejo de algunos de los elementos considerados en un trabajo muy amplio dedicado al análisis de las anomalías sexuales de Mr. B, que son también las de Pamela. Parte de este trabajo fue presentado en una conferencia, dictada en la Universidad de Jaén (Dañobeitia:2000). En una segunda conferencia, también organizada por la Universidad de Jaén, consideré la forma en que tales anomalías se mantienen durante el matrimonio de Pamela con Mr. B. Es la intención de esta autora publicar todo el trabajo, ya concluido, no a través de artículos, sino completo, a modo de monografía dedicada a Pamela. El estudio comenzó hace años, y es parte de las investigaciones que llevé a término cuando impartía un curso monográfico de Doctorado dedicado a Richardson.

un imaginativo proceso anticipatorio de lo que puede ocurrir, y que jamás acontece. Poder leer la carta/o cartas donde narrará gráficamente su brutal violación, y los morbosos detalles de sus preparativos esperando la muerte, como única salida de salvación purificadora, ora a través de su suicidio, ora a causa de su insoportable dolor, como ocurre en *Clarissa*.

El mundo que Richardson nos presenta no es un mundo de catástrofes, y de penurias; no hay guerras, ni hay pestes. Es apacible, y razonablemente equilibrado, salpicado insulsamente por subjetivos, y no tan subjetivos atisbos de injusticias sociales de corte propagandístico. El protagonista es joven, atractivo, rico y muy poderoso. Dedicaba casi todo su tiempo a Pamela. Nada sabemos de él, excepto lo poco que descubrimos a través de su hermana, Lady Davers. Ella nos incita a pensar que es un mujeriego puro y duro, pero lo hace impelida por la postura humillante que Mr. B adopta hacia ella, obligándola a compartir la mesa con Pamela. De ahí que, independientemente de lo mucho que Richardson nos lo quiera presentar, a través de Pamela y de Lady Davers, como a un libertino, no deja de ser un joven vestido con harapos donjuanescos, demasiado grandes para su talla. Mr. B poco tiene de mujeriego, y sí un mucho de sádico con vetas de masoquismo. Es también un joven caprichoso, ofuscado por su incontrolado deseo de poseer a una joven, y nada más que a esa joven, debido precisamente a sus peculiaridades sexuales, a sus desórdenes personales, no excesivamente excepcionales, aunque sí sorprende su variedad dado que estamos hablando de un único sujeto. El joven Mr. B necesita a Pamela porque, aunque no es asequible, ella enardece una amplia porción de sus singularidades. Si la joven es consciente de ello, aunque no lo está explicitado en el texto, sí lo está sugerido. Parece que Pamela, posiblemente guiada por su intuición femenina, sabe acatar las reglas del juego de Mr. B casi a la perfección. Es por lo tanto un objeto que Mr. B tiene que cazar, independientemente de la forma en que lo haga. Es a su vez una criatura que complacía a su madre, una mujer que parece haber volcado gran parte de su sedentaria vida afectiva en esta joven, quien no tenía más de doce años cuando entró a trabajar en su casa, en calidad de doncella. Aunque este aspecto de su relación con Mr. B se ha considerado con sumo detalle y cuidado en el estudio citado en la nota número uno, por abrir la puerta, a nuestro entender, al área de lo psicológicamente incestuoso, e indirectamente forma parte del proceso de caza mencionado, nos limitamos a apuntarlo.

Mr. B no es un libertino, es otra cosa mucho más intrincada. Es por ello por lo que, muy a pesar de haberlo querido dibujar como tal, Richardson fracasó. Hay que tener este punto muy en cuenta para así poder entender el erotismo de Mr. B en términos de una necesidad narcisista e infantil, traducida en su deseo de ser el dueño y señor de un ser humano, aparentemente inasequible. Pero sólo tiene un medio de satisfacerlo: alimentando una relación que le permita proyectar su yo erótico, su *anima* (elemento femenino, o sombra, como diría Jung 1964) mediante una transgresión sexual que complemente su ego escindido a través de un sistema binario de oposiciones. Con las necesidades erótico-sexuales de Mr. B, por no añadir las sublimadas de Pamela, entramos de lleno en lo que Ortega y Gasset (1981) dijo en su obra *Estudios sobre el amor*: que el erotismo masculino tiene mucho que ver con el instinto primitivo de caza del hombre, siendo el objeto no otro que la hembra. Afirmó Ortega, aquéllo que se logra con facilidad no produce la misma satisfacción que aquéllo que nos lanza a emprender una dura batalla por conseguirlo. Si a las palabras de Ortega aunamos el medio en el cual se desarrolla la trama de *Pamela*, no es demasiado difícil deducir cuales son las modalidades eróticas que controlan el reducido mundo de Mr. B y de Pamela. Singularidades, que descodifican el concepto masculinidad a modo de metáfora de cazador, pero, sadomasoquista, como parte del *homo ludens* que se complace en el compromiso transgresor de la caza prohibida, regida por normas antisociales. Reglas que producen un desplazamiento, también de corte metafórico, al sustituir a la hembra por un blanco de caza.<sup>2</sup> Pamela, aunque Richardson lo niegue, goza también masoquistamente ante la idea de haberse convertido en un objeto de deseo sexual obsesivo. Y, por mucho que no esté dispuesta a caer en las irracionales, impúberas y burdas trampas de Mr. B, espera poder invertir los papeles por él impuestos, acrecentado más allá de lo

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<sup>2</sup> El amor como un juego de caza es un tópico muy antiguo. Chaucer, en su *The Book of the Duchess*, juega semánticamente con el referente caza debido a la afinidad fonética que hay entre *heart* (corazón) y *hart* (ciervo). También lo hace en *Troilus*. Jung (1964:29) dice, “the sexual implication of the deer hunt is underlined by a medieval English folk song called *The Keeper*”. El posible trasvase entre ciervo y corazón junto al corolario caza tiene su importancia en el estudio de *Pamela* debido al gran número de ocasiones en que Pamela borda todas y cada una de sus cartas con la palabra corazón, precedido o antecedido por toda una gama de posibilidades calificándolo y determinándolo, bueno, perverso, malvado, generoso, afligido, etc. En consideración a la estructura de *Pamela*, el amplio uso del término corazón era de esperar. Leyerle (1980) consideró el corazón a modo de núcleo temático de *Troilus and Criseyde* en un trabajo titulado “The Heart and the Chain”. Ver Benson & Leyerle (1980). Es un dato más a estimar por requerir un análisis detallado, efectuado en nuestro trabajo original. Una obra que nos ha sido de gran utilidad es la de Bataille (1979).

razonablemente sostenible el deseo erótico de Mr. B a través de su continuamente ponderada virginidad. Dicho con otras palabras, que sea Mr. B el que, debido a la naturaleza de los trucos que utiliza, los transforme él mismo, sin percibirlo, en ingredientes picantes que aumentan y sazonan su ya enardecida energía vital, o sexual si se prefiere, alcanzando de este modo tensiones prácticamente insostenibles. Estados morbosos que se desaten en absurdos y pretendidos intentos de violación, nunca ejecutada gracias a las muertes simbólicas de Pamela (sus desmayos). A Mr. B le basta con los desvanecimientos de su amada, pues sus sponcios le permiten dilatar su juego en el tiempo, aunque sabedor es que todo juego tiene un principio y un fin,<sup>3</sup> y en este sentido tiene dos opciones: concluirlo con la violación, o repetirlo en un campo de juegos distinto, mediante la consumación del matrimonio. Lo singular del caso, sin embargo, surge de lo que conllevaría la violación, un final definitivo, mientras que el matrimonio podría abrir las puertas (y de hecho las abre) a un nuevo juego no muy diferente del que ahora le tiene tan entretenido; y no sólo a Mr. B sino a más de un lector. Leedor que Richardson logra transformar en una sombra de Mr. B, y por razones nada confesables.

No viene al caso mencionar el amplio número de obras literarias donde el autor se recrea describiendo con todo lujo de detalles la belleza de la heroína. Aquí no ocurre tal cosa. En lo que al aspecto visual se refiere, ocurre todo lo contrario. Richardson ni tan siquiera invita a la relativización, sino que excita la inventiva. Terminamos de leer la novela y tenemos que lucrarnos de nuestra imaginación para hacernos una idea de su físico. Cosa curiosa, Pamela describe sin omitir pormenor alguno tanto a Mrs. Jewkes como a Mr. Codford, pero, cuando de ella misma se trata, generaliza. No poseemos, en este sentido, ilustración alguna de cómo es Pamela, por no saber no sabemos ni tan siquiera de qué color tiene los ojos. Y no hubiese sido imposible ofrecer, aunque difuminada, una imagen algo más concreta. Hubiese bastado con que alguna persona del entorno de Pamela lo hubiese hecho, y ésta inmediatamente lo hubiese repetido, a modo de reportaje epistolar, palabra por palabra.<sup>4</sup> Sólo

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<sup>3</sup> Huizinga (1972:9) ha examinado los elementos que singularizan el juego. Una de sus reglas dice: "every game plays itself to an end". Todo juego se agota. Cuando esto ocurre hay dos opciones, darlo por concluido o tratar de repetirlo. Aquí nosotros sostenemos la posibilidad de una repetición, pero, con variantes, mediante el matrimonio.

<sup>4</sup> La concepción de Richardson de una buena feminidad no difiere mucho de la de eruditos como Marañón o Caba. Hoy en día pocos estarían de acuerdo con ellos. Escribir, afirman, es una tarea

sabemos, porque ella misma nos lo dice, que todos la consideran una muchacha muy agraciada, y que todos ponderan su bien definida figura. Afirma que ella es delgada, que tiene un cutis suave y perfecto, y unas manos delicadas, porque ella, a diferencia de otras sirvientas, jamás ha tenido que hacer trabajos que estropeen la piel de sus manos.

Pamela es, por tanto, más una idea en torno al poder erótico de una jovencita de quince años, bella y virginal, que un ser real. Se podría argumentar, por no decir perdonar esta deficiencia, especulando que Richardson trataba de modelar a una joven tan humilde que jamás tuvo la presunción de describirse así misma, pero este razonamiento no es sostenible. Tiene otras formas de alabarse a sí misma mucho más peligrosas. Pamela no es Hero, o Venus, o Isolda, Pamela es una mera ensoñación erótica, totalmente y deliberadamente proteica. Es Pigmalión la que se forja y se esconde en las fantasías sexuales de muchos hombres; ella es un objeto inalcanzable, el eterno femenino entapujo dentro del corazón masculino. Ella es un ser incircunscrito, el deseado precisamente debido a la paradójica situación innata a su abstracción sexual. Es, hasta el mismo momento en que se transforma en la Señora de Mr. B, un personaje extraído de los cuentos de hadas en lo que a su imprecisión física se refiere. Jung (1964) dice que esta clase de mujeres atrae a los hombres inmaduros, a los que siguen siendo púberamente insensatos, y mucho de esto hay, como veremos, tanto en Mr. B como en el mismo Richardson. Escribió Jung (1964:180): “A fairy-like character that specially attracts such anima projections, because man can attribute almost anything to a creature who is so fascinatingly vague, and can thus proceed to weave fantasies around her”.

Pamela es un personaje tipo hada y mucho más. Es, como diría el refranero español, «la niña bonita», el emblema de la presa difícil, la que más apetece simplemente porque, como el mismo Capellanus (1969:43)

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femenina, el detalle deleita a la mujer, lo pequeño, lo aparentemente trivial. Véase, por ejemplo, lo que ocurre en las epístolas femeninas, como son una forma silenciosa de interminable charloteo. Parece un hilar sin fin, un tejer y destejer, un hacer sin término, continuo, incansablemente. Ya Nietzsche lo intuyó, certero. “La mujer lleva a perfección los más delicados trabajos manuales” (Caba, 1947:253). Se acusa a Pamela de neurótica compulsiva, en tanto en cuanto a su afición a escribir cartas se refiere, pero, nunca la vería así Richardson. Está siendo, según él, mujer. Aquí y antes de ser acusada de no utilizar crítica o teorías punteras, aclaro que Richardson era un hombre de su tiempo, y por consiguiente cuanto más cerca estén las teorías de su época, más luz arrojarán éstas sobre el contenido del texto. Creo que si intentásemos entender a un hombre como Richardson, partiendo del concepto actual de feminidad, estaríamos rescribiendo su obra. Es por ello por lo que me he centrado y mucho en textos de su época tanto legales como teóricos, textos que cubren hasta la violación bajo un punto de vista jurídico.

dice: “We value more what we have got with great labor than that which comes easily, for without great labor great things cannot be won”.

Y mucho trabajará Mr. B infructuosamente para conseguir el amor de Pamela, tal y como lo concibe Andreas en sus dos primeros libros: fuera de los lazos matrimoniales.

¿Cómo es Pamela? Los lectores bien pudieron haberse hecho esa pregunta, entonces y ahora. Pero a causa del difuminado de su imagen todos especularían en torno a una estampa que entrase dentro de sus cánones de su ideal erótico femenino, y todas encajarían con la desdibujada Pamela, puesto que no hay ni una sola descripción física de su persona: únicamente vaguedades de amplio espectro. Mucho se habla, según Pamela, de su encanto, y pocas veces utiliza el término *beautiful*, comparado con los atributos *lovely*, *pretty* o *charming*. Incluso en esto hay un pequeño truco en lo que al lector se refiere, más cuando uno de los términos que apenas maneja es el de *handsome*, posiblemente en razón a la fuerza y contundencia que conlleva, y por consiguiente connotaciones de dificultad de acercamiento basadas en la superioridad física. Richardson, puede que deliberadamente, evita tanto como le es posible esta palabra, simplemente porque sabe que los objetos de deseo, tanto masculinos como femeninos, que más despiertan profundos y obsesivos apetitos sexuales, no son siempre aquéllos que se califican con el término *handsome*. El sujeto erótico es algo más sutil, más misterioso, más difícil de definir, y por ello no siempre el vocablo *handsome* puede o debe emparejarse con el de atractivo sexual, de ahí su escasez.

Tanta imprecisión arroja múltiples reflejos sobre la joven, unos velados, otros semi-velados y algunos suficientemente concretos. Es un ser enigmático, una forma mercuria y multicolor; es incluso, en la mente del lector, reflejo inconsciente de su propio yo idealizado: desafiante en ocasiones, heroica en otras, astuta cuando es necesario, cruel con los defectos ajenos, adulatora, inteligente como pocas, tramposa, mentirosa, calculadora, y fantasiosa. Es muy materialista y coqueta. Es cómplice de las actitudes masoquistas de su señor, porque ella también disfruta siéndolo, humillándose como la que más, arrodillándose en el suelo levantando sus brazos al cielo con los ojos cuajados de lágrimas.<sup>5</sup> Larga

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<sup>5</sup> Más de un crítico ha calificado a Pamela de cruel debido a lo mucho que hace sufrir a sus padres con sus cartas. “Once the reader begins to consider the novel as an actual correspondence it seems somewhat cruel for Pamela to make every detail of her uncomfortable situation so agonizingly clear to

sería la lista de lo que Pamela consigue sugerir, y aunque pueda parecer todo lo contrario, no estamos insinuando que Pamela sea una mala persona (como lo hace Fielding 1987 en su *Shamela*). Simplemente afirmamos que, considerando sus circunstancias, hace lo que puede, y gana, sin embargo es un triunfo turbador, una derrota de acuerdo con la concepción del matrimonio de una mujer moderna, y no tan moderna.<sup>6</sup> Lo más importante, el mérito no buscado en *Pamela* con respecto al lector, radica en que éste dispone de una amplia gama de posibilidades para dar rienda suelta a sus ensoñaciones eróticas, contingencias siempre sugeridas por lo que Mr. B espera de Pamela. Ella reacciona a sus provocaciones y todo parece valer siempre y cuando pueda mantener su virginidad.

El rebuscado hermetismo inherente al aspecto físico de Pamela induciría a verla a través de los dictados de la imaginación. En particular aquellas inspiraciones que pudiesen regir impulsos eróticos, no siempre del todo confesables y jamás consumados en tanto en cuanto a la naturaleza de la recomposición de su inexistencia como sujeto físico se refiere. Si contiene una veta sádica, centrará el lector su proceso erótico imaginativo en la Pamela llorosa, si por el contrario ansía ser dominado, será la Pamela osada la que ocupará sus pensamientos, si fantasea con violaciones, esperará mortificado a que éstas ocurran, y lo que es aun peor, que la joven especifique el delito cometido enfatizando todos los pormenores. Si se deleita con el morbo intrínseco a las descripciones de sufrimiento y muerte, como ocurre en *Clarissa*, anticipará el gozo que tal exposición pueda causarle. El logro es descomunal, Mr. B y el lector pueden acabar siendo una misma cosa.

Son copiosas las posibilidades que Richardson ofrece al lector, siendo su enorme mérito no mojarse de una forma definitiva, y comprometida en ninguna de ellas, rozándolas empero con sutileza y suavidad, de ahí que la fascinación que la novela ejerció fuese enorme,<sup>7</sup> y sorprendente,

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her helpless, aged and sorrowing parents" (Bergen, 1974:55). También se han observado otras tres cosas, que es vanidosa, que es orgullosa, y que es egoísta (Bergen, 1974:59-61). Ver Higbie (1984:60-83).

<sup>6</sup> No era la aspiración de Richardson crear un ser perfecto, pero, su sana intención le llevó más allá de los límites por él mismo calculados. Dice al Dr. Cheye "I have generally taken Human Nature as it is; for it is to no purpose to suppose it Angelic, or to endeavour to make it so. To be credible no character should be completely flawless: The character of a mere Mortal cannot, ought not, be quite perfect" (Bergen, 1974:21).

<sup>7</sup> Fielding, entre otros, criticó duramente a Richardson. Escribió *Shamela* tratando de satirizar a *Pamela*. También en *Joseph Andrews* se ríe de Pamela al hacer exclamar al joven Joseph que él mantendrá

puesto que no es una obra de fácil lectura: es muy larga y repetitiva. Hay momentos en los cuales el texto se hunde por el peso de una tesis fallida (el valor de la virginidad), para resucitar partiendo precisamente de su hundimiento, e introducirse en algo perverso, su inaudita concepción no del amor, o del sexo, sino de lo que se necesita para establecer una relación permanente y duradera entre Pamela y Mr. B, más basada en reglas de comportamiento que en un sentimiento puro de amor mutuo. Si Mr. B. está, desde un principio, obsesivamente, locamente enamorado de Pamela, se podría cuestionar, aunque no demasiado. No empero la palabra «amor» significa, al derivar de *amus*, gancho, anzuelo, capturar o ser capturado, puesto que aquél que ama está capturado en las cadenas de la pasión, y consecuentemente necesita atrapar al objeto de su encadenamiento con su «gancho».<sup>8</sup> Eso es lo que intentará Mr. B ciertamente porque Pamela es la única que responde adecuadamente a sus necesidades sexuales, y en consecuencia la necesita. Sus métodos no son ortodoxos, pero sabe lo que quiere, ser el amante, no el marido de Pamela.

Además de las artísticas veladuras que acrecientan el misterio intrínseco al físico de Pamela, hay en el discurso narrativo escenas donde se ofrecen sugerentes desnudeces de la joven, también perturbadoras catalogaciones de su ropa interior, descripciones de desgarros en sus prendas, pero nada más. El efecto es devastador. A Pamela no le falta nada en tanto en cuanto a tentación erótica se refiere, pues tiene algo que va más allá de sus encantos físicos. Recibe con mansedumbre golpes, unos causados por la violencia pasional de Mr. B, otros por su carcelera, Mrs. Jewkes. Tiene una voz dulce y suave; y como diría *King Lear*, un gran atributo en una mujer. Es Pamela astuta como una serpiente (ella misma lo reconoce, jactándose de ello) y dulce como una paloma. Su corta

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su virginidad porque quiere ser un digno hermano de la famosa Pamela. Su interpretación de Pamela fue errónea, puesto que sólo se centró en el aspecto de la concepción moral de la virginidad. Vió en Pamela una joven que utilizaba la virginidad para cazar a un memo, a Mr. B. Lo que no percibió Fielding fue el efecto de la obra en la imaginación del lector, y aun menos que Pamela fuese el objeto perfecto de caza de Mr. B, puesto que la naturaleza de Pamela se ajusta a las necesidades eróticas de éste, y viceversa. Por ello cuando Richardson los ve como a una pareja perfecta está siendo sincero. Ahora, lo cuestionable es la naturaleza del erotismo que los atrae mutuamente. Y si Mr. B acaba declarando que Pamela es la única persona que podría hacerle feliz, también deberíamos decir lo mismo de Pamela: que Mr. B y sólo Mr. B, por paradójico que parezca, puede hacerla feliz, aunque sus deleites sean para otros un infierno.

<sup>8</sup> Esta derivación semántica es bien conocida, y no pocos la explotan. Shakespeare en *Anthony and Cleopatra* hace decir a Cleopatra que ella es el gancho o anzuelo y Anthony su pez, haciendo alusión a su superioridad sexual sobre Anthony.



experiencia le ha conferido la madurez de una vieja, una cultura nada desdeñable, un refinamiento cortesano, y es casta. Que la castidad en sí misma constituye un mágico atrayente erótico, pocos lo dudarían. No en vano tanto Mr. B como Pamela mencionan a Lucrecia en un momento de desatada pasión por parte del joven.

No sabemos exactamente el momento en que Mr. B se fijó en la joven, pero, si nos atenemos al contenido de sus cartas, no es demasiado osado afirmar que esto aconteció en el mismo momento en que la madre muere. Posible es también que se hubiese fijado mucho antes en ella, pero que la madre no le hubiese permitido que la molestara con ningún tipo de juego erótico.

Ella no es una sirvienta común, ella es tratada por la madre de Mr. B casi como si de una hija se tratase. No le pidió demasiado la madre de Mr. B a Pamela, y sí contribuyó generosamente en su educación. Todo lo que tiene que hacer es cantar, bailar minuetos, tocar la espineta, leer en voz alta, recitar poesías, ponerse ropa bonita, bordar cosas primorosas, y ser amable y complaciente. Nunca se hubiese desprendido la Señora de Pamela.

Tampoco su hijo permitirá a la joven ir a servir a casa de su hermana. Este joven alocado e inmaduro, obcecado por sus propios fantasmas sexuales, inventa historias, y busca la forma de tener a Pamela de acuerdo con las reglas que él mismo ha ideado. Al ver la cara de la muerte, al ser consciente de que ya no tiene ni padre ni madre, a modo de reacción compensatoria, siente la fuerza de la vida bullendo en su ser, pero transgresora, para proyectarla en Pamela, sombra y *anima* de su propia madre. Es por ello por lo que no busca la compañía de mujeres, por ser mujeres. Lo que se ha despertado en él es un fuerte deseo erótico, ya larvado, que eclosiona ante el espectáculo de la muerte, y de su irreversibilidad. La relación brotadura erótica y muerte de su madre pone de relieve la estrecha relación que había entre madre e hijo, concretada en una figura femenina filial a la madre, una joven que bien podría ser a modo simbólico sustitutivo una extensión de su propia madre, o de su propia hermana, fenómeno al que alude inconscientemente la misma Pamela, refiriéndose a lo que les ocurre a las mujeres (más específicamente a Tamara) una vez que se entregan a un hombre: que son repudiadas.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> Pamela menciona a Tamara, y se compara con ella; y de todos es sabido que Tamara fue violada por su propio hermano. ¿Lo que impulsa a Richardson a comparar a Pamela con Tamara? La respuesta

Mr. B no puede dejar marchar a Pamela. Sin ella, se hundiría en la pesadumbre de la muerte. Aunque invertidas, las esperanzas de la madre se cumplen muy pronto; el hijo se ve sacudido por Eros, y responde como mejor entiende. El juego empieza, pero es un juego pervertido. Comienza vistiendo a Pamela con las ropas de la madre:

(...) He gave me two suits of fine Flanders laced head-clothes, three pair of fine silk shoes, two hardly the worse, and just fit for me (for my lady had a very little foot), and the other with wrought silver buckles in them; and several ribands and top-knots of all colours; four pair of white fine cotton stockings and three pair of fine silk ones; and two pair of rich stays. (11) (Richardson, 1958:11)<sup>10</sup>

Aunque la transferencia Madre/Pamela no es lo primero que salta a la vista, nosotros empezaremos por matizarla, puesto que creemos que no es pequeña su importancia, muy a pesar de parecer, aparentemente, la madre de Mr. B una protagonista puramente coyuntural, y por consiguiente una a la que apenas se le concede más de dos líneas en cualquier estudio crítico. Nosotros, ciertamente, pensamos que no es un personaje anecdótico, sino generativo. Mencionamos en otro trabajo la importancia que tiene la figura de la madre. Aquí nos limitaremos a apuntar la relación que existe entre su muerte y la vandálica eclosión de Eros en su hijo. Hicimos notar la posibilidad de un interesante transvase, por parte del hijo, del *anima* de la madre a Pamela, lo que aclararía el deseo destructivo del hijo en tanto en cuanto a la joven se refiere.

Ahora encontramos que sólo Pamela parece haber tenido la misma talla que la Madre de Mr. B, especialmente en lo que al tamaño de los pies se refiere. También que ahora, más que a Pamela, el hijo verá una virginal versión de la madre, ora sentada en su escritorio, ora leyendo en los mismos apartamentos de la madre. No es, por tanto, una casualidad

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no es nada fácil, pero, sólo se puede entender si aceptamos que la idea del incesto está implícita, habiendo sido originalmente el objeto de deseo de Mr. B su propia madre, y ahora Pamela, en calidad de sustituta. Su relación con su hermana también es anómala, la creación de un supuesto amante, Mr. Williams también lo es. Pero Mr. B necesita ser mordido por los celos. Son las celambres del hijo hacia el padre, sublimadas en la persona de un pobre clérigo. Estos puntos han sido analizados porque hay mucha evidencia textual que los avala, factor que nos ha forzado a discrepar con la idea de la crítica canónica de Mr. B. De la postura de Pamela se pueden deducir muchas cosas en tanto en cuanto a la compleja personalidad de Mr. B se refiere, puesto que ella responde emocionalmente a los estímulos de aquél, y responde correctamente. De otra forma no hubiese llegado a tomarla como esposa, enfrentándose a su mundo y a su propia hermana.

<sup>10</sup> Todas las citas se tomarán de esta edición.

que abra los cajones de la cómoda de su madre, saque toda clase de ropa, y pida a Pamela que se la ponga, amén de los zapatos.

En la obra abundan referencias a zapatos, a ir calzada, a ir descalza y por consiguiente a los pies, junto a su tamaño. Los seres perversos, aquéllos que participan en la concretización del deseo de Mr. B tienen, según Pamela, los pies deformes, grandes, feos, y cuadrados, en oposición directa a los de Pamela, y los de la madre de Mr. B: los de estas dos son pequeños, delicados y por consiguiente femeninos. Aunque en otro trabajo nos hemos centrado en la simbología de los zapatos, *i.e.* en su relación con el proceso Muerte/Eros, aquí, a modo de entremés, verificaremos la importancia del pie, sobre todo si es pequeño, más cuando, en la carta que sigue a ésta, se desata cual vendaval incontrollado, el juego que ha estado bullendo en la cabeza de Mr. B, y con ello el mundo imaginativo del lector. Generalmente se dice del pie:

Además del andar femenino, el hombre se puso a **adorar los pies pequeños**, a admirarlos, a cantarlos, y los tuvo por fetiche de amor (...). Según los psicoanalistas (Freud y Jung, etc.), el pie también tiene significación fálica y el calzado sería símbolo femenino; al pie corresponde adaptarse a él. El pie sería el **símbolo infantil del falo**. Entre las partes más atrayentes del cuerpo, según una encuesta americana, el pie estaba en la quinta posición, después de los ojos, los cabellos, el cuerpo por entero y las nalgas (...). La preferencia erótica por el pie obedece a esta estructuración de la femineidad: pone en juego los elementos que están ligados a la fijación, en la experiencia vivida del sujeto, de ciertos acontecimientos infantiles que han persistido en la actividad psíquica inconsciente, en virtud de una falta de madurez erótica. Aunque el pie no aparezca como foco central, es al menos uno de los polos de la atracción sexual. El pie es **símbolo erótico**, de poder muy desigual, pero particularmente fuerte en los dos extremos de la sociedad, entre los primitivos y entre los refinados. En la evolución psicológica del niño, el descubrimiento del pie desempeña un papel considerable. Acariciar los pies de otro, sobre todo si están bien hechos, puede convertirse en una verdadera pasión para ciertos niños; y bastantes adultos confiesan conservar una supervivencia del mismo impulso, que al parecer produce un placer intenso. Para el hombre normalmente evolucionado desde el punto de vista sexual, la significación fálica del pie tendría tendencia a disminuir, por efecto de objetivar las funciones propias de cada órgano y de cada miembro. (Chevalier & Gheerbrant, 1986:827) (énfasis mío)

Si la madre de Mr. B tuvo que ser adorable, no menos lo es Pamela, la única mujer que la puede igualar, por mor del tamaño y delicadeza de su diminuto pie. Que no se pueda obviar este detalle respecto a Pamela

es lógico. Richardson nos está dibujando un objeto erótico de lo más deseable, fenómeno que no le permite descuidar esta, hoy en día, aparentemente trivial parte de la anatomía de la joven Pamela. Que Mr. B se haya dado cuenta de la semejanza entre Pamela y su madre, arroja luz tanto sobre la subversión de sus sentimientos personales hacia Pamela, como sobre los sublimados deseos hacia su propia madre. Aquí podemos incluso llegar a pensar que los pies de Pamela simbolizan la inmadurez sexual de Mr. B, su fijación infantil en la figura materna, a la que, en el fondo de su corazón, no ha querido enterrar, porque aunque quisiese no puede hacerlo, siendo por ello que recurra a un perverso travestismo: vistiendo a Pamela con las ropas de su madre, ella sigue viva, pero, para dominarla, controlarla, y finalmente poseerla.

Que la escena acabe de una forma casi idéntica (llorando) a la que singulariza la posdata de la primera carta, es de esperar. Cada vez que Richardson añade un atributo femenino a la desdibujada forma de Pamela, la encontramos condoliéndose; “So, like a fool I was ready to cry; and went way courtesying and blushing” (12). Es la fórmula que utiliza para anunciar al lector en lo que Pamela está a punto de convertirse, una víctima. Presa voluntaria, pues, parece ser una parte indeleble de su naturaleza reaccionar llorando, humillándose, cuando no sabe qué decir. De nuevo las lágrimas incipientes, el joven cuerpo, doblándose ante la protectora forma en que Mr. B le da el dinero a Pamela, nos sugieren lo que Pamela puede significar dentro del contexto emocional de su desbarajuste erótico, ahora huérfano, y por consiguiente libre (descontrolado o fuera de sí), de la férrea<sup>11</sup> disciplina impuesta por una madre piadosa, caritativa y posiblemente dominante.

El rol despótico de la madre podría estar avalado por la elección de una niña para que le haga compañía, y por la forma en que Mr. B le da el dinero de su madre a Pamela. Puede entrenarla y educarla a su modo; y

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<sup>11</sup> Es interesante la justificación de Richardson en lo tocante al cambio de Mr. B, muy a pesar de haber sugerido otro cambio, mucho más significativo que el aludido. Dice Caba (1947:10-11): “No sólo el hombre se altera (de álder, el otro) y aun se pone en ocasiones fuera de sí, sino que hablamos del hombre que tiene dos caras y todos hemos dicho alguna vez que estamos en lucha con nosotros mismos”. Mr. B es ahora hombre endemoniado. Aristóteles ve lo demoníaco como el otro maléfico que actúa en los sueños, en los sueños eróticos, diríamos nosotros de Mr. B. No siempre el otro es el genio positivo, sino el negativo. Hay quien experimenta el otro en lo inferior y subterráneo, como la bestia dormida, el monstruo encadenado.

el estilo de vida en que la ha inmerso, la clase de habilidades que la ha forzado a desarrollar, considerando su rango social, no es ni lo apropiado ni lo correcto. Ha cometido una enorme equivocación. Aunque pueda parecer exagerado, y aunque Dickens creó a Miss Havisham años más tarde, esta mujer parece anticipar a Miss Havisham, pues existen ciertos paralelismos en la elección de una niña a modo de entretenimiento privado, por no añadir fines personales, posiblemente cargados de intenciones ulteriores. Ambas mujeres han pensado más en sus necesidades físicas y psicológicas que en las de las dos criaturas que les hacen, por fuerza, compañía. Son posesivas, punto corroborado por la información que Pamela nos da respecto a sus padres, quienes no parecen haber tenido la oportunidad de ver a su hija desde el día en que entró a trabajar.

Que tenga monedas en el *pocket* es cuando menos prodigioso, más cuando son esas monedas las que Mr. B le da a Pamela. Es posible que no debamos entender esta palabra como bolsillo, sino como *bag* (bolsa o saquillo), siendo éste el segundo significado que en Flexner (1987) se da a la palabra *pocket*. Debe matizarse que puede no tratarse de un bolsillo sino de una bolsa o faltriquera que oculta un conjunto cromático perfecto por ser binario, alquímico, masculino y femenino: oro/plata. Son cuatro guineas de oro, y un número indefinido de monedas de plata lo que Mr. B le da a Pamela. Es conveniente recordar que el oro es símbolo de lo imperecedero, y también la plata, aunque femenina, puesto que aclara mucho la intención simbólica del acontecimiento.<sup>12</sup> Hay una expresión muy sugerente, «el saquillo de los vivos», y es del saquillo de los vivos de donde sale el dinero que Mr. B regala a Pamela como anticipo del pago de favores sexuales por parte de ella. Por ello no debe causarnos demasiada sorpresa que sea una bolsa el lugar donde, de acuerdo con una amplia gama de tradiciones simbólicas, se conserve el principio Vida,

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<sup>12</sup>El simbolismo inherente a las monedas pertenecientes a la madre es cuando menos intrincado, incluso que sean cuatro de oro y un número indefinido de plata. Ahora nos limitamos a marcar su importancia. Richardson ha hilado magistralmente el simbolismo que empapa toda la obra, pero con tal sutileza que casi pasa desapercibido. De esto hablamos en nuestro trabajo, pues no hay nada accidental en *Pamela*, i. e., la relación carpa, alubia y girasol que aparece en una sola carta. Pamela hace tres hatos con su ropa (los tres cofres del *Mercader de Venecia*). Hay tres madres en relación con Pamela, una biológica, y dos adoptivas (madre de Mr. B y Mrs. Jervis). También tres madres biológicas, la de Pamela, la de Mr. B y la de la hija de Mr. B, Sally. Hay tres casas, la de Pamela, la controlada por Mrs. Jervis, y la gobernada por Mrs. Jewkes. El bordado de las flores en el chaleco de Mr. B está cargado de simbolismo. Mencionamos esto a modo de apunte, aunque la lista es muy dilatada.

con una connotación evidente de salvación, por no añadir de triunfo sobre la muerte (Chevalier & Gheerbrant, 1986:912).

Es la madre quien, sintiéndose vencida por la muerte, quiere a su vez derrotarla a través de un proceso de continuidad en la persona de su hijo y posiblemente de Pamela, no necesariamente confiando precisamente en una unión entre ellos, sino en la búsqueda ordenada de una pareja para ambos, aunque lo primero no puede ser descartado fácilmente, debido a la ambigüedad contextual de las últimas palabras de la madre. Dadas las rarezas sexuales y el carácter despótico de Mr. B, no constituye una idea descabellada conjeturar que la madre viese en Pamela una posible compañera de su hijo, y si lo pensó, no se equivocó si nos atenemos al comportamiento de Mr. B en calidad de esposo. Pamela es la única mujer que lo aguantaría. Puede que su madre cuando menos lo sospechase. Sea como fuese, lo cierto del caso es que incluso la moribunda parece desear que surja de la muerte (su muerte) la vida, a modo de prolongación de su propia estirpe, simbolizada por la transferencia del oro de la madre al hijo, y del hijo a Pamela. No hay herederos, Lady Davers no tiene hijos, ni parece que los tendrá. Su familia debe perdurar dentro del ámbito de un orden social externo, aunque sea aberrante en lo privado.

El asunto del dinero entronca directamente con lo que Pamela nos dice en la carta XI, ajustándose como un guante a lo que Mr. B está buscando. Sentir un inmenso placer ante el miedo de Pamela, en su rol de Señor haciendo sufrir sádicamente a su presa, adornada ahora con la ropa de su madre. Tarda algo, pero, incapaz de reprimir sus anómalos impulsos sexuales, acaba por lanzarse cual poseso directamente sobre Pamela.<sup>13</sup> Han pasado aproximadamente unos doce meses, y ni los padres

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<sup>13</sup> Aunque no lo discutiremos aquí, que Richardson haya dado una fecha exacta entre el día de la muerte de la Señora y el día del ataque sexual, produce una gran incomodidad. Y no soluciona el problema inherente a la edad de Pamela. Teniendo presente, para empezar, los años que tenía Pamela cuando entró a servir, doce, la edad que tiene ahora, quince, más el año que ha pasado, de hecho no ha estado tanto tiempo al servicio de la dama en cuestión: dos años. Hubiesen sido tres si Pamela tuviese dieciséis años, no quince. Más aun, sólo tenía catorce años cuando murió la señora, lo que no hubiese permitido a Mr. B acosarla sexualmente con tanta premura: hubiese sido demasiado. Rozaría la pederastia. Considerando sus catorce años, la personalidad de Pamela deja mucho espacio para la sorpresa: tiene una profunda fijación con la indumentaria. Lleva puesta la ropa de una difunta. Y o bien asumimos que falta algo de credibilidad en todo ello, o la imagen que Richardson nos ofrece de Pamela no es mucho mejor que la de Mr. B. Es mejor que Richardson no hubiese tratado de ser tan realista. Pamela afirma en una de sus cartas que, cuando muere la señora, tiene catorce años, pero no especifica si los acaba de cumplir: y si nos aferramos a esta última aseveración, Pamela está rozando

la han visitado, ni ésta parece estar preparada para el ya más que anunciado encuentro sexual. Estaba ella, escribe, en un invernadero de verano cosiendo, cuando apareció Mr. B. La toma de la mano, tiembla ella para no perder la costumbre, y llora desconsoladamente.

(...) He put his arm about me, and kissed me! I struggled and trembled, and was so benumbed with terror, that I sunk down, not in a fit, and yet not myself; and I found myself in his arms, quite void of strength; and he kissed me two or three times, with frightful eagerness- at last I burst from him, and was getting out of the summer-house; but he held me back, and shut the door. (16)

Lo que ha ocurrido es muy simple y esperado: ha pasado directamente de la insinuación al acto físico. La ha besado, y se ha producido un inicio de tocamientos obscenos. La alarma empieza a sonar, porque no sólo escribe que la ha besado, sino que siguiendo la misma tónica que empleó catalogando la ropa que le dió, cuenta detalladamente incluso el número de veces que la ha besado, además de los sentimientos de terror que la embargaron. No obstante, no dice nunca dónde la besa. La escena es cuando menos patética, y de hecho ha ocurrido mucho menos de lo esperado, pero, como es un episodio inconcluso, el lector espera un segundo encuentro, uno mucho más violento que éste, uno en el que la joven no salga tan bien parada.

Pamela, escribe ella, ha conseguido escapar del abrazo de Mr. B. Se trata de una joven delicada, y por consiguiente que haya conseguido eludir con tanta rapidez como facilidad su abrazo, independientemente de estar casi sin fuerza física debido al miedo que le ha producido este imprevisto hostigamiento, pone de manifiesto lo que Bergen (1974) escribe: que Mr. B nunca forzará a Pamela. Lo intenta inicialmente a modo de juego, lleno de infantiles esperanzas, seguro de obtener una respuesta positiva, cegado por su poder y despotismo. Ahora bien, tanto haya respuesta como no la haya, desde el principio, un lector avisado, un lector cuyos ojos no hayan sido empañados por el morbo sexual inherente al acoso sexual, así lo percibiría. Mr. B jamás utilizará la fuerza

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los dieciseis años cuando Mr. B empezó a hostigarla. Es necesario, para terminar, recordar que una chica a los catorce está en proceso de formación corporal, de ahí que esté un poco fuera de lugar tanto encomio respecto a su belleza física, es la hermosura de una adolescente, no la de una mujer. Credibilidad le falta también a lo mucho que Pamela es capaz de aprender en tan poco tiempo. ¿Por qué ha escrito tan pocas cartas en todo un año? ¿Qué justifica el que así, de pronto, se produzcan a semejante velocidad? Son preguntas merecedoras de respuestas rigurosas.

física. Si él hubiese querido, Pamela no hubiese podido escapar indemne del invernadero. Irrebatible es que, en cuanto nota que la joven no está dispuesta a entregarse voluntariamente a él, ante el menor forcejeo, muy a su pesar, la deja marchar. Quizás con el forcejeo le baste, de la misma forma que más adelante los desmayos de Pamela acaban siendo episodios físicos que satisfacen a Mr. B a modo de transvase sexual, o muerte simbólica, sustituyendo el acto sexual en sí.

La ira se apoderará de él, y era de esperar. La humillación le deslumbrará, y es razonable, pues su orgullo de varón ha sido pisoteado, ha quedado totalmente mancillado. Pero no importa el número de veces que Mr. B se sienta peor que un perro apaleado, siempre la dejará ir; y rabia, e impotencia y vergüenza es lo que siente ahora Mr. B, respondiendo en este sentido de una forma muy masculina, aunque mezquina, al rechazo de Pamela, llamándola precisamente lo que ha demostrado ampliamente no ser: una ramera. Utiliza curiosamente la palabra *hussy*, pero ahora no con el sentido que Pamela le quiso dar cuando ella misma la empleó en una de sus cartas, sino con el de fulana. Aunque primero todo se reduce a gritar *hussy* (16), poco después se vuelve tremendamente explícito ante una Pamela asustada, atónita, incoherente y llorosa: “He was angry, and said. Who would have you otherwise, you foolish slut! Cease your blubbering” (17). Está bien advertida ahora. Además de llamarla *slut*, le asegura que sólo de esta forma la tendrá. Que sólo una necia contemplaría la posibilidad de que fuese de otra manera. Ahora ya no es llanto lo que sacude la delicada forma de Pamela, ahora está *bluberring*, es decir, sollozando incontroladamente, entrecortadamente.

Más no se ha podido conseguir en tan poco espacio. Siente terror, tiembla, casi se desmaya, pierde toda su fuerza física, es insultada, solloza a la par que Mr. B le aclara la forma incondicional en que la poseerá. La llama *foolish slut*, una variante de *hussy*, amarga ironía, pues es precisamente poder transformarla en su zorra, o barragana si se prefiere, su único objetivo. La carga erótica es tremenda, y su impacto más, por no ser una descripción que trata con la debida franqueza lo que se esconde detrás de ella, algo no del todo divorciado de lo que habría de abocar años más tarde en lo que se conoce como crimen sexual.

Si retomamos algunos aspectos de este incidente, podríamos incluso matizar algo más de lo que hasta el momento hemos estado discutiendo



respecto a la dudosa sexualidad de Mr. B. No es tan inasequible imaginarse que la satisfacción sexual de Mr. B radica en verla reducida al rol de esclava sexual, de subyugada doliente. El punto empieza a perfilarse cuando, durante este ataque, en lugar de seguir adelante y consumar el acto, acaba Mr. B depositando unas monedas de oro en su mano: “putting some gold in my hand, to make you amends for the fright I put you in” (17). Le intenta pagar no los besos que le ha robado, tampoco por los tocamientos obscenos. Lo que le está abonando, y con oro, es el miedo que ha sentido, fenómeno que apenas necesita mayores comentarios.

Esta rareza la podemos comprobar en el segundo intento de Mr. B, no menos patético que el primero. La encuentra sola, y está aterrada. Escribe:

I fell down on my knees, and said, for Heaven's sake, your honor, pity a poor creature, that knows nothing of her duty, but how to cherish her virtue and good name: I have nothing else to trust to; and, though poor and friendless here, yet I have always been taught to value honesty above my life (...) leaving me on my knees; and I threw my apron over my face, and laid my head on a chair, and cried as if my heart would break, having no power to stir. (25)

No sólo adopta Pamela la postura de la víctima propiciatoria, del manso y dulce cordero que está a punto de ser inmolado, sino que se representa a sí misma como a una criatura pobre, y lo que es peor, sin amigos (esto último, si nos atenemos a lo que escribe no es cierto). Es la reo sobre el cadalso que ruega e implora a su verdugo que tenga compasión de ella. También le recuerda cuál es su falta, su pecado; y lo que le rememora es precisamente lo que más ha de avivar su inflamado deseo sexual. Que ella es doncella, que defenderá con su vida su virginidad. Hay un mucho de humillación, de dolor, de pavor, en Pamela, siendo esto, a nuestro entender, el auténtico catalizador de los deseos desenfrenados, poco viriles y transgresores, a la par que turbadores de Mr. B. Aunque es cierto que no la viola, también es igualmente cierto que la escena es hartamente irritante, y dificultosa de digerir; digna de un cuento gótico. Además, el gesto que hace Pamela de taparse la cara contribuye, en gran medida, a activar los ya de por sí excitados ánimos imaginativos de un varón de la tipología de Mr. B. Hombres hay que creen que cuanto más se tapa una mujer más misteriosa se vuelve, y

consecuentemente mayores son los deseos que provoca.<sup>14</sup> Debido a ello, afirman que algunas mujeres, conscientes del poder inherente a lo que puede sugerir lo que ocultan, recurren a gestos tan femeninos como el de taparse los ojos, e incluso el de ponerse la mano delante de la boca, antes de proferir una franca y abierta carcajada.

La visualización imaginativa del cuadro pintado por Richardson, utilizando la máscara de Pamela, es sediciosa, ergo su temática. Pamela está literalmente en el suelo, dentro de un precioso encuadre de lujo, incapaz de soportar el peso de su dolor, la carga de su terror, con la cabeza recostada sobre una silla, y el rostro pudorosamente cubierto con su delantal, mientras los sollozos la sacuden como si fuese una frágil ramilla a punto de romperse.<sup>15</sup> El otro está en posición vertical. Se pasea a su alrededor, mostrándose altanero, haciendo gala de su poderío ante el espectáculo que Pamela le ofrece, lleno a rebosar de la fuerza electrizante de su supuesta masculinidad, pero, incapaz de entender lo poco que hay de masculino en aterrorizar a una pobre mujer indefensa, además de complacerse con semejante espanto. Que Mr. B tiene unos marcados rasgos sadomasoquistas, es más que evidente. Que Pamela los alimenta con su pánico, con sus súplicas, y con su arrodillarse implorante, apenas se puede dudar.

Lo que en el fondo busca Mr. B, aunque no está abiertamente explicitado en el texto, queda bastante claro con lo que ocurre, una vez que éste trata de tomarla por la fuerza. Pamela se desmaya, y queda inerte, sobre el suelo, como si fuese un trapo:

“For I fell into a fit with my terror, and there I lay, till he, as  
I supposed, looking through the key-hole, spyped me upon the floor,

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<sup>14</sup> Pero la mujer tiende a cubrirse en un doble sentido: para ocultarse y para protegerse. El impulso de encubrimiento es, en una de sus raíces, una busca callada de protección y patrocinio. Por el otro, está el golosineo de lo secreto. Cubrirse la cara con las manos -como en el sollozo-, es un gesto oriundo de la femineidad que siente el dolor y la vergüenza de haber pecado, acaso de haber exteriorizado su afán de exhibición y entrega y trata ahora de protegerse y de ocultarse entre los brazos (Bergen, 1974:210).

<sup>15</sup> La mujer sueña hermetismos, cierres y secretos. Pero también desgarros; de ahí esos broches levisimamente prendidos en los vestidos (Bergen, 1974:211). Es interesante cotejar las ideas de un hombre como el Dr. Caba con las de Richardson, puesto que arrojan mucha luz sobre el segundo, amén de su actitud hacia la virginidad y buena femineidad. Algunas de sus afirmaciones más parecen ajustarse al delirio varonil de su corto entendimiento de lo femineo que al mundo real. Se olvida Caba, entre otras muchas cosas, que a la mujer no la vestía entonces la mujer, sino el hombre. Puede que a una mujer jamás se le hubiese ocurrido diseñar la clase de broches de la que Caba está hablando. La mujer moderna no es muy amante de los broches, elemento decorativo tremendamente desfasado. Es el hombre quien sueña con el desgarror, no la mujer. Y es el hombre quien habla de pecado y culpabilidad, tratando así de hacer lo mismo que hace el infeliz de Mr. B: decir que le han hechizado.

stretched at length, on my face; and then he called Mrs. Jervis to me, who, by his assistance, bursting open the door, he went away".  
(26)

Lo peor no es que quede tirada en el suelo, sino lo que ella nos dice de Mr. B; cree que la contempló de tal guisa a través del ojo de la cerradura, confirmando así a la escena un toque de delirio sexual prohibido. La jovencita no sólo está tirada en el suelo, sin sentido, y el rostro oculto por su cabello, sino con la ropa desgarrada mientras su agresor está mirándola. La escena roza peligrosamente lo repulsivo, pero, repelente o no, satisface los impulsos erótico imaginativos de Mr. B, e indirectamente los de algún lector ávido de fantasías sexuales. Es la muerte simbólica de Pamela, contemplada, en este caso, de la misma forma en que lo haría un mirón, lo que sustituye al coito, lindando arriesgadamente el área del delito sexual. Dice Wilson (1990:514): "Samuel Richardson and Jean-Jaques Rousseau discovered that when imagination is combined with sexual desire, the result is twice as intoxicating".

Y tiene toda la razón, aunque pocos hayan sido capaces de ver a Richardson de esta forma. Ahora bien, si Richardson era consciente de ello, es otro problema mucho más difícil de elucidar. Pero, independientemente de lo que fuese, toda la novela constituye una sostenida fantasía erótica cruzada y entrecruzada por una tupida urdimbre de un sadomasoquismo astutamente dirigido, aleteando éste sin cesar al igual que una mariposa en la noche en torno a una llameante transgresión presupuesta, donde el placer extático queda suspendido en el aire, diferido, y consecuentemente magnifica el deseo innato al pensamiento tanto mágico como creativo del hombre.

El artífice no es Pamela, sino Mr. B, joven, que, como hemos apuntado desde el principio de este trabajo, es muy complejo, constituyendo un magnífico muestrario de desviaciones sexuales, configuradas a lo largo de los años, bajo la férrea tutela de su madre, y de los cuidados de una hermana de más edad que él, y también dominante.

