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Editorial Note

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It is a pleasure to serve as guest editor for *JACLR*, a project I entered almost three years ago as an eager post-graduate student and which I have seen grow and evolve with delight. None of our accomplishments would have been possible without the initiative and tireless effort of Dr. López-Varela, who has maintained the editorial line and values for more than a decade. I would like to extend my gratitude to her and all the members of the team who have accompanied me in this journey, from peer reviewers to members of the scientific board all over the world. Especially, I would like to thank Jaime, for his guidance and warmth as chief-editor and fellow young scholar. During these years, I have witnessed *JACLR* become closer to authors and readers through social media, break international barriers, grow in reach and for the first time, house brand new units of interviews and reviews. Reflecting on our achievements only gives us strength to face future challenges with determination in our quest for giving voice to different types of writers in an ever-changing multidisciplinary format. “Up! Up! My Friend, and quit your books” – wrote once William Wordsworth in a not so truthful parallelism of what his refined upbringing had been. He surely sought to encourage his peers to thrive and learn through real life. *JACLR* also aims to do that *through* art and cultural divulgation. In an era of disinformation, do not quit your books, but choose carefully those that will be nurturing for your mind and spirit.

LITERARY RESEARCH

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"Like dancers to a music they deserve": Setting to Music Lawrence Durrell's Poetic Nostalgia for Greece[1]

Ester Díaz Morillo[2]

Abstract:

This article aims to examine several musical transmediations of Lawrence Durrell's poems. Given the evocative imagery and musicality of Durrell's own poetry, it is no wonder that his works have attracted musical renditions, ranging from jazz to art songs. Durrell's friend Wallace Southam set to music different poems by Durrell, namely "Nemea," "In Arcadia," "Lesbos" and "Nothing is lost, sweet self" (based on the poem "Echo"). Thus far, Southam's musical transmediations have mainly remained overlooked. Nevertheless, they offer us with interesting new perspectives on the transmediation of contemporary poetry. As a musician, Southam transmediates the poet's musicality in his verses and plays with the rhythm, providing listeners with sometimes more melancholic renditions that convey hopelessness, and more tense musical rhythms, where the singing voice strengthens the anxiety of the poems. Interestingly, the poems chosen by Southam have a strong Greek flavour and show how Durrell captures the spirit of the places described. The obscure symbolism of Durrell's verses translates, hence, into a music full of pathos. The analysis will focus on how the composer strives to transmediate Durrell's words in musical terms, by transferring the haunting atmosphere and poignant emotions of the poet's words.

Keywords: Lawrence Durrell; poetry; transmediation; music; art song; jazz.

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1. Introduction

The interplay between art and literature has thrived since Classical Antiquity, as evinced in the Dialogues of Plato. More precisely, poetry and music have held a special place in this interrelation, as both arts were indistinguishable in ancient times, and poetry was mainly transmitted orally. As Winn explains: "The Greeks used the same word, *mousike*, to describe dance, music, poetry and elementary education."[3] This strong relationship between poetry and music would later flourish again in the late sixteenth century and the early seventeenth century, as it was the time of madrigalists and song writers such as Henry Purcell, who would state that "Musick and Poetry have ever been acknowledg'd Sister,"[4] and then from the nineteenth century onwards. Tracing back the Greek roots of this interconnection, author Lawrence Durrell pays special attention to the musicality of his poetry. In fact, Greece became for the poet a site of nostalgia for a lost past where mythology, past, and present blend through a very sensuous poetic language. More interestingly, given the evocative imagery of Durrell's poetry, it is no wonder that his works have attracted musical renditions, ranging from jazz to art songs. This article will examine several musical transmediations of Durrell's poems by amateur musician Wallace Southam, after analysing Durrell's own poetic language, so as to observe how transmediations re-present the powerful dark imagery and melancholic mood of the source texts and how these adaptations reconcile both sister arts—poetry and music—both so strongly important for a poet such as Durrell.

Within the relationship between poetry and music in the English language, we have examples in operas and musicals, but also of what is generally called art song, that is, a vocal and musical composition setting poetry to music, most especially folk songs. This article will examine several art songs based on Durrell's poetry. Linda Hutcheon sees art songs as adaptations which are amplifications of the *Lieder*

[3] James A. Winn, "Music and Poetry," in *The New Princeton Encyclopedia of Poetry and Poetics*, ed. Alex Preminger and T.V.F. Brogan (Princeton University Press, 1993): 803-4, quoted in Arturo Mora-Rioja, *Poetry in English and Metal Music: Adaptation and Appropriation Across Media* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2023), 8.
[4] Henry Purcell [1691], in *The Cambridge Cultural History,* vol. 1, ed. A. Ellis (Cambridge University Press, 1991); 47, quoted in Maria Frendo, "T. S. Eliot and the Music of Poetry" (PhD diss, University of Durham, 1999), 1.

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tradition.[5] The German *Lied*, whose origins date back to the Middle Ages, especially thrived during German Romanticism. These *Lieder* set German poetry to classical music, with musicians such as Beethoven or Schubert making compositions for different German pieces of poetry.

Art songs often set a single poem or text to music and are part of a recital for (one) voice and piano accompaniment. Many of them are written in strophic form, that is, all verses are sung to the same unchanged music, as in most folk and popular songs. The "modified strophic" song, on the other hand, preserves the same vocal melody but changes the musical accompaniment. Lastly, through-composed songs present no repetitions and continually introduce new musical material. These songs are simpler and easier to follow, since words might be understood more straightforwardly. Siglind Bruhn argues that "[w]henever a poetic text is set as vocal music …, the original medium is *inflected* rather than *transformed,*"[6] though some features are modified; however, instrumental music just accompanies the vocals "as a musical illustration *of* and *to* the poetic text."[7] This might be true of simple art songs or *Lieder*, which merely set poetry to music. The art song tradition, though, will continue to develop as a genre, and some of the examples examined here are quite complex and evolved compositions, where music acts as more than a mere accompaniment to the lyrics of the poem. As a composer, Southam paid extra attention to employing musical devices so as to transmediate poetical language and the main characteristic of the source texts.

This article addresses transmediations, a type of adaptation defined by Lars Elleström as the "repeated mediation of equivalent sensory configurations by *another* technical medium."[8] That is, there is a transfer of ideas and narratives *across* different media; it does not focus solely on the narrative core of the source. The re-presentations of the source texts often imply a change of purport and manner of

[5] Linda Hutcheon, *A Theory of Adaptation*. (New York: Routledge, 2013), 44.
[6] Siglind Bruhn "A Concert of Paintings: 'Musical Ekphrasis' in the Twentieth Century," Poetics Today 22, no. 3 (2001): 568
[7] Bruhn, "A Concert of Paintings," 568.
[8] Lars Elleström, *Media Transformation: The Transfer of Media Characteristics among Media* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014): 14, original emphasis.

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expression. This means that there is some sort of transformation throughout the process, since things might be added, removed, or kept, so as to bridge the gap between media and their different capacities to convey meaning. The traits from the source text are, thus, re-presented in a new medium. There are numerous transmedial characteristics which can be transferred from one medium to a different one, regarding content, style, or structure, depending on the media. In fact, music can convey aspects which language can only refer to. The cases which I will examine maintain but also transform verbal language—Durrell's poetry—into musical language, transmediating, therefore, "nonmusical media characteristics into musical pieces."[9] Hutcheon[10] argues that the transfer from one medium to another requires creativity, as it implies the use of a different medium and, hence, finding a way to express things in a different manner. Transferring poetry into music, therefore, is a creative and interpretive act which does not intend to simply copy or replicate information.

2. "Like notes of music on a page": The Importance of Music and Durrell's Private Greece

Poetry is an art which indeed combines acoustic aspects, as poetic language can convey a certain rhythm and sound which renders it with an acoustical quality. Poets have at their disposal figures of speech and techniques to create sound effects, such as rhymes, onomatopoeia or alliteration, among various others. All this is especially important if we consider that poetry, in most cases, lends itself to being read aloud and, therefore, to be heard since, as Minoru Yoshida points out, "[t]he value of a poem as a work of art can best be appreciated when it is recited, for poetry uses as its medium linguistic sounds which have also musical effects."[11] Both music and poetry, moreover, have several similarities which, at the same time, distinguish them from other arts, such as being auditory arts and having rhythm, and relying on devices such as the climax; that is, the highest point or level of intensity and emotional response.

[9] Elleström, *Media Transformation*, 34.
[10] Hutcheon, *A Theory of Adaptation*, 03.
[11] Minoru Yoshida. "Word-Music in English Poetry," *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 11, no. 2, 1952: 151.

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Unsurprisingly, T. S. Eliot concluded that a poet "may gain much from the study of music."[12]

Eliot suggested in his well-known essay "The Music of Poetry" (1942) that a musical poem "is a poem which has a musical pattern of sound and a musical pattern of the secondary meanings of the words which compose it, and that these two patterns are indissoluble and one."[13] The musical pattern of sound, then, refers to the sonority, while the musical pattern of the secondary meanings alludes to the accumulated meaning of a word, that is to say, to what the word evokes in the reader's mind, and not simply the primary meaning of that word. For Eliot, these two patterns should work together, as "the music of poetry is not something which exists apart from the meaning;"[14] therefore, sound and meaning contribute to the musicality of a poem. Eliot's pivotal essay and his notions regarding the musicality of music seem to have had a great impact on Durrell's own writing, since musical imagery and metaphors, as well as the musicality of words and then importance given to rhythm pervade all his works, even his prose. In fact, in a BBC interview, Durrell claimed that poetry "leaks into my prose […] It's certainly slightly poetic prose."[15] Isabelle Keller-Privat calls attention to the musical rhythm in the introductory passage of the second chapter in Durrell's novel *Clea* (1960): "Ancient lands, in all their prehistoric intactness: lake-solitudes hardly brushed by the hurrying feet of the centuries where the uninterrupted pedigrees of pelican and ibis and heron evolve their slow destinies in complete seclusion."[16] This musicality is prominent all throughout Durrell's writing.

More precisely, Durrell's poetry exemplifies the importance of musicality in poetic language. An illustrative example is his ethereal poem "Patmos" (1948), whose melodic finishing stanza mixes the rhythm of the sea and the rain, and is teeming with assonances and alliterations:

[12] T. S. Eliot, "The Music of Poetry," in *The Complete Prose of T. S. Eliot: The Critical Edition: The War Years, 1940-1946*, ed. David E. Chinitz and Ronald Schuchard, (Johns Hopkins University Press, 2017): 321.
[13] Eliot, "The Music of Poetry," 316.
[14] Eliot, "The Music of Poetry", 313.
[15] Lawrence Durrell quoted in Isabelle Keller-Privat, *Lawrence Durrell's Poetry: A Rift in the Fabric of the World* (Farleigh Dickinson University Press, 2023), 3.
[16] Durrell, *Clea*, 47.

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When from the Grecian meadows
Responsive rose the larks,
Stiffly as if on strings,
Ebbing, drew thin as tops
While each in rising squeezed
His spire of singing drops
On that renewed landscape
Like semen from the grape.[17]

Lawrence Durrell was himself deeply involved in music and that is evident in the musical metaphors of his writings, but also in his temporary job as a jazz pianist, and in his opera libretto entitled *Sappho* (set to music by Australian composer Peggy Glanville-Hicks in 1963). Durrell even wrote a musical, called *Ulysses Come Back* (c. 1970), where both music and lyrics were written by the author. This sketch for a musical is based on Ulysses' travels back home and his last three love-affairs. It includes three acts: Circe, Nausicaa, and Penelope. Recorded in April 1970 at Lansdowne Studies, London, under the direction of Wallace Southam, all these numbers are sung by Durrell, accompanied by Belle Gonzalez for the female parts, Pat Smythe on the piano (who had already collaborated with Southam for the arrangement of the song "Lesbos"), and Jeff Clyne on the bass. The recording, thus, features Durrell singing himself the songs he had written.

Yet, before embarking on this musical adventure, Durrell had already collaborated with his friend Wallace Southam (also known as TW Southam), who set to music different poems by Durrell, namely "Nemea," "In Arcadia," "Lesbos" and "Nothing is lost, sweet self," this latter based on the poem "Echo." Up to the present time, Southam's musical transmediations have attracted little to no attention in scholarly work. However, these musical compositions provide us with interesting and new perspectives on the process of transmediating contemporary poetry. These musical settings will be the focus of our attention in this article, and they will be more thoroughly examined in section 3.

