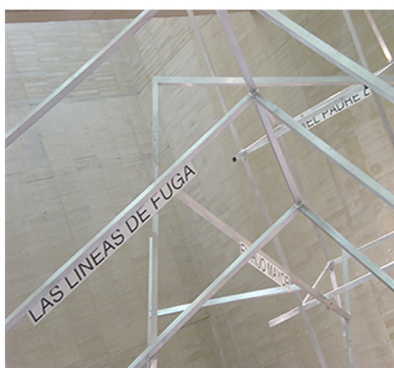




CSSAN - Cultural Studies,  
Society, and Alternative  
Narratives



EDITED BY  
EDUARDO BARROS-GRELA

# CULTURAL STUDIES AND SPACE IN CONTEMPORARY NARRATIVES



UNIVERSIDADE DA CORUÑA

**CULTURAL STUDIES AND SPACE IN  
CONTEMPORARY NARRATIVES**

Edited by Eduardo Barros Grela

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Cultural Studies and Space in Contemporary Narratives

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## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Este volumen es el resultado de una iniciativa con la que se pretende dar mayor protagonismo investigador al alumnado de posgrado en el ámbito humanístico. Durante el periodo comprendido entre 2016 y 2021, un grupo de estudiantes de Filología pusieron en marcha un grupo de discusión y debate en el que se trataron en reuniones periódicas temas relacionados con las políticas de identidad, de comunidad y de sociedad atendiendo a las formas discursivas en las que aparecían representados. El resultado de esas conversaciones fue la organización de tres ediciones del Congreso de Estudios Culturales y Narrativas Alternativas, así como la publicación de este volumen. Es preciso, por lo tanto, agradecer el empuje, la motivación y el interés de cada unx de lxs autorxs de este volumen colectivo, así como el de todxs lxs participantes del grupo.

También agradecemos la colaboración de las diferentes instituciones y organismos que han apoyado la publicación de esta colección de ensayos: la Universidade da Coruña y su Servizo de Publicacións, la Facultade de Filoloxía el Observatorio de Investigación de *Cultural Studies, Society, and Alternative Narratives (CSSAN)* y el Instituto Universitario de Investigación en Estudios Irlandeses, *Amergin*.

Esta publicación se enmarca en los objetivos del proyecto de investigación “Estética, ética y estrategia de las nuevas cartografías migratorias e identidades transculturales en las literaturas en lengua inglesa del siglo XXI” (Aesthetics, Ethics and Strategics of the New Migratory Cartographies and Transcultural Identities in Twenty-First-Century Literature(s) in English) (PID2019-109582GB-I00), financiado por el Ministerio de Ciencia e Innovación y del que forma parte el editor de este libro como investigador participante.



## INTRODUCCIÓN

### **Cultural Studies and Space in Contemporary Narratives**

El presente volumen responde a la necesidad creada por un grupo de jóvenes investigadores que se plantearon la siguiente pregunta: ¿qué espacios ocupan en la investigación académica los discursos con los que más empatizan las nuevas generaciones de lectores, espectadores o creadores? Resulta evidente que no se puede articular una respuesta única en torno a un planteamiento tan amplio y heterogéneo, pero la discusión alrededor del alcance de sus premisas sí merece una indagación más extensa y detenida.

El marco teórico que subyace en el presente estudio se ha desarrollado necesariamente desde el ámbito de los Estudios Culturales, y más concretamente dentro del debate, ya canonizado, entre la cultura alta y la cultura popular<sup>1</sup>. En el año 2020 los grados en Estudios Ingleses de las universidades españolas recogen con buen tino el estudio de las obras literarias más importantes de los contextos anglófonos, entendidos estos en su sentido más amplio. Así, con itinerarios que se encargan de la profundización en temas lingüísticos y otros cuyo enfoque se define por un recorrido por las diferentes estéticas que han determinado el camino de las letras inglesas y norteamericanas (principalmente), estas propuestas curriculares facilitan a su estudiantado una visión panorámica de los agentes culturales, sus artefactos y sus prácticas, que les habilita para potencialmente transmitir de nuevo a sus futuros estudiantes conocimientos similares, o incluso idénticos.

No resulta disparatado indicar que esta visión de la formación en grados de Estudios Ingleses ha podido contribuir a una perpetuación de la hegemonía del canon, a pesar de que en los propios contenidos de las materias ofertadas se haga hincapié (reiteradamente) en la necesidad de transgredir, a la vez que conocer, ese canon y esas prácticas canónicas.

Esta intersección metodológica encuentra una explicación coherente en el marco de las leyes de educación que se han ido implementando en la docencia de ámbito universitario, que si bien supusieron una racionalización de las enseñanzas regladas en España, a la vez que una sincronización con los modelos educativos propuestos en otros países

miembros de la Unión Europea, también conllevaron una limitación de la capacidad actancial de los docentes universitarios, cuyas tareas profesionales, tradicionalmente distribuidas entre la docencia y la investigación, en aproximadamente un 45% respectivamente, y completadas con trabajo de gestión o administrativo en aproximadamente un 10% del total de tiempo dedicado a las tareas profesionales, se vieron transformadas en detrimento de las dos primeras, y en acusado favor de la tercera (Peralvo, Arias y Merino 18). Así, la profesión docente universitaria, que a la sazón había cobijado a agentes transformadores de la sociedad y a las vanguardias del pensamiento, se vio entonces redefinida alrededor de una burocratización alienante y, por qué no afirmarlo, paralizante.

Que tal regresión obedeciera a intenciones políticas, ideológicas o sociales es algo que se escapa a las pretensiones analíticas de este estudio, pero conviene localizar las corrientes sociales en las que se encuadra la problemática inicial. Si el profesorado no se viese en la obligación de dedicar un alto porcentaje de su dedicación laboral a gestiones administrativas, y solo una mínima fracción de su aportación curricular a labores docentes y de investigación, con toda seguridad el resultado de la implantación de mejoras docentes, curriculares y pedagógicas no tendría ese cariz estigmatizante y parasitario.

Por este motivo, hoy en día resulta cada vez más difícil para el profesorado universitario mirar hacia fuera. Salir de la “burbuja académica” en la que la rutina laboral se impone frente a la creatividad investigadora, y asomar los párpados a otros ámbitos académicos tanto nacionales como internacionales, para así ser partícipes de las discusiones teóricas y críticas que se plantean en la actualidad, ya que resulta extremadamente costoso tanto desde un punto de vista profesional como personal. La asistencia a congresos, por ejemplo, conlleva un intercambio de conocimiento sobre las líneas de trabajo de colegas de profesión que es imprescindible para el desarrollo académico del profesorado. Sin embargo, su poca relevancia en los procesos de acreditación y evaluación de la carrera investigadora, añadida a la falta de financiación desde las instituciones para desplazamientos, hace que una actividad tan enriquecedora se encuentre en vías de extinción (asistencia mínima de público, cada vez un número menor de participantes, así como la tendencia más reciente, obligada o no, de reorganizar estas reuniones como eventos a distancia o por teleconferencia).

De forma similar, los criterios para valorar la investigación actual del profesorado requieren que se le dedique tanto tiempo a escribir un artículo de investigación como a descubrir el foro apropiado para la publicación, así

como entender los datos de indización de las revistas, con el fin de asegurarse de que el artículo que se someterá a la evaluación por pares tendrá algún valor, ya no solo curricular, sino también en la trayectoria investigadora de su autor o autora. Investigar conlleva, en muchas ocasiones, dejar de lado el discurso sometido a estudio para centrarse en la crítica que ha sido publicada con anterioridad y de la que se pretende hacer una valoración académica. Así, las exigencias de la carrera universitaria española conllevan un desgaste administrativo que genera un relevante agotamiento intelectual, con la consabida repercusión académica en los círculos internacionales de conocimiento.

Con un panorama profesional tan intenso, prolongado, y en muchas ocasiones desmotivador, resulta difícil echar la vista al entorno social en el que adquirirían sentido las conclusiones que se alcanzan tras el esfuerzo investigador, bien sea a partir del análisis de una obra o bien a partir de la reflexión crítica sobre las propuestas de otros colegas de la profesión académica. Observar, mirar, detenerse y reflexionar sobre lo que está sucediendo de cara al exterior de los límites de los campus universitarios es una tarea de la profesión docente e investigadora que se ha transformado en algo accesorio, secundario o complementario, y que en ningún caso debería restringirse a ninguno de estos apelativos.

Atendiendo a la necesidad de recuperar estas privaciones del sistema universitario, cuyo impacto más inmediato incide sobre el derecho del alumnado y del profesorado a la investigación<sup>2</sup>, surge la idea de crear, en primer término, un grupo de investigación y en segunda instancia una línea de publicaciones que sirvan como puente entre estos dos ámbitos (sociedad y cultura popular e investigación en el campo humanístico), y cuya separación se está intentando mitigar mediante la implantación de sistemas educativos modernos, vinculantes, interseccionales, diversos e inclusivos, pero todavía con una tasa de éxito dispar.

El Grupo de Investigación de Estudios Culturales, Sociedad y Narrativas Alternativas reúne una serie de inquietudes investigadoras que se amalgaman en la necesidad de prestar atención crítica a elementos de los diferentes epistemes del inicio del siglo XXI, y que, por diferentes motivos, han quedado excluidos de la legitimación académica—en el ámbito de los estudios literarios o filologías—o no han gozado de la suficiente atención. Es así como sucede en una parte importante del ámbito geográfico en el que surge esta propuesta, en el que se sigue privilegiando una interpretación tradicional y monolítica de los estudios de Letras, aunque la evolución de esos mismos estudios tiende a ser inclusiva con estas áreas de investigación. Existe ya una gran variedad de espacios universitarios—notablemente en el

ámbito internacional—en los que la presencia de estudios de literatura fantástica, literatura juvenil, novela gráfica, cine, televisión, videojuegos, danzas y música popular, entre otros, ya gozan de una relativamente notable longevidad<sup>3</sup>. Sin embargo, sigue siendo necesario sedimentar el interés académico en estas disciplinas, que si bien ya gozan de una aceptación popular ampliamente reconocida, tienen todavía la tarea pendiente de recibir un tratamiento académico acorde a su repercusión social.

Para contribuir en la cimentación de ese proyecto, lo que se plantea desde el grupo de investigación encargado de organizar la publicación del presente volumen es un ejercicio de articulación hermenéutica que permita navegar por las aguas de la interseccionalidad. Asentados en la firme creencia de que la interdisciplinariedad es un vehículo de producción y transmisión de conocimientos con un alcance ilimitado, los diferentes sectores que componen este grupo aplican un enfoque de multiplicidad a sus estudios, ofreciendo una aproximación liminal en el tratamiento de las narrativas que se exponen. Así, la relectura de obras desde una óptica popular queda determinada por las sensibilidades éticas y estéticas que se manifiestan en los estudios académicos y teóricos que se presentan aquí, y cuyos nuevos espacios permiten diálogos entre los diferentes ámbitos de conocimiento y la cultura popular, así como entre los discursos de poder y las narrativas de resistencia<sup>4</sup>.

Resulta evidente que tales afirmaciones deben ser entendidas dentro del ecosistema de los *Cultural Studies*, así como en referencia a la problemática aceptación de la *popular culture* como herramienta generadora de conocimiento. No descubrimos nada nuevo al referirnos a las tan discutidas tensiones entre la *alta cultura* y la *cultura popular*, como tampoco innovamos al estudiar de forma crítica la *desjerarquización* de la estética contemporánea, ni sus redefiniciones en el contexto globalizado del mercado cultural.

Sí aportamos, sin embargo, lo que considero una articulación novedosa entre esta aproximación teórica al complejo ecosistema de lo popular y su maximización a través de narrativas actuales, que en determinados contextos no llegan siquiera a ser consideradas como “narrativas” *per se*. Esto se debe, principalmente, a las definiciones tradicionales de este concepto dentro de los departamentos de letras, que, en términos generales, habían identificado la narrativa como un elemento inherente a la literatura, y que han ido ahora dejando paso a sensibilidades más amplias sobre el concepto. Estas diferentes aproximaciones se han cristalizado en el concepto de intermedialidad<sup>5</sup>, que si bien ya se había trabajado en el pasado con profusión y en diferentes formas, en la actualidad se ha establecido ya como una disciplina independiente de estudio (Schröter).

En este sentido proponemos la integración de discursos publicados en formatos no tradicionales con la caracterización propia del concepto más aceptado de narrativa, aunque la finalidad de esta colección de estudios no se dirige tanto hacia una teorización de las formas populares de contar historias en los inicios del siglo XXI como a su puesta en práctica a partir de diferentes modelos. Por este motivo, ocupan las páginas de este volumen diferentes análisis de textos literarios, fílmicos y de música popular que atienden a aproximaciones más pragmáticas e interseccionales para dar respuestas a las inquietudes discursivas y hermenéuticas de las nuevas generaciones, tanto académicas como no académicas.

Así, entendemos que es necesaria una convivencia crítica de todas estas propuestas narrativas, con el fin de que se nutran unas de las otras y que estimulen de esta forma el uso—comunicativo y formativo—de todas ellas. Para ello, el presente volumen se compone de capítulos divergentes en sus contenidos pero convergentes en su aproximación de análisis, y es ese el motivo por el que no hemos introducido una división temática de las diferentes contribuciones, ya que apostamos por la confluencia comparativa y dialogante de todas ellas. Se incluyen colaboraciones en las que se propone un enfoque transversal de los estudios del cine a través de la cuestión espacial, cuya influencia y repercusión en la estética fílmica ha tenido una gran relevancia en los últimos tiempos. También la música y la literatura representan el enfoque primario de varixs autorxs, cuya aproximación, como ya hemos indicado, no prioriza el interés académico sobre su proyección popular, abarcando ambas esferas con rigurosidad y de forma crítica.

En “Equivalencia en los Estudios de Traducción: colonización, colonialidad y colonialismo”, Natalia Moreiras Arias discute la función de la traducción como mediadora intercultural, así como la relevancia de la imagen y el debate en torno a la equivalencia como ámbitos de reflexión sobre la transmisión cultural. Desde una aproximación culturalista, Moreiras observa la función del poder en el acto de la traducción, y propone desde ahí un análisis del papel de la ideología en la construcción identitaria y de la otredad. Su aportación resulta de gran relevancia no solo para los Estudios de Traducción, sino también para su aplicación en Film Studies, que representa una de las áreas de interés de Moreiras y le permite ahondar en la intersección entre traducción, cine y espacio.

Martín Mallo Meilán responde en “The Postmodern Gothic Spaces of Dario Argento’s *Suspiria* and *Inferno*” a la dislocación intertextual entre dos de las películas italianas más representativas del género *giallo* y las referencias—explícitas e implícitas—que incorpora el director Dario Argento. Entroncado en la estética posmoderna de las películas analizadas, el discurso de Mallo alude a la utilización espacial como agente narrativo

que fluctúa entre diferentes tiempos, lugares y géneros, y que encuentra en los espacios físicos representados en las propuestas de Argento guiños narrativos hacia la estética del gótico.

Sin alejarnos de la discusión espacial, aunque es este caso centrada en los discursos del cuerpo, María Medín-Doce introduce con “Body, Desire and Alteration: Exploring Corporeal Discourse in Delany’s ‘Aye, and Gomorrah’” una visión poliédrica en torno a los discursos que conforman la narrativa deontologizante del cuerpo, vistos desde el análisis de la ficción producida por un inquietante Delany en “Aye, and Gomorrah”. Propone Medín que la discusión del deseo como elemento motivador de nuevas identificaciones facilita la comprensión del cuerpo como espacio subjetivable.

Si en los tres primeros capítulos de este volumen el análisis de espacio y lugar aparecen íntimamente conectados a los discursos del poder, en la propuesta de Hilda Puig Fraga, “Blame It on Santo Domingo: Yunior’s Failed Relationships in Junot Díaz’s *This Is How You Lose Her*”, esa articulación conceptual se presenta como fundamento en la obra de Díaz. Sugiere Puig que la masculinidad del recurrente personaje del autor dominicano, Yunior, presenta una masculinidad que ha sido producida desde diferentes espacios sociales y transgeneracionales, desarrollando desde esa múltiple formación identitaria un trauma personal de origen histórico y político. A través de una propuesta narrativa en la que se potencian los factores lingüístico y estilístico como referentes de la cultura de base, el constituyente espacial resulta, en esta ocasión, inmanente a las políticas identitarias que definen el devenir diaspórico de Yunior, en el que su huella hipermasculina entra en conflicto con su proceso de reterritorialización.

Beatriz Solla-Vilas indaga, en “Becoming: Female Agency en *The Far Away Brothers* y *The House on Mango Street*, cómo dos de los personajes femeninos de estas dos obras, Maricela y Sally, desarrollan, negocian y deconstruyen su *agency* en relación—o en contraste—con los personajes masculinos, así como las consecuencias sobre su identidad y su subjetividad a raíz de ese análisis introspectivo. De nuevo nos encontramos ante un estudio que revisita estas dos obras fundamentales y las coloca como mesa de negociación para el análisis de sus proyecciones espaciales, culturales y populares.

El objetivo de la siguiente aportación (María Gil Poisa, “Artificiality and the Sensorium in Horror Film: A Look to Europe”) será describir los mecanismos afectivos a través de los cuales el cine de terror dialoga—o interactúa—emocionalmente con los espectadores, centrándose en lo que Gil Poisa llama la máxima manifestación de la emoción humana: el miedo. Le interesa a la autora observar los espacios que comparten la ficción filmica

y el espectador, y cómo se producen los procesos de identificaciones para que las fronteras que separan ficción y realidad entren en crisis como forma discursiva.

En el capítulo 7, la ficción televisiva protagoniza el análisis transmedia de la propuesta de Noelia María Galán-Rodríguez. Bajo el título “The Madwoman in Sherrinford: Eurus Holmes and the (Non) Canon in BBC’S *Sherlock*”, la autora sostiene que la serie de la BBC puede ser considerada como un ejemplo de producto *fanfic*, ya que sus creadores han trasladado numerosos elementos de la ficción original—así como de su contexto histórico y cultural—y los han adaptado al nuevo entorno presentado en la serie, y que responde a las expectativas de sus espectadorxs, pero no como una reescritura de personajes y acciones sino como una relectura de los mismos.

Desde una óptica más descriptiva, Pablo Méndez Seoane analiza la carrera discográfica de Lady Gaga en su “Gaga Poli-*Chromatica*”, capítulo en el que se defiende la relevancia que tiene en la estética de la artista de New York la moda como elemento performativo y el color como discurso afectivo. El procedimiento analítico de Méndez Seoane recupera todas las facetas artísticas de la cantante—letras, escenografía, temas—para presentar su figura como artefacto cultural provisto de subjetividad, lo que la convierte en paradigma cultural de una generación, y provoca un eminente interés entre sus seguidores pero—y—también entre los académicos de los Estudios Culturales.

En “*Ways of Seeing*, by John Berger” (capítulo 9), Seán Keane analiza la versión documental de la obra del crítico de arte inglés (que posteriormente daría lugar a un libro homónimo) y se centra en la discusión del concepto de imagen visual, así como en la repercusión que tiene sobre el espectador la exposición de este concepto como forma de arte. Como ya había hecho Walter Benjamin, Keane se fija en la reproductibilidad de la imagen y en el concepto de *aura*, y posiciona a sus lectorxs hacia una visión ideológica—e incluso política—de la obra de Berger.

El décimo capítulo se corresponde con el estudio de Andrea Patiño de Artaza sobre la obra de la cantante española Rosalía, *El Mal Querer* y sus correspondencias temáticas con la obra del siglo XIII *Flamenca*. En “Adaptation, Jealousy, and Narrative in Rosalía’s *El Mal Querer*”, la autora analiza la relación entre ambas obras para intentar determinar si se trata o no de una adaptación, pero, sobre todo, explica sus temas y la forma en la que son presentados para indagar sobre la gran repercusión que la obra de Rosalía ha tenido entre el público y la crítica más especializada. La transposición cultural se intuye de nuevo como punto de partida de esta propuesta, en la que el estudio sobre adaptación realizado por Linda Hutcheon adquiere gran protagonismo.

La última contribución del volumen, “Spatial Power in Quentin Tarantino’s Revenge Cinema” (Eduardo Barros Grela), alude a la relación bidireccional entre el espacio y la narrativa en la obra del cineasta estadounidense, centrándose principalmente en el concepto de espacialidad para referirse a la capacidad actancial—o agencialidad—del sujeto para producir espacio y la del propio espacio como sujeto. Esta territorialización también juega un papel importante en el análisis de la venganza en la obra de Tarantino.

Tal y como demuestra esta colección de ensayos, es urgente favorecer una articulación de las diferentes formas narrativas desde los diferentes medios de expresión y de comunicación, así como las manifestaciones artísticas derivadas de ellos. En gran medida, ese espacio transmedia ha plasmado este nuevo interés por el estudio de la ética y la estética humanística desde una óptica popular por medio de, principalmente, una producción taxonómica de los elementos estructurales y componentes metodológicos del estudio de las letras. Nuestra postura, sin embargo, denota una gran ambición en la definición del plano sistemático que conforma la maquinaria de los Estudios Culturales, ya que los discursos de poder, resistencia, hegemonía y cultura son repensados desde la visión popular de la narrativa, pero también desde la dimensión teórica del espacio.

Por lo tanto, nuestra propuesta libera a ambos extremos de esta ecuación para generar una dinámica de confluencias que solo puede ser entendida desde una teorización de la interseccionalidad, y que permite articular voces y discursos divergentes en una convergencia nomotética. La narratividad del cine, de la literatura, de la música, de la televisión, del cuerpo o de la imagen allana su camino hacia un espacio propio y heterogéneo, contingente y contradictorio, que enajene a los lugares discursivos tradicionales de su esencia, y permita manifestar empatías y concomitancias entre sus elementos constituyentes.

**Eduardo Barros Grela**



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<sup>1</sup> Los estudios sobre esta cuestión son muy numerosos y ya bien establecidos en la academia. Algunos ejemplos son Storey, Inglis, Goodall o Gans.

<sup>2</sup> En el sentido que otorgan Henri Lefebvre y David Harvey al concepto de “derecho a la ciudad”.

<sup>3</sup> Sin ir más lejos, tanto el sistema universitario de Estados Unidos (cuyas instituciones copan el 90% de los puestos en las listas de las diez y veinte mejores universidades del mundo) como en el del Reino Unido (que ocupan los restantes puestos en esas listas) no solo se ha producido en los últimos años un incremento de la presencia de programas con un alto contenido en estas áreas (University of Southern California; University of California, Berkeley; o Stanford University, entre muchas otras), sino que se ha multiplicado la creación de centros reglados de enseñanza superior cuyo rango de titulaciones se centra en este tipo de estudios (Full Sail University; University of Advanced Technology; o el conjunto de Media Institutes).

<sup>4</sup> El ámbito de los Cultural Studies goza de una importantísima producción crítica desde mediados del siglo XX, y ha contado con estudios de inmenso impacto académico, como los desarrollados por Stuart Hall o Raymond Williams, pero también y más recientemente por autores como Giorgio Agamben, Arjun Appadurai, Judith Butler o Paul Gilroy, por mencionar solo a algunos de los más relevantes.

<sup>5</sup> Ver *Handbook of Intermediality: Literature – Image – Sound – Music* editado por Gabriele Rippl, Walter de Gruyter GmbH & Co KG, 2015.

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## I

**LA EQUIVALENCIA EN LOS ESTUDIOS DE TRADUCCIÓN: COLONIZACIÓN,  
COLONIALIDAD Y COLONIALISMO**

NATALIA MOREIRAS ARIAS

**La equivalencia en traducción**

Si nos detenemos aquí en presentar nuestra visión sobre la equivalencia en materia de traducción es porque existen unos antecedentes relevantes acerca de este concepto como criterio fundamental como sinónimo de una traducción de buena calidad (House 247). Sobre la equivalencia se ha debatido largo y tendido durante mucho tiempo y dado que, además de no ser siempre fácil encontrar un equivalente total de 1-1, el hecho de tomar una u otra decisión viene estipulado por una serie de factores que, como veremos, influyen directa o indirectamente en el traductor, acarreando una serie de consecuencias con repercusiones, asimismo, en las sociedades receptoras y, por ello, en el ámbito cultural.

Para empezar, la génesis de la controversia radica en la relatividad y en la subjetividad de dicho concepto: ¿hablamos de equivalencia en el formato?, ¿en el contenido?, ¿a nivel pragmático o funcional? Ivir da cuenta de esta problemática atribuyendo la misma al contexto de situación:

Equivalence is... relative and not absolute,... it emerges from the context of situation as defined by the interplay of (many different factors) and has no existence outside that context, and in particular it is not stipulated in advance by an algorithm for the conversion of linguistic units of L1 into linguistic units of L2 (citado en House 247).

El problema proviene de un cambio en la manera de concebir la traducción tomando como referente el texto traducido cuando antes se otorgaba preferencia al texto original. Este cambio en la forma de entender y de reflexionar sobre el concepto de equivalencia aplicado a la actividad traductora, tiene consecuencias no solo en el ámbito teórico sino también en la práctica de traducir. Hoy en día resulta evidente que traducir no es una

actividad meramente lingüística, sino que tiene en cuenta otros factores: el lugar, la época en la que se traduce, las ideologías que rodean al traductor, etc. Por consiguiente, los expertos ya no buscan un sistema de equivalencias universales como antes, época en la que era más importante el interés por la lengua, la traducción de palabras y segmentos por otros en otra lengua y con validez universal, concepción conocida como *source-oriented*, es decir, una visión orientada hacia el texto de partida y en la que la traducción está supeditada al texto original y no goza de autonomía. En la actualidad, el enfoque ya no es *source-oriented*, sino que es *target-oriented*, es decir, como afirman Gnisci y Sinopoli “se desplaza hacia la cultura de llegada, *target-oriented*, que abandona en el cambio toda relación residual con las ideas de fidelidad o infidelidad de la traducción, ancladas en la investigación lingüística, para afirmar la esencia intertextual de la traducción y su autonomía respecto al original” (321), por lo que el cambio de punto de vista implica un cambio radical, pues pasa a centrarse en la recepción de una traducción y en cómo esta puede influir en la sociedad y en el sistema lingüístico y cultural de la lengua y cultura de llegada. Como expresa Toury, uno de los máximos representantes de la Universidad de Tel Aviv, “las traducciones son realidades de un único sistema: el sistema de llegada” (19). Para House, la equivalencia más apropiada, aquella que se debe procurar, es la equivalencia pragmática y funcional para describir las relaciones entre original y traducción debido a que los elementos lingüísticos de dos lenguas diferentes resultan ambiguos dado que cada idioma describe su realidad de formas diferentes y, por ello, no solo se pueden tener como referencia los aspectos formales, sintácticos y léxicos (247). Así pues, para House,

Translation is viewed as the recontextualization of a text in L1 by a semantically and pragmatically equivalent text in L2. As a first requirement for this equivalence, it is posited that a translation text have a **function** equivalent to that of its original which—consisting of an ideational and an interpersonal function component—is defined pragmatically as the application or use of the text in a particular context of situation, the basic idea being that “text” and “context of situation” should not be viewed as separate entities, rather the context of situation in which the text unfolds is encapsulated in the text through a systematic relationship between the social

environment on the one hand and the functional organization of language on the other (247-248).

A propósito de esta reflexión y justificación de House, vemos que la mediación cultural en la que vive un traductor no solo se fundamenta en aspectos lingüísticos y culturales, sino que esos aspectos relevantes en el momento de traducir se concretizan en el conjunto de lo que constituye el contexto de situación, tan importante como el texto, hablando así de una unidad indivisible, un contexto como sinónimo de un todo en el que se encuentran todos los aspectos posibles que intervienen en un proceso de traducción: texto, contexto, situación personal de la sociedad del TO así como del traductor y de la sociedad de recepción, etc. Hablar de traducción como recontextualización responde a una necesidad de adaptación al giro teórico producido en los Estudios de Traducción atendiendo a un modelo funcional paradigmático de la evolución de la traducción. A este respecto, Delisle establece que

Traduire (...) c'est avant tout se mettre au service de ses futurs lecteurs et fabriquer à leur intention un équivalent du texte de départ: soit, d'abord, un texte qui libre, avec le moins de distorsion possible, toute l'information contenue dans celui d'origine. Mais traduire, c'est aussi produire un texte duquel il convient d'exiger trois autres qualités: qu'il soit rendu "naturellement" en langue d'arrivée (qu'il "en sente pas la traduction", dit-on couramment), qu'il soit parfaitement intégré à la culture d'arrivée et qu'il parvienne, par une adroite manipulation de l'écriture, à donner l'idée la plus juste de l'originalité et des inventions stylistiques de l'auteur traduit. (14-15)

Como vemos, Delisle entiende la traducción como recontextualización, supeditando esta a sus futuros lectores con un concepto de equivalencia que comprende una naturalización del texto en la lengua/cultura meta y su integración conservando el estilo del TO.

No obstante, House, a la que tomamos aquí como referencia por la claridad en sus explicaciones y por su adecuación a la hora de describir las relaciones entre el TO y el TT, profundiza más que Delisle y distingue dos tipos de traducción dependiendo si se mantiene o no y cómo la función textual, a saber, abierta o encubierta, diferenciación basada en

Schleiermacher y sus términos *verfremdende* y *einbürgernde Überetzungen* (House 249). De manera sucinta, una traducción abierta se integra en un marco nuevo y es equivalente con respecto al TO en el nivel del lenguaje, del registro y del género. Asimismo, en este tipo de traducción interviene el “filtro cultural”, que consiste en que el traductor ve el TO desde el punto de vista de la cultura de llegada. Sin embargo, ante la creciente globalización y la imposición del inglés como lengua común para la comunicación entre hablantes de todo el mundo, se produce un cambio en las convenciones culturales y lingüísticas y estas se aproximan más a las de los países anglófonos. Por su parte, la traducción encubierta reproduce la función del original y, en el nivel del lenguaje y del registro, presenta modificaciones. Además existe una compensación cultural, por lo que en este tipo de traducción no se aplica el filtro cultural (249-254).