Aunque Mr. B no ha matado a Pamela, a cotas alegóricas sí lo ha hecho; y cada vez que consiga que Pamela pierda el sentido, él se marchará, tranquilo, calmado, dejando en manos de otros la igualmente simbólica resurrección de la joven, para así poder reincidir. Además de la brutalidad psicológica, intrínseca a la escena, hay mucha violencia física. La puerta tiene que ser derribada a golpes. Hay clamor de voces,

estruendo, y lo que es peor, la ruptura de una entrada, símbolo de protección y de ritos de paso. Hay, en este sentido, la destrucción de una cerradura, como parte indivisible de una llave, elemento que ha tenido su función atenuante, a modo de perversión sexual, fenómeno que debería inquietar mucho al lector. No en vano la llave es un símbolo del poder, del mandamiento, pues abre y cierra las puertas. Es también símbolo del misterio a penetrar y emblema del enigma a resolver. El símbolo/o símbolos contenidos en llave/cerrojo son dilatados y complejos, conteniendo un amplio e intrigante conjunto de niveles de significado que encajan, sin dejar resquicio alguno, dentro de la trama sexual del discurso narrativo. Pero por falta de espacio, queda su estudio relegado a los otros trabajos. Para Mr. B ya no hay barreras, se ha quebrado el último bastión, el último vestigio de dignidad que le quedaba. Ha perdido todo su sentido de la responsabilidad, vergüenza y decoro. En resumen, le está tomando demasiado gusto al juego. Su repetición es ya inevitable. Nada separa a Mr. B de Pamela, siendo precisamente sus muertes alegóricas lo que la salvarán. Sin embargo, para Mr. B esto no ha sido un fracaso, más bien todo lo contrario. Es por ello por lo que no podemos esperar de él el lógico comportamiento de un hombre que, obcecado momentáneamente por un deseo irracional, luego recapacita serenamente, y trata de olvidar lo ocurrido.

Si el dinero se transformó en un sistema de intentos de compra de favores sexuales, las cartas de Pamela también funcionan al mismo nivel. Por mucho que se queje Mr. B de que la joven se pasa el día escribiendo, nada le complace más que lo haga porque sus cartas constituyen el medio que le permite revivir una y otra vez la excitación sexual causada por sus encuentros con Pamela. Las lee una y otra vez, a escondidas, furtivamente, como un ladrón. Actualmente, esta clase de hombre hubiese tenido una cámara y hubiese filmado las escenas. Ergo en la patética soledad de su cuarto se hubiese deleitado hasta la saciedad, proyectando, una y otra vez, las escenas que tanto le gratificaron, sin querer entender jamás que está cometiendo una incalificable transgresión.

Para Mr. B se trata de un juego, así lo dice, y no está mintiendo. El problema radica en que ni él mismo comprende ni la naturaleza del juego, ni Pamela deja de alentarle al seguir reaccionando como él desea. En cuanto recobra el sentido, y muy a pesar de estar ya protegida por Mrs. Jervis, dice que: "I fainted away with the terror". (26)

Otro aspecto inherente al grafismo de la escena que estamos considerando lo tenemos en la descripción de la ropa de Pamela, además de la implacable persecución a que es sometida, antes de tener la suerte de encontrar un lugar no sólo donde encerrarse sino donde desmayarse. Dice Pamela:

He then put his hand in my bosom, and indignation gave me double strenght, and I got loose from him by a sudden spring, and run out of the room! And the next chamber being open, I made shift to get into it, and threw to the door, and it locked after me, but he followed me so close, he got hold of my gown, and tore a piece off, which hung without the door, for the key was on the inside. (26)

La imagen que provoca en lo que hemos llamado, «pensamiento mágico en el hombre» es muy intensa, y estremecedora. Está hábilmente controlada por verbos de movimiento, y frases cortas. La joven forcejea, consigue deshacerse del abrazo de Mr. B y sale corriendo despavorida de la habitación. Sigue corriendo y tiene la buena fortuna de hacerlo hacia el sitio adecuado; hacia un cuarto que además de tener la puerta abierta tiene la llave puesta. Se lanza desesperada hacia ese aposento, y trata de cerrar la puerta, pero, Mr. B corre también tras ella, pisándole, por así decirlo, los talones, tanto que se las arregla para tratar de retenerla agarrando (o eso parece), una parte de su vestido. Ella se defiende y, en su heroica y desesperada resistencia, un trozo de su vestido se desgarró (*tore*), y queda éste colgando de la puerta. Tiene suerte, la llave estaba en la parte interna (*inside*), cierra la puerta, y como siempre, muy a tiempo, tiene la buena estrella de caer sobre el suelo, pero sin sentido.

No vamos a meternos en el problema de cómo pudo Mr. B mirar por el ojo de la cerradura si la llave estaba puesta, y menos aún si muy a pesar de los temblores Pamela tuvo tiempo de quitarla, y de arrojarla al suelo. Lo aquí nos interesa es que hay varias cosas en la descripción de esta escena que deleitarían a un hombre como Mr. B. Un joven que, posiblemente debido a su inseguridad, o baja varonía si se prefiere, se siente poderoso persiguiendo a una jovencita como Pamela, además de fascinado ante lo que intuye está al descubierto de su joven anatomía, pero, que por mucho que mire por el ojo de la cerradura, parece que no lo pudo ver, y si lo consiguió, nada dice Pamela al respecto. Mucho consigue Mr. B, pues además del trofeo viviente (Pamela desmayada) de sus desmanes, hay otro, meramente material, el trozo de ropa desgarrada a

su disposición, a modo de fetiche, porque según Pamela ha quedado colgando en la parte externa del cuarto.

No es fácil, muy a pesar de su efectividad emotiva, de la violencia de las carreras por los pasillos, de los jadeos jamás mencionados, aceptar todo lo que Pamela nos ha contado respecto a este episodio, a no ser que Richardson esté incitando al lector a interpretar lo que dice Pamela en términos de otra singular ramificación transgresora propia del ya complejísimo y enrarecido mundo erótico de Mr. B. Pamela podría haber sido algo más explícita a este respecto. No dice demasiado, sólo sugiere y veladamente, lo que aún es más perverso por parte de Richardson, y por consiguiente más efectivo en relación con el lector que tenga tendencias afines a las de Mr. B. El silencio de Pamela, y sus sucintas ambigüedades van creando extraños caminos que conducen al mundo de la imaginación pervertida, a recrear la escena como mejor se ajuste a las inclinaciones del lector. Si es mujer de la época de Richardson, entre sonrojo y sonrojo, puede negarse obtusamente a considerar que alguna parte de su joven cuerpo ha quedado expuesto a las libidinosas miradas de Mr. B, o puede ocurrir todo lo contrario, lo que la llevaría a conjeturar imaginativamente cuál. Todo vale. La escena está estructurada de tal forma que la imaginación se dispara incontrolada al decir Pamela que el trozo desgarrado quedó colgando de la puerta, a modo de señal proléctica de futuros y más jugosos acosos sexuales.

Se puede, a partir de las razones psico-eróticas que controlan el mundo tosco, oscuro y enfermizo de Mr. B, deducir sin mayor riesgo de equivocarse que el protagonista del discurso narrativo es él, compartiendo su solitario y secreto regodeo sexual, su incesante rumiar, su energía descontrolada, no con Pamela, sino con el lector. Pamela es un bebé sediento, alimentándose del fulgor del supuesto amor de Mr. B, pero sin sopesar los riesgos, contingencias tales como la adicción a la violencia, o el mero acostumbramiento. Así nos lo hace sentir Richardson, quien tratando de encomiar las virtudes de Pamela en calidad de esposa, le quita la máscara a Mr. B, y en un momento de inconsciente sinceridad nos ofrece un panorama nada alentador en torno al futuro de Pamela, en calidad de esposa: "I hope, Lady Betty, whenever she marries, will meet with a better husband than I should have made her; for, in my conscience, I think, I should hardly have made a tolerable one to any but Pamela". (468)

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# GAMEL WOOLSEY'S *DEATH'S OTHER KINGDOM*: THE PSYCHOLOGICAL VIEW ON THE SPANISH CIVIL WAR OF AN ANGLO-AMERICAN EXPATRIATE IN MÁLAGA

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## **Abstract**

*This paper endeavours to shed some light upon the psychological approach used by Gamel Woolsey in her *Death's Other Kingdom* (1939), an eye-witness account of the first three months of the Spanish Civil War in Málaga. Woolsey's poor knowledge of Spain and of the military and political aspects of the war is, it appears, the main reason why she concentrates primarily on portraying the effects of the war on the population of Málaga under Fascist siege. The easy life of leisure of foreign expatriates in Spain in the 1930's is also exposed and described in detail through Woolsey's account.*

"I'm often in limbo"<sup>1</sup>  
(Gamel Woolsey)

Gamel Woolsey's *Death's Other Kingdom*<sup>2</sup> (1988) is a personal eye-witness account that covers the time span of the outbreak of the Spanish Civil War in Málaga and its development throughout its first three months, up until the moment that an American destroyer finally collected

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<sup>1</sup> (Partridge, 1988:viii).

<sup>2</sup> It was originally published in 1939 in London (with a preface by J. C. Powys) (Thomas, 1964:654). The edition used is Virago, 1988. Woolsey took the title from a poem by T. S. Eliot (Règas, 1998:11), for whom she professed a high admiration. Zalin Grant changed the original title to *Malaga Burning. An American Woman's Eyewitness Account in the Spanish Civil War* and was in charge of its publication in England and in the United States (11).

her husband and herself and took them away from this war-torn country. Woolsey's view on the Spanish ordeal is nevertheless a non-military one. She is mostly concerned with showing the psychological impact that the war had on the civilian population and especially on women and children, the weaker elements in the conflict.<sup>3</sup> Her account is restricted to Málaga and to Churriana, the village where she lived with her husband the hispanist and historian Gerald Brenan, as Woolsey appears to be oblivious to the outside world. This was no doubt due to her limited perspective on the war and also partly due to the fact that any communication with Madrid or any other cities had been cut off. The exception to this lack of communication was some dubious radio broadcasting, the most appealing of which was the insurgent General Queipo de Llano's vociferous radio speeches from Seville.<sup>4</sup>

In Woolsey's eyes the Malagueñan society -the adjective is herself-seemed to be divided into four groups. The top of Woolsey's social scale appeared to be occupied by Brenan and herself, a married couple of expatriates who, according to the authoress's account, promptly fulfilled the roles of defenders of the weak. They claim to be objective observers of the war and judges of the events. Then came the numerous English expatriates residing in Málaga and its surroundings (of equal status to the Brenans, but who were not always as well informed of the idiosyncrasies of the country or as familiar with the Spanish language). Next came their household servants, whom the Brenans called their "family" (consisting of Enrique, the gardener; María, his mother, the housekeeper and cook; Pilar, María's melancholy widowed daughter, and Mariquilla, who Woolsey describes rather unelegantly as Pilar's "ugly" child).<sup>5</sup> The bottom of Woolsey's social scale is occupied by the lay population of Málaga and Churriana, who, in an undisguised

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<sup>3</sup> Règas (1998:10) was the first one to notice Woolsey's interest in describing people's reaction to the phenomenon of war, leaving aside dates, political parties and military events as much as she could.

<sup>4</sup> In *Memoria Personal 1920/1975* (1980), which I have consulted as I have not been able to use *Personal Record 1920/1972* (1974), Brenan (1980:418-20) copies his wife's account of Queipo de Llano's polemic personality and the anecdotes attributed to him almost word for word. Brenan (1977:80) includes this passage in his *Historia y Vida* article on the war in Málaga. Although signed by Brenan himself, the article is simply an anonymous Spanish translation of the most important passages of *Personal Record*.

<sup>5</sup> According to Brenan's *Memoria Personal*, their servants were María, her sister Rosario, and Antonio, Rosario's husband.

condescending and patronising attitude, the authoress feels she has to protect and guide: «claiming protection», Woolsey writes, «seemed always to me very characteristic of the relations of Spanish servants and masters at their best» (9).

The Brenans, who referred to each other as *Señora* and *Don Geraldo* when in the presence of a Spaniard, led the typical life of leisure of English expatriates in Málaga until the war broke out. The references to their life of ease and relaxation before the war are numerous. Gamel speaks of their privileged garden as being paradisaical and consequently calls it the “Garden of Eden” (8). In July, they have showers in the garden (2), bathe in the cistern (1), have late breakfasts (3), sit in the patio for tea in the shade of the house (5), spend their days in their bathing suits (1), have delicious red mullet, the freshest vegetables and great bowls of fruit (3). As Woolsey plainly puts it, “it was lovely to have nothing in the world to do, simply bask in the day like lizards in the shade of the high white garden wall” (4). As expatriates, their aim in life was to live cheaply and at peace in remote Iberia where nothing ever changed, far from the troubles of Europe (4). They are proud of their expatriate condition, especially of the privileged situation that their foreign nationalities allow them to have: it almost guarantees them neutrality in the Spanish war and distances them from the conflict: “the English were the friends of [Republican] Spain” (15) or, as the *Malagueño* anarchists and workers say to each other when they come across the Brenans, “they are no Fascists” (27). Woolsey bases the respect that the Left wing in Málaga felt for Brenan and herself on the fact that they “had never injured them, nor [were they] associated in their minds with any class of people or institutions which had” (50). This neutrality was nevertheless ineffective when bombing took place,<sup>6</sup> but it at least prevented them from having their house searched for weapons too often. The country folk (especially women) saw the Brenan household as a sanctuary of protection and consolation and a shield from bombs and the ill-famed Moors: “The kitchen was full of poor old countrywomen who had already begun to see Moors behind every bush and had come for protection and consolation. That day for the first time we flew our English flag” (22).

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<sup>6</sup> Churriana in general and the Brenans in particular received a large share of the bombs, as the Nationalists had incorrect information about a huge ammunition dump in the village (Gathorne-Hardy 1992:305).

This belief was certainly encouraged by the Brenans themselves after hoisting the British flag: “Now the house is sacred. No one can touch it” (23), they said, a remark that gave great comfort to both the servants and their poor neighbours. It also implied an overt affirmation of the Brenans’ superiority over the local inhabitants and symbolised a legitimate boasting of their patriotism. After all, the Brenan matrimony believed that the English were “members of a stronger nation” (62). The lower floor of their house was always crowded with refugees, especially when the bombings became regular. Many spent the whole day and even slept there, afraid to go back to their fragile houses. Woolsey describes the state of terror and hysterics of the villagers, for whom she confesses to having felt a physical repugnance (88). However, at other times she claims to feel some kind of missionary purpose and feels “nothing but love -for them and for the millions like them, the poor, the suffering, the burden bearers of this world” (90). She even thinks of converting her house into a hospital (51).

Being of British nationality,<sup>7</sup> the expatriates were allowed to flee the country in a destroyer or to make their way to the neutral territory of nearby Gibraltar when the situation became unbearable. The alleged neutrality of the foreigners is mentioned by Gamel as much as possible. The Brenans make a point of often smiling at the Spanish population and «feeling a profound attraction towards them, towards the Spanish people -not the Left nor the Right, but the people of Spain» (63). In spite of Brenan’s sympathy for the Left and the Anarchists, he offers Don Carlos, a well-known local Fascist of some unknown aristocratic origin, and his charming family, refuge in his house, a deed that brings him unquestionable danger and numerous problems, especially when Don Carlos does not prove to be the most discreet of men and indeed a radical and violent *falangista*.<sup>8</sup> Many pages are dedicated in this book to the tension and difficult relations existing between the English host and the Spanish guest and the ordeal that Brenan went through, despite his differences of opinion with Don Carlos, in trying to help him and his family escape the country using their dubious claims to Chilean

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<sup>7</sup> In spite of the fact that Gamel Woolsey was American, she speaks of herself as English.

<sup>8</sup> Don Carlos’s surname is hidden in Woolsey’s book. When she needs to refer to his family she writes «the C - family». However, Brenan uses his surname in *Memoria Personal*, and so does Gathorne-Hardy in Brenan’s biography: Crooke-Larios.

nationality.<sup>9</sup> Another British expatriate, a Scottish resident on the outskirts of Málaga, the anarchist sympathiser Sir Peter Chalmers Mitchell, author of *My House in Málaga* (1938), generously provided Don Tomás Bolín (and his wife Doña Mercedes), prominent Fascists of Málaga, with a hiding place in his villa and valuable help in their escape.<sup>10</sup> The fact that expatriates were believed to be ignorant of, or distant from “las cosas de España” (which in most cases was indeed true), allowed them to give refuge to wanted Fascists. Indeed, Mitchell (1938:85) admits that «the English in Málaga knew nothing of what was going on». He added that, when he went into the city, though empty and silent, he did not have «the smallest interference (...), the car having a small Union Jack over the radiator cap, and the Gibraltar number» (86). Expatriates were very seldom disturbed.

Naturally, servants were a key element in the idle life of the expatriates in Spain. Their jobs were limited to looking after their masters, advising them on the often unpredictable behaviour of the native people, and above all, working for them. The servants are invariably presented as doing their chores efficiently and happily. For example, Woolsey (1988:1) states “Enrique, our gardener, was already at work irrigating the tomatoes (...) for the garden was his pride and his joy”. And María, who has the task of dealing with the household’s economy, from time to time could be heard “bargaining, raising her voice in horror because melons were a farthing more today” (2). Their opinions on the current situation is usually looked down upon as coming from intellectually inferior minds. Enrique’s only virtues are his loyalty to his master and mistress and his capacity for hard work. María’s main asset is her skill as a cook. Her unwillingness to accept any change whatsoever perhaps indicates her inability to develop intellectually. María, as well as the other servants, is happy to work for the Brenans because her life of poverty and hunger that she experienced living in the

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<sup>9</sup> Brenan also dedicates many pages in his *Memoria Personal* (1980:430-43) to his difficult relationship with Don Carlos during the month that he and his family spent hidden in his house. Gathorne-Hardy (1992:305-10) does too.

<sup>10</sup> This is told in detail by Sir Peter Chalmers Mitchell himself in his *My House in Málaga* (1938:100-120 and 182-203). For more details on the book itself and the version that Mitchell wrote on the war in Málaga in contrast to other travel books like John Langdon-Davies’ *Behind the Spanish Barricades* (1936), Bernard Newman’s *I Saw Spain* (1937), Kate O’Brien’s *Farewell in Spain* (1937), the Duchess of Atholl’s *Searchlight on Spain* (1938), Gamel Woolsey’s *Death’s Other Kingdom* (1939) and Marjorie Grice-Hutchinson’s *Malaga Farm* (1956), see Ruiz Mas (1997).

Alpujarra is now over. María's daughter, Pilar, is described as an immature and childish widow. Her pathetic attachment to Woolsey's cast-offs reveals just how perfectly she has accepted her inferiority to her mistress and her innocent pride for having the "role of servant in a big house of the English" (10). The authoress's constant mention of Pilar's best clothes being Woolsey's own imply the latter's delight at her superiority over her servant.

All Spanish servants working for the expatriates seem to have one characteristic in common: they are proud to work for the English, who pay well (according to Spanish standards) and treat them in an affectionate and familiar way. Pilar's pride in her condition as a servant is shown in the fact that she aspires to have her young daughter Mariquilla working for the Brenans in the future: "I want to bring her up to do you credit when she is your servant", she solemnly says to Woolsey (9). Brenan's American friend Gray speaks of his own servant María, from Cártama, as a bad-tempered old woman who "stays with [him] because [he] pays her well and she's rather fond of [him]" (27). Needless to say, Woolsey's affectionate treatment of the Spanish servants does not prevent them from calling her *Señora* and her husband *Don Geraldo*. According to her friend Frances Partridge (1988:ix), Gamel often talked nostalgically about her childhood in her father's cotton plantation in South Carolina, where the black slaves cared for their master and children with devotion, and were granted love and protection by their employers in return. The treatment that the Brenans give their *Alpujarreño* servants is no doubt similar to the paternalistic treatment of the Woolseys towards their black slaves.

Woolsey's vision on Spain and its culture is on the whole based on the typical clichés so widely spread by previous travel writers. She comments on the Spaniard's beautiful manners (by which "even a beggar by the road eating dry bread offers it courteously to the rich passer-by and is as courteously refused") (5) and the poetic greetings that Spaniards use with each other (12). She also mentions the concept of the village as a unit and the bond of the peasants to it (6), and the Spaniards' great attachment to their children and to their land (8), and comments on the grave beauty of the Spanish woman, a beauty as austere as that of the Spanish landscape (9). However, Woolsey makes an effort to put an end to the widespread accusation of Spain as a cruel, brutal and illiterate

country by taking pains to prove to her readers that it is also a country with a glorious history, literature and saints (196).

From Churriana and their life of ease the news that the Brenans obtained from the war was very limited and more often than not completely misleading or exaggerated. The smoke rising from urban Málaga and the lorries full of armed workmen saluting with their left fists which was typical of the Popular Front and shouting *Salud!* while passing through Churriana suggest that something important is taking place. Chalmers Mitchell (1938:95) also recalls the sound of heavy firing coming from the centre of Málaga and great columns of smoke rising and the flickering glow of flames over the hill that separated his villa *Villa Lucía* (in the Limonar area) from the city. The flames started to get closer and closer, villa after villa along the Limonar, bursting into flames (96). It was long afterwards that Chalmers Mitchell learnt what had been happening. The Brenans also spend the whole chapter wondering about what is going on and about the origin of so many fires.<sup>11</sup>

All the Brenans know for certain is that they can sense the optimistic atmosphere of an Anarchist revolution, which idealistically claims that Man can aspire to a better and happier world where he would be free and happy (14). In his autobiographical *Memoria Personal 1920/1975*, Brenan (1980:404-5) coincides with Woolsey in the narration of the first moments of a chaotic but optimistic Anarchist feast, as well as in the description of the Anarchist manifesto of honesty and good will. The patrol of anarchists that searches for weapons in Brenan's house creates a most embarrassing situation for them, for all they find is Gamel's lingerie. Brenan believed that this anecdote confirmed the belief that he includes in his *Memoria Personal* (405), that, had they found the jewellery and silver in the house, they would never have stolen it. Woolsey (1988:17) also believes in the anarchist's integrity: "[an Anarchist] might have killed me in the pursuit of Anarchy, but he would never have stolen from me". She later adds that "[she] cannot help always feeling a sort of love for the anarchists in Spain" (71).

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<sup>11</sup> Thomas (1964:38) writes that «within a few days the fires had spread to Andalusia, especially to Málaga». Grice-Hutchinson (1956:147) says that «on reaching Malaga [in July, 1936] [her] father found many buildings destroyed» and adds that «the mob had given free rein to its passion for incendiarism, an instinct so deeply rooted in the Spanish soul that [she] think[s] it must date back to some primitive fire-cult».

The Brenans hear all types of confused versions and accounts of war events. From these the married couple only manages to ascertain that “there had been a fight between some soldiers who tried to seize the Government buildings and the Guardias de Asalto and the soldiers had deserted their officers” (15).<sup>12</sup>

Rumours filled the air of Málaga: that four hundred Fascists’ houses had been burnt (15), that the fierce and demoniac *El Tercio* was coming (19), that the Fascists were hidden in the mountains ready to set siege to the city (20). Neither the very anarchists, despite their mobilization, nor the Brenans themselves seem to know anything for sure. They are so confused that they feel obliged to ask an American journalist and friend of theirs that lived in Torremolinos, Gray, to explain to them what was happening. The summarised account of the events that the American gives them is however quite accurate considering that it is only the day after the coup d’état.<sup>13</sup> This was presumably added by Woolsey much later:

Generals in Morocco rose first. Everywhere in Spain they’ve tried to seize the Government buildings. Failed here completely, succeeded in Seville, and God knows where else. I don’t suppose they can do much unless they can get all the Foreign Legion and the Moors over. And I don’t see how they can because the Government has got practically all the Navy. The officers rose, the sailors refused to obey orders. (25)

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<sup>12</sup> This is an oversimplification of the military and political events that took place in Málaga on the first day of Franco’s coup d’état. To illustrate this opinion it is appropriate to offer a summarised narration of the events that took place in Málaga, July 18th 1936 as explained by the historians Rubio Cabeza (1987:502) and Cierva (1996:115): The coup nearly succeeded in Málaga. After some hesitation to join the coup, General Francisco Patxot Madoz, the local military commander, decided to obey Queipo de Llano’s order to proclaim the state of war in the city and therefore sent a battalion under captain Agustín Huelín Gómez’s command to capture the *Gobierno Civil*. The *gobernador civil*, José Antonio Fernández Vega, of the Republican Left Party, supported by the *Guardia de Asalto* corps, refused to resign power. Colonel Fulgencio Gómez Carrión, the chief of the *Guardia Civil* in Málaga, obeyed Republican General Poza’s demand to hand over the command of his troops and the *Guardia Civil* were taken back to their headquarters. The multitude (joined by *guardias de asalto* and carabineers) noisily hit the streets and extensively burnt *Calle Larios* and other bourgeoisie areas in Málaga. The military authorities surrendered. The coup had failed.

<sup>13</sup> According to *Memoria Personal* (109, 406-08 and 408-09), on the afternoon of July 19 Brenan went to Torremolinos by himself to visit a certain Mr Bush, an American resident, who, together with his Spanish wife, was looking for a way to escape to Gibraltar. Naturally, they did not know what was happening. Next Brenan visited a certain Johnny Churchill, who had no idea either. He then visited Jay Allen in Torremolinos, an American correspondent of the *Herald Tribune* and a friend of some Socialist leaders, but he had already left for Gibraltar and Morocco. These facts allow me to reach two conclusions: that nobody, not even the Central Government in Madrid knew what was really happening the day after Franco’s coup d’état, and that Gray is a fictional character based on Jay Allen.



The Brenans wished to know what had happened with their own eyes.<sup>14</sup> They travelled to Málaga and all they could see was a completely empty *Alameda* and the central *Calle Larios* still full of smoke, rubble and twisted iron. The city was evidently in a state of fear, most people having decided to remain at home. All Woolsey can do is to describe the atmosphere of the city and its inhabitants, for no one can still fully interpret the events that have just taken place:

I looked at the other faces around us and all looked queer and wild. The burning of the houses had been an orgy, and they were still completing their satiation among the ashes. Arson, I am sure, is a vice of the nature of an erotic crime: it is rape on the grand scale. The mad faces on the streets of Malaga seemed drugged with the lust of burning; and all the queer creatures of the gutter and the cellar, the twisted, the perverse, and the maimed had crawled up into the light of the flames. (40)

Their only source of information consists of the unreliable opinions of the acquaintances they come across. The steward of the “English Club” tells them that despite so many hundreds of thousands of ammunition fired the day before only twelve people were killed, or that fewer houses than were thought had actually been burnt: two or three blocks in *Calle Larios*, thirty or forty villas in the *Caleta-Limonar* district (the area where Chalmers Mitchell lived) and a few other houses in different parts of the town (44). However, these are all rumours.

Soon after, according to Woolsey, life in Málaga and Churriana becomes almost normal, with the odd rumour of nightly murders carried out by uncontrolled gangs of Anarchists that she calls “Terrorists”.<sup>15</sup> During one of these so-called *paseítos* Juan the baker, a good friend of the Brenan’s, meets his death due to the fact that he is a practising Catholic. Even Brenan himself ->with his strong feelings of humanity

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<sup>14</sup> Woolsey does not say why they risked their lives to see what had happened in Málaga. The real reason why they did so was to find out how they could put Miranda, Brenan’s illegitimate daughter, on board a British ship that could take her away from Málaga. This they did on July 24. As soon as the ship left, the first bombardment began. Although Woolsey wrote *Death’s Other Kingdom* from the notes she took in a diary, Miranda does not appear a single time in the book. It is Brenan (1980:420-1) who mentions their real intentions in leaving Churriana on such a dangerous date. Gathorne-Hardy (1992:304) also mentions this.

<sup>15</sup> According to Rubio Cabeza (1987:502), once the Fascist coup failed in Málaga, the anarchists and the communists succumbed to the murdering of hundreds of *Malagueños* and to arson, leaving the city in a lamentable state of ruin. According to Mitchell (1938:130), «except during the incendiarism of the first two days, when at least one private chapel attached to a mansion was burnt, no churches were burnt or sacked». He adds that, although «evil things» did take place in Málaga, he had not seen any of the so-called “atrocities” (129-130).

and his tremendous energy» (112)- had done his best to try to save Juan's life by talking to the Anarchist Committee and by trying to reason with them, to no avail.<sup>16</sup> Woolsey claims:

I do not think it would have been possible for us to have kept Don Carlos even a week longer than we did. To take in Juan as well would have been very dangerous for them all. (168)

According to Woolsey, terrorists must not be confused with the political parties that ruled the city. She makes the point of telling us that the terrorists acted on their own accord. The nightly murdering finally became a real week of terror and many people were dragged out from their hotels to be killed. The terrorists were after Don Carlos and Juan the baker, among others. The former managed to escape (thanks to Brennan, of course, but only just), but not the latter. However, Woolsey insists that the authorities and the police did their best to stop this and that every political organisation condemned the killings. Yet Woolsey feels "relief" when hearing of Juan's death for "at least his long agony was over and Juan was safely dead" (175). When she says that she was sometimes tormented by the idea that they might have saved Juan, she suddenly excuses her husband's and her own lack of action by claiming "he might have saved himself - if he had acted differently" (175).

Apart from the food rationing and the daily bombing, life in Málaga carries on virtually as normal. Woolsey justifies the odd revolt and the nervousness of the population to the Fascist bombings: "The evil in the air was corrupting everyone", she writes (127). She insists that the stories of atrocities told in Gibraltar about the *Malagueños* are imaginary, but she regrets that they spread too easily and that the feeling of cruelty that these stories all share is always attributed to them by the very English as a product of their perverse minds (126-7). This she finds out when obliged to flee to Gibraltar in an American destroyer: "I realized even more clearly later at Gibraltar, listening to the English talk of atrocities what atrocity stories really are: they are the pornography of violence" (126).

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<sup>16</sup> Juan's full name was Juan Navaja and he was usually known as *el Gaucho*. Brennan always felt guilty for not having given him refuge in his house and therefore indirectly allowing him to be caught in a cave, where he had remained hidden for weeks. In *The Face of Spain*, published in 1950 (though I have consulted a 1987 edition), Brennan (1987:98) insists that he could not have helped his friend by giving him shelter in his house without putting Don Carlos' life at risk. Brennan (1980-428-34) dedicates many pages of his *Memoria Personal* to trying to justify the impossibility of helping him. Gatherne-Hardy (1992:310) refers to this too.

Finally, on September 7, 1936 (a date that Woolsey does not mention in her book) the Brenans leave Málaga on an American ship.<sup>17</sup> Woolsey excuses their flight by saying that they «decided to go to Gibraltar to get some money and find out what was happening and then to return to Spain» (190).<sup>18</sup> Their alleged intentions for leaving are nevertheless difficult to believe. In fact, they did not come back to Spain until 1949 (a journey described in Brenan's *The Face of Spain*, 1950).<sup>19</sup> But the experience of nearly three-months of the Spanish war in Málaga and Churriana left Woolsey with a sea of impressions and thoughts on human nature, on violence, on death, on Spain, on Anarchy, on friendship and on many other aspects, which we have tried to delve into as she experienced them. However, Woolsey clearly admitted to not knowing what was going on in Málaga and in Spain. In Gibraltar, she says, she hopes to be informed on the development of the Spanish war.

One cannot but conclude that Woolsey's knowledge about the whys and wherefores of the Spanish war was very limited. Apart from knowing little, she intentionally hides information from the reader, depicts the events that were -or were not- taking place at the time to her convenience and brings the relevant individual characters to the foreground or the background to suit her intentions. Woolsey's psychological view on the effects of war on the local population is the only one that a foreign expatriate, so often far from being involved in the current affairs of the country, could hope to depict in a book about Spain. Nevertheless, *Death's*

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<sup>17</sup> The date has been located thanks to Gathorne-Hardy (1992:311). The Brenans were among the last English residents to leave Málaga. Sir Peter Chalmers Mitchell left in February 1937, when the Fascists captured the city. According to Gathorne-Hardy (1992:311), the only British expatriate that remained in Málaga throughout the war was Walter Grice-Hutchinson, a convinced pro-Francoist resident and the father of Marjorie, authoress of *Malaga Farm* (1956) and Head of the Spanish Department at Birkbeck College, London. In *Malaga Farm* Marjorie recalls her childhood in Málaga during the war and compares it with the Málaga of the early 1950's, but also says that her father had once escaped to Gibraltar at the outbreak of the war in July (Grice-Hutchinson, 1956:147), which contradicts Gathorne-Hardy's statement above. Mitchell (1938:290) tells of some more foreign residents having to leave Málaga for Gibraltar when Franco's army entered the city in February 1937, among whom was a Mr Norton, the former American consul.

<sup>18</sup> In *My House in Málaga* Chalmers Mitchell (1938:130) confirms Brenan's (and presumably also his wife's) thirst for information on the events taking place in the city: «But [Mr. G. Brenan] lived a few miles out of Málaga in a village where he was well known and popular, and came into town only occasionally, sometimes to see me, sometimes to gather information for newspapers with which he was in correspondence, and left Málaga early in September [1936], hoping to come back, but being refused permission.»

<sup>19</sup> Woolsey and Brenan stayed at Churriana for ten days, from 10 March to 20 March, 1949. They visited Juan Navaja's family, an American friend at Torremolinos (Mr Washbrooks) and Don Carlos and his family (Brenan, 1987:95-120).

*Other Kingdom* is a pleasant book to read and its main message seems still to be of relevance today: violence and war can only bring Man misery. Her autobiographical account of the events that took place and her interpretation of what was happening also give us a clear insight into the authoress's character and into the life that foreign expatriates usually led in Spain in the 1930's, although one remains generally unenlightened as to the military and historical incidents in Málaga at the time. Indeed, this is not surprising, seeing that Woolsey was "often in limbo".

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# ON THE USE OF INTERNAL MODIFIERS IN REQUEST PRODUCTION IN ENGLISH AS A NATIVE AND AS A FOREIGN LANGUAGE

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## **Abstract**

*The study of requests has aroused interest due to the fact that request realization is deeply connected with the expression of verbal politeness and, therefore, with social interaction in general. It is considered that requests normally involve an imposition on the hearer or an intrusion on his/her freedom of action. Consequently, the speaker will have to resort to certain devices in order to mitigate that imposition and keep a fluent relationship with his/her interlocutor. It is to the analysis of one of those devices—internal modification—in English as a native and as a foreign language that the present study is devoted. The data have been collected from 75 British English native speakers and 75 nonnative speakers of English who have Spanish as their mother tongue. Another 75 native speakers of Spanish have also acted as informants to this study in order to investigate any possible interference from the mother tongue.*

## **1. Introduction**

The main purpose of this paper is to compare the use of internal modifiers—including both syntactic and lexical or phrasal downgraders—in the production of requests by native and nonnative speakers of English. A second objective will be to investigate how situational factors affect the use of internal modification in the requestive

speech act. The data for this study were collected by means of two versions of a discourse completion test (DCT): one of those versions, in English, was administered to 75 British English native speakers and 75 nonnative speakers of English whose mother tongue is Spanish, and the other one, in Spanish, to 75 native speakers of Spanish.

## 2. The requestive speech act

A request is an illocutionary act by means of which a speaker communicates to a hearer that he/she wants the latter to carry out an act which will benefit the speaker. Requests may refer to non-verbal goods and services —objects, actions, or a given service— or to verbal goods or services, in which case it would be a request for information. Thus, Tucker (1988:155) says the following: “Requests serve to change a current state of affairs to the advantage of the speaker, whether by having another act to this effect or by seeking permission to act oneself”. Labov & Fanshel (1977:63) consider that, even though several sub-categories may be distinguished within the group of requests —as requests for information, for attention, for approval, etc.— in the end all of them are basically requests for the hearer to carry out a given action. The action will take place, obviously, after the utterance corresponding to the request. Consequently, the speech act of requesting may be characterized as a pre-event, unlike, for example, complaints, which are post-events, since they refer to an offensive action which happened before the speech act were produced. Due to this reason, requests —as all directive speech acts in general— by definition concern a controllable event and never a process, that is to say, an uncontrollable event as falling asleep or sneezing (Dik, 1989:90-100).

Following Searle’s (1975) classification, requests belong to the group of *directive* speech acts, which, according to his definition,

are attempts (of varying degrees, and hence, more precisely, they are determinates of the determinable which includes attempting) by the speaker to get the hearer to do something. They may be very modest ‘attempts’ as when I invite you to do it or suggest that you do it, or they may be very fierce attempts as when I insist that you do it. (Searle, 1975:11)

Mulder (1998:237) states that the interest aroused by directive speech acts finds its explanation in the fact that requests, as well as

other directives, reveal two essential functions of language, *desiderative* and *instrumental*. For Bach & Harnish (1979:47), directives express not only the speaker's attitude towards a prospective action to be performed by the hearer, but also the speaker's intention or desire that the hearer takes his/her utterance or the attitude expressed in it as a reason or as the reason to carry out the action. Other authors, such as Green (1975), Haverkate (1979), Leech (1983), or Trosborg (1995), prefer the term *impositive* rather than *directive*. Trosborg (1995:187) says that whenever a request is produced, complying with it is normally at the cost of the hearer. Thus, the speaker in a sense imposes himself/herself on the hearer when demanding from him/her some good or service. Sifianou (1992), however, considers that the label *directive* is more suitable, due to the fact that "although requests always 'direct' the addressees to perform the action, they do not always 'impose' it on them" (Sifianou, 1992:98).

Requests tend to be considered as a paradigmatic case of a speech act which involves an intrusion into the hearer's territory and which limits his/her freedom of action, that is to say, as an example of a *face-threatening act* or *F<sub>TA</sub>*. More precisely, it is a speech act which threatens the hearer's negative face.<sup>1</sup> As stated by Trosborg,

The request is per definition a face-threatening act (F<sub>TA</sub>). The speaker who makes a request attempts to exercise power or direct control over the intentional behaviour of the hearer, and in doing so threatens the requestee's negative face (his/her want to be unimpeded) by indicating that he/she does not intend to refrain from impeding the requestee's freedom of action. (Trosborg, 1995:188)

However, not only can the hearer's negative face be threatened by a request. In Brown & Levinson's (1987:76) opinion, requests can on some occasions pose threats to the face of both interlocutors. The speaker also runs the risk that his/her public image may be damaged, owing to the fact that the hearer can refuse to comply with his/her wishes. Sifianou (1992:99) asks herself to what extent the statement that requests always threaten the hearer's negative face and therefore demand the working of negative politeness is true. In some cases in which there is a close

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<sup>1</sup> The terms positive and negative face are taken from Brown & Levinson (1987), and they are defined as follows: negative face: the want of every 'competent adult member' that his actions be unimpeded by others. positive face: the want of every member that his wants be desirable to at least some others. (Brown & Levinson, 1987:62)

relationship between the interlocutors, positive politeness will also play a role in request production. In addition, certain types of requests, such as those addressed to a shop assistant, are not normally considered face-threatening acts.

Trosborg (1995:188) states that in a request the action that will be carried out will benefit the speaker and will normally involve a cost to the hearer. Both characteristics are, in this scholar's opinion, essential to establish a distinction between requests and other acts in which the speaker also tries to exert his/her influence on the hearer. Thus, whereas in a suggestion the action will be beneficial for both interlocutors, in an instance of advice or instruction, or in a warning, it will be for the hearer's benefit only. In a warning the speaker tries to impose himself/herself over the hearer in order to avoid a situation which would be contrary to the latter's interests. Finally, in threats, the speaker indicates that unless the hearer agrees to his/her wishes, the speaker himself/herself or some other person will instigate sanctions against him/her. The dividing line between these illocutionary acts, however, is anything but clear-cut. Thus, a request may be presented as a suggestion, a piece of advice, a warning, or a threat, as can be seen in the following utterances which express the speaker's desire that the hearer cuts the grass:

- (1) Would you mind cutting the grass. (request)
  - (2) Wouldn't it be an idea to cut the grass. (suggestion)
  - (3) I think you'd better cut the grass (before it gets too long). (advice)
  - (4) If you don't cut the grass it'll get too long. (warning)
  - (5) If you don't cut the grass you won't get your pocket money. (threat)
- (Trosborg, 1995:189)

The speaker will be able to pretend that the act expressed in the proposition will be beneficial for both interlocutors, as in (2), or for the hearer, as in (3) or (4), and, in this way, he/she will try to diminish the degree of imposition of the speech act. In the present study we will deal only with those acts whose illocutionary point is to make somebody do something which will benefit mainly the speaker. The illocutionary force of those acts may range from that of an order to that of a beg and, as Koike (1988) states, the choice will depend on the relationship between the interlocutors:

The social relationship between speaker (S) and hearer (H) in a context of communication is reflected in the language used between them. This is demonstrated clearly in directives, or the



ways in which S utilizes language to express the desire that H act on the utterance. (Koike, 1988:211)

### 3. Method

#### 3.1. Subjects

Seventy-five British English native speakers and seventy-five nonnative speakers of English whose mother tongue is Spanish acted as informants to this study. For the sake of comparison, data in Spanish as a native language were also collected from another seventy-five subjects. Therefore, two hundred and twenty-five informants participated in this study altogether. All of them were university students at the universities of Leeds, Stirling, and Jaén. Their ages range between twenty and twenty-five years old. The reason to choose students as our target population, apart from purely practical reasons of availability, was to ensure as much homogeneity as possible with regard to educational background, social class or age range.

GROUP	LANGUAGE	SPEAKERS	NUMBER OF INFORMANTS
I	British English	Native	75
II	Peninsular Spanish	Native	75
III	English	Nonnative	75

Table 1. Description of the groups of informants.

#### 3.2. Research instrument

The data for this study were elicited by means of a discourse completion test. Such a research instrument was used to ensure cross-cultural comparability. The test is composed of five socially differentiated situations which vary in terms of the interlocutors' relationship, that is to say, on the dimensions of dominance or social power and social distance or familiarity. Therefore, this instrument has allowed us to investigate not only the similarities and differences in the realization patterns of requests between native and nonnative speakers of English, but also the effect of social factors on those realization patterns.

The situations are as follows:

S1 You are in class and you ask another student to lend you his/her notes.

S2 You are in one of your teachers’ office and you remember that you have to make a phone call urgently. There is no public telephone around and you ask your teacher to let you use his/her office telephone.

S3 You need a book from the library for a paper, but it is already on loan. You see another student you do not know with the book and ask him/her to lend you the book to photocopy a couple of chapters.

S4 You have to hand in a paper for one of your subjects and you find out that there is a new lecturer at your faculty whom you have never seen before and who is a specialist in the subject of your paper. You go to his/her office for him/her to read the outline of your paper and give you some bibliographical references.

S5 You are in the university library. You want to take a book from a shelf but it is too high for you. You ask a class mate taller than you to get the book down for you.

The items vary in terms of the participants’ role relationship in the following way:

Request situations	Social distance	Dominance	Degree of imposition
S1 Notes	-SD	S = H	+
S2 Telephone	-SD	S < H	+
S3 Book	+SD	S = H	+
S4 Paper	+SD	S < H	+
S5 Shelf	-SD	S = H	-

Table 2. Description of the situations proposed in the discourse completion test.

## 4. Results

### 4.1. Syntactic downgraders

A speaker may vary the degree of politeness with which he/she produces a request in different ways. Thus, other things being equal, a conventionally indirect request is normally considered more polite than a direct request. But in addition to the directness level, it is possible to smooth or increase the impact that a request may produce on the hearer by means of certain optional elements. Thus, a speaker who wants to smooth the illocutionary force of his/her request may resort to syntactic and to lexical or phrasal downgraders. In this section the attention will

be focused on the first of these two types, that is to say, syntactic downgraders.

There are several syntactic devices to increase the degree of politeness of a request. Nine different types have been distinguished here, including combinations of syntactic downgraders that very frequently occur together, namely, *conditional + interrogative* and *progressive aspect + past tense* (types 7 and 8), apart from combinations of any other syntactic downgraders (type 9).

1. INTERROGATIVE:

(6) **Can you get that book for me?** I can't reach. (I/7/5)<sup>2</sup>

(7) **¿Me alcanzas ese libro?** (II/46/5)

(8) **May I make a call from here?** (III/25/2)

2. SUBJUNCTIVE:

(9) Hola. **Quisiera** que, por favor, me ayudara con un trabajo que tengo que presentar; no le ocuparé mucho tiempo. (II/60/4)

3. CONDITIONAL:

(10) I've been told that you have borrowed a book that I really need, I wonder if I **could** borrow it for a few minutes to photocopy. (I/4/3)

(11) Hola, estoy haciendo un trabajo del tema en que usted está especializado y vengo a ver si usted me **podría** orientar. (II/11/4)

(12) I wonder if I **could** use your phone, please. (III/72/2)

4. PROGRESSIVE ASPECT:

(13) I'm doing an essay on your subject and I'm **wondering** if you'd mind just going over it for me. (I/16/4)

5. PAST TENSE:

(14) I **wondered** if you would give me some references for the topic of my paper please. (I/52/4)

(15) Disculpe, pero me han comentado que usted ha trabajado en el tema de mi trabajo y me **preguntaba** si podría dejarme algún tipo de información. (II/19/4)

(16) I **wondered** whether I could make a phone call. (III/56/2)

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<sup>2</sup>The relevant linguistic item or sequence appears in bold type. In the code system used to identify the examples, the first number represents the group of speakers (I: English native speakers, II: Spanish native speakers, and III: English nonnative speakers), the second number (from 1 to 75) represents the informant, and the third number (1 to 5) refers to the situation.

## 6. CONDITIONAL CLAUSE:

(17) Excuse. I'm an English Philology student and I wish you read this outline **if you don't mind**. (III/13/4)

## 7. CONDITIONAL + INTERROGATIVE:

(18) **Would it** be at all possible to use your telephone? I know it's rude, but it's urgent. (I/28/2)

(19) ¿Le **importaría** dejarme el teléfono? Es que tengo que hacer una llamada urgente. (II/25/2)

(20) **Would you** mind reading the outline of a paper I have to present? (III/21/4)

## 8. PROGRESSIVE ASPECT + PAST TENSE:

(21) I **was wondering** if you had the time to help me with my essay. It won't take long, just a few points to go over. (I/6/4)

(22) I'm working on this paper and I **was wondering** if you could help me with it. (III/67/4)

## 9. OTHER COMBINATIONS OF TWO OR MORE SYNTACTIC DOWNGRADERS:

(23) I know that you don't know me, but I'm doing a course in ... and I **was wondering** if it **would** be possible to borrow ... and make some photocopies. (Past tense + progressive aspect + conditional) (I/6/3)

(24) Oiga, ¿le **importaría**, **si no es mucha molestia**, dejarme utilizar su teléfono? Me haría un gran favor. (Interrogative + conditional + conditional clause) (II/66/2)

(25) Excuse me, **if you were** so kind as to give me some bibliographical references, **I'd** be very grateful. I have to finish my paper. (Conditional clause + subjunctive + conditional) (III/23/4)

A common characteristic to all the syntactic downgraders presented above has to do with their ability to distance the request from the sphere of reality, something that has been pointed out more than once (Haverkate, 1992:510; Trosborg, 1995:209-210). A shift away from the speaker's deictic centre (I-HERE-NOW) implies an increase of the politeness level with which the request is produced, since the speaker's expectations with respect to the fulfilment of the request by the hearer are reduced. If the expectations are low, the risk that the speaker loses his/her own face is diminished if the request is rejected by the hearer, and, in addition, the hearer will have the possibility of answering negatively if he/she does not want to comply with the speaker's demands.

In this sense, producing a request for instance by means of an interrogative utterance is more polite than doing it by means of a declarative utterance, as may be observed when comparing the two following utterances. The first of them both —(26)— corresponds to a request produced by an English native speaker, and the second one —(27)— is a manipulation of that utterance, which has been transformed into a declarative one:

(26) **Can you get that book for me?** I can't reach. (I/7/5)

(27) **You can get that book for me.** I can't reach.

In producing a request by means of a question to somebody about his/her ability to do something, a direct imposition on the hearer is avoided and, at the same time, the hearer is being offered the possibility of answering negatively to the request without seeing his/her face seriously threatened. If a declarative utterance is used in which the hearer's ability to carry out the action is stated, the request will be presented as a certain future act in an unnegotiable way, which implies a much higher degree of imposition on the hearer. Due to this reason, an utterance such as (26) is a much more polite manner of producing a request than another one of the type of (27).

The great majority of the requests recorded in this study have been produced by means of an interrogative structure, although in most cases the interrogative structure is combined with some other syntactic downgrader. The conditional, in the same way as interrogative structures, involves a shift away from reality. Therefore, when both mechanisms are combined within the same utterance, this distance is increased, which helps to reduce the degree of imposition of the request, and, consequently, to increase its level of negative politeness. As stated in Haverkate (1992:509), the conditional has some peculiar characteristics. This may be observed in its componential analysis, in which two fundamentally contrastive temporal features are present: [+ past] and [+ future]. This componential analysis indicates that verb forms in the conditional are negatively marked for present time, which implies that their point of reference does not coincide with the time of the utterance. Thus, the combination of the distinctive features [+ past] and [+ future] indicates a point of reference which is distanced from the deictic centre (I-HERE-NOW). It can also be said that those utterances which contain a conditional verb form do not refer to the real world, but to a possible world. Such a distance from reality is connected with the mitigation of

the illocutionary force of requests, and, consequently, with the expression of verbal politeness. In this sense, Haverkate (1992) says the following:

Metaphorically speaking, the distance involved may be associated with the interpersonal distance speakers create in order to express mitigation. This is equivalent to stating that the potentially mitigating interpretation of the conditional can be explained in terms of metaphorical distance or space. (Haverkate, 1992:510)

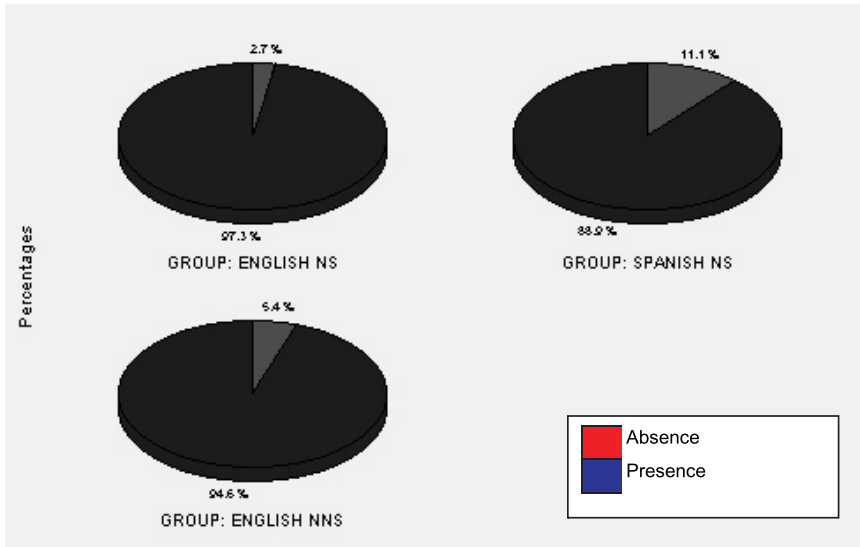
The inclusion of the conditional, therefore, reduces the expectations as to the fulfilment of the request even more, as a result of the fact that it distances the utterance from its deictic centre, in such a way that the separation between the utterance and reality is increased from a metaphorical point of view. If the utterances (28) and (29)—both of them produced by English native speakers—are compared, it can be seen that the distance from reality and, consequently, the politeness level are greater in the latter:

(28) Hi, **do** you mind getting that book? I'm not tall enough. (I/37/5)

(29) I'm too small to reach this book. **Would** you mind getting it down for me? (I/12/5)

As regards the temporal coordinate, in addition to the use of the conditional, a distance from the deictic centre may also be achieved by means of the resort to past tense or subjunctive mood. The use of verb forms in past tense or in subjunctive mood also reduces, at least metaphorically, the expectations that the hearer answers positively to the speaker's requirement.