[17] Lawrence Durrell, *Collected Poems 1931-1974* (London: Faber and Faber, 1985), 198.

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Before tackling the analysis of these musical transmediations, there are certain aspects about Durrell's poetry which need to be considered, as they bear upon Southam's adaptations. Though unfortunately mainly disregarded particularly by the general public, Durrell's poetry is imbedded in modernism, and he evinces a very fine ear, with poems rich in sensuality and vivid imagery. In his poetry, Durrell unfolds "the world of sensorial perception, giving the reader access to the secret ripening of poetry through a composition that has been minutely organized."[18] As a poet, Durrell shows a fascination with the Mediterranean and many poems are set in a symbolist Greece, sometimes full of mysticism and lyricism. As a matter of fact, Durrell is considered a Mediterranean writer[19] and the poems chosen for musical transmediation are part of these Mediterranean poems. More precisely, it is interesting to note that, except for "Echo"—though in the dedication Durrell directly mentions Greece—, Southam's songs are all based on poems with a Greek flavour, emphasising in this way the poet's philhellenism. Apart from "Lesbos" and "Echo," the other two poems transmediated by Southam were first collected in *A Private Country* (1943), a collection where the poet explores "a private Greece that is the true spring of the poetic imagination."[20] In these poems, Durrell nostalgically pays homage to Greece, the country he had to abandon during the war, and pays tribute to the loss of an era of his life, and we can feel his uprootedness. This exile and absence would always inspire the poet.

In Durrell's poetry there is, moreover, a profound understanding of mythology and the ancient Greek canon, as seen in poems such as "Nemea" and "Lesbos," which serve as a springboard to reflect with wittiness upon the present. Exemplified in his celebrated poem "Deus Loci," Durrell expertly personifies the spirit of a place, which is also clearly observable in the poems set to music by Southam. He is a master of evoking the spirit and atmosphere of the places, which also clearly transpires in the poems set to music by Southam. The Greek poems chosen by Southam, moreover, are very musical, with carefully drafted forms, and are very connected to the ancient

[18] Keller-Privat, *Lawrence Durrell's Poetry*, 26.
[19] Isabelle Keller-Privat, "Lawrence Durrell's Mediterranean Hinterland: the Secret Flow of the Poet's Heraldic Universe," *Caliban* 58 (2017): 115.
[20] Keller-Privat, *Lawrence Durrell's Poetry*, 37.

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Greek lyric poetry, making them very adapt for musical adaptation. A strong harmony and melody define these poems, devices which are properly musical, but which also are part "of the components of the music of words."[21] They also abound in musical metaphors and sombre imagery, as shall be analysed.

3. Echoes of Unspoken Words: From Poetry to Music

In general terms, Wallace Southam's life remains virtually in the dark and not much information is available about this elusive amateur composer and music producer, except that he spent part of his life in Athens and met Durrell and his first wife Nancy Myers. Interestingly, though, there is a reference to him in Durrell's poem "Cities, Plains and People" (1943) in the marginal note in section X, where he mentions other well-known artists and friends. This is an important clue to let us see how close these two men were.

When focusing on Southam's songs, it is interesting to note that three of them are more traditional art songs, and one ("Lesbos") is a piece of jazz, more precisely, a *Jazz Lieder*. Southam playfully engages in this way with the same tradition of setting poetry to music but employing different genres. "In Arcadia," "Lesbos," and "Nothing is lost, sweet self" were released with the Bernard Stone's Turret Book label in *Contemporary Poets set to music* in the late 1960s. More precisely, in this series, *Contemporary poetry set to music No. 1* was published in May 1967 and it featured "Nothing is lost, sweet self." Predating all this, though, singer Belle Gonzalez published an EP entitled *Contemporary Poets Set in Jazz* (1966) featuring different poems set to music by Southam with arrangements—to jazz music—by Leonard Salzedo, an English multifaceted composer and conductor.

The songs based on "Lesbos" and "In Arcadia" were also performed at the concert called *Jupiter and Turret at the Wigmore Hall: New Jazz and Modern Poetry* on February 15th, 1968, in London. The programme for the concert featured music by Wallace Southam, among other composers, based on poetry by Durrell, Christina Rossetti, Lord Byron, W. H. Auden, and many other poets. The jazz arrangement of

[21] Eliot, "The Music of Poetry", 315.

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these songs makes them early examples of *Jazz Lieder*. Later, in May 1969, Southam published again through Turret Records the album *Songs of a Sunday Composer*, with settings of different poets. This album included once more songs such as "Nothing is lost, sweet self," "In Arcadia," "Lesbos," but also "Nemea," all of them by Durrell. Southam dedicated as well the song "We'll Go No More A-Roving" to Durrell and his then wife Claude-Marie Vincendon, a song with words by Lord Byron and set to jazz music.

Concentrating on Southam's musical transmediations of Durrell's poetry in chronological order, "In Arcadia" is the first song composed, probably in the late 1940s, as a companion to "Nemea," but not published until 1968 by Turret Books. This art song was later included in the album *Songs of a Sunday Composer*, where it was sung by New Zealand-born baritone Bryan Drake (1925-2001), who was mainly associated with Benjamin Britten's music, and with Diana Wright at the piano. In his source poem, Durrell offers a celebration of Greece and its extinct history, in line with the Greek lyric with its five quatrains, a couplet, and a couple of single lines. Durrell's Arcadia is a space of harmony and unity, where man and nature, time and space, unite. In order to mirror this unity, the poet does not even use linking words. This era evoked by Durrell "can only be revived through the poetic vision that sees through the past mysteries," in Keller-Privat's words.[22] The poem is awash with alliterations and consonance, which provides a certain rhythm and a very sensorial imagery, mostly related to nature: the river, the valley, the trees growing, the birds and the Keatsian nightingale, the bee and the ant, among others. The following stanza exemplifies the absence of linking words and use of repetitions and alliteration: "Rain fell, tasting of the sky. / Trees grew, composing a grammar. / The river, the river you see was brought down / By force of prayer upon this fertile floor."[23] For its part, Southam's composition is rather challenging and demanding as compared with later ones, as he provides listeners with a forceful and vigorous song performed in *fortissimo* (*ff*). The piano plays from the beginning a recurring passage in music, which is called *ritornello*, a repeating device which mirrors Durrell's alliterations and consonances. The piano and vocal line

[22] Keller-Privat, *Lawrence Durrell's Poetry*, 18.
[23] Durrell, *Collected Poems*, 88.

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at times diverge, provoking a sense of dissonance. The tone of Southam's song is rather gloomy and threatening, especially with the uncanny piano lines which can be heard until the third line of the third stanza.

It is noteworthy that the composer creates a striking contrast in the melody from this third stanza, where both piano and voice sound more mellow. This interval of smoothness ends when the baritone sings the word "kiss," elongating its sound, in the following stanza. The single line stanza leads once more to the frenzied sound of the beginning, after which the rhythm of the melody becomes smoother again. As can be seen, Southam uses of intensity and tempo throughout the music to emphasise certain moments. Eliot once wrote that "there must be transitions between passages of greater and less intensity, to give a rhythm of fluctuating emotion essential to the musical structure of the whole."[24] In line with these words, Southam marks transitions in his composition according to the rhythm of the own poem. As such, he ends the vocal line in a very smooth and harmonious manner, while the piano continues solo playing the *ritornello* passage from the beginning in an almost obsessive manner. Therefore, Southam does not transmediate the sense of unity and harmony in Durrell's poem; rather, he focuses on the conflicting sounds between voice and piano.

Another art song by Southam is "Nemea," which was written in 1950, that is, seven years after the publication of *A Private Country*, the poetry collection in which the source poem is included. It is signed as T. W. Southam and dedicated to "E. and L. D.," namely, to Lawrence Durrell and his then wife Eve "Yvette" Cohen. Written for voice with pianoforte accompaniment, the song was recorded in the album *Songs of a Sunday Composer* and sung by English tenor Wilfred Brown (1921-1971) with Margaret McNamee at the piano. I will first look into Durrell's source poem and provide a brief examination so as to fully grasp how Southam engages with the poet's musical and melancholy poetical language.

Written with a metre and rhythm truly reminiscent of a song, Durrell's poem is made up of five couplets, two tercets, and a final single verse. The musicality of the poem is evident as well in its rhyme, sometimes even internal, and sense of repetition

[24] Eliot, "The Music in Poetry", 315.

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and variation, at times through the use of anaphora and alliteration. In fact, repetition and variation are structural elements both in music and in poetry, variation being a consistently different version of a theme. In that sense, Eliot stated that the use of recurrent themes is a natural device both in music and in poetry.[25] In "Nemea," for example, the poet repeats and varies from several times "song" to "sing" ("A song un the valley of Nemea: / Sing quiet, quite quiet here."[26]), and he repeats the first stanza as the sixth stanza or even plays with the order of the letters in "quiet" and "quite," as in the example above.

But, most interestingly, Durrell employs similar images throughout the poem, as in the variation from "golden hair" in the fourth verse to "golden helm" in the seventh verse. His poem is full of sensuous imagery as well, relating to all senses: hearing ("quiet," "song"/"sing," "drum," "tone," "drone"), touch ("Combing the swarms of golden hair," "cool," "cold), sight ("golden helm," "bald bee") or several at the same time ("Under the rolling comb of grass," "The sword outrusts"). As regards imagery, the poem focuses on death, silence, and barrenness, enveloping the verses in a melancholy and dark tone, as illustrated in the last two verses which close the poem: "Tone of the frog in the empty well, Drone of the bald bee on the cold skull, / Quiet, Quiet, Quiet."[27]

In the poem, Durrell addresses the spirit of the place already mentioned before, the *deus loci*. As pointed out by James Nichols, "[t]he overwhelming significance of the place and its human experience comes to the poet only as he writes and finishes the poem."[28] This is noticeable in the change from "quite quiet" in lines two and five to "Quiet, Quiet, Quiet" in the last line. Here, a sense of understanding and quietness, of silence, seems to overcome the poet, as a full realization. The poet depicts the tragedy of Clytemnestra and Agamemnon, but this is a song for "the brides of Argos," the women left behind, and not the men who went away. It is the women who dominate the scene in this poem: while Agamemnon, as well as many other men during the war

[25] Elliot, "The Music in Poetry," 321.
[26] Durrell, *Collected Poems*, 87.
[27] Durrell, *Collected Poems*, 88.
[28] James R. Nichols, *The Stronger Sex: The Fictional Women of Lawrence Durrell* (Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 2011), 11.

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against Troy, dies (the poem, in fact, describes his grave), Clytemnestra rises to power as "the lion queen." Faced with the inevitability of history, only music and poetry can carry the story and its lessons to the future.

To mirror this daunting inexorability, Southam sets Durrell's poem in D minor, then changes to B Major then back to D minor, as minor is a mode of the tonal system "supposed to trigger sadness and melancholy in the listener,"[29] and traditionally associated with a darker sound. This is a quick movement, the fastest in Southam's transmediations, noted as *con moto* (200 bpm[30]). The piano begins playing and, after two measures, the voice starts performing. At points, the piano offers a counterpoint, simultaneously playing the same rhythm as the voice. The piece is syllabic, meaning that each syllable is matched to a single note. The composition is rather simple, with some repetitions, *ritornelli*, and similar rhythms, mirroring Durrell's sense of repetition and variation. Southam stresses the end of each verse by elongating the last word or syllable. The melody gains strength, noted as *mezzo-forte* (*mf*) or moderately loud when singing "Agamemnon" and gradually increases in intensity until reaching a *ff* when singing "jury of skeletons."

Interestingly, at that point, the composition changes to B Major when singing the verse "Cool under cumulus the lion queen,"[31] which is sung suddenly in *piano*. This line is followed by four measures of rest in the vocal line as if pausing to paint a picture in the listener's mind. Then, the singer retakes the lines "Only the drum can celebrate,"[32] sung once more in *ff*, and then gradually decreases the intensity, followed by another three measures of rest in the vocal line. Southam presents, thus, a clear distinction in this passage, as there is a change in mode and lines are surrounded by intervals of silence, providing a special emphasis. Moreover, the melody sounds more triumphant, playful, and livelier. After that, there is a repetition of the first melodic line, especially in the voice line, since the verses "A song in the valley of Nemea: / Sing quiet, quite quiet here" are repeated and music is almost identical to the beginning.

[29] Mora-Rioja*Poetry in English and Metal Music* , 12.
[30] Bpm stands for beats per minute which, in musical terminology, helps to measure tempo.
[31] Durrell, *Collected Poems*, 87.
[32] Durrell, *Collected Poems*, 87.