### **La ideología como elemento partícipe en el proceso de traducción**

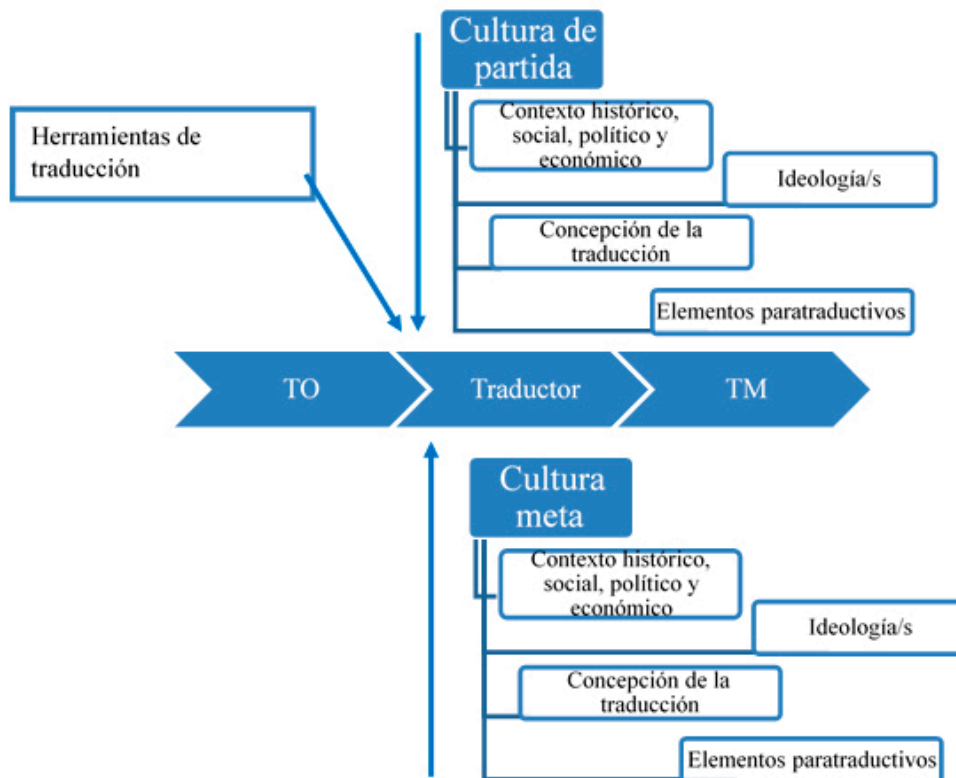
House es consciente de que traducir no solo es expresar en una lengua lo que está escrito en otra, sino que va más allá y tiene que ver también con estudios culturales. En este sentido, la autora incorpora el concepto de “filtro cultural” que el traductor debe aplicar, es decir, que este debe reconocer la diferencia cultural y saber transmitirla o recontextualizarla, según el tipo de traducción y su función (adaptar la diferencia o dejarla para dar a conocer esa misma diferencia). Por otra parte, nos parece muy acertada la reflexión sobre la globalización y la influencia del inglés en el mundo actual porque puede llevar a una neutralización y empobrecimiento de las culturas en el caso de producirse una ingente cantidad de préstamos culturales por contagio intercultural. Dicho de otro modo, la riqueza cultural reside en la diferencia entre las distintas culturas que se encuentran en el mundo, expresadas por medio de aspectos lingüísticos y no solo tradiciones, sino también en las prácticas del día a día, defendiendo así la cultura popular como elemento definitorio de una sociedad/cultura determinada. Evidentemente, dos culturas pueden parecerse mucho por haber tenido una historia común o por cuestiones de proximidad geográfica, pero nunca hay dos culturas iguales. La riqueza cultural, además de basarse en la diferencia, también nos permite tener una mente más abierta e incorporar elementos de una u otra cultura, en cierta medida, sin

embargo, es conveniente, como Yuste apuntaba a propósito de transformar al Uno y al Otro y no al Uno en el Otro, mantener una esencia y una conexión con sus raíces. La influencia del inglés y del modo de vida de Estados Unidos ha aumentado considerablemente durante estos últimos años y eso se ve reflejado también en el idioma, puesto que cada vez se utilizan más anglicismos, como por ejemplo en alemán, en donde la influencia del inglés es mucho mayor que en otros idiomas como el español. En consecuencia, no debemos hablar de un intercambio o mestizaje de culturas, sino de imposición, aunque esta pueda resultar inconsciente para los hablantes de una lengua, como puede ser por medio del cine.

En la misma línea de House y la importancia del contexto de situación encontramos a Camps, quien afirma que “traducción supone contextualizar un concepto que ha sufrido, a lo largo de los siglos, notables variaciones en su significado” (25), un contexto determinado nos da un significado concreto y, por lo tanto, una traducción determinada. Es decir, que se corrobora la idea de que la traducción no es, en ningún caso, un compartimento estanco, sino que está en continuo cambio, lo que explica que una misma obra se traduzca varias veces a lo largo del tiempo de formas diferentes debido a que las culturas no permanecen estancas, sino en continuo cambio y evolución. Esto no tiene que ver solamente con la época en la que se traduce, sino también con el lugar en el que se traduce y el entorno personal del traductor, es decir, su ideología, su estilo al escribir, sus influencias, su forma de captar los mensajes escritos, extralingüísticos y paratextuales, sus experiencias previas, su conocimiento de las lenguas y culturas entre las que traduce, etc.

En Baltrusch (24) podemos observar un esquema que recoge los elementos y diversos contextos que intervienen en cualquier proceso de traducción. Basándonos en su propuesta, hemos diseñado nuestra propia versión como sigue:





Este esquema sirve para dar cuenta de la compleja realidad de todo proceso de traducción y para comprender mejor los factores y/o situaciones que intervienen, consciente o inconscientemente, en cuanto a la noción de equivalencia en traducción sobre la que pretendemos esclarecer ciertos aspectos.

De esta representación gráfica cabe indicar que, si bien el esquema y los factores que en él intervienen son esos, los resultados a la hora de actuar el traductor (entidad traductiva según la nomenclatura empleada por Baltrusch) no serán los mismos, pues para cada labor de traducción es necesario redefinir los contextos, lo que conlleva a un modelo de traducción en continua construcción y adaptación (Baltrusch 23-24). El primer aspecto que pretendemos poner en relieve con nuestra propuesta es apreciar la posición del traductor, en lugar del texto de la traducción. Como vemos, el traductor se sitúa no solo entre los textos original y meta, sino también ENTRE dichas culturas. Por su parte, cada cultura que participa en el proceso de traducción aporta su contexto, como vemos, histórico, social, político y económico, su/s ideología/s, su concepción de la traducción y sus

elementos paratraductivos. Con respecto al esquema de Baltrusch hemos añadido la concepción de la traducción como elemento decisivo al proceso, en vez de su propuesta de estética de la traducción dado que el foco central de estudio ha ido variando, según se otorgase más o menos importancia a factores como la estética o la función. Por ello, estimamos que se merece un sitio en el gráfico ya que, aunque sea involuntariamente, el traductor siempre aporta su sello personal con respecto a la estética en el caso de que la traducción de una canción o un poema en medio de una novela, por ejemplo.

Por último, el desdoblamiento de singular/plural en la palabra ideología/s no es casual. Así como en cada época existe la presencia de una ideología dominante, no por ello hemos de menospreciar a las restantes, aspecto sobre el que queremos hacer hincapié, por ocupar un lugar de vital importancia en este proceso, pues, como indica Garrido Vilariño, la ideología, junto con la sociedad y el poder, constituyen tres variables responsables de las principales decisiones de todo proceso de traducción: qué se traduce, cuándo, por qué, para qué, dónde y, sobre todo, cómo (32). Garrido se apoya en la denominación aportada por Althusser quien, siguiendo a Marx, habla de una “ideología dominante” (36), la cual se apoya sobre dos pilares: por un lado, contar con una mayoría numérica y, por otro, representar los intereses de la clase dominante de las diversas sociedades. El concepto de “ideología dominante” responde a la expresión de una determinación social fruto de las relaciones de dominación entre las clases. Para Engels y Marx, la ideología representa la “production of ideas, of conceptions, of consciousness” en todo lo que “men say, imagine, conceive”, e incluye aspectos como “politics, laws, morality, religion, metaphysics, etc.” (47). Estos autores establecen que

The ideas of the ruling class are in every epoch the ruling ideas, i.e., the class which is the ruling *material* force of society, is at the same time its ruling *intellectual* force. The class which has the means of material production at its disposal, has control at the same time over the means of mental production... The ruling ideas are nothing more than the ideal expression of the dominant material relationships, the dominant material relationships grasped as ideas;

hence of the relationships which make the one class the ruling one, therefore, the ideas of its dominance. (64)

De esta afirmación cabe destacar la asociación realizada entre ideas dominantes con la clase dominante, la cual tiene los medios necesarios para ser el motor de las sociedades de una época determinada, tanto a nivel material como intelectual, ejerciendo un control sobre las restantes clases sociales y estableciendo las ideas dominantes, consideradas como “buenas” o “correctas” en todos los ámbitos de la vida, como bien señalan Engels y Marx cuando se refieren a la política, la elaboración de las leyes, moralidad, religión, metafísica, etc. Esta idea se ve reforzada en Gramsci, para quien la ideología es “una concepción del mundo que se manifiesta implícitamente en el arte, en el derecho, en la actividad económica, en todas las manifestaciones de la vida intelectual y colectiva” (citado en Portelli, 18). Como Marx y Engels, Gramsci es consciente de que la ideología está presente en todos los ámbitos de las sociedades y que es una manera de concebir el mundo y, en esas concepciones y creencias se justifica el ejercicio de poder de una clase sobre otra, lo cual nos lleva a hablar de ideología dominante, entendida como justificación y preservación de las relaciones materiales-sociales de desigualdad. En palabras de Poulantzas,

la ideología dominante se encarna en los aparatos del Estado que desempeñan el papel de laborar, inculcar y reproducir esta ideología, la cual tiene su importancia en la constitución y reproducción de la división social del trabajo, de las clases sociales y de la dominación de clase. Este es por excelencia el papel de ciertos aparatos que pertenecen a la esfera del Estado y han sido designados como aparatos ideológicos del Estado, lo mismo si pertenecen al Estado que si conservan su carácter jurídico “privado” (27-28)

La ideología dominante implica la existencia de una diferencia de clases y, por tanto, de organización y reproducción de tareas en todos los ámbitos de las sociedades y que influirán en la manera de concebir modas, formas de trabajar, etc. Aplicado a nuestro esquema del proceso de traducción, esto quiere decir que el traductor estará influido por una serie de parámetros ideológicos que responden a dicha cuestión de dominación y que provocará que este, consciente, o inconscientemente, sea transmisor de dicha ideología según su toma de decisión a la hora de desempeñar su labor traductora.

En términos generales podríamos definir la ideología como “o conxunto de valores ou crenzas, tanto conscientes como inconscientes, que son compartidos por unha comunidade dada (ou por un individuo) e que conforman interpretacións e representacións do mundo de cada individuo” (Garrido Vilariño 36). De esta definición nos cabe destacar el matiz consciente o inconsciente de dicha ideología, puesto que, retomando la figura del traductor, su profesionalidad le hace ser objetivo en su trabajo. No obstante, Garrido Vilariño contempla tres modificaciones en cuanto a la transmisión de la ideología en traducción. Así pues, además de los procedimientos de traducción de Gonçalves Barbosa, que si bien entrañan una u otra ideología, están más orientados a aspectos lingüísticos, Garrido Vilariño contempla la ideología distinguiendo atenuación, neutralización e intensificación del discurso-ideología del TO en el TT (37-38).

La variación de un tipo a otro cambia de acuerdo a infinidad de factores que limitan la cultura de llegada, la de partida, sus contextos e ideologías. En referencia al anterior esquema de Baltrusch, este explica que “cada texto / ideología de chegada devém através do tempo um novo texto / ideología de partida para outras atividades para / tradutivas...” (27). En consecuencia, el paso del tiempo y la consiguiente modificación de la ideología del contexto de partida hará que el texto original requiera de una nueva traducción y una reinterpretación acorde a la ideología momentánea, tanto de la nueva cultura de partida, como de la nueva cultura receptora de la traducción, afirmando así, como Baltrusch indica, que “qualquer ideología de chegada depende de uma estética de recepção para poder se perpetuar” (28), dando lugar a retraducciones ligadas a la ideología. En su descripción del papel del traductor, Peña Martín realiza un breve recorrido destacando aquellos aspectos que forman parte de todo proceso de traducción, teniendo en cuenta desde los objetos que en él participan, los sujetos, los tipos de traducción, el marco de la traducción hasta aspectos inmateriales y de índole abstracta como el concepto de fidelidad y el factor tiempo. A este respecto, y ligada a la idea de Garrido Vilariño de que a ideologías diferentes, traducciones diferentes, Peña Martín distingue, por una parte, la fidelidad en traducción y, por otra, contempla el paso del tiempo y, en estos dos bloques, categoriza varias situaciones que desempeñan un papel crucial en la noción de equivalencia que aquí nos

atañe y que completa la influencia de la carga de ideología dominante expuesta por Garrido Vilariño.

De este modo, Peña Martín describe dentro de la fidelidad en traducción seis elementos y, a pesar de que no los describa en demasía, la formulación de los mismos es transparente y permite, al mismo tiempo, poder tener una visión global más amplia. Así pues, sus opciones contempladas sobre la fidelidad (48-51) incluyen la adecuación / reproducción, ya sea en concordancia con la forma o el contenido, estipular que el original no existe, sino que es entendido como una mera referencia, siendo así un caso extremo de manipulación. Por otra parte, Peña Martín habla de las mutilaciones y pone el ejemplo de que existen razones de orden comercial, práctico y manipulaciones domesticadoras que hacen que textos con carga moral sexual se vean aligerados, en un acto de censura. En cuarto lugar, las tergiversaciones son señaladas en tanto que pueden resultar interesadas y conscientes por parte del que interviene, algo que está relacionado con el quinto aspecto mencionado sobre la fidelidad, los deslices ideológicos, provenientes ya sea de un pensamiento clasista, sexista o racista. Por último, encontramos los problemas éticos vinculados al código deontológico de los traductores. En este punto, Peña Martín realiza una afirmación relevante y es que “las traducciones se cuentan entre los refugios consentidos donde ciertas formas de censura siguen actuando en las sociedades democráticas contemporáneas” (51), lo que nos hace no perder de vista esta forma de proceder y estar alerta para detectarla. Asimismo, se recalca la idea de que ninguna traducción es un acto objetivo, ya que, sea de forma consciente o inconsciente, el traductor realiza su trabajo influido por su propia ideología reflejada también en su estilo de escribir, por ejemplo.

En cuanto al factor tiempo, Peña Martín, sin entrar en detalles, nombra los desfases causados por el espacio diacrónico y las retraducciones (51-52), de las que también hablaba Baltrusch (27-28), como causantes de dicho desfase temporal.

### **La traducción en época postcolonial**

En tanto que transdisciplina, los Estudios de traducción nos ofrecen la posibilidad ya no solo de estudiar el proceso de traducción desde un enfoque

cultural de manera general, sino, más en concreto, desde un punto antropológico y etnográfico. El giro cultural producido en los Estudios de traducción condujo a una nueva concepción del proceso de traducir, abriéndose así a otras disciplinas de las que tomar elementos para sus propios intereses teóricos. Así pues, el cambio de perspectiva teórica en una disciplina relacionada con otra conllevará modificaciones y nuevas aproximaciones teóricas siguiendo esa nueva idea, ya sea aceptándola o dando lugar a una crítica de la misma. En este sentido, Buzelin destaca que “dès lors que l’on appréhende la culture comme un “texte” et que l’on voit dans les textes des représentations culturelles –ce à quoi conduit le “virage culturel” (Bassnett 1998) des études en traduction–, les liens entre l’ethnographie et la traductologie se resserrent d’un coup, les études des uns acquièrent une pertinence immédiate pour les autres” (730). Vincular el mundo colonial y postcolonial con los Estudios de traducción responde a la afirmación de Simon y St-Pierre, que estiman que

to enter in the postcolonial world is to see cultural relations at a global level, to understand the complexities of the histories and power relations which operate across continents. For translation studies and literary study in general, adopting a postcolonial frame means *enlarging the map* which has traditionally bound literary and cultural studies... And so we must understand our own place on this map. Where do we belong, where are we speaking from, and on the basis of what particular kinds of knowledge? (citado en Buzelin 730).

Los procesos de colonización han originado una nueva forma de concebir tanto los Estudios de traducción, como los culturales entrañando el análisis de una serie de relaciones de poder y hegemonía que siguen estando presentes en nuestras sociedades por medio de mecanismos encargados de emitir señales e ideologías que difieren las unas de las otras, ya sea consciente o inconscientemente.

No obstante, antes de explicar en qué medida la época postcolonial influye en los Estudios de traducción, nos parece interesante exponer la diferencia que realiza Estermann entre tres términos que a menudo se confunden: la colonialidad, la colonización y el colonialismo. El primer término se emplea para hacer referencia a una representación de una “gran

variedad de fenómenos, abarca toda una serie de fenómenos desde lo psicológico y existencial, hasta lo económico y militar, y que tienen una característica común: la determinación y dominación de uno por otro” (Estermann 55). Esa dominación a la que se hace referencia es de tipo político, económico, político, ideológico, etc., llega a nuestros días causando desigualdades entre los sexos, por ejemplo, y es un legado de la época de la colonización, es decir, del “proceso (imperialista) de ocupación y determinación externa de territorios, pueblos, economías y culturas por parte de un poder conquistador que usa medidas militares, políticas, económicas, culturales, religiosas y étnicas” (Estermann 54). En este proceso, como bien sabemos, siempre ha habido un poder al que se consideraba superior, un poder que se impuso en su momento y que no mostraba respeto por las culturas que se encontraban a su paso en un territorio inhóspito por el hecho de considerarlas “bárbaras”. La consecuencia fundamental de la colonialización es pensar que hay una cultura superior y ocultar la identidad propia autóctona considerada “inferior”, potenciando así una asimetría y una clara hegemonía en todos los aspectos que dirigen y gobiernan nuestras sociedades, por lo que, más allá de ocupar físicamente un territorio, incorporan su modelo económico, político, su régimen jurídico, sus valores, su religión y su lengua, dada la visión de occidendocentrismo (Estermann 54 y 63). Por su parte, el “colonialismo” hace referencia a “la ideología concomitante que justifica y hasta legitima el orden asimétrico y hegemónico establecido por el poder colonial” (Estermann 54). Vistas estas tres definiciones podemos concretar que hoy en día estamos continuamente ante desigualdades que podemos denominar colonialidad, y lo cual responde a un colonialismo ideológico aún presente en las sociedades actuales, originando desigualdades, relaciones de superioridad e inferioridad entre culturas e individuos.

En relación con los Estudios de traducción y su concepción de traducción como transformación del Uno y del Otro, la colonialidad se podría plantear desde la pregunta señalada por Robinson: “Who is transforming what how? And also: if a current or still-dominant cultural transformation is harmful to our interests, how can we retranslate its terms so as to engineer a different transformation” (93). Pese a que para autores como Yuste Frías, el ideal es traducir al Uno y al Otro a la vez, sin que estos

se conviertan en su “opuesto”<sup>1</sup>, no podemos restringirnos al marco teórico y obviar aquí la práctica del día a día de cómo tratar o cómo se ha tratado lo que podríamos llamar una traducción cultural en materia de colonialismo, dado que la decisión de adoptar una u otra estrategia ha acarreado consecuencias a nivel teórico palpables en la realidad de las sociedades colonizadas de la actualidad. Por estrategia aquí entendemos tanto la “domesticación” como la “extranjerización” de los elementos de la cultura de partida y que marcan el grado de contacto cultural que se produzca. Durante los procesos de colonización, las potencias de occidente se toparon con pueblos de costumbres “inferiores” y “bárbaras” y, debido a una visión occidentocentrista e iniciaron un proceso de traducción cultural en términos de identidad/otredad haciendo que el pueblo autóctono sintiese que su cultura ya no era válida y que debían seguir el modelo de occidente por medio de la imitación de la forma de vestir, sus pautas de comportamiento, etc. integrando así elementos de los colonizadores en costumbres autóctonas, convirtiendo a ese Uno minoritario en Otro. En resumen, la conclusión de Buzelin de que “la traduction en contexte postcolonial exige, avant toute chose (avant de les substituer par d’autres) que l’on remplace les “*minority elements*” du texte de départ au cœur du *processus interprétatif*, qu’on lise ce texte, non pas uniquement, mais avant tout, selon leur point de vue” (741) manifiesta perfectamente el reflejo y la ideología de la época y sigue vigente en nuestros días por medio de concepciones que denigran todos esos elementos minoritarios.

No obstante, ningún elemento minoritario debe ser menospreciado dado que pese a no ser aspectos o prácticas muy extendidas por limitación de territorio y/o tratarse de una cultura minoritaria frente a otras mayoritarias, ese conjunto de los llamados “elementos minoritarios” resulta ser definitorio de las culturas a las que pertenecen debido a su carácter intrínseco, puesto que hacen que una cultura sea una y no otra.

Como hemos visto, el enfoque etnográfico en traducción nos sirve para fundamentar las relaciones de poder, identidad y otredad en este ámbito, y para explicar que todo es cultura y que todo es traducción. Por otra parte, cabe remarcar que el legado de los procesos de colonización y el colonialismo tiene su forma en el término “colonialidad”, concepto muy amplio y que da a conocer las relaciones de poder y dominación a grupos



minoritarios, cuya presencia, en soporte textual como en traducción, se sustituye u oculta por medio de procedimientos como la domesticación o la extranjerización y, en cuanto a soporte no textual, se ve reflejado en el proceso de colonización y su visión occidentocentrista, imponiendo modelos y costumbres occidentales a los nuevos territorios conquistados.

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<sup>1</sup> “Traducir no es o el Uno o el Otro, sino el Uno y el Otro a la vez: el Uno no llegando a convertirse en el Otro, ni el Otro asimilándose al Uno” (“Desconstrucción, traducción y paratraducción en la era digital” 79).

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## II

LITERARY INTERTEXTUALITY IN THE POSTMODERN GOTHIC SPACES OF  
DARIO ARGENTO'S *SUSPIRIA* AND *INFERNO*

MARTÍN MALLO-MEILÁN

This paper explores the intertextuality between the Gothic spaces of Dario Argento's films *Suspiria* (1977) and *Inferno* (1980) and Gothic literature texts. This work purposefully leaves out the third film in Argento's *The Three Mothers* trilogy, *Mother of Tears* (2007), because of its notably different cinematography, which subsequently implies a vastly different representation of space. Despite not being one of the foci of this study, this last film will be referenced owing to thematic commonalities with *Suspiria* and *Inferno*. This essay will examine, first, several spaces that appear in both films and are integral to Gothic literature, and then a specific case of intertextuality between Prospero's abbey in Poe's "The Masque of the Red Death" (1842) and the ballet academy in *Suspiria*.

*Suspiria* and *Inferno* are the first and second films in Dario Argento's *The Three Mothers* trilogy. Each of the films deals with one of the Three Mothers (although two of them appear in *Inferno*), tremendously powerful and ancient witches who live in majestic houses built for them from which they rule the world. At the end of each film, the protagonist witch is vanquished. This essay will address Mater Suspiriorum / Helena Markos (her previous name), who haunts Freiburg in *Suspiria*, and Mater Tenebrarum, who inhabits New York in *Inferno*. In *Suspiria*, Mater Suspiriorum uses a ballet academy as a front for her coven of witches until she is killed by the new American student Suzy Bannion. In *Inferno*, Mater Tenebrarum terrorizes the people who enter her apartment building until she is destroyed by debris produced by an accidental fire.

Both *Suspiria* and *Inferno* have garnered the attention of academia, and both films have been researched from a variety of fields and perspectives. Naturally, they have been of interest to cinema studies, with

essays such as Giulio L. Giusti's "Expressionist Use of Colour Palette and Set Design in Dario Argento's *Suspiria*", in which the author draws parallels between the use of color and mise-en-scène in *Suspiria* and in German Expressionist films. Also within the area of cinema studies but dealing with substantially different themes is Damien Pollard's essay "I'm blind, not deaf!': Hegemonic soundscapes and resistant hearing in Dario Argento's *Suspiria* and *Inferno*", in which the author demonstrates the importance of the films' soundscapes, focusing on their aural aspect, instead of on the more commonly analyzed visual facet. But the films have also received attention outside of cinema studies. As an example, Charlotte Gough writes about gender issues, abjection and other topics in her article "The Ballerina Body-Horror: Spectatorship, Female Subjectivity and the Abject in Dario Argento's *Suspiria* (1977)".

In terms of research with goals similar to the ones in this essay, at least two other texts can be found: Lindsay Hallam's "Why are there always three?: The Gothic Occult in Dario Argento's Three Mothers Trilogy" and Chris Gallant's "In the Mouth of the Architect: *Inferno*, Alchemy and the Postmodern Gothic". The first of the two essays deals mostly with the occult and esoteric sources of the film trilogy, but also briefly mentions some aspects of the films' space and their relation to literature that are adjacent to this text's content. Hallam writes about one of the main literary sources for the films, Thomas De Quincey's essay "Levana and Our Ladies of Sorrow", contained within his 1845 book *Suspiria de Profundis*, that also lends its name to Argento's film. She also mentions the debt that the films owe to the Gothic not only thematically but also in terms of the critical importance of space. Hallam writes:

The title of the first Gothic novel from 1764, *The Castle of Otranto* by Horace Walpole, again demonstrates the significance of place within the Gothic milieu with its reference to the house of the novel's villain. [...] Architecture and design are integral elements of The Three Mothers trilogy, often taking prevalence over aspects such as character development or plausible narrative events. (Hallam 11)

However, other than this brief reference to Walpole's novel, the essay does not delve into the connections between *Suspiria*, *Inferno*, and other Gothic

fiction texts as this paper aims to do. Regarding Gallant's essay, even though there is some overlap with this work since both deal with the Postmodern Gothic, most of the content is notably different. First, Gallant's text focuses exclusively on *Inferno*. And second, his work is centered on alchemy, a topic that will not be discussed here.

As previously mentioned, this work will focus specifically on the associations between the spaces in Argento's two chosen films and a selection of Gothic literary texts. Both *Suspiria* and *Inferno* have often been criticized as irrational, unbelievable films, (even when accepting the existence of witchcraft in their diegesis with a precedence of form over substance. Quoting Hallam, "these films have often been criticized for their lack of plausible narrative events and underdeveloped characters" (26), thus shifting the attention from the typical narrative elements to the technical aspects of the film when one is seeking meaning in them. There are many ways to look for meaning in these perhaps resistant to interpretation films. The aforementioned scholarly works already offer a number of paths: symbolism, color, sound and intertextuality. It is the last of these paths that this essay tackles. Intertextuality is here proposed as a possible avenue to fill these two films with more meaning(s). As discussed, this essay will look particularly at spatial intertextuality between the films and Gothic literature, thus distinguishing itself from previous research that sought intertextual links within the field of cinema such as the previously alluded to essay by Giusti.

The methodology used in this essay to extract meaning from these films is drawn from Jan Alber's book *Unnatural Narrative: Impossible Worlds in Fiction and Drama* (2016). One of the main objectives of his book is to try to make sense of the unnatural, defined by him as the "physically, logically or humanly impossible" (3). This essay intends to do the same with the unnatural spaces in *Suspiria* and *Inferno*, mainly represented by the houses of the two witches. Since their abodes operate as their lairs and hideouts, their powers are most felt inside of them, turning them into unnatural spaces not only because of their impossible architecture but also because of the magical events that transpire inside of them owing to witchcraft.

In *Unnatural Narrative*, Alber connects the unnatural in postmodernist texts with the unnatural previously present in literary history. In his words: “In a nutshell I aim to reconceptualize postmodernism as an intertextual endeavor that is connected to the history of literature through manifestations of the unnatural” (13). The aim of this essay is similar, but it limits the scope to consider exclusively unnatural spaces and connects two different arts: cinema and literature.

In his book, Alber also proposes that although the unnatural is indeed present in older narratives, postmodern texts often hold a far greater concentration of it: “Postmodernism frequently builds on the unnatural passages of historical genres and extends them so that unnaturalness exists in a (quantitatively speaking) higher concentration and dominates the narrative as a whole” (221). Furthermore, he suggests a connection between the Gothic and the postmodern: “I see the Gothic novel as an anticipation of postmodernism: Gothic novels and postmodernist narratives are linked through modes of the unnatural” (146-147). *Suspiria* and *Inferno*, thus, deploy this same technique: in both films, Argento refurbishes Gothic unnatural spaces and deploys a high quantity of them in the films. While he mostly uses typical spaces, such as catacombs or haunted houses, he also takes strong inspiration from Prospero’s abbey in “The Masque of the Red Death”. With this proposition in mind, why can *Suspiria* and *Inferno* be considered postmodern films beyond this accumulation of unnatural spaces which were already existing in older art?

There are several reasons to consider both films postmodern, at least in the broad sense. Despite this, labeling or categorization of art is almost always open to discussion. The first and perhaps strongest link to postmodernism that *Suspiria* and *Inferno* share is, precisely, intertextuality. Besides the intertextual connections to Gothic literature that will be explored here, the two films contain a high amount of references to other works. In her essay, Lindsay Hallam reveals two critical sources for the films: fairy tales (particularly Snow White for *Suspiria*) and Thomas de Quincey’s essay “Levana and Our Ladies of Sorrow”:

[...] the connection to de Quincey is clear, as is the influence of traditional fairy tale structure. In *Suspiria* 25th Anniversary, both Argento and Nicolodi cite tales such as Snow White and Bluebeard

as formative in shaping *Suspiria*'s narrative. As Varelli states, these Mothers 'are actually wicked stepmothers', in the mould of such characters found in *Snow White* and *Cinderella*. They are embodiments of an evil and destructive femininity that takes life rather than creates it, giving birth only to sorrow, tears and darkness. (9)

Moreover, Hallam's essay points out several references to the occult and Western Esotericism present in the films: "Furthermore, within these three films are several references to esoteric traditions, such as Hermeticism, Gnosticism, alchemy, and astrology, as well as esoteric figures such as Fulcanelli and Rudolf Steiner." (3). In the case of *Suspiria*, this intertextuality goes one step further towards postmodernism, as the walls of the dance academy present designs by Aubrey Beardsley and M. C. Escher. Although nonexistent in *Inferno*, these decontextualizations of paintings serve to strongly position at least *Suspiria* as a postmodern film. Further, and lastly in terms of intertextuality, it is this relation between *giallo* and painting that cement the thoughts of some critics that consider *giallo* to be a postmodern genre. In "Los contornos del miedo. La huella del arte pictórico en el giallo italiano", Agustín Rubio Alcover and Antonio Loriguillo-López argue that "la prolija y continuada relación entre giallo y pintura, clave para la adjudicación de la (discutida) etiqueta de género postmoderno, permanece infraexplorada." (59). Although debating whether *Suspiria* can be considered a *giallo* film or not is beyond the scope of this essay, it is clear that it possesses links to the genre and characteristics of it, such as the graphic violence and the victims being mostly women. As such, it seems fair to consider that if intertextuality with painting links *giallo* to postmodernism, it can also link *Suspiria* even though it also contains characteristics that cannot be considered *giallo*.

Other characteristics that allow the films to be linked to postmodernism include the following: first, their bizarre montage, packed with strange camera angles, that, combined with other factors such as the saturated colors or the music, lend them their artificial appearance. Second, in line with the previous point about the films' idiosyncratic aesthetic, they can be said to prioritize form over substance. While they possess a tremendously characteristic and powerful aesthetic, if one were to look for the meaning of



the films in its more traditional narrative conveyors, (the plot, the characters, the dialogue) one could easily be disappointed. While these narrative functions do provide a followable story, its narrative content is nevertheless rather tenuous. It could be argued that image is another protagonist in these films, (if not the protagonist) and that through this heightened importance many of the narrative functions are transferred unto it. Finally, both *Suspiria* and *Inferno* make constant use of raw, perhaps excessive, violence. This also connects them to the interest in graphic violence that so many postmodern films show.

Before delving into the specific intertextual relationship between “The Masque of the Red Death” and *Suspiria*, a number of spaces common to both *Suspiria* and *Inferno* will be examined, as these can be regarded as a sort of stock spaces drawn from Gothic tradition. Certainly, Argento does not extract the following spaces exclusively from Gothic literature; they are common tropes in horror cinema as well, but Gothic literature is perhaps the first medium in which they occur in such concentration.

The first of them are haunted spaces. Almost omnipresent in Gothic literature, these are places that are home to the numinous, just as the three houses of the Mothers in Argento’s trilogy. The haunting often turns into a perilous place what should be a safe space such as a castle, a house, or another form of residential building. Notable examples of them in Gothic literature include the castle of Lindenberg in Matthew Lewis’ *The Monk* (1796), which houses the spectre known as the Bleeding Nun, or Horace Walpole’s pioneering *The Castle of Otranto* (1764), where a haunting giant knight and moving pictures can be found.