The following graph displays a representation of the proportion of syntactic downgraders in requests according to the group of informants. As the graph portrays, whereas in the group of English native speakers 97.3 % of the requests contain a syntactic downgrader, in the group of English nonnative speakers the proportion is 94.6 %. For sake of comparison, the use of syntactic downgraders in the production of requests by Spanish native speakers has also been investigated. The percentage of requests which present a syntactic downgrader is in this case 88.9 %. Therefore, it can be seen that the group of English nonnative speakers is placed in this case between those of English native speakers and Spanish native speakers. Differences are statistically significant between the group of Spanish speakers and the two groups of English speakers.



Graph 1. Presence/absence of syntactic downgraders according to the group of speakers.

	ENGLISH NS		SPANISH NS		ENGLISH NNS	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
<i>None</i>	10	2.7	41	11.1	20	5.4
<i>Interrogative</i>	94	25.2	128	34.8	122	32.9
<i>Subjunctive</i>	0	0	5	1.4	0	0
<i>Conditional</i>	12	3.2	16	4.3	23	6.2
<i>Progressive Aspect</i>	1	0.3	0	0	0	0
<i>Past Tense</i>	1	0.3	7	1.9	3	0.8
<i>Conditional clause</i>	0	0	0	0	1	0.3
<i>Conditional + interrogative</i>	217	58.2	166	45.1	191	51.6
<i>Progr. Asp. + Past tense</i>	26	6.9	0	0	6	1.6
<i>Combinations</i>	12	3.2	5	1.4	4	1.1
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>373</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>368</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>370</b>	<b>100</b>

Table 3. Distribution of types of syntactic downgraders in requests according to informant group.

#### 4.2. Lexical and phrasal downgraders

Another type of optional element internal to the nuclear act in requests is the lexical or phrasal downgrader. Lexical or phrasal downgraders also contribute to smooth the illocutionary force of requests and, consequently, they are closely related to the expression of verbal politeness. This type of downgrader, as the syntactic one, expresses a reduction of the speaker’s expectations with respect to the compliance

with the request on the part of the hearer. Seven different types have been distinguished in this study, including the combination of two or more lexical or phrasal downgraders. They are the following:

1. POLITENESS MARKER:

- (30) Any chance of grabbing that book for me **please**? (I/52/5)
- (31) ¿Me dejas los apuntes **por favor**? Los fotocopio y te los devuelvo. (II/10/1)
- (32) ¿Sería **tan amable** de leer el esbozo de mi trabajo? (II/15/4)
- (33) Hey John, take that book down, **please**. (III/5/5)
- (34) Excuse me, would you be **so kind as to** read this outline and provide me with some references for my paper? (III/6/4)

2. UNDERSTATER:

- (35) Could you lend me your notes **for a bit**? (I/59/1)
- (36) Perdona, ¿puedo usar su teléfono **un minuto**? (II/44/2)
- (37) Can I take that book **for a few seconds**? (III/54/3)

3. SUBJECTIVIZER:

- (38) Excuse me, **I was wondering if** you could give me some help and advice for an essay I'm writing in your specialist field. (I/10/3)
- (39) Buenas, perdona que le moleste. **Me preguntaba si** usted me podría orientar en el tema del trabajo que estoy haciendo. (II/33/4)
- (40) Excuse me, **I wonder if** you could help me with a paper. I've heard you are a specialist on this subject. (III/71/4)

4. DOWNTONER:

- (41) Could you **possibly** read the outline of my work and give me a few pointers? (I/4/4)
- (42) Hi, I'm a student in this Department. Could you **perhaps** read this for me to check I'm on the right lines? (I/11/4)
- (43) Can you **just** grab that book for me? (I/44/5)
- (44) Excuse me, could you **possibly** give me some bibliographical references of this subject? (III/14/4)
- (45) Hey man! I need this book for an urgent paper, could you **just** lend it to me to photocopy a couple of chapters? (III/29/3)

5. INTERPERSONAL PRAGMATIC MARKER:

- (46) Do us a favour and get that book down for me, **will you**? (I/11/5)



(47) Alcánzame ese libro, ¿**vale?** (II/68/5)

6. CONSULTATIVE MECHANISM:

(48) I'm too small to reach this book. **Would you mind** getting it down for me? (I/12/5)

(49) **Do you think** you would have the time to read through my paper and make some suggestions? (I/26/4)

(50) Oye, ¿**te importa** alcanzarme ese libro? (II/18/5)

(51) **Do you mind if** I borrow your notebook? (III/16/1)

7. COMBINATIONS OF TWO OR MORE LEXICAL/PHRASAL DOWNGRADERS:

(52) Hello, I'm writing a paper on something I've heard you specialise in... and **wondered if** you could **possibly** give some help **please**. (Subjectivizer + downtoner + politeness marker) (I/5/3)

(53) Perdona, es que estaba buscando este libro, ¿**te importa** dejármelo **un momentito**, lo fotocopio y te lo traigo? (Consultative mechanism + understater) (II/20/3)

(54) **Would you mind if** I use your telephone **for a while, please?** I have to make an urgent phone call and there's no public telephone around. (Consultative mechanism + understater + politeness marker) (III/13/2)

The most frequent type of lexical/phrasal downgrader, if we leave aside the absence of downgrader, is the so-called politeness marker. In those cases in which a politeness marker is used, this will normally be *please* in English or *por favor* in Spanish. English nonnative speakers also use the formula *Would you be so kind as to...*<sup>3</sup> very frequently, which has been classified here as a politeness marker. Whereas English native speakers have never used this marker in the data collected for this study, English nonnative speakers have used it on twenty-one occasions. This phenomenon has been called stereotype-induced error by Beebe & Takahashi (1989:119). In attempting to converge with the foreign language norm, the nonnative speaker goes too far and generalizes the use of certain formulae. This behaviour produces an effect which is

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<sup>3</sup> House & Kasper (1987) consider structures of the type *Would you be so kind as to do X?* as suggestion formulae. Here, following Trosborg (1995), expressions such as *be so kind as to / kindly* have been considered politeness markers and, therefore, optional elements in a request.

contrary to the expected one, because it results in a divergence from the normal practice in the L2. This type of pragmatic deviation is very often a reflection of errors produced by the teaching method.

By means of the use of these politeness markers, the speaker adds an element of deference towards the hearer. Thus, in adding a politeness marker such as *please* or *por favor*,<sup>4</sup> the speaker begs the hearer to show a receptive or cooperative attitude and, in this way, increases the politeness level of the request. Since the request illocutionary force is reduced and, therefore, the imposition is diminished, the potential threat to the interlocutor's face is also minimized.

The impositive burden of a request may also be reduced by means of the minimization of certain aspects of the requested action. Thus, by means of the inclusion of understaters such as *a minute*, *a second* or *a bit*, the speaker implicitly expresses that what he/she is requesting will imply a minimal cost to the hearer and, in this way, the imposition of the request on the latter will be reduced in a sense.

The speaker may reduce the imposition also by introducing the request by means of an expression which transmits the speaker's attitude or subjective opinion about the state of affairs to which the proposition refers, by expressing tentativeness, doubt, gratefulness, etc. These downtoners, which have been called subjectivizers, include expressions such as *I wondered if...*, *I was wondering if...*, *Me preguntaba si...*, etc.

There are some other lexical or phrasal mechanisms which may be used to minimize the impositive force of a request, for instance, adverbs such as *maybe*, *possibly*, *perhaps*, *just*, *only*, etc.<sup>5</sup> The speaker may also use expressions whose main function is to establish or maintain a good and friendly interpersonal relationship with his/her interlocutor. These interpersonal pragmatic markers include question tags, such as *will you?*, by means of which the speaker directly appeals to the hearer for his/her compliance.<sup>6</sup> In this way, the speaker's imposition on the hearer is

<sup>4</sup> Quirk, Greenbaum, Leech & Svartvik (1985:569) classify *please* as a *courtesy subjunct*.

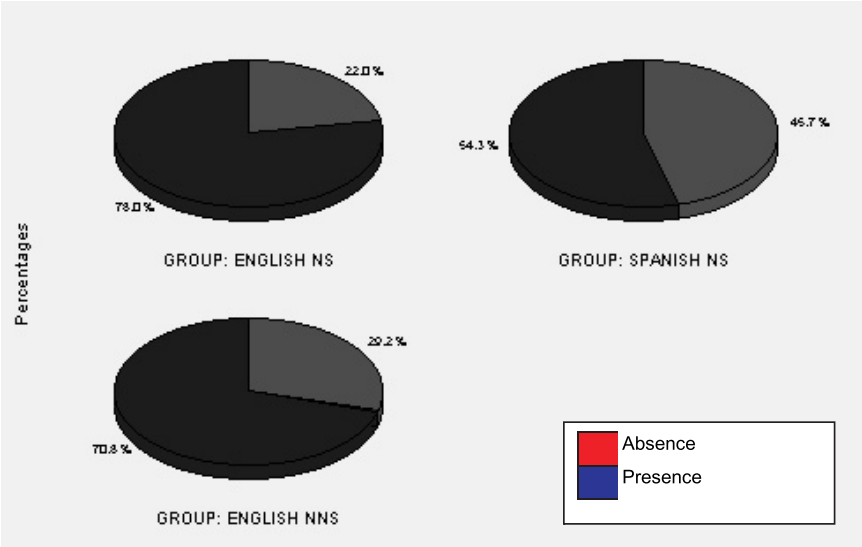
<sup>5</sup> Quirk, Greenbaum, Leech & Svartvik (1985) classify these adverbials as *subjuncts*, and particularly, as *downtoners*.

<sup>6</sup> Ortega Olivares (1985) calls question tags of the type of *¿vale?* in Spanish *comprobativos* (*checkers*) and states that the most usual modality of the utterances which precede them is that defining orders, requests and begs. In his own words, "[los comprobativos] suavizan (...) la rudeza que supone la exigencia o imposición de alguna cosa, es decir, dan opción (lingüística, se entiende) a que la respuesta práctica del destinatario pueda ser el rechazo" (Ortega Olivares, 1985:252). We consider that question tags such as *will you?* or *could you?* in English could be included under the same category.

reduced, since more options are given to him/her to refuse to do the requested action.

The speaker can also directly attempt to achieve the hearer's involvement and his/her collaboration. He/she can do so through so-called consultative mechanisms, which include formulae such as *Would you mind...?* or *Do you think you could...?*, by means of which the hearer is asked about his/her disposal to carry out the requested action.

Although most of the requests produced by speakers of the three groups participating in this study include a lexical or phrasal downgrader, statistically significant differences have been found between the three groups with regard to the percentage of use. As the graph and table below show, the use of lexical or phrasal downgraders is more frequent among English native speakers (78.0 %) than among Spanish native speakers (54.3 %). English nonnative speakers (70.8 %) occupy an intermediate position between one group and the other, but in this case they are closer to the group of English native speakers. This may be explained by saying that in this particular aspect their interlanguage is midway between their mother tongue and the target language, in this case English.



Graph 2. Presence/absence of lexical/phrasal downgraders according to the group of speakers.

	ENGLISH NS		SPANISH NS		ENGLISH NNS	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
<i>None</i>	82	22.0	168	45.7	108	29.2
<i>Politeness marker</i>	91	24.4	70	19.0	109	29.5
<i>Understater</i>	37	9.9	29	7.9	23	6.2
<i>Subjectivizer</i>	5	1.3	7	1.9	15	4.1
<i>Downtoner</i>	40	10.7	0	0	8	2.2
<i>Interpersonal prag. Marker</i>	2	0.5	6	1.6	0	0
<i>Consultative mechanism</i>	53	14.2	61	16.6	36	9.7
<i>Combinations</i>	63	16.9	29	7.9	69	18.6
<i>TOTAL</i>	373	100	368	100	370	100

Table 4. Distribution of types of lexical/phrasal downgraders in requests according to the informant group.

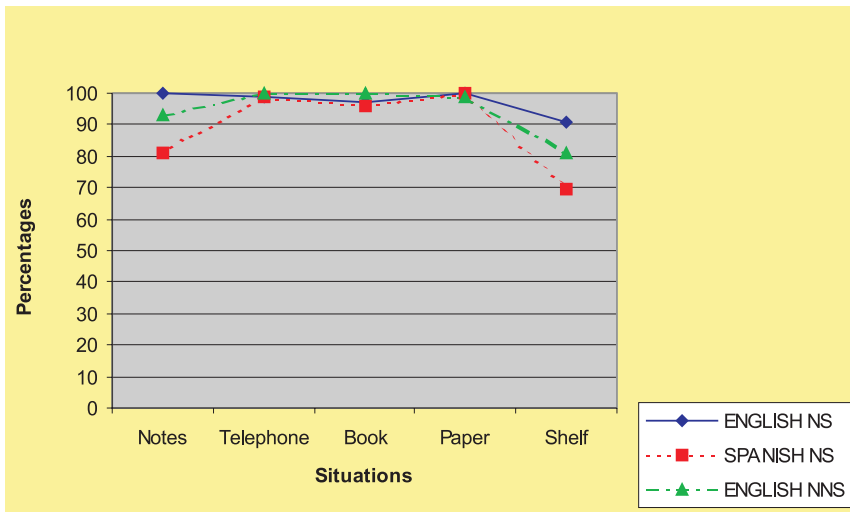
### 4.3. Situational factors

Not only do internal modifiers show variation across languages or types of speakers, but within the same language or group of speakers the combination of situational factors such as social dominance, social distance, and weight of imposition seems to condition the use of internal modifiers in requests.

That situation in which the hearer exercises power over the speaker and in which they do not know one another, that is to say, that situation in which the relationship between the interlocutors is most distant —S4 (*Paper*)— has been that in which the use of both syntactic and lexical/phrasal downgraders has been the highest. The second place is occupied by the situation S2 (*Telephone*), in which the hearer exercises power over the speaker, but in which, unlike the previous one, they are not strangers. This implies a somehow closer relationship, since the social distance is more reduced. The following situation with respect to the use of both types of internal modifiers is S3 (*Book*), in which there is not a hierarchical relationship of social power, but there is social distance, that is to say, speaker and hearer do not know each other. The last two places are occupied by those situations in which there is neither social power nor social distance between both interlocutors, namely, S1 (*Notes*) and S5 (*Shelf*). The difference between both situations is that the degree of imposition of the requested action is greater in S1 (*Notes*) and, consequently, the proportion of internal downgraders is higher, due to the fact that it is more necessary to save the hearer’s negative face. As may be observed, the more distant the relationship between both

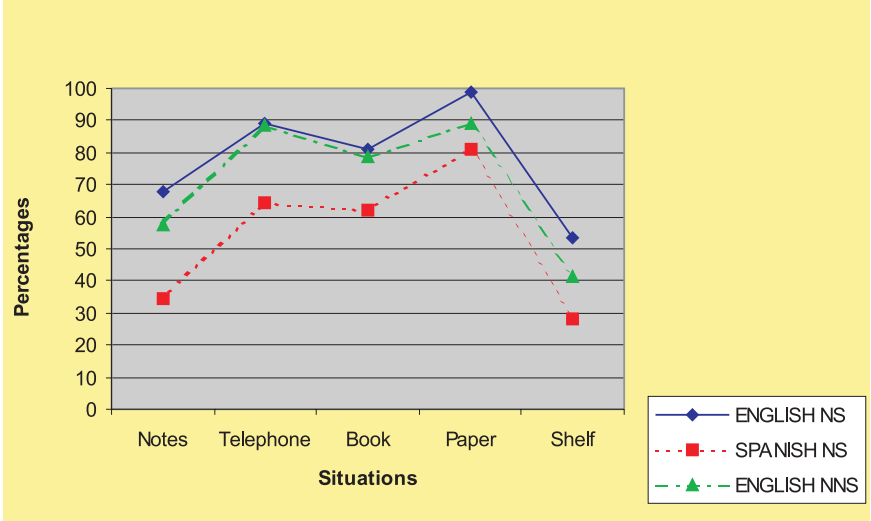
interlocutors or the greater the *perceived distance*, that is to say, the higher the level of social power and social distance, the greater the proportion of use of internal modifiers.<sup>7</sup> It may be stated, therefore, that there exists a directly proportional relation between social power and distance and presence of syntactic and lexical/phrasal downgraders. The weight of imposition of the action also has an effect on the presence of these types of downgraders. Thus, other things being equal, the higher the degree of imposition the greater the proportion of both types of internal downgraders.

In addition, the data collected in this study seem to indicate that there exists a high cross-cultural agreement for trends of cross-cultural variation, as depicted in the graphs below. In both charts a very similar line pattern may be observed for the three groups of speakers. Thus, for instance, in the two diagrams there is a steady fall from S4 (*Paper*) to S5 (*Shelf*).



Graph 3. Presence of syntactic downgraders in requests according to group and situation.

<sup>7</sup>The notion of *perceived distance* was introduced by Hill et al. (1986). This concept refers to the distance that the speaker perceives that exists between the speaker himself/herself and a given hearer in a specific situation and that works in a shared sociolinguistic environment. In addition to social power and social distance, *perceived distance* also covers the degree of imposition. Thus, Hill et al. (1986) state that *perceived distance* "is a device to measure Brown and Levinson's D(istance), P(ower), and R(ank) on a unified scale." (Hill, Ide, Ikuta, Kawasaki & Ogino, 1986:351-352).



Graph 4. Presence of lexical/phrasal downgraders in requests according to group and situation.

### 5. Conclusions

As the data collected in this study reflect, English native speakers use more syntactic and lexical or phrasal downgraders than English nonnative speakers who have Spanish as their mother tongue. The differences, however, are statistically significant only in the case of lexical or phrasal downgraders. When the productions of native and nonnative speakers of English are compared with data elicited from Spanish as a mother tongue, it can be observed that the results in English as a nonnative language are between those in English as a native language and those in Spanish. This fact may lead us to conclude that differences in the production of requests in English as L1 and L2 may be due to the influence of Spanish, the mother tongue of the nonnative speakers of English. To finish, it could be remembered that the teaching of English as a foreign language has traditionally focused mainly on aspects such as grammar or vocabulary and that pragmatic aspects such as those investigated in this study have been normally left aside. However, it goes without saying that learning a foreign language involves much more than learning its grammar and vocabulary. Matters related to pragmatics and interactional styles are also extremely important, because they affect the image that the native hearer may have about the nonnative speaker. Not to use the appropriate internal modifiers to mitigate the illocutionary

force of requests, for example, may lead the English hearer to believe that the foreign speaker is bad-mannered or not polite enough.

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**JOHNNY PANIC AND THE BIBLE OF DREAMS:  
PAISAJE Y SIMBOLISMO EN LOS ENSAYOS Y  
RELATOS DE SYLVIA PLATH**

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**Abstract**

*This article focuses on Johnny Panic and the Bible of Dreams, the only compilation of short stories we keep from Sylvia Plath. These pieces, belonging to different moments of her life as a writer, show, if contrasted, a tendency towards the elimination of details in the description of the scenery where the action takes place. Besides this progressive elimination of details, we also observe in Plath's short stories a tendency to show a scenery that has human qualities and that reflects the main characters' mood and mental and physical state with increasing frequency. In such a way, the writer's short stories also show what is very characteristic of Plath's last poetry, i. e., that physical and mental landscapes become progressively one and the same thing in her writing.*

“Outside the window the sky is blacker than a cast-iron skillet”<sup>1</sup>

*Johnny Panic and the Bible of Dreams* es una compilación de algunos de los relatos y ensayos escritos por Sylvia Plath durante el transcurso de su vida literaria. Así, mientras hay relatos pertenecientes a los comienzos de su carrera, cuando aún era una estudiante en *Smith*

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<sup>1</sup> De “The Daughters of Blossom Street” (Plath, 1977:90).

*College*,<sup>2</sup> como “The Day Mr Prescott Died” y “Sunday at the Mintons”, que la revista *Mademoiselle* publicaría en agosto de 1952,<sup>3</sup> otras piezas costumbristas, como “America! America!” y “Snow Blitz”, serían escritas poco antes de morir la escritora, unos 10 años después.

Ted Hughes, el famoso poeta británico que fue su marido durante más de seis años, cuenta en su introducción a *Johnny Panic* cómo Plath escribió mucho en prosa y cómo ella misma destruyó gran parte de lo que no le gustaba.<sup>4</sup> No cuenta, claro está, que él mismo hizo desaparecer parte de la prosa en la que tanto él como otras personas del ámbito de la pareja aparecían retratadas de forma desfavorable. Hughes explica que la publicación de tales piezas habría producido un dolor innecesario a las personas que aparecían descritas con especial dureza:

... The vivid, cruel words she could use to pin down her acquaintances and even her close friends were nothing she would want published and would be no joke to the recipients, still less so now that she is internationally famous ... (Hughes, 1977:19)

Evidentemente, Hughes no admite aquí que él mismo hiciera desaparecer los escritos, pero parece bastante obvio.<sup>5</sup>

*Johnny Panic* aparece dividido en tres partes: la primera parte, subtitulada “The more successful short stories and prose pieces”, se compone de siete relatos cortos y cinco ensayos de carácter costumbrista escritos, en su mayor parte, en los años 60; la segunda parte, titulada simplemente “Other stories”, es un compendio de seis historias pertenecientes a la década de los 50; mientras que la tercera parte, “Excerpts from notebooks”, consta de cuatro piezas costumbristas, dos de las cuales fueron escritas en 1956 y las dos restantes en 1962. Según Hughes (1977:17), la selección de estas piezas fue hecha por él mismo en base a un criterio de calidad literaria: “... The first section contains seven of the best ... Interspersed among these stories are five of her best pieces of journalism” [se refiere aquí a “America! America!”, “A Comparison”, “Context”, “Snow Blitz” y “Ocean 1212-W”].

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<sup>2</sup> Véase lo que Hughes (1977:17) dice con respecto a la cronología de las historias cortas recogidas en *Johnny Panic and the Bible of Dreams* en su introducción a este libro.

<sup>3</sup> Ésta sería una de las primeras publicaciones significativas de Plath, cuando sólo tenía 19 años y por la que recibiría la suma de 500 \$ otorgada al primer premio del concurso de relatos organizado por *Mademoiselle*. Véase Wagner-Martin (1987:85).

<sup>4</sup> Véase lo que dice Hughes (1977:11) al respecto.

<sup>5</sup> Para estudiar el tema de las omisiones, manipulaciones y destrucciones de la obra de Plath por parte de Hughes se pueden consultar, entre otros, el capítulo titulado “The Archive” del libro de Jacqueline Rose *The Haunting of Sylvia Plath* (1991:65-113) y el libro de Janet Malcolm *The Silent Woman*, sobre todo en sus primeras páginas (1994:3-12).

Sabemos que a Sylvia Plath le interesaban los detalles. Ella misma se imponía ejercicios para mejorar su capacidad de observación y retención de detalles, lo que luego intentaba plasmar en su escritura para hacerla parecer más real. El propio Hughes comenta en la introducción a *Johnny Panic* el interés de la escritora por la descripción y la férrea disciplina que se imponía para mejorar ésta en su escritura:

... When she moved to Devon she set about making an archive of all the new people she met, and of her dealings with them. She planned to case the whole region, with the idea of accumulating details for future stories. Some of this material is unpublishable. She regarded these sheets not only as an archive, but as an arena for exercising her observation in Flaubertian style. After visiting a neighbour's house, she would detail the décor and furnishings with laborious tenacity, and unbraid herself for failing to remember exactly what motif adorned that particular lamp, and exhort herself to get a mental photograph of it on her next visit. (Hughes, 1977:11-12)

De esta manera, el hecho de que tanto en su famosa novela *The Bell Jar* como en sus relatos aparezcan pocas descripciones no puede ser un hecho casual.

Es difícil extraer conclusiones generales de piezas de tan distinta índole y diversa cronología como las que recoge *Johnny Panic*. No obstante, podemos afirmar que hay cierta tendencia a encontrar descripciones más naturalistas en las primeras historias escritas por Plath, mientras que en años sucesivos el escenario que rodea a los personajes aparece dibujado con brochazos descriptivos y de forma más abstracta y simbólica. Este proceso, no obstante, es mucho más obvio y fácil de apreciar en su evolución poética.<sup>6</sup> Aparte de esto, también se aprecia en la obra de Plath un progresivo énfasis en la descripción psicológica de los personajes y en las relaciones interpersonales entre ellos, que se va acentuando con el tiempo.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Para ver este proceso hacia la «abstracción» y la progresiva eliminación de detalles en la obra poética de Plath puede compararse su primer libro de poemas, *The Colossus and Other Poems*, con su último libro escrito, *Ariel*. También conviene leer lo que Rosenblatt (1979:91-3) dice al respecto en su libro *Sylvia Plath: The Poetry of Initiation* donde, entre otras cosas, afirma: "The landscape thus appears as a mental construction of the poet rather than as an objectively perceived external scene".

<sup>7</sup> Compárense, al respecto, relatos como "Initiation", escrito en 1952 y que empieza precisamente con una descripción del escenario: "The basement room was dark and warm, like the inside of a sealed jar, ..." (Plath, 1977: 143), con otros escritos ya en los años 60 como "The Fifty-Ninth Bear", "Rose and Percy B" o "Charlie Pollard and the Beekeepers".

Con respecto a la tenacidad de la escritora para hacer descripciones minuciosas, a modo de ejercicio literario, Hughes comenta que, curiosamente, ése no representó para Plath sino un paso en su evolución hacia la eliminación de detalles:

... *At the same time she had a great suspicion that her real inclination might be to ignore such things altogether.* What is especially interesting now about some of these descriptions is the way they fed into *Ariel*. They are good evidence to prove that poems that seem often to be constructed of arbitrary surreal symbols are really impassioned reorganizations of relevant fact. They show just how much of the poetry is constructed from the bits and pieces of the situation at the source of the poem's theme. A great many of these objects and appearances occur somewhere or other in the journals. (Hughes, 1977:12) (énfasis mío)

En realidad, estas palabras de Hughes se podrían interpretar como una señal de menosprecio a la escritura de la primera época de Plath, la que está todavía lejos de *Ariel*, pero su análisis es correcto: a Plath los ejercicios descriptivos le sirven, precisamente, para llegar a la ausencia de descripción y a la eliminación de detalles típica de sus últimos escritos. Plath está aprendiendo y, sin intentar menoscabar la escritura anterior a *Ariel*, podemos decir que sus escritos anteriores forman parte de su aprendizaje y de su evolución hacia la abstracción.

En las piezas que componen *Johnny Panic* podemos observar este mismo proceso. En los relatos escritos en los primeros años de la década de los 50 encontramos una descripción del escenario en el que se encuentran los personajes, como en el siguiente fragmento de “In the Mountains”, escrito en 1954:

Rocketing up along the mountain road in the bus, with the day graying into blackness, they came into snow blithering and spitting dry against the windows. Outside, beyond the cold glass panes rose the mountains, and behind them more mountains, higher and higher. Higher than Isobel had ever seen, crowding tall against the low skies. (Plath, 1977:173)

En relatos de finales de esa década apenas hay detalles del marco de referencia donde transcurre la acción. Así, en “Johnny Panic and the Bible of Dreams”, relato escrito en diciembre de 1958, sólo sabemos que el escenario es una clínica psiquiátrica donde la protagonista se dedica a tomar nota de los sueños de los pacientes para su posterior análisis. Y, en relatos aun posteriores, tales como “The Daughters of Blossom Street”, escrito en 1960, empezamos a descubrir rasgos de realismo imaginario

que no habíamos visto antes y el escenario aparece claramente descrito en consonancia con los acontecimientos, como si se adaptara a ellos para resaltarlos. Así, las flores que Emily Russo recibe en el hospital, ya en su lecho de muerte, parecen adoptar su identidad y estar al borde del colapso, igual que ella:

Miss Emily's eyes slide to this heap of flowers. *Something flickers there.* I feel I am watching two candles at the end of a long hall, two pinpoint flames blowing and recovering in a dark wind. Outside the window *the sky is blacker than a cast-iron skillet.* (Plath, 1977:90) (énfasis mío)

La muerte de Miss Emily va asociada, como en otras ocasiones,<sup>8</sup> a la ausencia de luz; hasta el viento en esta historia parece enlutado.

La sincronía existente entre el tiempo atmosférico y los elementos físicos que rodean a los personajes, por un lado, y el estado anímico de éstos, por otro, es típica en los relatos de Plath, y es que una de las influencias literarias que Plath recibe es la de T.S. Eliot, quien hace un claro uso simbólico del escenario.<sup>9</sup> No obstante, esta utilización simbólica del paisaje se remonta a Baudelaire, según Hargrove (1978:27), y también a Tennyson. Efectivamente, la utilización del paisaje para simbolizar emociones humanas predominantemente negativas, que vamos a ver de forma clara en Eliot, tiene ya sus antecedentes en escritores victorianos y simbolistas como Tennyson y Baudelaire. Tennyson utiliza paisajes exteriores para simbolizar estados mentales, pero les falta inmediatez y variedad. Domina la técnica de la utilización del paisaje con respecto a escritores anteriores, pero no llega a dar el gran salto. Como McLuhan (1972:280) afirma, "... if one asks what it was of landscape art that the Romantics and the Victorians did not achieve, it must be replied, *le paysage intérieur* which had to wait for Baudelaire, Laforgue and Rimbaud". Este *paysaje interior* al que se refiere McLuhan no es sino la descripción del estado psicológico y mental del individuo. Efectivamente,

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<sup>8</sup> Véanse, a este respecto, relatos como "Superman and Paula Brown's New Snowsuit", donde una luna imposable presencia la impotencia de la protagonista, que ha sido culpada de una acción que no ha cometido: "The staircase to the second floor was dark, but I went down to the long hall to my room without turning on the light switch and shut the door. A small unripe moon was shafting squares of greenish light along the floor and the windowpanes were fringed with frost. I threw myself fiercely down on my bed and lay there, dryeyed and burning" (Plath, 1977:172). En "The Fifty-Ninth Bear" el protagonista también muere en la completa oscuridad, como ya veremos: "The darkness fistled and struck. The light went out. The moon went out in a cloud" (Plath, 1977:111).

<sup>9</sup> Véase el libro que Hargrove (1978) dedica al estudio del paisaje en el escritor, *Landscape as Symbol in the poetry of T.S. Eliot*.

años más tarde, Baudelaire depura la técnica de descripción del paisaje y la lleva de fuera hacia dentro, hacia la obtención del paisaje interior. Además de este logro, Baudelaire introduce el tema de la ciudad moderna como objeto de descripción de sus paisajes simbólicos (Hargrove, 1978:27-28). En general, la influencia de Baudelaire en Eliot, en cuanto a la descripción de lugares, ha recibido escaso reconocimiento, pero los dos avances que hemos mencionado son las contribuciones más importantes que recoge, a su vez, T.S. Eliot, y que también están presentes en Plath.

La poesía de Tennyson y Baudelaire supone una ruptura con el pasado, ya que, como explica Hargrove (1978:210), "... landscape had been used simply as description or decoration, it had provided a locale for the action or characters, it had consoled the speaker, or it had evoked a mood or atmosphere". Tennyson y Baudelaire lo utilizan para simbolizar emociones humanas y, más tarde, T.S. Eliot utiliza su talento literario para introducir la novedad de una poesía que habla de paisajes concretos con gran realismo, pero que no es puramente descriptiva, pues nos da cuenta de estados de ánimo y ambientes. Así, cuando en *The Waste Land* la ciudad de Londres desaparece para convertirse en un estéril desierto, el impacto de tal suceso en el lector es notable, puesto que es capaz de identificar fácilmente en el poema una ciudad que posiblemente conoce con todo detalle. Por otra parte, en sus "Preludes" o en "Marina" los ambientes que el escritor describe contribuyen a crear un sentimiento general de depresión, en el primer caso, o de alegría y renovada esperanza, en el segundo. Podemos concluir que Eliot va, sin duda, mucho más allá que Tennyson y Baudelaire en la complejidad con que utiliza el paisaje, puesto que sirve tanto para ambientar lo que cuenta como para describir estados emocionales, morales y espirituales, de forma que

... he is able to communicate the "inapprehensible", the "incomprehensible," with ever-increasing skill and precision as his poetry moves from depictions of man's spiritual and emotional sterility to those of his spiritual and emotional fulfillment, what Eliot himself calls "a satisfaction of the whole being"... (Hargrove, 1978:210-11)

Centrándonos de nuevo en la forma en la que Plath plasma el paisaje en sus relatos, podemos afirmar que "The Daughters of Blossom Street" es un ejemplo de lo que acabamos de describir. Se trata de una historia que comienza con un aviso de huracán y una fuerte lluvia y concluye con un atemperamiento de las fuerzas de la naturaleza tras la muerte de dos de los personajes de la historia: Emily Russo, una de las empleadas

del hospital, y Billy Monihan, el chico de los recados: "... All along the corridor you can hear the rain, quieted now, drumming steadily against the panes." (Plath, 1977:97). La tormenta amaina y la lluvia se aquieta como si la paz en la que ahora descansan Emily y Billy lo invadiera todo.

Esta relación no casual entre el estado de los personajes y el tiempo atmosférico se vuelve a repetir en historias como "Sunday at the Mintons". En este relato, la violencia del mar embravecido coincide con los sentimientos de violencia más profundos de una de las protagonistas de la historia, Elizabeth Minton, quien en el fondo desea ahogar a su hermano, cruel y autoritario. Así, cuando en una escena que contiene rasgos de realismo imaginario ella observa cómo las fuerzas de la naturaleza se encargan de hacerlo, no puede dejar de alegrarse en su interior: "... *With a growing peace* Elizabeth watched the flailing arms rise, sink and rise again." (Plath, 1977:164) (énfasis mío). Sólo al final del relato nos damos cuenta de que, en realidad, nada ha cambiado y de que la protagonista sólo estaba soñando despierta.

Hay, en este relato, elementos de fusión entre naturaleza e individuo que son muy típicos de la escritura de Plath y en especial de su obra poética.<sup>10</sup> Sin embargo, la fusión que Plath apunta aquí se irá desvelando, progresivamente, como inalcanzable. Si nos planteamos el por qué del deseo de fusión de Plath con la naturaleza, tal vez podamos encontrar la respuesta en Edward Picot, quien al referirse al hombre señala:

[he] envies the apparent unconscious contentment of the non-human world, and often he turns towards that world with a sense of release, simply because it is different from his own creations, and therefore offers him a moment of escape from his own problems. (Picot, 1997:293)

Efectivamente, el ser humano tiende a pensar que el mundo natural no es susceptible de sufrimiento y es ahí, por tanto, donde espera encontrar alivio a las penas que le afligen. Plath era una mujer obsesiva y

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<sup>10</sup> Plath trata sobre la identificación y fusión entre ser y paisaje en poemas predominantemente transicionales como los que componen el grupo "Poem for a Birthday", publicados en *Crossing the Water*, y en "Flute Notes from a Reedy Pound" y "The Stones", publicados en *The Colossus*. Para lograr tal fusión es necesaria la regresión del ser a un estado más primitivo, para lo cual se operan en él incluso cambios físicos, como en "The Beast" o "Dark House". En poemas de la etapa final de la escritora, tales como "Ariel", "Poppies in October", "Getting There", "Years", "Winter Tress", pertenecientes a *Winter Trees* y *Ariel*, vamos a encontrar de nuevo esta idea de fusión entre naturaleza e individuo, pero esta vez no va a ser tanto física como mental.

atormentada<sup>11</sup> y no es extraño que buscara cierta paz en un mundo aparentemente ajeno al sufrimiento.

En otro relato de *Johnny Panic*, “The Fifty-Ninth Bear”, aparece de nuevo la idea de sincronía entre lo que va a suceder y el medio donde transcurre la acción. En este caso, la oscuridad es un marco perfecto para que algo trágico ocurra: “The darkness fisted and struck. The light went out. The moon went out in a cloud.” (Plath, 1977:111). A menudo, la ausencia de luz anuncia muerte en la obra de Plath, como en este caso.<sup>12</sup> La luna es cómplice y se esconde para garantizar la ausencia de luz en el momento en que el oso mata al protagonista del relato.

Hay excepciones en las que la muerte de algún personaje de la historia coincide con un día luminoso y brillante pero, cuando esto ocurre, este dato sirve, en realidad, para resaltar el hecho de que tal personaje era realmente insignificante y de que, en el fondo, a nadie le importa su desaparición. Tal es el caso de Mr Prescott en el relato “The Day Mr Prescott Died”,

“Now, Mama”, I said, “you know Mr Prescott was twenty years older than Mrs Prescott and she was just waiting for him to die so she could have some fun. Just waiting. He was a grumpy old man even as far back as I remember. A cross word for everybody, and he kept getting that skin disease on his hands.” (Plath, 1977:46)

“But Mama”, I complained, “how can I say I'm sorry about Mr Prescott when I'm really not sorry at all? When I really think it's a good thing?” (Plath, 1977:47)

Existen aún más ejemplos de correspondencia entre lo que podríamos denominar el *paisaje exterior* y el *interior* de los personajes, de simbiosis entre los elementos de la naturaleza y su estado psíquico y emocional. Al respecto, cabe mencionar también el relato titulado “Initiation”, escrito en 1953, donde Plath narra el proceso de iniciación de Millicent Arnold, protagonista principal, en una hermandad para mujeres (*sorority*). La sensación de iniciación vivida por Millicent es narrada así en el relato:

But just then, from somewhere far off, Millicent was sure of it, there came a melodic fluting, quite wild and sweet, and she knew that it must be the song of the heather birds ...

<sup>11</sup> Sus propios diarios son los que mejor ilustran esta idea.

<sup>12</sup> Ya hemos citado, a este respecto, otro relato de *Johnny Panic* en el que oscuridad y muerte van asociadas: “The Daughters of Blossom Street” (1960).



Within Millicent another melody soared, strong and exuberant, a triumphant answer to the music of the darting heather birds that sang so clear and lilting over the far lands. And she knew that her own private initiation had just begun. (Plath, 1977:153)

Los pájaros cantan y sus trinos expresan la alegría que hay en el corazón de Millicent. De manera parecida, el escenario que rodea a Elizabeth Minton, con sus objetos inertes, se confabula para expresar la irritación que la inflexibilidad de su hermano le provoca, y los objetos se ofenden ante la manera despreciativa en que Henri trata a Elizabeth:

The very room seemed to take offence at this open insolence. Elizabeth was sure she saw the rigid andirons stiffen, and the blue tapestry above the mantel had paled perceptibly. The grandfather clock was gaping at her, speechless before the next reproving tick. (Plath, 1977:159)

Seres inertes cobran vida. Este mundo onírico descrito por Plath, donde los objetos cotidianos están vivos o los animales tienen reacciones inesperadas, casi humanas, como en “The Fifty-Ninth Bear”, está directamente relacionado con el concepto de *uncanny* examinado por vez primera por Sigmund Freud. En efecto, el famoso psicoanalista dedica su ensayo “The Uncanny” (“Das Unheimliche” en su título original en alemán) a lo que él denomina *unheimlich* y que podemos traducir de forma aproximada al español como «lo siniestro», «lo inquietante», «lo lúgubre», «lo que incita miedos atávicos», etc.<sup>13</sup> Para Freud, este sentimiento está directamente relacionado con la presencia de dobles que son, en realidad, un auspicio de muerte y que confunden al individuo sobre cuál es su identidad real. También parece ser que la tendencia a ver «dobles» de uno mismo se desarrolla a muy temprana edad. Freud afirma:

... When all is said and done, the quality of uncanniness can only come from the fact of the “double” being a creation dating back to a very early mental stage, long since surmounted -a stage, incidentally, at which it wore a more friendly aspect. The “double” has become a thing of terror, just as, after the collapse of their religion, the gods turned into demons ... (Freud, 1990:358)

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<sup>13</sup> En este particular me referiré a la traducción del alemán al inglés que de este ensayo realiza la editorial Penguin y que aparece compilado, junto a otros temas de arte y literatura, en el volumen 14 de una colección dedicada a Freud. En dicha traducción, *unheimlich* se traduce al inglés como *uncanny* y se sugieren, a su vez, traducciones al español del término como las arriba mencionadas: «sospechoso», «de mal agüero», «lúgubre» y «siniestro» (Freud, 1990:342).

Esta idea del doble aparece reflejada en las estatuas del Antiguo Egipto, las cuales se elaboran con materiales imperecederos tras la muerte de alguien importante y nacen del narcisismo primario que caracteriza al niño y al hombre primitivo. Son símbolo de inmortalidad y pueden interpretarse también como imagen de la muerte inevitable que espera a cada cual (Freud, 1990:357). De ahí, el sentimiento de miedo, extrañeza, etc., que la imagen del doble provoca.

Veremos, por tanto, que la causa de que Plath observe en la naturaleza un elemento siniestro, inesperado, que le produce miedo e inseguridad, subyace en el hecho de que encuentra en el medio natural dobles de sí misma, seres con los que su identidad se fusiona. Como hemos mencionado, para Freud esta tendencia a descubrir el lado inquietante de una realidad aparentemente afable tiene su origen en traumas infantiles y complejos que han sido reprimidos y que, por algún motivo concreto, son revividos a consecuencia de alguna impresión.

Our conclusion could then be stated thus: an uncanny experience occurs either when infantile complexes which have been repressed are once more revived by some impression, or when primitive beliefs which have been surmounted seem once more to be confirmed ... (Freud, 1990:372)

En el caso de la escritora que nos ocupa, no cabe duda de que su infancia no fue todo lo fácil que habría cabido esperar y que fue, sin duda, origen de muchos de sus males posteriores. Sólo parecía faltar el detonante adecuado para hacer saltar por los aires su autocontrol y para que empezara a escribir sobre lo que verdaderamente le inquietaba.

En la interpretación que Vidler (1992:11) hace de este concepto freudiano, el escritor añade:

“the uncanny is ... in its aesthetic dimension, a representation of a mental state of projection that precisely elides the boundaries of the real and the unreal in order to provoke a disturbing ambiguity, a slippage between waking and dreaming”.

La simbiosis llega a tal extremo que el mar se confabula con Elizabeth para así poder vengarse de Henri quien, convencional, inflexible y rígido, desprecia el mundo onírico, imaginativo y soñador de su hermana, que suele transformar la realidad cotidiana en una vivencia mucho menos monótona y predecible que Henri. Una ola gigantesca derriba y lleva al fondo del océano a Henri, mientras Elizabeth contempla la escena primero horrorizada e, inmediatamente después, aliviada de tan agobiante presencia.

Acto seguido, Elizabeth es transportada por un golpe de viento hacia el cielo sobre las olas y allí se funde con los elementos:

The wind was rising again, and Elizabeth's skirts lifted in a fresh gust, billowing, belling up, filled with air ... Her feet rose from the planking, settled, rose again, until she was bobbing upward, floating like a pale lavender mildweed seed along the wind, over the waves and out to sea.

And that was the last anyone saw of Elizabeth Minton, who was enjoying herself thoroughly, blowing upward, now to this side, now to that, her lavender dress blending with the purple of the distant clouds. (Plath, 1977:165)

El mar aparece aquí como aliado, a pesar de tratarse de un mar tempestuoso, de olas gigantescas, y no como enemigo, como es frecuente en la obra poética de Plath, y la idea de fusión aparece de nuevo en la última línea de la cita.

En su relato escrito en 1955, "Superman and Paula Brown's New Snowsuit", la protagonista, una niña, cuenta cómo una amiga la ha acusado de empujarla mientras jugaban con otros amigos y estropearle, al caerse sobre una mancha de aceite, su traje nuevo de esquí. La dueña del traje miente, pero la verdad no resulta nunca desvelada y la protagonista se siente completamente desvalida ante tal acusación. Una vez más, el paisaje expresa los sentimientos del personaje y la luna presencia su dolor, pero es una luna pequeña y sin brillo que no pone luz a su pena: "... A small unripe moon was shafting squares of greenish light along the floor and the windowpanes were fringed with frost" (Plath, 1977:172). De nuevo, la oscuridad, como una enorme sombra, lo inunda todo y la ausencia de luz se puede traducir en dolor:

... I lay there alone in bed, *feeling the black shadow creeping up the underside of the world like a flood tide*. Nothing held, nothing was left. The silver airplanes and the blue capes [Superman] all dissolved and vanished, wiped away like the crude drawings of a child in colored chalk from the *colossal blackboard of the dark*. That was the year the war began, and the real world, and the difference. (Plath, 1977:172) (énfasis mío)

Éste es el final de la inocencia, el final de sus sueños de niña que se hacen pedazos. Su mundo fantástico, lleno de colores y personajes ficticios desaparece y se impone la realidad, asociada al blanco y negro y a la presencia de la luna como testigo impasible. El final de su niñez marca el comienzo de su entrada en el mundo adulto, real, momento que queda simbolizado por la inmensa sombra negra que lo cubre todo. El paisaje

que enmarca la acción se disuelve esta vez, se convierte en la nada que ahora rodea a la protagonista.

La sombra ha sido de forma tradicional para muchas culturas el símbolo de la esencia espiritual del individuo, del alma. Para Plath, además, representa, en cierta forma, lo que el individuo podía haber sido y nunca fue, la parte del yo que ha sido aniquilada. Tal como explica Axelrod (1990:231): “Shadow betokens the imaginative self that might have been but was forbidden to be, the self that has been defeated and destroyed” y también, “Shadows, then, evoke the painful half-life one lives on the edge of annihilation ...” (Axelrod, 1990:216). Así suponemos que se siente la protagonista del relato durante unos instantes: incomprendida y derrotada.

“In the Mountains”, relato escrito en 1954, repite de nuevo esta simbiosis entre los sentimientos de los personajes y el marco que les rodea. De esta manera, cuando uno de los protagonistas de la historia, Austin, llora quedamente conmovido por la visita de su novia al hospital donde se encuentra convaleciente de tuberculosis, el tiempo atmosférico fuera de la habitación expresa su estado de ánimo: “... There was no wind at all and it was hushed and still” (Plath, 1977:182). Todo, dentro y fuera, está en calma.

Lo mismo ocurre en “All the Dead Dears”, historia escrita por Plath en 1957 y que narra la muerte de varias personas. De nuevo, las fuerzas naturales acompañan la acción del relato y, mientras Nellie Meehan explica cómo se le apareció el fantasma de su hermana Minnie, muerta cuando tenía 7 años, el viento, afuera, azota la casa hasta hacerla crujir: “... Outside, the wind blasted away at the house which creaked and shuddered to its foundations under those powerful assaults of air ...” (Plath, 1977:185).

De entre los relatos costumbristas y personales de Plath recogidos en *Johnny Panic*, cabe destacar “Widow Mangada”, escrito en el verano de 1956 y que cuenta unas vacaciones que los Hughes pasaron en Benidorm, y “Ocean 1212-W”, escrito a finales de 1962, poco antes del fallecimiento de la escritora. En el resto de relatos recogidos en este libro apenas aparecen descripciones escénicas.

“Window Mangada” es un excelente ejemplo del tipo de descripciones naturalistas y detalladas que a Plath le gustaba hacer por aquella época. Suponían una especie de ejercicio literario donde la escritora debía

centrar toda su atención, tal como hemos visto que explicaba Hughes en la introducción a *Johnny Panic*:

Widow Mangada's house: pale, peach-brown stucco on the main Avenida running along shore, facing the beach of reddish yellow sand with all the gaily painted cabanas making a maze of bright blue wooden stilts and small square patches of shadow. The continuous poise and splash of incoming waves mark a ragged white line of surf beyond which the morning sea blazes in the early sun, already high and hot at ten-thirty; the ocean is cerulean toward the horizon, vivid azure nearer shore, blue and sheened as peacock feathers. (Plath, 1977:224)

La descripción continúa hasta ocupar dos páginas repletas de todo tipo de detalles naturalistas sobre la casa donde la pareja vivió sus vacaciones españolas.

Tal descripción contrasta claramente con la que Plath (1977:123) nos ofrece en “Ocean 1212-W”, y es que aquí el escenario es el mar, al que Plath amaba y cerca del cual vivió de niña hasta la muerte de su padre. En este relato Plath describe su temprana conexión con el mar: “My childhood landscape was not land but the end of the land—the cold, salt, running hills of the Atlantic ...”. Relaciona el mar con su niñez y lo describe como si del seno materno se tratara, como si fuera el útero donde fue concebida. Así, se refiere al movimiento del mar con sus rítmicos vaivenes como al “motherly pulse of the sea” (Plath, 1977:123) y lo define en términos claramente femeninos: “Like a deep woman, it hid a good deal; it had many faces, many delicate, terrible veils”. Plath atribuye al mar la típica complejidad del carácter de una mujer. En realidad, a diferencia de muchos niños a quienes las olas atemorizan y no se atreven a acercarse a la orilla, Plath describe cómo de pequeña tuvo que ser literalmente rescatada de las aguas por su madre, pues sentía el mar como un medio natural en el que sumergirse sin peligro: “... When I was learning to creep, my mother set me down on the beach to see what I thought of it. I crawled straight for the coming wave and was just through the wall of green when she caught my heels” (Plath, 1977:123). Creía que, una vez en el agua, podría operarse la metamorfosis y convertirse en sirena. Plath se lamenta en su ensayo: “I often wonder what would have happened if I had managed to pierce that looking-glass. Would my infant gills have taken over, the salt in my blood? For a time I believed not in God nor Santa Claus, but in mermaids ...” (Plath, 1977:123). Hay aquí una completa identificación con el mar que, en realidad, puede

interpretarse como un deseo de regreso al seno materno y, a la vez, como un deseo de muerte.<sup>14</sup>

Su amor por el paisaje marino, siempre en constante movimiento, siempre cambiante, le hace meditar sobre lo rígido y encorsetado que resulta el paisaje terrestre: las montañas y otros accidentes terrestres son inamovibles y ella siente necesidad de cambio:

Did my seascape, then, lend me my love of change and wildness? Mountains terrify me—they just sit about, they are so proud. The stillness of hills stifles me like fat pillows. When I was not walking alongside the sea I was on it, or in it ...” (Plath, 1977:128)

El regreso tierra adentro, lejos del mar, representa, por tanto, una desgracia para Sylvia, como si de la separación de sus verdaderos orígenes se tratara. Además, la posibilidad de integración con el medio que la rodea se hace pedazos cuando nace su hermano Warren: “... As from a star I saw, coldly and soberly, the separateness of everything, I felt the wall of my skin: I am I. That stone is a stone. My beautiful fusion with the things of this world was over” (Plath, 1977:126). El nacimiento de su hermano amenaza el orden de su universo. Vemos, por tanto, que el deseo de Plath de fusionarse con el medio que la rodea aparece siendo niña y que luego va a hacerse progresivamente patente en su obra. También aparece pronto la certeza de la imposibilidad de tal fusión. El hecho, por tanto, de que el elemento natural se muestre hostil y desoiga sus súplicas, lo que es mucho más patente en su obra poética,<sup>15</sup> puede interpretarse como la respuesta que el medio natural da al ser humano por el abuso sistemático del mismo. Como explican Adorno y Horkheimer (2000:77),

Men pay for the increase of their power with alienation from that over which they exercise their power. Enlightenment behaves toward things as a dictator toward men. He knows them in so far as he can manipulate them.