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The last lines are sung in a very smooth and *legato*, *piano*, and repetitive manner, as the voice repeats three times the word "Quiet" in the same way, twice in a row, though the second time the last syllable ("et") is elongated, and, after two measures of long rest, the voice sings it a final time. The piece is, then, awash with *ritornelli*. The song ends in a rather dim tone, after the triumphal mood of the middle stanzas, emphasising Durrell's sombre tone and ending of his poem.

A particularly striking case worthy of our attention is Southam's composition based on "Lesbos," the only song, as aforementioned, belonging to a different music genre thus far—jazz. Signed as Wallace Southam this time and dedicated to Lawrence Durrell and her then wife Claude-Marie Vincendon, who died in 1967, the jazz song "Lesbos" was recorded by Belle Gonzalez accompanied by a small jazz ensemble (alto saxophone, bass, drums, piano, tenor saxophone, bass clarinet, trombone, and trumpet). Within this ensemble, the saxophone stands out in this composition. "Lesbos" was included both in the album *Contemporary Poets Set in Jazz* and in *Songs of a Sunday Composer*. The printed music available Bodleian Library in Oxford is noted as an adaptation for voice and piano arranged by Pat (or Patrick) Smythe, published in 1967 by Turret Books Publishers, and printed by Oxford University Press. Given that Durrel was himself a jazz enthusiast, this jazz *Lied* is a musical adaptation which he might have well enjoyed.

Natural imagery is once again highly relevant in the source poem by Durrell, where the poet explores sensorial experiences. Keller-Privat points to the "formal perfection of the poem" with its "regular rhythm" and "fluidity of verse."[33] Here, the use of alliteration plays an important role, as well as the word and concept game with "eye"/"I": "Defined in concave like a human eye / Or cheek pressed warm on the dark's cheek, / Like dancers to a music they deserve".[34] Just as the poem begins with an image of quietness, Southam mirrors this in the slow movement of his composition (52 bpm) and by having the piano line open the movement, only followed by the voice after four measures. For Durrell, in this poem written in four tercets in iambic pentameters, autumn is regarded as a time for melancholy, which brings recollections

[33] Keller-Privat, *Lawrence Durrell's Poetry*, 137.
[34] Durrell, *Collected Poems*, 226.

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of the dead. For that reason, Southam chooses to set the poem in G minor, which is connected to sadness and darkness, as mentioned before. In fact, the mood of the song is rather lethargic, evoking the melancholy tone of the poem, which finishes with a meditation on death as a source of future inspiration, in line with Eliot's meditative and mystic *Four Quartets*.

The voice sings once again in a syllabic way, and the melody is quite simple, with some repetitions, in line with Durrell's employment of devices of repetition in his poem. For instance, the melody of the first verse of the first stanza is exactly repeated in the first verse of the second stanza and in the first verse of the last stanza of the poem. The voice line ends with a very long D note which extends the final "I" of the poem, while the piano line ends with a two final simultaneous D notes in one and two higher octaves, respectively, to the one sung by the voice. This strongly highlights Durrell's final contemplative image of the "I." Furthermore, in the vocal line, there are several *glissandi*, that is, changes from semitone to semitone, which adds to the moody atmosphere of the song and to its contemplative mood.

The voice sings very smoothly and drags the notes, only interrupting the singing for breathing when marked or during rests, following, thus, the regular rhythm and fluidity of Durrell's verses. A slight change can be noted after singing "Like dancers to a music they deserve," where the performer hits a very low G note. After that, there is a more marked rhythm thanks to the notable presence of the drums. Moreover, woodwind instruments sings stop playing until the voice sings "I slept," when the saxophone remains playing alone together with piano, drums, and bass. Woodwind instruments at times repeat the same melodic line as the voice acting as an echo. But at times they simultaneously perform the same notes as the singer as a kind of double or *Doppelgänger*, providing an emphasis to certain passages, such as "Defined in concave like a human eye," "In her slow expurgation of the sky" (these two passages are, in fact, a *ritornello*, as both repeat the same melody and rhythm), "And so am I now," and "so am I." In this way, we can see how the composer pays special attention to Durrell's wordplay and rhyme with the "I" sound.

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Following Durrell's *crescendo* before reaching the climax in the last stanza, the saxophone accompanies the voice, at points even drowning it, playing simultaneously the same melody, as if further playing with Durrell's dual concept of the "eye"/ "I." At the end, the voice sings "And so am I now," followed by a saxophone solo which nearly echoes the vocal line, until performing together "so am I." Both voice and all instruments end the song by playing together a D note in different octaves, to finally reach the conclusion of the movement in a resolute manner. Southam hereby transfers Durrell's fascination with the island of Lesbos and his evocation of harmony between man and universe through the harmonious melody between voice and most especially saxophone. In fact, this is among Southam's most melodious and sweet compositions based on Durrell's poetry, characterised by its lyricality and smoothness.

The last example to be here examined is "Nothing is lost, sweet self," another art song. This song for piano and voice was also published by Turret Books in 1967. The copy consulted during this research at the Bodleian has been there since 22 February 1968, and it was a reproduction of the original limited edition in handwritten style of 100 copies numbered and signed by the poet and the composer. This is also signed as Wallace Southam. There is a recording from 1969 with English baritone John Barrow and Diana Wright at the piano included in *Songs of a Sunday Composer*.

Durrell's source poem is a septet where the poet plays with the concept of the echo in its very structure:

> Nothing is lost, sweet self,
> Nothing is ever lost.
> The unspoken word
> Is not exhausted but can be heard.
> Music that stains
> The silence remains
> O echo is everywhere, the unbeckonable bird![35]

[35] Durrell, *Collected Poems*, 119.

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Durrel uses, thus, anaphora and rhyme to build an internal echo and consonance (evident in the prominence of the "b" sound in the last verse), which provides an internal echo within the verses. This is especially noticeable in the last verse, where the word "unbeckonable" literally echoes the word "echo." In this short lyric full of pathos and dedicated to his first wife Nancy Myers and daughter Penelope, Durrell defies emptiness by affirming that all things are preserved.

Southam retakes in his musical transmediation a somewhat faster tempo, as this is an *Andante* movement noted as 108 bpm and in Eb Major. As a very short poem, this is an equally short movement, only two pages long. Music is again syllabic and it is sung for the most part in a very *legato* style, which contributes to the smoothness and melancholy mood of the song, without leading to sentimentality. In fact, the piano and vocal lines are rather harmonious and traditional for an art song. The structural foundation of the song is repetition, so as to transmediate Durrell's literary devices to provide a sense of echo within the composition. For example, the piano starts the song alone by anticipating the first notes of the vocal line. It is also interesting to note that Southam pays extra attention to the word "unbeckonable" by making the singer carefully and markedly sing every syllable before ending with an elongation of the word "bird," thus underlining Durrell's masterful play of sound and meaning.

4. Conclusion

Overall, Lawrence Durrell's poetry—and all of his writing indeed—is deeply musical and he constructs his verses in a very minutely and architectural way employing techniques which saturate his poems with a musicality hard to escape. In the poems examined in this article, Durrell explores the concept of nostalgia, as there is a profound feeling of longing for a lost country (Greece) which serves as catalyst for meditations on the present, the cosmos, and human relations, especially towards nature. And, to do so, Durrell goes back to the Greek roots of poetry, to a time where poetry and music were indistinguishable. In the best of ancient Greek tradition, Durrel was a poet but also a musician.

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As a musician, Durrell's friend and composer Wallace Southam transmediates the poet's musicality in his verses and plays with the rhythm, providing listeners with sometimes more melancholic renditions that convey hopelessness, and more tense musical rhythms, where the singing voice, counterpointed by the piano, strengthens the anxiety of the poems. Throughout this analysis it has been noted how in these musical settings, Southam strives to transmediate Durrell's words in musical terms, by transferring the haunting atmosphere and poignant emotions of the poet's words. The obscure symbolism of Durrell's verses translates itself into a music full of pathos. For that purpose, Southam employs similar techniques in music to mirror Durrell's poetical language and devices: *ritornello*, *crescendo*, repetition and variation, tone, and mood. It is highly interesting that, for this aim, Southam decided on poems with a powerful Greek essence, where Durrell explores its land and history, in order to provide music awash with a sense of sorrow and darkness, truly capturing Durrell's nostalgic feeling for Greece—his lost country. Perhaps Southam also felt nostalgic for the country he had lived in and shared Durrell's melancholy and, thus, he was drawn to these Hellenic verses overflowing a yearning for a lost time in dual tension between the past and the present, a tension which is evident in Southam's compositions and his often-clashing melodies between voice and instruments. Both in the poems and the musical transmediations, Greece comes across as a more than a mere spatial reference, but as a living thing which is given a voice, and which acts as a springboard for their own creative and artistic imagination.

Fortunately, Southam's compositions are not the only musical transmediations of Durrell's poetry, as other composers such as Anthony Powers with his *Memorials of Sleep: Seven Songs to Poems by Lawrence Durrell* (2000), Francis Routh and his *Songs of Lawrence Durrell* (1996), or Lennox Berkeley and his *Autumn's Legacy Op .58* (1963) have felt impelled by the poet's masterful use of language and vivid imagery to adapt his words into musical language. Very thought-provoking is the fact that all these composers seem to feel attracted to the same poems time and time again. Yet the aim of this article was to shed light upon a Sunday composer (as he liked to call himself), since his friendship with Durrell and his almost complete absence in the archive make

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him a very interesting case study. He also was the first (at least on record) to venture to set to music these captivating poems by Durrell, making him very worthy of our attention and worthy to be rescued from oblivion.

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Incorporación de las adaptaciones cinematográficas de Shakespeare en el sistema educativo español[36]

Rocío Moyano Rejano[37]

Resumen:

Este artículo examina el uso de las adaptaciones cinematográficas de Shakespeare en los planes de estudio del sistema educativo español, con especial atención a *Hamlet* (1601). Se analiza su integración en el currículo y su potencial como material didáctico para la enseñanza de la literatura. A través de una revisión teórica y un análisis didáctico, se exploran las ventajas del cine como herramienta pedagógica, incluyendo su capacidad para facilitar la compresión de textos clásicos, fomentar el pensamiento crítico y acercar la obra de Shakespeare a las nuevas generaciones. Asimismo, se estudia cómo estas adaptaciones pueden contribuir a una enseñanza más dinámica e interdisciplinar, conectando la literatura con otras áreas como el cine. Se discuten los desafíos y limitaciones de su implementación en el aula, como la selección de las versiones cinematográficas apropiadas y la necesidad de estrategias didácticas efectivas. El artículo concluye con una reflexión sobre los hallazgos obtenidos y su aplicación práctica, además de proponer líneas de investigación futuras para optimizar el uso de las adaptaciones cinematográficas en la enseñanza literatura.

Palabras clave: adaptaciones cinematográficas, cine, didáctica lengua extranjera, literatura inglesa, William Shakespeare.

1. Introducción

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En una sociedad dominada por la cultura audiovisual, integrar el cine en el aula resulta clave para captar la atención del alumnado y enriquecer su aprendizaje. Como señala Javier Hidalgo-Valverde, es esencial "preparar a los alumnos para desenvolverse un mundo eminentemente audiovisual."[38] En este sentido, el cine no facilita el acercamiento a la literatura clásica, sino que también permite abordar competencias lingüísticas y comunicativas de manera auténtica.[39]

El uso de películas y series en versión original fomenta el contacto directo con el inglés y facilita la comprensión auditiva. A diferencia de las tradicionales comprensiones orales, a menudo artificiales y descontextualizadas, las adaptaciones cinematográficas ofrecen un lenguaje natural y situacionalmente relevante. Gillian Lazar destaca que la literatura proporciona materiales lingüísticos auténticos con valor sociolingüístico y pragmático[40], un beneficio igualmente aplicable a sus versiones cinematográficas.

En el caso de William Shakespeare, sus adaptaciones cinematográficas no solo acercan sus obras a los estudiantes, sino que las modernizan y hacen más accesibles. Ejemplos como *Romeo + Juliet* (1996) de Baz Luhrmann trasladan los diálogos originales a un contexto contemporáneo, mientras que *West Side Story* (1961) reinterpreta Romeo y Julieta en un entorno contemporáneo de pandillas urbanas. Por su parte, *The Lion King* (1994) adapta la trama de *Hamlet* para un público joven, manteniendo sus temas centrales de traición, venganza y poder. Estas versiones permiten que los estudiantes conecten con Shakespeare desde una perspectiva más cercana y visual, facilitando la compresión de sus obras y su vigencia en la actualidad.