Argento’s haunted spaces do not assume the form of the preferred Gothic spaces, but they serve an identical narrative function. The director translates the castles and noble estates of the past of which the Gothic is so fond into a dance academy (where most of the students sleep as well, hence turning it into a residential space) in *Suspiria* and an apartment building in *Inferno*. Both are still houses, but for the witches. For most of their other residents they become haunted deathtraps due to the Mothers’ witchcraft, thus fulfilling the same function that they did in Gothic literature.

A specific type of (often haunted) place that holds much intertextuality with the two films is the house (usually, and particularly

often a family house) that collapses when its owner dies and/or vice versa. The paradigmatic example of this trope is possibly the house in Poe's "The Fall of the House of Usher" (1839). In the short story, when Roderick and Madeline, the brothers who inhabit the house, die, the house almost immediately splits apart and sinks into the nearby lake. The same event occurs in M.P. Shiel's "Vaila", that can, after all, be considered a variation of Poe's text. Evidently, the event also takes place in "The House of Sounds", Shiel's rewriting of his own short story.

This trope is not unique to Gothic literature, but it seems that Poe's text is one of the first works to make use of it. As a few examples of the same trope used in other literary genres and also in media other than literature one could think, first, of Barad-dûr. Sauron's tower fortress in Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings* high fantasy trilogy is reduced to rubble in both *The Return of the King* novel and its filmic adaptation as soon as the One Ring is destroyed and with it the tower's host, Sauron. The same happens in the film *It: Chapter Two* (2019), where the house in which Pennywise was hiding crumbles following his defeat. Anecdotically, there is another filmic example of this trope that is related to clowns. During the climax of Stephen Chiodo's 1988 film *Killer Klowns from Outer Space*, the circus tent that houses the invader clowns while they are on Earth metamorphoses into a spinning top that purportedly would take the clowns back to their home. But their return is truncated when Dave, one of the film's protagonists, stabs the nose of the leader of the clowns, killing it. The leader of the clowns starts spinning and explodes simultaneously with the tent-spinning top.

This trope proliferates in videogames, although here the space in question is not usually haunted. A notable example is how in the *Castlevania* saga the castle is always destroyed after the defeat of the final boss, Dracula. It also happens in *Dragon Quest XI: Echoes of an Elusive Age*, where the Fortress of Fear is destroyed after beating the apparent final boss. These examples hopefully suffice to show how common this trope, arguably of Gothic origin, is.

This motif is germane to this paper because it is present in the three films of the trilogy. In *Suspiria*, after Mater Suspiriorum is killed all of her coven can be seen grasping at invisible wounds and the academy is set on fire. In *Inferno* it happens the other way around: an accidental fire ends up

heaving debris at Mater Tenebrarum that slay her. And even in *Mother of Tears* Mater Lachrymarum dies perforated by a pillar that drops from the mansion above the catacomb where she hid after the house had started to collapse. The repeated use of this motif strongly links the trilogy to Poe's "The Fall of the House of Usher".

Other spaces that often are permeated by the unnatural and that Gothic literature and *Suspiria* and *Inferno* share include underground spaces, secret passages and the city. Regarding the first, Gothic literature makes ample use of spaces such as caves and catacombs. As an example, in *The Monk* Matilda leads Ambrosio to a cavern in the catacombs of St. Clare's where she performs a magic ritual to help Ambrosio lay with Antonia. Argento also makes use of underground spaces invaded by the supernatural: in *Mother of Tears* Mater Lachrymarum hides in the Catacombs of Rome, for instance. But in *Inferno*, again, instead of using a typical Gothic space he uses a similar space that is more commonly found in the twentieth and twenty first centuries: the underfloor of a building. Mater Tenebrarum hides in the underfloor of the apartment building in which most of the film transpires, establishing a thematic link between the Gothic underground spaces and the films. Evidently, the notion of the underground housing the unnatural, and particularly the unnatural evil, predates the Gothic by centuries, beginning in Western culture perhaps with the banishment of Lucifer to the depths of Hell if not earlier. Still, it is a resource often used in Gothic literature that reappears refurbished in *Inferno*.

Finally, it is worth noting that *Suspiria* contains another common Gothic space, the secret passage behind which Mater Suspiriorum/Helena Markos resides; and also that both *Suspiria* and *Inferno*, as well as the third film in the trilogy, take place in cities: a frequent choice of setting in Gothic texts. On the one hand, Argento's trilogy films are set in Freiburg, New York City and Rome respectively, while on the other hand one could think about Bram Stoker's *Dracula* (1897) London or, again, *The Monk's* Madrid. Because neither of these spaces is necessarily unnatural, their significance shall not be developed here. They are simply indicated as more shared spaces between Gothic literature and the films. Without denying that there might be further significance to this sharing, the fact that neither the secret

passage in *Suspiria*, Freiburg nor New York are presented as unnatural as a whole is enough to exclude them from deeper analysis here. In *Mother of Tears*, however, Rome might be considered to turn unnatural due to the actions of Mater Lachrymarum throughout the film, which could spur further research.

*Suspiria* does contain what could be considered an analogy of a very specific Gothic space, instead of a generic space as those presented so far: Freiburg's dance academy presents several analogous features to Prospero's abbey in Poe's "The Masque of the Red Death". First, in Poe's short story, Prince Prospero takes refuge from the plague ravaging the land inside an abbey. An abbey is, usually, a space of isolation for monks or nuns. Prospero repurposes the space to some degree, turning it from the theoretically pious abode of a monastic community into a palace of hedonism for himself and his guests. Nevertheless, the abbey is still used as a place of isolation, this time to protect the people inside from the Red Death. What is shifted, instead, is the use that is made of the building. Prospero turns the abbey from a place of worship and meditation into a haven of pleasure.

Freiburg's ballet academy in *Suspiria* becomes a space isolated from the outside world quite early in the narrative. It could be argued that it is a space of isolation from the onset, seeing how Suzy Bannion is ostracized by many of the veteran students, but in this case it would be an individual isolation as opposed to an almost complete separation of those within from the outside. The point at which the academy becomes an isolated space is when an infestation of maggots is found and all the students are strongly encouraged and subtly threatened to spend the night in one of the dance studios so that they might be terrorized by Mater Suspiriorum.

However, the abbey and the academy also have in common that neither of them is utterly isolated. In Poe's short story, the Red Death personified somehow manages to sneak into the abbey and kill Prospero and the rest of the guests: "and now was acknowledged the presence of the Red Death. He had come like a thief in the night. And one by one dropped the revellers in the blood-bedewed halls of their revel, and died each in the despairing posture of his fall." Meanwhile, in *Suspiria*, the students are not forbidden from leaving the school premises after the maggot infestation, as this would dismantle the cover of the coven. Because of this, Suzy Bannion

is able to leave and learn that the school was founded by a powerful witch and that her whole coven would die if she did. Thanks to this she is ultimately able to slay Helena Markos and free the students from the witches' sadism. In this way, it also seems relevant that both buildings are almost isolated, but not entirely. These narratives suggest that in cases where isolation is intended but not wholly achieved, either salvation or doom can slip through the cracks.

Another analogy can be found in the existence of chromatically named rooms in both texts. In "The Masque of the Red Death", the rooms are colored due to their stained glass windows: "These windows were of stained glass whose colour varied in accordance with the prevailing hue of the decorations of the chamber into which it opened." Of the seven colored rooms in the short story, the essential one is the seventh and last room: the red room. "The panes here were scarlet—a deep blood colour." *Suspiria's* academy also includes rooms named after colors: the red room and the yellow room. However, they are never shown in the film, only mentioned, so it cannot be known whether they are also named according to their color or for different reasons. Even so, the presence of red rooms in both works segues into the importance of the color red in them. In Poe's text, red denotes the plague of the Red Death, the one unnatural presence in the story since it is, somehow, a disease and, apparently, an anthropomorphic entity simultaneously. In Argento's films, the tremendously artificial and saturated red color that pervades much of the academy's interior and its facade as well signals (together with other colors) the domain of the unnatural. This is further supported by how the red becomes even more intense during the scenes in which stronger unnatural events take place, such as when Suzy is about to find the hiding spot of Mater Suspiriorum. In contrast, the outside, normal world is almost always presented with a realistic color palette. The realistic coloring is only broken in a few scenes, for instance, when Suzy picks up a taxi just after arriving in Freiburg, denoting her immersion into the realm of the unnatural. Therefore, "The Masque of the Red Death" and *Suspiria* share the use of red colored spaces to indicate the presence of the unnatural.

As a final aside, since this intertextuality is not necessarily related to space, there is a similarity between the two antagonists of the works as well.

After Prospero's death, "a throng of the revellers at once threw themselves into the black apartment, and, seizing the mummer, whose tall figure stood erect and motionless within the shadow of the ebony clock, gasped in unutterable horror at finding the grave cerements and corpse-like mask, which they handled with so violent a rudeness, untenanted by any tangible form." The nature of this embodiment of the Red Death is never disclosed, but the fact is that a body is not found where one was expected to be found. In *Suspiria*, Helena Markos does have a physical body that is destroyed, resulting in the destruction of her coven as well. But after the protagonist discovers her hiding spot, her final line of defense is turning invisible, that is to say, concealing her body.

To conclude, even though *Suspiria* and *Inferno* have been criticized for their light plots and other arguable lacks of traditional narrative, several ways remain to give meaning(s) to these films. This essay attempts to do so by examining the relationships of their unnatural spaces to the previous iterations of these locations in Gothic literature. Many of the spaces that Argento presents in his films are refurbished versions of stock Gothic spaces, such as haunted houses or catacombs. A stronger tie can be seen in the multiple analogies found between *Suspiria's* academy and the abbey in "The Masque of the Red Death". Thus, the director concentrates many unnatural spaces from previous tradition that enrich his films through intertextual connections.

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## III

**BODY, DESIRE AND ALTERATION: EXPLORING CORPOREAL  
DISCOURSE IN DELANY'S "AYE, AND GOMORRAH"**

MARÍA MEDÍN-DOCE

We only become what we are by the radical  
and deep-seated refusal of that which others have made of us.  
Jean-Paul Sartre, Preface to *The Wretched of the Earth*

The body has long been a question of great interest in a wide range of fields. It would be futile to try to deny its complexity as a concept, since its meaning—confrontational against society in certain contexts—seems to expand beyond what words can describe. Undoubtedly, exploring the discourse that involves the body—the one that is constantly constructed, deconstructed and reconstructed by both society and individuals—is a way of trying to understand its nature far from what humans may or may not impose on it. In spite of the tendency to recognize the body as a natural entity, the nature of the body must be interpreted with caution. In this respect, nothing should be fully taken as a standardized outcome, nothing should be entirely assumed. We are all *different*.<sup>1</sup> It is likely, however, that such nature affects notions that are attenuated as the body develops and, therefore, this process happens at the same time that the subjects that inhabit the body change.

In “Aye, and Gomorrah” a set of particular characters can be observed; spacers are quite complex for the mere fact that they do not change, but they have been changed. The main narrative of this story revolves around these characters who have been blocked from puberty through castration, which prevents them from being cataloged under meanings of sexuality. These characters also experience a series of encounters with the frelks, who are attracted to the spacers precisely because of their lack of sexual marking. The genealogy of this story brings the reader



closer to issues such as sexuality, the construction of gender or fetishism, and the relationship among these and other concepts. This essay discusses how desire is affected by the body, by following the experiences of spacers. On the one hand, I explore the consequences that result from the changes that spacers have suffered —or following the words the author uses, the processes of alteration or neutering these characters have suffered/experienced. On the other hand, I analyze how desire is linked to one of the aspects that derive from the context formed in this story: suffering. Taken together, the findings of this study will further support the idea that desire is intimately related to the composition of the body.

Following this line of thought, it can be said that, in general, there is no body equal to another and, therefore, the *different* is an intrinsic quality of individuals. One of the most striking observations to emerge from such a quality is that particular and subjective experiences take place through which bodies can manifest themselves. However, all bodies share at least the same correspondence with the subjects that inhabit them. Despite the fact that, in some cases, there may be a concordance between them, such correspondence points out the distinction between body and subject: each one can be conceived as autonomous. Michel Foucault, cited by Butler (2001), argues that “the body is the inscribed surface of events” and she — Butler— continues:

the body is always under siege, suffering destruction by the very terms of history [which is evident in this story, as it will be pointed out throughout this essay]. And history is the creation of values and meaning by a signifying practice that requires the subjection of the body. This corporeal destruction is necessary to produce the speaking subject and its significations. (2491-2492)

Subjects depend, to some extent, on bodies and vice versa. However, in spite of such a dependence, a divergence may arise between them. Although there are, therefore, certain disparities, one of the obvious points of coexistence is related to the place they inhabit, as has been mentioned above. The very concept of *inhabiting* approximates the notion of space, which has been a subject of study and considerable interest for Foucault, among others. As he explains, the body “is the absolute place, the small fragment of space with which I become, strictly, body” (Foucault 7, my translation). That is why it seems appropriate to affirm, or at least to suggest, that the body forms a space —the space of oneself— through and from which individuals project their desires or needs.

Through this short science fiction story, however, Delany creates a world outside the ordinary that is perfectly recognizable to the reader. The characters that he presents in this story, spacers and frelks, constitute a new model of being, and readers can also identify with them since some of the experiences they live can be considered universal (they are related to the body and, therefore, to desire). Delany articulates the ambivalence of these concepts, body and desire, with the clarity or certainty that each and every individual possesses the ability of having similar experiences. In this story, the body seems to lay down the point of incision from which the direction of the life of spacers and frelks departs<sup>2</sup>. The question of how their behavior will develop and how they will project their desires or needs depends, to some extent, on their bodies. The next paragraph will focus on the situation of the spacers, who might be the wittiest characters, in order to discuss the relationship between body and desire.

“The longing, the old longing” (Delany 93); what happened to make it *old*? Is there now a *new* one?<sup>3</sup> Be that as it may, by stating such a sentence, the author suggests that spacers have once had the ability to have such a longing for *something*. Moreover, the word “old” places the reader in another time in which another situation for the spacers can be imagined; in such a situation, they were different. Society, constantly changing, changes these beings too. In most cases, society seems to shape individuals indirectly based on its principles or ideals; however, in the case of spacers, society literally shapes their bodies to achieve certain aims. These characters can be considered victims of a social construction that prevents their identity development in order to promote the development of wealth and prosperity; i.e., their power is based, in a certain way, on disempowering others. This action of *disempowering* is carried out by means of the alteration that spacers suffered in puberty, which deprives them of an exploration that would define their future sexual behaviors and preferences. It is pertinent to say, therefore, that “not biology, but culture, becomes destiny” (Butler 1990: 8) since it is society that interferes in their biological development by altering the nature of physics.<sup>4</sup>

Butler argues that gender is a historical category and a social construction (2004: 9); thus, the (literal) deprivation of having no gender is also the result of social conventions. Moreover, the bodies of the spacers are, in this way, also culturally configured, turning them into cultural artifacts. Furthermore, this “disempowerment”, alteration, or neutering, seems to impede the spacers access to what Lacan calls *jouissance*; which is not related

to “a feeling of pleasure or an experience of joy” (Braunstein 103) but is related to what it is “—in the sense in which the body experiences itself— . . . in the nature of tension, in the nature of a forcing, of a spending, even of an exploit” (qtd. in Braunstein 103). A reasonable approach to tackle this issue could be the consideration that the spacers’ *bodies cannot experience themselves* since they have undergone that *castration* process, such as it is mentioned “I think it’s unhappy that they have to alter you to make you a spacer. If they hadn’t, then we. . . If spacers had never been, then we could not be. . . the way we are. Did you start out male or female?”<sup>5</sup> Consequently, through alteration (or castration), experiences are restricted and limited. As it can be observed, the body becomes an obstacle that does not allow them to advance, i.e., it constitutes their own constraint. Their bodies are, as Foucault would say, “the irremediable place to which [they are] condemned” (8, my translation). One of the traits of these characters is that they have the ability to move from one place to another, to go up, to go down; that is, to cross borders. Nevertheless, despite being able to easily escape from one place to another, they cannot escape from their own space; they cannot be alienated from their bodies. Although they have a sexless body, such space is in reference to their own composition as entities, that is, the set of all their parts that makes spacers as a whole—but, as it has been mentioned, without sex.

As a consequence of this condition, their bodies do not lack meaning, but they are more exposed to an exploration to redefine themselves. Their bodies are a simple reconstruction and they are not even a passive medium, but they (the bodies) certainly open a space in which sexuality and its definition are raised as the main questions. Following Butler, “bodies cannot be said to have a significant priority to the mark of their gender” (Butler 1990: 8) and, therefore, “the [same] question then emerges: To what extent does the body [in this case, of spacers] *come into being* in and through the mark(s) of [no] gender” (8) and no sex? Undoubtedly, there is a great tension that raises the question of to what extent is the existence of these characters questionable, given the fact that they possess neither gender nor sex? Spacers could determine the unrepresentable by the mere fact of having incomplete, opaque and neutral bodies. As a consequence of this condition, spacers lose “purely organic energy” (Lemaire 161), that is, what Lacan calls *need*. They do not have an absence of something that would be primordial, essential and vital to them; since, *where there is not, one cannot take out*. However, in spite of the fact

that their bodies are oppressed, reduced to a void and subject to certain restrictions, this does not imply that they cannot have the option of having similar experiences to the rest of the characters and individuals. It can be alleged that individuals and, in the same way, characters sometimes speak about the same thing in different ways and that they all feel the same in multiple ways. The same happens with desire.

It could be said that the need is related to physical conditions, that is, to the nature of the body. However, desire does not depend entirely on the body, but transcends it.<sup>6</sup> The supposed *need* that the spacers would have had in case they had not suffered the alteration disappears after such a process; however, the desire does not disappear, but it is transformed. As Delany himself explains in reference to Lacan, "when *all* the elements of need are satisfied in the situation of want, the *remainder* is desire" (1999: 18) but, in the case of spacers, if there is no real need, where does the desire come from? Delany also affirms that "Its mark [desire's mark] is absence" (15) so it would be convenient to suggest that desire is governed by certain logic. This logic is related to the search for real satisfaction which, therefore—because of the searching—is not possessed or not achieved. In other words, the logic of desire is related to what Lacan calls *lack*. As Anika Lemaire explains, "Lacan often uses the term lack (*manque*) or gap (*béance*) in his *Écrits*, and he always does so in a context which indicates what it is that lies before any form of instinctual expression or canalized desire" (162), which is successfully reflected in the case of spacers. Literally, they have that lack, that gap that (almost) forces them to find *something* to cover it, to fill it: "Lack implies the idea of the lived drama of an irreversible incompleteness. . . it subsumes all the radical anxiety in [spacers]; the anxiety which results from [their] conditions" (Lemaire 162). Moreover, desire is neatly encapsulated in an endless time frame: it is the infinite paradox that cannot be fulfilled. Spacers, no matter what they do, are not able to fill that void as readers can observe when the protagonist explains that "there are times when yelling and helling will not fill the lack" (94). This lack, this emptiness, and the fact of being unable to fill it, produces exasperation, despair and may even make spacers vulnerable because they feel powerless in the face of the impossibility of feeling complete. They *want* something "forever out of reach" (Leader and Groves 90).

The protagonist spacer does not know what he *wants*—in the same way that the rest of spacers do not know either—, he does not even want "her [frelk's] damn money" (96) ("*what* [does he] *want the dammed money*

*for anyway?*”). In this regard, capital becomes the most significant element through which they achieve power and what offers them the possibility of feeling fullness. Following Lemaire, “all the objects of the subject's desire will always be a reminder of some primal experience of pleasure” (164); however, the object of desire for spacers, as it has just been affirmed, is not defined.<sup>7</sup> This is the case of the simple fact that the spacers have not had that experience of previous pleasure; they do not know what they *want* because their development has been stopped at the moment it was about to begin. They have been paralyzed at puberty; they are like children and, therefore, they seem to carry a certain innocence —or, perhaps, ignorance— that prevents them from fixing an (mature) object of desire. This can also be explained as the spacers have not developed the ego, not deeply at least.<sup>8</sup> Therefore, since spacers do not have “the other of their self”, they are not able to configure their ideals or have a clear conception of who they *want* to be or what appearance they *want* to project (see Lemaire 73). Accordingly, it would be not possible that “[their] sexual drives begin to emerge and [they cannot] distinguish themselves in their specificity, first according to the particular sites or erotogenic zones of the body (oral, anal, phallic, scopophilic, etc.) from which they emanate; and then with particular sources, aims and objects” (Grosz 268).

In view of all that has been mentioned so far, one may suppose that the alteration is a way of silencing the body or, at least, it seems to be the ‘theft’ of the possibility of communicating in certain situations and in a particular way. Power annuls the *conversation* of their bodies, since the (body) interactions could be understood also as a dialogue. Such a dialogue cannot be maintained by spacers and *frelks* due to their differences. Following Gatens, “difference does not have to do with biological ‘facts’ so much as with the manner in which culture marks bodies and creates specific conditions in which they live and recreate themselves” (230) but, in this case, as has been observed, culture marks bodies, putting biology at a disadvantage.

To some extent, incongruity is present among these characters: they do not know what to do with each other. In this regard, it can be asked whether or not they *know* each other: “Oh, what do you want! / What will you give me? *I want something*” (100, *my emphasis*). They cannot, indiscreetly, keep proclaiming the traditional “simple bipartite statement and question, ‘I like you. Do you like me?’ ” (Delany 1999: 18); hence, the *demand* comes into action. A desperate plea becomes for spacers the most

opportune way to convey their impatience or, rather, their anguish. They want something, whatever it is, that can fill their void as can be observed in the following statement: “Give me something.’ I said. ‘Give me something —it doesn’t have to be worth sixty lira. Give me something that you like, anything of yours that means something to you” (99). Their demand is — such as Lacan explains the meaning of demand— “not concerned with any specific object in a stable manner” (Lemaire 169). The spacer is convinced that by acquiring *that* which has value for the frelk, it can be the guarantee of experiencing the same contentment. The observed correlation between the spacer and the frelk might be explained in this way: *one desires what the other has*, and not what the other desires to have. Consequently, desire approaches, to some extent, envy. They are aware that Frelks can possess valued things and, hence, they want to also have that ‘esteem’ and ‘appreciation’ for *something*.

However, the frelk woman cannot ‘obey’ the demand because, by doing so, she would be denying her own will to maintain her own desires and, therefore, to satisfy her own pleasures. If the desire was reciprocated and, therefore, the spacer and the frelk could go beyond what they can actually go, satisfaction would cease to be unattainable. Nevertheless, it seems that the very fact of being limited is what delights the frelk, as she states: “I want you because you can’t want me. That’s the pleasure. If someone really had a sexual reaction to... us, we’d be scared away” (98). The behavior of the frelks could be considered as detrimental to the autonomy of the spacers, since it is characterized by a lack of deference that hinders, in some way, the possibilities he has to satisfy his desires. The controversy is related to the fact of experiencing pleasure by observing that the other subject is affected and suffering. Sadomasochism is perpetuated in this interaction or, rather, empathy is absent. Although generalizations are not appropriate, this story seems to suggest that some sexual relationships are shaped by this type of behavior or, at least, influenced by it. However, sadomasochism may be conceived as an identity factor that, in some cases, governs the development of the relationships, such as the case of spacers and frelks. As a result, suffering becomes a habit that the spacer cannot escape: “there are times when you must walk by yourself because it hurts so much to be alone” (94). It is loneliness that reigns, thus, in the inhospitable territory of his body —and his soul; a desolation or solitude that gets used to being manifested and that contaminates the spacer with uncertainty, such

as he states: “I'm lonely. Maybe I want to find out how far it goes. I don't know yet” (100).

It is painful to assume the inability to achieve what one *wants* to have. As has been demonstrated throughout this essay, the corporeal otherness in turn affects the development of desire. However, in view of the question of what can be done under their imposed conditions, the resolution with oneself —both spacers and frelks— to develop resilience arises as one's own psychological *need*. Overall, this essay has tried to provide reasonably consistent evidence of an association between the body of the spacers and the development of their desire. Such association depends on the array of circumstances that are imposed on them after an alteration that displays a chain of limits with which they must learn to live.

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<sup>1</sup> See *Epistemology of the Closet*, Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick.

<sup>2</sup> This could be also stated as the “inflection point”. In mathematical studies, the inflection point defines a change; it is the point that makes the difference in a line. Following this respect, by using this simile, I am referring to the moment in which the body of the characters goes from being one “thing” to another. The body is that point that establishes a difference and, hence, they have attributes that allow them to experience life differently.

<sup>3</sup> “Old” can be also interpreted in the sense of “permanent” or “timeless”. However, since I have previously argued that spacers went through a change, I consider that the longing has also changed, but they still have knowledge about how it was in the past or, rather, they can speculate about it.

<sup>4</sup> This is in agreement with previous research that led to a precise reflection. A relevant instance of such scholars is that of Freud, who “does not assume a givenness or naturalness for the body: on his understanding, the biological body is rapidly overlaid with psychical and social significance, which displaces what may once (mythically) have been a natural body” (Grosz 268).

<sup>5</sup> According to Hewitson, “Lacan sees it [castration] as a process by which a sacrifice is given a mark. This mark is a lack, something with a negative attached to it”.

<sup>6</sup> The body has not been considered a main theme in psychoanalytical studies; however, it is also an aspect to be considered. Elizabeth Grosz states that “Although psychoanalysis is largely oriented to analysis and interpretation of psychical activities, and although the psyche is generally considered to be allied with mind, and opposed to the body, Freud and a number of other psychoanalysts have devoted considerable attention to the body's role in psychical life” (267).

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<sup>7</sup> There appears to be some agreement that this ‘non-defined object’ refers to what Lacan calls *the Missing Phallus*; “how can we speak about an object of desire? It would seem, on the contrary, as if desire did not have any object. Lacan replies that the object is of a particular kind: an absent one” (Leader and Groves 88).

<sup>8</sup> In the essay elaborated by Grosz (1992), it was reported that, according to Freud, “the ego is an image of the body's significance or meaning for the subject” (269). Nonetheless, as it has been stated previously, the meaning of spacer's bodies has been lost.

<sup>9</sup> The study by Leader and Groves also offers an explanation about Lacan's understanding of the *ego*. Following this, they mention the existence of two different *egos*: “the ideal ego is the image you assume and the ego ideal is the symbolic point which gives you a place and supplies the point from which you are looked at” (48). Therefore, it could be argued that “the other of the self” is constructed by two different aspects.



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## IV

**BLAME IT ON SANTO DOMINGO: YUNIOR'S FAILED  
RELATIONSHIPS IN JUNOT DÍAZ'S *THIS IS HOW YOU LOSE HER***

HILDA PUIG FRAGA

Junot Díaz's third and latest work *This Is How You Lose Her* (2012) is composed by nine non-linear interlinked short stories whose narrator and main character is Yunior, Díaz's alter ego and the main narrator also in his previous works: *Drown* (1996) and *The Brief Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao* (2007). From the beginning, Díaz aimed to write a heterogeneous novel about Yunior throughout several books (Scarano), with the intention of depicting the interior collapse of a certain New Jersey Dominican male, whose apprehended masculinity codes prevents him from having a home in intimacy (Filgate). Hence the reading of Díaz's three works as a sole unit allows to follow Yunior's formation, from his humble childhood in Santo Domingo towards his growth as an adult in the US who embodies the image of the stereotypical hyper-masculine Dominican man. This essay aims to explore Yunior's masculinity through his relationships with women, depicted mainly in his last work, in order to prove that the development and performance of Yunior's masculinity is a response to different social, transgenerational, and personal trauma. As Ramirez points out, Díaz achieves to portray in his works transmigrant characters who disclose "a Dominican hyper-masculine ethos which surpasses the borders of the island and persists in the vast diaspora community" (384) Thus we have to dig into his past and the past of his country to find the reasons behind his behavior towards women, his persistent infidelities and his inability to achieve real intimacy with his partners.

In his works, Díaz uses both their formal structure and language to reinforce and reflect the complexities and ambiguities of a character whose transmigrant identity is divided between two cultures. In 2011 Homi Bhabha coined the term "in-between" that both Del Valle and Yrizarri (57) use in their works to refer to the third space characters in Díaz's works inhabit; a space of interstitial agency where the transmigrant hybrid subjectivity is articulated while destabilizing both national hegemonic

narratives (Del Valle 64). Yunior is forced to negotiate all the traits which conform his identity, his masculinity, in that in-between space formed by the Dominican Republic and the United States. In 2011 Marta del Pozo Ortea published an essay that focuses on *Drown*, but whose premises can also be applied to *This Is How You Lose Her*. Del Pozo maintains that Díaz's non-structured narrative, composed of independent but linked stories with a constant juxtaposition and shifts in time and space, reveals that absence of a solid center both for the psyche of the text and the narrator (Del Pozo 2). Yunior's internal discordance is represented also through language, since his code-switching between English and Spanish is one of the most evident signs for the reader of the cultural struggle he undergoes. Both through language and narrative techniques Díaz is able to portray what is happening to the character, with each of the stories the reader sees how Yunior is forced to question static notions of Dominicaness that originate in the Island and prevail in the Diaspora. In *Masculinity after Trujillo* Maja Horn writes about the harsh consequences of Yunior's learned Dominican masculinity parameters that he struggles to perform in the diaspora: "the ongoing power of hegemonic notions of Dominican masculinity, including in the second generation of the diaspora, ultimately spells personal misery for the main narrative voice, Yunior" (134).

Del Pozo turns to Lacan's theory about the representation of the subconscious through language and applies it to Yunior's formation of his subjectivity across the stories. According to Lacan, language, when it functions as a representation of the subconscious, acts like the images of dreams. Del Pozo points at Díaz's stories as those dreams Lacan refers to which, by a metonymic function, lead to endless associations in trying to achieve the subject's truth (del Pozo 2-3). This theory is especially interesting in regards to *This Is How You Lose Her*, since it is not until we reach "The Cheater's Guide to Love", the last story of the book, that the reader confirms the previous stories form part of Yunior's diary, they are his written memories that he intends to turn into a novel. Yunior, fictional author of Díaz's three works (Ventura), remembers and writes the episodes of his life that have had an impact on him and tries to make sense of them in order to decipher the man he has turned into.

In the study of Díaz's novel "A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Cannibalist" Monica Hanna argues that one of Díaz's main themes is precisely the trope of writing as a healing process (91), what turns even more evident in Díaz's third work. In the same way Hanna observes in the novel

(90), *This Is How You Lose Her* is also a *Künstlerroman*. If we set the stories in a chronological order, we see Yunior's path towards becoming a man modeled after his brother and father, thus unable to maintain a normal intimate relationship with a woman, and this same path leads him precisely to become a writer. Once he finds himself psychologically, physically and emotionally destroyed by his inability to have an intimate partner, through writing his memories he attempts to understand what has taken him to that point. He begins the deconstruction of his masculinity codes. Because Yunior is narrating his own stories, there is always two perceptions of himself within them. On the one hand, we are informed of how Yunior the character behaves and what he thinks of himself back then, when the stories took place. But, on the other hand, we have the voice of Yunior the narrator reflecting on how these experiences eventually affected him or even understanding what really happened for the first time.

*This Is How You Lose Her* is composed by nine stories that can be gathered in three groups, those that relate the relationships of Yunior, the ones of his father (Ramón) and the stories involving his brother (Rafa). We will follow this gathering of the stories instead of going through them in their order of appearance in the book. Therefore, we will start with an exploration of the stories dealing with Ramón and those involving Rafa in order to see the major influence both masculine characters had on Yunior's view of women and his understanding of love and intimacy. This reorganization of the stories will lead to a chronological reading of them and thus will help us to trace Yunior's evolution as a character.