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<sup>14</sup> Véanse las interpretaciones que Patéa (1989:165) y Rosenblatt (1979:24) hacen sobre el elemento marino en la obra de Plath. Para la primera, el mar en Plath representa la “nostalgia de los orígenes” o “unidad absoluta de los comienzos” con su poder mediador entre la vida y la muerte; según Rosenblatt, el mar de “Ocean 1212-W” es “both a nurturing and a terrifying ‘mother’ for her”.

<sup>15</sup> Poemas como “Tulips”, “Frog Autumn”, “Blue Moles” y “Finisterre” son buen ejemplo de lo que queremos decir.

La naturaleza responde, así, a la actitud del hombre moderno, a veces con indiferencia y otras con abierta hostilidad.

Hay pocos relatos que tengan como escenario una ciudad y que hagan clara alusión a la misma. En “Johnny Panic and the Bible of Dreams” la ciudad aparece desdibujada, como si se tratara tan sólo del producto de una elucubración mental, irreal e intangible. Es la ciudad de los sueños:

Some nights I take the elevator up to the roof of my apartment building. Some nights, about three a.m. Over the trees at the far side of the park the United Fund torch flare flattens and recovers under some witchy invisible push and here and there in the hunks of stone and brick I see a light. Most of all, though, I feel the city sleeping. Sleeping from the river on the west to the ocean on the east, like some rootless island rockabying itself on nothing at all. (Plath, 1977:24)

Esta idea de ciudad como lugar irreal, producto concebido intelectualmente, surgido de la elucubración de los arquitectos, a manera de todopoderosos demiurgos que controlan a los personajes que en ella se mueven, es la misma que se observa en la más famosa obra en prosa de Plath, *The Bell Jar*, donde Manhattan es, simplemente, un mero decorado o telón de fondo para sus personajes. Es también ésta una concepción de la ciudad como lugar donde hacer recuento de los sueños de sus locos habitantes: la vida es sueño, como decía Calderón de la Barca, y la ciudad es el escenario ideal creado a su medida, el almacén de estos sueños:

... When you think how much room one night of dreams props would take up for one person in one city, and that city a mere pinprick on a map of the world, and when you start multiplying this space by the population of the world, and that space by the number of nights there have been since the apes took to chipping axes out of stone and losing their hair, you have some idea what I mean. I'm not the mathematical type: my head starts splitting when I get only as far as the number of dreams going on during one night in the State of Massachusetts. (Plath, 1977:25-6)

También en este relato aparece el concepto de ciudad como escenario: “... The electric lights in the four copper lamp bowls overhead flash on, and, almost magically, the room brightens, shutting the stormy sky off in the distance where it belongs, *harmless as a painted stage backdrop* ...” (Plath, 1977:83) (énfasis mío).

La idea de que la ciudad es agresiva y puede ser peligrosa, claramente expuesta en *The Bell Jar*, se ve acompañada en esta recopilación de relatos

que descubren la convicción de que también la naturaleza entraña peligros que el ser humano desconoce o menosprecia. Así, en “Sunday at the Mintons” el mar se confabula con Elizabeth para vengarse de su hermano Henri y en “The Fifty-Ninth Bear” la muerte acecha y el concepto freudiano de *uncanny* es más que evidente: lo familiar se vuelve de repente ajeno, desconocido, y se rebela contra nosotros cuando menos lo esperamos; así, uno de los osos que merodean usualmente entre las tiendas de campaña buscando comida, y que no suelen atacar a los campistas, se enfrenta a Norton, protagonista masculino del relato, y lo mata.

Ligada también a esta concepción de la naturaleza aparece de nuevo la noción de fusión, de simbiosis de los personajes con el medio que les rodea, de la que ya hemos hablado. La identidad de los personajes aparece descrita en toda su fragilidad y como a punto de desaparecer fusionada con el medio. A este respecto, nos hemos remitido con anterioridad a los personajes de Elizabeth Minton o Emily Russo:

Her feet rose from the planking, settled, rose again, until she was bobbing upward, floating like a pale lavender mildweed seed along the wind, over the waves and out to sea.

And that was the last anyone saw of Elizabeth Minton ... her lavender dress blending with the purple of the distant clouds. (Plath, 1977:165)

Miss Emily's eyes slide to this heap of flowers. *Something flickers there.* (Plath, 1977:90) (énfasis mío)

Para concluir este análisis de los elementos paisajísticos en los relatos y ensayos de *Johnny Panic and the Bible of Dreams*, debemos decir que resulta en cierta medida arriesgado sacar conclusiones de un volumen que contiene piezas de tan diversa índole y cronología. No obstante, cabe afirmar, en términos generales, que el estilo de Plath va evolucionando hacia una ausencia de detalles paisajísticos y que éstos, por otro lado, van adquiriendo una naturaleza menos realista y más simbólica con el tiempo: así, vemos relatos donde la naturaleza parece «simpatizar» con los personajes protagonistas y transmitir sus sentimientos, emociones, deseos, etc. Ejemplos de esto los tenemos en historias como “Initiation”, “Sunday at the Mintons”, “Superman and Paula Brown's Snowsuit”, etc.

Unida a esta idea aparece también el hecho de que el tiempo atmosférico de cada relato es descrito a menudo en consonancia con los acontecimientos que éste narra y, así, los eventos negativos o la muerte de los personajes suelen ocurrir en mitad de una tormenta, de un fuerte viento,



y suelen estar asociados con la ausencia de luz, con sombras, etc. Los relatos “The Daughters of Blossom Street”, “Sunday at the Mintons” y “All the Dead Dears” ilustran en buena medida lo que acabamos de decir.

Este último aspecto nos lleva al concepto de fusión entre individuo y naturaleza que es tan evidente en la obra poética de Plath. En los poemas de la escritora la posibilidad de tal fusión se va revelando como no factible, mientras que en sus relatos esta idea sólo aparece apuntada. Además, la naturaleza descrita en algunos de los relatos contiene un carácter de imprevisión que está estrechamente relacionado con el concepto freudiano de *uncanny*, que hemos explicado y que es una característica muy definitoria de toda la escritura de Sylvia Plath y, en especial, de su poesía.

Por último, cabe señalar que la ciudad apenas aparece elegida como marco de referencia de las historias y que, cuando lo es, como en el caso de “Johnny Panic”, el relato que da título a todo el volumen aparece sólo como mero telón de fondo, sin apenas rasgos definitorios y con un matiz evidente de irrealidad.

En general podemos decir que muchas de las ideas que aparecen tan sólo esbozadas en los relatos compilados en *Johnny Panic* van a ser desarrolladas por Plath de forma más clara y rotunda en su obra poética.

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# A FUNCTIONAL VIEW OF THE LANGUAGE IN PHILASTER

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## **Abstract**

*Beaumont and Fletcher's style in Philaster reflects the authors' "world view", that is, the version of reality they construct. This concept clearly refers to the capacity of language to create a particular vision of things. Our hypothesis in this article is that Beaumont and Fletcher present a language clearly controlled and patterned that points out that there is a relation between the use of words or structures and the world view. The main purpose of this article is to show Beaumont and Fletcher's world view through the use of language in Philaster. Modality, the use of vocabulary and adjectives, the use of different rhetorical devices (repetitions, exclamations, etc.), and significant syntactical structures (cleft sentences, fronting, etc.) are the main ways of pointing out the authors' world view in Philaster.*

## **1. Introduction: world view**

Beaumont and Fletcher's plays show a relation between elaborate style and emotional and oratorical effects. The predominance of the oratorical effect in these authors' tragicomedy fits very well the taste of the times in which Beaumont and Fletcher wrote. According to Mincoff (1961:1), the interest of these authors lies in the fact that they "represent the gateway to seventeenth century tragedy, or what I should call the Baroque type in its essentials and without the neoclassical accidentals that loom so large with Dryden and his fellows, and also with the French classicists".

James I sets the fashion for his court. The Jacobean court is known for its sensational intrigues and scandals and for disrupting the social and cultural balance between country and town. The audience of their time was captivated by the extravagant eloquence of Sophistic rhetoric.

We agree with Waith (1952) in that Beaumont and Fletcher's style is rhetorical, although the emotional tension is relaxed in some scenes of the play: we find moments in which the authors imitate the vocabulary of conversation, and passages in which we find the accumulation of sentences whose grammatical connection is loose.

Their style shows their "world view", that is, the version of reality they construct. It clearly refers to the capacity of language to create a particular vision of things. We find this term in the following quotation by Whorf:

[...] users of markedly different grammars are pointed by their grammars toward different types of observations and different evaluations of externally similar acts of observation, and hence are not equivalent as observers but must arrive at somewhat different views of the world. (Whorf, 1956:221)

Another way of defining the same term is the following:

[...] the complete set of objectivations in a culture constitutes the representation of reality, or world-view, enjoyed by the community and its members. In a nutshell, we see the world in terms of the categories through which we and our society have constituted it. (Fowler, 1981:25)

Fowler (1986:130) refers to the same concept as the system of beliefs, values, and categories through which a person or a society comprehends the world. We can also refer to this concept as ideology (the way in which someone perceives the world). As van Dijk (1998:135) points out: "Ideologies are not merely sets of beliefs, but socially shared beliefs of groups". It is thus important to take into consideration the role played by ideologies in society.

Fowler (1977:76) refers to this concept as "mind style": "cumulatively, consistent structural options, agreeing in cutting the presented world to one pattern or another, give rise to an impression of a world-view, what I shall call a 'mind style'". From this definition we can deduce that the world view of authors, the way in which they see and interpret things can be seen throughout their style.

This term normally describes the ways in which what we say and think interact with society; this is a way of pointing out that language

reproduces ideology, as Fowler (1981:28) says: “[...] we regard language as a continuously active social practice, and the production of ideology or theory as an inevitable and ongoing function of the use of language”.

Since language reflects ideology or world view, and since world view is a social practice and a social product, language constitutes a theory of the organization of the world. To analyse the authors’ style we should take into account the meaning of the texts because this meaning reflects in some way the meaning of the world. This is the reason why we should understand general frameworks of reference and meaning as language reproduces social values.

Whorf (1956:252) underlines the importance of language to help us understand thoughts: “Actually, thinking is most mysterious, and by far the greatest light upon it that we have is thrown by the study of language”.

In a similar way, Couture (1991:263) points out that:

Language in and of itself constructs the social conscience [...] Functional theories claim that the word is the medium of exchange among ideologies, that ideology is fundamentally social, and that the individual conscience is fashioned by the social milieu.

Language is a form of social behaviour, that is, the reason why it is inevitably joined to the social context in which it functions. This context carries out the ideology of social system and institutions.

Halliday (1971:332) refers to the experience of people saying:

Language serves for the expression of content: it has a representational, or, as I would prefer to call it, an ideational function [...]. The speaker or writer embodies in language his experience of the phenomena of the real world; and this includes his experience of the internal world of his own consciousness: his reactions, cognitions, and perceptions, and also his linguistic acts of speaking and understanding.

The social context and the purpose of communication produce a collection of characteristic meanings that are codified throughout the characteristics of the text.

Our hypothesis is that Beaumont and Fletcher present a language which is patterned, elegant and controlled; and thus reflects the existing relation between the use of words or structures and the world view. We will study this aspect in the present article, which is dedicated to the

use of language in *Philaster*. In general terms, we should say that the two dramatists brought the required qualities of the time, such as:

[...] adroit stagecraft; lucid, graceful language which served as an idealised version of the language of gentlemen, their elegant casuistries deriving from the Roman *controversiae*; arguments about special, even fanatic, cases of law which must have appealed particularly to the young Inns of Court men who made up a large proportion of their audiences. (Fletcher, 1967:17)

At this point, we should develop a little further the main world views that are normally associated with *Philaster*. On the one hand, we can talk about a conception of life that can be classified as aristocratic and elitist. On the other, we should mention the world view concerning the magnanimous sense of life in which the common good is always above the bad side of things. Therefore, we should refer to monarchy as a supreme authority and supreme good. In this way, we can say that Beaumont and Fletcher's "world view" or mind style is very idealised, sophisticated and adulterated. By presenting this world view, the authors are trying to convince us of the convenience of the social reality they are describing.

Fowler (1981) examines writers' uses of language considering that linguistic choices reflect and influence relations with society. Throughout the literary work, social characteristics of the period can be easily perceived:

There is a dialectal relationship between language and social structure: the varieties of linguistic usage are both products of socioeconomic forces and institutions [...]. The New Critics and the Formalists vehemently denied that "literature" had social determinants and social consequences, but a sociolinguistic theory of the kind [...] will show that all discourse is part of social structure [...]. (Fowler, 1981:21)

The grammatical and syntactic forms used in *Philaster* grow out of social forms and of the belief that the proper world view is an optimistic one.

The main purpose of this article is to show this precise world view through the use of language in *Philaster*. Modality, the use of vocabulary and adjectives, the use of different rhetorical devices (repetitions, exclamations, etc.) and significant syntactic structures are the main ways of reflecting the authors' world view in *Philaster*. Before giving examples showing the idealised world view we have already mentioned, we will focus on the function of language in general.

## 2. The function of language

The linguistic framework under which we will analyse *Philaster* is Systemic Functional Grammar, whose main figure is Michael Halliday. Systemic Functional Grammar investigates what the range of relevant choices is, both in the kinds of meanings that we might want to express (or functions that we might want to perform) and in the kinds of wordings that we can use to express these meanings. In order to identify meaning choices, it is necessary to focus on the context: what option, in the kind of society we live in, is more appropriate or likely to be expressed? But, at the same time, we need to identify the linguistic options (i.e. the lexical and structural possibilities that the language system offers) and to explore the meanings that each option expresses.

In a functional grammar, language is interpreted as a system of meanings, accompanied by forms through which the meanings can be realised (Halliday, 1994:xiii-xiv). In this sense, we can say that a functional grammar is one that is pushed in the direction of the semantics.

The fact that this is a ‘functional’ grammar means that it is based on meaning, but the fact that it is a ‘grammar’ means that it is an interpretation of linguistic forms (Halliday, 1994:xx). The notion of “system” is a very important one for this school of linguistics: “A system is a set of options in a stated environment; in other words, a choice, together with a condition of entry” (Halliday, 1974:45). Each choice in the system network specifies an environment, consisting of choices already made, and a set of possibilities of which one is (to be) chosen (Halliday, 1994:xxvii).

We cannot forget that Beaumont and Fletcher were born into the gentry at a moment of rapid social change. They were caught between two worlds, the Elizabethan world where secure and paternalist values, as well as a Renaissance ideal of contemplation and valour could be cherished, and a more complex Jacobean world, where the Court was disrupting the social and cultural balance between country and town (Fletcher, 1967:14).

Broadly speaking, we can say that the language used in tragicomedy is quite idealised, rhetorical, and sophisticated. Although it often borrows the vocabulary of conversation and makes use of flexible and varied rhythms, it is characteristically elaborate. In general, the forms used are not very natural and language seems to be cold and adulterated.

So far, we should say that we will be concerned with the relationships between language and social structure, considering social structure as one aspect of the social system (Halliday, 1989a:4). The opening dialogue of the courtiers can illustrate the previous statement, since it delineates the evil atmosphere of the court by the way in which these two characters speak together:

*Cle.* Here's nor lords nor ladies  
*Dion.* Credit me, gentlemen, I wonder at it  
 They received strict charge from the king to attend  
 Here. Besides, it was boldly published, that no  
 Officer should forbid any gentlemen that desire to  
 attend and here. (I, i)

The courtiers in this instance speak familiarly, but the evil atmosphere of the Sicilian court is normally presented in a more formal rhetoric, as in this example:

*Dion.* It is not a shame  
 For us, that should write noble in the land,  
 For us, that should be freemen, to behold  
 A man that is bravery of his age,  
 Philaster, [...]. (III, i)

In *Philaster* the court scenes, reflecting the Sicily of political upheavals, alternate with woodland scenes, reflecting pastoral Sicily, to form a combination of pseudo-history and romance.

### 3. Rhetorical devices

We will study the language in *Philaster*, a play in which, in our view, there is a clear adequacy of the style to the matter. In order to do this we will analyse the culture and the situation reflected by the language and the variety of language with the situation in accordance with the world view and values portrayed in the play, which are the ones normally used in tragicomedy.

The functional analysis of the language in *Philaster* will help us understand the relation between language and culture, and language and situation. It will also help us understand how language varies according to the functions for which it is being used.

Language reflects the literary and cultural conventions that are always present in Fletcherian tragicomedy. In this kind of tragicomedy,



we find many patterned expressions, a reason why from now on we will relate the literary conventions that govern the presentation of feelings to the literary conventions normally found in Fletcherian tragicomedy; for example alliteration, doublets, and parallel clauses were a ready means of controlling the sentence. The patterns of repetition and alliteration are interwoven with the insistent mould of the five-foot line, reinforced by frequent parallels of construction, as we can see in the following passage:

*Phi.* How heaven is in your eyes, but in your hearts,  
More hell that hell has; how your tongues like Scorpions,  
Both heal and poyson; how your thoughts are woven  
With thousand changes in one subtle webb,  
And worn so by you. (III, ii)

Although *Philaster* is the epitome of honest love, the previous response is a display of the tragicomic exposition of violent feeling on the stage. Such a strong feeling is the semantic choice ruling the syntactic devices.

The repetition, together with the parallel clauses and exclamations in the following dialogue, is another example of how Fletcherian tragicomedy portrays a strong feeling. As we find a word with a very clear negative connotation, ‘devils’, and a word with a very positive one, ‘blessings’, in the parallel clauses, we can speak of a dialogue full of expression and energy that is completely related to the revolt that is on the stage at the moment:

*Mes.* Arm, arm, arm!  
*King.* A thousand devils take ‘em!  
*Dion.* A thousand blessings on ‘em! (V, iii)

The repetition of words (*heaven and earth, blood, hell...*) is used as a way of underlining and being rhetorical. The repetition of “It’s a woman” underlines the importance of this moment for the action and for the whole play. This is very much related to the patterns used in this kind of tragicomedy to express sentimentalism, anxiety, and intrigue that characterises *Philaster* and the Fletcherian tragicomedy in general.

*Are.* What is discover’d?  
*Dion.* Why, my shame!  
It is a woman: Let her speak the rest.  
*Phi.* How? That again!  
*Dion.* It is a woman.  
*Phi.* Bless’d be you powers that favour innocence!

*King.* Lay hold upon that lady.  
*Phi.* It is a woman, sir! Hark gentlemen!  
 It is a woman! Arethusa, take  
 My soul into thy breast, that would be gone  
 With joy. It is a woman! Thou art fair,  
 And virtuous still to ages, in despite  
 Of malice. (V, v)

The already mentioned rhetorical devices highlight the expression of feelings and the sentimentality and idealism of the play, that is, the sophisticated and sentimental world-view. This is what we should highlight as the “ruling convention” throughout the whole play. In this way we can see a relationship among the patterns that are being enumerated, the style of the play and the world-view conveyed. The following examples will help us understand this fact.

Exclamative sentences are found throughout the whole play; this is one of the most common devices to show up a feeling, to emphasise emotions. In the first example, together with the exclamation, we find an enumeration.

*Bel.* [...] Heaven bless your loves, your fights, all your designs! (II, i)  
*Pha.* [...] Oh, for our country ladies! (II, ii)  
*Meg.* All happiness attend your grace! (II, iv)  
*Dion.* May your dreams be true to you! (II, iv)

Sometimes, exclamations are a very clear exponent of the sense of decorum so important for the period. In the following example it is worth noticing the premodification of the noun by two adjectives that really idealise or debase it:

*Meg.* Oh, delicate sweet prince! (II, ii)  
*Gal.* Oh, thou pernicious petticoat prince! (II, ii)

The following example is pronounced by Philaster when he talks to Dion, asking for his forgiveness:

*Phi.* Forgive me, thou that art the wealth  
 Of poor Philaster! (IV, v)

When the king asks for Philaster’s forgiveness, he uses an exclamative sentence:

*King.* Oh, worthy sir, forgive me! (V, iii)

We should also highlight the use of social conventions throughout the whole play; the hand of the lady, which is a Petrarchist motif, is referred to on several occasions as a symbol of idealization:

*Thra.* Peace, the king! (I, i)  
*Pha.* I come to kiss these fair hands. (I, ii)  
*Pha.* By this sweet hand. (II, ii)  
*Meg.* By my honour [...]. (II, ii)  
*Bel.* Health to you, my lord! (III, i)  
*Phi.* Then guide my feeble hand,  
 You that have power to do it, for I must  
 Perform a piece of justice! (IV, iii)  
*Phi.* Then thus I take my leave, kissing your hand [...]. (V, iii)  
*King.* All the gods go with thee! (V, iii)

Very clear references to the lady's honour as a social convention are the following examples. In them, we can see a clear aspect of ideology or world view:

*King.* Now, lady of honour, where's your honour now?  
 No man can fit your palate, but the prince. (II, iv)

In the following example we find a hypothetical subjunctive, which is very much determined by the message of the sentence; it is not a fact but a social convention:

*Phi.* Thus to rob a lady  
 Of her good name, is an infectious sin,  
 Not to be pardon'd: Be it false as hell [...]. (III, i)  
*Phi.* I do love fair truth:  
 She is my mistress, and who injures her,  
 Draws vengeance from me [...]. (III, i)

In this example of scene IV, Philaster finds Bellario asleep in the forest and wounds her, again, as his soliloquy makes clear, as a token gesture:

*Phi.* Sword, print my wounds  
 Upon this sleeping boy. I ha' none I think  
 Are mortal, nor would I lay greater upon thee.  
 (IV, iv)

Philaster repents of his attitude to Arethusa and Bellario when he is in prison. The exclamative and parallel sentences at the beginning of the speech reflect the profound feeling of Philaster, feeling that is emphasised by the other exclamative sentences and the imperatives used in them. We find the contrast between heaven and earth, both heaven and earth take part in the world-view offered by the authors.

*Phi.* Oh, Arethusa! Oh, Bellario!  
 Leave to be kind:  
 I shall be shot from Heaven, as now from earth,  
 If you continue so. I am a man,

False to a pair of the most trusty ones  
 That ever earth bore: Can it bear us all?  
 Forgive and leave me! But the king hath sent  
 To call to my death; Oh, shew it me,  
 And then forget me! And for thee, my boy,  
 I shall deliver words will mollify  
 The hearts of beasts, to spare thy innocence.  
 (V, ii)

After having studied the previous examples, we can say that the best word to define the language in *Philaster* is “rhetorical”, meaning that the style is showy and calls attention to itself by its wealth of ornament. The Elizabethan drama was frankly rhetorical; that is generally admitted. It was because so many of the speeches were based upon public property of one kind or another -common tags or common situations- that this rhetorical speech became possible. In words of Hoy (1970:170) “[...] the great strength of Elizabethan and Jacobean drama lies in its language, in its power of passionate and lyric utterance”. As Waith (1952:40) says, “[...] the language of Beaumont and Fletcher is largely responsible for our sense of contact with the familiar world and also of remoteness from it”.

As we have seen, this use of language in the play projects a society where conventional language behaviour appears. Systemic Functional Grammar treats language as an observable object that can be explained, and makes reference to its social functions, as we will also see in the following section.

Apart from the analysis of rhetorical devices, in which we have seen that language organises experience, in the following section, dedicated to vocabulary and syntax, we will also observe how all this represents social realities and reaffirms that there is a relation between the use of words or structures and the world view.

#### **4. Use of vocabulary, adjectives, and syntactical structures**

By analysing the vocabulary of the play, we can also affirm that it is a clear exponent of the of the authors’ world view, and we can also perceive a clear correlation between the different words chosen by the authors and the context in which they are used. In Waith’s (1952:176) words, the language of Beaumont and Fletcher’s tragicomedy “With its balance and antithesis, its repetition and alliteration, it is ‘brilliant and florid’ like

the style which Cicero associates with the Sophists". The language used in the play is saturated with specific social and communicative purposes.

At this point, we should refer to two concepts that are very much related to the notion of context, such as cultural code and register. By cultural code we understand the set of cultural beliefs and assumptions shared by a community and necessary for the complete understanding of the messages (literary or not) which that community produces. The notion of register proposes a very intimate relationship of text to context: indeed so intimate is that relationship, that the one can only be interpreted by reference to the other (Halliday, 1989b:vii).

In *Philaster* we can clearly see the love and honour conflict. We can also speak of a conflict of passion with a social code. There is a political code of loyalty to the sovereign. In this period, religion began to lose importance, as the new scientific discoveries of Kepler and Copernicus began to push through into the general consciousness of the educated people. As the spirit of rationalism asserted itself, the necessity for new moral sanctions was beginning to make itself felt (Mincoff, 1961:3).

The world of Beaumont and Fletcher is a disconcerting world of ever-shifting circumstances and sudden reversals in which we must constantly reorientate ourselves, a world from which all sense of stability has disappeared (Mincoff, 1961:6), as we can see by studying the different semantic fields we find in the play:

Vocabulary related to the court: *kingdoms, nation, prince, honour, virtue, king, court, etc.*

As the theatre became more and more a form of upper-class entertainment, the concept of morality as a social rather than a religious obligation imposed itself, something we can see by the repetition of the following words: *heaven, earth, death, church, altar, sin, hell, devils, gods, punishment and fear*. All the previous examples have moral or religious connotations.

There is a difference between a moral law and a social code. The code of honour, which is obviously artificial, is present throughout the play by references such as the following: *loyalty, a lady's honour, the lees of honour, blood, wounds, soul, etc.*

The allusions to heaven and providence provide the play with a sense of mystery due to the connotations carried by words such as *the heart of earth, shadow, storms, thunders, tyrant, monster or sin*.

We also find references to parts of the body, which referred to a sample of the conflict between love and social conflict mentioned in the previous speeches: *eye, lips, heart, kiss, hand* and so on.

The King's style is direct and crude, as we can see throughout the play. The vocabulary used by the king is also a means of being expressive: *sin, hell, devils*. This fact, together with the repetition of the pronoun "Thou" in the following speech and "all" in the final two lines, underlines his feeling:

*King.* Now, lady of honour, where's your honour  
 No man can fit your palate, but the prince.  
 Thou most ill-shrouded rottenness; thou piece  
 Made by a painter and a 'pothecary:  
 Thou troubled sea of lust; thou wilderness,  
 Inhabited by wild thoughts; thou swol'n cloud  
 Of infection; thou ripe mine of all diseases;  
 Thou all sin, all hell, and last, all devils, tell me,  
 Had you none to pull on with your courtesies,  
 But he that must be mine, and wrong my daughter?  
 By all the gods! All these, and all the pages,  
 And all the court, shall hoot thee through the court. [...]  
 (II, iv)

The adjectives are also a good way of presenting an idealised and distant world view. The primary function of this use of language is to make clear the actions and emotions which the plot entails. In fact, an almost equally important function of language in the play is to furnish poetic elaboration of such inherent acts and feelings as the plot provides. Here we offer some of the representative examples we find in each act:

White hand, artificial shadow, sweet princess, factious spirit,  
 tedious pilgrimage, noble sir, brave fellow, a virtuous court, a  
 virtuous gentlewoman, your fair and virtuous self, sweet sounds,  
 noble thoughts, contemned life. (Act I).

A childish overflowing love, a sweet boy, cureless diseases,  
 good-minded prince, a prodigious star. (Act II)

Good lord, the subtle thoughts, loving secrets, pretty servant,  
 honest looks, good boy, fairest thoughts, dearest mistress, my  
 dearest servant. (Act III)

Venial tresspass, old surfeited stallion, precious limehound!,  
 mortified member, goodly protection, noble lord, strange fortune,  
 hell-bred women!, wounded fellow, ambitious fool. (Act IV)

Celestial harp, thy noble head, prodigious meteor, brave  
 Philaster, noble blood, brave prince, never-pleased Fortune, prodigious  
 meteor, brave followers!, mortal cut, a noble soul. (Act V)

After this enumeration of adjectives of the five acts, we can clearly see that most adjectives have idealised connotations. In our view, this is very much connected with the authors' world view and with the idealised atmosphere they want to describe throughout the whole play. The artifice words are a necessary distancing device that allows us to have a double perspective on events, to be aware that things are not quite what the characters think they are and to feel for their sorrows without suffering the disturbance of our own emotions.

The references to classical figures throughout the whole play (Hercules, Jupiter, Hylas, Adonis, Apollo, Jove, Venus, the wealth of Tagus, the court of Neptune, Mars, Augustus Cesar), together with the use of personifications, is a very clear resource to reflect the idealised version of the language of gentlemen:

Personifications of Death and conscience:

*Bel.* A heaviness near death sits on my brow,  
And I must sleep. (IV, iv)  
*Phi.* I have done ill; my conscience call me false  
To strike at her, that would not strike at me. (IV, iv)  
*Bel.* Oh! Death, I hope, is come: Blest be that hand! (IV, iv)  
*Phi.* [...] Heaven knows, it is a joy to die;  
I find a recreation in't. (V, iii)

Personifications of Heaven and heart:

*Bel.* Heaven knows  
That I can stand no longer. (IV, iv)  
*Dion.* Yes; but the king must know, 'tis not in  
His power to war with Heaven. (V, i)  
*King.* By the gods, my heart speaks this  
And if the least fall from me not perform'd,  
May I be struck with thunder! (V, iii)

The main features of the authors' world view that we perceive from the previous examples are: the supreme role of the divinity that appears every time we find a reference to heaven, the inevitability of death as part of human existence, the idealization of feelings, and the sophistication of thoughts.

The following short speech is very expressive due to the use of the exclamation, the elevated language (aspects already mentioned in the previous speeches); but, in addition, we should mention the cleft sentence at the end. By using this sentence, Philaster is establishing a contrast: it was not Bellario who wounded Arethusa; it was he; he claims the guilt

for himself. The fact that the emphasised unit is a personal pronoun (“I”) gives prominence to the whole sentence.

*Phi.* ‘Tis not the treasure of all kings in one,  
To wealth of Tagus, nor the rocks of pearl  
That pave the court of Neptune, can weigh down  
That virtue! It was I that hurt the princess.  
(IV, iv)

Another example of a cleft sentence in the play is the following:

*Phi.* It is my business that doth call thee hence; [...]. (II, i)

In the previous examples we can clearly see, through the use of the cleft sentence, a cleaving of the sentence by means of “it”, followed by a relative pronoun. In this way, we single out one particular element of the sentence, and by directing attention to it, we mark a contrast. The introductory *it is (was)* is completely without meaning and serves to give front-position to some part of the sentence. This construction involves the division of the sentence into two clauses, each with its own verb.

Apart from the cleft sentence, we should refer to other syntactic structures used by the authors as a way of controlling the sentences and transmitting the message, so that we can perceive their world view and join the context in which they wrote with the linguistic forms:

We find several examples of extraposition in the play, a construction in which we find a dummy element functioning as a place-holder for the subject and the “that-clause” rightwards. Thus, the subject is moved to the end of the sentence and the normal subject position is filled by the anticipatory pronoun *it*. By using this structure, we are postponing the heavy subject to the end of the clause, that is, we are postponing an important part of the message as a way of giving prominence to it:

*Dion.* It seems your nature is more constant  
than to enquire after state news. (I, i)  
*Phi.* It is a simple sin to hide myself. (I, ii)  
*Phi.* It more afflicts me now, to know by whom  
this deed is done, [...]. (III, i)  
*Phi.* It troubles me  
that I have call’d the blood out of my cheeks,  
that did so well become thee. (III, i)  
*Phi.* Pursue thy own affairs: It will be ill  
To multiply blood upon my head [...]. (IV, iii)  
*Bel.* It pleased her to receive me as her page, [...]. (IV, iv)

Sometimes we start the sentence with a dummy ‘there’ which serves to bring the existence of an entire proposition to the attention of the



hearer or reader. The resultant constructions are known as ‘existential sentences’; they are introduced by unstressed *there*, and accompanied by the simple present or past of *be*.

*Pha.* There’s theme enough for one man for an age. (II, ii)  
*Phi.* There’s all the danger in’t. (I, i)  
*Bel.* [...] Oh, there was none but silent quite there! (V, iii)  
*Are.* [...] There’s nothing that can stir me from myself. (V, iii)

Inversions are quite common in *Philaster* as a way of showing feelings and as markers of subjectivity. This structure can also be seen as a discourse marker serving the organisation of discourse, since the sentence-initial position has potentially wider discourse relevance and is thus a particularly promising candidate for the function of a positional choice in discourse, as we can see in the following examples:

*Gal.* Ladies, This would have been a pattern of succession,  
 had he ne’er met this mischief. (I, i)  
*Phi.* [...] were Pharamond as truly valiant as I feel him cold,  
 [...]. (I, i)

In the two previous examples, we find a clear conditional of elevated tone.

*Are.* [...] never gave the world two things so opposite,  
 so contrary, as he and I am. (I, ii)  
*Bel.* Had she the lust of sparrows, or of goats;  
 Had she a sin that way, hid from the world, [...]. (III, i)  
*Bel.* Never, sir, will I  
 Marry; it is a thing within my vow [...]. (V, v)  
*Phi.* I, Philaster,  
 Cannot be jealous, though you had a lady  
 Dress’d like a page to serve you; nor will I  
 Suspect her living here. (V, v)

In these examples, the syntactic form is not exclusively at the service of expressing propositional content, but can only be accounted for by the conditions of use which justify the norm-breaking.

Fronting is the term we apply to the achievement of marked theme by moving an item into initial position which is, otherwise, unusual there.

*La.* [...] and to me you appear a very strange fellow. (I, i)  
*King.* To give a stronger testimony of love  
 than sickly promises (which commonly...)  
 we have drawn you, worthy sir, [...]. (I, I)  
*Bel.* In that small time that I have seen the world,  
 I never knew a man hasty to part  
 With a servant he thought trusty [...]. (II, i)

*Bel.* [...] but what I came to know  
 As servant to her, I would not reveal,  
 To make my life last ages. (III, i)  
*King.* What they will do with this poor prince  
 The gods know, and I fear. (V, iii)

Right and left dislocations are also examples of anomalous structures in *Philaster*:

*Phi.* I am what I do desire to be, your friend;  
 I am what I was born to be, your prince. (V, iv)  
*Are.* This earth, how false it is! (V, v)  
*Gal.* A dog it is. (I, i)

One important implication of the functional view of language under which we have analysed the examples is that context and language are interdependent. There is a very clear relationship between language and social structure that is present in the play in question, i.e., the fictional one that is ruled by the literary conventions of *Philaster*.

We agree with Halliday *et alii* (1964:52) in that “the relationships between medium and linguistic structure, like those between contextual factors and medium, are functionally motivated”. From this we can deduce that “there is a probabilistic relationship between types of situation and types of linguistic structure”.

The intentionality of the examples derives from a word and its textual context, or a group of related words of whatever length and its textual context (Shawcross, 1987:19).

Since the systemic meaning is not context free, all the examples are set in the appropriate context or speech situation. They appear acceptable, and in some cases they are stylistically marked. The literary text is an authentic text, since we have real language in context.

In the previous examples and in the following section, dedicated to mood, we can see how the use of language made by the writers is the link to let us know their world view and the social reality they want to describe. In this way, the literary text is a source of meaning because it shows the relationship between the text and the social reality. The social conventions of Fletcherian tragicomedy demand a determined way of presenting feelings and characters' behaviour, and of representing reality on stage, etc. Overall, the conventions that govern the presentation of feelings, culture, and reality in *Philaster* are the ones characteristic of tragicomedy.

## 5. Mood

It is a well known fact that one function of language is to provide for interaction between people by allowing the expression of assessments, judgements, social and individual attitudes, and the like. Every language incorporates options whereby the speaker can vary his/her own communication role, making assertions, asking questions, giving orders, expressing doubts, and so on. The basic 'speech functions' of statement, question, response, command, and exclamation fall within this category and they are grammatically expressed by the system of mood (Halliday, 1970:159-160).

Mood has to do with the speaker's attitude towards an event, action, or state. In the first place, we will refer to the use of imperatives. Basically, this tense can be characterised by means of two features: it is realised by the base form of the verb and it is used to express commands, as we can see in the following examples:

*Phi.* [...] For, hear me, Pharamond! (I, i)

In the previous example we get to know the profound feelings of Philaster when he is talking about his father and his inheritance. In the following one, Philaster addresses the king full of anger:

*Phi.* [...] but do not take away  
My life and fame at once. (V, v)

Other examples representative of the emotion that can be seen in the discourse of the different characters of the play are:

*Phi.* [...] cry me king. (I, i)  
*Phi.* Go, get you home again, and make your country  
A virtuous court [...]. (I, i)  
*Phi.* Hide me from Pharamond! (I, ii)  
*Pha.* [...] This is all; love me, and lie with me. (II, ii)  
*Are.* Come, sir, tell me truly, does your lord love me?  
*King.* Knock, gentlemen! Knock loud! Louder yet! (II, iv)  
*Meg.* Let'em enter, prince; let'em enter [...]. (II, iv)  
*Cap.* Give him a broadside, my brave boys, with your pikes;  
Branch me his skin in flowers like a sattin,  
And between every flower a mortal cut. (V, iv)  
*Bel.* Oh, kill me, gentlemen! (V, v)

Arethusa addresses Philaster in this way:

*Are.* Come, live with me;  
Live free as I do. (V, v)  
*Phi.* Hear me my loyal father [...]. (V, v)

This sense of decorum, a convention always highlighted in tragicomedy, is detected in these examples since there are no exclamations, and in the rhythm of the line and the different imperatives:

*Phi.* Kiss her fair hand, and say I will attend her.  
*Are.* Let us leave and kiss. (I, ii)  
*Phi.* Take me in tears betwixt you,  
 For my heart will break with shame and sorrow.  
*Are.* Why, 'tis well.  
*Bel.* Lament no more. (V, i)

The end of the tragicomedy:

*King.* Let princess learn  
 By this, to rule the passions of their blood,  
 For what Heaven wills can never be withstood. (V, v)

Here we offer several examples of the mood of the play; since modality is multidimensional, we will classify our examples into three different dimensions:

- In the first ones, we can see that the speaker expresses a judgement about the proposition he or she is presenting; the proposition can be possible, probable or certain. By expressing these judgements, we get to know the world-view that is presented in the play, that is, a world-view in which everything seems to be prepared and controlled:

*King.* I'll make you tamer, or I'll dispossess you [...]. (I, i)  
*Are.* [...] and, sure our love will be the nobler,  
 and the better blest [...]. (I, ii)  
*Phi.* Laid on so weak a one, I will again with joy receive thee:  
 As I live, I will. (II, i)  
*Pha.* The constitution of my body will never  
 Hold out till the wedding. I must seek elsewhere. (I, i)  
*Meg.* More of my own, I will have fellows, and such  
 Fellows in it, as shall make noble mirth. (II, iii)

In the following examples, we can see Philaster's feelings:

*Phi.* I will see thy thoughts as plain  
 As I do know thy face. (III, i)  
*Phi.* Then it is no time  
 To dally with thee; I will take thy life,  
 For I do hate thee: I could curse thee now. (III, i)  
*Phi.* Mistress, forget the boy: I'll get thee a far better. (III, ii)  
*Phi.* I will be temperate in speaking,  
 and as just in hearing. (III, iii)  
*Pha.* I will not leave one man alive, but the king,  
 a cook, and a traylor. (IV, ii)  
*Phi.* I will be temperate in speaking. (IV, iii)

- The following examples of modality can be referred to as performative, since with them the speaker gives permission, lays an obligation or in some way influences or directs the behaviour of the addressee.

The king performs an action when he refers to Dion in the first example:

*King.* You shall be righted. [...]  
 We shall employ you. (II, ii)  
*Dion.* [...] I must speak with her [...]. (II, ii)  
*Meg.* What I have known,  
 Shall be as public as a print; all tongues  
 Shall speak it, [...]. (II, ii)  
*Phi.* [...] for I must love  
 thy honest looks, and take no revenge  
 upon thy tender youth. (III, i)  
*Pha.* We must stop  
 his mouth with some office when we are married. (I, ii)  
*Bel.* But though these tears,  
 Shed at my hopeless parting, I can see  
 A world of treason [...]. (III, i)  
*Phi.* Then lay me gently on his neck, that there  
 I may weep floods, and breathe forth my spirit. (IV, iv)

The old captain talks to Pharamond in the following way:

*Cap.* My beyond-sea sir, we will proclaim you: You  
 Would be king! (V, iv)  
*Pha.* [...] And know there shall be nothing in my power  
 You may deserve, but you shall have your wishes. (V, iv)

- The following examples of modality deal with capacity and volition meanings.

*Meg.* As I live, I could love all the  
 nation over and over for his sake. (I, i)

Pharamond asks Galatea in this way:

*Pha.* Dear lady, can you love? (II, ii)

Dion addresses Philaster as follows:

*Dion.* Oh, noble sir, your virtues  
 Cannot look into the subtle thoughts of woman. (III, i)

The way Bellario talks to Philaster in act III is also worth noticing:

*Bel.* But through these tears,  
 Shed at my hopeless parting, I can see  
 A world of treason practised upon you,  
 And her, and me. (III, ii)

Waith (1952:39) refers to the mood of the play as middle mood, and declares:

[...] is due not only to the fact that tragedy threatens without materialising. Most of it is due to the independent life of the emotions of the play-to the communication of the feelings of a tragic situation where the treatment of plot and character does not convey the sense of inevitable tragedy and where evil is more an atmosphere than a real force.

## 6. Conclusion

We can conclude that profound feelings and emotions are attempted throughout the whole play. Similarly, we perceive a sophisticated and sentimental world-view, as we have tried to point out by commenting on the language used.

The pattern of tragicomedy which dominates Beaumont and Fletcher's plays imposes upon them a special language whose effect is above all emotional. There are speeches whose sole purpose is to convey information, and others which define a character or present an idea; but the most important speeches are the laments, the defences of honour or the expression of feelings.

Beaumont and Fletcher's "world view" or mind style is very idealised, sophisticated and adulterated. We can say that their tragicomedies were created to provide escapist entertainment for a public who was troubled by the reality of life in Jacobean England.

We have chosen Systemic Functional Grammar as the linguistic framework because we are interested in studying how language is used in its context, in the period in which Beaumont and Fletcher wrote and James I was the king, and because different elements in the language of the play will be explained by reference to its function in the total linguistic system. Physical properties of texts anchor the text within social circumstances and relations. By giving attention to the physical properties of texts, creativity is located in writing within a framework of concrete social forces.

Since, to a large extent, word order in English is fixed, we should say that the use of certain grammatical constructions is functionally relevant. For example, by using extraposition, we are postponing an important part of the message as a way of giving prominence to it. By

the use of existential sentences, we introduce new elements into discourse. In the same way, clefting is a device used to focus on a particular constituent of the sentence. The same happens with vocabulary, adjectives or the analysis of rhetorical devices.

Tragicomedy has the capacity to create a social life; we can even speak of an ideological finished product whose purpose is social. According to Bristol (1985:5): “Renaissance drama is important in that it invites consideration of forms of collective life and of subjectivity other than those proposed and legitimated by a hegemonic culture.”

According to Couture (1991:261), we can refer to three premises which govern the linguistic laws or patterns established by functional language theory: language constructs social harmony, language organizes space and time, and language polarizes reality. In her view, through these three orientations, conventional meanings, structures and ideologies are functionally validated.

We, as readers, should assume that the writers have chosen the right word, the right structure, and that all contribute to the overall structure. The complex interweaving of language’s elements, ideas, structures, and so on, has a functional explanation and constitutes the aesthetic unity of the text. The language in *Philaster* is controlled and conventionalised to contribute to the world view typical of the Fletcherian tragicomedy that the authors want to transmit.

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# STOPPARD, SHAKESPEARE (IN LOVE), AND THE THEATRE

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## **Abstract**

*In Shakespeare in Love, which received the 1998 Oscar award for the best original script, Tom Stoppard revisits a series of commonplaces in his production. In this text I intend to base my approach to the text on a study of three of his major dramatic resources when approaching any stage or screen production. The first one is the deep knowledge Stoppard has proved to have of Shakespeare's world and production. The second basis for his approach is the way in which he has frequently incorporated the theatre and the stage world, as we see in such plays as The Real Inspector Hound and The Real Thing. Finally, the last aspect will be Stoppard's own tendencies in his approach to writing, be it for the stage, for the screen or as a novelist, and which have created a style of his own, very commonly defined as 'Stoppardian'.*

## **1. The first cut is the deepest: Shakespeare and Stoppard**

As so commonly in his production, in the script of *Shakespeare in Love*, Stoppard takes Shakespeare's original texts as a basis for his own approach to playwriting.<sup>1</sup> It has often been suggested, however, that,

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<sup>1</sup> Actually, the script is signed by Marc Norman and Tom Stoppard himself. On this, Nadel (2001:98) suggests that the script is «a reworking of a Marc Norman effort», and Zeifman (2001:200) that «anyone familiar with his writing will be able to identify the vast majority of the screenplay's dialogue as unmistakably 'Stoppardian'.» This is well summarised by Levenson (2001:166): «eclecticism; conflating a previous era with a modern one: cultural observations about both; verbal wit». I will use the Faber & Faber edition of the text, page numbers appearing parenthetically in the text.

logically, this dramatic technique could never be a mere adaptation of the original texts without adding anything of his own (Hunter, 1982:127-151; Diamond, 1986; Cohn, 1987; Sales, 1988:87-138; Meyer, 1989; Zinman, 1991; Levenson, 2001). As a result, and as one more of the possible forms that intertextually can take, Shakespeare's texts are given a new context both within the internal universe of the film and, more obviously, in the reception that we, as modern readers/spectators, make of the final text -or, in Fowler's words (1996:112-128), in the first case as part of the context of reference, in the second, as part of the context of utterance, and both leading to the conception of the context of culture of twentieth century Britain and the world as contrasted to those of the end of the sixteenth century.<sup>2</sup> *Romeo and Juliet* provides the basis for the story of *Shakespeare in Love*, as *Hamlet* provided that of *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead* in the sense that what is somehow anecdotic in Shakespeare's plays becomes central in both of Stoppard's plays. For instance, in the older play two minor characters take the central roles, with Hamlet himself playing a minor one, with what was obviously a tragedy's plot becoming «a comedy of ideas» (Stoppard, 1974:7-8). By contrast, in the recent film the roles originally played by Romeo and Juliet are now played by Shakespeare himself and Viola de Lesseps, as both plots deal with an impossible love, and what was clearly a love tragedy becomes, in the worst of cases, a tragicomedy.<sup>3</sup>

However, this is not the only way in which Shakespeare's play is incorporated to the script. Another more direct form of intertextuality we also find in the film is connected to what we might very freely call a 'recreation of context', in other words, the use of part of Shakespeare's original text in *Shakespeare in Love* to produce a different kind of discourse where we find it. This happens for the first time in the Puritan preacher's words (8) -"a plague on both their houses!"-, which are intended

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<sup>2</sup> This can be seen in such plays as *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead* and *Dogg's Hamlet, Cahoot's Macbeth*, and indirectly in many episodes of, for instance, *Jumpers* and *Travesties*.

<sup>3</sup> In Nieto García (1997:40) I suggested that «the comic hero/heroine is usually one of us showing enough wit, persuasion or strong will to reach some degree of personal fortune and/or social acceptability to consider him/herself lucky». In fact, in Stoppard's script Shakespeare, as a character, in the end cannot find a solution to his sad love, but at least is ready to become what he has been famous for in the future, a great playwright who «can show the very truth and nature of love» (Norman & Stoppard, 1999:148) and much more besides, therefore reaching the degree of personal fortune and obvious social acceptability to consider himself (partially) lucky. The case of Viola de Lesseps is somehow more dubious, as on the one hand she is married to a man she loathes, but on the other has gained fame as Shakespeare's heroine in *Twelfth Night* and has acted as the person who has made it possible for the playwright to become famous himself.

to give rise to another famous line appearing later in *Romeo and Juliet* (III.i), although, as is frequent in Stoppard's works, with a clear difference in meaning, as the reference to the Curtain and the Rose in the film, therefore meaning the theatres, becomes a reference to the families in the play.<sup>4</sup> Likewise, after Will's and Viola's first night together (71-73), the words employed by both characters undoubtedly direct the reader's mind to the ones uttered by Romeo and Juliet on the same occasion (III.v), with the obvious difference that what is mundane and commonplace in Stoppard's story -the owl, the rooster, Henslowe- becomes elevated in nature and acquires some aesthetically salient value in Shakespeare's -the nightingale, the lark-, thus producing, as in the previous case, a quite different kind of discourse again, to the point of being later employed in the film script itself as an excuse for adding a new scene to the play, which, in the internal universe of the screen text, did not exist and was added by Shakespeare as a hint intended for nobody but Viola de Lesseps and himself. Finally, we find a third similar case towards the end of the film, where Juliet's original words «If he be married, / My grave is like to be my wedding bed» (I.v) become, in Will's mouth, «If you be married, my grave is like to be my wedding bed» (140). The analysis of this occurrence, initially being simpler as the words in both texts hardly differ, is, however, much more complex, since the situation is completely reverted by Stoppard in more than one way. If we consider the place where both speeches occur, the former is presented soon after Romeo and Juliet's first meeting, the latter taking place right before Will and Viola's separation for good. The speaker also differs, as in the first case it is the female participant, whereas in the other it is the male one.<sup>5</sup> Finally, the internal situation of both discourses also differs to a large extent, since the obvious lack of knowledge of Romeo's status by Juliet is the cause of her assertion, as they have just met, whereas Will's intentionality is clearly different as he goes beyond his literal meaning by making the reader understand that Viola's marriage will be, for the lovers, the cause of their last goodbye.<sup>6</sup> All in all, we can say

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<sup>4</sup> As has been frequently suggested (Stoppard, 1974:8; Hunter, 1982:133-41; Diamond, 1986; Billington, 1987:29-38; Cohn, 1987:6-7; Sales, 1988:65-84, 112-13, 126-38; Jenkins, 1989:37-49, 96, 155-59; Meyer, 1989:111; Freeman, 1996), here Stoppard is first de- and then re-contextualising Shakespeare or any text written before Stoppard's times, for that matter.