2. Importancia de las Películas en Versión Original como Recurso Didáctico

[38] Hidalgo-Valverde, Javier, *Educar en Valores: Propuestas y Metodología* (ANPE Murcia, 2001), 405.
[39] Sánchez-Cortés, Marta. "Recursos Didácticos en una Clase de Lengua Extranjera en Segundo de Bachillerato: La Película *Shakespeare in Love*." *Interlingüística* 16, no. 2, (2005): 965, http://dialnet.unirioja.es/servlet/oaiart?codigo=2514279.
[40] Lazar Gillian, *Literature and Language Teaching: A Guide for Teachers and Trainers* (Cambridge University Press, 1993), 190.

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El uso de películas en versión original no es una herramienta didáctica de la enseñanza de idiomas, sino también un vehículo de intercambios culturales y una forma de valorar la relevancia de las lenguas extranjeras dentro y fuera del aula. En este sentido, el estudio del inglés como vía de acceso a su cultura permite reconocer su significado social y cultural. En un aula, el propósito del profesor es crear un entorno donde los alumnos puedan desarrollar sus destrezas lingüísticas en situaciones reales. Esto incluye la compresión y producción del inglés hablado en diversos contextos, desde conversaciones entre hablantes nativos hasta interacciones en el ámbito laboral y cotidiano. Sin embargo, los textos pregrabados y el material audiovisual tradicional no siempre ofrecen el mismo nivel de interacción y espontaneidad que las conversaciones reales. Además, estos recursos rara vez se adaptan a las necesidades específicas del alumnado. Como ya decía Lazar, "el lenguaje utilizado en el material puede ser demasiado avanzado o básico para el nivel de los alumnos, o no cubrir completamente las destrezas lingüísticas o los temas que los alumnos necesitan."[41]

Partiendo de estos argumentos, es importante analizar por qué se defiende el uso de las adaptaciones de Shakespeare para enriquecer las clases de inglés. Este autor forma parte del canon literario que se estudia en Lengua y Literatura, además de en la asignatura más especializada de Literatura Universal en el segundo curso de Bachillerato, por lo que no resulta desconocido para el alumnado. Además, William Shakespeare puede considerarse el escritor más influyente de la lengua inglesa por diversas razones: la universalidad de sus temas, su riqueza lingüística y su magistral uso de la palabra. Asimismo, es relevante mencionar el impacto del cine en la difusión de Shakespeare. La historia del dramaturgo en la gran pantalla es tan antigua como el propio cine. Según la base de datos, IMDb (Internet Movie Database), la primera obra de Shakespeare adaptada al cine fue King John. Desde entonces, por mencionar algunas obras como *Romeo and Juliet*, *Hamlet* o *A Midsummer Night's Dream* han sido llevadas al cine en múltiples ocasiones.

Particularmente los años noventa marcaron un auge de adaptaciones cinematográficas de Shakespeare, sobre todo en Reino Unido, fenómeno comparable a

[41] Lazar, *Literature and Language Teaching: A Guide for Teachers and Trainers*, 193.

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la "Austenmanía" o fascinación por Jane Austen en ese mismo periodo. Como señala Miguel Ángel González-Campos en su monográfico sobre *The Tempest*, "la cenicienta parece haberse transformado en una bella princesa cortejada por muchos, incluidos algunos de los que en el pasado la habían repudiado."[42] Este resurgimiento se evidencia en títulos como *10 Things I Hate About You*, *Never Been Kissed* y *Romeo + Juliet*, que trasladan las tramas de Shakespeare, facilitando la conexión con el público juvenil. También destaca la serie *Shakespeare Retold* que ofrece reinterpretaciones contemporáneas de sus obras: *The Taming of the Shrew*, *Macbeth*, *Much Ado About Nothing* y *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. El estudio académico de las adaptaciones cinematográficas de Shakespeare comenzó a consolidarse en la década de los sesenta, cuando el cine basado en sus obras aún era considerado un terreno carente de prestigio por la crítica.[43] El primer monográfico dedicado a este tema fue *Shakespeare on Silent Film* de Robert Hamilton Ball (1968). Más tarde, autores como Roger Manvell (1971) y Jack J. Jorgens (1977) profundizaron en la influencia del cine en la recepción de las obras del Bardo.

Si bien una adaptación cinematográfica puede proporcionar una experiencia visualmente impactante y enriquecedora, no puede sustituir por completo la representación teatral original. Como señala Carlos Grau-Arquer, "aunque tengan la misma historia e incluso una estructura similar, deberán tener estrategias argumentales diferentes, poner en acción distintos énfasis, pues la historia llega al receptor por diferentes vías, lo que requiere un tratamiento acorde a ellas."[44] En el aula, los docentes emplean estas películas con diferentes propósitos: algunos las usan para revisar una lectura y promover debates, mientras que otros las utilizan para reforzar los aspectos más destacados del texto. Sea cual sea el enfoque, las obras de Shakespeare presentan un lenguaje poético y complejo que, al ser adaptado al cine, facilita el aprendizaje del vocabulario, la compresión lectora y la expresión oral. Además, sus temas universales -amor, ambición, traición, poder- siguen vigentes y

[42] González-Campos Miguel Ángel, *Adaptaciones a la Pantalla de The Tempest de William Shakespeare* (Universidad de Málaga, 2006), 15.
[43] González-Campos, *Adaptaciones a la Pantalla de The Tempest de William Shakespeare*, 15.
[44] Grau-Arquer Carlos, *The Turn of the Screw de Henry James: Análisis de su Adaptación Cinematográfica,* (PhD diss., Universidad Complutense de Madrid, 2017), 30, Docta Complutense.

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pueden generar reflexiones significativas en los estudiantes. Como afirma Alan Maley, "la literatura implica que el grado de identificación, si es tratado correctamente, puede ser una excelente forma para involucrar al alumnado en la práctica docente."[45]

3. El Uso de las Adaptaciones Cinematográficas de Shakespeare en la Educación

Hablar de una obra de Shakespeare a un grupo de adolescentes puede ser una ardua tarea. La lengua, la cultura y los personajes pueden parecerles lejanos a su realidad y a su compresión. En este contexto, el profesor debe encontrar estrategias para acotar la distancia entre el alumnado y el texto. Una de las herramientas más eficaces para lograrlo es el cine. Enseñar Shakespeare en el siglo XXI requiere mucho más que una lectura en profundidad de sus obras; un docente eficaz debe utilizar diversos recursos para ayudar a los estudiantes a comprenderlas. Las películas desempeñan un papel fundamental en este proceso, ya que acercan lo que a menudo parece un texto sin vida a la experiencia moderna de los alumnos. Tan importante ha sido su papel en la educación inglesa que, como señala Sarah Olive, "[ya] había sido establecido, en cierta medida, por las primeras intervenciones estatales en la educación antes de que se convirtiera en el único autor obligatorio en el Plan de Estudios Nacional de Inglés (1989)."[46]

A pesar de que vivimos en una era dominada por la cultura audiovisual, el conocimiento a través de la imagen sigue estando infravalorado. En la Antigüedad, Platón ya advertía de que los habitantes de la caverna eran inducidos al error por sombras que solo reflejaban las apariencias de un mundo falso, pues el verdadero conocimiento era inaccesible a los sentidos. Además, condenaba la imitación, considerándola un simulacro engañoso cuyo único propósito era la seducción y la corrupción del conocimiento autentico. Como medio de expresión visual, el cine ha sido históricamente percibido como una forma de conocimiento imperfecto.[47] Sin

[45] Maley Alan, *Down from the Pedestal: Literature as Resource* (Modern English Publications, 1989), 11.
[46] Olive Sarah, *Shakespeare Valued: Education Policy and Pedagogy 1989–2009,* (Intellect Books, 2004), 30.
[47] Gispert-Pelliver Ester, *Cine, Ficción y Educación* (Laertes, 2011), 35.

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embargo, el mundo actual es profundamente visual, y las imágenes constituyen una de las principales formas de información. Junto con la televisión, el cine es un medio sumamente atractivo para el público juvenil, lo que lo convierte en una herramienta de gran valor didáctico. Si aplicamos la definición de *media literacy* (alfabetización mediática), entendida como "el conjunto de perspectivas que utilizamos activamente para exponernos a los medios de comunicación e interpretar el significado de los mensajes que nos llegan,"[48] el uso de adaptaciones cinematográficas en el aula se presenta como un recurso educativo altamente beneficioso. No solo amplía las posibilidades de aprendizaje en entornos escolares formales, sino que también ayuda a los estudiantes a desarrollar el pensamiento crítico y a conectar emocionalmente con los textos. El cine, como género artístico, se basa en la idea de que una sola imagen puede transmitir más significado que mil palabras.

A lo largo de los años, numerosos autores han defendido la necesidad de incorporar el cine al aula como una valiosa herramienta pedagógica. Claritza Arlenet Peña-Zerpa sostiene que el cine es el resultado de la unión entre el séptimo arte y la educación, ya que "estamos frente a un intento de educar a una masa denominada espectadores o público sin que se le asocie al término aprendiz."[49] Enrique Martínez-Salanova, por su parte, afirma que "el cine […] no puede ni debe ser reducido a las salas cinematográficas."[50] Gracias a las nuevas tecnologías, hoy es posible trasladarlo a cualquier entorno, incluyendo las aulas de todos los niveles educativos, donde su presencia resulta fundamental. Además, el cine, cargado de mensajes y contenido, posee un "ingrediente mágico" que en muchas ocasiones despierta el interés y la motivación de los estudiantes. A pesar de la creciente digitalización de los centros educativos, donde cada vez hay más aulas TIC equipadas con Internet, la presencia de las adaptaciones cinematográficas en los currículos sigue siendo limitada. Si bien algunos centros han avanzado en este ámbito, la falta de integración del cine en la enseñanza ha generado una brecha significativa entre docentes y alumnos. Dado que

[48] Potter W. James, *Media Literacy* (University of California Press, 2019), 49.
[49] Peña-Zerpa Claritza Arlenet, "Cine y educación: ¿Una relación entendida?," *Revista de Educación y Desarrollo* 3, (2010): 57, www.cucs.udg.mx/revistas/edu_desarrollo/anteriores/15/015_Pena.pdf.
[50] Martínez-Salanova Enrique, "El Valor del Cine para Aprender y Enseñar," *Comunicar* 20, (2003): 46, doi.org/10.3916/C20-2003-07.

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el lenguaje audiovisual es una parte esencial de la comunicación contemporánea, merece un espacio dentro del currículo. En este sentido, el profesorado debe aprovechar todas las ventajas del cine como herramienta didáctica y acercarlo a sus alumnos.

Las adaptaciones cinematográficas de Shakespeare pueden considerarse un material auténtico en el aula. Hu Sufen propone dos definiciones de material didáctico auténtico: la primera sostiene que se trata de aquel que no ha sido con fines de aprendizaje y enseñanza de idiomas, mientras que la segunda lo define como material producido en un contexto de comunicación real.[51] Alex Gilmore amplía esta idea, afirmando que la autenticidad puede referirse a diversos aspectos, como la "lengua producida por hablantes nativos para hablantes en una comunidad lingüística concreta" o "la lengua producida por un hablante/escritor real para un público real, que transmite un mensaje real."[52] En la misma línea, Freda Mishan señala que "la autenticidad puede ser algo que se realiza en el acto de interpretación, y puede juzgarse en función del grado de participación del alumno."[53] Para aprovechar esta autenticidad en el aula, no basta con proyectar una película de forma esporádica; debe usarse regularmente y con un propósito pedagógico definido. Además, al seleccionar una película con valor didáctico, es importante considerar que no se trate de una mera reproducción literal del texto original. En este sentido, Elaine Showalter destaca que "de todas las técnicas de enseñanza, la interpretación puede ser la más activa y centrada en el alumno, y puede conducir a un descubrimiento intelectual comprometido del texto."[54] Las obras de Shakespeare no fueron escritas para ser leídas en prosa, sino para ser representadas en escenas. Por ello, al analizar adaptaciones contemporáneas bien conocidas, los estudiantes pueden desarrollar habilidades analíticas y comprender la importancia de estos. Mark Gould propone

[51] Sufen Hu, "On Teaching Non-English Majors Listening and Speaking through Videos," *CELEA Journal* 29, no. 2 (2006): 46, https://es.scribd.com/document/50809955/Teaching-non-E-major-Listening-Speaking-by videos.
[52] Gilmore Alex, "Authentic Materials and Authenticity in Foreign Language Learning," *Language Teaching* 40, no. 2, (2007): 97.
[53] Mishan Freda, *Designing Authenticity into Language Learning Materials* (Intellect Ltd, 2004), 30.
[54] Showalter Elaine, *Teaching Literature* (Blackwell Publishing, 2003), 87.