With respect to the stories involving the figure of Ramón, joining them together complete his image as an adulterous, cold and mainly absent father. "Otravida, Otravez" is, chronologically, the first story. It tells an episode of Ramón's life in the US, before he comes back to the Dominican Republic to take his family with him and start a new life in New Jersey. We learn about one of his extramarital relationships from the perspective of his lover, Yasmin. As the title itself suggests ("another life, once again"), Ramón is cheating again on Virta and therefore living another life away from his family. Deborah R. Vargas centers her essay "Sucia Love. Loosing Lying and Leaving in *This Is How You Lose Her*" on the figure of Yasmin and remarks how through her voice we see Ramón's double life. She makes us witnesses of Ramón's harsh daily life in the diaspora as well as she, and therefore the readers, witnesses his relationship with Virta and his life left behind in the Dominican Republic through the letters he receives from his

wife (Vargas 365). Along the book (and already in *Drown*) there are references to Ramón's hypersexuality and his other relationships that Yuniór, as a child, is totally exposed to (161).

If by the end of "Otravida, Otravez" Ramón has left Yasmin and has come back to the island to join his family, in "Invierno" Yuniór relates an opposite journey, the arrival of de las Casas family to the US. We see their first weeks in their new house in New Jersey during a tough winter storm. Gerke highlights the oppression and isolation that the family encounter on their arrival to the US and points at nature and Ramón as the two factors enabling this. Ramón does not let them go out of the house, he "plays the role of a key-holder of each of the different layers of tangible and intangible spaces. He is one and the same with the prison, as he is lord of the home that he transforms into a guarded compound" (Gerke 86). Gerke argues that Ramón oppresses his family physically, linguistically and psychologically and her essay exposes how his sons mimic the power Ramón has over them in their relationship with their mother in the only way they are able to do it. Thus, Virta finds herself linguistically isolated by his husband but also by his sons. Yuniór and Rafa challenge their mother by acts of disobedience, undermining her authority each time her commands and requests are ignored. They also exclude her from their learning of English through TV programs and refuse to talk to her in English or to teach her new words. This not only isolates her from them, but also from a life outside the house (90-91) what informs the reader that the position of the woman is in the house taking care but under the power of men. The reader sees how as children Yuniór and Rafa recreate Ramón's behavior, they are learning the position a man has in the family. The last image of the story represents an insight of their future and of the role of their father. Ramón is absent in the last scene (as he will soon leave the family) and Virta, Yuniór and Rafa dare to go out of the house to play with the snow. Ramón does not appear again in the stories, but his masculinity codes as a father, a husband and a lover will remain in his sons.

Together with Ramón, Rafa is Yuniór's main masculine model who, in the absence of their father, has become the head of the house and a mirror of Ramón. Rafa's first story is "Nilda" in which Yuniór relates his brother's relationship as an adolescent with a Dominican girl who represents Yuniór's entrance into puberty. Nilda's body changes and her first sexual relations with Rafa make Yuniór abandon his child phase while he start to sexualize her: "But that was before she'd gotten that chest, before that slash of black

hair had gone from something to pull on the bus to something to stroke in the dark” (29). Rafa sees other girls apart from Nilda, and Yuniór is a witness of his sexual encounters with all of them. However, it is Nilda the one who remains in his memory as the first girl he falls in love with. Along the story, Yuniór emphasizes the interests he shares with her, their love for comic books and the moments of intimacy among them. There is a tenderness in the way Yuniór sees Nilda and in how he pities her for her life and her dreams, that he already sees unfulfilled in the future (38). In contrast, Rafa’s relationship with her is always described in terms of misogyny and Nilda being no more than a sexual object for him: “Nilda was in my brother’s lap and he has his hand so far up her skirt it looked like he was performing a surgical procedure. When we were getting off the bus Rafa pulled me aside and held his hand in front of my nose. Smell this, he said. This is what’s wrong with women.” (34) But, in spite of Yuniór’s true feelings for her and despite their emotional connection, Nilda falls in love with Rafa, who despises her: “I wanted to warn her, tell her he was a monster, but she was already headed for him at the speed of light.” (33).

In “Nilda” Yuniór also relates Rafa’s death of cancer and “The Pura Principle” focuses precisely on his last relationship during his final months. The story serves Yuniór to magnify Rafa’s codes of Dominican masculinity and to portray the lack of intimacy among the family members that keeps them isolated from one another. At the beginning of the story, Rafa seems to be willing to make the most of his last months in his own ways. He has learned that to be a man he needs to be violent, sexually active and emotionally detached from his family, therefore, “he gets into vicious fights, womanizes according to his ‘papi chulo’ scripts, and completely disregards the admonitions of Yuniór and his mother” (Gonzalez 102). However, the moment comes when his cancer takes over him and his body prevents him from continuing with his normal life and it is then when Rafa decides to take a job. Rafa seems to make this decision as if, unable to perform his masculinity in the ways he used to, he grasps the only masculine domain available to him: “A man has to stay busy. He grinned, showed us all the gaps. Got to make myself useful” (97). It is in this new job where he meets Pura: “Remember the Spanish chick, the one who’d been crying over him at the Yarn Barn? Well, turns out she was actually Dominican. Not Dominican like my brother or me but *Dominican*. As in fresh-of-the-boat-didn’t-have-no-papers Dominican. And thick as fucking shit” (100). Pura disrupts the family dynamics and as a pure Dominican takes over Virta’s role in the

house as Rafa's principal caregiver. This comes as a threat to Virta since because of Rafa's only sex-based relationships with women, it is the first time a woman really replaces her during the last months she can look after his predilect son (107). Pura's entrance in the family leads to a constant battle between the two women in the house that Rafa seems to enjoy until he and Pura get married and Virta throws them out. By the end of the story, Pura leaves Rafa who comes back home assuming, without verbalizing it – as he is unable to share or show emotions – his coming death.

Thus, with Ramón's absence—who left the family for a twenty-five-year-old woman (35)—and Rafa's death, an adolescent Yuniór becomes the man of the family, and of course, the legacy of his father and his brother will still accompany him through his growth as an adult. Both Rafa and Ramón represent the archetypal Dominican man, or *tíguere*<sup>1</sup>. In *Colonial Phantoms*, Ramírez explains how this term has its roots in the colonial past of the Dominican Republic and the power relations it established among the different emergent social groups. Though the term had a positive meaning in the beginning, it evolved throughout Dominican history and gained special importance during Trujillo's dictatorship, when a man's hypersexuality was taken for granted within a context of secrecy and violence, and thus became one of his most recognizable characteristics (134). Regarding the evolution of the term, Brown argues in his article *Tígueres and Tígueras in Dominican National and Diasporic Culture* that

contemporary Dominican scholarship, media, and literature have gradually deconstructed and adapted the *tíguere* within critical, queer, gender-inclusive, racially conscious, and transatlantic methodologies, in doing so it has also played a role in reinscribing the *tíguere*'s place in Dominican culture, both at home on the island and across oceans (1)

As Brown suggests, the contemporary *tíguere* has many different stripes (2), however, it is generally represented as “an ambiguous figure, both shrewd and clever, a survivor and a trickster, and a subject and a perpetuator of gender based power and violence” (3). Both Ramón and Rafa fit into this description and after they are gone, Yuniór takes their place. However, there is always something that keeps Yuniór from being a mirror of his father and brother. He labels them as *sucios*, a pejorative term that, without the ambiguity or positive characteristics that may be attributed to a *tíguere*, it solely refers to a hypersexual behavior. Along the stories we see Yuniór does

not show a violent character, and we are witness of his mixed feelings about his own behavior and the behavior of those surrounding him.

“Miss Lora” portrays what seems to be Yuniór’s first relationship and the first of his forthcoming infidelities a couple of months after Rafa’s death. Miss Lora is Yuniór’s neighbor, a mature woman with whom he is unfaithful to his high school girlfriend, Paloma. From the very first lines, we see how Rafa’s example lingers around him over the years: “Years later you would wonder if it hadn’t been for your brother would you have done it? You remember how all the other guys had hated on her – how skinny she was, no culo, no titties, como un palito but your brother didn’t care. I’d fuck her.” (149). Paloma, his girlfriend, is described as a responsible girl very worried not to make any mistake so that she can go to the university and safe herself from the scarcity life she lives in. Hence, she refuses to have sex with Yuniór, fearing she could end up pregnant (151-152). Thus, when Miss Lora makes advances toward him, Yuniór finally succumbs. However, it does not feel as a victory, but rather as a fate written in his genes that he cannot evade, after all this is the typical man behavior he has always witnessed:

Both your father and your brother were sucios. Shit, your father used to take you on his pussy runs, leave you in the car while he ran up into cribs to bone his girlfriends. Your brother was no better, boning girls in the bed next to yours. Sucios of the worst kind and now it’s official: you are one, too. You had hoped the gene missed you, skipped a generation, but clearly you were kidding yourself. The blood always shows (161).

As an adolescent, Yuniór blames the legacy of his father and brother for what he has done, however, he leaves Miss Lora free of guilt. He keeps his relationship with Miss Lora as secret and it is not until years later, when he talks about her with a girlfriend in college, that he realizes she was abusive: “While the hypersexualized, sixteen-year old Yuniór does not yet have any real understanding about human erotic love, the forty-something writing-professor Yuniór recalls the ugly feelings of ‘panic’ he felt as a result of his couplings with Miss Lora” (Saldívar 338). With this story Díaz brings up the normality of the hypersexualization of Latinx and black adolescents (Saldívar 325) and also reveals a double standard in terms of gender, since the story would be read differently, the abuse would be more evident, if the protagonists were a grownup man and an adolescent girl (González 104).



All along the story we see Yuniór's mixed feelings during his relationship with Miss Lora: "It should be the greatest thing, so why are your dreams worse? Why is there more blood in the sink in the morning?" (163). Yuniór keeps dreaming about the end of the world, about an explosion, and as their relationship moves forward his dreams get worse. It is interesting to note here that Díaz places this story just before the closing one, as if "Miss Lora" was the germ of the broken Yuniór, unable to maintain any relationship, that we find in "The Cheater's Guide to Love". The germ, in fact, has two sides: On the one hand, his assumption at age sixteen of his irrevocable condition as a *sucio* like his father and brother that he will carry all his life. On the other hand, being victim of an abusive relationship he cannot fully comprehend until he comes back to it as an adult, although its consequences were always there: "At Rutgers, where you've finally landed, you date like crazy and every time it doesn't work out you're convinced that you have trouble with girls your own age. Because of her." (169).

In the stories "Alma" and "Flaca", Yuniór relates two relationships that seem to be opposite, they reveal two different Yuniórs. In "Alma" he narrates the story of his relationship with a Dominican girl. Their personalities are not truly complementary (46) and the only thing that seems to keep the relationship working is Alma's active sexuality (47). This story portrays Yuniór as a *tíguere* just as Rafa or Ramón. We do not see Yuniór's doubts or any emotional issue involved, Alma allows to see Yuniór's sexualized vision of women:

You, Yuniór, have a girlfriend named Alma, who has a long tender neck and a big Dominican ass that seems to exist in a fourth dimension beyond jeans. An ass that could drag the moon out of its orbit. An ass she never liked until she met you. Ain't a day that passes that you don't want to press your face against that ass or bite the delicate sliding tendons of her neck" (45).

Even when she learns of Yuniór's infidelity through his journal, the sadness he shows is not about losing Alma, but rather about losing her body: "You are overwhelmed by a pelagic sadness. Sadness at being caught, at the inconvertible knowledge that she will never forgive you. You stare at her incredible legs and between them, to that even more incredible *pópola* you've loved so inconstantly these past eight months" (47).

In contrast to this story, Díaz provides the reader with "Flaca" where we find Yuniór in another relationship where for the first and only time what we witness is just tenderness, while the narrator's voice filters a tone

of regret for how it ended. There are not physique or sexual descriptions of Verónica (Flaca's real name) and it is the only story in which Yuniór remains faithful to a girl. Nevertheless, their relationship eventually comes to an end and their belonging to different races seems to be the only reason why it does not work out: "Maybe five thousand years ago we were together. Five thousand years ago I was in Denmark. That's true. And half of me was in Africa" (84-85). Flaca is "whitetrash from outside Paterson" (31) and her whiteness stands in between them as if they belonged to different worlds. González points out how Yuniór constantly refers to the comments his Dominican friends have about her<sup>2</sup> - "You can't be fucking whitegirls all your life" (82) - or those his family may have should they meet her "I knew I'd call you Flaca. If you'd be Dominican my family would have worried about you, brought plates of food to my door" (80). He argues that these kind of thoughts prevent him from realizing that he might be truly in love with her: "Yuniór is tortured by the disparity that results when there is no synergy between what his heart leads him to do and what the social codes of Dominican masculinity dictate" (González 119). The question of race underlies each of the stories. Being white is always considered the most desirable condition for Latinxs who find themselves surrounded by a society that tells them whiteness is good: "She was from Trinidad, a cocoa pañyol, and she has this phony-as-hell English accent. It was the way we all were back then. None of us wanted to be niggers. Not for nothing." (39)

"The Sun, the Moon, the Stars" is the opening story of Yuniór's relationship with Magda, whom he is unfaithful to. It begins with Yuniór's following statement: "I'm not a bad guy. I know how that sounds - defensive, unscrupulous - but it's true. I'm like everybody else: weak, full of mistakes, but basically good. Magdalena disagrees though. She considers me a typical Dominican man: a sucio, an asshole" (4). The contrast of this story with the forthcoming ones evidences the irregular evolution of Yuniór self-perception throughout the years. Paradoxically, when Yuniór commits his first infidelity with Miss Lora, he shows his hopelessness after the realization of him being just like his father and Rafa, a sucio. But, after years of infidelities he does not see himself like that anymore. It is Magda who sees him as a sucio, and his opinion of himself has changed drastically: "All of Magda's friends said I cheated because I was Dominican, that all us Dominican men are dogs and can't be trusted. I doubt that I can speak for all Dominican men but I doubt they can either. From my perspective it wasn't genetics; there were reasons. Causalities" (18-19). We see however,

that his relationship with Magda was actually important to him and he is really hurt. There is a discordance between his acts and his feelings. He has learned the way a man should behave even if it does not relate to the way he feels: “I told her the truth: It’s because I love you, mami. I know it sounds like a lot of doo-doo, but it’s true: Magda’s my heart.” (6)

The relationship with Magda finishes after a trip to Santo Domingo in which they were supposed to fix everything, and after reading the whole book it seems Díaz is telling the reader, already from the beginning, where the source of the problem lies. During the trip, Yuniór meets two men and tells them about Magda, and one night they take him to the Cave of the Jagua “The birth place of the Taínos” (24). They grasp Yuniór by his feet and introduce him into the hole where Yuniór recalls the memory of his first encounter with Magda and breaks into tears, “the Vice-President says, indignantly. Don’t be a pussy about it” (25). This scene of Yuniór’s vulnerability because of the loss of his girlfriend through and infidelity and the comment of the vice-president regarding his not masculine behavior when crying, tells us a lot of the masculinity codes operating in the Island precisely in the mythological spot where everything began. In an interview with Paula M. Moya, Díaz talks about the impact and trauma of colonialism which lead to a “compulsive promiscuity that is a national masculine ideal in some ways and whose roots I see in the trauma of our raped pasts” (Moya, 397-398). In “The Sun, the Moon, the Stars” Yuniór is forced to directly face the source of his problems with intimacy, and thus he begins the narration of the stories that marked his life in that sense.

“The Cheater’s Guide to Love” is the culmination of Díaz’s growth as a tíguere or sucio like his father and brother. Yuniór is left by his partner when she discovers he has cheated on her. Díaz presents Yuniór’s condition even as a pathological problem that he finally recognizes: “She could have caught you with one sucia, she could have caught you with two, but as you are a totally batshit cuero who didn’t ever empty his email’s trash can, she caught you with fifty! Sure, over a six-year period, but still. Fifty fucking girls? Goddamn” (175). After losing his girlfriend, we see Yuniór completely devastated and through the story the reader follows him in his attempts to get over her, being witness of his despair and the depression he undergoes that eventually manifests in his body, showing us a complete broken character. Yuniór tries to excuse himself, to find the reason behind his behavior: “You blame your father. You blame your mother. You blame the patriarchy. You blame Santo Domingo” (176). This is when he finally realizes that “whether

he is prevaricating or cowed, hanging on to the genetic/cultural explanation for his womanizing or expressing empathy for his exes, the pernicious constant is [his] compulsory hypermasculinity, identified as an essential component of male Dominican identity” (Ciocia 142).

Yunior is finally able to recognize his fault and begins his process of healing “because you know in your lying cheater’s heart that sometimes a start is all we get” (213). The book finishes with a new beginning: the stories we have just read. This cycle structure parallels Yunior’s process. In order to understand him the reader must come back to the stories and confronting them and reading behind the lines, we can start to deconstruct the character. Thus, we will see that his acts respond to an apprehended performance of Dominican masculinity product of the trauma caused fundamentally by Colonialism and that was reinforced during Trujillo’s dictatorship, this question is the focus of Díaz’s novel. In “Psychopathologies of the Island” Stefania Ciocia remarks how *This is How You Lose Her* is a book “about consequences: a book of necessary testimony to the devastating effects of machismo, and the (self-inflicted) destruction it leaves in its wake” (142). The last lines of the book seem to indicate Yunior’s recovery, his new beginning. However, in the last story we find again a child born from an adulterous relationship between his Dominican mother, from a poor neighborhood of the Dominican Republic, and his transmigrant father with a family and a life in the US. With this newborn child and the circle structure of the book, Díaz may imply that the system will continue, and the codes of masculinity will persist in the Dominican and US diasporic societies. Díaz leaves the hope of escaping from the spiral to a question of individual agency. He writes the story of a broken man that finding himself without hope realizes, as he writes in the novel, that the only way out is in.

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<sup>1</sup> One of the first published studies of the term is Lite Collado’s *El Tiguere Dominicano* (1992), whereas some of the most recent ones belong to authors such as Maja Horn in *Masculinity after Trujillo* (2014), Dixia Ramirez, *Colonial Phantoms* (2018), or Jacob Brown, *Tígueres and Tígueras in Dominican National and Diasporic Culture* (2019). Brown’s article thoroughly traces the emergence and evolution of both the figure and the term up to today.

<sup>2</sup> For further exploration on how Díaz portrays the influence race and ethnicity have in the dynamics of dating and relationships in the US Latinx diaspora see

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Marisel Moreno's essay "Debunking Myths, Destabilizing Identities: A reading of Junot Díaz's "How to Date a Browngirl, Blackgirl, Whitegirl, or Halfie"

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## V

**BECOMING: FEMALE AGENCY EN *THE FAR AWAY BROTHERS* Y  
*THE HOUSE ON MANGO STREET***

BEATRIZ SOLLA VILAS

El concepto de *agency* ha sido estudiado por académicos de diferentes campos a lo largo de los últimos años, y sus teóricos han llegado a definiciones muy diversas. Susan P. Shapiro, por ejemplo, que considera las relaciones de *agency* como omnipresentes en todas las disciplinas (282), defiende que este término no ha sido lo suficientemente estudiado ni ocupa todavía un nicho en muchos ámbitos de investigación, como la sociología. Edgar Kiser explica que, en comparación con otras ramas de estudio, “the use of agency theory in sociology is in its infancy” (162). Así, estudiar una clase concreta de *agency* puede hacerse desde varias perspectivas, por lo que se ha de partir desde la definición de este concepto. Para este estudio, en el que estudiaré el desarrollo y producción de la *female agency* en dos de los personajes femeninos de *The House on Mango Street* y *The Far Away Brothers*, partiré de la definición propuesta por Bandura, y que resumen Pollock & Brunet: “According to Bandura (2001), *agency* is the ability of an individual to make things happen as a result of their own actions. As such, our sense of *agency* influences our self-development and adaptation to new situations” (15). En este trabajo pretendo no solo estudiar el desarrollo de la *agency* de estos dos personajes, sino también tratar cómo esta se produce en relación con los personajes masculinos de los libros y, sobre todo, con las parejas sentimentales de estos dos personajes. Estudiaré, así, no solo las diferentes interacciones de las dos mujeres con los hombres, sino también cómo estas afectan al desarrollo de sus identidades y cómo influye en el desarrollo de su propia subjetividad.

Aunque ambos libros se han publicado en años diferentes, están escritos por autoras con pasados dispares y sus historias se sitúan en escenarios alejados geográficamente (mientras que la primera historia se sitúa en un barrio chicano de Chicago, la segunda está ubicada entre San Salvador y California), ambos libros presentan varios elementos en común. Entre estos componentes se encuentran dos de los personajes secundarios (en *The House on Mango Street*, Sally, en *The Far Away Brothers*, Maricela)



cuyas tramas funcionan como engranaje para entender el contexto en el que se encuentran los protagonistas y, a su vez, ponen en relieve una sociedad patriarcal en la que las mujeres no tienen espacio suficiente para crecer y desarrollar su *agency* y su independencia, dando como resultado dos mujeres cuyas vidas e identidades están constantemente atadas a las personas de su alrededor. Aunque la producción de su *agency* se puede hacer a través de varios elementos y de una manera individual, en este estudio me centraré en la relación de ambas mujeres con los personajes masculinos de las historias y en las masculinidades tóxicas de estos.

*The House on Mango Street* (1984), es un libro que ha sido estudiado desde diferentes perspectivas a lo largo de los años. El espacio, la búsqueda de identidad o los estudios chicanos son algunos de los temas principales que se estudian en esta obra<sup>1</sup>. En ella, la escritora chicana Sandra Cisneros narra, a lo largo de una serie de viñetas, parte de la vida de Esperanza Cordero, una niña chicana que crece en Mango Street, un barrio latino de Chicago, así como la de otras personas de su comunidad. Entre aquellos personajes que rodean a Esperanza se encuentra Sally, una niña de edad similar a la de la Esperanza quien, a través de las palabras de la protagonista, refleja el deseo de alejarse de su realidad. Sin embargo, mientras que Esperanza afirma querer romper con todos los lazos que la unen a su realidad actual, para Sally la única manera posible de escapar parece ser casarse: “Sally got married like we knew she would, young and not ready but married just the same” (101).

En *The Far Way Brothers* (2017), Lauren Markham narra la vida de Ernesto y Raúl Flores, dos hermanos gemelos que emigran desde El Salvador hasta Estados Unidos en busca de lo que consideran una vida mejor. Aunque la historia se centra tanto en la huida de los hermanos como en el primer período de sus vidas en Estados Unidos, así como en el proceso por el que pasan tanto para conseguir un permiso de residencia como para pagar su deuda con los coyotes, la narración va dando saltos entre Estados Unidos y El Salvador, lo que permite tener una imagen también de cómo es la vida en su antiguo barrio. Aquí, la escritora presenta a la hermana mayor de los gemelos, Maricela, quien, aun siendo un personaje secundario, juega un papel central a la hora de mostrar la realidad de las mujeres en su comunidad.

Aunque con pasados y entornos diferentes, las narrativas de estos dos personajes ponen de manifiesto dos comunidades que se asientan sobre los cimientos de una sociedad patriarcal: al igual que sucede en ambos

libros, donde sus tramas parecen ser dejadas a un lado, ellas, como mujeres, son consideradas personajes de segunda clase dentro de sus comunidades. Este es uno de los motivos que las hace tan interesantes a la hora de estudiarlas, pues, aun no siendo personajes tan desarrollados y complejos como los protagonistas (o precisamente por este motivo), provocan el mismo interés en el lector, pues sus futuros y decisiones son los que soportan gran parte del desarrollo de las historias. Así, sus relatos, aunque breves, permiten vislumbrar el desarrollo femenino en sus respectivas sociedades y de qué manera las masculinidades tóxicas de su alrededor pueden influir sobre este.

La primera vez que Sally aparece en el libro, Esperanza habla de ella como “the girl with eyes like Egypt” (81). Se puede ver, a lo largo de esta primera viñeta, que Sally no es feliz en casa, que tiene un padre muy estricto, “her father says to be this beautiful is trouble” (81) y que el resto de los chicos de su colegio hablan de ella: “the stories the boys tell in the coatroom, they’re not true” (81). Así, ya en su introducción, se presenta a una Sally cuyo desarrollo personal está marcado por relaciones problemáticas con los diferentes hombres de su alrededor. Esperanza le presenta al lector, a través de una serie de divagaciones y pensamientos, las dudas y miedos de Sally, así como sus sueños:

Sally, do you sometimes wish you didn’t have to go home? Do you wish your feet would one day keep walking and take you far away from Mango Street, far away and maybe your feet would stop in front of a house, a nice one with flowers and big windows and steps for you to climb up two by two upstairs to where a room is waiting for you [...]. (82-3)

Sally, que parece sentir su hogar como una prisión, desea ser libre, y la imagen de esta libertad es representada por Esperanza como una casa donde pueda reír y ser feliz.

No se vuelve a saber de ella hasta algunas secciones después, en la viñeta titulada “What Sally Said”. Aunque en su primera aparición se dejaba entrever que Sally no pertenece a una familia funcional, y no se puede más que sospechar que su padre la maltrata, aquí se expresa ya abiertamente: “He never hits me hard” (92) es la frase con la que Sally abre esta viñeta. A pesar de intentar irse a casa de Esperanza durante unos días, Sally acaba volviendo después de que su padre la vaya a buscar y le pida perdón. A partir de esta viñeta y durante sus siguientes apariciones, vemos el retrato de una adolescente que siempre se rodea de chicos mayores que ella, algo que

Esperanza no entiende. En la tercera viñeta, Esperanza y Sally están jugando con otros niños en un parque y, en un momento dado, Esperanza se da cuenta de que Sally está con un grupo de chicos: “I said, Sally, come on, but she wouldn’t. She stayed by the curb talking to Tito and his friends. Play with the kids if you want, she said. I’m staying here” (96). Cuando Esperanza vuelve de jugar, cuenta que “Sally was pretending to be mad... something about the boys having stolen her keys [...] They were laughing. She was too. It was a joke I didn’t get” (96). Aunque la protagonista parece no entender lo que ocurre, no se siente cómoda con la situación de su amiga: “One of Tito’s friends said you can’t get the keys back unless you kiss us and Sally pretended to be mad at first but she said yes.” (96). A diferencia de Esperanza, Sally sufre abusos por parte de su padre y acoso por parte de sus compañeros desde que tiene uso de razón, por lo que la masculinidad tóxica de estos personajes juega un papel principal en el desarrollo de su propia sexualidad.

Aunque aquí veamos el retrato de una Sally cuya adolescencia parece mucho más temprana que la de Esperanza, quien la retrata a través de los ojos de la inocencia, como explica Beltrán-Vocal, esto se debe a que es forzada a perder su niñez: “Sally, la amiga de Esperanza, no disfruta ni de una niñez ni la adolescencia normal de una chica de su edad. Y no es ella quien, poco a poco, pierde su inocencia; son los adultos quienes, directa o indirectamente la provocan” (6). Sally, al no poder crecer en un entorno funcional, y con un padre que abusa de ella, busca refugiarse en otras relaciones para distraerse de la realidad de su casa, algo que influirá y marcará el desarrollo de su identidad a lo largo de toda su vida.

La manera en que la sexualidad de las mujeres es proyectada ya se pone de manifiesto en varias ocasiones a lo largo de la narrativa de Esperanza, aunque una de las más claras ocurre en el capítulo “Red Clowns”, en el que la protagonista cuenta cómo un hombre la agrede sexualmente. Esperanza abre esta viñeta pensando en Sally: “Sally, you lied. It wasn’t what you said at all. What he did. Where he touched me” (99). A la vez que la amistad entre las dos niñas crece, también ellas lo hacen. La unión que las dos tienen y el contexto en el que esto ocurre hace que Esperanza sienta que Sally, su único referente en cuanto a sexualidad, la está traicionando. Doyle, respecto a esto, afirma:

Just as the relationship between the two girls is more central to Cisneros's loosely structured plot than any heterosexual bonds, so Esperanza seems to feel Sally's betrayal more keenly than the rape

she suffers while she waits for Sally at the carnival. "Sally a hundred times," she says, hoping her friend will "make him stop" (100) [...] When she cries, "I waited my whole life" (100), Esperanza bitterly evokes the "romance" of deflowering as well as the eternity she waited for Sally to rescue her (16).

Como explica Doyle, en esta ocasión Esperanza también alude al mito y a la imagen de la virginidad, así como a las expectativas impuestas por la sociedad sobre el amor y las relaciones sexuales. Sally y Esperanza se hallan aquí en un espacio fronterizo en el que estas expectativas que se tiene sobre ellas y la producción de su propia realidad se encuentran enfrentadas en una contradicción. Sally ya no es, en esta ocasión, solamente la amiga de Esperanza, si no que la protagonista siente esta traición como un engaño por parte de todo el colectivo femenino; ninguna de las dos niñas puede cumplir las expectativas que se les impone como mujeres y esto provoca una suspensión de su *agency*, pues la producción de sus identidades se enfrenta a una fuerza ideológica superior a su propia capacidad.

En el último capítulo sobre Sally, Esperanza cuenta que se ha casado "like we knew she would, young and not ready but married just the same" (101). Esperanza explica que Sally se casa con un "marshmallow salesman" (101) y que se casan en otro estado, uno en el que "it's legal to get married before eighth grade" (101), por lo que también vemos que Sally tiene unos trece o catorce años cuando esto ocurre. Aun así, ni para Esperanza ni para el resto de sus amigos parece ser una sorpresa, por la manera en que dice "[she] got married like we knew she would". Aunque Sally dice que está enamorada, Esperanza cuenta que "I think she did it to escape" (101). De esta manera, Esperanza reitera sus pensamientos sobre Sally de la primera viñeta, en la que contaba cómo quería escapar. Sally ansiaba la libertad y escapar del entorno en el que se encontraba a través de cualquier medio. Para ella, la casa representaba la dualidad entre un lugar de confinamiento (la casa en la que crece) y la libertad (la casa de sus sueños). A lo largo de todo el libro, Cisneros ya utiliza la casa en varias ocasiones como símbolo de la representación física de esta dualidad entre la libertad y el confinamiento, y el final de esta viñeta es una de las ocasiones en las que esta representación se hace más latente. Sally antes quería una casa con grandes ventanas; ahora no puede utilizarlas: su marido no le deja acercarse a ellas. Sally, que soñaba con vivir libre, pasa ahora a un estado de confinamiento en el que: "she sits at home because she is afraid to go outside without his permission" (102). Así, vemos cómo ahora ya ni siquiera tiene

acceso al mundo exterior y tiene que imaginárselo mirando a las paredes, a los dibujos del suelo y al techo: “she likes looking at the walls, at how neatly their corners meet, the linoleum roses on the floor, the ceiling smooth as wedding cake” (102). Como explica Beltrán, “sale de su hogar, no necesariamente por amor a un hombre [...]. Sin embargo, como vemos a través de este personaje, el matrimonio no la conduce a la libertad esperada, todo lo contrario, significa la entrada a otro tipo de tiranía, violencia y dependencia” (6). Su *agency*, parece encontrarse de nuevo en un estado de suspensión en el que Sally se encuentra nuevamente en conflicto: antes buscaba la libertad a través de un espacio en el que ser ella misma, pero el espacio en el que se encuentra ahora no le pertenece. A pesar de esto, la manera en la que se relatan sus acciones deja un final abierto: aunque ya no tenga el espacio que buscaba, ni pueda mirar por la ventana, utiliza ahora las paredes y el techo como un espacio en el que proyectar sus pensamientos.