<sup>5</sup> The sexual roles in *Shakespeare in Love*, however, as we shall see later, are far from being clearly established, an aspect which the text shares with *Twelfth Night* and, partially, with *The Two Gentlemen of Verona*, rather than with *Romeo and Juliet*.

<sup>6</sup> Also, obviously, as a result of the follow-up of both assertions being different, since the response in the first case is 'no' whereas in the second it is 'yes'.

that what is probably a young girl's too quick and rather thoughtless assertion in Shakespeare's play is converted by Stoppard into a plaintive, hyperbolic expression by a much more mature man.<sup>7</sup>

Important though *Romeo and Juliet* obviously is for Stoppard's text, it is not its only source in what affects Shakespeare's influence. Two other obvious sources are the comedies *The Two Gentlemen of Verona* and *Twelfth Night*. The former is the trigger for the primary plot of the film script, as it is not by chance that after Viola's attending its staging in Whitehall (19) she has the idea of 'becoming' an actor to be with Will, just as Julia disguises herself as Sebastian in the play to be with Proteus.<sup>8</sup> If *The Two Gentlemen of Verona* has just been defined as the trigger for the film, *Twelfth Night* can be considered a kind of follow up, as it is clearly present at the end of the film.<sup>9</sup> From a wider perspective, however, we can contemplate most of the plot of Stoppard's film script as another version of both of Shakespeare's plays, especially in what affects the inversion of sexual roles that the former so warmly welcomes throughout the text. In most of *Twelfth Night*, we see a woman playing a man's role, whereas in *Shakespeare in Love* the situation changes along the script, and there are even some moments when we do not very clearly know which is which. Leaving aside Stoppard's frequent metatheatrical games, which will be studied in the next section, Viola de Lesseps is alternately herself and Thomas Kent for a long part of the script (19-136), to become Viola playing Thomas Kent playing Juliet for a few pages (136-150), that is, a woman pretending to be a man playing a woman. After this, the illusion is over and she must regain her «true» nature. Obviously, this is not the only occasion on which Stoppard plays at inverting the sexual roles of characters, as was so common in Shakespearean theatre.

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<sup>7</sup> Besides these intertextual occurrences, we can also find others that have a much more structural role, some of them even employed with a parodic nature. The most obvious case of this kind is the coincidence between Will's visit to Viola's house (45-47) and the famous balcony scene in *Romeo and Juliet* (II.ii). The parodic nature of Stoppard's text becomes clear in the episode in which Will and the nurse unexpectedly face each other at the balcony, the nurse yells and Will falls down the tree, a streak of visual humour that Stoppard does not very frequently use but which he delights in from time to time, as we shall see later.

<sup>8</sup> In *The Two Gentlemen of Verona* (II.vii), Julia asks Lucetta to «fit me such weeds / As may beseem some well-reputed page», just as Viola de Lesseps asks the nurse to disguise her as a boy (41). Paradoxically, by contrast, and this will be the basis for the later inversion of sexual roles in *Shakespeare in Love*, Sebastian-as-Julia, in IV.iv tells Silvia that he/she once played «the woman's part» in a supposed staging of Ariadne and Theseus' myth.

<sup>9</sup> Besides, it is also clearly predicted from the first mention of Viola's character (19) and, very especially, through Will's reference to his dream (101), which is the starting point of Shakespeare's comedy.

Actually, throughout the film we also find Will reading and rehearsing Juliet's words, and this is relatively unimportant in comparison with the end of the movie, where, after all, Viola leaves Will to marry somebody else after having «seduced» the former, that is, playing a much more active role than was allowed at the time for most women.

Together with these three plays, which are to be considered the backbone of the film script, Stoppard also employs some passages from *Hamlet*, with a clear emphasis on what could be understood as a playwright taking notes for his future production. The allusion to the use of different kinds of contexts in literary works made before is also perfectly adequate now. This time, we find a twentieth century playwright –Stoppard- incorporating into his text's context of reference part of the context of reference of the text produced by a sixteenth century playwright –Shakespeare-, with the intention of making his contemporaries 'believe', as part of the large suspension of disbelief of 'literature' -understood in the broad sense of the word-, that Shakespeare was inspired by his own reflections when affected by a personal crisis ("words, words, words", 9), by an actor accidentally finding a skull on the floor in a theatre (13) and by a duel between Viola's two lovers (119). As in the previous case, the recreation of context proceeds in the same way, that is, by situating the words and episodes out of their place and presenting them as the triggers for Shakespeare's future theatrical creations.

Some other minor sources are incorporated to the script, namely, *Macbeth* and the *Sonnets*. The first one is hardly present, but we could still think of Will's apparition before Wessex (109-110) when the latter thought the former was dead, and which undoubtedly reminds the reader/spectator of the banquet scene and Banquo's ghost (III.iv: "Hence, horrible shadow!/ Unreal mockery, hence!"), if not in words at least in tone and general background situation; in both cases a man (Macbeth/Wessex) has had another (Banquo/Will) killed and he appears, ghostlike and muddy -on this occasion because, in despair as he thinks he is responsible for Marlowe's death, he has fallen in a puddle (107)- to remind him of his deeds. By contrast, the *Sonnets* seem to be a permanent reference for the film script in some minor but still important aspects, as the situation seems to explain who the mysterious "dark lady" is -Rosaline, Will's first love in the movie- and also who the source of inspiration of Shakespeare's famous 18 sonnet was -Viola (61). Much more than this,

we could even go so far as to suggest that, again, the rather unstable romantic situations that Will goes through in *Shakespeare in Love* set the tone for most of the feelings later reflected in the *Sonnets* as a whole, since we find an initial alienation from love, theoretically mutual love between Will and Rosaline which later becomes clearly the origin of frustration when he discovers her infidelity, love between apparent males (Will and Viola as Kent) and sincere love between man and woman that later becomes an impossible one and means the lovers' separation for ever. As we can see, the feelings present in these processes are to some extent reflected in many of the sonnets written by Shakespeare, so that again Will's universe at this relatively early stage in his career is presented in the film as the source of inspiration for much of his later production and which includes, at least, the plot for *Romeo and Juliet* and *Twelfth Night*, some unforgettable episodes of *Hamlet* and *Macbeth* and the tone and background of many of the *Sonnets*.

## **2. Stoppard's second nature: theatre and the metatheatrical experience**

In his former production, Stoppard has demonstrated that his knowledge of the world of theatre is as deep as that of any other modern British playwright. This has been studied in connection with his dramatic techniques (Hunter, 1982:16-25; Sales, 1988:5; Kelly, 1990:387; Zinman, 1991:320-21; Innes, 1992a), with his use of metatheatrical games (Perlette, 1985; Cohn, 1987:6-13; Sales, 1988:35-51; Homan, 1989; Innes, 1992b:475-77) and even with his personality as a dramatic author (Elam, 1984; Sammels, 1986; Jenkins, 1989:ix-xii). Unsurprisingly, these tendencies are also confirmed in his approach to Shakespeare's world and stage in *Shakespeare in Love*, even though this is not in itself a dramatic production but a work for the screen. This can be mainly observed, from my point of view, in three different aspects that will be studied next: firstly, the make-belief situation that is created by theatre and the theatrical experience; secondly, Stoppard's deep knowledge of the world of theatre and of productions; thirdly, the way he deals with the roles taken by the different people involved precisely in these productions.

As Stoppard has clearly shown in *The Real Thing*, in theatre nothing is what it seems to be. This is again one of the leading principles and

conclusions in *Shakespeare in Love* also, as could be observed, for instance, in the way in which sexual roles are presented in the script, and which was studied in the previous section.<sup>10</sup> This is particularly true of a time when female roles were played by male actors, and it is a notion that Stoppard exploits several times along his text. Probably the first time that we find this complexity of context is in the rehearsal of *Romeo and Juliet's* dance scene (61), in which Viola as Kent playing Romeo, being unaccustomed to her new nature as a man, places herself alongside the other «women» in the ball. On the one hand, she *is* a woman, the only person in this group of people actually fulfilling her own natural role in life, as all other «women» pretending to dance are in fact men. On the other hand, she is playing a man's role and should therefore line up with all other men; in other words, she is respecting a natural frame -being a woman-, by unexpectedly breaking an artificial one -playing a man's role- which, in the end, will have to be repaired as otherwise she would simply give herself away. Another matter is, of course, why her fellow actors do not find this confusion of sexual roles surprising, and she is plainly asked by Alleyn whether she is a lady. The reason for this is obvious: in an internal world -that of the Elizabethan stage- where men play the women's roles, at the beginning of the rehearsals of a new production, where the characters' roles have just been given and they are an all-men company, it is simply common sense that anyone could be confused, as the make-believe of the situation would have any actor wondering which place to take.<sup>11</sup> Something similar happens when Viola appears for the first time on stage as Juliet and when, as a result, Tilney accuses her of being a woman. Although the natural frame and the artificial one coincide this time, since she is playing a woman's role being a woman, we are still moving in the uneasy ground of pretension and make-believe situations, as the internal spectators of *Romeo and Juliet* cannot be so ready to accept such similarity between 'life' -for how can a man look so woman-like as Viola does now?- and 'art' -for how can an

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<sup>10</sup> For a detailed analysis of sexual roles in Elizabethan drama, see Jardine (1989:9-36).

<sup>11</sup> As Jardine (1989:9) asserts, «[because] the taking of female parts by boys was universal and commonplace (...) it was accepted as 'verisimilitude' by the Elizabethan audience, who simply disregarded it». Another different matter, and one we shall deal with in more detail later, is the use of dramatic irony in these situations, since the reader/spectator, together with Will and Viola, aptly knows that, after all, she *is* a woman and she is certainly not confused in the same way as any other actor could be, this being the source of humour in the situation that the author is undoubtedly looking for. As we shall see next, this is not the only way in which dramatic irony is employed in such cases.

actor assume a woman's role to the extent of 'becoming' a woman?<sup>12</sup> This comedy of errors reaches its climax in Tilney's «That woman is a woman!» (146), a tautology in itself that must be explained in its own proper context. Comparing, as we did above, the natural and the artificial frames this time, we must first of all consider the feminine roles always taken by male actors in the Elizabethan stage, so that, in this context, the common saying would be 'that woman (in the artificial frame) is a man (in the natural frame),' which would be no surprise to anyone. The frame-breaking, however, is so blatant that it needs the queen's authority to be recovered, in a scene that marks the film's climax.<sup>13</sup>

The use of pretension and confusion of sexual roles is sometimes employed by Stoppard, in combination with the principle of dramatic irony, with a clearly humorous, rather than climatic purpose in mind, as on the occasion of one of the rehearsals for *Romeo and Juliet* (74-75), when Will plays Juliet's role while Viola is playing Romeo's. The game of make-believe is played in a double level this time, since the secondary characters' stance in what affects their epistemological assumptions is clearly different from the one shared by the main characters and the reader/spectator. The former position is that of a group of people watching the author playing a feminine role and a fellow 'actor' playing a masculine one, all the time pretending they are somebody else in an artificial frame. The latter is that of another group of people moving in a higher ground knowing they are watching a man -natural frame- playing a woman -artificial frame- courting a woman -natural frame- playing a man -artificial frame. In this way, the natural pretension behind a theatrical production is made patent in a paradoxical situation in which nobody is who/what they seem to be. As Sales (1988:44) asserts, nothing succeeds like excess in Stoppard.

The way in which the sexual roles are managed in *Shakespeare in Love* is, as we said above, only one minor point within the general idea so frequently held by Stoppard that in theatre, and in art in general,

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<sup>12</sup> The fact/fiction interface has always been a commonplace in Stoppard's production (see for instance Delaney, 1985; Rusinko, 1985; Thomson, 1987; Jenkins, 1989:159-172; Meyer, 1989:113-119; Carlson, 1993), and its presence in *Shakespeare in Love* will be studied later on in this section.

<sup>13</sup> The fact that Queen Elizabeth herself is constantly breaking frame in her role as governor in a man-made world is also in itself a sexual paradox. For a deep analysis of such inversion of roles, see Montrose (1986). In this case, Elizabeth's role is mainly that of «the loving and selfless mother» (Montrose, 1986:330), who saves Viola from very serious accusations. I am indebted to Dr. López-Peláez for his commentaries about this and other points on a previous draft of this essay.



nothing is real in itself but depends on a frame of action that lives on this fictionality. The paradoxes that we find for sexual roles are then reinforced in other points of the film. This is seen for instance in the permanent and intentional confusion of roles between Will and Romeo, between Viola and Juliet, and is very frequently made patent by the author's directions about the readers' lack of knowledge on this point in the written text and by the camera angle and movement in the visual one. This idea can in turn work in two different ways. In the first one (116-117: "*we hardly know ourselves whether it is rehearsal or lovemaking*" and 141: "*we cannot tell whether this is the play or their life*"), the situation in the play is simply reproduced in the film script, as they are definitely two doomed lovers, just like Romeo and Juliet. In the second case, with a minor authorial presence, that is, without Stoppard's directions, we, as readers/spectators are left to assume that *Romeo and Juliet's* lines are perfectly applicable in the internal situation affecting the film's protagonists (82: "O, wilt thou leave me so unsatisfied?" and 84: "I am afeared,/ (...) all this is but a dream,/ Too flattering-sweet to be substantial") or, finally, by sharing Will and Viola's wonderings about the play's progression in the making, we find ourselves expanding its artificial frame to the not less artificial set of Will and Viola's own love story (88: "It is not a comedy I am writing now. A broad river divides my lovers -family, duty, fate- as unchangeable as nature"). As in another previous play by Stoppard, which in turn is a clear reference to Henry James's short story, we simply ask ourselves what *The Real Thing* is in life and in art.<sup>14</sup>

Apart from the sexual roles and the doubtless connections between both pairs of lovers, we could trace other relationships between the film script, the events in the play, and 'life'. This is the case of Mercutio's death scene (139), in which his role is played by Alleyn and Romeo's by Will. On the one hand, Alleyn, as a 'real' character has been metaphorically sacrificed by Will like a scapegoat so that Romeo's role can be played by Viola-as-Kent. On the other, their relationship is partially like Will and Marlowe's,<sup>15</sup> and all this rather complex set of

<sup>14</sup> In the same way, the nurse's words (41) in which she compares Viola's situation to «a play [that] will end badly» are obviously there to exploit this dimension also, since her 'actual' life is presented as a tragedy at this stage, very much as Will's words are intended to define both his own situation and his characters'.

<sup>15</sup> Like Mercutio's for Romeo, Marlowe's death, for Will and the audience alike, was initially thought to be caused unintentionally by his friend. The deep feeling that Will could not show, as he was not present at Marlowe's decease, is now reflected in this scene.

connections is reflected in the author's directions (139: «*the tone of the playing is unlike anything we have seen before: without bombast, intense and real*»). Obviously, playing is not being, but at least they come closer in this passage.

The treatment of the apothecary's figure deserves special attention. In Shakespeare's original text, he is defined as "poor" (V.i) and "true" (V.iii). Through Stoppard's reinterpretation, this role is played by Fennyman, who is, as he himself admits, "the money" (51), and is no more "true" than any other character in the play, probably even less so since he is even a non-professional actor<sup>16</sup> and obviously quite the opposite of «poor». There is, however, another point that I think is worth considering within this general study of reality and fictionality in theatre in connection with this character; not unintentionally, Stoppard selects the following exchange (*Romeo and Juliet*, V.i):

*Ap.* My poverty, but not my will, consents.

*Rom.* I pay thy poverty, and not thy will.

In this case, by contrasting, as we did above in other similar cases, the 'real' frame and the 'artificial' one, we can find the following: on the one hand, Fennyman's poverty, although not the apothecary's, is as much a fiction as the play in its entirety; on the other, his will actually has consented in a series of aspects that we would never think possible when we read the opening episode in the film script, since it has been won to the theatre. As to Romeo/Will's words, paradoxically again he could never pay Fennyman's poverty, as he is obviously less wealthy than the moneylender, but has gained his will. In a way, we are all through witnessing a paradox that is also that of theatre: nothing is what it seems to be.

Although the relationship between art, life, and pretensions is the basic resource employed by Stoppard in the film script from a metatheatrical point of view, it is by no means the only one. Some other minor points are shown here, among which we can mention the playwright's reflections on the mystery of theatre, some metalinguistic expressions proper of the stage world, the show-business people's

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<sup>16</sup> He is actually so alien to the make-believe situations of theatre that he apparently takes the play's reference to the true nature of the apothecary as a personal compliment towards his acting (144).

solidarity, and their functions at Shakespeare's times -and by extension also nowadays- in the world. All these aspects have a point in common and can be considered a panaegiric of the profession. The mystery of theatre is that of an event which, surprisingly and after many setbacks finally takes place successfully, or at least, in the worst of cases, generally takes place (23, 132, 134-135). The metalinguistic expressions are very uncommon and intended for a rather 'restricted' audience.<sup>17</sup> The show-business people's solidarity is undoubtedly presented in Burbage's words (125), which are in themselves a chant to the profession. Finally, Stoppard's opinions about the different figures' roles in the world of theatre are present all through the film, in which the author alternates between being «nobody» (Henslowe's words, 50), being doubtful about how to carry on his own work (9-12, 106), and changing the world through his words,<sup>18</sup> even if in the long term<sup>19</sup> (94-95), whereas the producer is nobody but «the money» (51), as suggested above in connection with Fennyman's character.

### **3. The third man: What is so Stoppardian about *Shakespeare in Love*?**

As suggested in both of the previous sections, the references to Shakespeare's world and stage as a basis for the film and the knowledge and reflections on theatre and metatheatrical techniques are two of the basic background resources behind the script. However, there are other less permanent but still present factors that are very common in the British playwright's production and that can also be observed in this text.

Tom Stoppard is one of the modern representatives of the line of wit that we find in the history of English literature, especially in drama and among whom we could also mention Shakespeare himself, Congreve,

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<sup>17</sup> Such is the case of Wabash's «B-b-b-b-break a l-l-l-leg» (36), which is defined by Winslow (1991:23) as a way of wishing good luck that, surprisingly, originated in America and therefore is, apparently, Stoppard's own postmodernist addition to the original context of reference of the script - on which see the next section for more details.

<sup>18</sup> On this, see Delaney's (2001b:35) commentaries about the film actually representing, at least in part, the author's evolution, or, in Levenson's words, «a parody of the artist as a young man» (2001:166).

<sup>19</sup> A point that Stoppard has suggested elsewhere (1974:13-14) and has been studied in some detail, among others, by Camroux (1978), Delaney (1985), and Innes (1992a:333-337), in some rather lengthy debates about how art can affect society and/or be affected by it.

Wilde, Shaw, and so many others. The film script could not possibly be an exception to this tendency, and we can see this in several episodes. This line of wit is frequently structured around an apparently random event that is later explained and is usually employed for humour.<sup>20</sup> This is the case of the apparently unmotivated presence in the opening scene of the film of a hypothetical play entitled «*The Lamentable Tragedie of the Moneylender Reveng'd*» (1), a title and topic that are perfectly likely at Shakespeare's time, especially when we consider the use of syncope in the word «revenged» that was so common in the literary language of the sixteenth century. As so frequently in Stoppard's production, the metaphorical becomes the literal when we watch Fennyman -a moneylender- torture Henslowe because he has not yet received his money back. The joke is taken further when the latter says «I am a dead man and buggered to boot» (7), which is literally a reference to the co-occurrence of two circumstances -being in serious danger and tired- but indirectly also a pun on the over-heated state his boots had during Fennyman's act of revenge.

Sometimes, Stoppard's favourite punning does not exactly follow this pattern, that is, taking the literal for the metaphorical or viceversa, but actually consists of employing circumlocutions contrasted with somebody else's point of view and this is again another occasion for humour. This happens, for instance, in Will's description of his state as being "unmanned, unmended, and unmade, like a puppet in a box" (63). This description is retorted by the layman's plain reflection "Writer, is he?" (64), which suggests a contrast between a long-winded explanation and another view that can explain this long-windedness.

The basis for all these contrasts between being and seeming can be found in Stoppard's deep conviction that language in itself is but a misleading and untrustworthy communication system<sup>21</sup> -on which see for instance Hunter (1982:93-126) and Jenkins (1989:56)-, and which is clearly reflected in his management of referential systems as a whole. This obvious mistrust of language can be observed once and again along

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<sup>20</sup> This is what the playwright himself has called a set of «ambushes» for the audience (Stoppard, 1974:6). See, for instance, Hunter (1982:74-92) and Sales (1988:13-34) for a more detailed analysis of Stoppard's use of this dramatic technique.

<sup>21</sup> Actually, following Wittgenstein here, at least two of his shorter earlier plays, *Dogg's Our Pet* (1971) and *Dogg's Hamlet, Cahoot's Macbeth* (1979), are totally or partially based on this conception.

the film script, with different purposes in mind. In this way, the «immaterial» Greek goddess Aphrodite can be taken for a too material English prostitute (6), a question about Will's sex affairs for one on his family (11-12), a debut in love-making for the same in acting (70) or getting to a place for ejaculating (83). These are all minor instances of playing at double sense. There are, however, two cases that are worth paying further attention to, as they are rather complex and more sophisticated uses of referentiality. This is first of all the case of an actor's question on the money he should get for acting, which is reverted by Henslowe to the opposite situation, that is, acting is free and actors do not have to pay for it. This is explained by the theatre owner's previous words suggesting that this is a good opportunity for fame which should bring money with it. That is, the sequence is deliberately made ambiguous since Henslowe suggests that such an essential component in an actor's life as fame is free for those taking part in the production, something positive for which they do not have to pay. The second occasion is not intended for humour but actually for one of the very few mournful episodes in the film, namely, Wessex's conversation with Viola in which not once does he mention Will's name but simply refers to him as «the fellow» and «a great loss to playwriting» (109). Since Shakespeare had introduced himself to Wessex as Marlowe,<sup>22</sup> a simple mention of this name would have disambiguated the topic but this absence is employed instead to give rise to the game of double-entendre so dear to Stoppard in his playwriting.<sup>23</sup>

Another way in which language is untrustworthy and a random way of referring is in the use of naming. As a possible way of balancing this lack of linguistic consistency, however, Stoppard very frequently uses naming systems as a source of true and deep referencing.<sup>24</sup> This is

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<sup>22</sup> In fact, this is another basic point in the script and many other of Stoppard's texts, since mistaken identities and doubles also abound in them -see for instance his play *Hapgood*, in addition to Jenkins's (1989:183-192) and Zinman's (1991) commentaries on it. In this case, Shakespeare and Marlowe's existence is a recurrent topic in the movie. Not only does Will present himself to Wessex as the author of *Faustus*; he is permanently compared to him by most other characters, always at a loss.

<sup>23</sup> Actually, he bases one of his major focuses of attention in *Jumpers* on this intentionally ambiguous use of the referential system, which is sustained for most of the play. In it, the male protagonist believes everybody is talking about his pet hare's murder when in fact it is one of his colleagues'. For a more detailed analysis of this point in his play, see Nieto García (1992:272-276).

<sup>24</sup> The playwright himself has admitted that this is a rather substantial tendency in his production -see Stoppard (1974:17). For more details on the way names are employed in Stoppard's production, see Hunter (1982:120-126).

probably the case of Viola de Lesseps in the film, whose first name is, to some extent, «given» by the pre-existing context -as are also at least those of Shakespeare, Marlowe, Queen Elizabeth, Webster, Burbage and Henslowe- in what affects Shakespeare's future use of it in *Twelfth Night*. By contrast, her family name has been probably chosen to suggest a relationship between Ferdinand de Lesseps's pioneering and ground-opening work in civil engineering and the female protagonist's similar behaviour in life as the first actress in the modern British stage.<sup>25</sup>

Finally, language is also employed for suggestions rather than certainties. This is the case of the use of mixed registers. For instance, if we did not know that they are talking about Viola, how would we consider the following exchange between Sir Robert and Wessex?

W.: Is she fertile?

S.R.: She will breed. If she do not, send her back.

W.: Is she obedient?

S.R.: As any mule in Christendom. But if you are the man to ride her, there are rubies in the saddlebag. (42)

Apparently, two large areas seem to be triggered by the use of language in this situation. The first obvious one, affecting the topic, reminds us of cattle, as if the subject -leaving aside the use of feminine-pronouns, which are in any case frequently employed also for animals in this kind of activity- of the talk were actually a mule and not a woman. The second one, affecting the activity, is that of a commercial transaction, as if Sir Robert were exchanging some goods for some other kind of service -which is actually the case, as he is looking for connections with the nobility. As so frequently in his production, Tom Stoppard is employing the associative power of language that allows readers to conceive of several different fields of knowledge simultaneously.

Sometimes, the purpose of the language employed is not that of bringing together apparently independent fields of thought but quite the opposite, that is, making thought converge in one idea to suddenly, by means of contrast, make it diverge. In other words, repetitive situations

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<sup>25</sup> Another connection is also obvious in this case: Tom Stoppard has been traditionally accused of never writing a «round» female character -see for instance Sales (1988:116), Billington (1987:92), Jenkins (1989:92), although the two latter critics seem to suggest that the tendency changes partially in *The Real Thing*; see Jenkins (1989:170) but also the opposite view in Arndt (1997). This new character, by contrast, has been greeted by critics and the audience as one of the major successes in the film.

and the words employed in them suggest the deep monotony of life, an idea that the British playwright exploited in depth in such plays as *The Real Thing*, where the use of very similar or the same words and phrases suggests the existence of similar situations with different participants. In the case of *Shakespeare in Love*, however, this technique is mainly exploited in presenting the main female character in her future role as male actor, so that, in the playing tests, every other single actor chooses, by hazard, the same lines by Marlowe, until he/she decides that his/her “writer who commands the heart of every player” (33), surprisingly for the author of *Romeo and Juliet* and the other people present, will be nobody but Shakespeare himself.<sup>26</sup> This presentation of Viola’s character in a new role, the one that will determine the development of the rest of the story, undoubtedly attracts both Shakespeare’s and the reader/spectator’s attention and opens a new dimension that will lead to the presentation of the primary plot.

Everything we have said up to this point is of relatively minor importance if compared to what has been considered probably one of the greatest achievements in Stoppard’s plays, especially those concerned with revising and updating Shakespeare near the end of the twentieth century. We suggested above that some of the expressions employed in the script were not common in sixteenth century Britain but rather have been incorporated to the British stage in modern times, some of them coming from the United States, and this whole process was defined as presenting a post-modern Shakespeare. It is not the only time this happens in the film, as we can see in several details we find in the text.<sup>27</sup> These details are most of the times to be considered a simple anecdote in what is the general tone of the story, even if they are also a pervasive element in it. This is the case of the presence of a souvenir from Stratford-upon-Avon (5), the ‘race’ of boats on the Thames as taxis (36) and Wessex’s prediction that tobacco will have a future (60). In the first case,

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<sup>26</sup> The surprise is even greater in a situation in which the game of double identities, Shakespeare’s and Marlowe’s, that we suggested above as one of the working principles in the film, seems to favour the former and leave the latter as a relatively minor figure at the time.

<sup>27</sup> The process employed in this case is approximately the following: the knowledge that we, as twentieth century readers/spectators, have of very common modern objects, events and activities, is exploited to suggest a previous existence of such objects, events and activities in Shakespeare’s times. What could be easily considered an anachronism is frequently used by post-modern authors to suggest some apparent similarities between Shakespeare’s times and our own and also, evidently, to trick, humour or simply suggest some degree of solidarity, by establishing some common ground, between the author him/herself and the reader/spectator.

Stoppard is playing with Stratford's fame as Shakespeare's birthplace; in the second, transposing the characteristics of a modern means of transportation to an old one; in the third, as in the first, taking advantage of our knowledge of a modern fashion, smoking, to present it as something still to come. But nowhere is this post-modernising process of Shakespeare more evident in the film than in Will's visit to the 'psychiatrist's couch' on pp. 9-12. The atmosphere of what could have been a sixteenth-century version of this twentieth-century activity is suggested from the beginning by a series of props -the sign identifying the place, the testimonials and framed degrees on the wall, the couch, the hourglass, etc.- and corroborated by the tone and words employed by both participants, especially when the topic turns to implicit and later explicit sexual imagery, as if we found a reproduction of what the layman may guess psychoanalysis is about, a reproduction of Freud and his method in the sixteenth century.

This final reference to the use of sexual innuendos in this part of the film leads us to what I would like to suggest as the last mention of distinctly Stoppardian tendencies in the script. In this case I would like to suggest the presence of dramatic techniques that mostly refer back to other points in some of his previous plays even though they are obviously reproduced only partially. The sexual innuendos in this part of the script remind us of the ones also employed previously in *Dirty Linen and New Foundland*, a minor play that was initially received as being "beamed at the business-men's evening out lowbrow West End audience" (Hunter, 1982:244) and a "*divertissement* with a point of view (*sic*)" (Billington, 1987:110) but which has been reevaluated later as, among other things, a courageous defence of politicians' private life as what it is, merely private (Jenkins, 1989:129-130). In this play sexual innuendos and double-entendres are relatively common and so are in *Shakespeare in Love* (10), where we find a specific mention of a broken quill, an organ of imagination which has dried up, the proud tower of genius having collapsed and, finally, of nothing coming.

Something similar happens to the way visual humour is incorporated to the script, a dramatic technique that is not very frequently employed by Stoppard but is present both on 122, in Tilney's fierce attack on Sam Gosse's private parts to prove that he is a woman -which he is not-, and in Rosencrantz's losing his trousers on stage (Stoppard, 1967:66), a purely



clownish detail that, as suggested before, is hardly ever used in Stoppard's production although it is on both of these occasions.<sup>28</sup>

Finally, we are also left to wonder with Stoppard what *The Real Thing* is, not only in those episodes suggested in the previous section but also, very especially, in the (real) fight between Henslowe's and Burbage's men, which Fennyman takes as a mock one of a highly theatrical nature (100-102). The props are here employed as if they could be employed in a real fight, but most of them are no good for this purpose, since they are intended not to hurt the actors. In this way, also in the script, and not just in the play published in 1982, nothing is what it seems to be.

#### **4. A new fourth dimension: by way of conclusion**

Tom Stoppard is probably not a widely-read, widely-staged or even well-known dramatist in the non-English speaking world, especially if compared to other British authors of the 60's and 70's. The Oscar award for best original script may have brought him a popularity in large areas of the world that he had never had before in spite of his many previous plays.<sup>29</sup> However, we cannot just assume that the film script does not have his own deep knowledge behind this, as the professional writer he undoubtedly is -see his own commentaries on this in Stoppard (1974:11)-, of the topics he deals with -Shakespeare's world and stage-, the world of showbiz and, probably to an even greater extent, his own particular likes and dislikes when facing literary and stage/screen events. The way in which these elements are incorporated to the film script gives it a definite aspect of its own that makes it unique.

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<sup>28</sup> An episode that has been, however, studied by Freeman (1996:28-29) as Stoppard's reflection on the immutability and permanence of Shakespeare's original text, since, instead of stopping Hamlet in his removal of Polonius's body from the stage, they simply make fools of themselves.

<sup>29</sup> Cf Nadel (2001:100), who speaks about "Stoppard's continued commitment to film as he reaches audiences in larger numbers than could ever fill a theatre".

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**THREE CANADIAN NATIVE WOMEN  
AUTOBIOGRAPHIES: FROM THE SYNECDOCHE  
OF THE COMMUNAL TO THE METONYMY OF  
THE SINGLE SUBJECT**

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**Abstract**

*This essay analyses three Native autobiographical works produced by women in different cultural areas of Canada (the Plateau, the Plains and the Subarctic): The Days of Augusta (1973), The Ways of My Grandmothers (1982) by Beverly Hungry Wolf, and I Walk in Two Worlds (1987) by Eleanor Brass. The first text is a bicultural composition that has come to us via an intermediary, Jean E. Speare. The other two are basically monocultural texts, though inasmuch as their subjects have become acculturated in order to write their lives there also remains the element of biculturalism. My aim has been to show how their autobiographical presentations move from the synecdochic to the metonymic sense of self and from the oral to the written mode under the influence of Euro-American literary patterns.*

**1. The red side of autobiography**

Autobiography as we understand it in our culture did not exist as a traditional mode of literary expression among the Natives of North America. Life stories came into textual form only after contact with white society, since none of the conditions necessary for their production, i.e.

post-Napoleonic historicism, egocentric individualism, and writing obtained in aboriginal cultures.

In the nineteenth-century autobiographies by Indians were romanticized stories of conversion from “primitivism” to “civilized” Christianity. The hero was the good Indian capable of giving up his tribal traditions in favor of white practices. However, and despite its popularity, the most common form of Native autobiography well into the twentieth century has been the Indian self-narrative. This is a bicultural and composite work produced by an Indian subject, to whom the first-person pronoun makes reference, and an Euro-American questioner in charge of fixing the text in writing. The subject questioned was mainly a world-historical chief, whose reputation had been established by fighting. This historical orientation in Indian autobiography persisted after the Wheeler-Howard Act of 1943, when none of the warriors was left alive to tell his tale. By that time a shift in interest from history to science occurred, and a new discourse came into use, that of anthropological science, founded by Franz Boas. If the discipline was certainly historical it was also anti-evolutionary.

With the rise of Native activism in Canada and the United States in the 1960s, a new generation of Indians, fed up with posing and disappearing, and highly educated in Western literary forms, decided to come out behind the walls of stereotype and symbolism and started to write their own life-stories. Although they felt forced to capitulate to Euro-American models, their autobiographies did differ from the forms prevalent in the dominant culture. With regard to these differences, Carter Revard raised in 1980 the issue of demographic influences on generic geneses, a point that bears on the matter of voice and text in Native American self-presentation:

I wonder how much mere demographics has to do with the differences between Native American and Western literature. I take a major fact to be that in a small, relatively classless society where everyone knows everyone else, it is redundant for anyone to offer an autobiography. I take as another major fact that cities are meant to hide lives, to make sure nobody knows what one has been doing, to try and prevent circumstances of family and parentage from constraining a person's claims on society or claims for herself. I take it that in a society where there are many people and most of them have never met or meet only for brief moments, where “privacy” means one can hide everything in the past from

everyone else, THERE it is possible to offer autobiography. (qtd in Krupat, 1992: 208)

Native autobiographies propose then a new model of self and text. If we generalize about the Native American self from the available anthropological and psychological literature, we can argue that this self appears to be less attracted to psychology, introspection, expansion, or fulfillment than the aggressively individualistic Western self. As a result, we can assert that Native texts tend to be more cultural, more collective, and more overtly dialogic than the Euro-American models. In addition, if Indians were never good at recognizing Anglo-American boundaries, they are not any better at acknowledging aesthetic and generic ones. It follows that their texts be loosely structured and their forms blend together. In short, their personal narratives combine history, fiction, and poetry with legends and stories from the old traditions.

## **2. Autobiographies by native women**

As argued above, Indian autobiographical literature has often focused on the activities of men in the buffalo hunt, in intertribal warfare, raiding and the like, and has neglected the role of women, either by ignoring their power within tribal structures or by devaluing it. Indian women have been seen as household drudges, beasts of burden, or squaws, unequal and inferior to the men.

Recent studies have examined the status of Native women, and while some researchers have agreed with this long-held view about Native women remaining in the background for traditionally social and cultural reasons, others have claimed that their role was negatively affected by the imposition of Judeo-Christian beliefs regarding her nature, and have even referred to matrilinearity and women's participation in the Great Councils.<sup>1</sup> The image of Native women projected in the three texts under analysis participate in this second perspective and thus contribute to challenge the myth of the helpless and passive female Indian, always willing to remain anonymous and forever silent and absent.

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<sup>1</sup> For references on the debate over women's status in hunting/gathering societies and the implication of the social division of labour see Brodrigg (1984).

### 2.1. *The Days of Augusta*

In 1973 Jean E. Speare edits *The Days of Augusta*, a short glimpse (79 pages) into the individual and communal life story of Mary Augusta Tappage, born at the Soda Creek reserve in British Columbia in 1888. Unfortunately, there is no record of the relationship between the editor and the speaking narrator, nor are the methods used in the process anywhere explained. We do not know the degree to which the editor has interefered with and altered the story, and we are never informed of the selection in operation. Internal evidence, however, suggests that Speare's editorial hand was not heavy.

Augusta's life is presented through the written form, but Western autobiographical conventions and narrative assumptions are held in abeyance. On the one hand, the text retains performance features that contribute an interactive quality to the static essence of the written record. On the other, Speare does not impose a chronological pattern on the material.

Although nothing is said of the performance context, and possible shifts in tone, pauses, changes in diction, intonation, or gestures on Augusta's part are nowhere noted, I would argue that the underlying epistemology and the aesthetic assumptions of the text derive more from the oral than from the written tradition. Augusta's poems, tales, and stories appear all "spoken," they address the audience directly, ocasionally defy the conventions of English grammar and abound in apostrophe, personification, euphony, parallelism, and repetition.

Stories, tales, and recollections, most of them in a loose verse format, seem to be compiled haphazardly. Forthrightly the narrator tells stories of her remembered past, but she does not commence by speaking of her birth or childhood, as Western autobiography dictates. She reminisces about deaths in her family, her work as cook and mid-wife, and the so-called St. Joseph mission. She also records less personal facts and events, some of which occurred outside her lifetime, like the gold rushes during the 1850s and 1860s or the smallpox epidemic that gripped the reserve in 1860. All this blends with stories of captive girls and women, instructions on how to make a net and mend a basket, and recipes for Indian icecream.

However masked Speare's presence has been under the first-person pronoun, she decides to include herself in the text by way of a preface.



The loose structure of the autobiography, dwelling, as she notes, on repetition and “unimportant” details which confuse the white reader and make it hard to follow the story, forces the editor to work out a coherent and chronological sequence, both of Augusta and the Cariboo land’s personalities.

As in all composite works, the question arises as to what motivated Augusta to work with Speare and the reason why Speare thought it interesting to record Augusta's anecdotes of the past. Despite the fact that the Shuswap (Augusta's tribe) had a late relationship with white settlers—for only in 1805 and 1806 did Simon Fraser and David Thompson begin their fort-founding expeditions, the book does not contain interesting anthropological material. No detailed description of ancient rituals, no record of purification and expiation ceremonies, no analysis of initiation, puberty, and mortuary rites is provided because the Plateau culture lacks elaborate ceremonies and well-defined kinship groups.<sup>2</sup> But if there were no anthropological incentives, there did seem to exist some historical ones. That the Shuswap were not affected by the changes engendered by the fur-trade (their material basis revolved around salmon, plant foods, and small game) and that they are a group comprised by immigrants might have caught Speare’s attention.

Augusta's motives for letting Speare print and edit some snapshots of her life are more difficult to disentangle. Money might have had to do with Augusta's willingness to speak, but I am inclined to think that her desire to pass down a set of ways and manners that were about to become extinct was certainly stronger. Sulkily in Speare's preface she denounces the lack of interest in younger generations: “And now we are supposed to remember our language and our skills because they are almost lost. Well, they're going to be hard to get back because the new generations are not that interested.”

## 2.2. *The Ways of My Grandmothers*<sup>3</sup>

*The Ways of My Grandmothers* also resonates with the wistfulness for the good old days, and like *The Days of Augusta*, it is a collection of

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<sup>2</sup> For data on the Shuswap in particular and the Plateau culture in general, see Morrison and Wilson (1991: 437-44).

<sup>3</sup> In the American Indian communities the web of kinship is expansive and by tribal custom all the old women of the past are grandmothers. Bataille and Sands explain that “the use of terms such as

stories and photographs, as much as it is a narrative of Beverly Hungry Wolf's life. Although Wolf is the youngest of these three autobiographers –she writes her story when she is only thirty, we, as readers, perceive that her life has reached a climax of sorts. She has borne children, and now that she feels that her role has been played out, she prepares herself for a time when she will act as a teacher for younger girls and perhaps even become a medicine woman.

She commences her autobiography with the writing of her name, family name, and ancestral name, inherited from a great-grandmother shortly after birth. Other data follow, such as the place and date of birth and the location of the reserve she grew up in. Brought up in traditional ways and speaking Blackfoot language, “Little Bear” (Wolf's childhood name) goes to boarding school, where she tries hard to learn the modern way of life. From there she goes to college, travels during the 1960s, and eventually comes to teach in the same boarding school where she had long been a student. Her life follows the conventional pattern: traditional childhood, first-hand experience of “indoctrination camps” (Armstrong, 1990:142), and several other forms of forced acculturation and, finally, a self-conscious return to tribal values and ways.

Wolf confesses that she had rejected the ways of her grandmothers till she married the German Adolf Hungry Wolf, a white man who converted to the ways of the Blood Indians and who, in her words, “encouraged (me) her to find pride and meaning in (my) her ancestry” (1982:16). With his support she integrates into the manners of her people and decides to put together a book to fight stereotypes, perpetuate ancient beliefs and institutions, serve as a record of her grandmothers's knowledge, and subscribe to the fact that the responsibilities of Indian women were no less significant than those of men:

...there are no...books about my Indian grandmothers of the Blackfoot Nation, including my division, the Bloods. There are books that tell stories about horse stealing, buffalo hunting, and war raiding. But the reader would have to assume that Indian women lived boring lives of drudgery, and that their minds were empty of stories and anecdotes. (16)<sup>4</sup>

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mother and grandmother does not conform to non-Indian labels for relatives. The label grandmother was assigned to several women; in fact, almost any older woman or medicine woman is likely to be referred as grandmother. The label connotes wisdom and evokes respect. One cannot be a medicine woman until after menopause, suggesting further the respect and responsibility of age” (1984:37).

<sup>4</sup> Such didactic intentions are at odds with postmodern theories of literature as process and play. This divergence has been, in my opinion, partly responsible to the devaluation of Native literature.

In her acknowledgements she gives a careful account of her female lineage, both biological and social. The stories told are always identified as coming from her mother, her grandmother Hilda Strangling Wolf, Paula Wasel Head, one of the wisest women in the Blackfoot nation, and Mrs. Rides-at-the-Door, who initiates Beverly to wear a sacred necklace, among other wise old women. Although Wolf is clearly the central character her voice is not isolated, as the title says. She perceives her life as an exemplification of a socialization, lacking value in its individuation. In accordance with the Native copyright system, she explicitly explains that her role is simply that of transmitter of her culture and transcriber of others' words. There is "none of the European romantic notion of the artist as creative genius" in this type of literature, says Barbara Godard, who also notes that because un-authored "these texts are perhaps un-authorized, subverting our Euro-American definition of the text as commodity" (1987: 150).

The organization of the text obeys no fixed format and cannot be read as a sustained narrative. Wolf's miscellany contains snapshots of her grandmothers's childhood memories told in the first person and in between quotation marks. It also includes legends of Napi or the Old Man Creator of buffalo men and women; and stories involving the origins of sacred ceremonies, medicine bundles and warrior societies that attest to the high social standing enjoyed by women in Wolf's grandmothers's times. In this respect she explains that "women take part in most of these legendary religious origins, and they are recipients of the most important religious rituals that are described" (137). In addition to these specific origin myths, the book contains reports on pregnancy and childbirth, child-naming ceremonies, and natural birth control methods, together with a good deal of folk technology, i.e. instructions for tanning and setting up a tipi in the proper fashion, information on dressing styles with the corresponding drawings and illustrations, and even recipes from the reservation period. Every so often the information is reiterated because Wolf is not always aware of writing as a medium that obviates the necessity for constant repetition.

Certainly the narrative is valuable as ethnography, as a reflection of the day-to-day responsibilities of Blood women, as a record of the moral and domestic education of a young Indian girl, and as an account of social norms, ceremonies, sacred societies, and sacred bundles. Because Wolf does not assume familiarity on the part of the white readers with

Native materials, she constantly proffers details for their benefit. However, as it corresponds to a person committed to her tradition and its secrets, she withholds sacred ceremonial information and never dramatizes rituals:

One of my favourite childhood memories is sitting by my grandmothers and hearing them tell us kids the many different myths and legends that have been handed down from my ancestors...In keeping with our tribal traditions, I cannot tell these legends in a public space, such as this book. (136)

### *2.3. I Walk in Two Worlds*

If Wolf tries to revitalize old traditions with no present link to present times, so as to stabilize her Blood community by affirming pre-contact culture, Eleanor May Brass creates her own relationship between the old and the new Indian identities. Her autobiography thus becomes a work of synthesis by a woman straddling cultures, and, as such, shows significant evidence of the reflective considerations and aesthetic structuring that occur when writing provokes the awareness of text as artifact. In her work, however, contrary to all dictates of postmodernism, Brass erases the gaps and fissures of the actual creative event to produce the illusion of a unified, seamless textual object.

If the previous two autobiographical narratives consist of a myriad of vignettes in which the narrator goes in and out of reminiscence, commentary and analysis, Brass' first-person narrative proceeds chronologically. She was born at the File-Hills Colony at the Peepeekisis Indian Reserve near Balcares, Saskatchewan, in 1905. This costly colony of farmers had been established in 1901 by W.M. Graham, who would later become commissioner for the prairies. His idea had been to continue the agricultural training received by young Indian students from the various schools in the Northwest, and ensure that they would not regress to their Native ways by returning to their own families and communities. Brass comments on his design: "So keen was the desire for the success of this scheme that Mr. Graham made his own plans which were felt to be quite strict at times. A few beginners could not stand up to these rules and soon left for other parts" (1987:11). For those who remained, fiddle dances, pow-wows, and tribal ceremonies were forbidden, and even marriage partners were occasionally selected.

Cree was not spoken at home because Brass' parents thought their children would be held back at school if they did not master the English language. Integrated schooling was at the time forbidden on the grounds that the association between Indian and white children would lower the standards of the latter, and so, even though her father wanted her and her sister Janet to attend the white day school, Brass is put into the Indian boarding school when she is six. The story is the already too-usual one: strappings, infectious diseases, insufficient diets, inadequate clothing, and neglect. Not long after attending high school in Canora, she marries and abandons the reserve in response to a dictatorial and parental system in which even their money was held in control by the Indian agent, and what little they were allowed did not give them the opportunity to learn how to budget. It comes as no surprise that in the white world she finds herself in the low income bracket.

Brass has been educated according to Euro-American standards and, consequently, as Charles Alexander Eastman or William Apes before her, she has written an integrated life-story offering details that are more and more personal, more and more individual, and less quintessentially Cree. Unlike Augusta or Wolf, Brass cannot use her life as a source for traditional tales and stories, but she employs her personal experience to speak to those who know that they are Indian but have few easily identifiable cultural traits.

Brass has moved simultaneously along a continuum between what might be regarded as high-status Euro-American positions (member of the Regina Friendship Centre Board; placement officer and councillor for Indian girls and women in the Indian and Métis Branch of the Department of Agriculture in Regina; Executive Director of the Peace River Friendship Centre; and news correspondent for the Alberta Native Communications Society) and traditional high-status Native American positions. She has accordingly divided her autobiography into two parts: a foreword that comprises her family events, personal growth and everyday activities, arranged under topical titles disposed in a chronological manner; and an appendix which focuses on her public role and contains articles, cultural essays and stories that she wrote for the *Regina Leader-Post* and other newspapers and magazines during the 1950s and 1960s.

#### 4. Metonymy, synecdoche, and orality

On the basis of the traditional fourfold rhetorical division of metaphor, metonymy, synecdoche, and irony, Arnold Krupat in *Ethnocriticism* builds a theory of self-conception and self-situation in autobiographical narratives. On metonymy and synecdoche as terms that name relations of a part-to-part and a part-to-whole, he explains that:

...where personal accounts are strongly marked by the individual's sense of herself predominantly as different and separate from other distinct individuals, one might speak of a metonymic sense of self. Where any narration of personal history is more nearly marked by the individual's sense of himself in relation to collective social units or groupings, one might speak of a synecdochic sense of self. (Krupat, 1992:212)

Synecdochic is Augusta's sense of herself. Through her cultural autobiography the singular represents the plural, and the individual characteristics by which she is recognized become tribal. In other words, for her identity is not individuality. Likewise, Wolf's personality vanishes under the weight of culture. The author realizes her self-image through identification with an entire community as the collective other. As the title indicates, her identification is made personal through her grandmothers. But Brass' title is the more individualistic of the three. It announces her as the central character and the heroine of her own story, ready to account for the peculiarities of a life that made her the woman she is. Like Wolf, she dramatizes her self-realization through the recognition of another, but in this case it is her husband the one constituted as other to self. This proves suitable because Brass has achieved a public role reserved for men in the white world.

If the move from synecdoche to metonymy is determined by the influence of Euro-American models on autobiography, the move from the oral to the written and sequential mode can be charted on a parallel line. To Augusta writing means only another method for the perpetuation of the accustomed narratives and personal stories in the accustomed manner, and so she speaks her life in writing. The oral element is also much preserved in Wolf's text, where tales, episodic recollections, and photographs are fused to unite the writing tradition of civilization with the oral practice. However, she has been unable to pass naturally from diction to scription. Conscious of her mainstream audience and aware of the fact that many young Natives only speak English, she has translated her grandmothers' reminiscences and has expanded them with

sociological and anthropological information. In Brass' work, by contrast, orality is just complementary, Euro-American literary and aesthetic concerns coming first.

## 5. Conclusion

David Brumble suggested in 1981 that the history of American Indian autobiography would be found to recapitulate the history of Euro-American autobiography, from the *res gestae*, the coup tales or the Indian hunting tales to the "genuine autobiography," in which a self-reflective person asks "who am I?" and "How did I become what I am?" (3). Certainly his predictions have proved truthful. In fact, Native self-biographies have moved from history through science to art on a line parallel to the history of Euro-American ones. In the process the texts have become less oral and the sense of self presented in them more metonymic.