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once preguntas clave para los docentes que deseen este tipo de recursos en el aula. Entre ellas, destacan las siguientes:

- ¿Cómo transformar la teoría de la adaptación cinematográfica en prácticas pedagógicas concretas?
- ¿Cómo podemos utilizar la adaptación en la evaluación del aprendizaje de los alumnos?
- ¿Cómo podemos utilizar las adaptaciones para promover los objetivos del estudio del inglés?[55]

Para dar respuesta a estas cuestiones, los docentes pueden implementar diversas estrategias en el aula, como:

- Fomentar la lectura del texto original antes de ver la adaptación cinematográfica, para que los estudiantes comprendan la trama, los personajes y el contexto. Gould señala que cuando los alumnos ven una adaptación antes de leer el texto original, pueden acercarse a él como a un terreno más familiar.[56]
- Investigar sobre la vida y obra de Shakespeare antes de ver la película. Andrew Langley, en *Shakespeare and the Theatre* (1996), proporciona un análisis más detallado de la época isabelina y sus influencias en el trabajo del dramaturgo.
- Comparar el lenguaje y las técnicas utilizadas en la obra original con la adaptación cinematográfica, analizando cómo se transmiten el significado y las emociones.

El estudio de las adaptaciones permite a los alumnos reflexionar sobre la relevancia del estudio literario y comprender por qué ciertos textos siguen siendo vigentes hoy en día.[57] Shakespeare trata temas universales como el amor, la envidia, la ambición, lo que permite que espectadores de distintas épocas y culturas conecten con su obra. Cuando estas historias se sitúan en contextos más cercanos al público actual, el interés y la motivación de los estudiantes aumentan. En los últimos años, el estudio de la

[55] Gould Mark, "Teaching Adaptations", in *The Oxford Handbook of Adaptation Studies*, edited by Thomas Leitch. (Oxford University Press, 2017), 674.
[56] Gould, "Teaching Adaptations", 674.
[57] Sanders Julie, *Adaptation and Appropriation* (Routledge, 2005) 22.

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representación escénica de Shakespeare ha cobrado especial importancia, dado que sus textos fueron escritos para ser representados.[58]

Entre las numerosas recontextualizaciones de Shakespeare, merece la pena mencionar la adaptación de Michael Hoffman de *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (1999), protagonizada por Michelle Pfeiffer y Calista Flockhart. Sin embargo, la forma en la que Hoffman decidió ubicar la historia en el siglo XIX y utilizar elementos anacrónicos como bicicletas, algo que no existía en la época de Shakespeare, ha sido criticad por algunos especialistas y puristas del teatro isabelino. A pesar de ello, su enfoque visual y su intento de hacer la obra más accesible a una audiencia contemporánea han sido valorados positivamente por otros, ya que permiten a los espectadores conectar con el texto de formas nuevas y creativas. La adaptación destaca por un diseño y producción rico en colores y escenarios naturales que enfatizan la atmosfera mágica y onírica de la historia original. No obstante, la adaptación del texto shakesperiano ha sido objeto de controversia, ya que algunos críticos consideran que ciertos elementos de humor original se diluyen o pierden su impacto en la versión cinematográfica, lo que podría afectar la percepción que tiene el espectador moderno de la obra.

En lo que respecta a la producción de Kenneth Branagh de *Hamlet* (1996), esta versión comparte algunas características de lo que Andrew Dudley designa con el término "préstamo,"[59] ya que se basa en la obra de Shakespeare, pero con una interpretación distintiva y una puesta en escena grandilocuente. Branagh se distingue por su fidelidad al texto completo de *Hamlet*, siendo una de las pocas adaptaciones cinematográficas que presenta la obra en su totalidad, sin cortes significativos. Su versión se caracteriza por un enfoque visualmente deslumbra, con escenarios palaciegos inspirados en el siglo XIX, un vestuario exuberante y su uso innovador de la cámara para resaltar la intensidad dramática de las escenas. Además, el director y protagonista se apoya en un elenco estelar con actores de renombre como Derek Jacobi, Kate Winslet y Julie Christie, lo que refuerza la seriedad y el prestigio de la producción.

[58] González-Campos Miguel Ángel, *Adaptaciones a la Pantalla de The Tempest*, 20.
[59] Dudley Robert, *Concepts in Film Theory* (Oxford University Press, 1984), 98.

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El propio Branagh parte de una audiencia base garantizada por la respetabilidad de su figura dentro del teatro y el cine, al mismo tiempo que busca ganar un prestigio propio dentro de la esfera cultural del mito shakespeariano. No obstante, este filme no es un simple trasvase al uso de los argumentos de Hamlet, sino que emplea la tragedia como vehículo para reflexionar sobre el aparato teatral en sí mismo, destacando la teatralidad inherente a la historia y el impacto emocional que esta puede generar en el espectador moderno. Branagh hace uso de elementos cinematográficos como el empleo de espejos, analepsis y encuadres simbólicos para enriquecer la experiencia visual y aportar una nueva dimensión interpretativa a la obra. Lo que caracteriza a la "intersección," según Dudley, es que "la singularidad del texto original es preservada hasta tal punto que este se deja sin asimilar de manera intencional en la adaptación."[60]

En este sentido, la versión de Branagh se sitúa en un punto intermedio entre la fidelidad textual y la reinterpretación visual, ofreciendo una experiencia cinematográfica que honra la riqueza lingüística de Shakespeare, al tiempo que la adapta a un formato accesible para nuevas generaciones de espectadores. Su uso en el aula puede resultar altamente beneficioso, ya que permite a los estudiantes experimentar la obra de una manera inmersiva y comprender cómo la puesta en escena influye en la percepción de los personajes y los temas centrales. Esta adaptación demuestra que el cine no solo puede servir como herramienta de apoyo en la enseñanza de Shakespeare, sino que también puede ser un medio poderoso para reinterpretar y revitalizar sus textos en un contexto contemporáneo.

4. Apuntes para el Empleo de las Adaptaciones Cinematográficas de Shakespeare como Recurso Educativo

Para justificar la consecución de dichas habilidades, debemos apoyarnos en las estrategias de comprensión para el alumnado. Estas incluyen la inferencia y extrapolación de significados a nuevos contextos comunicativos, así como la transferencia e integración de los conocimientos, las destrezas y las actitudes de las lenguas que conforman su repertorio lingüístico. Dentro de estas últimas se encuentra

[60] Dudley, Concepts in Film Theory, 99.

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la interpretación de diferentes formas de representación y la utilización de información contextual, elementos que permiten a los estudiantes comprobar sus hipótesis iniciales acerca de la intención y sentido del texto, así como plantear hipótesis alternativas en caso de que fuera necesario. En este sentido, el uso de adaptaciones cinematográficas de Shakespeare en el aula ofrece una oportunidad única para potenciar estas habilidades.

Las películas permiten a los alumnos analizar cómo el lenguaje shakesperiano se transforma en imágenes, sonidos y actuaciones, lo que facilita la comprensión de su complejidad. Los recursos cinematográficos como la puesta en escena, la iluminación, la música y el montaje pueden ser utilizados como herramientas interpretativas que ayuden a los estudiantes a desentrañar los temas y emociones presentes en las obras del dramaturgo. A nivel metodológico, estas estrategias pueden aplicarse en el aula mediante actividades que fomenten el análisis crítico de las adaptaciones. Por ejemplo, se pueden comparar escenas de diferentes versiones cinematográficas de una misma obra de Shakespeare para discutir cómo cada director ha interpretado el texto original. Del mismo modo, los estudiantes pueden participar en debates sobre las diferencias entre la obra escrita y su adaptación visual, analizando aspectos como la fidelidad al texto, los cambios en el contexto temporal y cultural y la representación de los personajes.

En primer lugar, es fundamental contextualizar la obra proporcionando información histórica y cultural sobre la época en la que fue escrita. Esto permitirá a los estudiantes comprender mejor la trama, el lenguaje y la construcción de los personajes, estableciendo conexiones entre el contexto original y su propia realidad. Además, resulta beneficioso realizar un análisis detallado del lenguaje utilizado en la obra, facilitando a los alumnos un glosario de términos y expresiones que puedan resultar complejos o arcaicos. De este modo, se favorece una comprensión más profunda de la historia y de los matices lingüísticos presentes en el texto shakesperiano.[61]

[61] Breu-Panyella Ramón, *Cine para Tener Ganas de Leer: Sugerencias para Relacionar la Literatura y el Cine en el Aula* (Ediciones Alfar, 2012), 65.

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Un factor clave para tener en cuenta es la elección de una adaptación cinematográfica para la edad y el nivel de habilidad de los estudiantes. No es lo mismo proyectar una versión clásica de *Hamlet* o *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, que puede resultar más densa y menos atractiva para el alumnado, que optar por una adaptación contemporánea con un enfoque visual y narrativo más cercano a su realidad. Sin embargo, para que el uso de este sea realmente efectivo, es necesario considerar ciertos de aspectos clave.

Otra estrategia útil es la dramatización de escenas seleccionadas a partir de las versiones cinematográficas, lo que permite a los estudiantes experimentar de primera mano el lenguaje y las emociones de la obra. Asimismo, la proyección de películas en versión original puede contribuir a la mejora de la competencia lingüística en inglés, ayudando a los alumnos a familiarizarse con los ritmos y sonidos del idioma en un contexto literario autentico. Como resultado, no solo se desarrolla la comprensión del texto, sino que también estimula la creatividad y la capacidad de interpretación del alumnado. Podemos interpretar, a partir de lo anterior, que este tipo de actividades permiten a los estudiantes participar en el aula, involucrándose en el proceso de aprendizaje de manera más significativa. Al interactuar con el texto de forma visual y auditiva, los alumnos no solo llegan a apreciar el lenguaje shakespeariano, sino que también reaccionan a sus usos imaginativos y creativos, lo que fortalece su capacidad de análisis y expresión.

En segundo lugar, las obras de Shakespeare están escritas en un inglés renacentista que puede resultar complejo para los estudiantes. Por ello, es fundamental analizar el lenguaje empleado en la obra y proporcionar a los alumnos el glosario de términos y frases mencionado anteriormente, facilitando así su comprensión del texto. Sin embargo, el apoyo lingüístico no es suficiente por sí solo; es recomendable complementar este análisis con actividades prácticas que permitan a los estudiantes interactuar con la obra de manera dinámica y significativa. Entre estas estrategias, destacan las representaciones teatrales, que permiten a los alumnos experimentar con el texto en su dimensión escénica; los debates, que fomentan el análisis crítico de los temas abordados en la obra; y la escritura creativa, que estimula

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la reinterpretación y apropiación del lenguaje shakesperiano. En términos generales, la incorporación de adaptaciones cinematográficas de Shakespeare en las clases de inglés no solo mejora la comprensión del idioma, sino que también enriquece el conocimiento cultural del alumnado.

Un aspecto fundamental para considerar al utilizar adaptaciones cinematográficas de Shakespeare en el aula es la correcta planificación de su implementación. Para ello, se sugiere un enfoque estructurado que combine el análisis del texto literario con el visionado y comentario crítico de la película. Nailya Garipova destaca la importancia de seguir una serie de pasos para introducir este recurso y garantizar su correcta aplicación en el aula de inglés.[62] Entre ellos, merece la pena señalar los siguientes:

- **Trabajo con el texto literario.** En esta primera fase, los alumnos leen la obra propuesta y analizan sus principales características: el contexto histórico y cultural, el tipo de narrador, los personajes, los temas y los motivos recurrentes. Este proceso suele extenderse a lo largo de cuatro o cinco sesiones, aunque se recomienda que los estudiantes complementen el trabajo en casa si es necesario.
- **Presentación de la adaptación cinematográfica.** Antes del visionado, el docente presenta la película proporcionando información clave sobre su producción: ficha técnica y artística, dirección, reparto, contexto de la adaptación y valoraciones críticas. Posteriormente, se invita a los alumnos a expresar sus opiniones y expectativas sobre la película.
- **Visionado y comentario de la adaptación.** El visionado se inicia con la secuencia de apertura, que desempeña un papel estratégico al establecer y las claves narrativas de la película.
- **Análisis de la adaptación.** Los alumnos debaten en grupos sobre el tipo de adaptación, el tono, el estilo y el grado de fidelidad con respecto a la obra

[62] Garipova Nailya, "Literatura y cine en la enseñanza secundaria: Una propuesta didáctica para el aula de inglés," *CAUCE. Revista Internacional de Filología, Comunicación y sus Didácticas* 36, (2013): 83-84.