La primera vez que se presenta a Maricela en *The Far Away Brothers*, Markham narra que es “the eldest girl stuck between a bunch of brothers” (34) y que, en el colegio, “she did her work and laughed at other kids’ antics, batting her eyelashes in an alloy of flirtation and self-erasure” (34). Para Maricela, la historia se desarrolla, aunque con similitudes, de una manera diferente a la de Sally. Tras un tiempo viéndose con un chico, se queda embarazada de él y, al ver que este no quiere hacerse cargo, decide escapar de casa por miedo a la reacción del resto de su familia: “So one day, four months pregnant, she left school at midday, grabbed one of her family’s two suitcases, and started packing” (38). Aun así, acaba volviendo a casa, donde todos la acogen a excepción de su hermano mayor, que la hace sentir avergonzada de sí misma: “he did everything he could, she felt, to make her feel unwelcome and ashamed” (39).

Poco después de la introducción de Maricela, sus hermanos empiezan su proceso de huida a los Estados Unidos. Aquí, se empieza a mostrar a una Maricela en estado de espera, que solo se queda en una casa que siente, al igual que Sally, como una prisión más que como un hogar: “For three days, Maricela kept the pone by her side, waiting for news” (81); “*Everyone leaves, she thought. Everyone*” (123); “she missed going to school, when her days had had some outward purpose and direction. Her whole world was now in the house: all she did was help her mom with chores and take care of her daughter, who was attached to her [...] like a snail on stone” (124). A través de estas frases, la autora deja entrever a una Maricela que se siente acorralada y que no es feliz en su vida, a una mujer que siempre está

esperando y viviendo a través de los demás y que se siente sola en una casa que no siente como su hogar.

Poco después, Maricela escribe a un programa de citas y acaba conociendo al que será el padre de su segunda hija, César. Según la relación avanza, Maricela sospecha que César la está engañando con otra, y es aquí es la primera vez que se puede ver cómo Maricela es consciente de sus limitaciones como mujer en la sociedad, algo que, en el caso de Sally, nunca queda de todo claro: “Things happen. People fall in love with other people. A man could vanish from his commitments in a heartbeat, take on a new life. For men, the world was always open. Not so, thought Maricela, for women” (234). Independientemente del hecho de que la infidelidad de Cesar es perdonada y acaban volviendo juntos, a partir de este momento Maricela refleja su inseguridad y su incomodidad frente a los privilegios masculinos. Uno de los ejemplos más notables ocurre cuando uno de sus hermanos deja embarazada a su novia, en el Maricela piensa: “she knew what it would be like for her. Girls had so few options [...] Guys, like Cesar, couldn’t be trusted to stay good” (251). Aun cuando se refiere a su propia familia, Maricela es consciente de las desventajas que tiene la novia de su hermano frente a él, incluso aunque ambos vivan en un contexto cultural diferente.

El final de la historia de Maricela es destacable por dos motivos. Por un lado, su pensamiento vuelve al principio, recuperando la idea de irse al norte: “If only they’d sent her to the North instead of, one after another, her brothers. For now Maricela wasn’t leaving, but she hadn’t give up her burning-ember hope” (263). Esta idea, que Maricela tiene desde el primer momento, se recupera en varias ocasiones a lo largo de su historia. Siendo consciente de que, aun siendo mayor de sus hermanos, es ella la que se tiene que quedar en San Salvador, no deja de fantasear con la posibilidad de irse, cerrando su historia con un atisbo de esperanza. Por otra parte, aunque se ve cómo mantiene la esperanza de irse, decide no hacerlo de momento:

For now, Cesar loved her and, more important, valued her. Men always had, and perhaps always would, determine her world. But she knew that she also had to find value for herself –especially in this world where women were still, so often, second class [...] What good, clean-hand choices were there for girls like her? They could go to the convent, they could go to the North, they could hunker down in their lives and live as quietly as possible, as if underground (264).

Por tanto, aunque exista esta esperanza, no deja de mantener la afirmación de que para las mujeres es algo mucho más difícil y se aferra a la seguridad que le da Cesar.

Aunque con puntos en común, las historias de Sally y Maricela se desarrollan de manera diferente, especialmente sus finales. Para Sally, la libertad es representada a través del deseo de una casa idealizada. Como explica Karen W. Martin,

For Sally, the longing of freedom is tied to an idealized house, an open space characterized simultaneously by privacy and limitlessness. Her longing for verticality focuses on access to nature and freedom for her neighbors' prying eyes in a house "with flowers and big windows and steps for you to climb up two by two to where a room is waiting for you" (103), (64).

Para Sally, aunque su casa actual represente la idea del confinamiento, la idea de una casa soñada también es la representación de la libertad: al igual que su identidad dual, que se desarrolla de forma paralela entre la Sally que ríe y la Sally que no levanta la vista del suelo, existe la casa que la atrapa y la casa que la guiará hasta su propia libertad, aquella que le permite escapar y que está llena de grandes ventanas, que representan, aquí, la visión del mundo exterior. Aun así, a diferencia de la protagonista, Sally no corta de raíz con su entorno, si no que pasa de estar en manos de su padre a estar en manos de su marido: buscando su individualidad a manos de otro hombre acaba, en realidad, en una prisión. Para Maricela, por otro lado, la búsqueda de su libertad empieza por su deseo de irse a Estados Unidos, pero en un momento dado se limita a irse de su casa y crear un hogar y una familia con Cesar. Aunque al final de su historia no pierda del todo la esperanza, su sueño se ha quedado limitado a la realidad de su contexto: aunque le gustaría irse y ser libre, se ve a sí misma atada y limitada por los hombres de su alrededor.

Aunque con varias diferencias, el desarrollo identitario de ambas mujeres es, en muchas ocasiones, representado por unos marcados *sexual scripts*. Para ninguna de las dos parece haber dudas, en ningún momento, ni de su sexualidad ni de su papel como mujeres. Como explican Rossetto y Tollison: *sexual scripts vary by sex and gender* (Parson, 1983; Phillips, 2000) [...]. *Conventional female sexual scripts stress that the woman's role is to be pursued by a man and to put his desires and needs first* (Peplau, Rubin, & Hill, 1977)" (63). Rossetto y Tollison explican que el papel de las mujeres, según esto, es "to be emotionally available to men" (63). Así, aplicando estos

*sexual scripts* a ambos personajes, vemos que tanto Maricela como Sally tratan no solo de intentar escapar de sus respectivas situaciones socioeconómicas a través del matrimonio o de la relación con otro hombre, sino que, en la búsqueda de su propia libertad, se acaban quedando atrapadas en una situación en la que sus vidas dependen de estos hombres y tienen que complacerlos y servirles.

Cabe destacar, además, que estos marcados *sexual scripts* que se les imponen a ambas desde el principio, así como las experiencias que viven (en especial Sally, de la que abusan) desde que son niñas, tienen una gran influencia en su desarrollo futuro y pueden ser consideradas como traumáticas. Como explica Christa Schönfelder, “traumatic childhood experiences [...] tend to have a particularly severe impact, leaving scars that cut deep into the psyche as well as the body” (55). Judith Herman, por otro lado, explica “[r]epeated trauma in adult life erodes the structure of the personality already formed, but repeated trauma in childhood forms and deforms the personality (citado en Schönfelder 55). Para Kai Erikson, “trauma is generally taken to mean a blow to the tissues of the body –or more frequently now, to the tissues of the mind –that results in injury or some other disturbance. Something alien breaks in on you, smashing through whatever barriers your mind has set up as a line of defense” (183). De esta manera, muchas de las experiencias que ambas viven (maltrato y abuso por parte de Sally, abandono por parte de Maricela, entre otras) desde muy jóvenes, acaban siendo parte de la identidad que ellas construyen, moldeándola a medida que estas crecen. Forman parte de su imaginario y las influyen a la hora de tomar diferentes decisiones, a la par que forman (y deforman) constantemente sus realidades.

Recuperando la definición de *agency* dada al principio de este estudio, podemos ver que ambos personajes acaban teniendo, aunque con desarrollos diferentes, conclusiones similares. Para Sally, a pesar de ser consciente de que dentro de su propia familia no encontrará la felicidad, su huida utilizando a un hombre la lleva a una situación paralela a la que se encontraba al principio. Así, al dejar su individualidad a cargo de otro hombre, parece acabar perdiendo toda capacidad de decisión sobre sí misma. A pesar de esto, como se ve en las últimas líneas de su relato, Sally empieza a construir su propia historia nuevamente, esta vez a través del lienzo de las paredes y techos de su casa. Así, aunque en un principio parece que su *agency* está completamente suprimida a raíz de las interacciones con los hombres de su alrededor, vemos como, constantemente, reescribe su



historia, intentando recuperarla. Para Maricela esto parece funcionar de una manera diferente, pues, aunque deje de lado su propia libertad, lo hace de una manera consciente desde el principio y sabiendo lo que le depara el futuro. Aun dejando muchas de las decisiones importantes sobre su vida a manos de los hombres (su padre, sus hermanos y, por último, su marido), lo hace siempre dejando claro, a través de sus pensamientos, que sabe lo que está haciendo. Al ser consciente de su situación como mujer, Maricela se apodera, hasta cierto punto, de su propia capacidad de decisión y actuación y, con ellas, de su *agency*. Aunque a través de sus acciones vemos cómo constantemente pierden la capacidad de decisión y sus individualidades, sus *agencies* también pueden analizarse desde la perspectiva de sus intenciones. Así, vemos cómo, aunque nunca lleguen a este fin, ambas tratan, de una manera u otra, de conseguir esta independencia. Se puede concluir, por tanto, que a pesar de no encontrar esta individualidad, el hecho de intentar hacerlo hace que esta propia *agency* se quede suspendida en un estado liminal en el que, aunque sin los resultados esperados, ambas buscan constantemente un cambio en sus vidas, intentando reescribir constantemente sus historias.

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<sup>1</sup> Algunos de los autores que han estudiado *The House on Mango Street* desde estas perspectivas son Jacqueline Doyle (“More Room of Her Own: Sandra Cisneros’s *The House on Mango Street*”), María Elena De Valdes (“In Search of Identity in Cisneros’s *The House on Mango Street*”), Regina M. Betz (“Chicana “Belonging” in Sandra Cisneros’ *The House on Mango Street*”) y Jayne E. Marek (“Difference, Identity, and Sandra Cisneros’s *The House on Mango Street*”).

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## VI

ARTIFICIALITY AND THE SENSORIUM IN HORROR FILM: A LOOK  
TO EUROPE

MARÍA GIL POISA

*Things need not have happened to be true.  
Tales and dreams are the shadows-truths that will  
endure when mere facts are dust and ashes, and forgot.*  
Neil Gaiman (*The Sandman*)

Our senses are our only connection with the world, open doors to external stimuli that help us to relate to our environment. Senses shape the world for us: our sensorial interaction builds experiences, and through those experiences we construct what we understand as our reality. Those new experiences create references, which will form our vital system to decode the world. Those collected experiences are constructing the reality around us as individuals and, once they are saved and classified, we recognize our environment relating the external stimuli that our senses perceive with our stored experiential information. As receivers, we shape complex messages with the information provided by our sensorium, and we react consequently.

When watching a film, the receptor, as a spectator, follows the same perceptual pattern using his or her senses to perceive the stimuli offered by the film and interpret them through his or her stored vital experiences. According to this, we are able to understand films because their messages are codified through vital elements similar to our owns: the closer the work is to our experiential references, the easier it is to understand it, and the more people it will reach, creating a personal identification between the object and the receptor. In addition, in some filmic genres such as horror, this sensorial perception seeks to arouse an emotion that translates into a physical reaction. The aim of this chapter is to describe the affective mechanisms that link horror films to their audiences, provoking the ultimate human emotion through their interactivity: fear.

In a moment in which art is continuously changing and people are constantly exposed to different and variable stimuli, cinema needs to evolve, chasing identification between the film and the audience. Therefore, it needs to provoke this identification through the recreation of previous experiences that can arouse emotions, in order to appeal to a potential audience, systematically challenged by their senses. That identification is often linked to the spectator's reality, since we understand as realistic what fits the expectations built by following the vital code established by previous experiences. Though we can tend to consume film as an escape from reality, we need a connection with reality in order to understand it at any level. That means the closer the represented object is to the experiences we have had, the more realistic it will appear to us: the object needs to be realistic enough to be understood, but also fictional enough to be considered a suitable escape. Nevertheless, if the line that separates any expectation of fiction from expectations of reality is crossed, the unreal would start to be real, and the contact with reality would be lost. In other words, we can understand two different levels in our perception when building our sensorial reality and our stored experiences, the real and the fictional ones. However, the line that separates them can blur, and even vanish, when the person's perception interprets them as very close to each other. When film imitates reality, the result can be so real that it crosses the line that separates both levels of reality and fiction, and invades the dimension on the other side of the screen. When art approaches reality, the dividing lines fade, both planes overlap, and one reality can invade the other. Hence, fiction simulates reality. In that sense, and following Jean Baudrillard's conception of simulacrum, models as abstractions of the features of real objects which precede them (10-11), the simulated reality turns to be more real than reality itself, overlapping one with the other and replacing the object with the model.

In relationship to this, Charles Derry says, dealing with Michael Haneke's films, that we are not living within reality anymore. According to the author, our relationship with media in an intermedial society makes the reality we used to construct our sensorial perception to be replaced by a new reality built through media: 'we no longer live in reality, but live vicariously through video images that increasingly dominate our lives' (Derry 156). That makes what our sensorium used to recognize as a complete reality, less real than the audiovisual one, though it lacks sensorial perception elements such as odor or touch. Our connection to media creates a reality that, at the same time, separates us from reality. Thereupon, and as Derry states, '[o]n

some level, events become real when we capture them via a technological, consumable product' (156). Sometimes the audience is so exposed to intermedia stimuli that the actual reality is not challenging anymore, and fictional reality ends up being more appealing for the spectator than real reality.

For instance, in *Benny's Video* (Michael Haneke 1992), we find how a familiar drama turns into a horror film through the media replacing the diegetic reality for the character. The message works in this way as an extradiegetic threat: if media can replace reality in the film, the same film we are watching could replace our own reality. In the movie, a normal teenager keen on violent movies loses his contact with reality, and decides to kill a strange girl, thinking that his actions, like in films, will have no consequences. In his delirium, Benny mixes reality and fiction, and crosses the line bringing to life one of his films, the actual real slaughter of a pig; he kills the girl with the same gun they used with the animal, and hides the corpse without any trace of guilt: 'Benny is unconcerned, alienated from the moral meaning of his actions' (Derry 153). When his parents find out what the boy has done, their only concern is what would happen to their family, without any thought towards the victim or penalty to their child. When passing from fiction to reality, Benny has erased any possible personal consequence of his actions—crimes in movies are not real so his crimes are not real either—and his parents confirm his attitude. Hence, his films are not fictional anymore, and the line has been crossed, what brings to reality the fictional nightmare. Haneke is, one more time, sending us his most constant message: violence in media is real violence (and "violence is pandemic in our contemporary world" (Derry 156); when consuming violence we are creating violence, and it is this threat what transforms the film into a real horror movie.

Following this point, crossing the fiction/reality line is a matter of personal connection with the work, and specifically in a film category such as horror, the identification with the story and the consequent blurring (but not disappearance) of the separation line between reality and fiction are key elements to understanding the genre. According to Noël Carroll on his book *The Philosophy of Horror: Or Paradoxes of the Heart* (1990): "works of horror are those designed to function in such a way as to promote art-horror in audiences" (62) <sup>1</sup>, and in order to provoke this horror, films need to establish a link with them, the reality/fiction line. Actually, for Carroll those consequent emotions, like fear or horror, are what configure the genre; if a

horror film cannot scare anybody, then it is not a horror film<sup>2</sup>. Therefore, it is fundamental to agree that in horror film, the image is sensory-motor offered: our sensorial perception will drive us to a physical reaction, product of an emotion, a pure sensorial one. This links both perception levels, real and fictional, in order to achieve the ultimate goal of the film: to scare; if the audience can understand the fictional menace as a personal one, the fear effect is created. In this sense, Barbara Clover, and Laura Williams after her, considered horror as a 'body genre', since the main intention of the film is to get a physical reaction from the audience in the form of an emotion, fear in this case (Williams 4). Thus, a narrative stimulus creates a corporal response; a passive sensorial experience as a spectator leads to an active sensorial reaction.

As an instance, we can think of *Shaun of de Dead* (Wright 2004). Its plot would undoubtedly be considered a horror film if just described: a zombie apocalypse in a small town in England. However, the tone of the film makes it a comedy, and the spectator is not expected to feel fear. The film introduces to us a goal-driven protagonist, Shaun, who during a zombie outbreak needs to protect his girlfriend and friends in his town. The setting is prepared to establish a direct connection and identification with the audience: an ordinary English man, with an ordinary job and ordinary problems that in a profoundly extraordinary situation needs to act accordingly to the circumstances. Any regular spectator would be able to establish the connection with Shaun, the main character, and if the film would follow the conventions of horror films it would be very easy to fill the expectations of a horror film audience and get to the emotion of fear. However, this is not the actual goal of the film, which does not want to enter into horror, but into another "body genre": comedy, whose goal is not to scare, but to amuse the audience. For example, the film opens with a very plausible sequence in which we see regular people mechanically, like zombies, performing regular actions, followed by a sequence in which Shaun visits a corner market and walks around his town without realizing his neighbors have been transformed into zombies. The targeted identification with the audience is there, in the character and in the setting, and the situation would be the ideal opening for a horror film, but the story turns around and breaks the audience's expectations, getting a different reaction: laugh instead of fear.

As stated, we can identify with Shaun because he is an ordinary man in an ordinary setting, because he and his environment reflect a previously

stored and classified experience for the audience. For Carroll, that kind of identification will lead the audience to an emotional connection with the characters, but the mechanism used in comedy would not necessarily work in horror: “For horror appears to be one of those genres in which the emotive responses of the audience, ideally, run parallel to the emotions of characters. Indeed, in works of horror the responses of characters often seem to cue the emotional responses of the audiences” (17).

However, in the described scene Shaun is not conscious of the hilarious, and dangerous, situation in which he is involved, therefore his reactions are not expected to be the same the audience’s; he is not a leader, but a trigger of emotions. When in both comedy and horror the audience needs the identification with the situation and the characters, the relationship with it is totally different. Carroll argues that the spectator needs to establish a relationship of emotional dependence with the character, since they are guides for what the audience should feel: ‘The emotional reactions of characters, then, provide a set of instructions or, rather, examples about the way in which the audience is to respond to the monsters in the fiction’ (17). The emotion of the characters is perceived through our senses, and compared with our previous experiences in order to find the equivalence and we react consequently through variable corporal (physical) reactions. What identifies the emotion is a cognitive effect of a sensorial process.

Nevertheless, Carroll clarifies that the spectator must keep a distance; he or she understands what the natural emotional reaction is the one the character is suffering, but, at the same time, he or she also needs to understand the fictional character of the film: there is no need to be as scared as the character is, since the threat is not real for the viewer, but for them. In that sense, what Carroll points out is an emotional parallelism: both the spectator and the character need to feel emotions, but they do not need to necessarily have the same reactions, since the degree of intensity and connection with the threat is different. The emotional parallelism is, therefore, asymmetric. Actually, if those reactions, from characters and audiences, would merge, the film would be penetrating into actual reality, fictional and real levels would overlap, and it would lose its target: it would terrorize instead of scare. However, this cannot be the exclusive cause of the identification since, as spectators, we connect not only with the characters, but also with situations, contexts, settings...in a sort of cultural identification. This is due to our experience in similar situations that we



classify and store in order to understand the world. If the signifying whole is not credible, it will not be effective. The characters need to be natural; the story, plausible; and the monster, realistic, but not so realistic that we cannot distinguish the film from our reality. If we do not believe in the character or the situation, if it is not credible enough, the suspension of disbelief is cancelled and, with it, the identification and the resulting emotion. In the setting of a realistic context with credible characters, the audience will find the personal link to the story needed to create an emotion after the identification.

An example of the mechanism to establish this asymmetric identification with the characters is the use of close-ups in horror films as rupture with an empathetic realism: through the use of these short shots the director links the character to the audience, but breaks the sensation of reality. In his volume on film *Cinema 2: The Time-Image/ Cinéma II: L'image-temps*, Gilles Deleuze opens his essay with a claim from Bazin: that realism in Neorealism is not only in the form of its social content, but also comes from an aesthetic perspective. Reality is presented as objective through filmic language elements such as the use of long shots and long takes, showing but not telling, in what Bazin calls “image-facts” (37), allowing the personal interpretation of the spectator through an objective presentation that makes it closer to reality. In contrast, the Realism’s typical use of close-ups subjectivizes the gaze of the story, making the identification easier but, at the same time, distancing it from reality as a sensorial perception. That can be, again, related to Realism and its obvious intention to *reproduce* reality, in opposition to Neorealism, trying to *show* that reality. The spectator is going to identify both with what the camera shows and what it does not. Following Deleuze’s logic, as individuals, we do not naturally see in close-ups, our natural vision is limited to focused/unfocused long shots, but those close-ups are helping us to link our perspective to the character’s. Therefore, the use of editing or non-natural shots distances the film from the spectator’s way of perceiving reality, and makes it more unreal, but more emotionally close.

A good instance of this is *Funny Games* (Haneke 1997). The film shows us a long night of torment and killing suffered by a regular family from two anonymous teenager torturers. In the movie we are constantly bombed with extreme close-ups of the main characters, especially of the victims, in order to reflect their fear and suffering. The use of those shots makes us, as an audience, to necessarily empathize with the members of the

family, since they are making their suffering the protagonist of the film. The relationship is, obviously, asymmetric, since when the characters in the film are suffering from physical and emotional pain when seeing their loved ones tortured, the audience is scared and disgusted from the killers' lack of feelings and the victims' agonies. The effect is so clear, that it is often emphasized by the fact that most of the times the spectator does not actually see the act of violence, but only the reaction of the characters showed in close-ups. That helps the audience to build the action by itself without seeing it, with the only support of the sound and the character's feelings, which they are invited not to replicate, but to understand, and in this understanding the targeted emotion is supposed to be achieved. What Haneke is doing in the film is establishing a strong identification with the characters and the situation from the very beginning, introducing a very ordinary family in a normal situation with which almost any spectator can empathize. When the link is established, the audience is tacitly asked to follow the characters in a situation that gradually gets less and less ordinary, and more and more dangerous, but the connection is already there. With the use of close-ups and off-camera actions Haneke gets to provoke the fear feeling in the audience, but not an absolute horror; they can feel the connection, but they are also constantly expelled from the actual reality of the film, systematically reminding them that what they are watching is a movie. In that sense, it is also remarkable the way he uses strident extra-diegetic music in the film. When the whole movie lacks background music in its soundtrack, just some incidental diegetic music in precise moments, both at the beginning and at the end Haneke sends a clear message to the audience by playing loud rock music out of the context, reminding, one more time, that the movie is just fiction. As Derry points out, '[Haneke] refuses for the rest of his film to use any extra-diegetic music to tell the audience what emotions to feel or when to feel them' (146); audience, indeed, need to feel the connection with the film in order to develop their emotions, but they should never forget that what they are watching is still on the other side of the line.

As stated, in horror genre it is indispensable for the audience to be able to link, at least partially, its perception of the fiction with its perceived reality in order to be effective: the audience needs to believe in a potential real threat in order to get an emotion, to be scared. This is the line, the closest contact that both levels, fiction and reality, can experience, when they are so close that one can almost overlap the other and the receiver can

feel real emotions as a product of this closeness. However, if the film crosses the line and the movie is too real, more real than the actual reality, the effect becomes counter-productive; we do not want a real threat from our film, we need to keep it on the other side of the screen. When the separation vanishes and the two levels, fictional and real, overlap, then the story is true for the spectator. Once the story is true, the identification is total, and the threat is real. Therefore, the fear is real, too. When a spectator is watching a horror film which can establish a strong and direct relationship with his or her real life, the two levels of reality are closer, and the line is easier to be crossed. At the same moment in which the film's diegesis and the spectator's perceived reality overlap, because the link is too strong and the line too vague, fear can take control of the receiver, and run the risk that he or she turns the TV off or leaves the room, breaking the link and ending the experience.

In that sense, there are some interesting cinematographic examples of how the image can symbolically cross the line and enter into reality before replacing it. A case in point is the Spanish film *El televisor* (Ibáñez Serrador 1974). In this film the protagonist, Enrique, is a totally ordinary man, a hard worker who attends every day to his office work and earns money in order to provide for his family. His only illusion is to save enough money to afford a television, a luxury in Spain at that moment for a medium-class family. When Enrique finally gets the TV, he gets obsessed with it, replacing his own reality with the one that the broadcast programming offers. The situation gets too far, and the characters and situations on TV jump out of it, invading Enrique's real life, and replacing it through the disturbing overlapping of one reality with the other. Enrique's stories symbolically represent here the trespass of the dividing line, fiction invading reality in an extreme and obsessive identification. Due to his link to his television, Enrique is totally absorbed by this fictional plane, and he enjoys suffering the same griefs than the characters in his Western or horror films and shows, reaching the point in which their pains will be his own, but this will not stop him from watching TV. For Enrique in the film, the line has faded and his fictional reality is invading his real reality, transmitting his nightmare to the actual audience of *El televisor*, but despite the intense emotions that TV shows produce in him, Enrique cannot help keep watching it.

This is what Carroll calls 'the paradox of horror [...] deriving pleasure from sights and descriptions that customarily repulse them' (158); as spectators, we suffer through the fiction, but we simultaneously enjoy it.

This rejection comes from what Deleuze understands as the ‘unbearable [...] something too powerful’ (18), either too beautiful or too strong. In this case, the visual takes charge of the audience. It takes the cinematographically sensorial to the extreme and exceeds the barrier, crosses the border of fiction and temporarily invades reality, causing fear. Even so, the spectator does enjoy this fear in some way and looks for it when watching horror films. The effect of the unbearable needs to be perfectly measured, needs to grab the audience by the lapels and hold them, suffering but enjoying the fear. However, this effect of the unbearable cannot be lasting; if the invasion of the audience’s reality lasts too long, the spectator is lost, the unbearable takes the control and expels the audience.

For Deleuze, this is only possible once we pass from the scripted viewer in motion-image as a passive witness, to the free audience in time-image, the active persona. As he understands the purely optical-sound images as sensorial descriptions opposed to the actions, those which can cross the line, they also make the recipient an agent that needs to participate and be part of the story by constructing it. Therefore, the identification in these images is stronger, the line is crossed and the audience is expelled by itself. The threat is imminent, and the situation is unbearable. In order to avoid this, most horror film tries to establish a distance with the spectator and his or her reality; it needs to set the link to scare up to a point, but never exceed it. Since this relationship is built on the sensorial experience of the receiver, his or her link with reality, to cross the line means that the previously stored experience is not giving enough tools to confront it, so the film needs additional resources to expel the audience and keep it close to the line, but not across it. In Godard’s words: “It’s not blood, it’s red”: if blood does not look like blood, it is not blood anymore, therefore it is not a threat. Deleuze says that “[a]nd we are precisely not without sensory-motor schemata for recognizing such things [...] We have schemata for turning away when it is too unpleasant, for prompting resignation when it is terrible and for assimilating when it is too beautiful” (20).

For him, those schemata are clichés, but when they are exceeded by horror or beauty, the pure optical-sound image appears, the one we cannot confront because it approaches too much to our reality through the approach. Fiction in those cases can replace the real and, in this way, the unreal will distance the spectator from reality and sink him or her in fiction. In order to avoid this effect, horror movies are constantly establishing a distance with the audience, reminding us that, at the end, they are only

fiction. What some authors talk about as “distancing effect” between the text and the receptor is the spectator’s consciousness of watching a film and distinguishing the fictional work from reality. In the case of horror film, the distancing effect acquires a special importance since the emotional effect of the movie on the spectator depends on it. Horror films need, therefore, to be relatively notably fake in order to establish a distancing effect and remind the audience they are watching a film: their blood is too red, their music is too obvious, constantly reminding the spectator that what is on the other side of the border is a fiction, and that he is safe on his own place. They scare their audience, but also, they know how to hold it, because when films are too real, they run the risk of crossing that line and, passing the limit, they may be rejected.

We can think, for example, in Dario Argento’s classic *Suspria* (1977), a film that systematically drags the audience closer and further from the line, through the use of all available audiovisual narrative resources. In Argento’s film music plays an especially important role; with a disturbing extra-diegetic soundtrack, the director systematically guides the audience throughout the film. The Italian tells the spectators what they are supposed to be feeling in every moment, and implicitly reminds them that what they are watching is not true, since there is not such a scary soundtrack in real life. The same case happens with the lighting, dyed of bloody red effects through the whole film which provide it with a nightmarishly oneiric atmosphere implying, for the audience, that what they are watching is not real. The nightmare reiterates itself in the use of deliberately fake looking blood in impressive and disquietingly hardly credible deaths on the film, such as the attack to the girls in the dorm or the dog scene in the square. The film joins a long series of artificial and spectacular elements that combine into a movie that is at the same time absolutely terrifying and totally plastic, constantly distancing the audience from the line, reminding it is a fiction, though a very disturbing one. In this way, Argento avoids the audience’s rejection of a film that, treated in a constant realistic style, would lead to the unbearable.

About this sort of rejection in horror film, Carroll argues that spectators, and not only films, must have their own strategies in order to establish the distance and stand the unbearable:

And what one is doing in all these cases is distracting oneself from the thought of what is being portrayed on the screen. One is not attempting to extinguish the belief that the referent of the

representation exists nor the belief that the representation itself exists. Rather, one is attempting not to think about the content of the representation—that is, not to entertain the content of the representation as the content of one’s own thought. (80).

According to Carroll, fear comes from thinking, we see it as rational, because what we fear is to think of the object, and the thought actually exists; therefore, it is rational and creates the emotion. According to him, the spectator who experiments rejection does not try to stop believing in the fiction, because he or she really does not believe in it, but in his or her thoughts. Therefore, the option here is to try to escape, to stop thinking, and the resources will be found inside and outside the diegesis.

To recapitulate, the creation of the fear emotion through horror film comes from the inevitable sensorial contact and identification spectator experiences when he or she is watching the film. In the first place, we can agree that the only channel for our primary perception is our senses, which will receive the stimuli and classify them into vital experiences, building, therefore, our reality level. From this point, when the spectator establishes some sensorial contact with the fictional level through his or her senses, the identification with it is established, since there are elements in the story which can be recognizable and, thus, related to the stored experiences. This identification between the fictional and the real levels is shocked when some elements led to produce fear are introduced, affecting both levels. The sensorial elements are here the ultimate channel for fear that links both levels, forasmuch as the audience has previously established the links between the reality they have constructed through vital experience and the fiction they have assimilated through the film they are watching. As a consequence, horror film needs to be able to balance those sensorial stimuli, in order to get an equilibrium on the “paradox of horror”: being able to simultaneously scare and attract their audience.

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<sup>1</sup> Noël Carroll distinguishes between “art-horror” and “natural horror”. He understands “art-horror” as the artistic genre, and horror as a human emotion as “natural horror”, what actually exists, and we can fear. He considers that the main feature of “art-horror” is the intention, and goal of provoking horror.

<sup>2</sup> Maybe here it would be relevant to think why it is easier for some people than for other to get scared with films.

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## VII

**THE MADWOMAN IN SHERRINFORD: EURUS HOLMES AND THE  
(NON) CANON IN BBC'S *SHERLOCK***

NOELIA M<sup>a</sup>. GALÁN-RODRÍGUEZ

“Elementary, my dear Watson!” is a sentence any Sherlockian<sup>1</sup> and non-Sherlockian would know: from memes to constant references in popular culture, this excerpt has been linked to the most famous fictional detective in history and used in casual conversations and different cultural manifestations. However, there is a small issue non-Sherlock fans may not know: Sherlock Holmes never uttered these words. Though it may be true that Sir Conan Doyle threw in an “Elementary” and “my dear Watson” when the detective was speaking<sup>2</sup>, this was never presented together. This poses an unanswered question: does it mean that the most common Sherlock trivia around the world is non-canonical?