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# ASSESSING ENGLISH SPELLING PERFORMANCE: TEST CONSTRUCTION AND VALIDATION

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## **Abstract**

*This paper addresses the lack of published standardized spelling tests for Spanish EFL learners at all stages of the educational system. In order to fill such a vacuum, it describes in depth the design of a spelling test for the third cycle of Primary Education by focusing on its layers, aspects, facets, requirements, steps in being devised, pilot phase, and scoring system. It equally portrays the process undertaken and statistical operations performed to ascertain its validity and reliability. Only when a battery of orthographic tests of this type is drawn up for each cycle of Spanish Primary and Compulsory Secondary Education will objective data be obtained of the orthographic situation of such learners and of the most outstanding spelling difficulties which they encounter and which need to be remedied in the FL classroom.*

## **1. Introduction**

The neglect of English spelling in schools has become particularly conspicuous over the course of the past two decades. However, it was with the advent of whole language methodologies and their emphasis on top-down, implicit approaches that spelling began to lapse into obscurity. Since as early as the 60s, English spelling has been a slighted field of study, disregarded both in an L1 context and in our FL environment. Not surprisingly, its oblivion has yielded extremely

unsatisfactory results, which are now becoming evident: according to a recent study by the INCE (*Instituto Nacional de Calidad y Evaluación*), only 31.6% (less than a third) of Spanish Primary School students perform adequately on an English writing test adapted to their educational level (quoted in *La Escuela. El Suplemento Educativo de Diario Jaén*, 22-6-00). This situation is buttressed by Madrid & Muros (1984), Krashen (1993), Bean & Bouffler (1997), and Templeton & Morris (1999:102), who state that “Much of the concern has to do with the perception that students are misspelling many more words in their writing than they used to. ... On the other hand, many school systems report that students’ performance on standardized tests of spelling is poorer than in previous years”.

Fortunately, there is now manifest evidence that this neglect is gradually being remedied and that spelling is once again a concern. As Yule (1994:43), Bean & Bouffler (1997:1), Wilde (1997:61), or Heald-Taylor (1998:404) pinpoint, spelling is one of the areas of literacy currently being debated most hotly. In addition, English orthography is now awarded a relevant role in the new Spanish curriculum. Nonetheless, despite this revived interest in the discipline of spelling, we still lack a basic and fundamental instrument in order to fully appraise and adequately measure the English orthographic performance of Spanish students: a battery of published, standardized spelling tests adapted to each cycle of each educational stage of our Foreign Language context. The general inappropriateness of spelling tests is highlighted by Pattison & Collier (1992:102):

Of great importance, is the availability of reliable and valid measuring instruments. The few standardized tests of spelling that are available tend to be fairly unsophisticated and dated. One does not find in spelling testing the sophisticated approach that characterises much of the measurement of reading and speech.

Without such an instrument, it remains impossible to obtain objective data of the orthographic situation of our learners and of the most outstanding spelling difficulties which they encounter and which need to be addressed in the FL classroom. To fill such a vacuum, we now describe the process we have followed in the design and validation of a diagnostic spelling test for the third cycle of Primary Education (cycle in which we were interested for our specific research purposes) and which

may serve as a possible jump-off point for further attempts at test construction.

## **2. Aspects included in the spelling test**

Rather than employing randomly selected words and testing formats, we departed from a very clear-cut and well-established taxonomy of spelling dimensions and aspects which we believe should be mastered at the end of Primary Education, selecting spelling words in accordance to such criteria. The process was a laborious one given the inconsistent and slippery nature of English spelling, difficult to classify into clearly delimited categories. Johnston (2001:141-2) testifies to this:

It is impossible to neatly categorize sounds and letter combinations in such a way that simple generalizations will work reliably. We have inherited a very complex orthography that cannot be reduced to a few simple rules of letter-sound correspondence easily taught ...

Nevertheless, based on our extensive readings on the subject, we elaborated a spelling test for the last cycle of Spanish Primary Education comprising five main spelling dimensions or layers: auditory, visual, morphological, orthographic, and semantic. These are the most frequently considered realms of English spelling and, following the numerous authors who cite them as characterizing English spelling (e.g. Hildreth [1962], Madrid & Muros [1984], Zutell [1992], Ehri [1992], Goulandris [1992], Seymour [1992], Lennox & Siegel [1994], Moats [1994], Reason & Boote [1994], McCracken & McCracken [1996], Rosencrans [1998], Tarasoff [1998], Cramer [1998], Templeton & Morris [1999], Honig [2001]), we included them so as to cover all the possible logics of spelling. In addition to these dimensions, we also bore in mind capitalization and punctuation marks as an additional section.

If we followed the recommendations of the main writers on the subject for drawing up the taxonomy of dimensions to include in our spelling test, we did exactly the same when selecting which spelling aspects to consider within each main dimension. Basing ourselves particularly on the complete recommendations of Tarasoff (1990), Wilde (1992), Gentry & Gillet (1993), Moats (1995), Pinnell & Fountas (1998), and Johnston (2001), we included a number of aspects or features within each of the main dimensions which we expected would give us insight

into the growing understanding developed by the students of English spelling. Let us now proceed to specify and comment on each of these aspects, defining what we mean by them, as some of the terminology might require clarification.

Within our initial section, we grouped the auditory and visual dimensions, as the aspects and patterns we can include within them are often overlapping; they can either be learnt through the eye or through the ear. These aspects are initial, medial, and final consonant blends<sup>1</sup> and digraphs;<sup>2</sup> double consonants and vowels; silent letters; the diverse graphemic realizations of vowels, diphthongs,<sup>3</sup> and triphthongs<sup>4</sup>; and phonograms, rimes, or word families<sup>5</sup> (the phonograms considered are the thirty-seven most frequently used ones, according to Pinnell & Fountas [1998]). Thus, in this initial section of our taxonomy, we were covering the visual and auditory traits of vowels and consonants (particularly groups of two or three consonants, which pose the real difficulty, as Moats [1995] advocates), and measuring to a large extent phonics aspects, as we were concerned with letter-sound correspondences.

In turn, within the morphological dimension (the next major section), we basically considered the grammatical or structural process of affixation, distinguishing prefixes<sup>6</sup> and suffixes,<sup>7</sup> of both derivational<sup>8</sup> and inflectional<sup>9</sup> type. Within the latter, that is, within inflectional relationships, we bore in mind past tense, gerund, superlative, and plural markers.

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<sup>1</sup> By *consonant blends* (clusters, for certain authors) we mean two or more consonants which appear together and each of whose sounds is heard (e.g. *bl-* is an initial consonant blend as we hear the sounds for *b* and *l*).

<sup>2</sup> *Consonant digraphs* are two or three adjacent consonants which represent one unique phoneme not represented by either letter alone, such as *sh*, *th*, or *ch*.

<sup>3</sup> A *diphthong* is a complex vowel sound that has two distinct parts with a slide or shift in the middle (e.g. *boy*).

<sup>4</sup> A *triphthong* is similar to a diphthong, but differing from it in that it has three distinct vowel sounds instead of two (e.g. *flower*).

<sup>5</sup> A *phonogram* or *word family* is a graphic sequence composed of a vowel grapheme and an ending consonant grapheme (*-at*). It coincides with the rime, which is the last part of a syllable, including the vowel and what follows it. The onset is the initial consonant(s) of a syllable, before the vowel (e.g. in *s-at*, *s* would be the onset and *-at*, the rime).

<sup>6</sup> *Prefixes* are affixes attached to the beginning of a word or word stem.

<sup>7</sup> *Suffixes* are affixes attached to the end of a word or word stem.

<sup>8</sup> *Derivational affixes* are used to make new words of a different grammatical category from the stem.

<sup>9</sup> *Inflectional affixes*, on the contrary, merely indicate aspects of the grammatical function of a word.

Our subsequent dimension pertained to spelling or orthographic rules, a layer which can be defined as the relatively regular and generalizable patterns and rules of the English spelling system. It involves knowledge of the rule-like aspects of the spelling patterns of the language. The rules we considered here were both the most useful for this level and the most frequently cited by writers on the subject. The first of the five blocks of rules we included pertained to orthographic change for adding endings or suffixes. Here, we need to mention consonant doubling (when a one-syllable word with one vowel ends in one consonant, double the final consonant before adding a suffix beginning with a vowel); advanced consonant doubling (when a word has more than one syllable, double the final consonant when adding an ending beginning with a vowel, if the final syllable is accented and has one vowel followed by one consonant); drop silent *e* (when a root word ends in a silent *e*, drop the *e* when adding a suffix beginning with a vowel. Keep the *e* before a suffix beginning with a consonant); change *y* rule (when a root word ends in a *y* preceded by a consonant, change *y* to *i* before a suffix, except *-ing*. If the root word ends in a *y* preceded by a vowel, just add the suffix). The next rule is known as the *ei* or *ie* rule and is mentioned as confusing by numerous figures. This rule has traditionally been expressed as “*i* before *e* except after *c*”, subsequently being revised due to its many exceptions to “*i* before *e* except after *c* or when sounded like *a* as in *neighbor* or *weigh*”. Brown (1985), in his mnemonics approach to spelling, is still not satisfied with the nature of this rule and takes it one step further by shifting it to “*i* before *e* after sound of *cee* and sound of long *a* is spelled *ei*”. With this formulation, he believes, the exceptions are reduced to a minimum and the usefulness of the rule is thereby enhanced. Our third block of spelling rules was constituted by forming plurals. Here, we took into account the add *s* rule (add *s* to most words to form the plural; also add *s* to words ending in the vowel *y*); the add *es* rule (add *es* to words that end with *s*, *ss*, *sh*, *ch*, *x*); and the change *y* to *i* rule (change *y* to *i* and add *e* to words ending in *y* preceded by a consonant). The final two rules for which we selected words in our spelling test were the *qu* rule (always put a *u* after *q*) and the two sounds of *c/g* rule (soft *c* or *g* is usually followed by *i*, *y*, or *e*).

Our last spelling layer was the semantic one, where meaning aspects come into play. Here, following the scholars on the subject (and more especially, Pinnell & Fountas [1998]), we considered homophones,<sup>10</sup> Greek

and Latin word roots,<sup>11</sup> clippings,<sup>12</sup> compounds,<sup>13</sup> contractions,<sup>14</sup> and possession through the saxon genitive.<sup>15</sup>

As a complement to spelling, we considered capitalization and punctuation marks as a fifth major section within our spelling test. Capitalization of countries, nationalities, seasons, holidays, streets, or subjects were borne in mind, together with punctuation marks such as the exclamation point, the question mark, the apostrophe, the comma, the period, or the colon.

### 3. Testing facets

In order to test all these aspects, we employed three basic testing facets, once again not merely relying on our intuition, but rather, on the recommendations of several outstanding authors (detailed below). These formats are dictation (of a short text and of isolated words), free composition, and a proofreading text for spelling error recognition and correction. We combined all three taking into account that “the way spelling is tested affects spelling performance” (Pattison & Collier, 1992:111) and that employing a single facet might yield misleading results of orthographic ability. Furthermore, as Hildreth (1962:291) puts it, “Although there has been considerable experimentation with different forms of spelling tests for evaluation, there is no clear-cut evidence as to which form is best ...”.

With dictation in general, we aimed to test spelling productively and auditorily, both with a text, where weak forms,<sup>16</sup> linking,<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> *Homophones* or *homonyms* are words which sound the same but have different spellings and meanings (e.g. *to – too – two*).

<sup>11</sup> The *root*, *base*, or *stem* of a word is the basic word-form (which can be bound or free) to which affixes are added. Many words in the English language are derived from Greek and Latin. These roots, which have meaning, help children greatly in understanding new words, hence our interest in including them.

<sup>12</sup> *Clipping* occurs when a word of more than one syllable is reduced to a shorter form, often for greater efficiency.

<sup>13</sup> *Compounds* are words made up of two or more words that are spelled normally and whose meaning may be derived from that of the words combined or may change completely.

<sup>14</sup> A *contraction* is a word made from two longer words. Some letters are omitted and replaced with an apostrophe.

<sup>15</sup> The *saxon genitive* is a way of indicating possession by basically adding an apostrophe and a morpheme to a noun form (although there are more complex rules which do not interest us at this level).

<sup>16</sup> *Weak forms* affect grammatical words and “consist of a variant of the word containing either a weak vowel ... or a syllabic consonant, even if in their strong form they have a different, stronger vowel” (Nieto García, 1997:52).

assimilation,<sup>18</sup> elision,<sup>19</sup> or gemination<sup>20</sup> come into play, and with isolated words. Since we strived to sample the greatest number of words possible, we included ninety in the dictated text and fifty in the dictation of individual lexical items. Dictation, as Camps *et al.* (1990:82-3) point out, has traditionally been associated with spelling acquisition. It is, however, by no means a simple activity consisting in transcribing phonic elements into graphic signs; it also involves a complex process of meaning construction, of segmentation of the phonic chain into linguistic units (words, sentences, etc.), and of adequate graphic representation of such units. The value of dictation, particularly to obtain insight into the progress in children's knowledge of spelling, is enhanced by Madrid & Muros (1984) and Hughes & Searle (1997). The latter authors also appreciate it for further advantages, such as the fact that free writing does not represent the range of spelling features which can be included in a constructed list. Indeed, when writing, some children tend to use only a small set of words repeatedly, with the majority of spellings correct and with no reflection of their true spelling knowledge. Rosencrans (1998) coincides with Hughes & Searle on this point, highlighting that dictated tests reveal students' confidence with new or challenging vocabulary; enable us to focus on specific structural information; and reveal misconceptions and problems. In this last sense, they are indeed of great value, as using errors to understand children's spelling knowledge and the processes by which they use this knowledge is recommendable and rewarding (Wilde, 1997:125; Bear *et al.*, 2000:7). Additional assets of this method are ventured by Hildreth (1962:290) and by Schlagal (1992:33-4). The former author considers that a dictated test has the advantage of testing not only spelling but also punctuation, capitalization, and handwriting. In turn, the latter stresses that dictations reduce the number of variables with which children are concerned, thereby offering a truer picture of orthographic concepts than those misspelled during composition, where the writer is also preoccupied with word choice,

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<sup>17</sup> The term *linking* "refers to the pronunciation of two or more words in one 'chunk'" when the first word ends in a consonant or in a vowel in the area of an /u/ or /i/ sound and the next one begins in a vowel (Nieto García, 1997:53).

<sup>18</sup> By *assimilation* we mean the alteration of a speech sound influenced by a neighboring sound, which makes it more like the neighboring sound.

<sup>19</sup> *Elision* "covers those cases in which a sound which is usually pronounced in extremely careful speech is not uttered in a more natural pronunciation" (Nieto García, 1997:54).

<sup>20</sup> *Gemination* "is employed to describe those cases in which the presence of two identical sounds together results in the loss of the first and the prolongation of the second" (Nieto García, 1997:54).

grammatical form, and meaning. Furthermore, all schoolchildren are familiar with the format of spelling tests, while many may have different degrees of familiarity with composition. And finally, Schlagal argues, this testing facet makes it possible to observe patterns of errors in straightforward ways.

A necessary complement to dictation in testing spelling productively is free writing, our second main method. Although criticized by such authors as Pattison & Collier (1992:104) for being “imprecise”, for making it difficult to compare spelling performances where words of differing complexity are employed, and for encouraging poor spellers to “play it safe”, independent writing is seen by Rosencrans (1998:63) as “The most powerful source of information on which to base program decisions”. Hughes & Searle (1997:139) equally value spontaneous spelling as they consider it “the most authentic testing ground for spelling knowledge,” as well as the means through which children evince their ability to use their knowledge of spelling to generate text. Krashen (1993:10) also highlights its assets:

... using writing to test spelling may be more ecologically valid than other procedures, because writing for meaning is the way people actually use their spelling competence. ... composition or essay writing tasks, since they focus on meaning more than other measures of spelling do, may give us a better look at subjects’ unmonitored, natural spelling competence.

The appreciation of our third type of testing facet – proofreading and correction of spelling errors – is more heterogeneous. While certain writers like Hughes & Searle (1997), Tarasoff (1998), or Rosencrans (1998) all enhance the crucial nature of proofreading as an integral part of the spelling process, other authors such as Gill (1992), Pattison & Collier (1992), Bosman & Van Orden (1997), or Ehri (1997) criticize it for not allowing reading and spelling to be evaluated as separate skills, for being easier than spelling production tasks (something which was not the case in our spelling test, as we shall see), and for being of dubious educational value to expose children to incorrectly spelled words, as this might exert deleterious effects on the students, particularly when they are exposed to phonologically acceptable, commonly occurring, or intentionally created misspellings in multiple choice formats. We avoided the latter, placing the misspellings contextualized within a brief text. We equally asked the students to correctly rewrite the misspelled words they spotted – and not merely to identify them – so as to combine word recognition



with actual knowledge of spelling (since Henderson & Chard [1980] maintain that the former is more sophisticated than the latter). Despite the adverse effects which it is held to have, we opted to include a proofreading section (with a total of 64 words) as it is the sole means to test spelling receptively and visually. If we had not complemented it with other productive sections, the consequences might have been harmful, but given the fact that it is one more division of our test which enables us to complement the other three by providing us with insights into different spelling processes, its inclusion seems justified. Moreover, by fostering proofreading, we are encouraging the learner to see, experience, rethink, and reflect upon spelling misconceptions, something (s)he should also grow accustomed to doing with his/her own work. We are equally, as Fresch (2001:509) puts it, helping to develop his/her spelling conscience. Furthermore, if what Funnell (1992:89) claims is true, namely, that “the ability to spot a *misspelling* [depends] upon whether or not the subject [can] spell the word correctly”, then our proofreading facet should be of great value, as all corrected misspellings will reflect true spelling knowledge on the part of the testees.

Thus, all in all, the four main sections of our spelling test have been validated. All four are mentioned by Hildreth (1962:290) as effective means of testing pupils' spelling. And the value of their use is perfectly summarized by Moats (1995:72): “Because of this division between competence and performance, assessment should include both dictated tests and analysis of spelling in spontaneous writing. Thorough assessment should also include direct tests of related processing skills such as ... recognition of orthographic patterns ... .” To conclude our description and substantiation of the testing methods employed in the design of our spelling test, we would like to highlight the fact that we attempted to endow them with a communicative character that would hopefully help the learners to realize the significance and utility of English writing and spelling in real life, outside the confines of the classroom, and thus to motivate these students in the completion of the test. Or, put in Au's (2000:37) terms, such a communicative character will “help young children see that the literacy knowledge they have gained in the home and community has a place in school and can contribute to their becoming good [spellers]”. Indeed, we made the text dictation a note from the students' mother, asking them to do some food shopping; the free writing, a description of their best friend, required by the Interpol

in order to find him/her, as (s)he is missing; and the proofreading, an e-mail of a Welsh pen pal (or, rather, keypal) (see *Appendix I* for final version of spelling test).

#### 4. Testing requirements

The latter trait of our testing facets contributes to their face validity, one of the multiple requirements all tests must meet, and which we shall proceed to examine in connection with our test. Validity in general is the extent to which a test measures what it is intended to measure. Diverse types need to be met. Content validity (which is present if a test is a representative sample of the language content) is a first of them. To ensure it, we took the English textbooks of the three schools where our test was applied for its validation and recorded all the words studied not only in fifth grade, but also in third and fourth grade, that is, from the very outset of English instruction. The textbooks were *Fantastic Fanfare 1, 2, and 3*; *English Club 1*; and *Bingo! 1, 2, 3*. From all these lexical items, we selected 90 for our text dictation; 50 for our individual word dictation; and 64 for our proofreading section (204 in all). Since the textbooks follow a cyclic or spiral approach to the introduction of new words, only 26.82% of the words in our text had been presented exclusively at the fifth grade level, while the remainder had been studied over the course of the three years of English instruction. Thus, by selecting only words which the students had seen through their textbooks, we ensured content validity.

A second type of validity which we designed our test to meet is face validity. Indeed, we attempted to make our test appealing to the students by the inclusion of the afore-mentioned testing facets. The students' version and the teacher's sheet were constructed to look right to testees, teachers, and administrators.

The previous two types of validity are cited, among others, by Heaton (1988), Hughes (1989), or Palencia del Burgo (1990). However, Moats (1995:74) contributes a further kind, namely, ecological validity or representativeness. According to this author, "An ecologically valid test is one that is representative of what children are expected to learn or do in school". Since our test is precisely based on the words they learn at school and does not include lexical items that they would never use in their own writing or never see in reading, it can be considered to meet

this requirement. It is interesting to note that Moats also mentions another one, namely, representative sampling of the spelling domain, which, in a sense, seems related to content validity. What Moats (1995:73) means by this is that “a test should sample the whole domain of spelling if it purports to be a broad-based measure of spelling achievement”. That is, it should consider “several levels of language organization (phonology, orthography, morphology, meaning, and word origin)”. More specifically, it should include “orthographic patterns, sound-symbol correspondences, ... morphological constructions, ... contractions, homophones, compounds, Latin plurals, and assimilated prefixes”. Since our test indeed covers these aspects and many more, we can affirm that it is a representative sampling, not only of the spelling content with which the students are familiar (content validity), but also of the spelling domain in itself.

Yet another necessary psychometric property or requirement which a good test must meet is reliability (the internal consistency of results). A test is said to be reliable if, when administered to the same group of students without further learning or forgetting, the results are the same. We worked towards it on three main fronts. To begin with, as regards external circumstances, we provided uniform and non-distracting conditions of administration. The test was administered by the same person – the author of it and of this work – in each and every one of the sessions.

In second place, with respect to the testing items, we included a vast number of words (204 in all) to ensure reliability; we did not allow the candidates too much freedom of responses (only in the free composition exercise, just enough to maintain a balance between validity and reliability); we provided clear, explicit, and unambiguous rubrics (in Spanish and large, bold, capital letters) and items, subjected to critical scrutiny in our pilot phase of the study, which we shall subsequently describe; we ensured that the test was well laid out and perfectly legible (it was written on the computer with different types of letters and print); and we certified that the testees were familiar (test-wise) with the format and testing techniques (their teachers confirmed that they had already practiced dictation, brief composition writing, and proofreading in class).

Finally, concerning scoring, we used items that permitted objective scoring and determined acceptable scores at the outset of marking (we established a clear-cut scoring system and answer sheet – described below

– which made the grading of our test extremely objective); we identified candidates by number and not name; and we scored all the tests ourselves so that there was no need for inter-moderation among scorers. We did so over the course of several weeks so that the scoring could take place in a relaxed manner and with the same predisposition and attitude towards each of the tests (intra-moderation consistency).

A last testing requirement which our test was designed to meet is practicality. The fact that it could be applied in roughly ninety minutes made it economical in its administration. It was equally economical in its correction, as the clear-cut scoring system made it straightforward to mark. In fact, we devoted much time to making its design feasible precisely to ensure the practicality of its correction.

## 5. Steps of test design

In this previous section in which we have examined the requirements met by our test, we have already mentioned in passing some of the steps followed in its design. Let us at this point enumerate them more systematically in order to explain how we arrived at the final product which is presented in *Appendix I*. The first step in the elaboration of our test has already been alluded to: we took the English textbooks (*Fantastic Fanfare 1, 2, 3*; *English Club 1*; and *Bingo! 1, 2, 3*) of the three schools where our test would be applied for its initial validation and recorded all the words studied by the students in third, fourth, and fifth grade, that is, from the very outset of English instruction. We ascertained that they included high-frequency words; frequently misspelled words; linguistically patterned words; content-related words; and, obviously, developmentally appropriate words, all criteria which Cramer (1998:153) considers should be borne in mind for selecting spelling words. We then grouped them according to the dimensions, criteria, or aspects which we described at the outset of this section. From this taxonomy, we selected the words for our spelling test, making sure they were representative of the dimensions and subspects of our taxonomy.

## 6. Pilot phase

However, this final version of the spelling test was not the original one we designed; initially, we drew up a much longer test, where the text

dictation comprised three notes rather than one; where the dictation of isolated words included forty-five rather than fifty; and where the proofreading section was made up of five much longer paragraphs than the final three. We subjected this initial version of our test to the critical scrutiny of two University experts and six Primary School teachers who were teaching the level (fifth grade) for which the test had been designed (including the teachers of the schools where our test would be applied for its validation).

Although two of the Primary School teachers were in complete agreement with all the sections of our test, the general consensus was that it was slightly difficult and excessively long. The difficulty was particularly to be found in certain words of the second part of the dictation, which we eliminated and substituted for others: *rhyiming* for *rhyme*; *transport* for *busy*; *spooky* for *school*; *crystal* for *bicycle*; *whistle* for *toy store*; *thirteenth* for *nineteenth*; *smuggler* for *quickly*; *tractor* for *football*; *aquarium* for *daughter*; *ideal* for *Autumn*; and *intergalactic* for *there*. In the final version, we also added five more (*between*, *smell*, *difficult*, *o'clock*, *toast*) to cover certain spelling aspects which had been lost as a result of shortening both the text dictation and the proofreading text. Indeed, these two parts were held responsible for the excessive length of our test, as the teachers insisted that the students were familiarized with these testing techniques but in shorter format. We thus eliminated the last two notes and maintained solely the first one, to which we added a sentence towards the end, again, to cover necessary aspects for the text dictation: "*And if it's cold, put on your brother's yellow jacket.*" In turn, for the proofreading, we omitted the third and fourth paragraphs, maintaining only two short sentences from the fourth one as a way of closing the e-mail: "*Please answer me soon. I'm very lucky to have such a special pen pal.*" The only part of our test we did not modify was the free writing one, which all the experts esteemed was suitable for fifth-grade students to perform.

## 7. Scoring system

Finally, as we mentioned when alluding to testing requirements, we established a clear-cut scoring system which enabled us to mark the test objectively and to carry out a qualitative diagnosis of spelling errors and difficulties. Rather than considering every single spelling aspect of

each of the words included in the test, something which would make its correction and grading extremely impractical and time-consuming, we selected a representative word for each of the subspects of the criteria included in the dimensions of our spelling test. Thus, for instance, one word was chosen to test each of the initial, medial, and final consonant blends within the visual/auditory dimensions, so that, in the end, a total of thirty-six words was employed to assess blends. If the student spelled less than 75% of this total number of words correctly, (s)he needed remedial work in this spelling area. This was the general criterion we established and followed and which enabled us to determine in which dimensions and general aspects of these dimensions the students evinced weaknesses, and with which specific subspects they had the greatest problems.

For each of these subspects, we normally selected a single word, except when there was only one subspect within the general criterion, in which case we usually selected a minimum of three words to assess it. Of the 204 words included in the test, 184 were employed to test each of the spelling aspects; the 20 we did not bear in mind were merely function words which enabled us to construct the texts, or items which redundantly covered the same orthographic criteria as many of the others which were used (*at, the, is, some, if, on, are, from, have, pen pal, in, dog, as, pet, like, eat, even, such, or, give*). As there were many more spelling subspects to be tested than words in the test (and, even so, our test is quite extensive for a fifth-grade level), on occasions, we employed the same word to cover different subspects.

One point was awarded for the correct spelling of each of the word(s) representing a subspect, with a total of 296 points for the dictations and proofreading sections (115 for the text dictation; 97 for the isolated word dictation; and 84 for the proofreading part). As regards the free composition, we awarded it a maximum of 80 points, bearing in mind two criteria: spelling correction (up to 50 points) and length and lexical breadth and variety (up to 30 points)<sup>21</sup>. We should also point out that, in this facet, repeated misspellings of the same word were counted as only

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<sup>21</sup> We awarded 5 points if the composition included less than 10 different words; 10 points if it included from 10 to 20 different words; 15 points if it included from 20 to 30 different words; 20 points if it included from 30 to 40 different words; 25 points if it included from 40 to 50 different words; and 30 points if it included 50 or more different words.

one error, and that if a lexical item was both correctly and incorrectly written, it was considered a mistake. *Appendix II* contains the correction key, where the words considered in each of the subspects are detailed, together with the number of items which needs to be correctly spelled for each criterion to be considered mastered. The words were each assigned a number for ease of correction.

## 8. Application and validation

With the final product completed, the next step was the application of the test in order to assess its effectiveness as a measure of spelling performance in the third cycle of Spanish Primary Education. We thus administered it to 261 fifth-grade students over the course of the three weeks preceding Easter of the year 2000 (the last week of March and the initial two of April of that year). The subjects of our sample were fifth graders from three private schools in the city of Granada. Two of the schools had three fifth-grade classes and the remaining one had four. In a more detailed manner, the exact number of students in each of the three schools, subdivided also according to gender, were the following:

	Boys	Girls	Total
School 1	0	84	84
School 2	57	21	78
School 3	53	46	99
Total	110	151	261

The English spelling test was administered to each of the ten groups of fifth grade students in two sessions, in order to avoid fatigue on their part: an initial one of fifty minutes for the two dictations, and a subsequent forty-minute one for the free composition and proofreading. In an hour and a half, thus, the English test was applied to each of the groups. The administrator (and corrector) was always the author of the test. We should equally mention that, prior to their application, each of the test parts was contextualized in Spanish, as we not only read the instructions with the students, but also anticipated exactly what they would find in each section. In addition, in the two dictations, we not only read the sentences or words repeatedly in English, but also translated them as we dictated, so as to avoid possible confusion or errors resulting from lack of understanding.

The results evinced that the level of difficulty at which we aimed (a sufficiently challenging one set by words with orthographic difficulty) was attained, as the average grade was just below the pass or 50% threshold (44.66%). The least difficult part of the exam was found to be the composition (with a mean percentage of correct responses of 65.19%), followed by the text dictation (47.17%), the proofreading (42.54%) and, in last place, the individual word dictation (26.98%). There was greater heterogeneity of results in the two parts on which the students performed best (namely, the composition and text dictation) and more homogeneity of outcomes in the two other sections where the achievement was poorer (proofreading and word dictation). The reliability of the exam was clearly portrayed, as the Kuder-Richardson coefficient (according to formula 21) was .95. Thus, it seems that the steps we undertook to ensure this testing requirement indeed resulted in the statistically sustained reliability of our exam. Its internal consistency was equally satisfactory, as the moderate intensity of the correlations between the four parts of the test (ranging from .42 to .54) confirmed that each of these sections was necessary since it measured English spelling in a different way. Finally, the communicative nature of the four testing facets seemed to be quite successful with the students, as their involvement in completing them reflected: in the text dictation, for instance, they signed off as their mother, while in the composition, they included pictures of their best friends or ended their descriptions with sentences pleading for them to be located.

## 9. Conclusion

Thus, we have described in considerable detail the design of a spelling test for the specific cycle in which we were interested (the third one of Primary Education) by focusing on its layers, aspects, facets, requirements, steps in being designed, pilot phase, and scoring system. We have equally portrayed the process undertaken and the statistical operations performed in order to ascertain its validity and reliability. The end product has been an invaluable instrument to gauge orthographic standards at the end of the Primary stage of Spanish education; to diagnose spelling weaknesses which require remediation in the FL classroom; or to assess students' varying orthographic performance in response to instruction. Only by drawing up a battery of



diagnostic spelling tests for Spanish students of English as a Foreign Language, adapted to each cycle of Primary and Compulsory Secondary Education, based on exhaustive textbook analysis to determine which words, rules, and patterns are worth including, and employing the official curriculum as a source of validation of their content, will we continue contributing to the upsurge of English spelling and will this discipline be restored to rightful place it deserves within the broader language arts curriculum.

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**APPENDIX I****TEACHER'S SHEET****SPELLING TEST****1.- DICTADO:**

**a.- A CONTINUACIÓN TE DICTARÁN UN TEXTO BREVE. SE TRATA DE UNA NOTA QUE TE HA DEJADO EN CASA TU MADRE. ESCUCHA CON ATENCIÓN Y REPRODÚCELA FIELMENTE PARA QUE PUEDAS SABER EL FAVOR QUE TE PIDE.**

Hello, dear!

I need to ask you a favour. I can't be back home before half past eight because I've got a meeting at the office. Can you please go to the supermarket which is opposite the railway station and buy some food? Here's a list of everything you must get:

- Twelve eggs
- One kilo of tomatoes
- Two kilos of onions
- Thirty slices of bread
- A packet of cereal
- Two packets of chocolate biscuits
- Strawberries and oranges
- Three bottles of milk
- Four bottles of fizzy water
- You can also buy some vanilla ice-cream if you want.

I leave you five thousand pesetas to do the shopping. Don't forget the change! And if it's cold, put on your brother's yellow jacket.

Thanks very much.

Love,

Mother

**b.- ESCRIBE LAS PALABRAS QUE A CONTINUACIÓN TE DICTARÁN.**

1.- Classify	26.- Maths
2.- Bright	27.- Kitchen
3.- Photograph	28.- Village
4.- Pretty	29.- Quickly
5.- Rhyme	30.- Badge
6.- School	31.- Multiply
7.- Swimming pool	32.- Princess
8.- Bicycle	33.- Football
9.- Snack	34.- Furniture
10.- Strip	35.- Noisy
11.- Stripe	36.- Carefully
12.- Island	37.- Daughter
13.- Giant	38.- Autumn
14.- Excellent	39.- There
15.- Biggest	40.- Delicious
16.- Scientist	41.- Difference
17.- Beginning	42.- Turkeys
18.- Signed	43.- Drier
19.- Field	44.- Quizzes
20.- Churches	45.- Receive
21.- Christmas	46.- Between
22.- Busy	47.- Smell
23.- Thumb	48.- Difficult
24.- Toy store	49.- O'clock
25.- Nineteenth	50.- Toast

**2.- TU MEJOR AMIGO/A HA DESAPARECIDO. SUS PADRES TE PIDEN QUE HAGAS UNA DESCRIPCIÓN LO MÁS DETALLADA POSIBLE DE ÉL/ELLA PARA LA POLICÍA EXTRANJERA. CUANTOS MÁS ASPECTOS INCLUYAS, MÁS POSIBILIDAD HABRÁ DE QUE LO/A ENCUENTREN (nombre, edad, lugar de procedencia, domicilio, lugar y hora donde fue visto/a por última vez, descripción física, altura, ropa que llevaba puesta, características de su familia, sus gustos y actividades preferidas, ...).**

**3.- UN NUEVO AMIGO GALÉS - CHUCK OWEN - TE HA ESCRITO UN CORREO ELECTRÓNICO. TÚ DECIDES CONTESTARLE, PERO ANTES TE DAS CUENTA DE QUE TIENE MUCHÍSIMAS FALTAS DE ORTOGRAFÍA. ¡CORRÍGESELAS!**

**Para:** [jpg@moebius.es](mailto:jpg@moebius.es)

**Asunto:** A pen pal from Wales

**Deer freind,**

¡Hello! ¿How are you? My **names** Chuck and I'm from Wales. I **rite** **yu becos** I **wont** to have a **spanis** pen pal. Do **yu wont** to have a **britis** pen pal **to**?

I **leave** in a flat, I've got a **baeutyfull blak** dog as a pet, and mi **favorit fuds** are **mit** and **frut** (I **dont** like to eat **unhelthy thins**). Mi **favorit subjet's** **geografi** and mi **favorit animales** are **dolfins**. Mi **hobys** are **waching** television\_ **scatebording**\_ **skying**\_ and **traveling**. I've got pen pals from **meny difrent nationalitys: french, greec, portugues, austreilian**, and even **japones**, but I **dont now any one** in **you're cuntry**.

**Plaese anser mi sun.** I'm **veri lucky** to have such a **speshal** pen pal.

Chuck

P.S. **Heres** my E-mail\_ [chuck@utf.co.uk](mailto:chuck@utf.co.uk). Or if you prefer, I also give you my home **adress**:

25, **Flauer Strit**,

Cardiff,

BH1 3XL,

Wales (**Graet** Britain)

**APPENDIX II**

**CORRECTION KEY**

	<b>ERRORS</b>	<b>ERRORS ALLOWED</b>	<b>REMEDIAL WORK</b>
<b>I. VISUAL/AUDITORY DIMENSIONS (209)</b>		54	Yes No
<b>A. Blends (36)</b>		9	Yes No
1. Initial (23) 26 (pl-) 43 (tw-) 51 (sl-) 52 (br-) 59 (thr-) 67 (cr-) 91 (cl-) 94 (pr-) 96 (sch-) 97 (sw-) 99 (sn-) 100 (str-) 106 (sc-) 114 (st-) 133 (dr-) 137 (sm-) 141 (fr-) 157 (fl-) 159 (bl-) 178 (sk-) 179 (tr-) 184 (gr-) 198 (sp-)		6	Yes No
2. Medial (5) 93 (-gr-) 121 (-pl-) 136 (-tw-) 192 (-tr-) 201 (-dr-)		1	Yes No
3. Final (8) 6 (-sk) 21 (-ng) 38 (-st) 72 (-nd) 86 (-nk) 104 (-nt) 109 (-ld) 138 (-lt)		2	Yes No
<b>B. Digraphs (17)</b>		5	Yes No
1. Initial (6) 29 (wh-) 50 (th-) 55 (ch- /tʃ/) 74 (sh-) 93 (ph-) 111 (ch- /k/)		2	Yes No
2. Medial (6) 40 (-th /θ/) 53 (-ck-) 90 (-th- /ð/) 110 (-ch-) 117 (-tch-) 173 (-ph-)		2	Yes No
3. Final (5) 88 (-ch) 93 (-ph) 115 (-th) 139 (-ck) 151 (-sh)		1	Yes No
<b>C. Double letters (14)</b>		3	Yes No
1. Consonants (12) 24 (ff) 31 (pp) 44 (gg) 57 (rr) 60 (tt) 63 (zz) 66 (ll) 97 (mm) 107 (nn) 122 (ss) 174 (bb) 202 (dd)		3	Yes No
2. Vowels (2) 4 (ee) 36 (oo)		0	Yes No
<b>D. Silent letters (12)</b> 15 (l) 95 (h) 102 (s) 108 (g) 113 (b) 120 (dge) 127 (gh) 128 (n) 149 (w) 175 (t) 190 (k) 193 (w)		3	Yes No
<b>E. Vowels (69)</b>		19	Yes No
1. /I/ (10) 56 (ui) 58 (a) 61 (i) 85 (e) 87 (y) 112 (u) 134 (es) 155 (i) 182 (ies) 204 (ai)		3	Yes No
2. /e/ (4) 1 (e) 141 (ie) 168 (ea) 180 (a)		1	Yes No



	ERRORS	ERRORS ALLOWED	REMEDIAL WORK
3. /ʌ/ (5) 41 (u) 45 (o-e) 49 (o) 89 (o-e) 192 (ou)		1	Yes No
4. /ʊ/ (2) 80 (u) 123 (oo)		0	Yes No
5. /æ/ (3) 12 (a) 25 (a) 33 (a)		1	Yes No
6. /o/ (3) 20 (o) 69 (a) 186 (au)		1	Yes No
7. /ɪ/ (10) 8 (a) 32 (ion) 39 (o) 64 (er) 98 (le) 121 (u) 124 (ure) 130 (ious) 163 (our) 181 (e)		3	Yes No
8. /o:/ (9) 14 (ore) 18 (au) 57 (aw) 62 (ou) 65 (a) 123 (al) 173 (ol) 177 (oa) 185 (or)		2	Yes No
9. /i:/ (8) 11 (e) 46 (i) 70 (ea) 109 (ie) 132 (ey) 135 (ei) 194 (e) 203 (ee)		2	Yes No
10. /u:/ (6) 7 (ou) 28 (u) 73 (o) 158 (eau) 165 (ui) 195 (oo)		2	Yes No
11. /a:/ (6) 6 (ask) 10 (ant) 16 (ast) 28 (ar) 47 (a) 93 (aph)		2	Yes No
12. /ɜ:/ (3) 50 (ir) 110 (ur) 124 (ur)		1	Yes No
<b>F. Diphthongs (32)</b>		7	Yes No
1. /əʊ/ (5) 13 (o-e) 27 (o) 47 (oe) 84 (ow) 140 (oa)		1	Yes No
2. /aʊ/ (2) 72 (ou) 142 (ow)		0	Yes No
3. /aɪ/ (7) 3 (i) 34 (uy) 71 (i-e) 92 (ight) 95 (y-e) 101 (i-e) 144 (y)		2	Yes No
4. /eɪ/ (7) 9 (a) 17 (ei) 32 (ai) 32 (ay) 77 (ange) 148 (a-e) 204 (ea)		2	Yes No
5. /oɪ/ (2) 114 (oy) 125 (oi)		0	Yes No
6. /ɪə/ (6) 2 (ea) 37 (ere) 49 (io) 54 (e) 171 (eo) 186 (ia)		2	Yes No
7. /ɛə/ (2) 126 (are) 129 (ere)		0	Yes No
8. /ʊə/ (1) 82 (your)		0	Yes No

	ERRORS	ERRORS ALLOWED	REMEDIAL WORK
<b>G. Triphthongs (3)</b> 1. /aUə/ 202 2. /aIə/ 103 133		1	Yes No
<b>H. Phonograms (26)</b> 14 (-ore) 17 (-ight) 25 (-an) 32 (-ail) 32 (-ay) 55 (-ate) 57 (-aw) 66 (-ill) 67 (-ice) 78 (-it) 86 (-ank) 100 (-ip) 105 (-est) 115 (-ine) 118 (-age) 119 (-ick) 137 (-ell) 139 (-ock) 145 (-ame) 148 (-ale) 157 (-at) 159 (-ack) 164 (-eat) 169 (-ing) 173 (-in) 196 (-uck)		7	Yes No
<b>II. MORPHOLOGICAL DIMENSION (32)</b>		9	Yes No
<b>A. Derivational relationships (26)</b>		7	Yes No
1. Prefixes (7) 28 (super-) 98 (bi-) 121 (multi-) 135 (re-) 168 (un-) 170 (sub-) 176 (tele-)		2	Yes No
2. Suffixes (19) 32 (-ion) 91 (-ify) 106 (-ist) 115 (-teen) 115 (-th) 118 (-age) 122 (-ess) 124 (-ure) 125 (-y) 126 (-ly) 130 (-ious) 131 (-ence) 133 (-er) 153 (-ish) 158 (ful) 163 (-ite) 186 (-ian) 188 (-ese) 198 (-al)		5	Yes No
<b>B. Inflectional relationships (6)</b> 47 (-es) 74 (-ing) 105 (-est) 108 (-de) 132 (-s) 172 (-s)		2	Yes No
<b>III. SPELLING/ORTHOGRAPHIC DIMENSION (17)</b>		4	Yes No
<b>A. Suffixes (4)</b> 105 (Consonant doubling) 107 (Advanced consonant doubling) 125 (Drop silent e) 158 (y→i)		1	Yes No
<b>B. ie/ei (3)</b> 17 135 141		1	Yes No
<b>C. Plurals (3)</b> 47 (es) 56 (s) 174 (y→i + add -es)		1	Yes No
<b>D. Qu (2)</b> 119 134		0	Yes No
<b>E. Soft + hard c/g (5)</b> 24 (c) 42 (g) 76 (g) 79 (c) 103 (g)		1	Yes No
<b>IV. SEMANTIC DIMENSION (20)</b>		6	Yes No
<b>A. Homophones (6)</b> 2 5 34 48 82 154		2	Yes No
<b>B. Word roots (6)</b> 93 98 106 108 121 171		2	Yes No

	ERRORS	ERRORS ALLOWED	REMEDIAL WORK
<b>C. Clipped words (1)</b> 116		0	Yes No
<b>D. Compounds (3)</b> 40 97 191		1	Yes No
<b>E. Contractions (3)</b> 19 75 145		1	Yes No
<b>F. Saxon genitive (1)</b> 83		0	Yes No
<b>V. CAPITALIZATION AND PUNCTUATION MARKS (18)</b>		5	Yes No
<b>A. Capitalization (8)</b> 116 151 153 183 184 185 186 188		2	Yes No
<b>B. Punctuation marks (10)</b> 1. Exclamation point (1) ¡Hello 2. Question mark (1) ¿How 3. Apostrophes (4) name's don't I've Here's (Proofreading) 4. Commas (3) 5. Colon (1)		3	Yes No



# INFLUENCIAS DETERMINANTES EN LA PRIMERA ETAPA DE LA TRAYECTORIA LITERARIA DE CHRISTOPHER ISHERWOOD: UNA APROXIMACIÓN

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## **Abstract**

*In this article we go over the main and most determining influences on the first stage of the literary career of the Anglo-American writer Christopher Isherwood, doubtlessly, one of the most representative figures of the English literature of the twentieth century. We do not limit ourselves to the realm of literary influences, but analyse those influences exerted on the writer's environment and which proved to be decisive and conditioning on Isherwood's literary output. The analysis starts from those elements that had an influence on the first period of his upbringing: family, education, and environment, but which definitely determined his literary production. The study goes on with the analysis of the influences on the technical and creative fields and finally runs over the main literary influences.*

## **Introducción**

Christopher Isherwood (1904-1986) es un escritor fundamental para cualquier estudioso que pretenda adentrarse y conocer el campo de la literatura inglesa contemporánea del s. XX, especialmente la década de los treinta. Es cierto que muchos críticos recuerdan algunas de sus obras más famosas, como *Mr. Norris Changes Trains* (1935) o *Goodbye to Berlin*

(1939), gracias a versiones o adaptaciones posteriores de las mismas. Éste es el caso de la obra de Van Drudden *I am a Camera* (1951), el musical *Cabaret* (1962) o la famosa película homónima dirigida por Bob Fosse (1972). El autor también ha pasado a los primeros puestos de preeminencia en el mundo de la literatura de la mano de Wystan Auden y así lo demuestran sus colaboraciones con él, como *The Dog Beneath the Skin* (1935), *The Ascent of F6* (1936), *On The Frontier* (1938) y *Journey to a War* (1939). De igual manera, también es cierto que si buena parte de su producción literaria precedente y posterior a sus creaciones de los años treinta ha sido estudiada sin un sentido de continuidad, esto es debido, quizás, al carácter heterogéneo y a la particularidad del conjunto de su producción. A pesar de ello, creemos que hay un hilo conductor básico en la raíz de su producción literaria. Éste, a nuestro juicio, reside en circunstancias como su formación y educación, condición sexual, formación e inclinaciones estéticas y sentido del compromiso político, entre otras. Nuestro objetivo es establecer un itinerario a través de las influencias más relevantes en la primera etapa de la obra del autor con la finalidad de arrojar luz sobre el sentido global de su obra.

Analizaremos, pues, las principales influencias en Christopher Isherwood centrándonos en esta primera etapa,<sup>1</sup> que va desde sus primeras obras hasta lo que hemos considerado el meridiano<sup>2</sup> de su obra,

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<sup>1</sup> Es bien cierto que algunos estudiosos de la obra y la bibliografía de Isherwood han seguido parámetros clásicos a la hora de establecer una taxonomía de la obra del autor. Éste es el caso de Funk (1979), quien en su bibliografía sobre el autor la divide en distintos géneros: novelas, obras autobiográficas, obras de teatro, libros de viaje, ediciones, traducciones y obras de índole mística o religiosa. Schwerdt (1989) clasifica la obra de acuerdo con la evolución que se aprecia en las técnicas narrativas del autor. Esta concepción hace que veamos la obra de Isherwood como un gran *Bildungsroman* que recoge las distintas etapas del desarrollo del individuo. Lisa M. Schwerdt clasifica la obra de Christopher Isherwood según éste ensaye nuevas técnicas -primeras obras-, emplee el narrador homónimo -principalmente las obras relacionadas con Berlín-, extienda la perspectiva narrativa -obras como *The World in the Evening* (1954) y *Down There on a Visit* (1962)- o aborde nuevas formas -aquí destacamos *A Single Man* (1964) y *A Meeting by the River* (1967). Heilbrun (1970) en su monografía sobre el autor establece una clasificación de sus obras mayores en dos grandes grupos: novelas y obras documentales. Estas últimas serían aquéllas en las que aparece la proyección del narrador ventrilocuo. Las novelas serían las producciones en las que éste no aparece. Entre las obras documentales estarían *The Last of Mr. Norris* (1935), *Lions and Shadows* (1938), *Journey to a War* (1939), *Goodbye to Berlin* (1939), *Prater Violet* (1945), *The Condor and the Cows* (1949) y *Down There on a Visit* (1962). Las novelas, según esta clasificación, serían *All the Conspirators* (1928), *The Memorial* (1932), *The World in the Evening* (1954), *A Single Man* (1964) y *A Meeting by the River* (1967). Para nosotros, si en algo coinciden Funk, Schwerdt y Heilbrun es en señalar un antes y un después de su marcha a los EE.UU.; de ahí que hayamos considerado la etapa anterior a su partida hacia Norteamérica como su primera etapa.

<sup>2</sup> Piazza (1978:194) considera que hay cinco Isherwoods en el conjunto de la obra isherwoodiana: "the Cambridge Mortmere-Isherwood, the English Isherwood of *All the Conspirators* and *The Memorial*, The Berlin Herr Issywoo, The American Vedantist Isherwood (and) the recent homosexual Isherwood".

esto es, su marcha a los EE.UU. en los años precedentes a la II Guerra Mundial. La etapa posterior, que coincide básicamente con su estancia en los EE.UU., merece, en nuestra opinión, un estudio aparte dadas las nuevas variables: pacifismo, autoafirmación sexual, Vedanta, misticismo... No obstante, hemos considerado en este trabajo aquellas influencias de su última etapa que mantienen las concordancias principales con respecto a lo que es el conjunto de su obra.

### **1. Influencias en la génesis: educación, familia y entorno**

La influencia de la educación y del sistema educativo son muy importantes en la mayoría de las personas de nuestro tiempo y más aún si nos referimos a la cultura occidental. Pero, si a principios del siglo XX la mayoría de los jóvenes en edad escolar pudo acceder a una formación básica en las escuelas en el Reino Unido, no todos pudieron hacerlo a niveles superiores. La mayoría de los beneficiarios de la enseñanza superior pertenecían a la clase media alta o a la alta burguesía.

Los estudiantes de estas clases sociales -entre los que podemos incluir a Christopher Isherwood- tenían que alojarse a temprana edad en las residencias de estudiantes, con los subsiguientes traumas que esta situación generaba. Era esta vida de cohabitación en ausencia de la familia, además de una educación de carácter más bien estricto, las que marcarían profundamente la personalidad de muchos jóvenes de aquel entonces, entre los cuales se encontraba Christopher Isherwood.