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original. Además, reflexionan sobre los aspectos culturales y sociales presentados tanto en el texto literario como en su versión fílmica.

En palabras de Aida Dziho-Sator, la enseñanza es un proceso activo en el que los docentes deben considerar los intereses, hábitos y actitudes de los alumnos, así como la manera en que procesan la información y aprenden lenguas extranjeras.[63] En este contexto, las películas se convierten en un recurso didáctico valioso, ya que permiten abordar diversos estilos de enseñanza y aprendizaje, incluyendo el trabajo individual y en grupo, el análisis crítico, el uso de la tecnología y el debate. Así mismo, según Ramón Breu-Panyella, existen varias actividades complementarias para incorporar eficazmente las adaptaciones cinematográficas en el aula.[64] Entre ellas, destacan las siguientes:

- **Lectura previa del libro:** Se recomienda comenzar la lectura al final del curso escolar y asignarla como tarea para las vacaciones. Para garantizar su seguimiento, se puede programar un cuestionario en la primera clase del siguiente curso. Dicho cuestionario debe contener preguntas concretas que solo puedan responderse mediante la lectura del libro, evitando respuestas basadas únicamente en la película.
- **Trabajo escrito sobre la obra:** La redacción de un ensayo sobre un tema central de la obra fomenta una lectura comprensiva y un análisis más profundo del texto.
- **Visionado estructurado de la película:** Dividir el visionado en dos sesiones permite una mejor asimilación del contenido visual y lingüístico, facilitando la identificación de acentos, expresiones idiomáticas y estructuras gramaticales.

Desde hace casi cuatro décadas, Joanne Collie y Stephen Slater defienden la incorporación de materiales auténticos en el aula, subrayando su contribución al enriquecimiento cultural y lingüístico del alumnado.[65] La combinación de texto literario

[63] Dziho-Sator Aida, "Literary Texts and Their Film Adaptations in the ELF Classroom", ed. by Ewa Bieńkowska-Kajko, Ewa Mężyk, and Bożena Stefanowicz (Silesian University of Technology, 2018), 40.
[64] Breu-Panyella*, Cine para Tener Ganas de Leer: Sugerencias para Relacionar la Literatura y el Cine en el Aula*, 66.
[65] Collie Joanne y Slater Stephen, *Literature in the Language Classroom: A Resource Book of Ideas and Activities* (Cambridge University Press, 1987), 11.

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y adaptación cinematográfica no solo facilita la adquisición de vocabulario y estructuras gramaticales, sino que también favorece el desarrollo de las cuatro destrezas lingüísticas: lectura, escritura, comprensión auditiva y expresión oral. Deborah Cartwell e Imelda Whelehan sostienen que el impacto de los estudios de adaptación en la enseñanza del inglés ha sido indiscutible.[66] Según estas autoras, el análisis de adaptaciones ha ampliado su campo de estudio para abarcar tanto la literatura como el cine, permitiendo un enfoque más integral que reconoce la interacción entre distintos medios narrativos.[67] El estudio de las adaptaciones cinematográficas de Shakespeare no solo enriquece la enseñanza del inglés, sino que también fomenta una comprensión más profunda de cómo las historias pueden ser reinterpretadas, recontextualizadas y reconstruidas en distintos formatos. Este enfoque ofrece a los estudiantes una experiencia de aprendizaje más dinámica y significativa, donde la literatura y el cine se complementan para desarrollar sus competencias lingüísticas y culturales de manera integrada y amena.

4.1. Una Propuesta de Caso: Cómo Enseñar *Hamlet* de Kenneth Branagh (1996) en el Aula de Lengua Extranjera

El uso del cine en la enseñanza del inglés como lengua extranjera se ha consolidado como una estrategia efectiva para mejorar la compresión del idioma y la apreciación cultural de los estudiantes. En este contexto, la adaptación de *Hamlet* (1996) dirigida por Kenneth Branagh se presenta como un recurso valioso para trabajar el texto shakesperiano desde una perspectiva visual, lingüística y contextual. Esta versión es particularmente útil en el aula debido a su fidelidad al texto original, su puesta en escena detallada y el prestigio de su elenco, conformado por reconocidos actores británicos como Derek Jacobi, Kate Winslet, Rufus Sewell, Julie Christie, Judi Dench y el propio Kenneth Branagh. Además, su enfoque cinematográfico permite explorar aspectos clave del lenguaje, la narrativa y la interpretación dramática de Shakespeare en un formato accesible para los estudiantes.

[66] Cartwell Deborah y Whelehan Imelda, *Teaching Adaptations* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), 98.
[67] Cartwell y Whelehan, *Teaching Adaptations*, 99.

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La introducción de esta adaptación en el aula de inglés se justifica por diversas razones:

- **Accesibilidad al texto shakesperiano:** Aunque *Hamlet* está escrito en un inglés renacentista, el lenguaje visual y la interpretación de los actores ayudan a contextualizar el significado de las líneas originales.
- **Desarrollo de habilidades lingüísticas:** El visionado de la película mejora la comprensión auditiva, el vocabulario y la entonación en inglés, al tiempo que facilita el análisis textual y la escritura argumentativa.
- **Enriquecimiento cultural:** La obra permite a los estudiantes conocer aspectos históricos y literarios de la época isabelino, así como su influencia en la literatura y el cine contemporáneo.
- **Dinamismo en el aprendizaje:** La combinación de la lectura de fragmentos del texto original con el visionado de la película ofrece un enfoque interactivo que motiva la participación de los estudiantes.

Para integrar esta adaptación en la enseñanza del inglés, se sugiere una metodología que combine lectura, análisis y visionado, estructurada en las siguientes fases:

Antes de ver la película, es fundamental proporcionar a los estudiantes el contexto histórico y literario de *Hamlet* y de la época en la que fue escrita. Para ello, se pueden realizar las siguientes actividades:

- **Investigación previa:** Los alumnos investigan sobre William Shakespeare, su época y el contexto en el que escribió *Hamlet*.
- **Lectura de fragmentos clave del texto original,** con apoyo de un glosario de términos y expresiones arcaicas para facilitar la comprensión.
- **Discusión sobre los temas principales de la obra,** como la venganza, la traición, la locura y el destino, para preparar a los estudiantes antes del visionado

Para un mejor aprovechamiento del material audiovisual, el visionado de la película puede dividirse en secciones acompañadas de actividades de análisis:

- **Visionado de la escena de apertura:** Analizar cómo se introduce la historia, qué elementos visuales destacan y qué primeras impresiones genera en los estudiantes.

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- **Visionado por actos o escenas clave:** Se pueden seleccionar escenas fundamentales para trabajar la compresión auditiva, el análisis de personajes y la comparación con el texto original.
- **Toma de apuntes durante el visionado**, enfocándose en el uso del lenguaje, la puesta en escena y la caracterización de los personajes.

Tras el visionado de la película, se pueden llevar a cabo diversas actividades para reforzar la comprensión y reforzar la expresión en inglés:

- **Comparación entre la adaptación y el texto original:** identificar las diferencias y similitudes entre la obra de Shakespeare y su representación en la película.
- **Debate sobre las decisiones del director:** Discutir por qué Branagh eligió ambientar la historia de una manera específica y cómo esto afecta la interpretación de los personajes.
- **Estudio de los personajes principales**: Analizar la evolución de Hamlet, Ofelia, Claudio y Gertrudis a lo largo de la historia.
- **Redacción de un ensayo** en el que los estudiantes analicen el mensaje central de la película y su impacto en la audiencia.
- **Creación de un diálogo alternativo**: Reescribir una escena de la película en inglés moderno y representarla en clase.
- **Debate sobre el dilema de Hamlet**: ¿Es su indecisión una muestra de inteligencia o una debilidad? Los alumnos defienden diferentes posturas basándose en evidencia de la película.
- **Análisis del lenguaje shakesperiano**: Seleccionar citas importantes de la obra, analizar su significado y discutir cómo se reflejan en la película.

Para consolidar lo aprendido, se puede realizar una actividad de reflexión en la que los estudiantes respondan preguntas como: ¿Cómo ha cambiado tu percepción de Hamlet después de ver la adaptación? ¿Crees que la película ayuda a comprender mejor el inglés shakesperiano? ¿Por qué? ¿Cuál fue la escena que más te impactó y por qué? Además, se puede realizar una evaluación creativa, como la grabación de un video en el que los estudiantes expliquen su escena favorita, o la redacción de una crítica cinematográfica en inglés.

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En definitiva, la adaptación de *Hamlet* de Kenneth Branagh ofrece un enfoque innovador y efectivo para la enseñanza del inglés, al combinar la literatura clásica con el cine como herramienta pedagógica. Al integrar actividades de lectura, análisis y producción lingüística, esta película permite a los estudiantes mejorar su comprensión del inglés, desarrollar su pensamiento crítico y enriquecer su conocimiento cultural. Al adoptar este enfoque, los docentes pueden hacer que la enseñanza de Shakespeare sea más accesible, dinámica y significativa, demostrando que sus obras siguen siendo relevantes y valiosas en el aula contemporánea.

5. Conclusiones

El presente estudio ha examinado las razones por las cuales las adaptaciones cinematográficas de Shakespeare continúan siendo una herramienta pedagógica relevante en la enseñanza del inglés como lengua extranjera. Entre los factores clave se encuentran la influencia del autor en la lengua inglesa, la universalidad de los temas abordados en sus obras, la riqueza lingüística y expresiva de sus textos, así como la gran cantidad de adaptaciones cinematográficas que han sido producidas a lo largo de la historia del cine. Estos elementos convierten las obras del Bardo en un recurso valioso tanto para el estudio del idioma como para el análisis cultural y literario.

Además, el uso de estas adaptaciones en el aula no solo acerca el texto original a los estudiantes de una manera más accesible y atractiva, sino que también permite analizar cómo los cambios en el lenguaje y la narrativa audiovisual responden a las transformaciones de la sociedad y a las expectativas del público contemporáneo. Así, la combinación de la literatura y el cine favorece una enseñanza más dinámica, contextualizada y significativa, al permitir que los alumnos se identifiquen con los personajes y los conflictos presentados en la obra.

De cara a futuras implementaciones de este enfoque en el aula, es importante tener en cuenta una serie de consideraciones que garanticen su efectividad pedagógica. En primer lugar, debe prestarse atención a la extensión de los textos seleccionados y la duración del visionado, de modo que el análisis de la obra pueda realizarse en profundidad sin afectar negativamente a la planificación general del

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curso. Asimismo, resulta fundamental valorar la explotabilidad del material audiovisual, asegurando que las actividades diseñadas en torno a las adaptaciones cinematográficas favorezcan tanto el aprendizaje lingüístico como el pensamiento crítico del alumnado. Por último, es esencial que estas propuestas mantengan una coherencia con el currículo escolar, integrando el estudio de las adaptaciones dentro de la programación global de la asignatura, de forma que los estudiantes perciban su relevancia dentro de su proceso formativo.

Este estudio abre la posibilidad de continuar explorando diversas áreas relacionadas con la enseñanza del inglés mediante adaptaciones cinematográficas. Algunas líneas de investigación futuras podrían incluir los siguientes aspectos a continuación. En primer lugar, un análisis comparativo entre diferentes adaptaciones de Shakespeare, para evaluar cómo distintos enfoques cinematográficos afectan la percepción del texto original. Incluir estudios sobre la efectividad del cine en la adquisición de competencias lingüísticas, midiendo el impacto del uso de películas en la mejora de la comprensión auditiva, la expresión oral y el desarrollo del vocabulario en inglés. Realizar una investigación sobre la motivación del alumnado, analizando cómo la incorporación de medios audiovisuales influye en el interés y la participación de los estudiantes en el aprendizaje del inglés. Desarrollar nuevas estrategias didácticas basadas en la adaptación cinematográfica de textos literarios, con metodologías innovadoras que combinen lectura, escritura, análisis crítico y producción audiovisual. Explorar otras obras literarias adaptadas al cine como recurso en la enseñanza del inglés, más allá de Shakespeare, para evaluar su viabilidad y beneficios en distintos niveles educativos.