Even though more than a century has passed since Conan Doyle resurrected a dead Sherlock Holmes<sup>3</sup> due to fans’ outrage after killing off the detective, it seems as if Sherlock is still present in different media outlets (specially television and films). However, many “purist” fans of the writings have brought to attention that these new Sherlock products do not comply with Conan Doyle’s canon, thus, considering them derivative works<sup>4</sup> rather than intertextual adaptations.

Looking at twenty first century adaptations of Conan Doyle’s characters in the small screen, two international productions come up: *Elementary* (CBS, 2012-2019) and *Sherlock* (BBC, 2010-2017). Both series break the canon by setting the characters in contemporary times rather than Conan Doyle’s Victorian England, though they still maintain the main plotlines and characters, or so it was until recently. In their last released season of *Sherlock* (BBC, Season 4, 2017), Sherlock producers Steven Moffat and Mark Gatiss changed the game by introducing new elements to their uptake on Sherlock in order to make “television history”<sup>5</sup>. However, despite the ever-growing popularity of the show at international level, this much waited season of the show was met with harsh criticism by Sherlockians (Gilbert “The (Final) Problem”) with many arguing that the canon from



Conan Doyle had been disregarded by introducing a new character: Eurus Holmes.

Eurus is the Holmes' youngest long-lost sister whose existence was unknown to the detective. Taken away very young when she showed "psychopathic"<sup>6</sup> tendencies, Eurus is described as highly intelligent (beyond Sherlock's and Mycroft's level), but having problems understanding human emotions, which seems to be her fuel regarding her psychopathic tendencies. In the third episode of the last season, Mycroft tells Sherlock she has been locked up since she was little as they could not "contain" her. She is presented in the fourth season as the main villain hidden at plain sight: she appears in all episodes, but only the truth is revealed in the second episode when she decides to come clean.

Even though no mention of any sister to Sherlock and Mycroft is to be found in Conan Doyle's writings, Eurus Holmes does not go far from the Victorian canon of a "madwoman": her "special" train of thought, which makes her different from others (even her so-clever brothers), and her imprisonment in a mental asylum are some of the most outstanding clues to think that, although she was not written in the canon (Victorian Doyle could not have written such a "madwoman" in his stories), Eurus could be in the canon as one of the many hidden Victorian "madwomen" at that time. Therefore, this chapter endeavours to prove that Eurus Holmes could be canonical in Conan Doyle's universe considering the BBC series as a transmedia narrative product (fanfic). In order to do so, a close viewing of the series will be carried out as well as a review of literature on gender studies reflecting on *Sherlock's* female characters. Furthermore, some literature on transmedia narratives will be reviewed so to understand *Sherlock* as a transmedia product.

First and foremost, some theoretical issues regarding transmedia narratives and participatory culture need to be considered. Considering Jenkins' (2006) definition of convergence<sup>7</sup> culture, cultural products can be considered cooperative products created by different forces (e.g. producers, consumers, fans, etc.); thus, also reflecting on the idea of participatory culture<sup>8</sup>. This would mean that different actors would come into play in the creation of these new elements. However, these actors could not be categorised as objective actors as they will shape the product to their desired effect (see, for instance, the wide range of fanfics pairing non-canonical fictional couples). Therefore, some changes to appease the new "producer-fan" would be introduced in the transnarrative.

These new fan perceptions of the source text cannot but be influenced by the reality of the moment. The fact that mass media has changed from the written form in Conan Doyle's times (newspapers, short stories, etc.) to a more audio-visual narrative type of mass media (films, TV series, podcasts, etc.) is further proof of how the fictional worlds are shaped by the spectators' reality. In this case, new Sherlock products have been introduced to the general public by means of relatable elements such as TV adaptations of the Victorian hero set in modern times as

the pleasure given by this series does not only take into account what it could be understood as an easy cure to youth, it endeavours to reach a young contemporary public who had not had access to Doyle's writing, but they know what a blog, a telephone and a computer are [my translation] (Naugrette 406).

This would lead to argue that the changes made to the original source are but a consequence of the spectators' reality just in the same way Doyle's writings were shaped by his middle-class Victorian readers (e.g. Sherlock's fictional resurrection due to the public's insistence). Therefore, a question of canon compliance could be more difficult to deal with if the canon is understood as a variable element influenced by the spectator and their reality.

The debate of canon versus non-canon is a hot topic of discussion in transmedia narratives and intertextual works as products closer to the canon are prized over those which show some major divergences to the original source (Leitch; Mahlknetch). Regarding *Sherlock*, both their creators (Moffat and Gatiss; known in the fandom as "Mofftiss") have pointed out that they consider every Sherlock Holmes adaptation as canon (Leader). This would open further possibilities into what the Holmesian "canon" would be comprised.

Taking into account Driscoll and Gregg's uptake on fan fiction, it could be considered that the TV series *Sherlock* is an audio-visual fanfic and that "Mofftiss" are fanfic writers: "Fan fiction depends on fanfic communities who take as a shared object not only the authorized source text [...] which the communities call "canon" but also the field of fan fiction written about it" (570). The creators of the series have often defined themselves as Conan Doyle's fanboys, remaining truthful to the canon but also considering previous TV adaptations of Sherlock Holmes as part of their source material.

An issue has proved to be controversial both in Conan Doyle's writings and the BBC version: the question of female characters. To start with, it is important to highlight the small number of women in Conan Doyle's stories, most of them playing the victim (literally) such as Violet Hunter<sup>9</sup> or even the accused/guilty and wronged part (e.g. Mrs Ferguson<sup>10</sup>). Canonically speaking, Mrs Hudson is the only female recurring character in the written works but very little is known of her (Beyer 64) and is relegated to domestic labours.

This uptake on female characters (or lack of thereof) has sparked a controversy in the BBC version which has been criticised as being "an essentially conservative, indeed, regressive narrative" (Fathallah 490). Bearing in mind that the canon "adapts" to the spectator's reality, it is significant to many that Sherlock creators had not introduced female characters who are not defined by their relationship with the men in the stories (mostly Watson and Holmes) in order to adapt to a more contemporary and "gender-conscious" reality. In order to understand the adaptation of female characters in *Sherlock*, some Victorian values and the Eve/Mary dichotomy in regard to female characters in the series need to be considered.

Concerning the only recurring female character in Doyle's stories, Mrs Hudson appears on the stories and the TV series as the "dotting mother", cleaning after Sherlock and John in her unidimensional Madonna/mother figure glory. Although she continuously repeats in the TV series 'I am your landlady, not your housekeeper!', this seems like a broken record as none of the characters (not even herself) believe it so. Even though the TV series gave her a dubious past (possible a former belly dancer and wife of a drug cartel lord), she is depicted as a mother figure in her appearance and actions (fussing over Sherlock and John, trying to play peacemaker between the two of them, cleaning, or preparing tea).

Nevertheless, some changes were made in the Christmas Special (set in Victorian England)<sup>11</sup> that may have been result of the criticism received on female representations in the series. Probably taking into account the criticism on the superficial roles female characters in *Sherlock* had (Cox), the creators took use of this and Victorian Mrs Hudson voiced this slight towards her figure in Watson's writings by saying "I am your landlady, not a plot device!". This would start a refashioning of the character who had her most "badass" moment in the last season where she is seen driving recklessly

a sports car<sup>12</sup>: a representation which is quite far away from Mrs Hudson of previous seasons.

Regarding female and canon divergences, only one character has made the creators break with Conan Doyle's list of characters: Molly Hooper. Both creators of the series had agreed that only Conan Doyle's regulars would be portrayed in the adaptation; however, they changed their mind after watching Louise Brealey's fantastic<sup>13</sup> portrayal of Molly in the first episode. As a non-canonical character with no constraints, the character could be considered a "wild card" as no fan expectation falls upon her.

Overall, Molly is set to represent the figure of the fangirl as Brealey (the actor playing Molly) states (Cooper): aware of Sherlock's many shortcomings on human interaction but also drawn to his intellectual prowess and good looks, she embodies the fangirl in love with her "unattainable" hero (Sherlock). Even though the character may have been easily used as a comic gag (the shy background girl in love with the main protagonist), some character development could be appreciated throughout the four seasons. While the first season Molly's main existing reason was to help Sherlock much like a tool (e.g. running errands, or working until late), some changes are conducted in the following seasons. She is presented as a multidimensional character outside the lab (invited to Baker Street' Christmas party only to be embarrassed by Sherlock); she outsmarts Moriarty along with Sherlock and the public gets to see her growing a backbone against Sherlock's usual insensitive behaviour towards her. In the last two seasons she confronts him, she slaps him when he is drugged and makes him apologise; and is present as Sherlock's voice of reason within his subconscious while he is at the brick of death.

Throughout the last two seasons and the Christmas Special (where she exemplifies the difficulties Victorian women had to endure jobwise by dressing up as a male doctor), Molly is given a voice. This may be understood as a new appreciation for the character but also a possible refashioning of female characters in the series. However, the last episode of season 4<sup>14</sup> turned out to be problematic regarding Molly's growing persona and fans responded with the hashtag "mollydeservesbetter" in different social media after the episode was released.

Contrary to the "meek" pathologist, Irene Adler (a Conan Doyle original) stands out by several reasons: she is the first female villain in the series, the first to be drawn as Sherlock's equal in wits and the first woman

to awake some sort of sexual interest in the detective. In contrast to her job as actress in Doyle's world, she becomes a dominatrix (known as "The Woman") with a perchance for trouble and blackmailing in the BBC product. In this context, she would be classified as the Eve in the Mary/Eve dichotomy. This is very clear on the sexualisation of the character and the effect it produces on the detective, especially considering both Doyle's Sherlock and "Mofftiss" Sherlock are indifferent to women with some viewers defining Sherlock as asexual. Their first meeting would set the dynamic for their following gatherings: Adler's nakedness when confronting Sherlock is used as a statement as well as a weapon –by using no costume or clothes she leaves Sherlock clueless and unable to deduce her. She turns the tables by deducing him and her quick wit defines her in Sherlock's eyes as a character/foe worthy of his recognition.

Her thirst for power is one of the traits which are exploited in the series: her job as a highly paid dominatrix, her blackmailing to the Royal family (without asking for anything, just to make them aware she had the upper hand), her power play with Mycroft and her outsmarting Sherlock are some of the defining moments in her performance. Therefore, it could be argued that Adler is defined by her need for power the same way Sherlock needs knowledge. However, Adler's powerful image crumbles at the end of the episode when she is bested due to her feelings for the detective<sup>15</sup>. She then becomes the "beguiling victim" (Gilbert "The Troublesome Women") and she is saved from a certain death by Sherlock.

This could be interpreted as a return to the traditional idea of the male hero saving the damsel in distress. Curiously enough, this would be a deviation to Conan Doyle's canon in which Irene Adler bests Sherlock and escapes. Poole points out that "In a literary universe full of victimized women, oppressed and manipulated by the men in their lives, Irene herself is the manipulator. She outwits one of the greatest detectives in literary history" (23). Despite the fact that Adler appears only on one episode<sup>16</sup> and one of Conan Doyle's short stories<sup>17</sup>, she is mentioned in the series offhandedly: appearing in Sherlock's mind palace naked when trying to solve a case, during Watson and Holmes' chat about sex and her trademark moaning ringtone saved on Sherlock's phone. In all these references the character is mainly used to sexualise Sherlock and continue his trademark heteromascularity.

As previously mentioned, most of Conan Doyle's canonical characters are men; it has been pointed out that the Sherlock centrism of

both the original stories and the TV series may not allow for the development of male or female supporting characters (Perron). However, the bias towards male characters in the series and the critics to a Sherlock male-centric universe were summarised by Eurus in her identity reveal to John: “Didn’t it ever occur to you not even once that Sherlock’s secret brother might just be Sherlock’s secret sister?”<sup>18</sup>.

Indeed, John and Sherlock had not considered that possibility, a fact which is very telling from a gender-focused perspective: they do not conceive the possibility of a woman as a criminal mastermind. Furthermore, even though Sherlock is the main protagonist of the series, the narrator’s voice belongs to John: he is the focaliser in Conan Doyle’s stories (writing Sherlock’s shenanigans for the newspapers) and in the BBC series (updating his blog). Therefore, the viewers are first presented with John’s perceptions rather than Sherlock’s. Hence, it is not surprising that the first glimpse of Eurus is through John’s eyes as “the woman in the bus”<sup>19</sup>.

Concerning Eurus, it should be pointed out her different appearances in disguise which resonate with the conception of *Sherlock* female characters within the Eve/Mary dichotomy already addressed. Throughout the three episodes of season four she appears as “E” (the woman in the bus), Faith (a client of Sherlock’s) and John’s psychiatrist.

Following Gilbert and Gubar’s theory on Victorian women and ideals, this deception could be understood as part of the seeming duality of female character and their deceiving nature as “the monster may not only be concealed *behind* the angel, she may actually turn out to reside *within* (or in the lower half of) the angel” (29). The reference to the Victorian angel has been widespread in literary criticism and gender studies during the last decades. Even though Conan Doyle did not introduce many female characters, most of these were wronged women and victims; thus, allowing only the “angels” to be present in his stories.

In *Sherlock*, the “angels in the house” would be represented by Mrs Hudson and Molly while the attribute of monster would undoubtedly fall on Irene Adler. In regard to Eurus’ alter egos, some categories could be drawn: (1) “E” as the “monster” and temptress, and (2) “Faith” and the psychiatrist as the “angels” and helpers. “E” is presented as John’s temptation and a danger to his marriage (they meet at the bus where they flirt, and she gives him her number) much in the same way Adler was a danger to Sherlock’s work. Curiously enough, nor Adler nor this alter ego are given their names but titles: “the Woman” and “E” correspondingly.

This may be a declaration of intentions in the sense that these characters work towards a subversive purpose, thus, the “subversiveness” of their names: their aim is to make men fall to their knees figuratively and, in Adler’s case, also literally.

In contrast to this, the alter egos presented in the second episode could be read as the “angels”. Firstly, “Faith” is introduced as a client to Sherlock (much like the “victim” women who used to appear on Conan Doyle’s writings): her “weak” state is exploited psychologically (presenting her as the victim to her father’s machinations as well as with suicidal tendencies) and physically (she has a limp). All these elements may reduce her to a defenceless woman in Sherlock’s mind to whom he would feel needs protecting from the monsters, thus, making her the “angel”. Canonically, this alter ego would strongly resonate with Conan Doyle’s women as innocents to be protected.

Eurus’ third alter ego (John’s psychiatrist) does not conform to the idea of victim, but it does relate to the figure of the Madonna already addressed in regard to Mrs Hudson. As a psychiatrist she could be considered as caring and nurturing similar to a mother figure. In this role, Eurus discovers John’s (and, therefore, Sherlock’s) inner thoughts and concerns. This could have a dual purpose: she does in to garner information for “The Final Problem”<sup>20</sup>, but also to turn the tables on the usual power play – Sherlock and John are the studied objects while she is judge and jury.

Even though a clear distinction on Eurus’ alter egos on Victorian types is possible, Eurus does not fit the archetypes of “mother-virgin-whore”: she is presented as an anomaly among *Sherlock’s* women, a monster to which the public and Sherlock are cautioned off from the beginning. The first information the public (and Sherlock) is given about her is through Mycroft (Sherlock and Eurus’ older brother). The name of Sherrinford is used by Mycroft when placing a call. The name “Sherrinford” is known in the Sherlock fandom as it was not only one of Doyle’s earlier naming options for the detective, but also Mycroft and Sherlock’s older brother in some non-canonical works<sup>21</sup>.

However, in contrast to this Sherlock-based information, Sherrinford turned out to be the facility in which Eurus was imprisoned. Much like the Victorian madwoman, Eurus was confined in this institution away from civilisation and believed to be dead. It was Mycroft who locked her up after showing “psychopathic” tendencies and being unable to control her. Intellectually speaking, she is smarter than any of her brothers; her

intelligence and her incomprehension of the human mind<sup>22</sup> are probably the causes of her unstable tendencies.

Her physical appearance at Sherrinford is similar to what an ill Victorian woman may wear: hair loose and flowing, barefoot and in a white nightshift. Her careless looks resonate with the idea of the ultimate Victorian madwoman: Bertha Mason Rochester in *Jane Eyre* (Brönte). Like Bertha, Eurus is “killed off” by a male relative (Mycroft) and imprisoned against her will. The reason behind these incarcerations was the need to control what the male/Victorian gaze considered unstable tendencies. Both women use fire to destroy patriarchal and oppressive symbols (Bertha burns down Thornfield Hall and Eurus the Holmes’ estate); thus, reflecting on the idea of escape through madness (Gilbert & Gubar, 341). In Bertha’s case, she was escaping from society’s oppression; in Eurus’ case, she is running from humankind and her own intellect.

To conclude, it is clear that the creators of the show have not only studied Conan Doyle’s fiction, but they have also researched Victorian times as it could be appreciated in the Christmas Special. Regarding women, they have continued with Conan Doyle’s treatment of female characters with some changes to adapt to the new *Sherlock* reality. Therefore, the series could be considered a fanfic product in the sense that the original story line is changed, but still follows Doyle’s essence. Furthermore, the series may be read as a transfictional and transmedia piece which is in constant change through the interaction with the public.

The characters’ emancipation from the original text should not only be considered as a consequence of the source refashioning due to external factors, but also as an additional reading of the story. In this sense, Eurus could not have been introduced in Conan Doyle’s writing due to the social constraints at the time: only “angels in the house” had space in literature. However, bringing Sherlock to the 21<sup>st</sup> century opens the door to unexplored realities such as the fact that, theoretically speaking, a Holmes’ “mad” sister may have existed. Therefore, Eurus Holmes could be considered a non-conventional but still canonical madwoman buried deep within the constrained Victorian society represented in 21<sup>st</sup> century *Sherlock*.

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<sup>1</sup> Fan of ‘Sherlock Holmes’ (either the character or his stories).



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<sup>2</sup> ‘The Adventure of the Crooked Man’, 1893.

<sup>3</sup> In ‘The Final Problem’ (1893), Sherlock Holmes falls through the Reichenbach Falls after a supposedly fight with Professor Moriarty and is considered dead. The fictional detective returned years later in Conan Doyle’s short story ‘The Adventure of the Empty House’, 1903.

<sup>4</sup> I make a difference here between derivative works and intertextual adaptations by considering the first one to have negative connotations in regard to the quality in following the original source while the second one has neutral connotations.

<sup>5</sup> These words were said by Amanda Abbington (Mary Watson in the TV series) in regard to season 4.

<sup>6</sup> This will be further discussed later on.

<sup>7</sup> Convergence: “the flow of content across multiple media platforms, the cooperation between multiple media industries and the migratory behaviour of media audiences who will go almost anywhere in search of the kinds of entertainment experiences they want” (Jenkins 2).

<sup>8</sup> Passive media reception of the product is set aside, and spectators take an active role in the creation of new media material.

<sup>9</sup> ‘The Adventure of the Copper Beeches’, 1892

<sup>10</sup> ‘The Sussex Vampire’, 1924.

<sup>11</sup> ‘The Abominable Bride’ was a Christmas Special released on January 1st, 2016. Set in Victorian times, it deals with the mysterious murders committed by a dead woman dressed in her wedding clothes. It was later discovered that the murderers were a group of women trying to get justice on their own for all the injustices suffered on men’s hands; thus, criticising the patriarchal society of the moment.

<sup>12</sup> ‘The Lying Detective’ episode 2, season 4.

<sup>13</sup> Metro TV. “Sherlock writer Mark Gatiss: Even Benedict Cumberbatch fangirls like Molly”. Metro TV. 9 December 2013, <http://metro.co.uk/2013/12/09/sherlock-writer-mark-gatiss-even-benedict-cumberbatch-fangirls-like-molly-4223394>.

<sup>14</sup> ‘The Final Problem’ episode 3, season 4. In one of the many mind games Eurus plays with Sherlock, she forces him to call Molly and make her say ‘I love you’ to him by making Sherlock think Molly is in danger. Although unwilling to say it due to the emotional turmoil that would cost her, Molly says it due to Sherlock’s persistence.

<sup>15</sup> Sherlock deduces her feelings for him; thus, discovering her password to the blackmailing files.

<sup>16</sup> ‘A Scandal in Belgravia’ episode 1, season 2.

<sup>17</sup> ‘A Scandal in Bohemia’ (1891).

<sup>18</sup> ‘The Lying Detective’, episode 2, season 4.

<sup>19</sup> ‘The Six Thatchers’, episode 1, season 4.

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<sup>20</sup> 'The Final Problem', episode 3, season 4.

<sup>21</sup> Baring-Gould, William S. *Sherlock Holmes of Baker Street: A Life of the World's First Consulting Detective*. Bramham House, 1962.

<sup>22</sup> Mycroft relates an episode in which she cuts herself to see how muscles work.

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## VIII

## GAGA POLI-CHROMATICA

PABLO MÉNDEZ SEOANE

A estas alturas de la película, en mayor o menor medida, todxs conocemos a Lady Gaga. Nacida con el nombre Stefani Joanne Angelina Germanotta, la artista de Nueva York saltó a la fama a nivel internacional en el año 2008 hasta consolidarse como la artista que es en 2020. Su carrera ha suscitado un gran número de reacciones en diferentes ámbitos críticos, incluyendo el académico, en el que han destacado en los últimos años obras de gran impacto de investigación, como *Lady Gaga and Popular Music. Performing Gender, Fashion, and Culture* (Routledge 2016) y otros. Siguiendo esta línea, en las próximas páginas llevaré a cabo un análisis de la evolución de la trayectoria artística de Lady Gaga, y comenzaré el estudio con unos párrafos en los que ofreceré algunas pinceladas sobre sus datos biográficos más relevantes, los cuales la convirtieron en la artista que es hoy en día. Seguidamente, hablaré tanto de sus discos musicales como de las diferentes estéticas que hacen de cada álbum una obra de arte total, relacionando en el proceso la moda utilizada, la escenografía de los videoclips y los temas tratados. Finalizaré con una reflexión personal al respecto. Mi objetivo es presentar a Lady Gaga como un paradigma cultural en el que la discursividad de sus letras, la performatividad de su iconografía y la narrativa inherente a su visión con respecto a la moda generan un estado de ánimo crítico tanto entre sus seguidores como entre los estudiosos de su impacto (Geczy 725).

Tal y como anticipé en el párrafo anterior, Stefani Joanne Angelina Germanotta nació en Nueva York en el año 1986, hija de padres italoamericanos. Fueron cuatro los aspectos que definieron la personalidad de Stefani, los que la hicieron liberar el que sería su alter ego artístico en el futuro. En primer lugar, su temprano contacto con la música. Desde que contaba unos tres años de edad, estuvo rodeada de música, motivada en gran parte por la melomanía de su padre. Así lo confirma Helia Phoenix en su libro *Lady Gaga - Just Dance: The Biography* (2010), en el que afirma que Stefani solía escuchar “Pink Floyd, Led Zeppelin, The Beatles, Billy Joel, the Rolling Stones and Elton John - all of which her daddy loved to play while

dancing around with his daughter” (1). Además, comenzó sus lecciones de piano a los cuatro años y, aunque al principio detestaba practicar, pronto descubrió el talento innato que tenía para dicho instrumento: “She learned fast and became very good at classical piano very quickly” (3). Esta temprana conexión con la música es determinante para desarrollar las competencias artísticas de una joven Stefani, que se impregna de las icónicas actuaciones de esos artistas no solo a través de su música, sino también por medio de las producciones en video divulgadas por una entonces emergente MTV (Kaplan 136).

En segundo lugar, la educación conservadora del colegio al que asistió tuvo un gran impacto en ella. Sus padres la enviaron al colegio católico privado más prestigioso de Manhattan, el Convento del Sagrado Corazón, donde además de coincidir con celebridades de la talla de Paris Hilton, participó con cierta frecuencia en obras de teatro y tomó lecciones de canto adicionales. Desde pequeña, Stefani poseía la cualidad de destacar entre la multitud. Teniendo alrededor de quince años, su actitud estrafalaria le granjeó problemas con las profesoras, en su mayoría monjas, las cuales no terminaban de aprobar su forma de vestir. En palabras de Phoenix: “(Stefani) would come to school with lashings of red lipstick on, or with her hair arranged strangely (...), and it was now that she developed a taste for fishnets and bright lipstick, a look she kept through the transformation from Stefani into Lady Gaga” (10, 15).

En tercer lugar, decisivo fue también el ambiente al que se mudó tras abandonar sus estudios universitarios. Primeramente, se fue a vivir al East Village, una de las zonas más alternativas de Nueva York. Más adelante, se asentó finalmente en un diminuto apartamento en el Lower East Side, lugar de la gran manzana que es, por así decirlo, el epicentro de la vida bohemia. En este barrio se concentraban la mayoría de piano-bares y salas de conciertos más importantes en los que la joven Stefani quería probar suerte haciéndose un hueco en el mercado musical. En palabras de Phoenix: “The Lower East Side was a trendy, arty, boho neighbourhood with an endless stream of artists, musicians and scenesters. It was also the location for many of New York’s best music venues, bars and clubs, (...) destination for many of the oddballs and eccentrics that inhabit the New York art scene” (50). Stefani, que ya empezaba a ser conocida en el mundillo como Lady Gaga, absorbió con fascinación la escena local, mimetizándose con ella hasta ser una más.

Y, en cuarto lugar, su pasión desenfrenada por la moda y su buen ojo para combinar lo estafalario con lo *chic* y, a su vez, dotar de un significado simbólico a todos sus *looks*. De acuerdo con Phoenix: “Gaga was also obsessed with Versace, Gucci, Dolce & Gabbana, Fendi (and) Valentino” (52). Lady Gaga posee, aún a día de hoy, la hipnótica habilidad de sorprender con cada una de sus apariciones mediáticas, lo cual se debe, en gran medida, a un sexto sentido para la moda. Para Gaga, la ropa es tan importante a la hora de expresar un mensaje como lo son las letras de una canción o los acordes empleados en su composición, creando una imaginería propia inspirada no solo en grandes diseñadores y diseñadoras de moda, sino también en otros músicos que compartieron su forma de entender el oficio como un todo en el que se combinaban todas las artes para crear un espectáculo total (Woolston 107). Tal y como explica Jessica Jayne en su libro *Modern Divas Boxed Set* (2012): “David Bowie and Queen were also major influences in her musical career. (...) She began thinking about the theatrics of performance, and that was when (she really discovered herself)” (114).

Así pues, mezclando todos estos aspectos e influencias, obtenemos el cóctel explosivo que es Lady Gaga, la cual incluso adoptó su nombre artístico a partir de una canción de Queen llamada “Radio Ga”. Y, llegados a este punto, es conveniente mencionar el hecho de que Gaga se considera a sí misma una artista performativa. En cada uno de sus álbumes musicales, y la consiguiente promoción del mismo a través de conciertos y videoclips, todo guarda una estrecha relación: las canciones, el vestuario escogido, la actitud. Todo debe estar preparado para que el resultado sea considerado un show total. Y es que Gaga, en el proceso de composición de un tema musical, piensa no solo en la musicalidad, sino también, por ejemplo, en la ropa que usará cuando toque dicha canción en vivo e incluso los movimientos que empleará para dar credibilidad a su visión. Es, por lo tanto, una concepción indivisible en su forma de entender su arte como un todo. Citando a la propia Lady Gaga, tal y como lo reproduce Phoenix: “I always have a vision (...). When I’m writing a song I’m always thinking about the clothes and the way I’m going to sing... How I move, that kind of stuff is written into the song. It’s not just a song, and I’m not just gonna stand on stage and sing” (84).

Teniendo en cuenta todo lo anterior, es el momento de analizar la evolución estética de Lady Gaga a través de sus seis álbumes de estudio. Cada uno de ellos adopta una estética y un tono diferente y, sin embargo,



todos son perfectamente reconocibles como la obra de la misma artista: todos tienen el toque Gaga. No obstante, cada disco puede ser catalogado siguiendo diversos criterios, como por ejemplo: la temática tratada, la historia contada, la moda empleada o los colores dominantes. En este estudio, voy a llevar a cabo un collage temático y transmedia referenciando los aspectos que marcaron el nacimiento de Lady Gaga; es decir, su temprana educación musical, sus orígenes católicos, el ambiente alternativo y la moda como recurso para obtener fuerza y teatralidad en su propuesta musical y estética. Así pues, siguiendo una cita de la propia Gaga, he decidido nombrar sus etapas artísticas siguiendo un patrón cromático, siendo cada color representativo de cada uno de los seis discos publicados por la artista hasta la fecha. La cita que inspiró esta división cromática, extraída del libro escrito por Helia Phoenix, es la que sigue: “When I write songs I hear melodies and I hear lyrics but I also see colours; I see sound like a wall of colours. For example, ‘Poker Face’ is a deep amber colour, when you see the show you will see that colour” (84). Esta referencia de la artista supone una invitación a observar su trabajo, tanto de forma colectiva como desde una óptica individualizada, atendiendo a una suerte de identificaciones cromáticas que parecen definir el tono de cada uno de sus trabajos, y que alimentan la exposición a sus propuestas como una experiencia holística plena.

Empecemos pues con la primera etapa, que he querido identificar como la Etapa Lapislázuli, y que se corresponde con su álbum debut *The Fame* (Interscope Records, 2008). Todo lo que rodea esta fase en la carrera artística de Gaga es de color azul con reflejos dorados, por eso decidí llamarla ‘lapislázuli’, inspirado en el color índigo de esa piedra que los egipcios solían combinar con el oro. Son dos las razones por las cuales decidí bautizar esta etapa con ese color. Primeramente, en la portada del disco apreciamos que el color dominante es el azul: un primer plano de Gaga con gafas de sol negras en las cuales relucen unos diamantes, reflejo de la vara ornamentada con dicho material que sujeta con una mano que no vemos en el plano. Los diamantes aparecen salpicados de motas de luz azul iridiscente. En segundo lugar, la videografía de esta fase está impregnada también de tonos azulados y brillantes, que podemos apreciar tanto en la escenografía como en la ropa y los complementos usados. De nuevo, aquí apreciamos la importancia que Gaga le da a la estética en todas sus presentaciones, y en la sutil elección de la moda que emplea. También hay que mencionar el contenido temático del disco para entender la elección del color azul. Según

Phoenix, el disco trata “the idea of possessing inner fame and how anyone could feel famous” (86). Gaga quería invitar al mundo a una fiesta para celebrar su debut en el mundo de la fama a través de un disco de pop totalmente refrescante e innovador por aquel entonces. Aunque mucha gente tachó al disco de “too racy, too dance-oriented, too underground (...) not marketable”, Gaga tenía claro que lo que ella hacía iba a ser la nueva tendencia musical, lo moderno, tal y como ella misma afirmaba: “I’m telling you, this is what’s next” (Jayne 132). De acuerdo con Óscar Castellero Mimenza, psicólogo y articulista de la revista online *Psicología y Mente*, el color azul tradicionalmente se ha asociado a la modernidad. Por lo tanto, podríamos afirmar que Gaga estaba haciendo una declaración de intenciones con los colores elegidos: ella iba a ser la modernidad, un soplo de aire fresco que revitalizase la industria musical.