Las escuelas y las instituciones educativas, tal y como las veían muchos autores británicos de los treinta, eran en su mayoría lugares de odio, represión y pesadillas.<sup>3</sup> Una concepción que, sin duda, era avalada por las contribuciones de todo un legado posdickensiano y decimonónico. Las universidades e instituciones superiores de educación del Reino Unido se habían convertido en auténticos santuarios del conservadurismo donde los profesores, en muchos casos, actuaban como mercenarios vendidos por dinero. Esta situación hará que en el futuro muchos de los antiguos alumnos reprimidos por el sistema decidan hacerse revolucionarios e intenten cambiar ese mundo de valores absurdos y

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<sup>3</sup> Estas opresiones influirían en las imágenes posteriores de los jóvenes escritores. Éste es el caso de muchas de las imágenes de la utopía *Mortmere* de C. Isherwood y E. Upward.

fijos y de cánones heredados. En su obra *Goodbye to Berlin* al referirse al mundo de Frl. Schroeder, uno de los personajes principales, vemos cómo la manera de colocar los objetos de la señora Schroeder, sin apenas registrar cambio alguno, halla su paralelismo con su estática visión de las realidades de este mundo: “Every morning, Frl. Schroeder arranges them very carefully in certain unvarying positions: there they stand, like an uncompromising statement of her views on Capital and Society, Religion and Sex.” (Isherwood, 1977:12)

No obstante, al tiempo que la enseñanza o el aparato educativo actuó como reactivo ideológico, social y creativo en las personalidades de muchos de los futuros escritores del Reino Unido, muchos de ellos recurrirían a ella; unos por preferencia y la gran mayoría por necesidades básicas. Este último será el caso de autores como George Orwell, Evelyn Waugh, Wystan Auden, Cyril Connolly o el mismo Christopher Isherwood. La enseñanza de aquella época era, en palabras de Cunningham (1988:124), “The last refuge of the unsuccessful literary man”.

Este hecho influirá decisivamente en el bagaje personal de Isherwood e, incluso, en los temas de sus obras. Sabemos que Christopher Isherwood llevó a cabo tutorías privadas en Inglaterra y que en su estancia berlinesa imparte clases de Inglés. En *Goodbye to Berlin*, en el primer capítulo, el personaje Christopher se gana la vida a través de la docencia de clases particulares de Inglés: “Frl. Hippie Berstein, my first pupil...” (Isherwood, 1977:23), aunque quizás sea más relevante en este sentido la historia ‘The Nowaks’, veamos un ejemplo:

At that time, I had a great many lessons to give. I was out most of the day. My pupils were scattered about the fashionable suburbs of the west -rich, well-preserved women of Frau Nowak's age, but looking younger; they liked to make a hobby of a little English conversation on dull afternoons when their husbands were away at the office. (Isherwood, 1977:116)

En lo que respecta a la familia, Christopher Isherwood pasaría una infancia feliz, pero al convertirse en adulto, ésta se transformará en un auténtico yugo y en sinónimo de normas, aprobación social, comportamientos tradicionales, convenciones... llegando a constituirse en todo un medio hostil y opresor que va a propiciar posturas de rebeldía. Así lo vemos en Isherwood y en su actitud de adolescente y así lo recogerá Schwerdt (1989:17) al referirse al escritor: “especially during the years 1923-30, his attitude typifies that of the recalcitrant adolescent”.



En su concepción de la familia, dos serán los elementos determinantes: la figura de la madre y la ausencia del padre. Para Christopher Isherwood la opresión de la madre es una opresión menos simbólica y más real. Significa la imposición de la heterosexualidad y del buen hacer burgués. A pesar de ello, y, según él mismo nos confirma, la madre sería un revulsivo para su creación. Veamos la explicación del propio Christopher Isherwood sobre la figura de la madre como “force of resistance”: “You must have a fulcrum for your lever. You must have an interaction of force and resistance. And one can always find someone to thank, for playing the part of this force of resistance” (Geherin, 1982:149).

Esta visión de la madre se hará extensiva y también mediatizará su visión de la mujer en general: “Girls are what the State and the Church and the Law and the Press and the Medical profession endorse, and command me to desire... If boys didn't exist, I should have to invent them” (Isherwood, 1985b:17).<sup>4</sup>

La muerte y ausencia del padre, como más tarde veremos, estarán ligadas a otros sentimientos, como la guerra o el deber no cumplido, y dejarán un vacío emocional que Isherwood intentaría paliar con la búsqueda de nuevos caminos. Uno de estos caminos pronto lo vería el joven autor en el marxismo de su amigo Edward Upward. Además, el marxismo era junto al socialismo, la literatura moderna, la homosexualidad y el psicoanálisis uno de elementos menospreciados por la clase media; de ahí que Isherwood se situara en la oposición de “The bourgeois, those who frowned on Freudianism, Marxism, Socialism, Homosexuality, modern literature.” (Piazza, 1978:137)

Pero en el caso de C. Isherwood y de otros de sus compañeros, no sólo contaba la ausencia de la familia y de una imagen masculina familiar como la del padre -hecho que podía estar motivado por los estudios-, sino que también contaba la formación y relación común entre compañeros. Este componente sería una circunstancia determinante que hará que sus trayectorias posteriores se movieran también en círculos comunes. Esta circunstancia, a su vez, produciría una endogamia

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<sup>4</sup> En esta misma obra, *Christopher and his Kind* (1985b:17), Isherwood afirmará: “My mother endorses them [girls], too. She is silently, brutishly willing me to get married and breed grandchildren for her”.

relacional que terminó por viciar aún más el círculo y que llegaría incluso a afectar no sólo al terreno literario-profesional sino también al sexual. El grupo se convierte en la unidad de donde emana todo tipo de relaciones. En el caso de Christopher Isherwood, esta influencia a veces trasciende a su obra, bástenos recordar el episodio ‘On Ruegen Island’ de *Goodbye to Berlin* (1939) donde el autor nos narra una estancia con sus amigos en las playas del Báltico o los episodios ‘Paul’ o ‘Ambrose’ de *Down There on a Visit* (1962). Estas relaciones serán altamente positivas desde el punto de vista profesional, pues los escritores más privilegiados ayudarán a los que querían abrirse camino en el mundo de las letras. Así, John Lehman no sólo ayudó a Christopher Isherwood a abrirse camino, sino que combinaría ambos ingredientes -sexual y profesional- con sus amigos homosexuales E. M. Forster, William Plomer, Stephen Spender, John Hampson... Según Cunningham, Cyril Connolly (citado en Cunningham, 1988:148) los llamaba un *Homitern*, una especie de *Comitern* homosexual. De ahí fue, a nuestro parecer, de donde surgió la homosexualidad de Christopher Isherwood y de muchos de los escritores británicos de los treinta.

Al mismo tiempo, la homosexualidad mediatizaría las relaciones con el sexo opuesto tanto en el caso de Isherwood como en el de sus compañeros. Cuando en 1939 Isherwood y Auden confeccionaron una lista con los nombres de los escritores británicos más prometedores, no apareció ningún nombre de mujer en la misma, a pesar de la importancia que las luchas y los logros femeninos tenían en aquellos años. Es bastante significativo el hecho de que en *Goodbye to Berlin* difícilmente encontremos una descripción favorable sobre alguna mujer. Veamos dos descripciones, la primera de Frl. Schroeder, la segunda de Frau Nowak:

Frl. Schroeder was quite beside herself. When I asked what was the matter, she clambered to her feet, waddled forward... (Isherwood, 1977:19)

We were interrupted by the return of Frau Nowak. She had come home early to cook me a farewell meal. Her string-bag was full of things she had bought; she had tired herself out carrying it. She shut the kitchen door behind her with a sigh and began to bustle about at once, her nerves on edge ready for a row. (Isherwood, 1977:131)

Incluso en el diario final de *Goodbye to Berlin*, Christopher Isherwood nos ofrece un comentario rayano a lo misógino: “Women are no good, ‘he told me bitterly. ‘They spoil everything. They haven’t got the spirit of

adventure. Men understand each other much better when they're alone together" (Isherwood, 1977:195).

Otra de las características que Christopher heredará de los primeros años de su vida, fruto de su educación y de las fijaciones de la infancia, será su pacifismo y su rechazo a la violencia. La muerte de su padre en el campo de batalla, ligado al sentimiento de no haber participado en una causa como era la I Guerra Mundial, aparecerán en Isherwood como un vacío y un deber no cumplido. A diferencia de otros escritores como Rex Warner, Rupert Brooke o Michael Roberts, donde la guerra será la experiencia que purgará al país, para Christopher Isherwood la guerra se torna una auténtica pesadilla. La I Guerra Mundial se convierte en otro de los temas recurrentes de sus primeras obras: "another haunting theme in Isherwood's novels" (Maes-Jelinek, 1970:455). Los personajes de sus primeras obras vivirán, al igual que C. Isherwood, esta pesadilla. Y éstos, al igual que nuestro autor, casi no habrán acabado una guerra, cuando se encontrarán inmersos en otra.

Sus sentimientos hacia la I Guerra Mundial pudieran parecer homogéneos a primera instancia, pero lo cierto es que durante sus años de escolar en la enseñanza secundaria aparece en C. Isherwood una actitud contradictoria hacia la misma. De un lado, Christopher estaba profundamente influido por Edward Upward<sup>5</sup> -el personaje Allen Chalmers de la obra *Lions and Shadows: An Education in The Twenties* (1938)-, quien se oponía al patriotismo y a la guerra, pero de otro y, como anteriormente mencionábamos, estaba el sentimiento de vergüenza por no haber participado en la Gran Guerra. Un sentimiento que poetas británicos como Robert Graves, Siegfried Sassoon y Wilfred Owen les habían hecho más patente. Así nos lo refleja Isherwood (1985a:13) en *Lions and Shadows*: "We young writers of the middle 'twenties were all suffering, more or less subconscious, from a feeling of shame that we hadn't been old enough to take part in the European War".

Esta misma contrariedad y esa ambivalencia en el sentir de Christopher Isherwood planean también a lo largo de todas sus obras. De un lado, está el pánico y el horror a la guerra y a la violencia, de otro, la imposibilidad de liberarse de esa opresión. Una frase de Bernhard

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<sup>5</sup> Christopher Isherwood en *Christopher and His Kind* considera a Edward Upward "literary and political mentor" (p. 42).

Landauer en el capítulo 'The Landauers' de *Goodbye to Berlin* resume perfectamente esta actitud de Christopher Isherwood frente a la guerra:

And then there was the War... At this time, I believed that the war would go on for ten, or fifteen, or twenty years. I knew that I myself should soon be called up. Curiously enough ... I accepted it. It seemed quite natural that we should all have to die. I suppose that this was the general wartime mentality. (Isherwood, 1977:170)

Años más tarde, en *Down There on a Visit* (1962), de alguna manera se autoexonera de ese sentir al retratarnos sus experiencias como objeto de conciencia en el *American Friends Service*. Esta actitud hacia la guerra y la violencia determinaría de forma considerable la evolución posterior y el acercamiento de Christopher Isherwood a Vedanta y el misticismo durante la posguerra -II Guerra Mundial-.

## 2. Influencias dentro del campo técnico y creativo

Es el cine uno más de los elementos que hace que veamos a Isherwood como un escritor de tremenda actualidad. En su estancia en Alemania durante los años veinte y treinta Christopher Isherwood tuvo ocasión de conocer de cerca las últimas creaciones que allí se producían. De hecho, el cine alemán de aquel entonces cautivaba por completo a la generación de jóvenes intelectuales de Europa y antes de que los nazis arruinaran el cine con la propaganda el cine alemán estaba a la cabeza del continente. Sólo en 1927 habían producido 421 películas,<sup>6</sup> superando con creces la producción de cualquier otro país europeo.

El cine soviético estará también a la vanguardia de las nuevas tendencias de aquellos años y, asimismo, también formará parte de la «dieta» de un joven Isherwood, ávido de cine, con autores como Vsevolod Pudovkin o Sergei Eisenstein.

Sin embargo, la influencia del cine en Christopher Isherwood no quedará relegada a la temática o a la susceptibilidad artística del cine. Las cámaras, como dispositivos de la nueva técnica, eran elementos que

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<sup>6</sup> A esa época pertenecen películas de intriga como *Doctor Mabuse, Der Spieler* (1922) del director austriaco de nacimiento Fritz Lang, o *Die Büchse der Pandora* (*La caja de Pandora*) (1929) de W. Pabst. También pertenecen a esta época películas surrealistas como *Nosferatu* (1922) de F. W. Murnau, historias felices como *El estudiante de Praga* (1926) o películas expresionistas como *El gabinete del Dr. Caligari* (1920) de Robert Wiener.

fascinaban a muchos escritores de aquel entonces. Para los escritores de izquierdas este nuevo ingrediente de la técnica contribuía a mostrar la situación social con una autenticidad desconocida hasta aquel entonces. No obstante, conviene recordar que su uso no quedó localizado en una determinada filiación ideológica, pues otros escritores menos progresistas también harían uso de ella. Veamos la opinión de Valentine Cunningham:

Technical attempts among leftist authors at the mass-condition of photograph and film instantly shed much of their acquired air of apparent social and formal hopefulness when one discovers them niftily replicated more or less, among the likes of Waugh (not to mention Eliot and Pound) and the politically less committed or even uncommitted Old Etonians. (Cunningham, 1988:333)

Ya en sus primeras obras de juventud es fácil apreciar cómo el autor se inclina por el expresionismo. Ésta es una etapa con obras como *Mortmere* (1924) o *All The Conspirators* (1928), pero Isherwood abandona pronto estas posturas más utópicas y rebeldes que depositaban una confianza plena en el hombre y, decepcionado, se vuelve hacia el objetivismo.<sup>7</sup> Será entonces cuando aparece la cámara cinematográfica como técnica narrativa. La cámara se convierte más que en el instrumento en la excusa de modernidad para recoger la realidad tal y como es, sin idealismos. Es, en definitiva, la cámara de sus obras *Mr. Norris Changes Trains* (1935) y *Goodbye to Berlin* (1939). Sería en la cámara y en el uso que de ella se hace donde Christopher Isherwood hallaría una de las fuentes de inspiración para sus técnicas ulteriores. Piazza (1978:117) afirmará que la aportación más importante del cine alemán fue el uso creativo de la cámara: “the peculiar German contribution to the cinema was the creative use of the camera”. Y él mismo nos corroborará su influencia en las dos obras de Isherwood, *The Berlin Stories*: “The very simplicity of *The Berlin Stories* -in plot, lack of clutter, and use of cogent incident only- may be a result of Isherwood schooling in the German cinema.” (Piazza, 1978:117)

Christopher Isherwood participaría también de una forma más activa en el mundo del cine gracias a una experiencia directa, experiencia que Cunningham (1988:294) denominará “Isherwood’s alacritous

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<sup>7</sup> Para Döblin (citado en Graig, 1978:475) los nuevos objetivistas serán “disenchanted and disillusioned people”.

incursion into film employment”. En 1933 Christopher Isherwood conoce a Berthold Viertel, un director de cine austriaco que estaba empleado por aquel entonces en el estudio *Gaumont-British* en una película titulada *Little Friend*, basada en la novela *Kleine Freundin* de Ernst Lothar. Isherwood pronto pasa a acabar el guión de esta película de forma casi accidental, tras el abandono del mismo por Margaret Kennedy. Así, lo que en principio es un hecho fortuito, se convierte más tarde en un reto personal y pronto Christopher Isherwood se da cuenta de que puede elaborar diálogos bastante realistas -decisivos en el estilo de su creación. Esta primera toma de contacto con el cine de forma activa ayudaría a desarrollar en Isherwood lo que Connolly (citado en Fryer, 1977:177) llamó “his fatal readability”, y que no es otra cosa que la amenidad que el lector encuentra ante la lectura de la obra de Christopher Isherwood.

Isherwood nos mostrará, asimismo, en una novela posterior, *Prater Violet* (1946), el mundo del cine. En ella aparece todo el proceso de creación de una película y la relación entre la vida y el arte. La obra en su conjunto demuestra que el cine puede trascender las barreras de lo meramente temático y que, además, puede conjugar este elemento con su demostración práctica mediante la técnica narrativa.

### 3. Influencias literarias

Christopher Isherwood recoge en su prosa una tradición del realismo de finales del s. XIX, que tiene sus antecedentes en escritores como Herbert George Wells, George Bernard Shaw y otros fabianos alejados de la propaganda y ligeramente politizados. Ellos habían tomado el relevo de la política de manos de Robert Owen, Karl Marx, John Stuart Mill y Thomas Paine en sus deseos de acercarse al hombre.

Uno de los soplos realistas y naturalistas del s. XIX., así como una de las influencias más importantes que el autor recoge, será la de los cuentos y las historias cortas. Somerset Maugham, uno de los creadores más grandes de historias cortas del pasado siglo, influirá considerablemente en Christopher Isherwood, hasta el punto de que el personaje Ashenden de muchas de las historias de Maugham nos recuerda a los personajes William Bradshaw, George o Christopher de las obras de Christopher Isherwood. La influencia de la historia corta y el cuento se dejará notar en su tratamiento creativo de la novela como recopilación o amalgama de distintas historias. Christopher Isherwood,

en una nota introductoria a su primera edición de *Goodbye to Berlin*, consideraba su libro como una “loosely-connected sequence of diaries and sketches” (Isherwood, 1977:9) y Maes-Jelinek (1970:470) habla de la misma obra de Isherwood como de una formación de “unrelated snapshots of the social scene taken at different moments from different angles”. Como advertimos, pues, la influencia de los cuentos y de las historias cortas ejercen también su influencia en el plano técnico.

En las versiones o los *retellings* podemos, asimismo, seguir el rastro de la influencia de las historias cortas y de los cuentos. Lehmann (1988:64), el famoso escritor británico y amigo de Christopher Isherwood, dirá acerca de la forma de crear de su amigo: “Christopher was always planning combinations and permutations of his shorter novels” y Piazza (1978:96), un tanto exageradamente, unificará la creación de su obra en lo que él llama «el Isherwood esencial»: “His nine novels are nine autobiographical glimpses ... taken together, these nine glimpses coalesce to form a reflected image of what might be called the 'essential Isherwood'”.

C. Isherwood recoge también en algunas de sus obras la tradición del *Bildungsroman* o del *Künstlerroman*.<sup>8</sup> Las aventuras y vivencias del joven Christopher en su obra *Goodbye to Berlin* o el registro de la evolución de las relaciones del autor con Prabhavananda en *My Guru and his Disciple* (1980) así nos lo recuerdan. Las obras no son sino las narraciones de las vivencias y aventuras -más materiales en una, más espirituales en otra- de una persona que se aventura por el mundo y del que vuelve con más o menos experiencia de sus lances por él.

Otro de los influjos que nos queda por referir es aquél que Christopher Isherwood recibe precisamente de sus contemporáneos y, sobre todo, de lo que en aquel entonces se consideraba la «literatura actual». La literatura de los treinta es una literatura que ante todo se va alejando de los juegos esteticistas, siendo ésta la evolución lógica del escritor. Isherwood, que, como hemos visto, era especialmente partícipe de las realidades de su tiempo, pronto participa de las nuevas formas culturales emergentes. Recoge, así, los influjos de esta nueva época

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<sup>8</sup> *Bildungsroman* se puede entender como novela de educación formativa y *Künstlerroman* como novela que trata de los años formativos del artista.

proletaria de realismo socialista, de compromiso político y social y de la defunción de la burguesía:

Again and again on the '30s left 'a new culture of the emancipated working-class' was envisaged. The new world of the emancipated masses would entail the breaking of the old bourgeois forms of art and literature, and the concomitant production of new forms. (Cunningham, 1988:318)

Esta tradición continuará en la década de los treinta, ahora con el elemento marxista entrado en vigor. Durante los treinta, los escritores cercanos al realismo rechazarán de plano cualquier tipo de experimentación en el campo formal e irán contra las vanguardias de los veinte y, por extensión, contra cualquier novedad que estuviera opuesta a las realidades cercanas a la vida. Es entonces cuando surge el realismo socialista, hecho dogma en el Congreso de escritores soviéticos de 1934 y que tendrá una enorme repercusión en Gran Bretaña.<sup>9</sup> El realismo socialista conducirá de nuevo a la novela a un realismo burgués decimonónico que poco o nada tiene que decir en el plano técnico. Este realismo socialista y los rápidos cambios que estaban teniendo lugar en la U.R.R.S -adonde muchos de los trabajadores del mundo miraban con esperanza- pondrán de moda a la Unión Soviética y a los escritores rusos, no sólo los del periodo contemporáneo sino también los escritores clásicos. Así, por ejemplo, Christopher Isherwood declarará ser un admirador de León Tolstoi y, por supuesto, habrá leído buen número de los contemporáneos rusos:

As a very young man, Christopher had read Tugenev and Chekhov and had yearned romantically for the steppe, the immense land-ocean which stretches east, unbounded, to the Ural Mountains and then endlessly on across Siberia. (Isherwood, 1985b:73)

Christopher Isherwood fue, sin lugar a dudas, uno de los escritores más receptivos a las influencias literarias. El autor, ya desde niño, había estado familiarizado con toda clase de lecturas y tenía un contacto muy importante con el mundo de la literatura. El 23 de abril de 1963 en una conferencia titulada *Influences*,<sup>10</sup> impartida en la *S. Francisco Public*

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<sup>9</sup> Cunningham (1988:303) afirmará acerca de los escritores de clase media y el Realismo socialista: "The trouble is that for most middle class authors, that is, most authors, working-class experience was a long way out there, and could remain remote despite the most energetic efforts at 'going over'".

<sup>10</sup> Según Piazza (1978:198) esta conferencia estaría basada en un libro de notas de Isherwood.



*Library*, C. Isherwood nos daba a conocer que ciertas obras literarias y ciertos autores habían influido en él como hombre y como escritor: “Bits and pieces that have struck me for various reasons ... influences which have been exerted upon me as a writer and as a human being”. Mencionaba a ciertos autores y los rasgos de éstos que él más admiraba. Señalaba, así, a T. E. Lawrence -en concreto la obra *Seven Pillars of Wisdom* (1935)-,<sup>11</sup> a E. M. Forster por su rebelión contra el héroe clásico, a Henry James por la admiración de una persona volcada totalmente en su profesión, a Katherine Mansfield por ser una persona heroica que luchó contra las adversidades, a León Tolstoy porque retomó su vida, a Robert Louis Stevenson por su concepción del realismo y a Aldous Huxley por personificar la búsqueda de toda una generación. Hacía también una mención a lo que él denomina obras con un «sentido de la vitalidad», como *Moby Dick* (1851), *Los hermanos Karamazov* (1879-80) y las obras de Tennessee Williams o Samuel Beckett. Todo un acervo de autores y obras importantes.

Para finalizar este recorrido por las influencias más determinantes en la primera etapa de Christopher Isherwood, es importante subrayar el hecho de que recoger las influencias de otros autores en su obra no es una tarea fácil, en especial, si atendemos a la afirmación de Piazza (1978:106) al considerar a Christopher Isherwood como uno de los escritores más receptivos de su generación y, sobre todo, a las de los escritores de generaciones inmediatamente anteriores: “Christopher Isherwood was the most receptive of his generation to the work of his immediate predecessors”. Con todo, esperamos haber recogido en este trabajo las más significativas o, al menos, las que inciden más directamente en su primera etapa, amén de las que incidieron en su formación estética y personal.

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<sup>11</sup> Ésta es la fecha de la primera edición comercial. En 1926 apareció una edición de 128 copias ilustrada y con encuadernación de lujo y que había sido encargada por el propio autor.

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# AN INTRODUCTION TO THE POETRY OF TED HUGHES

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## **Abstract**

*The death of Ted Hughes in the year 1998 deprived Great Britain of its Poet Laureate and the world of poetry was left without one of its most charismatic figures of the past century. If his personal life has been a source of controversy among admirers of Sylvia Plath, his first wife, there has never been any doubt about his immense talent not only as a poet, but as a fiction writer and a successful observer of both classical and contemporary poetry. His early departure from the orthodoxy and logicity represented by the poets of The Movement and his vision of poetry, which is both vital and spiritual, helped him make his contribution as one of the great poets of our time.*

## **1. Biography**

Ted Hughes was born in Mythmolroyd<sup>1</sup> (West Yorkshire, England), the son of a carpenter, on the 17<sup>th</sup> of April 1930. His father was one of the very few survivors of a British regiment annihilated in Gallipolis during the First World War. He spent the first years of his life walking through the craggy and mountainous landscape of Yorkshire, covered with moors and small forests, in the company of his brother, who was very fond of “shooting and hunting”,<sup>2</sup> as Ted Hughes later explained in his own words.

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<sup>1</sup> Mythmolroyd is at the heart of a community which was traditionally inhabited by weavers and millers.

<sup>2</sup> Close Up, 1998.

His close relationship with nature was never to abandon him. This fact, together with his exposure to the West Yorkshire dialect, gave him his first impulse towards poetry.

At school he revealed himself as a brilliant student, to the point of earning a scholarship to study at Cambridge University, where he started reading English Literature. But he became disillusioned with the stiff academic nature of his course, rather opposed to his own ideas, and decided to switch courses in his third year. He applied to enter the School of Anthropology, which he thoroughly enjoyed and which proved to be of great assistance in the making of his poetic world. In this sense, I would like to quote some lines from his poem *The Thought-Fox*:

I imagine this midnight moment's forest:  
 Something else is alive  
 Beside the clock's loneliness  
 And this blank page where my fingers move.  
 Through the window I see no star:  
 Something more near  
 Though deeper within darkness  
 Is entering the loneliness:

Cold, delicate as the dark snow  
 A fox's nose touches twig, leaf;  
 Two eyes serve a movement, that now (...)

Sets prints into the snow (...)

Till, with a sudden sharp hot stink of fox  
 It enters the dark hole of the head  
 The window is starless still; the clock ticks,  
 The page is printed. (Hughes, 1995:3)

The fox symbolises the natural world, protesting about the academic strain felt by Hughes, and breaks into the room to ask the poet to quit writing meaningless essays and to relieve him from his confusion, as if saying: "Stop this".<sup>3</sup> The intellect is replaced by instinct.

In 1955, after his graduation, he met Sylvia Plath, then a Fulbright scholar. The attraction was mutual and they married one year later. On their honeymoon they visited France and Spain, in the latter of which the poet "felt at home" (Hughes, 1998:39). Later on they went to

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<sup>3</sup> *Close Up*, 1998.

Massachusetts, where she had a teaching job; their original plans had involved both lecturing and writing. In 1957, Ted Hughes published his first book of poems: *The Hawk in the Rain*, which won him prizes and general acclaim. In 1959 he won a Guggenheim Fellowship and he travelled across America with his wife.

Back in England, the couple were determined to earn their living as full-time writers, and they had their first child, Frieda, in 1960. There were also two other books to appear that year: *Lupercal*, by Hughes, and *The Colossus*, by Sylvia Plath. In 1961 they moved to Devon, where their second son, Nicholas, was born. Soon after, the couple parted; he went to live with another woman, and Sylvia moved with the children to a flat near Primrose Hill, London, where she gassed herself (perhaps without meaning to do so) in 1963.

Ted Hughes did not write any poems for the next four years; instead, he devoted himself to writing children stories, such as *The Iron Man*.<sup>4</sup> Then, in 1967, *Wodwo* appeared, with its nightmare imagery. Later on, in 1970, he married Carole Orchard, a farmer's daughter, and published another book, *Crow* (1970).

From then on, he enjoyed some of the peace and quiet that he had missed in the years that followed Sylvia Plath's death and published regularly: among his works we can mention *Tales of Ovid* (1997) and *Birthday Letters* (1998), published shortly before his death. In the latter book he managed to express what he had kept inside for so many years, following the turmoil of Sylvia's suicide.

Ted Hughes became Poet Laureate in 1987, and fulfilled his duties until the very moment of his death from cancer, thus frustrating the hope of the one who writes these lines of being able to interview him.

It is my intention to discuss in this paper some of the main aspects that appear in his poetry, as well as some of the issues that worried him as a writer.

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<sup>4</sup> These were intended to be read to his children at bed time.

## 2. Main poetic ideas

### 2.1. Nature

“To me, a dead animal is simply a dead object. A dead fish is a dead object”.<sup>5</sup> For Hughes, Nature has to be something alive: Nature and Life are but a simple equation, resulting in an identification between both. Nature is not the romantic portrait of classical harmony, nor is his Art to do with a mimetic observation of landscape. Ted Hughes thinks that we all too often forget that our life is dominated by natural facts, and his concept of Nature is deeply embedded in the common, everyday struggle between life and death, where one does not exist without the other. Nature and life are about violent impulses, essential for surviving, and even the act of being born is violent in itself.

As Armitage points out: “There is a lot of blood and guts in Ted Hughes' poetry”.<sup>6</sup> In this sense, from the very beginning, he was decidedly out of the scope of the poetry practised by the so-called members of The Movement,<sup>7</sup> such as Phillip Larkin, Kingsley Amis, D.J. Enright, Elisabeth Jennings, and others, whose poetry focused on Empirism from the perspective of Liberal Humanism. Seamus Heaney offers his own insight as to the way Ted Hughes' poetry operates within his native culture:

“Hughes' voice is a rebellion against a kind of demeaned, mannerly voice (...) The voice of a generation, (...) the Movement voice, even the T.S. Eliot voice -the manners of speech (...) are those of literate English middle class culture and I think that Hughes' great cry (...) is that English language and poetry is longer and deeper and rougher than that. That is of a piece with his interest in Middle English, the dialect, his insistence upon foxes and bulls and violence” (Heaney, quoted in Bentley, 1998:3).

The role of animals is also to be considered in Ted Hughes' poetry, for they contribute to enlarge his vision of Nature; sometimes, they come as a blessing (as in *The Thought-Fox*); sometimes, as a nightmare (as in *Song of a Rat*); at other times, they present a world of their own, subverting the human mind and the human world through satire, as in

<sup>5</sup> Close Up, 1998.

<sup>6</sup> Close Up, 1998.

<sup>7</sup> Contemporary poets of Ted Hughes, who exercised a form of poetry which attempted to be logical, immediate and understandable to the reader, far removed from illogical and irrational statements as well as mysticism.

the case of *Crow*. They never come, though, as the main parts of a pantheistic view of poetry. Hughes obviously admired them. He once said that they were “so much more adapted to their environment than humans”,<sup>8</sup> thus questioning the role of men in the natural route of events in the world. Animals do not fit any form of human thought, and they are primarily concerned with surviving. This is why there are no moral overtones in the poems by Ted Hughes. The world belongs to them, and it is the hawk in *Hawk Roosting*<sup>9</sup> who is the only character who is allowed to speak in the first person; Hughes does not permit any single interference of his own in the description of the Nature which he so keenly reveres. It is only in his last book, *Birthday Letters*, that this tendency is broken by allowing his poetic *I* to identify with his real *I*. In a word, Hughes deliberately detaches himself from his poetic object.

## 2.2. *The bard in the Celtic tradition. Shamanism*

There is a concept which the Shamans in ancestral cultures share with the bards in the early Celtic world: the ability to put people in touch with that world which exists outside logic and coherence, resulting in chaos; yet this domain contains a power and a strength that the so-called “real world” does not possess. Let us not forget that the West Yorkshire ridings were one of the last strongholds where the ancient Britons retreated from the invasions of Romans and Saxons. Ted Hughes felt he was part of that Celtic tradition,<sup>10</sup> and his status as a poet brought him very close to the role of the bards in the old British society. He very strongly believed in the healing power of poetry. This concern for Celtic traditions becomes evident in his book *Remains of Elmet*<sup>11</sup> (1979) and also in *River* (1983). In the latter there are several poems devoted to salmon: *October Salmon* and *Salmon Eggs*, for salmon was a kind of sacred fish for the ancient Celts.<sup>12</sup>

Bards were also expected to enhance their leaders' deeds through poetry, as well as to provide some sort of a chronicle-like account of the

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<sup>8</sup> *Close Up*, 1998.

<sup>9</sup> Hughes (1995).

<sup>10</sup> His surname, Hughes, is Celtic.

<sup>11</sup> Elmet was the name of the Celtic kingdom of the West Yorkshire ridings before the arrival of the Angles and the Norse.

<sup>12</sup> Most of the ideas within this paragraph have been found in Ann Skea's homepage.

events taking place in their society; it is inevitable that the position of Ted Hughes as a Poet Laureate places him in close connection with the activities of traditional bards.

What a shaman has to offer his own society does not differ greatly from his Celtic counterpart. He has the power to communicate with the forces of Nature which are not within the grasp of the members of his community. He can heal the ill ones by allowing the forces in the far beyond to descend upon them and act on the evil nature of their maladies. In doing so, the patients have to undergo a daunting experience through different stages comprising the dissolving of the “visual” world, the disintegration of their self and their identity, the contact with the forces of the unknown world which will help them in the quest for healing, and should they succeed in finding the right forces and avoiding the prejudicial ones, come back to “human” reality again, free from their load and renewed from the dark forces that dominate the world.<sup>13</sup> A combination of both Celtic motives and Shamanistic experience are to be found in the last lines of his poem *Milesian Encounter on the Sligachan*, which belongs to the book *River* (1983):

(...) -what was it gave me  
Such a supernatural, beautiful fright  
And let go, and sank disembodied  
Into the eye-pupil darkness?

Only a little salmon  
Salmo salar  
The loveliest, left-behind, most-longed-for-ogress  
Of the Paleolithic  
Watched me through her time-warped judas-hole  
In the ruinous castle of Skye

As I faded from the light of reality. (Hughes, 1995:244-246)

In my opinion, in healing his own nightmares and fears through the writing of poetry, Hughes is passing them over to his readers, who must in turn write their own poetry to free themselves from such demons and thus, hand them over to somebody else. The chain is endless in this way, and some critics did not always welcome Hughes' procedures.<sup>14</sup>

<sup>13</sup> Ted Hughes was convinced that such forces exist, and they effectively take control of life.

<sup>14</sup> “(...) he is a bruiser who pummels his reader with the harshest, most solid words in order to batter them into submission” (Press, 1963:182). Some readers and critics thought for some time that Hughes was a poet of violence.



### 2.3. *The instability of life versus the stability of language*

This process is intimately linked with the poetry that Ted Hughes uses in his books *Wodwo* (1967) and, to a certain extent, *Crow* (1970). In the former, there is an element of disintegration of a language that can no longer contain the ephemeral and tricky reality that hides behind its words. The poetry of Ted Hughes becomes distorting and nervous, uncomfortable with the language to be conveyed and, above all, set on a basis of provisionality. It is a clear indication that he is unhappy with the language he is forced to use, and the most immediate solution to the problem is distorting it until the poet becomes able to produce a new one. And each chunk of new language must be replaced and not used again in the same way, once it has fulfilled its specific purpose on a particular matter. In this sense, Hughes is indebted to East European poets, such as Vasko Poppa, Miroslav Holub, Zbiginiew Herbert, and Janos Pilinsky. They stand for the poetry of experience in World War II (Hughes himself felt great concern for World War I, due to his father's experience). This Eastern European stream happens amidst post-war totalitarianism and poses a distrustful stance towards what can be *real*.

Hughes coincides with such poets on a number of ideas: “The air of trial and error exploration, of an improvised language, the attempt to get near something for which he is almost having to invent the words in total disregard for poetry or the normal conventions of discourse” (Hughes, quoted in Bentley, 1998:4).

In other words, the poet is always attempting something from a different direction and never allows a meaning to settle in a signifier for too long. Writing, at times, becomes a way of dissolving language. Animals, for example, are physical creatures in his first two books, *The Hawk in the Rain* (1957) and *Lupercal* (1960); but in *Wodwo* (1967), animals become symbolical entities accounting for some kind of representation. For example, in his poem *The Bear*, this animal symbolises inertia being transformed into consciousness:

(...) The bear is the gleam in the pupil  
ready to awake  
and instantly focus.  
(...) The bear is digging  
beginning to end  
through the Wall of the Universe  
with a man's femur. (Hughes, 1995:64)

The green wolf, in the meantime, stands for the pain in the Universe:

One smouldering annihilation  
 Of old brains, old bowels, old bodies  
 In the scarves of the dew, the wet hair of nightfall.  
 (Hughes, 1995:64)

A deformation process also becomes evident in *Crow*, in which the “ugliness” of its language corresponds to the “ugliness” of the world.

#### 2.4. *Yorkshire dialect and poetry*

In this sense, we can detect a desire on the part of Ted Hughes to return to the primitive realm of language and knowledge. It is at this point where he turns his attention to the most primitive aspects of his native Yorkshire dialect to express better the strength embedded in existence itself, the simplicity in the motivations in life and the testing nature of survival.

It would be unfair not to say a few things about Yorkshire and its dialect. The current county of York once belonged to the Angles, who founded the kingdom of Northumberland, covering most of Northern East England; their original speech was already somewhat different from the Saxon dialects from the south. By the ninth century, this territory was subject to the Danelaw and ruled by the Danish king Knut. Danish currency, law, and language were enforced within the region. By the time the Danes left, they had made their mark in the ways and the language of people, leaving many Norse words<sup>15</sup> and names of places (such as Whitby, Wetherby, Kirkstall, Selby...), as well as an economy and bluntness of expression that became a distinctive and recognisable feature in the speech of a native Yorkshire speaker: vigorous, precise, and dry.<sup>16</sup>

The North of England was the area most resistant to the innovations brought to the English language by the Normans, and parts of it remained relatively unaffected by the new masters of the place. This is why

<sup>15</sup> *Addle* means “to work”; *Bairn* (or *Bearn*) means “baby”, and so on.

<sup>16</sup> This is an extract from a real life conversation between two teenagers in a Yorkshire school:

- *A' ta on?*

- *Nobbut just* which in common English could be translated in the following way:

- *Are you in the first team?*

- *No, but I almost made it (in fact, I am on the substitutes' bench).*

Yorkshire dialect has retained some of the primitive character of Anglo-Norse speech and Ted Hughes felt that it would be adequate to recover and restore that language in his poetry. A poetry devoid of musicality and graced with density and strength, full of metallic, guttural sounds, and craggy as a Yorkshire peak. A poetry which restores Middle English (and even Old English) to the reader.

In later works, he would try to create a poetic language that could cover his expectations and expressive needs. In this sense, I should mention his work for the International Centre for Theatre Research in 1971. Here is a sample:<sup>17</sup>

BULLONGA OMBOLOM FROR	SHARSAYA NUBULDA
Darkness opens its womb	BRARG
	I hear chaos rear
IN OMBOLOM BULLORGA	
in the womb of darkness	
FREEASTAV OMBOLOM	NILD US GLITTALUGH
freeze her womb	rivets like stars
ASTA BREORBITTA	CLID OSTIA BULLORGA
Icy chains	lock up the mouth of darkness
IN OMBOLOM KHERN FIGYA	
GRUORD	
In her womb I make my words	
iron (Bold, 1976:128)	

Hughes is attempting to create new language but, at the same time, he is trying to reinvigorate the peculiarities of his native dialect within poetry. I would like to quote now a few lines of Caedmon's Hymn of the Creation in original Old English:<sup>18</sup>

nu we sculon herigean	heofonrices Weard
Meotodes meahte	ond his mod gethanc
Weore Wuldorfaether,	swa he wundra gehwæs
Ece Drihten	or onstealde
He aereþ sceop	eorþan bearnum
Heofon to hrofe,	halig Scyppend;
Tha middangeard	monncynnes Weard

<sup>17</sup> This poem is titled *Orghast*.

<sup>18</sup> Caedmon was the first known Yorkshire dialect poet, who died around 680 AD, according to Waddington-Feather (1977).

Ece Drihten	after teode
Firum foldan	Frea aelmihtig <sup>19</sup>

The translation of these lines could be as follows:

Now we must praise	the Guardian of Heaven
The might of God	and his mind
The work of the	since he had performed
Gloryfather,	each wonder
The eternal Lord,	the beginning
He first shaped	for the children of the earth
The heavens as their roof,	the holy Creator;
The eternal Lord	afterwards adorned,
The earth for men,	the Prince almighty.

It is quite clear that the poem by Ted Hughes and these lines by Caedmon have quite a lot in common, despite their main difference: Hughes' poem is written in a poetic language coming from an effort of his own imagination, whereas the poem by Caedmon is written in the language of his fellow countrymen in the Dark Ages. Even from a thematic point of view, both poems point to the same place: the origin of the world; even the number of syllables are the same for some of their lines. The oldest poem is also appropriate in the sense that it shows samples of Old English which have survived in Yorkshire dialect: such is the case of *bearnum* (or *bearn*, “baby”) and the Anglian form *nu*, accounting for the Modern Standard English form “now”.<sup>20</sup>

### 3. Conclusion

As a summary of the main ideas expressed throughout this paper, we can say that Ted Hughes tries to dig deep in our inner, collective self to restore in us the forces and feelings that were once experienced by the first generations of the human race, thus dismissing any references to technical advances or Positivism. Existence is a matter of life and death, and this struggle has its own, unique beauty, and it is inspiring enough in itself. Many of the characters of his poems are in fact animals, embedded within the womb of Nature, a world of its own where man has to look for the space which he lost such a long time ago. But Nature here is not symbolic, metaphysical, or lyrical in a traditional sense, nor does

<sup>19</sup> This translation is indebted to Abrahams (1986).

<sup>20</sup> Waddington-Feather (1977).

it allow any emotion on the part of the poet; poetry is about motion, rather than emotion.<sup>21</sup> The poet feels the necessity to detach himself from his poetical object and, therefore, moral overtone and personal opinions are unnecessary, if not unwelcome.

Poetry also possesses some kind of healing power for both the poet and his readers in the sense that it allows the individual to recover from the meaningless way of life that people must endure, by reminding him of the main motivations and goals of all living creatures (survival and reproduction), which have been buried by civilisation.<sup>22</sup> Hughes is possibly craving another Ice Age in which men would effectively find their own space among their fellow animals and would forget about the urge of becoming God, thus putting an end to the so far unstoppable stream of mass destruction in which the 20<sup>th</sup> Century has evolved. In order to achieve this aim, Ted Hughes turns his attention to such ancient cultures as that of the ancient Britons, as well as ancient patterns of language (hence his fondness for Middle English and old Anglo-Saxon poetry). It can also be added that he clearly abandons the institutional nature of language with all its social rules, conventions, and fixed meanings so as to search for other forms of expressing primary, vital, and poetic impulses, which in his work are associated with uncertainty and instability. This is why he focuses on the image of the shaman in ancestral societies (and even enhances the traditional role of the Celtic bards) as a means to state and identify the status of a poet in modern times.

As a critic, Ted Hughes often reviewed some of the work of his fellow colleagues and had a good relationship with some of them, as is the case of Seamus Heaney. He was also a successful commentator of classical poetry (as his book *Tales from Ovid*<sup>23</sup> shows). He is also having enormous influence on some of the new poets of Britain, and perhaps this is especially noticeable in Simon Armitage, a young poet from Yorkshire who has recently gained public applause for some of his work. His most recent success has come with the publication of *Killing Time*,<sup>24</sup> a

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<sup>21</sup> In this respect, he has something in common with another contemporary British poet called Gunn (1929).

<sup>22</sup> This idea covers the obvious tendency of Ted Hughes towards the bardic tradition in the British Isles and his interest in Shamanism (see previous pages of the present work).

<sup>23</sup> Hughes (1997).

<sup>24</sup> Armitage (1999).

recapitulation on the end of the past Millennium and the start of the new one.

I should now finish by providing an insight to some of the most representative books by the poet.

#### THE HAWK IN THE RAIN (1957)

The influence of Dylan Thomas becomes evident in his first book, with whom he shares a pulsating verb energy, a vision of death in life, expressions of blood, and bone, and hyperbolic imagery. This book presents man as a fellow animal, fighting for survival. He has all the respect in the world for nature, but none for the aspirations of men, who long to be God-like. Some of the best known poems found in this book are: *The Thought-Fox*, *Bayonet Charge*, *The Jaguar* and *The Casualty*.

#### LUPERCAL (1960)

The overall impression of this book is that Hughes has a vision, both God-like and obsessively earth-bound. He sees the globe at the end of a massive tunnel; at the end of such vision, the tunnel becomes more important than the light-world at the end. Animals are still a source of inspiration. Some of his best known poems are: *Pike*, *The Bull Moses*, or *Hawk Roosting*; I am going to quote a few lines from the latter:

I sit at the top of the wood, my eyes closed.  
Inaction, no falsifying dream (...)

I kill where I please because it is all mine.  
(...) My manners are tearing off heads -  
(...) No arguments assert my right.

The sun is behind me. (Hughes, 1995:29:30)

#### WODWO (1967)

*Wodwo* conveys a feeling of depression and a double black humour. The poems in the earlier books had alluded to a physical reality, but now there is a surrealistic tone dyed in sadness and distrust of the world, almost close to disgust. *Wodwo*, a half-animal, half-human creature from the forest apprehends the existence of another power at work: a malevolent, imperfect, inept God. Animals are not only physical entities but they also shift to the domain of the symbolic and the unreal, and the poet becomes a nightmare dreamer. In *The Rat's dance (They Song of a Rat)*, the animal.

Cannot think  
 “This has no face, it must be God” or  
 “No answer is also an answer” (Hughes, 1995:76).

### CROW (1970)

The intention of Ted Hughes in this book was to write songs that a crow could sing, in a simple, extremely ugly language.

According to Hughes, Crow is the bird of Bran, the oldest and highest totemic creature in Celtic Britain, also part of the Norse and Teutonic world. The bird becomes a symbol for destruction; Crow predated the weak and the helpless. Let us examine a few lines of the poem *Examination at the Womb-Door*:

Who is stronger than hope? Death  
 Who is stronger than the will? Death  
 Who is stronger than love? Death  
 Stronger than life? Death  
 But who is stronger than death?  
 Me, evidently  
 Pass, Crow (Hughes, 1970:5)

Crow's own birth is revolting in *A Kill*:

As he drowned in his own blood  
 Dragged under by the weight of his guts (...)  
 And smashed under the rubbish of the ground. (Hughes, 1970:6)

When he tries to say the word “love”, all he can see is the sexual urge of man and woman, and unable to utter the word, he flies *guiltily off* (from *Crow's first lesson*).

As I have mentioned before, another of Crow's abilities is subverting the myth of creation, as in the poem titled *A lineage*:

In the beginning was Scream  
 Who begat blood (...)  
 Who begat fear (...)  
 Who begat Adam  
 Who begat Mary  
 Who begat God  
 Who begat Nothing  
 Who begat Never (...)  
 Who begat Crow. (Hughes, 1970:4)

Other works by Ted Hughes include *Cave Birds* (1975), *Season Songs* (1975), *Gaudete* (1977), *Remains of Elmet* (1979), *Earth Numb* (1979), *River* (1983), *What is the truth?* (1984), *Flowers and Insects* (1986),

*Wolwatching* (1989), *Moortown Diary* (1989), and *Rain Charm for the Duchy* (1992).

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# **SOCIAL IMPLICATIONS IN PERCY WYNDHAM LEWIS'S *THE VULGAR STREAK*: A RESOURCE THEORY APPROACH**

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## **Abstract**

*This paper focuses on the one-sided interpersonal behaviour of Vincent Penhale, the main fictional character in Lewis's didactic thriller *The Vulgar Streak* (1941), in an attempt to unearth some of its peculiar sociological implications. To carry out this task we concentrate on the idiosyncrasy of his social interactions following American sociological Resource Theory by Uriel G. Foa, which explains social behaviour and the relationships conforming between individuals in everyday life in terms of transactions of six basic resources: love, services, goods, money, information and status. As a result, it is our purpose to show that this working-class man has such a pathological obsession with status that it leads him to disguise himself as a 'gentleman' and to indulge in ingratiatory tactics. This is why his daily social interactions in intimate settings like marriage, family and friendship, and in public ones aim at attaining social approval, certain privileges and power.*

## **1. Introduction**

Lewis's novel *The Vulgar Streak* is set in an atmosphere of disquieting political machinations in Europe few months before the outbreak of World War II. Its story evolves around the figure of Vincent Penhale, who travels with his upper-class friend Martin to Venice. Here

they meet Mrs. Mallow and her daughter April, who are also members of upper class society. Vincent's rapid conquest (his name meaning *the conqueror* (42)) of April (and her class), and her sudden pregnancy accelerate their marriage and settlement in London. A few weeks later, Vincent's sister Maddie informs him of their father's death and imminent funeral. This tragic event turns out to be very grotesque with both siblings adopting patronising attitudes towards the rest of the family who, like them, are working-class.

One day, the Police discover information implicating Vincent's involvement in a fraudulent note forgery business and his complicity in the death of Tandish, a government agent assassinated by Vincent's friend Halvorsen a few days earlier. The story appears in the newspaper, and April reads it with amazement. Vincent feels repentant, and asks his wife for forgiveness, but April suffers a haemorrhage, leading to the loss of their baby and her eventual death. As a result, Vincent commits suicide.

In our view, this character's principles of conduct are very curious. This Englishman with fascist sympathies, disguised as a cultivated 'gentleman', looks, talks and *behaves* as such, while his social encounters are motivated by working-class ideals, such as money and the possession of high social standing. Bearing in mind Foa's and Foa's assumptions (1974) about *manipulative behaviour*, we maintain that Vincent behaves both as a *flatterer* and, to a larger degree, as an *ingratiator* in his social interactions.<sup>1</sup> Vincent aims to attain social approval (and, thus, achieve certain privileges) in order to exert power on his fellow men. However, he ends up behaving in this slanted way even with his wife, relatives and friends, and people belonging to the same class. Vincent flatters his wife April because he likes her sex and, above all, her money, and he is often proud of his cunning, since this helps him improve his social

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<sup>1</sup> Some critics confuse the term *ingratiation* with *flattery*. Foa and Foa (1974:252-254) base their assumptions about ingratiation on Jones' work (1964:11), where the scholar uses these two terms differently. Thus, *flattery* refers to the situation in which "the securing of attraction is less important than the securing of benefit, and when over-generous praise is especially involved"; *ingratiation* "is a class of strategic behaviours illicitly designed to influence a particular other person concerning the attractiveness of one's personal qualities". Both *flattery* and *cunning* are rejected throughout Lewis's critical production recurrently. The artist refers to these two notions, when he comments on the behaviour of British civilians in *The Vulgar Streak*. It is not strange that we observe a large number of illustrations of both types of illegitimate behaviour in *The Vulgar Streak*.

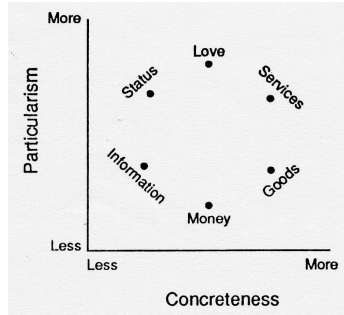
standing. As he says: "If I am able to deceive people that elates me" (30). Consequently, Vincent likes not only to flatter but also to plot, manipulate, and deceive April, his friends, his in-laws and relatives, and other people. Vincent's aim is to obtain social approval, since this is the only thing that will ultimately furnish him with financial standing in his fictional world. Nonetheless, the tactical ploys utilised by Vincent as instruments of power show only the erosion and deflection of such power.