En definitiva, la integración de las adaptaciones cinematográficas de Shakespeare en el aula de inglés representa una oportunidad única para enriquecer el aprendizaje lingüístico y cultural, al tiempo que motiva a los estudiantes mediante un enfoque multidisciplinar. Con una planificación adecuada y estrategias didácticas innovadoras, este recurso puede contribuir significativamente al desarrollo de las competencias comunicativas de los alumnos en un contexto más dinámico y atractivo.

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Gender Inequality and the Influence of Mary Wollstonecraft in Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice*[68]

Ángela Muro-Arpón[69]

Abstract:

The conception of gender and sex traditionally divides society into two. The establishment embraces this sexually gendered binarism creating a patriarchal *status quo* where the masculine dominates the feminine. The subordination of the feminine has then been consistently denounced by women, but their criticism began to be noticed in the eighteenth century with Mary Wollstonecraft's publication of *Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (1792). As a mirror of society, literature has also captured gender disparity and has sometimes counterattacked it. This research delves into Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice* (1813), a novel where women are at the centre of the narration. It addresses the possibility of Austen agreeing with Wollstonecraft's proto-feminist postulates and subtly denouncing the foundations of the patriarchal system through her characters. For this purpose, the study dissects the Austenian female characters of *Pride and Prejudice*, focusing on the stereotypes that are historically associated to the traditional sex-gender binarism. Through this analysis, it also attempts to unveil whether said characters may or may not accept their role in Georgian society. In the end, this project will try to determine if Jane Austen may have been a revolutionary or may just be considered a master writer of romance.

Keywords: sex, gender, female characters, inequality, Austen, Wollstonecraft.

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1. Introduction

"On ne naît pas femme: on le devient"[70]

In 1949, Simone de Beauvoir published *Le Deuxième Sexe*, where she reflected on the unresolved inequalities between men and women. With her abovementioned famous quote, de Beauvoir opens the debate about the conceptions of 'sex' and 'gender', terms which are often interchanged but also associated to different realities. This traditional division in Western feminism distinguishes 'sex' as the inevitable biological classification of the species, where there exists a male-female dualism based on what is seen as binary genitalia, either penis or vagina.[71] Nowadays, sex may not be considered dichotomous because "there are all kinds of variations in sex development that lead to a diverse range of outcomes,"[72] such as intersex traits, which have recently been socially acknowledged. Nevertheless, were the mentioned universality of biological sex contested, the definition of 'gender' would distance itself from the idea of 'sex' while maintaining sexual binarism. In terms of socially systemic structures, gender traditionally refers to a cultural construction.[73] In other words, it would be the establishment that determines how people behave and live as either women or men, assimilating again gender to sex. Gender would be "the representation of each individual in terms of a particular social relation which pre-exists the individual and is predicated on the conceptual and rigid (structural) opposition of two biological sexes."[74] Therefore, there is this image of members of society unconsciously performing according to their socially assigned and sexually gendered box,[75] which creates a debate between biological determinism and gender constructionism that may delimit Gender Studies "by creating false oppositions."[76]

[70] Simone de Beauvoir, *Le deuxième sexe* (Gallimard, 1949), 7.
[71] Pierre Bourdieu, *Masculine Domination* (Standford University Press, 2002), 8; Brian D. Earp, "What Is Gender For?," *The Philosopher* 108, no. 2 (2020): 94-5.
[72] Earp, "What Is Gender For?," 95.
[73] Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble* (Routledge, 1999), 10; Earp, "What Is Gender For?," 95-6.
[74] Teresa de Lauretis, *Technologies of Gender. Essays on Theory, Film and Fiction* (Macmillan Press, 1989), 5.
[75] Butler, *Gender Trouble*, xiv-xv; Judith Butler, *Undoing Gender* (Routledge, 2004), 1.
[76] Sara Ahmed, *The Cultural Politics of Emotion* (Edinburgh University Press, 2014), 17.

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Throughout history, this sexually gendered dualism of the *status quo* has likewise distinguished between the dominating masculine and the subordinate feminine,[77] creating the patriarchal belief that there is a universally fixed hierarchy that cannot be changed. According to Bourdieu, this social system lays its foundations on a binary gender which is also based on the visible differences between bodies, on genitality,[78] providing different spaces and activities for each gender.[79] In this sense, people may be attributed their own characteristics depending on the social image – masculine or feminine – they better fit. These characteristics consolidate the impression of being either a man or a woman and separate the "norm" from the queer, a community often socially marginalised and constructed as "hated community, which splits the nation, [sliding] into a construction of the nation as 'being' hated by others."[80] This is what Butler used to address as performativity[81] – although she currently regards the idea of 'performativity' as questionable, especially in relation to trans-criticism.[82] That is, being a man or a woman, having certain traits, may not be intrinsically part of humankind but a phenomenon that is acquired and reproduced over time.

Gender representations may be often linked to stereotypes that have been taught from generation to generation. Gender then distinguishes between masculine and feminine, being respectively related to maleness/masculinity and femaleness/femininity;[83] that is, "those behaviours, languages and practices, existing in specific cultural and organisational locations, which are commonly associated" with the socially accepted image of either men or women.[84] In the female case, private

[77] Bourdieu, *Masculine Domination*, 9.
[78] Bourdieu, *Masculine Domination*, 22.
[79] Bourdieu, *Masculine Domination*, 11.
[80] Ahmed, *The Cultural Politics*, 157-8.
[81] Butler, *Gender Trouble*, xiv-xv.
[82] Judith Butler, *Who's Afraid of Gender?* (Allen Lane, 2024), 23.
[83] Barnaby J. W. Dixson, "Masculinity and Femininity," in *Encyclopedia of Evolutionary Psychological Science*, ed. Todd K. Shackelford and Viviana A. Weekes-Shackelford (Springer International Publishing, 2021), 4816.
[84] Stephen M. Whitehead, Frank J. Barrett. "The Sociology of Masculinity," in *The masculinities reader*, ed. Stephen M. Whitehead and Frank J. Barrett (Polity Press, 2001), 15-6.

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spaces – the family home – are reserved for women and their gestational ability,[85] reserved for a softer task.[86] Thus, women are limited and supposed to accept their social restrictions. Within their limitations, they must learn to properly behave and deliberately obey, submitting to certain imperatives.[87] For instance, smiling, looking down, accepting interruptions, etc. Hence, they are described as physically and mentally controlled, subjected to their male counterparts as children in need of supervision. This control may be presented in how women are educated to marry and bear children, relegating them to the margins when they turn unsuccessful.[88] Furthermore, women may be also judged emotional compared to men, as well as unable to participate in more academic or scientific tasks. In this respect, they are portrayed as more sensitive and intellectually fragile.[89]

Before de Beauvoir, eighteenth-century women authors started to write and advocate for the end of a patriarchal system based on socially constructed stereotypes. They demanded gender equality and political, social, and economic rights for women, at a time when the word feminism had not even been coined. Among them, Mary Wollstonecraft stands out due to the publication of her pinnacle work, *Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (1792; 2017), an essay where she denounced the aforementioned historical role of women. Wollstonecraft raised her voice on behalf of women's rights and female writers who wanted a social change.[90] She stood up against the inferiority of women based on gender, denouncing how "their apparent inferiority with respect to bodily strength" moved ladies to think themselves "dependent on men in the various relations of life."[91] Considering that females were not allowed to inherit their birth right either, Wollstonecraft also condemned the infantilisation of women that led to the ban, as well as the masculine superiority complex which, disguised as

[85] Bourdieu, *Masculine Domination*, 11.
[86] Ahmed, *The Cultural Politics*, 2.
[87] Bourdieu, *Masculine Domination*, 28.
[88] Lina Meruane, *Contra los Hijos* (Literatura Random House, 2018), 8-9.
[89] Pilar Colás-Bravo and Patricia Villaciervos-Moreno, "La Interiorización de los Estereotipos de Género en Jóvenes y Adolescentes," *Revista de Investigación Educativa* 25, no. 1 (2007): 39.
[90] Marian E. Fowler, "The Feminist Bias of *Pride and Prejudice*," *The Dalhouse Review* 57, no. 1 (1977): 51.
[91] Mary Wollstonecraft, *Vindication of The Rights of Woman* (Amazon Classics, 2018), 14.

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chivalry, pretended to protect ladies from ruin.[92] Moreover, the British author introduced the concept of oppression. She wrote "I call women slaves,"[93] a quote with which she argued that the subjection of women was not voluntary. In *Vindication*, Wollstonecraft also criticised education for women as being "neglected"[94] and focused on learning to "blindly submit to [a male] authority."[95] She described it as an "improper education,"[96] which was curiously encouraged by women. She even denounced literature for women, which was reduced to plain romances.[97] Even nowadays, the description of novels supposedly intrinsically related to women sometimes seems to follow the pattern described by Wollstonecraft and tend to be heavily criticised. Hence, education was then oriented to the creation of accomplished vain puppets moulded to appeal to but also to obey men. As a matter of fact, Wollstonecraft stated that girls' education must not be described as such[98] because it did not cultivate the learners' minds.[99] Only by receiving a proper education will women become independent and able to choose their own path.

As a reflection of society, literary works have captured gender disparity and have sometimes counterattacked it. This study focuses on Jane Austen's most well-known novel, *Pride and Prejudice* (1813; 2008), a story that gravitates around women who may or may not follow the established rules of the strict Georgian society. Although *Pride and Prejudice* is not as explicit as Mary Wollstonecraft's proto-feminist postulates, it seems to also denounce the foundations of the patriarchal system. This study will explore the possibility of Austen following on Wollstonecraft's steps. In this vein, it will analyse how Austen uses her female characters to subtly introduce her own criticism against conventional gender assumptions. For this purpose, the research will dissect the female characters of *Pride and Prejudice*, concentrating on the stereotypes that are historically associated to the abovementioned traditional sex-gender binarism.

[92] Wollstonecraft, *Vindication*, 26; 76.
[93] Wollstonecraft, *Vindication*, 224.
[94] Wollstonecraft, *Vindication*, 9.
[95] Wollstonecraft, *Vindication*, 32.
[96] Wollstonecraft, *Vindication*, 57.
[97] Wollstonecraft, *Vindication*, 247.
[98] Wollstonecraft, *Vindication*, 228.
[99] Wollstonecraft, *Vindication*, 219.

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The ultimate objective will be to decide whether Austen is a proto-feminist herself or she should still be considered a master writer of the Georgian domestic unaware of the reality of her time.

2. Proto-feminist Criticism in *Pride and Prejudice*'s Female Characters

Pride and Prejudice (1813; 2008) presents a realistic description of private spaces in the early nineteenth century. Most specifically, one must highlight its portrayal of female characters. The story revolves around the Bennet family, especially the five sisters. Each of them differs from the others, but all become an attempt to personify the gender stereotypes of the Georgian society.

At twenty-two, Jane Bennet is the eldest sister. Her physique is consistently praised as if it were her only quality. After all, she is "the most beautiful creature in the room."[100] However, Jane does not seem interested in appearances, not obsessing over the "principle of self-preservation" which rendered women vain.[101] Moreover, Jane is described as "really angelic."[102] She believes in kindness, showing an excess of naivety that sometimes makes her appear childish. Her gentle personality leads to her being seen as easy to control. As Brown puts it, Jane is "prisoner of [the] repressive image of womanhood,"[103] controlled by the traits of her gender.[104] For instance, someone tricks her into thinking that they are friends, while her true intention is to separate Jane from Mr Bingley.

As she is, Jane Bennet may fit into the traditional description of being a woman: modesty, delicacy and beauty.[105] She is the proper lady of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.[106] In this regard she fits in the mentioned profile of the obedient woman who attempts to fulfil her parents' desires – mostly her mother's – before her

[100] Jane Austen, *Pride and Prejudice* (Penguin Classics, 2008), 13.
[101] Wollstonecraft, *Vindication*, 251.
[102] Austen, *Pride and Prejudice*, 132.
[103] Lloyd W. Brown, "Jane Austen and The Feminist Tradition," *Nineteeth-Century Fiction* 28, no. 3 (1973): 335.
[104] Bourdieu, *Masculine Domination*, 28.
[105] Bourdieu, *Masculine Domination*, 28; Ahmed, *The Cultural Politics*, 2.
[106] Rachel M. Brownstein, "Jane Austen: Irony and Authority," *Women's Studies: an Interdisciplinary Journal* 15, no. 1-3 (1988): 58.