La segunda etapa de Gaga mostró la otra cara de la misma moneda. Si en la etapa lapislázuli alababa la sensación que producía la fama, en esta abordó las consecuencias nefastas que puede conllevar no saber digerir un rápido ascenso al mundo de las celebridades. Es por esta razón que adoptó una visión más oscura, incluso siniestra. Esta es, por tanto, la etapa negra, y dicha etapa no comenzó con el lanzamiento de su segundo álbum de estudio, sino con la actuación más comentada en la historia de los Video Music Awards. En dicha actuación, Gaga llevó el dramatismo y la teatralidad hasta cotas nunca antes alcanzadas por ningún otro artista: hizo una versión de su canción “Paparazzi” en la que acabó “ahorcada” y con sangre falsa goteando por la cara y el body que llevaba: “suddenly blood began to pour through her white bra top (...) her dancers lifted her up, then she was hoisted above them by a rope, where she hung, staring at the audience, covered in blood” (Phoenix 228). Obviamente, esto pretendía ser una metáfora de las consecuencias de la fama: ser perseguida por la prensa sensacionalista a todas horas y cómo eso te afecta como ser humano. Además de dar inicio a la etapa negra y servir como antesala para su segundo álbum de estudio, *The Fame Monster* (UMG Recordings, Inc., 2009), esta actuación supuso su coronación como artista performativa en toda regla. Según Phoenix, “it was an art masterpiece; exactly what she’d wanted it to be” (228). Por otro lado, en la etapa negra apreciamos el uso de ese color no solo en el artwork del disco, sino en los videoclips. La portada del disco muestra a Lady Gaga con una peluca rubio platino y un abrigo de charol negro con hombreras: no hay calidez en el lado oscuro de la fama. Fue asimismo en esta etapa en la que comenzó a colaborar con diseñadores de

moda para crear el contenido visual de sus videoclips. Por ejemplo, en “Bad Romance” (Francis Lawrence, 2009) aparecen los icónicos zapatos armadillo de Alexander McQueen, así como unas gafas de sol Carrera. Muchas otras maisons de moda se interesaron en ella, y Gaga colaboró con aquellas con las que sentía más afinidad estética: “Thierry Mugler (...), Dior, Tom Binns, Giuseppe Zanotti, Dolce & Gabbana, Betony Vernon for Swarovski Runway Rocks, Chanel, Boudicca and Boy London” (178). El final de esta etapa coincide con la publicación del videoclip del último single del disco, “Alejandro” (Steven Klein, 2010). En este vídeo apreciamos por primera vez la escenografía inspirada por sus años escolares en el Convento del Sagrado Corazón, ya que en una de las escenas aparece vestida con un hábito rojo de látex adornado con una cruz blanca invertida.

Llegamos pues a la tercera etapa artística de Gaga. Esta etapa coincide con la salida a la venta de su tercer álbum de estudio: *Born this Way* (Interscope Records, 2011). Este disco marcó un antes y un después en su carrera, ya que fue concebido como un manifiesto en defensa de los derechos humanos, con especial énfasis en la reivindicación por la igualdad racial y los derechos del colectivo LGTBIQ+. Es por este motivo por el que la tercera etapa será la etapa arcoiris, como un símbolo a todo tipo de diversidad y minorías sociales a las que Gaga dedicó el disco. Cito una parte de la letra de la canción “Born This Way”: “No matter gay, straight, or bi, lesbian, transgendered life, I’m on the right track, baby, I was born to survive. No matter black, white or beige, chola or orient made, I’m on the right track, baby, I was born to be brave”. Además, esa pluralidad de colores se aprecia también en la riqueza tonal con la que impregnó la estética no tanto del disco como sí de los videoclips. En este sentido cabe mencionar el videoclip de “Judas” (Laurieann Gibson, 2011), en el que se combinan infinidad de colores, entre los que destacan el azul, el rojo y el dorado, y en el cual se lleva a cabo una reinterpretación de la traición de Judas a Jesucristo, donde Lady Gaga interpreta a María Magdalena. Nuevamente, aquí encontramos una muestra de la influencia que supuso para Gaga su temprana educación cristiana. Por otra parte, también es destacable el videoclip del tema “Yoü and I” (Laurieann Gibson, 2011), donde la paleta de colores utilizados es más suave que en el videoclip anteriormente mencionado. Así pues, en este destacan los colores verdes y azules, todos ellos bajo un filtro de tonos pastel. Es también en este vídeo en el que Gaga aparece como un drag king, su alter ego masculino, llamado Jo Calderone,

demostrando una vez más su personalidad polifacética, y alargando más si cabe con este hecho su lucha por visibilizar las minorías.

La siguiente fase de Gaga es la etapa blanca. El cuarto disco de estudio que lanzó al mercado llevó por título *ARTPOP* (Interscope Records, 2013). Para la concepción artística del mismo, Gaga bebió de las fuentes del arte del Renacimiento italiano, las cuales combinó con una estética pop al más puro estilo de Andy Warhol. Es además el disco en el que su sentido de la moda está más marcado que nunca. Lady Gaga canta en su canción “Fashion!”: “Look at me now! Like we’re on top of the world in my Fashion! Looking good and feeling fine. Je me sens Fashion! Donnez-moi Christian Louboutins, c’est la vie en Fashion. Je suis en haute couture en Fashion!”. Otra influencia para la estética de este disco fue la diseñadora de modas Donatella Versace, hermana de Gianni Versace, fundador de la casa. De hecho, le dedicó una canción. Con respecto a los videoclips de esta etapa, los colores más usados son el negro y, por supuesto, el blanco, que destaca por encima del resto. En el videoclip de “Applause” (Inez & Vinoodh, 2013), Lady Gaga luce un atuendo inspirado en la obra “El nacimiento de Venus”, de Sandro Botticelli. Sin embargo, no es hasta el videoclip de “G.U.Y. An ARTPOP Film” (Lady Gaga, 2014) donde veremos la explosión blanca, dando la impresión de estar en una fiesta ibicenca.

Entramos así en la quinta fase, la etapa rosa bebé. Tras la publicación de su anterior disco, que fue considerado un fracaso comercial, Lady Gaga decidió cambiar de rumbo y alejarse de los excesos visuales y del barroquismo estético que tanto la caracterizaron en sus primeros años. Nació así el que es sin duda su disco más íntimo y maduro hasta la fecha: *Joanne* (Interscope Records, 2016). No solo la estética sufrió un cambio drástico, sino la musicalidad y el lirismo de sus letras. Nos encontramos ante un trabajo familiar, salido de sus más hondas raíces, un disco simple pero potente. No es de extrañar que adquiriera una estética más suave y delicada, menos agresiva. Todo lo que rodea a este quinto disco es de color rosa bebé: la vestimenta, los decorados, las guitarras y los pianos. Todo es vaporoso y más etéreo que antes, para reforzar la sensación de calidez que quería transmitir. En la portada del disco se aprecia a Lady Gaga posando de perfil, con un traje de chaqueta rosa bebé y un sombrero de ala ancha a juego. Un detalle reseñable al respecto y que rompió un poco los esquemas en relación con el color del disco fue el videoclip de la canción “John Wayne” (Jonas Åkerlund, 2017). No obstante, simbólicamente funciona debido a que, en el

videoclip, se nos presenta a Lady Gaga asesinando, literalmente, a su yo pasada, y abrazando con este gesto su nuevo rumbo como artista.

Para terminar, la sexta y última fase: la etapa rosa oscuro casi negro. El álbum número seis en la carrera de Lady Gaga no podía haber tenido un título mejor: *Chromatica* (Interscope Records, 2020). Poco se puede decir todavía de este disco. Abraza toda su trayectoria anterior y ofrece un combinado perfecto de temas cuyo color exponencial es el rosa oscuro casi negro. Casi parece como si estuviera diciéndonos que ha vuelto para quedarse. No deja de ser interesante el hecho de que para su anterior disco optara por un rosa bebé y en *Chromatica*, disco en el que vuelve más madura pero a la vez con un sonido similar al del principio de su carrera, por un rosa oscuro casi negro, como remarcando la diferencia entre un disco y el otro.

En conclusión, cabe destacar la gran creatividad de una artista que no deja indiferente a nadie. A lo largo de toda su carrera, demostró que tenía el talento necesario para dejar una huella no solo en la industria musical, sino en todas las artes. Lady Gaga es, por lo tanto, arte con mayúsculas.

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## IX

ADJUSTING OUR FOCUS: ANALYSIS OF “WAYS OF SEEING”, BY  
JOHN BERGER.

SEÁN KEANE

“Ways of Seeing” is a BBC documentary hosted by John Berger, which was aired in 1972, and split into four separate parts of text, with three more parts for visuals. In a ground-breaking move, Berger attempted to deconstruct all that we knew, or thought we knew, about art and how it is viewed. The scripts from the documentary would later be adapted into a book of the same name in the same year, and went on to enjoy huge critical acclaim. Berger himself was as multifaceted as the points raised in his book; as well as being well known for his work as a novelist and art critic (winning the Booker Prize for the former in 1972), he was also highly regarded in the fields of poetry and painting. As mentioned, the documentary itself is divided into four parts, while I have split my thoughts about the points raised by Berger into three separate parts for a similar clarity. In this essay, I hope to highlight the reality that Berger’s forewarnings of the increasing public apathy to images which we consume are dangerous, and that the responsibility of this awareness is a burden we must all bear.

To begin to understand the ideas that are presented by Berger in this body of work, in which he appeals to us to deconstruct the mechanisms with which we view the world around us, we must also be somewhat aware of Berger’s own background. Intentionally or not, some personal political views that Berger held seem to manifest themselves as part of the fabric of his ideas communicated in “Ways of Seeing”. A self-proclaimed Marxist, Berger was vocal in his conviction of the marriage of art and humanistic Marxist theory, culminating in a collection of essays published in 1960 titled *Permanent Red*. As we watch these short but captivating episodes of “Ways of Seeing”, Berger’s disdain for the bourgeois elements of the modern art world is palpable. This can be noted in another one of Berger’s works, *Art and Revolution: Ernst Neizvestny and the Role of the Artist in the USSR*, when he tells us: The present condition of the world, if accepted as it is, if approached with anything short of determined impatience to change it



utterly, renders every value meaningless. Two-thirds of the people of the world are being robbed, exploited, deceived, constantly humiliated, condemned to the most abject and artificial poverty and denied as human beings. Furthermore, if this condition is accepted – or even more or less accepted with the qualification that there should be a few reforms, a little restraint and a little more foreign aid – it is quite clear from the evidence to date that the condition will become even more extreme. Imperialism is insatiable. It can modify its methods but never its appetite. (11)

Time and time again throughout this mini-series, we can note that Berger conspicuously rallies against modern advertising, commodity art, and consumer culture. But it is not only the ostentatious exclusivity of modern art which bears the brunt of Berger’s criticism—the role and mischaracterization of women in media, art and advertising is unscrupulously dissected. Berger implores us to examine the manner in which we view our environment, but also to cast a critical eye on the subject matter of that environment. As Berger frequently implies during “Ways of Seeing”, the approach we take to viewing our world and the subject matter therewithin are indelibly fused.

The first section of the book deals primarily in how the entire perception of art changes with a plethora of different factors, and as such, it serves as a preface for the rest of the series. Berger begins by directing us to the most basic example; that the original of a painting, seen in real life, will always be different when compared with a replica, a photo of the painting or a video of the painting, with Berger arguing that the invention of the camera changed art completely. This point is illustrated by Walter Benjamin in his essay “The Work of Art in the Age of the Mechanical Reproduction” (1935), which clearly had a big influence on Berger’s own understanding of the subject. According to Benjamin, the “aura” of the work of art is held within the original piece:

The presence of the original is the prerequisite to the concept of authenticity. Chemical analyses of the patina of a bronze can help to establish this, as does the proof that a given manuscript of the Middle Ages stems from an archive of the fifteenth century. The whole sphere of authenticity is outside technical – and, of course, not only technical – reproducibility. Confronted with its manual reproduction, which was usually branded as a forgery, the original preserved all its authority; not so vis-à-vis technical reproduction. (26)

He reinforces this by telling us that by seeing the piece of art in real life, we see it in its truest form; or possibly more how the artist wanted us to see it. Even with that being said, we may never, or at least may never know, if we are seeing the work of art in the way that the artist wanted it to be viewed. Berger tells us that:

Having seen this reproduction, one can go to the National Gallery to look at the original and discover what the reproduction lacks. Alternatively, one can forget about the quality of the reproduction and simply be reminded, when one sees the original, that it is a famous painting of which somewhere one has already seen a reproduction. But in either case the uniqueness of the original now lies in it being the original of a reproduction. (9)

It could also be argued that our mental image of the painting is forever and irreversibly skewed by the modern setting in which we are viewing it; we have been moulded by our modern environments to the extent that it would be impossible to recreate not only the physical setting of the original painting, but also to possess the moral zeitgeist of the time. To illustrate this point, Berger gives us an example; the image of fire may well have had dramatically different connotations for a person living in the middle ages, indoctrinated with the ideology that the souls of the damned go to hell, complete with fire and brimstone. Taking that into account, is it possible to, for example, ever view a piece of art as the artist imagined it, or a book as the author imagined it? The answer is not very clear, and Berger tells us this is just one factor amongst many others which determine how we understand and interpret art.

Reception Theory is at the heart of this idea, a shift in power between the author and the reader. In an article entitled *Literary History as a Challenge to Literary Theory* (1969), Hans Robert Jauss, an early proponent and champion of Reception Theory, explains it as so: "...the relationship of work to work must now be brought into this interaction between work and mankind, and the historical coherence of works among themselves must be seen in the interrelations of production and reception. Put another way: literature and art only obtain a history that has the character of a process when the succession of works is mediated not only through the producing subject but also through the consuming subject—through the interaction of author and public." (6)

But with that in mind, Berger urges us to question what are the other factors which contribute to our perception of art. The images that we see

immediately before and after are relevant, music (and its genre) which is being played over an art has a bearing, even something as simple as our own state of mind at that moment will be important in understanding our perception of art. On absorbing the point made by Berger in this section, I was immediately reminded of a line by the Greek philosopher Heraclitus, which was later quoted by Plato in *Cratylus*, in which he says “you could not step into the same river twice” (402). Heraclitus was an advocate for the constant change in our world, and on a larger scale, the cosmos. He argued that with the continual flow of the river, we will never actually step into the same river again, as the river we once knew is now, somehow intangibly, gone. Heraclitus goes even further with this theory, wondering if we can even step into the river once. With this in mind, it could be argued that we may never actually look at the same piece of art in the same way more than once, as Berger tells us, “the relation between what we see and what we know is never settled” (7).

There are simply too many variables to truly see art in the same way twice, with Berger also pointing out that to try and second guess the artist, to imagine that we see it from their view, is also folly. When we try to imagine a piece of art, we have a number of options: the meaning that the artist personally implied, the meaning which the reader or viewer derive from the work, the work as it stands alone, amongst others. None of these options take into account the deluge of factors which are themselves highly influential: setting, time, personal circumstance. Berger explains:

An image is a sight which has been recreated or reproduced, it is an appearance, or a set of appearances, which has been detached from the place and time in which it first made its appearance and preserved, for a few moments or a few centuries. Every image embodies a way of seeing. (10)

Fundamentally, the first chapter acts as a precursor for the rest of the series. Berger wants us to examine the notion that, when we see something, our interpretation of that image is a product of what we “know”, or what we have learned, from our experiences and memories, personally and societally. Berger advocates the use of a certain degree of caution, skepticism, and even suspicion when we study and consume art, as the face-value of art is not possible to access.

The second section of the book talks about women in paintings, their status therein, and what they actually represent, with nude paintings being of particular importance, focusing almost entirely on the tradition of

European oil painting. Berger tells us that the male subject in this tradition is always defined by the power which he wields; that is to say, his physical power, financial power, his status in the hierarchy of society. The contrast to this is the perception of women from the same era, as Berger pulls no punches in talking about the subject of objectifying women, along with the moralising and hypocrisy that goes hand in hand with this subject. Using the painting entitled “Vanity” by Hans Memling, in which a naked woman is looking at herself in a mirror, Berger attempts to convince us that this painting is a microcosm of the overlying problem of these nude paintings; that women are given the negative characteristic of vanity, while the man remains pure. Berger tells us:

The mirror was often used as a symbol of the vanity of woman. The moralizing, however, was mostly hypocritical. You painted a naked woman because you enjoyed looking at her, you put a mirror in her hand and you called the painting “Vanity”, thus morally condemning the woman whose nakedness you had depicted for your own pleasure. (51)

Berger believes just a handful of paintings of this era feature the naked female body as “true to form (47).”; the rest being grossly misrepresented in two ways. The first, as mentioned previously, is to objectify women as simply an entity of pleasure for men to aesthetically and sexually enjoy. The second, is to portray women as a submissive creature; an inferior being which is lost without the discipline and command of a man, with Berger explaining to us that “a man's presence suggests what he is capable of doing to you or for you. By contrast, a woman's presence defines what can and cannot be done to her.” (46)

Berger, with wonderful rationale, implores us to stop looking at these paintings simply in their most basic and fundamental form, and begin looking more deeply at female representation in the European oil painting tradition. The glossy, curved figure of the woman who gazes at us tentatively from Memling's work may just as well be a slab of meat, carved and moulded by the artist himself; she does not represent the female archetype. In Kenneth Clark's *The Nude: A Study in Ideal Form*, written a decade before Berger's work and from which Berger developed some of his own ideas, we are shown the contrasting concepts between the nude body, and the naked body. For Clark, to be naked is to simply be without clothes, but to be nude has a distinctive, artistic implication, which seems less personal, as the nudity becomes, in a sense, an object. Berger goes on to say: “To be naked is

to be oneself. To be nude is to be seen naked by others and yet not recognized for oneself. A naked body has to be seen as an object in order to become a nude. The sight of it as an object stimulates the use of it as an object. Nakedness reveals itself. Nudity is placed on display." (14)

Even in a painting without a prop such as a mirror, where the female subject is looking directly towards us, Berger argues that she becomes two things here, the surveyed and the surveyor. She is, in some ways, exposing herself to be seen in a submissive way, but also looking at the viewer in a search for approval or reaffirmation:

A woman is always accompanied, except when quite alone, and perhaps even then, by her own image of herself. While she is walking across a room or weeping at the death of her father, she cannot avoid envisioning herself walking or weeping. From earliest childhood she is taught and persuaded to survey herself continually. She has to survey everything she is and everything she does, because how she appears to others – and particularly how she appears to men – is of crucial importance for what is normally thought of as the success of her life. (Berger, 18).

Being the object of male desires and fantasies may lead us to believe that in this form, women could possibly assert some kind of dominance over the man. We could be forgiven for mistaking the objectification of the nude women in these paintings as seduction, when in reality they hold very little power here at all: "men act and women appear" (Berger, 47).

This is certainly not a new concept, and it is far from being remedied. As Judy Chicago and Miriam Schapiro tell us in their chapter of *The Feminism and Visual Culture Reader*: "When women began to speak about themselves, they were not understood. Men had established a code of regulation for the making and judging of art derived from their sense of what was and what was not significant. Women, thought to be inferior to men, obviously could not occupy centre stage unless they concerned themselves with the ideas men deemed appropriate." (40)

We are made aware of the prominence of this logic in European painting, where this type of oppression seemed to have a monopoly. In Indian, African and Persian art of the same era, these nude paintings would portray a reciprocal attraction. Later, Berger reinforces his theory of the subjectification of women in the tradition of European oil painting as he proposes the idea that this tradition is still alive and well: images of women are still used to entice and charm the male viewer, while simultaneously used

to degrade and debase the female subject. Along with this, we are presented with ideas about the nature of the physicality of these images and their bases in reality, with Berger making us ponder; is something real because we can physically touch it? Surely not.

The next section of the book goes on to talk about the subjects of the oil paintings of 1500-1900. As Berger points out, to merely glance at one of these painting fleetingly, one might simply come to the conclusion that the painting holds a beauty to its own, and then move on to the next. But there is another dimension, an underbelly which seems to be slightly more sinister than the notion of plainly being beautiful, that ties a huge majority of these paintings together. Above all else, these paintings are that of self-indulgence. Of the thousands of portraits that were created in this period, we are presented with the generic face of the nobility, an elite group of people dressed in their finest clothes and wearing their finest jewellery; which also account for a minute percentile of the population of the time. In page 87, Berger explains this further by saying: "Oil painting did to appearances what capital did to social relations. It reduced everything to the equality of objects. Everything became exchangeable because everything became a commodity." (87).

If we are to take an example of a painting which does not include any human subjects, we are given images of luxurious objects, materials and properties, of thoroughbred horses and vast acres of land. With these two examples, we are being told either one of two things: this is who I am, or this is what I have, and you can be nor have neither.

Immediately, we are struck with a sense of *déjà vu* from the last section. As with the nude oil portraits, Berger has again attempted to lead us away from the basic aesthetics of the paintings, which may be quite visually impressive, and more towards the subjects and their relevance.

Berger makes the assertion that anthropology may be the field of science which views the subjects of European oil paintings with clarity, as he goes on to cite the work of Claude Levi-Strauss. In Levi-Strauss' work entitled "Conversations with Charles Charbonnier", he remarks "It is this avid and ambitious desire to take possession of the object for the benefit of the owner or even of the spectator which seems to me to constitute one of the outstandingly original features of the art of Western civilization" (84). In this way, European oil paintings of the seventeenth and eighteenth century can be differentiated from artwork of previous eras, as Berger points to the expression of "new attitudes of property and exchange" that became the

ideals and principles of the European elite. The entire tradition of European oil painting matured in the age of wealthy patronage, of which the Church was heavily involved. Berger tells us that even religious works of art of this age do not escape the pitfalls now associated with European oil painting. He gives us three separate examples of paintings depicting Mary Magdalene from 3 different centuries, the sixteenth, seventeenth and nineteenth respectively, and in each example she is portrayed as being a desirable feminine figure, not alluding at all to the perseverance and hardship encapsulated in her story.

The chasm between the rich and poor in society is augmented further as we examine the genre paintings of the time, the interpretation of ordinary people completing seemingly mundane tasks of the age. The subjects of these paintings were purposely unknown to drive home the notion of the “every-man”, and generally these paintings were a far less lucrative venture for an artist to pursue, but as Berger tells us, there is more to it than meets the eye. We are given the example of “The Fisher Boy”, a painting completed in 1630 by Dutchman Frans Hals. In it, we see a young boy folding his arms, smiling directly at the viewer of the painting. His clothes are quite unkempt, the landscape is dreary behind him, but there is a sentiment of joy centred around the boy smiling. Hals completed three other paintings in the same collection, “Smiling Fishergirl”, “Fisher Boy with Basket”, and “Laughing Fisherboy”, all of which have very similar characteristics. The poorer subjects of art, in Berger’s view, must smile to make themselves more appealing the wealthy buyer of the art, while also seemingly happy to be wallowing in their current economic situation. In stark contrast to this, the fabricated stoicism with which the wealthy are portrayed in their portraits, stony-faced and surrounded by their possessions, is quite a cruel joke. Berger tells us that this is to become a “source of hope” for those less fortunate, a twisted root of aspiration.

As Berger points out, the irony is that these works of art, while portraying luxury items, have themselves become the luxury items, as many of these paintings will fetch millions of euros when on auction. The main point of these almost universally admired paintings was to create envy and to consolidate to others where you were in the social class ladder. This is, the author tells us, in direct correlation with the advertising industry, which is what the last sections deals with.

Even being written in the 70s, Berger’s notions about the essence of advertising seem more significant now than ever. We are told, very

convincingly, that the models in our magazines are in many ways the modern form of the goddesses painted in the aforementioned oil paintings. More correlation can be found when we look at their messages. The luxurious oil paintings of the elite with their possessions show the viewer what the subject had, while advertising shows us what we could have; both inciting envy, and reinforcing the bogus concept of “you are what you have”.

The crux of the point here is about the negative implications that this may have. Modern advertising tells us, though not directly, that “you are not good enough, but we can help”, with Berger giving us examples where men are surrounded by women if they are holding, buying or consuming a particular product. The message here, for men at least, is clear; this product equals fertility. It is with the creation of this voice in the back of our heads that shift control towards the advertiser, with Berger telling us that “all publicity works upon anxiety. The sum of everything is money, to get money is to overcome anxiety. Alternatively, the anxiety on which publicity plays is the fear that having nothing you will be nothing” (143).

With this in mind, the social position of “being envied” by our peers has not dramatically changed in centuries. The oil paintings of 17<sup>th</sup> century Europe show the viewer what they cannot have, at least not yet. The advertising industry plays on our social insecurities, and promises us an improved social standing should we buy their product.

Berger alludes to the duality of freedom within a Western context; on one side we have the notions of free enterprise, capitalism and entrepreneurship, while on the other side we must deal with the subtle indoctrination of the commercial industry. Navigating between these problematic themes is not an easy task, we are not only susceptible to succumbing to lure of powerful commercial tactics, but we are bombarded with advertising at every turn in our lives. The illusion of authority is also important here; Berger once again identifies the connection between the European oil painting tradition and modern advertising when showing the commonality of indifference in the subjects of both. The aloof and apathetic figures which populate the canvases of centuries-old oil paintings would not be out of place in modern advertising, as both seek to create an illusion of power in being detached and mysterious.

As mentioned previously, Berger’s own political sentiments on the subject come to the fore at various points throughout the series, but none more so than the final chapter, where his distaste for capitalist tendencies is apparent to all. The insidious “inspiration of envy” which modern



advertising creates can be characterised by the glamour industry, which relies on envy as its lifeblood. In the industrial age, and as a result of constant marketing, Berger argues that people exist in the realm between who they truly are and who they wish to be, the latter being helped along by the multitude of products which promise to do exactly that. In a different sense than before, the consumer’s illusion of power is created by offering thousands of products. The idea is, through the myriad of choices given to the buyer, that we are somehow in control of proceedings. In reality, as Berger indicates, we are faceless numbers obsessed with material consumption. This thought is echoed by Walter Benjamin when he says “Humanity’s self-alienation has reached such a degree that it can experience its own destruction as an aesthetic pleasure of the first order.”(34) We cannot see our own lust for consumption consuming us.

But advertisers do not only attempt to stoke the flames of our insecurities by showing us what we could have, or how we could appear to others. They also play on our insecurities of what the detrimental consequences of a life without their product. On page 143, we are shown an image of a life insurance advertisement, which intends to transmit the idea of salvation to the prospective buyer in the event of them purchasing a life insurance plan. The alternative to buying life insurance, the advertisement subtly insists, is uncertainty and possible future ruin.

The final point made by Berger about the advertising industry their subliminal manoeuvre of how we prioritise things. In the BBC documentary, Berger shows us a typical magazine of the time; in it, we are presented with starkly contrasting images from one page to the other. As an example, on one page, we are shown an article of refugees in the Middle East at the time, their plight, and why they needed help. Move on one page, and we have an advertisement for Haig whiskey. In Berger’s view, this may not be coincidence, as we are being told two completely different messages here, in the case of the refugees that the problems of the world are far away and not yours, and in the case of the whiskey that one of life’s pleasures is so accessible that it is right at your fingertips. Carefully placed advertisements can increase our anticipation to get our hands on the product, Berger argues. The act of purchasing the item becomes the celebrated event rather than the practical use of that item, an act which serves only to perpetuate the yearning for more consumption; a never-ending cycle.

In conclusion, not only is this an excellent commentary on art and its effect in the modern age, but what makes it even more impressive is when

we remember that it was written some 46 years ago. The debasing of women in the paintings discussed, along with their role in modern publicity, is as ground-breaking as it is innovative, with Berger making his points crystal clear. What struck me initially having read a sizeable portion of the book was its effortless accessibility; Berger does not dress up his words for the sake of it, and makes topics and concepts which may at first seem enigmatic appear to be much more straightforward.

With that in mind, Berger's work should be viewed as a gateway to a deeper understanding of the ideas presented, and most definitely not a conclusion. Indeed, the book itself has been a part of the undergraduate curriculum of Art History in the UK for decades, such is the acclaim with which it is held. The relatively low page count and the generally introductory style of the approach of these themes serve to whet the appetite of the reader, not to encapsulate the entire field. Berger emancipates the images that he discusses rather than chaining them down with jargon, and with that encourages us to seek out more answers from tangential questions that he raises. Berger's final words to the viewer are cautionary, as he tells us "Publicity turns consumption into a substitute for democracy." He states that we are coerced into believing that we are powerful because we can buy and consume, but real empowerment comes from non-reliance on consumption, self-sufficiency and representative democracy. While watching the accompanying documentary, we notice some things like products, style and social references seem dated by modern standards, but Berger's own ideas on the subject are most certainly not.

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## X

**“THE BAD LOVING”: ADAPTATION, JEALOUSY, AND NARRATIVE IN  
ROSALÍA’S *EL MAL QUERER*.**

ANDREA PATIÑO DE ARTAZA

While adaptation from one narrative form to another has been widely studied (novels adapted to films, theatre, television or even opera), there has not been enough emphasis on the adaptation of written texts into other art forms that seem, at first glance, less prone to “narrativity,” such as (popular) music. This adaptation from narrative to music is what we find in flamenco-turned-pop singer Rosalía’s (also known as Rosalía Vila Tobella) album *El Mal Querer* (2018), which, in her words, “was inspired by the anonymous thirteenth century novel *Flamenca*.” (“Sobre EMQ”). As she explains, the title of her album—which is also her dissertation project for her Flamenco degree at the Escola Superior de Música de Catalunya (ESMUC)—*El Mal Querer* (“The Bad Loving”) was clear before the beginning of the composition process. It was only after her friend, artist Pedro G. Romero, recommended *Flamenca* to her that Rosalía was drawn to the theme of jealousy that is explored in the medieval text, as well as with the name of “Flamenca” (meaning of Flemish descent) that echoes the genre of music that Rosalía has studied and is famous for.

The purpose of this essay is to determine to what extent is *El Mal Querer* an adaptation of *Flamenca*, based on the ideas proposed by Linda Hutcheon in *A Theory of Adaptation*, and comparing both the text in *Flamenca* and the lyrics in *El Mal Querer*, as well as complementing this reading with the analysis of other transmedia elements (music) that compose this project. By looking into *El Mal Querer* through the lens of adaptation we might be able to explain the reason behind its overnight success and its positive reception worldwide, as this album has been praised by the critics as well as the general public.

Since Rosalía’s project is comprised of eleven tracks, the focus will be placed on the songs in *El Mal Querer* that are most representative of the album and the story that it aims to tell. First, we will observe how Hutcheon’s thoughts on adaptation can be applied to *Flamenca* and *El Mal Querer*. Second, we will see how the concepts of transmedia, concept

albums, and medievalism can be found in this album, to finally conclude how all these elements, together, become part of a successful adaptation.

### **Adaptation**

Although Hutcheon attempts to clarify and create a clear definition of what constitutes an adaptation, it remains a rather vast term that involves many different degrees of closeness to the original work, and Hutcheon offers three main categories of adaptation: "an acknowledged transposition of a recognizable other work or works; a creative *and* interpretive act of appropriating/salvaging; an extended intertextual engagement with the adapted work." (8). *El Mal Querer* can be considered an adaptation of *Flamenca* since it has aspects from these three categories. First, *El Mal Querer*, has openly been mentioned as a work that has strong connections to *Flamenca* by Rosalía. While there is no clear intention of marketing the adaptation as such, the connection between both works is acknowledged. In this case, the transposition from the original work to the adapted work does in fact involve a shift of medium (written text to music), just as Hutcheon states as a necessity for this first "rule" of adaptation (7).

Second, in terms of Hutcheon's definition of "adaptation as a process of creation," (8) *El Mal Querer* also ticks the box. As we will comment further on, this album only *appropriates* the events in the first half of *Flamenca*, as well as certain characters.