## 2. Relevance of Resource Theory

The significance of Resource Theory in studying these aspects of *The Vulgar Streak* lies in the fact that it is an integrated methodological tool for understanding social behaviour and the relationships conformed between individuals in everyday life. This methodology is based on the idea that people depend on one another for the material and psychological resources necessary for their well being, which drives them to associate and exchange these two different resource types through interpersonal behaviour. Foa and Foa (1974:36) define a resource as "any commodity, material or symbolic, which is transmitted through interpersonal behaviour". To carry out this research on social interactions, they give meaning to behaviour, and then, class together those behaviours with similar meaning. In this way, they (Foa 1971, quoted in Converse *et al* 1993:15) differentiate the six basic dimensions of their resources structure classified as rewards and punishments according to six categories: love, status, information, money, goods and services. As a result, the location of each resource class according to its degree of *particularism* and *concreteness* produces the following structure of resources:<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> According to Foa (1971), quoted in Converse *et al* 1993:16), the attribute of *particularism* indicates the extent to which the value of a given resource depends upon the individuals involved in the exchange, and their relationship. Love is a highly *particularistic* resource since we tend to be highly selective when choosing a person with whom to exchange tokens of love. In contrast, money is the least *particularistic* resource because, in general, it matters very little with whom we exchange it, and of all the resources, money is most likely to retain the same value regardless of the relation between the agent and recipient. Services and status are less *particularistic* than love but more *particularistic* than goods and information. The notion of *particularism* is formerly explained by Parsons (1951), Longabaugh (1966) and Blau (1967); Foa (1976:80) applies this notion in order to construct his Resource Theory framework. The attribute of *concreteness* ranges from concrete to symbolic. Services and goods involve the exchange of some tangible activity or product and are classed as concrete. Status and information, on the other hand, are typically conveyed by verbal or paralinguistic behaviour and are thus more symbolic. Love and money are exchanged in both concrete and symbolic forms, occupying an intermediate position on this co-ordinate.



The Cognitive structure of resource classes.

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These principles concerning interpersonal behaviour and resource categories imply that every interpersonal attitude consists of giving and/or taking away one or more resources. According to Foa and Foa (1974), resource exchanges provide the means by which individuals can obtain their needed resources and, consequently, satisfaction in distinct settings. In this regard, their resources structure provides a framework for the systematic classification of interpersonal behaviour. This is why we consider Resource Theory to be more than adequate for describing the distorted significance of Vincent's social attitude and interactions in *The Vulgar Streak*.

Lewis's scholars have never considered *The Vulgar Streak* as one of the writer's masterpieces. In fact, some of his most well known critics, such as Symons (1969) or Edwards (quoted in Lewis 1985), have rightly suggested that this popular novel has many faults. Lewis's early naïve support of Fascism leads him to bankruptcy. Thus, he feels forced to gain some money quickly. As a result, he writes *The Vulgar Streak* in a rush. Nonetheless, his later disappointment with Fascism drives Lewis to condemn the use of force, power, and corruption for its own sake, or as a means to fulfil one's selfish interests in *The Vulgar Streak*.<sup>3</sup> In this

<sup>3</sup> Biographer Meyers (1982:186) puts this situation well: "Fascist ideology was designed to attract the lower middle classes who were disillusioned by the post-war world, angered by social disorder, industrial stagnation, chronic unemployment and the collapse of currency, fearful of communism and hostile to traditional political parties. Though Lewis was educated and elitist, he shared all these political attitudes as well as a lower middle class income, and was anxiously concerned about how he would earn enough to live on. Because Fascism seemed to offer a stable society governed by a romantic leader who stopped decadence, guaranteed peace by opposing Communism, aestheticized politics and promised respect and rewards for the artist, it attracted an entire generation of modern writers who were radical in their literary technique but drawn to the new totalitarian politics. [...] Despite (Lewis's) genius, which may have led (him) to create an imaginative political ideal to replace crude reality, (he) failed to understand the most significant political issues of (his) time".

sense, we consider that its anti-war and didactic social spirit deserves some special attention for various reasons. First, the novel reflects the narrator's imperative desire to portray certain irregularities in contemporary government institutions and the British class-structure within society. Second, largely through one-sided satirical techniques, it describes the ways in which Western society took many of the aforementioned irregularities for granted at that time. Third, it shows Lewis's helpless effort to recreate the destructive effects of Fascism and war on Western civilization.<sup>4</sup> Due to all these facts, it is our aim to analyse Vincent's ingratiatory conduct and biased commodity transactions in an attempt to throw some new light on certain sociological facts and implications recreated in this fictional work which have not been previously studied by Lewis's critics. As a result, this study illuminates two facts: on the one hand, the idiosyncratic portrait of the world and human relationships in *The Vulgar Streak*. On the other, the fact that Lewis's radical techniques constitute his own method of recreating and condemning the negative effects of the extreme degree of illegitimacy approved by the State, government institutions and society in his time, rather than an example of his bias.<sup>5</sup>

### 3. *The Vulgar Streak*: a resource theory analysis

One of the main reasons why Vincent deceives himself into believing that he conducts himself in strategic ways is the generalised class-discrimination spirit that exists in Britain. This character wishes to modify the current class-structure in his country since its State

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<sup>4</sup> Lewis writes various *anti-war* books such as *Left Wings Over Europe: Or, How to Make a War about Nothing* (1936) and *Count Your Dead: They Are Alive! Or, a New War in the Making* (1937) in this period. Here he shows the irrationality of the arguments used by those who tried to instil in people's minds the positive aspects of going through World War II. Concerning this issue, we support Head (1992:15), when the scholar posits that "Lewis's books have often been dismissed by his critics as profascist apologetics" in an unjustifiable manner. In this regard, this paper attempts to show that Lewis is against the use of force and violence for its own sake, or as a means to attain pragmatic and destructive objectives in *The Vulgar Streak*. Thus, his recurrent portrait of aggressive human behaviour and relationships throughout his fiction is a radical technique used by him to illustrate their loathsome effects on society's functioning.

<sup>5</sup> Following Corbett (1998) and other excellent critics such as Edwards, Munton, Normand, Hardegen, and Wragg, we believe that arguments of critics like Trotter, Julius, Ryan, Gilbert, Foster, Scott, Blair, Mengham, O'Connor, Stevie Smith or Hewitt do not often follow a correct logic, because they usually distort and manipulate quotations from the work of the writer in order to suit their particular interests. Thus, far from illuminating the production of Lewis, the last scholars describe him and his work in very unfair ways. Contrarily, we consider that certain aspects of Lewis' production such as its distorted social images must be studied within a historical perspective.

intervention economy only causes “misery and injustice” (182) to its less privileged segments and makes class-circulation in society impossible. This skewed principle, which conditions his actions and social encounters throughout the novel, affects to a large extent the view he has of himself, life, and people in general. As a result, he is driven by a compulsive desire to attain social standing (status) and to enjoy a life of pleasure and privilege (money). However, this obsession causes him to experience pathological disorders such as anxiety, frustration, and desire of retaliation (aggression), and leads him to indulge in ingratiatory practices and to try to exert power on his own species in his daily encounters.

Vincent experiences anxiety because he expects to receive concrete resources such as money and goods from his wife April and his mother-in-law Ms. Mallow, yet he is aware that the latter is suspicious of him and so he could lose this kind of resources at any time.<sup>6</sup> Vincent also feels frustrated because he considers that he is deprived of his expected resources by the middle and upper classes.<sup>7</sup> His disappointment stems from the fact that he has lost concrete resources and has been left with an amount that is below the minimum level. Thus, this perceived resource deficiency produces frustration in him. Furthermore, Vincent exerts aggression on several characters in the novel by inflicting the loss of some resource on them. He can be said to behave in an aggressive manner towards them because his acts are intentional and socially disapproved. Both of these elements introduce love deprivation into his aggressive acts, in addition to the specific resource involved and, thus, strengthen the effect of loss in his victims. Finally, Vincent considers that his fellow men possess power since they have more than a minimum amount of one or more resources and can, therefore, give these resources to others in exchange for resources possessed by them. Since Vincent is in need of concrete resources, he believes that the rest of characters exert power in various resources on him.<sup>8</sup>

Apart from these facts, we observe that the political and socio-economic circumstances of the stately urban environment of London,

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<sup>6</sup> See Foa's and Foa's (1974: 366-369) re-definition of *anxiety*.

<sup>7</sup> Foa and Foa (1974: 220-240) also conceptualise the *frustration-aggression* sequence as a type of resource exchange.

<sup>8</sup> See Cartwright & Zander (1968:216-217). These facts imply that there is a reciprocal relationship between *need* and *power*.

where *The Vulgar Streak* evolves, have enormous importance in defining the idiosyncrasy of Vincent's interpersonal attitude and relationships with other characters in the novel. This environmental situation promotes the transaction of concrete commodities, while disregarding *particularistic* ones. As Vincent says: "We should keep away from the cities. [...] I shouldn't wonder if all our troubles come from the monster cities" (10). In fact, the circumstances of this civilian *milieu* and the lack of social control effective instruments facilitate two phenomena. In the first place, the appearance of negative money, information and status transactions in some of its less privileged members like Vincent, his sister Maddie, and his friend Halvorsen. These three characters behave in this aggressive manner motivated by the extreme competition, jealousy, and hatred that exist between members of the same and different social and financial status. According to Vincent, these facts are not strange at all since the violation of social norms by high-class members has little effect as deterrent in this large city, while authorities punish regulation misuse severely when underprivileged members perform it. This is why he states that there is "One law for the Rich -One for the Poor. You can't escape from facts" (210) in his country.

In the second place, these external circumstances cause the State and its citizenship to accept an extreme degree of illicit human practices (disguised as democratic) as social norms. For example, Vincent's friend Halvorsen hates "the social order, as it exists" in Britain, and has a money theory: the State subjugates working-class members. Therefore, he considers that defrauding the current social order by counterfeiting money is not illegitimate but "a highly moral act". Here is Halvorsen speaking:

The modern state is based upon organized-*legalized*-Fraud [...] to counterfeit its fraudulent and oppressively administered currency [...] an act of poetic justice. (213)

At the same time, all these facts account for a large number of unsavoury aspects of civilian life: first, Halvorsen's alienation and criminal instinct; second, Vincent's mother's drug abuse; and, third, the latter's suicide. The socio-economic circumstances of this metropolitan area do not appear to fulfil Vincent and Halvorsen's expectations satisfactorily. Thus, the latter does not see his function in society adequately respected or appreciated by the State and society's larger segments. On the contrary, Halvorsen believes that the State promotes

the class structure system in his country, that is, a system that only favours a few social groups: upper and middle classes. Halvorsen experiences his shortage of *particularistic* resources like status, and of concrete commodities like money and goods as estrangement. This is why he is unable to find self-gratifying activities in society that engage him sufficiently, that is, the main sources of his existential predicament. This is why Halvorsen opts to be out of society, and involves himself and his friend Vincent in illicit practices such as note forgery. As a result, these two characters conduct themselves as real misanthropes or outlaws throughout the novel.

What is more, Vincent's mother spends her husband's pension on alcohol. This fact usually causes her to wander about the streets. Consequently, the Police often brings her home in a very bad state of health, something that is very degrading to her daughter Maddie ("It's so humiliating, Vincent!" (168)). Finally, Vincent commits suicide right after he realises that his wife has died because of his enormous cynicism.<sup>9</sup> This is why he leaves a paper pinned upon his chest reading:

WHOEVER FINDS THE BODY,  
MAY DO WHAT THEY LIKE WITH IT.  
I DON'T WANT IT.  
*Signed.* ITS FORMER INHABITANT. (230)

Thus, environmental circumstances in this large metropolitan area contribute to the unhappiness, low self-esteem and welfare and the unsatisfactory quality of life of Society's less privileged segments to a very large extent. The members of these underprivileged social layers share the feeling of being oppressed and exploited by the State, its institutions and representatives, and its privileged classes. This is why this fact plays such an important part in turning out their interpersonal behaviour to be one-sided in form, and their human relationships to be distorted in meaning. It is not strange that the overall interpersonal behaviour of Lewis's characters in *The Vulgar Streak* is inherently

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<sup>9</sup> We think that Vincent's suicide stems from the lack of moral rules in the society in which he inhabits. Concerning *suicide*, we find that Durkheim's (views clarify our assumptions. The sociologist 1967:164) considers that 'anomic suicide' has its origin in the characteristics of large sectors of modern industry, where the function of severe punishment in society is not considered to be very necessary, yet this is an important factor that permits the attainment of social unity. In fact, the need of such unity is something that Lewis calls attention to in this novel by throwing into prominence or representing its lack in it.



aggressive. Furthermore, social relationships are conflicting, superficial, and, often, unorthodox in nature. The need for social acceptance and personal significance is very high. However, interdependence and cooperation between members of both the same and different class and gender are very scarce.

Within this context, Vincent's wife April is a unique character, which reflects the positive side of human relations in *The Vulgar Streak*. Contrary to the rest of characters, the interpersonal attitude and resource transactions of April with her species are motivated by principles such as kindness and altruism in all types of settings. Thus, April is "in love" with Vincent and she trades resources with him determined by selfless love and communion only to gain intrinsic satisfaction and reward. In doing so, April is the only character who *says* she loves him and *means* it.

Naturally, this view of love is in considerable contrast with that of Vincent. His interpersonal behaviour and resource exchanges with her are determined by values that are egotistic, opportunistic, and deceitful in nature, and, above all, anchored in the exchange of rewards. In other words, he behaves towards her and other characters in the novel as if he were an ambitious businessman making deals with other businessmen in a market setting.<sup>10</sup>

#### **4. Resource Theory impact on the fictional population of *The Vulgar Streak***

The study of the interpersonal behaviour and relationships performed by Vincent (and Maddie and Halvorsen *passim*) in *The Vulgar Streak* shows that Lewis makes use of the real satirist's scorn to condemn the extreme degree of hypocrisy, aggression, and illegitimacy that were prevalent in British society and institutions during the period between the two wars. Lewis does so by illustrating the forms and guises of this character's unorthodox tactics, the antecedents of such strategies, the

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<sup>10</sup> Throughout his work, biographer Meyers (1982) states that April (like Margot in *Revenge for Love*, Hester in *Self-Condemed* and Mary Chillingham in *The Red Priest*) is characterised by extreme kindness. These four female characters are tributes to Lewis' wife Froanna, who took care of Lewis while he was sick, and remained by his side, despite his always difficult and iced personality.

external conditions that favour their practices and their loathsome implications for social relationships.<sup>11</sup>

*The Vulgar Streak* represents the seedy side of human relations, where a character like Vincent trades commodities directed toward objectives not contained in the implicit contract that underlies his behaviour and social interactions. In support of this view, we make Chapman's (1973: 134-135) words ours. Lewis shows "the socially acceptable means of escaping from the restrictions of working class culture" in a time in which "traditional normative and moral standards" were "in a process of disintegration".

Following the social scientist Blau (1967), we consider that big social changes, which benefit many segments of society, need to be originated in face-to-face social exchanges that are equitable, and above all, licit in nature, that is, like those performed by April in *The Vulgar Streak*. Otherwise imbalances emerge and these, in turn, give origin to power struggles, which transform into greater power struggles with increased opposition at a superior level. Since the resource exchanges Vincent performs to attain his needed commodities are not legitimate in meaning, they indirectly produce an imbalance of power and much dissatisfaction for the other participants involved. As a result, Vincent neither contributes any instrument to improve his own welfare, happiness, and "quality of life", nor those of the participants with whom he interacts. On the contrary, Vincent behaves like a cynic causing extreme human suffering to his wife April, who loves him selflessly, and to his sister Maddie, who has constructed her personality following his advice.<sup>12</sup> In this regard, Vincent does not provide any constructive instrument to reorganise Britain's illegitimate institutions, social structures and organizations as he wishes. Far from this, his resource exchanges in face-to-face interactions both in *particularistic* and in *non-particularistic* contexts are illicit in nature as well.

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<sup>11</sup> These assumptions are not characteristic of *The Vulgar Streak* exclusively. They can be applied to novels such as *Snooty Baronet* and *The Revenge for Love* as well. As Chapman (1973:134) suggests: "where *Revenge for Love* exposes the sham politics of the class-war *The Vulgar Streak* explores through the medium of Vincent's experience the social snobberies and tensions inherent in British society".

<sup>12</sup> We agree with Chapman (1973:136) when the critic says: "Just as Vincent created his self, so, indirectly, has he created Maddie [...] Her modelling is a more passive form of counterfeit, but equally destructive of self. [...] At the end of the novel, Maddie is still modelling and using her beauty to attract a man. In spite of Vincent's recognition of the hollowness of the pursuit, nothing has changed: the class trap still forces Maddie into this passive fraud".

Vincent aims to perfect society's deficiencies. Nonetheless, this brief study of his interpersonal conduct and relationships from a Resource Theory perspective has shown that he should co-operate with his own species if he really wishes to gain collective goals and to eradicate human distress and oppression. Since Vincent does not behave in this particular manner at all, he could be said to be one more victim of the Capitalist Establishment, and its individualistic ideology and values. Thus, Vincent's self-interests betray his social motivations, and lead him to use all types of ingratiatory strategies and to exert aggression and power on his fellow men in all kinds of settings. As a result, Lewis succeeds in satirically reflecting all of these social implications, and in making Vincent conduct a positive act as well. In other words, he forces his audience to reconsider that new forms of social reorganisation were extremely urgent in order to attain more happiness and the betterment of life for all of its members, and to preserve the species. Perhaps, April's altruistic patterns of conduct and values are in the novel to show us the means to achieve so in real life.

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**THE AMBIVALENCE OF (IN)HUMANITY IN A  
CLASSICAL AND MODERN VERSION OF  
THE BEAST-FABLE: JONATHAN SWIFT'S A VOYAGE  
TO THE COUNTRY OF THE HOUYHNNMS  
AND BERNARD MALAMUD'S "TALKING HORSE"**

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**Abstract**

*This paper explores the intricate ways in which both Jonathan Swift and Bernard Malamud (who draws from Part Four of the acclaimed Gulliver's Travels as one source for his 1970s story) reelaborate, reinterpret and subvert notions of humanity and inhumanity in A Voyage to the Country of the Houyhnhnms (Gulliver's Travels, 1726) and in the tale "Talking horse" (1972), fantastic fictional pieces which share the pattern of a role reversal between equine and human characters and characterizations. Proceeding from this common basis, the aim of this comparative study will be to research Swift's and Malamud's common reflections on the (in)human condition through these portrayals, and also to outline how the two authors differ in their metaphoric representations of a theme which originally dates back to the medieval beast-fable tradition.*

The fourth part of *Gulliver's Travels*, the much debated *Voyage to the Country of the Houyhnhnms*, has become distinguished, throughout two hundred and fifty years of critical evaluations, for the lack of unanimity as to Swift's ultimate meaning, particularly in connection

with the figure featured in its title (in Foster, 1968:121-3). It is without question, however, that of the four books which compose the *Travels*, it is only in this last one that Swift transcends the specific political, social, intellectual and scientific satires of the preceding three, and universalizes his scope to a deadly serious -albeit at times also controversially ironic- reflection on human nature.

In 1974 Jewish American author Bernard Malamud published his third volume of stories, *Rembrandt's Hat*, a collection of eight sombre and pessimistic tales which evidenced a radical departure from his earlier short fiction. The themes in *Rembrandt's Hat* highlight dark views of the self, such as madness or related psychological disorders, incommunicability and isolation, or the oppression and victimization of the Other. This last theme is at the core of the closing story of the collection, "Talking Horse", a story which, in the fashion of Swift's Part Four in relation to the *Travels*, seems to somehow recap and transcend the more specific situations presented in the preceding tales, by universalizing and translating human relationships into a mythic context. "Talking Horse" narrates the tragic life of the rational, sensitive "talking horse" Abramowitz who is enslaved by a strangely deficient human being, the cruel Goldberg, a deaf-mute who uses him in a circus act to earn their living. Needless to say, already for the generic basis of the story, i.e. the role reversal of man and horse, Malamud had in mind Swift's Part Four, where the Irish writer "turned the logic-book definition of 'man' as *animal rationale* and of horse as *animal irrationale* upside down and made the horses reasonable creatures" (Schakel, 1988:34), a definition which also holds true for "Talking Horse." Stemming from this common beast-fable layout, there are various specific themes from a *Voyage to the Country of the Houyhnhnms* which Malamud reelaborates on in "Talking Horse". It is my purpose in this paper to talk about one of these themes, which is central both to Swift's classical work and to Malamud's modern tale: the ambivalent terms in which the notions of humanity and inhumanity, in the various literal and figured implications of the terms, are posited in both works.

In chapter five of *A Voyage to the Country of the Houyhnhnms*, Gulliver is interrupted in his detailed narration of humankind's inclination towards evil by the unbelieving master Houyhnhnm in these terms:

I was going on to more particulars, when my master commanded me silence. He said whoever understood the nature of Yahoos might easily believe it possible for so vile an animal to be capable of every action I had named, if their strength and cunning equalled their malice. ... That although he hated the Yahoos of this country, yet he no more blamed them for their odious qualities, than he did a *ginnayh* (a bird of prey) for its cruelty, or a sharp stone for cutting his hoof. But when a creature pretending to reason could be capable of such enormities, he dreaded lest the corruption of that faculty might be worse than the brutality itself. (Swift, *Gulliver's Travels* 235-6)

The Houyhnhnm's vision of humanity accurately defines, on the binary scale of Malamud's fantastic story, Goldberg's attitude to, and treatment of Abramowitz. Throughout the story, Goldberg denies the "talking horse" Abramowitz all knowledge as to his true nature, threatening and punishing him for his curiosity. The pattern of Abramowitz's queries on this subject and Goldberg's verbal or physical violence as only answer conforms a recurrent *leitmotif* in "Talking Horse". As in Part Four of the *Travels*, where Swift satirizes the human addiction to alcoholism by alluding to the Yahoos' fondness for "a kind of root very juicy ... [which] would make them ... sometimes tear one another" (Swift, *Gulliver's Travels* 247), in Malamud's story Goldberg's violence toward Abramowitz is often related to his being drunk (Malamud, *Rembrandt's Hat* 169/184). Malamud graphically highlights Goldberg's threats and admonitions, delivered in Morse-code on the horse's flanks, with the use of capital letters: "NO QUESTIONS. UNDERSTOOD?"; "DON'T DARE ASK"; "NO MORE QUESTIONS"; "I'LL FLAY YOU ALIVE, YOU BASTARD HORSE"; "YOU KNOW WHAT A GELDING IS?" (Malamud, *Rembrandt's Hat* 166, 168, 171, 172, 174). I will get back to the deeper significance of this mode of communication in due time.

Particularly illustrative of the Houyhnhnm's comment, regarding the link between human reason and violence, that "... he dreaded lest the corruption of that faculty might be worse than the brutality itself" (Swift, *Gulliver's Travels* 236) is Abramowitz's reflection, early in the story, that he fears more Goldberg's threats than his actual savagery:

There's usually plenty of oats and straw and water, ... but otherwise it's one threat or another, followed by a flash of pain if I don't get something or other right, or something I say hits him on his nerves. It's not only the cane that slashes like a whip; his threats have the same effect -like a zing-zong of lightning through the flesh; in fact the blow hurts less than the threat- the blow's

momentary, the threat you worry about. (Malamud, *Rembrandt's Hat* 165-6)

More than the violence itself, what alarms Abramowitz is its deliberate and premeditated quality, implicit in Goldberg's acts of threatening. Similarly, the Houyhnhnm justifies the behaviour of the Yahoos in that it is instinctive, and thus unavoidable, unlike the human violence Gulliver reports. The underlying rational element of human violence -'the corruption of th[e] faculty'- confers it the evil character which both the Houyhnhnm and the talking horse dread. In Malamud's story, the "corrupt rationality" of Goldberg's violence is, for Abramowitz, largely embodied in his threats. As Frye (1968:217) noted in his reading of Christian symbols in Swift's Part Four, "the corruption of reason is far more culpable than the absence of it; by perverting his reason, man becomes far more contemptible than a brute beast". Both works ironically underscore the paradoxical inadequacy of the term "inhumanity" in that it identifies the lack of certain ethics as a notion alien to humankind when, by definition, this lack is only attributable to our species: "Swift [like Malamud in "Talking Horse"] leaves us in Part Four with confirmation of a logical tautology: because we are human we are open to dehumanization" (In Fox, 1995:393).

At the end of Gulliver's account in chapter VII, the Houyhnhnm pronounces the following verdict on human nature, attempting to elucidate the incompatibility of inhumanity with rationality:

... he said he had been very seriously considering my whole story; that he looked upon us as a sort of animal to whose share ... some small pittance of *reason* had fallen, whereof we made no other use than by its assistance to aggravate our *natural* corruptions, and to acquire new ones which Nature had not given us. (Swift, *Gulliver's Travels* 245)

This outline of humankind is interesting in that it corresponds very accurately to the psychological profile of Goldberg in "Talking Horse". Indeed, it is not only the language handicap that characterizes Goldberg, but also his portrayal as a mentally retarded, "incomplete" human being, "a sort of animal to whose share ... some small pittance of *reason* had fallen" (Swift, *Gulliver's Travels* 245):

[Goldberg] has his mysteries ... Sometimes he goes down the cellar with an old candle and comes up with a new one though we have electric lights ... He doesn't seem interested in women but sees to it that Abramowitz gets his chance at a mare in heat, ... Goldberg



applauds when Abramowitz mounts her, which is humiliating ... He also likes to read the *Daily News*, which he tears up when he's done. Sometimes he reads this book he hides in the closet under some old hats. If the book doesn't make him laugh outright it makes him cry. When he gets excited over something he's reading in his fat book, his eyes roll, his mouth gets wet, and he tries to talk through his thick tongue ... (Malamud, *Rembrandt's Hat* 168-9)

This portrayal of Goldberg is interesting for other reasons also connected to the theme of inhumanity. Modes of communication and language are essential issues both in Malamud's story and Swift's Part Four. Goldberg's being able to read but not to speak seems linked to his deficient humanity in ethical terms, if we assume that Malamud adopts Swift's perspective in Part Four. In a 1980 deconstructive analysis of Swift's work, critic Castle (1995:379-95) perceptively traced the connection of written texts with corrupt, degenerate, or evil values throughout Swift's earlier fiction (*A Tale of a Tub*, *The Battle of the Books*) up to *Gulliver's Travels* itself, where textuality is instrumental in the satire of the corrupt Lilliputians and ridiculous Laputans in Books One and Three. On arriving at Part Four, Castle notes that:

The pattern of grammaphobia in *Gulliver's Travels* conditions the appalling problem that confronts the reader in Part Four. Houyhnhnm society is pure to the extent that it is free from textuality. It is a naturalized society. The Houyhnhnms are bound by a community of the voice; they are bound by a language of pure sound, the neigh ... Swift queers the pleasant resolution of the grammaphobic situation (the escape to a Platonic utopia), however, by one simple and ludicrous transformation. The residents in Utopia are not human. By virtue of the essential difference between Houyhnhnm and human, the naturalized society is not, and can never be, our own ... Thus the satirist's examination of textuality takes its most damning turn. The Houyhnhnms may be textless -and thus admirable- but they are not men and women. For humankind, Swift suggests, the text is *inevitable*. It is already there. The evil text and human presence constitute an inseparable unit in the world. (Castle, 1995:392-3)

This very pattern also seems to apply to the characters in "Talking Horse". The human oppressor, Goldberg, reads the *Daily News* and reads extracts from the enigmatic "fat book", possibly a Sacred Text.<sup>1</sup> The fact

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<sup>1</sup> Cf. Burch and Burch's (1979:350-353) thought-provoking analysis of Goldberg as a God-like figure.

that he hides the book from Abramowitz and tears up the papers after reading them suggests that Goldberg is aware of the potential power of textuality and thus of the need to deny Abramowitz access to texts which may render his enslavement more difficult. What is even more interesting, however, is that the way Goldberg employs to instruct, warn, or threaten Abramowitz, by tapping Morse code signs on his flanks, is a written mode rather than an oral one. Goldberg actually *writes* (on) Abramowitz: his hands literally deliver the oppressive text upon the horse's body. Furthermore, this oppressive text, which generally consists of threats and warnings (as quoted before) is orthographically highlighted by Malamud's capitalizing of all its letters, thus marking the contrast between the oral naturalized speech of the enslaved horse and the written repressive language of the enslaving master. In addition, this evil vision of the text is conversely reinforced by a significant feature, also common to the two works: both the Houyhnhnms and Abramowitz share a penchant for poetry (Swift, *Gulliver's Travels* 257; Malamud, *Rembrandt's Hat* 178/186), which is the oral genre by definition and, canonically, the closest to intimate truths, feelings and beauty.

I would like to conclude by pointing out a further, not so manifest aspect also common to both works, which is related to humanity in a more literal sense: the hybridity of its protagonists, Abramowitz and Gulliver. In a classical essay on the pervasiveness of satire in Part Four of *Gulliver's Travels*, critic John Ross pointed out that

[Swift] sharply cuts human nature into two parts. He gives reason and benevolence to the Houyhnhnms. Unrestrained and selfish appetites, and a mere brutish awareness, are left for the Yahoo. Since he is writing satire rather than panegyric, the good qualities are given the nonhuman form of the horse, and the bad qualities the nearly human form of the Yahoo. (Ross, 1968:131)

Given this make-up of Yahoos and Houyhnhnms as the two complementary aspects of human nature, Gulliver's humanity in Swift's fantastic world renders him a hybrid being, physically akin to the Yahoos but mentally closer to the Houyhnhnms. In Malamud's story, Abramowitz suspects his nature to be human rather than equine, but the astonishing ending of the story posits an unexpected intermediate possibility:

Confronting Goldberg ... , [Abramowitz] reared with a bray of rage, to bring his hoofs down on the owner's head. Goldberg, seeing him out of the corner of his eye, rose to protect himself. Instantly jumping up on the chair, he managed to grab Abramowitz

by both big ears as though to lift him by them, and the horse's head and neck, up to an old wound, came off in his hands. Amid the stench of blood and bowel, a man's pale head popped out of the hole in the horse. He was in his early forties, with fogged pince-nez, intense dark eyes, and a black mustache. Pulling his arms free, he grabbed Goldberg around his thick neck with both bare arms and held on for dear life. As they tugged and struggled, Abramowitz, straining to the point of madness, slowly pulled himself out of the horse up to his navel. At that moment Goldberg broke his frantic grip and ... disappeared ...

Departing the circus grounds he cantered across a grassy soft field into a dark wood, a free centaur. (Malamud, *Rembrandt's Hat* 190; ending of story)

Abramowitz's freedom finally entails his rebirth as a centaur, a hybrid being: like Gulliver in Houyhnhnmland but, to a more literal degree, Abramowitz becomes also half-horse, half-man. On the other hand, Malamud's description of the final struggle has its ambiguities. As critic Solotaroff (1989: 131) interestingly notes, there is a clear suggestion that,

... if only Goldberg had not run away when he did, the human who was suffering the weirdest of the many imprisonments in Malamud's fiction might have pulled himself all the way out and avoided the new organization of man and horse.

So Abramowitz may be a free centaur, but he may also be only a partially liberated man. He may be both: "... the figure of the centaur as an ambivalent creature is an ironically superb solution to Abramowitz's dilemma of looking like a horse and feeling like a man" (Urdiales, 1999:507). Yet what Malamud is highlighting is that his newfound freedom -partial or otherwise- is inextricably linked to the adoption of this hybrid mythical identity. Abramowitz's hybridity is thus defined not only in spiritual terms throughout the story, but finally also in physical terms, as the duality implicit in the figure of the mythic centaur in a realistic environment. Gulliver's hybridity is defined inwardly, by attributing rationality to a humanoid figure in a mythic environment where only horses are capable of rational thought and the humanoids -the Yahoos- are *animales irracionales*. But in spite of these differences in terms of genre, the protagonists' hybridities, as regards the humanity/non-humanity issue, are defined in analogous terms in the two works.

Both Swift in Part Four of *Gulliver's Travels* and Malamud in "Talking Horse", employ the figures of man and horse as a subversion of

the concept of humanity, not only literally, but also in the ethical and psychological connotations of the term: Gulliver's grim vision of humankind, the Yahoos as degenerate humans, and the despotic, decadent, and limited Goldberg embody visions of inhumanity or of deficient humanity in a variety of ways discussed here. The theme of language, specifically in relation to the opposition between speech and the written word, is a relevant theme which both authors relate, in very similar terms, to the (in)humanity of their characters.

Conversely, the "horses" are distinguished by traits canonically linked to humanity, although not in exactly the same terms: while Abramowitz is endowed with both reason and feeling, the Houyhnhnms are only guided by reason. But this, of course, is to be explained by the last idea this paper has explored: Abramowitz's nature as a centaur is eventually a hybrid identity. Unlike the Houyhnhnms and unlike Goldberg, he has both the best in man and the best in horse. His hybridity will bring about his freedom, conversely to Gulliver's, which only brings him banishment from the Houyhnhnmland "utopia." But, of course, Swift's satire is unrelenting and Gulliver, in his exaggerated devotion for the rational horses, also becomes the Dean's target in Part Four, as 20th century criticism has gradually come to realize: Houyhnhnmland is, after all, not much of a utopia, and Gulliver's reluctant return among his own kind is, in more ways than one, an "act of humanity."

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## *Book Reviews*





**Ramón L. Fernández y Suárez e Isidro Almendárez  
López, 1994. *A Guide to Legal English.*  
*Inglés para juristas.* Madrid: Síntesis, 207 páginas.**

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De las distintas variedades de ESP (*English for Specific Purposes*), el inglés jurídico es, sin duda alguna, la que ha recibido menos atención, lo que se evidencia en la escasez de materiales didácticos (libros de texto y materiales audiovisuales, entre otros) y trabajos de investigación. A esto hay que sumar el hecho de que el profesor ha de familiarizarse con los contenidos propios de este campo de especialidad, aspecto que favorece la lectura y la comprensión de los textos, así como la circunstancia de que la enseñanza de inglés jurídico como lengua extranjera en la etapa universitaria es poco frecuente. Todo ello, obviamente, dificulta la enseñanza de esta variedad de ESP.

Los manuales *English for Law* (Riley, 1997), *Law Today* (Powell, 1993) y *English Law and Language. An Introduction for Students of English* (Russell & Locke, 1995) representan la única oferta editorial en el campo de la enseñanza de inglés jurídico como lengua extranjera, aparte de *A Guide to Legal English* (Fernández & Almendárez, 1994) y *Test Your Professional English. Law* (Brieger, 2002). Sin embargo, los tres manuales señalados en primer lugar no son sino recopilaciones de textos de temática jurídica procedentes de libros de derecho. Se centran en cuestiones gramaticales, ejercicios de vocabulario y actividades que introducen algunas de las estrategias de lectura. Sin embargo, no presentan una selección exhaustiva de los aspectos gramaticales que

tienen un carácter recurrente en los textos que son centro de análisis, tampoco prestan atención a los mecanismos básicos para la deducción y la adquisición de vocabulario ni a las estrategias de lectura intensiva y extensiva necesarias para enfrentarse a los textos que se presentan. A todo ello hay que añadir que no se contemplan actividades de escritura ni de comprensión y expresión orales. No obstante, estos manuales resultan útiles siempre que se utilicen como bancos de material para seleccionar textos y extraer ideas para el diseño de actividades.

Por ello *A Guide to Legal English. Inglés para juristas* (Fernández & Almendárez, 1994) tiene un carácter novedoso aun a pesar de no ser una publicación reciente. Es uno de los pocos manuales que puede considerarse como material didáctico de inglés jurídico, razón por la que puede resultar útil como libro de texto para alumnos de un nivel intermedio o avanzado.

Consta de diez capítulos organizados temáticamente a partir de diferentes aspectos y campos del derecho (objetivos generales del Derecho, Derecho civil, Derecho penal, los profesionales del Derecho y la magistratura, Derecho internacional, los contratos y las empresas). Cada capítulo consta de tres a cinco secciones, las cuales responden igualmente a una organización temática. En términos generales, cada sección se inicia con la presentación de un texto de carácter divulgativo, si bien de forma progresiva se introducen documentos típicos del campo del Derecho (demanda por daños y perjuicios, demanda de divorcio y testamentos). Los textos se acompañan de una gran variedad de actividades, cuya dificultad presenta un carácter progresivo. A continuación, introducimos una breve revisión del tipo de actividades que se contemplan en este manual:

- a) Comprensión lectora -*comprehension check*<sup>1</sup> (identificación de la idea principal, respuestas verdadero/falso, localización de información específica, elección de la respuesta correcta entre varias, respuestas a preguntas a partir de una lectura extensiva y exhaustiva de los textos, justificación de referencias anafóricas y catafóricas, inclusión de frases originales del texto que en un principio fueron omitidas).

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<sup>1</sup> Se indica el término en inglés de cada una de las actividades y secciones con la finalidad de identificar las mismas en el manual que es centro de atención.

- b) Vocabulario *-focus on lexis-* (localización de sinónimos y antónimos en los textos a partir de los términos propuestos, explicación del significado de términos por medio del contexto, localización de términos o expresiones en los textos partiendo de definiciones, identificación de palabras que no pertenecen a un campo semántico determinado, formación de palabras, propuesta de términos en español a partir de sus equivalentes en inglés).
- c) Traducción de textos de diferente extensión *-translation-*, así como la identificación y localización en los textos de términos en inglés tomando como base sus equivalentes en español.
- d) Ejercicios en los que se han de completar huecos de un texto *-gap filler-*.
- e) Asociación de términos con ideas y definiciones *-matching-*.
- f) Comprensión oral *-listening-* (ejercicios de elección múltiple, respuestas verdadero/falso).
- g) Ejercicios que potencian la adquisición de conocimientos teóricos relacionados con el campo del Derecho *-information transfer-*.
- h) Actividades de *follow up* centradas en la puesta en común de ideas sobre aspectos que han sido centro de atención en los textos propuestos.
- i) Actividades que integran las destrezas de lectura y escritura.
- j) Escritura (resúmenes de textos que se han leído con anterioridad).

Además de estas actividades, se incluyen breves listados de vocabulario de términos o expresiones claves en los que se proporciona la entrada en español y la correspondiente en inglés *-key words-*. Asimismo, son frecuentes los crucigramas y las sopas de letras, que potencian la adquisición de vocabulario y la familiarización con la definición de términos del campo de especialidad. Cada capítulo concluye con consejos prácticos sobre cómo potenciar la destreza de la escritura en este campo *-developing legal writing skills-*, sección que resulta muy útil por diferentes razones. De una parte, la presentación formal de la misma en un cuadro y la utilización de distintos tipos de letra favorecen la lectura y la comprensión de los contenidos. De otra parte, su carácter esquemático, así como la consideración de aspectos lingüísticos y técnicas de planificación y organización de la escritura hacen de estas secciones un manual básico de escritura de la lengua inglesa con especial aplicación al campo del Derecho.

A pesar de que no se hace mención expresa a las distintas estrategias de lectura, las actividades propuestas al respecto determinan la aplicación tanto de estrategias de lectura intensiva como extensiva. Como se desprende de la descripción de este manual, se integran las cuatro destrezas lingüísticas y, como los autores de este trabajo señalan en un breve párrafo que precede el primero de los capítulos, la potenciación de la destreza de expresión oral se sustenta en la utilización de la lengua inglesa en la puesta en común de ideas y la realización de las distintas actividades (comprensión lectora a partir de la respuesta a preguntas de forma oral).

Si bien este manual resulta de gran utilidad, adolece de la falta de nociones teóricas de gramática sobre los rasgos distintivos y recurrentes del inglés jurídico, aspecto que resulta esencial en la enseñanza de inglés como lengua extranjera en general y en el campo de ESP en particular. En el caso concreto del inglés jurídico, las cuestiones gramaticales resultan imprescindibles porque esta variedad de inglés para fines específicos tiene unos rasgos característicos que dificultan la lectura y la comprensión de los textos y que suponen una desviación del inglés estándar. No obstante, en algunos capítulos se hacen unas breves observaciones de carácter gramatical *-grammar key-*, las cuales resultan útiles, a pesar de su escasez. En este sentido, se hace oportuno destacar que en ocasiones se incluyen nociones teóricas sobre vocabulario y gramática *-focus on language-*, que se acompañan de actividades para afianzar los conceptos teóricos que son centro de atención (formación de palabras, inversión sujeto y verbo, oraciones de relativo, verbos modales). Asimismo, las actividades de traducción resultan inapropiadas para alumnos de titulaciones como la Licenciatura en Derecho, dado el nivel de competencia lingüística que es necesario para llevar a cabo las mismas, si bien pueden ser idóneas para alumnos con una formación filológica o de traducción.

Este manual consta, además, de un apéndice que incluye las transcripciones de los textos utilizados para las actividades de comprensión oral, un glosario de términos con la definición de los mismos en inglés y las soluciones de los crucigramas.

Según todo lo señalado, *A Guide to Legal English. Inglés para juristas* es un manual que puede resultar muy útil como libro de texto en la enseñanza de inglés jurídico, ya que sus limitaciones son fácilmente

subsanables. En este sentido, sería de gran utilidad complementar este manual con materiales adicionales, entre los que destacamos el trabajo de Alcaraz Varó (2001<sup>5</sup>) por ser una referencia clave en lo que respecta a los aspectos gramaticales y léxicos que distinguen el inglés jurídico. Asimismo, sería conveniente extraer las cuestiones gramaticales que tienen un carácter recurrente en los textos que se presentan en cada capítulo y sugerir al alumno manuales de gramática para afianzar las mismas. Por último, sería oportuno ampliar las actividades de comprensión oral, para lo que pueden servir de modelo las actividades que se contemplan en los últimos capítulos de este manual.

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**Eroulla Demetriou y José Ruiz Mas, 2002.**  
***English Literature for Spanish Students.***  
**Benalmádena (Málaga): Caligrama, 285 páginas**

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Como anuncian los autores en la introducción de su obra, uno de los fines primordiales de esta publicación es familiarizar a los estudiantes que no son especialistas en el área de Filología Inglesa con la literatura y, a través de la lectura y el estudio de ésta, favorecer el aprendizaje de la gramática y del vocabulario. En un momento en el que la mayoría de los libros de texto tienden a enfocar la enseñanza de la lengua inglesa con una orientación eminentemente lingüística, Eroulla Demetriou y José Ruiz Mas han confeccionado una serie de unidades didácticas utilizando como soporte principal textos de literatura inglesa que hacen que el estudio de la lengua resulte más apasionante y atractivo, a la vez que posibilitan familiarizar a los estudiantes con aspectos fundamentales de la civilización, historia y cultura inglesas. Esta perspectiva está en la línea de ciertos postulados, muy defendidos en estudios recientes, que consideran que los recursos lingüísticos que aparecen tipificados en el discurso literario crean un nexo valioso para explorar las formas, estructuras y conceptos propios de la lengua inglesa (Simpson, 1997:2).

En total, la obra consta de siete unidades didácticas, cada una de las cuales aparece dividida en las siguientes secciones:

- Presentación de un texto literario
- Gramática
- Pronunciación
- Aspectos socio-culturales
- Reflexiones sobre aspectos lingüísticos

La primera unidad didáctica toma como punto de partida la literatura anglosajona, para pasar en la siguiente a estudiar la literatura inglesa de la Edad Media. Las unidades tercera y cuarta se centran en William Shakespeare, mientras que la quinta contempla la obra de Oscar Wilde. La unidad sexta se dedica a la poesía inglesa y, por último, la séptima tiene como tema principal el drama del siglo XX.

Aunque a simple vista pudiera parecer chocante que no aparezcan representados todos los autores ingleses de cierta relevancia, mientras que otros, como es el caso de William Shakespeare, sí lo están ampliamente, no debemos olvidar que esta obra no pretende en ningún momento ser un manual de literatura y, probablemente, el criterio de selección utilizado por los autores haya sido el de «familiaridad» entre el lector y el texto con el fin de facilitar la tarea de comprensión del mismo (Urquhart & Weir, 1998:144). Se puede llegar fácilmente a esta conclusión si tenemos en cuenta que los autores no han escatimado esfuerzos para llenar este libro de contenidos, abarcando áreas tan diversas como la literatura, historia, cultura, fonética, gramática, historia de la lengua, estrategias de lectura y escritura, etc. En definitiva, es prácticamente imposible abordar más campos en menos espacio y, todo ello, mediante el estudio de textos y una serie completísima de actividades que, a pesar de su basto número, no tienen un carácter recurrente.

El método de trabajo propuesto por los autores hace factible que esta obra sea lo suficientemente flexible como para ser utilizada en niveles básicos como medio de introducción a la literatura inglesa y en distintas circunstancias de aprendizaje: estudios de Bachillerato, escuelas oficiales de idiomas, escuelas de traducción e interpretación. Asimismo, puede servir de referencia para estudiantes de oposiciones. El hecho de que esté escrita en inglés hace pensar que los autores han pecado de cierta modestia a la hora de enunciar el título, ya que este trabajo puede encontrar buena acogida más allá del contexto educativo español y resultar de gran utilidad como instrumento de trabajo para cualquier persona que muestre interés por la literatura inglesa y desee enriquecer sus conocimientos de lengua y cultura tomando como punto de partida vertientes literarias.

Cada una de las unidades didácticas concluye con las soluciones de las actividades propuestas. Este hecho, a la vez que permite que el alumno goce de cierta independencia y se erija en protagonista de su propio



proceso de formación, pone de manifiesto la actitud comprometida de unos autores que son capaces de asumir responsabilidades hasta sus últimas consecuencias, así como prestar una valiosa ayuda a alumnos y profesores.

En lo que respecta a la organización del libro, los autores hacen uso del mismo esquema, de tal forma que se repiten las mismas secciones en cada una de las unidades didácticas. Dicha circunstancia favorece que el estudiante se familiarice con la estructura de la obra. Sin embargo, si hay algún aspecto menos positivo que se pueda destacar en este sentido, es la forma en que se ha distribuido el espacio que separa unos ejercicios de otros. Esta particularidad, junto con la ausencia de ilustraciones, hace que en algunas ocasiones resulte difícil distinguir a simple vista unas actividades de otras. Posiblemente este hecho obedezca a cuestiones impuestas por las editoriales o a la dificultad para encontrar fotografías o imágenes originales. De cualquier modo, se puede afirmar, sin lugar a duda, que esta limitación de carácter formal es nimia si se compara con todos los aspectos positivos que se pueden señalar de este trabajo.

Para concluir, no me queda más que felicitar a los autores por aportar un material novedoso que los profesores de inglés estaban echando en falta. Con este libro, Eroulla Demetriou y José Ruiz Mas han demostrado su experiencia docente y su interés por familiarizar a los alumnos de lengua inglesa con «esa gran desconocida» dentro del aula que es la literatura inglesa, al mismo tiempo que han sido capaces de abordar y unificar con éxito distintos campos de estudio del inglés como lengua extranjera.

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**Francisca Molina Navarrete and Gloria Luque Agulló**  
**(eds.). 2002. *Uso del Inglés en el Aula.***  
***IV Jornadas de Estudios Ingleses. Jaén.***  
**Universidad de Jaén. 317 páginas.**

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This volume is a compilation of the lectures given and contributions made by the participants in the 4<sup>th</sup> Conference on English Studies held at the University of Jaén in November 2000. It covers a vast gamut of topics in connection to the use of English in the classroom, ranging from humanistic teaching and translation to literature and cultural aspects. Its contents are structured in three main thematic blocks, namely, plenary sessions, round tables, and workshops.

Within the first of these headings, Professor Domínguez González analyzes the different factors involved in foreign language learning, concluding that such a teaching/learning process is an extremely complex task from which a number of myths need to be eliminated. Professor Arnold also focuses on language learning, but from the point of view of the affective and emotional variables which have a direct bearing on the learner, making a case in favour of humanistic teaching. The remaining three plenaries deal with literary issues. In a first of them, Professor Galván Reula highlights the multicultural nature of the culture and literature of present-day England and pinpoints the changes it has undergone in the last decade of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. In turn, Professor Marco López establishes a correspondence between literature and the visual arts, with the aim of fostering a practical approximation to the topic. Finally, Professor LeSeur studies the work of black woman writers,

reflecting the different view of the world and the social stereotypes present in such novels.

The second main section of the volume in question comprises the presentations made in each of the three round tables which, in this 4<sup>th</sup> Conference, are devoted to the didactics of translation, literature, and humanistic teaching. In the first of them, chaired by Professor Domínguez González, Professor Alcaraz Sintés examines the application of new technologies to translation by outlining the diverse types of translation software available to prospective users, together with its assets and pitfalls. Professor Pascual Soler broaches the topic from an altogether different perspective, by reflecting on the diverse ways in which the problem of code-switching has been tackled in the translation of Chicano literature and on the deleterious effects which clumsy attempts at it can exert on the transmission of these peoples' identities. Professor Medina Casado also centres upon the difficulties posed by hermeneutics and equivalence in translation, but, in this case, as applied to the specific field of English legal translation. Professor García García closes this initial round table by suggesting the potentiality of a systemic approach to translation.

The second one, dedicated to literature and chaired by Professor Nieto García, explores the possibilities offered by the literary text as translation. Three initial authors who address this issue squarely are Professor Julio Olivares Merino, who focuses on Cormán's adaptation of "The Fall of the House of Usher"; Professor Nieto García, who analyzes intertextual aspects in Tom Stoppard's works by portraying how his minor works decisively influence his major ones; and Professor García Ramírez, who underlines how the phenomenon of writing back, particularly when applied to classical texts reinterpreted from the point of view of emergent post-colonial literatures, can foster a dynamic and multicultural perception of our world. In turn, Professors Soto Palomo and Molina Navarrete concentrate, respectively, on the ludic function of literature in the English classroom and on the relevance of using graded readers or adapted literary texts as linguistic instruments.

Professor Arnold chairs the round table devoted to humanistic teaching. This topic is probed by Professor Luque Agulló from the point of view of those student internal factors which directly influence success at language acquisition. In turn, Professor Lorenzo Berjillos links the

Humanistic Approach with the Psychology of Learning, Second Language Acquisition studies, and Neuropsychology, in striving to evince how humanistic-based analysis can provide solutions to key aspects in L2 acquisition research. Finally, Professors Bueno González, Ortega Cebreros, and Méndez García broach the subject from the perspective of intrinsic motivation, learner anxiety, and the cultural dimension, respectively.

Some of these factors connected to humanistic teaching continue to be explored in the workshop section, with which the volume under scrutiny draws to a close. Within it, Professor Ortega Cebreros looks into the question of communication apprehension in the language classroom; Professors Julio Olivares Merino and Adams appeal to the senses by exploiting musical and visual codes of learning and by using imagery in language teaching; and Professor Bueno González analyzes aspects of organization, cohesion, and reference as cues for reading and writing.

Thus, given its variegated nature, the present volume constitutes an inviting assortment of articles from which to derive invaluable theoretical and practical insights which will interest the researcher and guide the teacher in the challenging yet rewarding task of teaching English as a Foreign Language.