Third, while *El Mal Querer* has not been widely received by its audience as an adaptation (Leight)—many media outlets mention the medieval *novas* but do not elaborate on the extent of its influence in the album—it does point to *Flamenca* and allows a discovery of the original work to many as well as a different perspective when "experiencing" *El Mal Querer* after knowing its condition of adaptation.

Many adaptations are created because of the lucrative opportunities they can bring (for example, an adaptation of a well-known superhero comic book), the cultural capital that can be acquired when subverting a previously well-known work (the adaptation of Jane Austen's *Emma* into the film *Clueless* [1995]), or even the use of a previous work that presents no copyright issues to the adapter (any public domain work of drama or fiction). However, the reason behind Rosalía's choice to adopt elements from *Flamenca* came mostly from a personal connection with the work, as we mentioned previously. Keeping in mind that *El Mal Querer* is Rosalía's dissertation, we might consider that this adaptation is also a way of earning

some cultural capital (Hutcheon 91) and placing the narrative of *El Mal Querier* inside a broader context of literature and popular culture (Escobedo).

In relation to this perceived gain of cultural capital, other aspects that we must consider in adaptations in general, but this one in particular, are the reception of both the adapted work and the adaptation, and the overall context in which the adaptation is produced. If we consider both these aspects, we will be able to speculate about the reasoning behind Rosalía's choice of using *Flamenca* as the backbone of her narrative. Even though the romance of *Flamenca* is mostly well-known in francophone contexts, the story itself resonates with many other romances, folktales and legends (Hubert 15), since if we narrowed the plot to its most basic components, we find the story of a beautiful maid imprisoned inside a tower by an evil creature, who eventually gets rescued by a young knight. However, in *El Mal Querier* we do not get an explicit retelling of this story, although there is some mention of being restrained, the imprisonment is less physical and more of a mental state, as exemplified in "DE AQUÍ NO SALES," where the speaker and captor tells their victim "you are not getting out of here," and even threatens them with violence: "with the back of my hand / I will be clear with you" (my translation). Nevertheless, the trope of the jealous and possessive husband who mistreats his wife, is also a motif that is easily identifiable in *El Mal Querier*. These two themes are so universal that although most of Rosalía's audience will not be familiar with *Flamenca* they will be able to interpret the album through these lenses even as an unknowing audience (Hutcheon 122).

In terms of context, we must consider that Rosalía is a Spanish flamenco artist born in 1993 and that the years leading up to the release of *El Mal Querier* are characterised by the seeping of mainstream feminism into popular culture. In Spain, this culminated in the massive nation-wide International Women's Day demonstrations of the 8<sup>th</sup> of March in 2018 (Beatley). Even though Rosalía has never been vocal about her political ideology or alliances, it is clear from her music that she wanted to tell a story of a toxic relationship in which the female character finds the courage to escape that situation and becomes an independent and empowered woman (Europa Press). On the other hand, the reception of *Flamenca* after the publication of *El Mal Querier* has been heavily shaped by context and marketing strategies. It should be noted that the first edition of Espadaler's translation was sold out and the connection between the medieval romance

and Rosalía’s album prompted the re-edition in Spanish. In this case, the opposite of what is common in adaptations happens: it is the adapted work that is marketed after the adaptation and not the other way around. According to Hutcheon, this aspect should be taken into consideration when speaking about context since “context also includes elements of presentation and reception, such as the amount and kind of ‘hype’ an adaptation gets: its advertising, press coverage, and reviews” (143). Espadaler’s translation into Spanish has been marketed with the slogans “the novel that inspired Rosalía’s *El Mal Querer*” and “a feminist classic from the 13<sup>th</sup> century” (Espadaler). Espadaler emphasises these ideas in the prologue to his *Flamenca*:

*Flamenca* has sparked the interest in the modern sensibility because it is a novel that addresses with no half measures a topic that has been brought to the forefront in the present: the violence/mistreatment of women and their fight to occupy their space and gain the power that “machista” aggressiveness tries to negate. (7, my translation)

Espadaler continues by stating that considering this perspective, *Flamenca* could be perceived as a modern heroine and points out the author’s critical take on the oppressive conducts of men and their claim for gender equality and female liberation. However, Hubert and Porter do not consider this approach but rather focus on *Flamenca*’s behaviour as dictated by (courtly) love, which is the only possible way that her illicit relationship with Guillem de Nevers is honourable, to some extent.

In this sense, we can affirm that the reception of *Flamenca* as a feminist heroine has been further promoted by its adaptation in *El Mal Querer*. While *El Mal Querer* may not be considered a subversive adaptation of *Flamenca*, it has been subversive in its reception, since it has given a new dimension to the medieval story in contemporary mainstream feminism, particularly in Spain.

### **Transmedia and concept albums**

*El Mal Querer* could be considered a concept album, that is, an album with a clear and cohesive lyrical and/or musical theme that connects all the songs together (Shuker 5). Furthermore, this album could be also considered as part of a transmedia narrative of *El Mal Querer*, a story not only told through music and lyrics, but also through visuals (music videos) and live performances. Transmedia concept albums are not new, however, it might

seem as the only way mainstream albums can still make sense in an industry that has shifted towards the immediacy of streaming and fast consumption of singles. In fact, it is usually established artists like Beyoncé or Jay-Z that have the sufficient creative freedom to pursue this kind of works. Thus a transmedia concept album would expand its world further than the actual music, as Brembilla explains: “Here we have the narrativization of music (concept album), the visual representation of a musical concept (visual album), cross-marketing (fashion and literature, [...]), branding (the iconicity and aesthetics of the “Beyoncé brand”), and industry synergies [...]” (83).

Transmedia music is becoming more and more popular among artists as a way to connect with an audience through social media interaction as well as a way for both artists and industry-workers to diversify their earnings in a market that is no longer based on record-sales (Brembilla 84). Furthermore, transmedia productions are strongly connected to adaptation, as what previously would be just a film or television adaptation now has the potential to be expanded into re-written texts, webs, videogames, and merchandise (Hutcheon 180).

While we might not be able to call medieval texts “transmedia” *per se*, they also have a multimedia aspect in them. We know that romances were composed and then performed orally at courts (Gaunt 47), as well as the fact that popular songs of the time were often used in interpolation in the narrative (Dillon 226), making these narratives also adapted works to some extent, as we will discuss when we address intertextuality in *Flamenca*.

### **Medievalism**

Another aspect that characterises *El Mal Querer* is the medieval text behind the inspiration for the concept. While other contemporary concept albums, such as Beyoncé’s *Lemonade* (2016) have adapted a contemporary text, it is interesting that Rosalía not only adapts a text from a different era, but also from a culture that while close to her own, it is still not a text that is widely known among her (originally) intended audience.

The use of medieval texts and imagery was rather prominent in Eastern European rock music in the 70s. This medieval connection represented in the music often had its purpose in restoring a pride in the national culture, sometimes through the glorification of medieval heroes (Curta). Washabaugh recalls the spirit of national political resistance as being powered by music throughout history, and compares “the



Albigensians troubadours in the twelfth century [...] and, of course, the antifranquista flamencos of the early 1970s.” (132)

Whether or not Rosalía’s medieval inspiration draws from this attachment of medieval art and flamenco to resistance, medieval narrative poetry texts such as *Flamenca* share many characteristics with Spanish medieval literature, as well as with flamenco lyrics. Not only in the formal use of octosyllabic verses (the standard in all types of flamenco and traditional Spanish lyrical forms) but also in the themes they delve into. Provençal romances dealt with love and the trials and tribulations of courtly characters, including the topics of death, jealousy and unrequited love, which are very much present in flamenco lyrics.

### ***El Mal Querer and Flamenca***

The Romance of *Flamenca* is a Provençal narrative poem or romance written originally in *langua d’oc*. There is evidence that hints that the author is someone known as Bernardet, presumably a highly educated member of the clergy (Hubert 7). The romance is thought to have been written sometime around 1234, while the action in the narrative seems to take place from 1232 to 1235, as the different Christian celebrations mentioned in the romance would fit into the calendar of these years. Although a big part of the manuscript is missing, in this text, we are told the story of a young noblewoman, *Flamenca*, who gets married to Archambaud, the lord of Bourbon. All seems to go well, until the queen of France tells Archambaud that he should be jealous of *Flamenca* and the King of France, as her husband is known for flirting and chasing after other men’s wives. From this moment on, Archambaud becomes irrationally jealous and decides to lock *Flamenca* up in a tower, along with her two maids, and only allowing her to leave the tower to go to religious services with him. Meanwhile, in the town of Nevers, Guillem of Nevers, a young knight, hears about *Flamenca* and her beauty and falls in love with her without seeing her. He decides to go to Bourbon and once there, devices a plan to see *Flamenca* and communicate to her his desire to meet her. This way, they begin a secret affair unbeknownst to Archambaud. The manuscript ends abruptly with Archambaud almost forgetting that he was ever a jealous husband and organizing a tournament where Guillem and *Flamenca* “officially” meet.

It is the first half of *Flamenca* that resonated the most with Rosalía and her idea for *El Mal Querer*. In Anton M. Espadaler’s edition of *Flamenca*, the translation from the original Provençal into Catalan (and

later into Spanish) does not maintain the original octosyllabic rhyming verse of the romance, but rather turns the romance into a novel. In this edition, *Flamenca* is divided into 23 chapters, each with their own title, and the rhyming verses are substituted by prose.

Thus, part of what makes *El Mal Querer* a concept album is the emulation of this narrative thread that is carried throughout the album. In this narrative we can clearly observe, or rather, listen, to three characters and perspectives: a narrator, a male voice, and a female voice. The story of “the bad loving” begins with a premonition of the terrible events that will happen in this love story, continued by the happy wedding that is quickly followed by extreme jealousy. By the end of the album, the female character is free from her oppressor, vowing to never allow any man to control her life.

The influence of *Flamenca* in the album can be seen in these voices or characters, that can act as representations of the narrator of the romance, Flamenca, and Archambaut, but also in the double-titles of the songs. Each song in *El Mal Querer* has its own title as well as the title of the “chapter” (“cap.1,” *capítulo*) in the story, clearly influenced by Espadaler’s version of *Flamenca*. *El Mal Querer*’s tracklist is comprised of eleven tracks: 1. MALAMENTE - Cap. 1: Augurio; 2. QUE NO SALGA LA LUNA - Cap. 2: Boda; 3. PIENSO EN TU MIRÁ - Cap. 3: Celos; 4. DE AQUÍ NO SALES - Cap. 4: Disputa; 5. RENIEGO - Cap. 5: Lamento; 6. PRESO - Cap. 6: Clausura; 7. BAGDAD - Cap. 7: Liturgia; 8. DI MI NOMBRE - Cap. 8: Éxtasis; 9. NANA - Cap. 9: Concepción; 10. MALDICIÓN - Cap. 10: Cordura; 11. A NINGÚN HOMBRE - Cap. 11: Poder.

These two techniques (point of view narration and division in chapters) are the clearest formal adaptations of narrative transported from one medium (novel) to another (music).

As mentioned earlier, *Flamenca* could be also considered an adaptation, or a retelling, of other works, such as Petrus Alfonsus’ *Disciplina clericalis*, Marie de France’s *Yonec*, the romance of *Jouffroi*, one of the stories in Herbert’s *Dolopathos*, or “in the story of the ‘Chevalier à la Trappe’ in the *Roman des sept ages*,” as Hubert and Porter point out (15). All these works share the story of a maid imprisoned in a tower by her jealous husband, who manages to escape or is rescued by wittingly tricking the husband. Both Espadaler and Hubert and Porter mention the influence in some passages of Chrétien de Troyes and the *Roman de la Rose* by Guillaume de Lorris (Espadaler 16).

In terms of form, *Flamenca* “belongs to the literary type known to the contemporaries and to the author himself (see v. 251) as *novas*, [...] though Bernardet makes the term synonymous with a full romance. The *novas* realistically depicted in rhymed octosyllabic couplets imaginary events of daily life” (14).

Coincidentally, the octosyllabic rhyming scheme is very present in *El Mal Querer*, mostly as a result of the influence of traditional flamenco lyrics. Interestingly, the most common lyrical form in flamenco is that of the traditional Spanish romance (Molina 96), which consists in an indefinite number of octosyllabic verses, with assonant rhymes in the even verses, leaving the odd verses free.

Just as *El Mal Querer* makes use of formal aspects of narrative, *Flamenca* also brings a musical dimension into the takes by evocating songs that would be sang in medieval courts (troubadours at the wedding festivities), the ecclesiastical psalms and hymns sung in church, the traditional *calenda maias*, or even crucial points in the story being inspired by contemporary lyric. An example of the latter is the ingenious way that Guillem and Flamenca have of communicating with each other. This dialogue occurs with one sentence at a time, since they can only see each other when Guillem gives peace during mass, in what seems an eternal back and forth between Guillem and Flamenca. This conversation in which Guillem courts and declares his love to Flamenca, and through which they agree to meet secretly, spans months, and according to Espadaler it evocates Peire Roger’s poem *Ges no posc en bo vers faillir* in terms of content, as well as a poem by Giraut de Bornelh, *Ailas, co muer! Qe as amis*, which uses the same bi-syllabic form that we can find in Guillem and Flamenca’s exchange (184).

After analysing the music and the texts from *El Mal Querer* as well as *Flamenca*, we can conclude that there is sufficient evidence to prove that *El Mal Querer* can be considered an adapted work from *Flamenca*. Further research could analyse in depth other transmedia elements from *El Mal Querer* (music videos, live performances, album graphic design, etc.) as to find out to how extensive this adaptation is and if other medieval aesthetic elements described in *Flamenca* can be found in Rosalía’s work.

Nevertheless, we have observed that up to this point, not many major music media outlets have regarded this project as an adaptation, but rather as an anecdotal inspiration for Rosalía. While the worldwide audience of *El Mal Querer* has not seemed to be interested in the literary

origin of the story narrated in this concept album, it is clear that Rosalía's Spanish-speaking audience has, as the edition of *Flamenca* in Spanish has been re-edited and sold out after the release of the Catalan singers' second album. Moreover, the fact that *El Mal Querer* can function as stand-alone project as well as an adaptation, only highlights the skill behind the elaboration of the album. While many, if not most, adaptations are criticised through the lens of the original work and often suffer comments that criticise their "lack of similarity" with the adapted work or their "lack of subversion," *El Mal Querer* has managed to be considered a masterpiece on its own right, as well as to breath in new air onto a medieval classic for a new generation that is aware of the inequality and abuse that women still suffer centuries after *Flamenca*.

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## XI

## SPATIAL POWER IN QUENTIN TARANTINO'S REVENGE CINEMA

EDUARDO BARROS GRELA

Quentin Tarantino's interpellations of legitimate discourses are particularly emphasized in what has come to be known as his "revenge fantasies" (Biswas-Diener), even though other names have also been attributed to his different series (Coulthard 4, Ornella 230). After the filming of *Inglorious Basterds* (2009) and *Django Unchained* (2012), many found in these two films a continuity of the "cycles of revenge that dominate the structure of his films" (LeCain 2004), a feature that had begun, profusely, with the two parts of *Kill Bill* (2003 and 2004), and ended, to a certain extent with *Once Upon a Time... in Hollywood* (2019).

This chapter tackles the liminality of an abstract concept such as "revenge" within the environment of power displacement—or discursive reterritorializations—and articulates it with the aesthetic deconstruction of space, as it has been portrayed by the renowned director of *Pulp Fiction* (1994). In order to provide an interdisciplinary referential framework, I look at the intertextuality that shapes the narratives of his revenge films, but I also discuss the metanarrative of the discourses used in the films to represent—and perform—a social panorama from the turn of the century until today.

*Kill Bill* is, in many ways, a road movie that deconstructs the spaces it represents. Every visit the main character pays to her offenders becomes a disruption of the legitimate spaces they populate, and violate therefore their cultural discursivities. In order to carry out this narrative vengeance, as will be explained later in this chapter, the Bride ("Black Mamba") deterritorializes her archenemies' "retirement homes", and triggers a set of spatial redistributions that end up conforming a destabilized reterritorialization.

This process is paralleled in *Inglorious Basterds*, where all main characters are subjected to a process of disidentification. This can be easily identified at the beginning of the film, where a French peasant who camouflages under his floor the existence of some Jewish neighbors is dispossessed from his integrity and forced to reveal their hiding place, thus



being exposed to a conflicting morality that inevitably takes him back to an empty identity. The hollowing out of the farmer's identity sets the point of departure of the subsequent revenges that are plotted throughout the story, and establishes the liminal discursive controversies that will shape the vindictive-driven plot.

A third block is represented by *Django Unchained*, which introduces the fallacies of the "good savage" and the "white savior" to stage the story of an African American slave who gets his freedom bought and proceeds to rescue her enslaved wife from the alienating power of a white supremacist landowner. Django presents an ontological confusion that becomes with time a deontologization of his external identifications, but these come with prices that secondary characters will be—implicitly—forced to pay. All of these characters will be punished with the horrific view of themselves as displaced subjects in deterritorialized places, and therefore will become easy targets for Django's honest, yet shallow, vengeance.

It is evident, nonetheless, that these continued revenges reveal a more profound narrative intention. They refer to the cunning desire of producing counter discourses in the spheres of suffering mothers, Nazi's victims, and historically neglected American slaves respectively, in order to create both their own discourses and their own spaces (Gooch 14).

*Once Upon a Time... in Hollywood*, lastly, represents another turn of the revenge screw as it depicts, similarly to how *Inglourious Basterds* and *The Hateful Eight* (2015) did, a historical event in the shape of a revisionist form of speculative fiction, or more precisely, of alternate history. Tarantino's blunt appropriation—and subsequent parodical decontextualization—of history lets this "twentieth-century fairy tale for adults" (Howard) respond to its audience sociocultural needs. A dreadful episode of American twentieth century history such as the Tate-Labianca murders, which was culturally identified as a signifier of the end of hippieism in Tinseltown California, is transfigured into a tragicomedy that fulfills Angelenos' longing instincts of retaliation.

This chapter will look at the different cultural and narrative devices that shape the transitional, intersectional, liminal affect of revenge, in terms of memory, space, and the body. Hence it reads Tarantino's films as sources of narrative and discursive interpellations, and adapts Robert Watson's view on revenge, where he explains that, "[r]evenge commonly proposes to repeal a loss by imposing an equivalent loss on the entity that caused it, and blood-revenge implies that life can be restored like stolen money" (44). This

follows John Kerrigan's position about vengeance, a practice in which "deaths can be cleared up. Expiation offers to cancel, to free, even to bring the dead back to life" (85).

### **Killing Bill's Places of Identification**

According to Ian Reilly, "*Kill Bill* is a meditation on the subversive nature of a woman's appropriation of male heroic principles and how this appropriation has disastrous effects on both male and female figures in the film" (28). This gender-based approach to Tarantino's rewriting of Euripides's *Medea* (Reilly 30) offers an uncapped set of possibilities to discuss the relevance of *Kill Bill* (I and II) in terms of spatial conflict. The main characters from the movie, namely, Beatrix Kiddo "The Bride," (Uma Thurman) and Bill (David Carradine), start a frenetic and violent dialectic which functions, as is usually the case in revenge titles, as discursive elements that call for the examination of more critical ideological predicaments. In particular, the originally inane confrontation between the two lovers grows from a mutual deterritorialization, presented to the audience in the form of a love-hate interpersonal and dislocated relationship.

The story offers to viewers an itinerant lapse back and forward from the chapel scene that opens the film, in which a reminiscent Beatrix lies on the floor, seriously injured after the vicious massacre perpetrated by the Deadly Viper Assassination Squad—O-Ren Ishii, aka Cottonmouth (Lucy Liu); Vernita Green, aka Copperhead (Vivica A. Fox); Elle Driver, aka California Mountain Snake (Daryl Hannah); and Budd, aka Sidewinder (Michael Madsen)—during Beatrix's wedding. Right before the opening credits appear on screen, a close-up shot of Beatrix's point-black gunshot and apparent demise reveals the origin of both protagonists' revenge motivation: she is marrying another man while being pregnant of Bill's daughter, a seemingly not strong enough reason for Bill not to attempt to kill her and abduct the baby.

Both parts of the film (*Kill Bill Volume 1* and *Volume 2*) elaborate on the different ramifications derived from this initial situation, all of them defined by a revenge pulsion experienced by The Bride against Bill and the Deadly Viper Squad (Shandu 31). From that point on, Beatrix plays the lead of a road movie in which she takes viewers with her to distinctive places that represent her process of identity reconstruction: a domestic suburban environment where she kills a reformed Copperhead in front of her

daughter Nikki (Ambrosia Kelley)<sup>1</sup>; a Japanese garden at a Tokyo restaurant, the House of Blue Leaves, where she confronts, kills, and humiliates Cottonmouth, now Yakuza boss O-Ren Ishii; a trailer parked in the desert of Calico Hills (California), where she intends to kill Bill's brother Sidewinder but ends up defacing—and perhaps leaving behind to die—California Mountain Snake; and lastly, Bill's hacienda in Mexico, an isolated yet luxurious place where she finally completes her revenge and executes Bill with her “Exploding Heart Technique”.

All of these places contribute with specific semantics to the development of the story. As Beatrix keeps renegotiating her identity through traumas of incompleteness, the places that are brought to the diegesis of revenge project their empty core onto viewers (Henry 110). All of them are deontologized spaces that are located in frail territories: a desert, a garden, a hacienda backyard, and a suburban non-place.

The narrative construction does not come as a given token to viewers but, rather, as an invitation for them to build the discursive thread that gives coherence to the plot. In the frequent flashbacks and flash-forwards that shape the story, scenes are also taken to perceptibly distanced moments that are parallel to distanced spaces, both physical and mental. Spectators know about the common past of the two protagonists on account of the oral stories shared by them, but also because there are several filmed moments which are reproduced in their dialogues. Accordingly, we learn how The Bride travelled to China in order to be trained in Kung Fu arts by renowned master Pai Mei, from whom she learns most of her physical and spiritual abilities despite his harshness and tough training system. Their relationship grows bonded, and later we learn that Bill and his sidekicks executed their plans to murder the monk. Before witnessing this soldering process though, and before the vengeance drive starts to grow in solidarity, viewers accompany The Bride in her travel to avenge the apparent death of her unborn daughter, the death of her husband to be and their friends at the wedding chapel, as well as the physical suffering she had to endeavor from the makings of aggressive Bill's squad.

All in all, the resentful feeling is planted on the viewers' minds, who show no hint of doubt when they are forced to decide whether to support The Bride in her violent rant. Tarantino succeeds at creating a comfort zone for the viewers in their trip along Black Mamba, hiding their responsibility to question their enjoyment of the brutal ensuing murders. Vengeance, after

all, is satisfactory (Elshout 506), and feeds the cruel force of action that social morality forbids.

In order to facilitate this process, Tarantino uses a set of spaces that crates a perfect distance with our familiarity. Even though many of the places are easily recognized by the global spectator (most of them are set in contemporary California or inside domestic spaces), the absurdity that the director incorporates with those places alienates them from our perception of quotidian atmospheres, and are therefore, resignified as non-realistic or even fictitious territories. In those spaces, audiences feel legitimized to fill their urge to give back to their ethical nemeses the treatment they deserve, in what could be considered as satisfying and non-incriminating subjective—and physical—lynching.

Tarantino undresses with this approach the morality of contemporary America, and by extension of contemporary western society. With each strike performed by The Bride against her enemies, particularly against Bill, the viewers' enjoyment increases to levels of unclouded sadism. This is possible because the American director situates the different scenes in Foucauldian heterotopic spaces. In them, an affective escape is placed for the viewers so that they disengage from *their selves*, and construct individual doppelgängers that extenuate the contradictions of contemporary ethical values. *Reservoir Dogs* (1992) and *Pulp Fiction* (1994) would represent an oppositional pattern to this approach, as they present sceneries in Los Angeles that are recognizable and habitual to viewers, which triggers in them an uncanny experience as murders strike.

### **Transitional Places**

*Django Unchained* follows the same narrative pattern, in which a series of events befalls in order to avenge an unsolved concomitant conflict. In these two productions, Tarantino presents the audience with similar spatial discourses of revenge (Redmon), but instead of providing alternating locations for the most significant episodes, he undertakes a highly focused narrative in which all places are signified as driving locations in a coherent purpose.

Django's (Jamie Foxx) quest for revenge, for example, follows an in crescendo logic that responds to his thirst after solving some unfinished business with sadistic slave owners and traders. His is a personal revenge against those who made him and his wife Broomhilda von Shaft (Kerry

Washington) suffer the horrors of slavery, but at the same time, it is a chase and hunt of the slave system that defined the history of modern America.

Django and King Schultz's (Christopher Waltz) revenge is therefore manifested through the different spaces they rove. Django's several liberations—as well as Broomhilda's—lead in to emotions that transcend the personal affections of characters and, by extension, of viewers. Their use of spaces fuels the indulging desire for retributive justice that characters and viewers comprehend as an act of vindictiveness. As Morgan Ereku has claimed,

Despite all the killing and gore, it is crafted as a feel-good ending with a cathartic high. The audience has seen justice served. Candie has received his "just desserts," Django is reunited with Broomhilda, and the couple's delight clearly lends veracity to Lord Byron's maxim "sweet is revenge."

The mellifluousness of vengeance is unhindered explored by Tarantino in several sceneries of *Django Unchained*, persistently through an exquisite use of parody. The sequence that epitomizes this confluence of hate and laughter displays an anachronistic group of Klan acolytes who plan to beleaguer and murder Django and Schultz while they sleep, but are instead battered and chastised in a humiliating manner. The representation of the members of this criminal white supremacist hate group as illiterate imbeciles showcases the confluence of director and audience in their hunger for historical revenge, and reveals the relevance of spatial deconstruction in Tarantino's proposals of revisionist discourses (Paquet-Deyris 168). The scene displays an empty territory whose natural harmony is only interrupted by the protagonists' stationary wagon first, and then by the savage raid staged by the Klan group and conducted by Big Daddy (Don Johnson).

The spatial component of this scene is relevant to the atmosphere of gratifying revenge constructed by Tarantino in that the placid and pristine natural environment depicted in the scene is reminiscent of the nostalgic imaginary of "the Wild West" that has so firmly contributed to the performative writing—and therefore imagining—of American identities (Falconer 98). The irruption of the hateful gang, marshaled by the caricatured landowner Big Daddy, symbolizes the desecration of said lands, and therefore engenders a dramatic hankering for vengeance among

viewers. This is squarely addressed by a disaffected Tarantino, who aptly uses parody in his zesty revision of antebellum Old West to reflect upon the deconstruction of American citizens' agency in the configuration of their collective identity. Thus, the same sequence offers an exhilarative momentum to incite moviegoers to figuratively echo what they see on the screen. After the deflating failure of the Klan assault, unshackled by the controlled detonation of Schultz's wagon and causing the death of several members as well as the flight of remaining survivors, both protagonists, witnessing the scene from a distance, mimic their audience's gaze while they enjoy the retaliation and inflicted damage upon the supremacist attackers. Django's corybantic facial expression facing the explosion parallels the viewers' emotional reaction toward the scene, but is affectedly distanced from the latter in terms of his subsequent subjective responsiveness. While spectators keep passively glaring at the affective images on their screens, intradiegetic viewer Django explicitly takes action to materialize his hunger for revenge, and grabbing Schultz's rifle, shots Big Daddy dead in his attempt to make an escape riding his horse away from the scene. The consequential killing, which is presented using a slow-motion camera to highlight the environmental and historical justice rendered in the sequence, enhances the spectators' lascivious emotional response to vengeance. Therefore, as Moon Charania explains,

The film's self-congratulatory tone is palpable throughout—a quiet winking that it has collapsed white colonial supremacy, usurped racist ideas, and allowed black men agency and resistance. For *Django* and for his audiences, each moment of white death operates as a step toward black emancipation, inciting applause and triumphant laughter in darkened movie theatres. This laughter is undoubtedly spiked with shame, as severe violence of racism in the U.S. becomes both visible and entertaining. An awareness of the depravity of slavery as the (main) human cost of a past colonialism ensures that the film is not cheap racist propaganda: the psychological complexity of say, Django or Dr. Schultz, is depicted so that liberals can enjoy the film without guilt.

Precisely, the complexity of these sequences in *Django Unchained*—such as Big Daddy's killing, encapsulates perimeter references that are familiar to

the contemporary imagination, and are enriched by Tarantino's dexterity to signify spaces and places.

**Conclusion. Once upon a place: future revisions of revenge**

Tarantino's latest film, *Once Upon a Time... in Hollywood* (2019), is a tribute to the final years of Tinseltown's Golden Age, in which it presents segments from the lives of a declining movie star and his stunt double (Rick Dalton and Cliff Booth, played by Leonardo di Caprio and Brad Pitt, respectively). In a running time of 160 minutes, it condenses the nostalgic collective memory of the prosperous and violently happy California of the film industry during the nineteen sixties, but also its *inducted inertia* of self-destruction, epitomized by the experiences of the two co-protagonists. In particular, the episode in which—mostly—Cliff is involved in the ominous habitudes of the infamous Manson family.

Once again, Tarantino fiddles with an important compartment of American cultural history. In this occasion he tackles the events that are considered by many as the turning point in the social rebuilding of the United States, and the end of the "flower power" era (Toren 108, Campbell 18, Cooper 69).

The film presents a revision of the historical events that resulted in the outrageous murders of Sharon Tate and her circle of friends in her place of residence at Cielo Drive in Los Angeles. In this new version, the Manson family's plans veer off after Rick Dalton's hostile intervention as they approached by car to their cul-de-sac drive a few nights earlier. On the night of August 8-9, 1969, instead of entering Tate's rented home and commit there the appalling crimes that shocked American dreams of peace and love, only two years after the globally-praised Summer of Love, the family members decide to change their course and enter Dalton's house—located next to Tate's in Tarantino's personal presentation of the events—in order to murder the actor and all possible co-habitants.

It will be there, in the final climatic sequence of the film, when Tarantino will again respond to viewers' hunger for vengeance, and will offer an emotionally gratifying alternative outcome, responding thus to the expectations raised by the title of the film. Tex (Austin Butler), Sadie (Mikey

Madison), and Katie (Madisen Beaty), are sadistically murdered inside Dalton's mansion after Booth's brutal strikes against them, and the scene is frantically filmed by Tarantino to offer vindictive pleasure to the audience. The horrible crimes that take place in Dalton's house—death by cranial crush, mauling and evisceration, or incineration by torching—would have been unbearable for most viewers had they occurred at a different location. But they are instead praised and enjoyed by an audience that rejoices in witnessing Tarantino's vengeance against the alleged culprits of American moral decline (Aviram 68).

Once again, the use of spaces plays in Tarantino's productions a determining role in the generation of cultural subjectivities. Not only has the imagined Cielo Drive house reconfigured the connotations of an Angeleno bedeviled landmark, but it has also provided a critical deconstruction of domesticity.

American filmmaker Quentin Tarantino, therefore, offers through his exploration of revenge a critical position about historical events and how these have had an impact upon contemporary identity productions. In the ensemble of films that I discuss in this chapter viewers are confronted with the moral dilemma of whether complying with the comforting social and physical lynching of despicable groups and individuals. Places, spaces, and subjective performances of revenge provide gargantuan projections of pleasure among spectators, who become exposed to both a semantic and a physical reterritorialization of spaces, and participate in the logic of historical discursive appropriation.

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<sup>1</sup> There has been a certain speculation about the production of a third volume of *Kill Bill*. In it, Nikki would seek revenge on Beatrix after the murder of her mother Vernita, thus continuing the premises of Tarantino's revenge films (Dawson 125).



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