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own. *De facto*, Austen does not include much information about Jane Bennet's life expectations but an interest in "marrying [soon and] advantageously,"[107] as so should the oldest Bennet sister.[108] This fictional character wants to marry because she has been taught so, but also because she believes in love and wants to be loved in return. Nevertheless, she also knows the reality of the Georgian Era, where most well-off people had arranged marriages.[109] Thus, she is prepared to marry someone she does not love, hoping to, at least, respect him. Eventually, she falls madly in love with Mr Bingley and is reciprocated. Their relationship is not just the socio-economic transaction criticised in *Vindication*, but neither is it the fellowship Wollstonecraft demands. Jane is educated to see herself as inferior to Mr Bingley. Her happiness – and herself – depends on being with him and disappears as he does, proving Wollstonecraft's ideas on female dependence.[110] Despite accepting said socially imposed role, Jane does not fully agree with it. Otherwise, she would not have followed Mr Bingley when he leaves for London, breaking the rule of waiting for a man's marriage proposal. Jane subtly evidences her initiative to change her path and her rejection to patriarchal conventions.

Moving on to Elizabeth Bennet, she is the protagonist and second daughter of the Bennet family. She is almost as beautiful as Jane, with a piercing dark look which reveals her strong personality.[111] It is this daring nature that makes her confront impertinent and offensive behaviours. As the heroine, Elizabeth is an uncommon woman, ahead of her time. She is intelligent but also stubborn and proud. Elizabeth is not interested in pleasing people around her, channelling her disgust through the sharpness of her words. She does not want to depend on any man or to be submitted to them. She, in turn, prefers having knowledge and freedom. In Wollstonecraft's words, Elizabeth would be described as "a woman who has dedicated much of her time to purely intellectual pursuits, and whose affections have been exercised by

[107] Wollstonecraft, *Vindication*, 80.
[108] Meruane, *Contra los Hijos*, 8.
[109] Penelope J. Corfield, *The Georgians: The Deeds and Misdeeds of 18th-Century Britain* (Yale University Press, 2022), 77.
[110] Wollstonecraft, *Vindication*, 14.
[111] Austen, *Pride and Prejudice*, 258.

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humane plans of usefulness."[112] Hence, she refuses to fully perform as her gender demands of her.[113]

As she diverges from the traditional female role, Elizabeth is considered wild, obstinate and headstrong by those who surround her. She is sometimes even mocked and admonished,[114] as when the Bingley sisters laugh at her when she arrives with a dirty skirt in Netherfield. In relation to this episode, "Lizzie" proves she is not the typical envious Georgian woman. Regardless of her mother's commands, she walks to the great house to take care of her sick sister, no matter what others may think of her. It is a relevant moment, where the character reclaims the need for sorority, positioning herself against competition among women. She understands that women have to support each other in a totally male-oriented society. In this vein, Elizabeth states that "the distance is nothing when one has a motive."[115] Although she may only refer to her walk to help Jane, this quote may hide a bigger purpose. Dissatisfied with society, Austen may write Elizabeth's words to exhort people to change the social model.

Rebelling against society, Elizabeth Bennet refuses to subject to men as her sex is supposed to do.[116] Throughout the story, she even declines to marry two men to whom she would have been forcibly related. On the one hand, Mr Collins, a distant cousin who will inherit Mr Bennet's estate, offers Elizabeth her first marriage proposal. He is described as a "conceited, pompous, narrow-minded, silly man" who looks for a wife in an attempt to please her patroness, Lady Catherine de Bourgh.[117] As a consequence of his ridiculousness, Elizabeth rejects him because he thinks of women as interchangeable: "Mr Collins had only to change from Jane to Elizabeth—and it was soon done—done while Mrs Bennet was stirring the fire."[118] On the other hand, Mr Darcy proposes to Elizabeth twice. Regarding the first time, he determines that "in vain

[112] Wollstonecraft, *Vindication*, 76.
[113] Butler, *Gender Trouble*, xiv-xv;10; *Undoing Gender*, 1.
[114] Brown, "Jane Austen and the Feminist Tradition," 332.
[115] Austen, *Pride and Prejudice*, 32-3.
[116] Bourdieu, *Masculine Domination*, 9.
[117] Austen, *Pride and Prejudice*, 133.
[118] Austen, *Pride and Prejudice*, 69-70.

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[he has] struggled" to tell her "how ardently [he] admired and love [her],"[119] proceeding to explain to Elizabeth that regardless of her inferior birth he still wants to marry her. Evidently, Austen's protagonist rejects this proposal – although she eventually forgives and marries him. It goes without saying that the way Elizabeth turns her suitors down utterly displeases them. Wollstonecraft explains their reaction as false gallantry. That is, they think that offering Elizabeth an economically comfortable future is enough reason for her to accept their proposals, but they actually are trying "not [to] lose their rank in the distinction of sexes, … [being] reckoned superior to women."[120]

Concerning the idea of marriage, Elizabeth's perspective also varies from the rule. Despite being educated to marry well, she clearly challenges the whole institution, disapproving marriage as the socio-economic transaction described by Wollstonecraft.[121] She would rather be a spinster than please someone and his family. Besides, she would like to wed not only a man that she chooses and loves, but also a man who respects her. Thus, Elizabeth's conception of a romantic relationship is similar to that of Wollstonecraft, "where women by being brought up with men, are prepared to be [men's] companions, rather than their mistresses."[122] Nonetheless, love is not Elizabeth's priority. Her aspirations are always before any man. At the end, she marries Mr Darcy, because she does not need to change who she is. Thus, they become a couple, not a master and his slave.[123]

As for her aspirations, Elizabeth is eager to learn. Being an intelligent person, she asserts herself "in a male-dominated world" and refuses to accept their dominance.[124] She "posits the … new ideal offered by the feminists, wanting to be treated as a rational creature and subtly noting others' absurd behaviours."[125] She even mocks Mr Darcy's idea of an "accomplished" woman, which omits any reference

[119] Austen, *Pride and Prejudice*, 185.
[120] Wollstonecraft, *Vindication*, 31.
[121] Wollstonecraft, *Vindication*, 14.
[122] Wollstonecraft, *Vindication*, 222.
[123] Bourdieu, *Masculine Domination*, 28.
[124] David Herbert, "Place and Society in Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice*," *Geography* 76, no. 3 (1991): 206.
[125] Fowler, "The Feminist Bias," 61.

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to cleverness and basically responds to courtesy-book standards for ladies. After his long list of conditions for a woman to be suitable, she answers: "I am no longer surprised at your knowing only six accomplished women. I rather wonder now at your knowing any."[126] I believe Austen is subtly denouncing the lack of a proper education for girls and women. Therefore, she agrees with *Vindication*, where Wollstonecraft criticises that "everything conspires to render the cultivation of the understanding more difficult in the female than the male world."[127] Additionally, Elizabeth seems to consider books her primary source of knowledge. She is described by Bingley as "a great reader, and has no pleasure in anything else,"[128] meaning that she does not enjoy stereotypically female activities. Nevertheless, she affirms that there are many other things that please her.[129] In spite of lacking specificity, her words may indirectly highlight that women also have different and multiple interests and dreams.

After this dialogue, Austen pivots the conversation to reveal that men were the owners of books because they inherited them. In Mr Darcy's words, his family library "has been the work of generations."[130] In other words, men were the heirs of culture throughout history. Moreover, Elizabeth exposes the differences between readings for men and for women: "Books—oh! no. I am sure we never read the same, or not with the same feelings."[131] She condemns how literature is primarily addressed to a male readership, linking – once again – *Pride and Prejudice* to *Vindication*, where Wollstonecraft affirms that men can own and read any book – novels, history, philosophy, etc. – whilst the ladies' choice is reduced to romances, frivolous novels that only increase their vanity.[132]

Regarding Mary, she is the third Bennet sister. Being considerably different to the rest, she is sometimes left out due to their lack of affinity. In other words, she is not really close to any of her sisters, who commonly appear as pairs in the novel: Jane-

[126] Austen, *Pride and Prejudice*, 39.
[127] Wollstonecraft, *Vindication*, 72.
[128] Austen, *Pride and Prejudice*, 37.
[129] Austen, *Pride and Prejudice*, 37.
[130] Austen, *Pride and Prejudice*, 38.
[131] Austen, *Pride and Prejudice*, 92.
[132] Wollstonecraft, *Vindication*, 248.

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Elizabeth, Catherine-Lydia. She is just alone in the middle. Mary does not stand out for her beauty or her accomplishments and intelligence. However, it is said "wisdom" is what characterises her personality. She constantly tries to prove to everyone that she is clever, aspiring to make up for her not so agreeable physical appearance: "Mary, … in consequence of being the only plain one in the family, worked hard for knowledge and accomplishments."[133] Nevertheless, Austen made her actually vain and empty, a foolish pedant, and thus nobody takes her seriously.[134] Even her father ridicules her when she is unable to quickly answer a question: "What say you, Mary? For you are a young lady of deep reflection, I know, and read great books and make extracts. … While Mary is adjusting her ideas … let us return to Mr Bingley."[135] In spite of the mockery, her conceited behaviour leads Mary to truly see herself as an accomplished woman, showing her naivety to the reader.

Throughout the novel, Mary also seems to live up to several precepts of Georgian gender stereotypes.[136] She argues about the relevance of attending "evening engagements … intervals of recreation and amusement as desirable to everybody."[137] Then, she approves of balls as a way of disinhibiting, a way of breaking with a monotonous life, but mostly a way of finding a husband. Nonetheless, her "intellectual" attitude leaves her without suitors. Austen exaggerates Mary's image to critically portray how patriarchal stereotypes caricatured and derided bright women in an attempt to drown female knowledge and education. In fact, Mary's ridiculous intellectual pretensions may be used to reflect on the absence of a proper female education, supporting Wollstonecraft's proposal of a new educational model based on the precept of rationality and equality. Regardless of their intelligence, these women were continuously treated as fools who knew nothing and were forced to accept their role as women. But society would never let them marry. Hence, they were eternal spinsters and their families' carers.

[133] Austen, *Pride and Prejudice*, 25.
[134] Brownstein, "Irony and Authority," 63.
[135] Austen, *Pride and Prejudice*, 9.
[136] Fowler, "The Feminist Bias," 57.
[137] Austen, *Pride and Prejudice*, 86.

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On their part, Catherine, referred to as Kitty, and Lydia are the youngest Bennet daughters. Both are beautiful and good-humoured young ladies, but also "ignorant, idle, and vain."[138] They seem to be an inseparable pair, unable to exist as individual units. They are superficial, wandering around thinking only about trivial matters. Their biggest concern consists in finding the best ribbons for the next ball.[139] Their mother, Mrs Bennet, identifies with and prefers them rather than Elizabeth or Mary. Kitty and Lydia may be a hyperbolic portrait of the description of the stereotypical Georgian woman. Despite this description, it is relevant to highlight that both young ladies are still teenagers experiencing life. Albeit women were forced to age earlier due to the social necessity of marrying a man who would economically provide for them,[140] Kitty and Lydia prove they are not mature enough because they are not old enough and, consequently, behave according to their age – 17 and 15 respectively.

Focusing on their interests, neither Kitty nor Lydia has any of their own but only aspire to fulfil the established role for women: marriage and children.[141] They are taught to worry just about their physical appearance and concentrate their efforts on spending money to look stunning. Their fixation with youth and beauty lies in the social importance it has for women.[142] In the end, female youth was notably valued in Georgian marriages because it was explicitly associated with beauty, but also because it was intrinsically linked to the ability of procreating and giving heirs to their husbands, which was women's ultimate life goal. All in all, they willingly accepted to "sacrifice every other consideration to render [themselves] agreeable to [men]"[143] in an attempt secure economically advantageous marriages. That is, Kitty and Lydia accept the open objectivation of Georgian women and their bodies to fulfil the duty of their sex. In this vein, both sisters – especially Lydia – are "sex-seekers determined to

[138] Austen, 206-7.
[139] Brown, "Jane Austen and the Feminist Tradition," 330.
[140] Amanda Vickery, "Mutton Dressed as Lamb? Fashioning Age in Georgian England," *Journal of British Studies* 52, no. 4 (2013): 860.
[141] Meruane, *Contra los Hijos*, 8-9.
[142] Colás-Bravo and Villaciervos-Moreno, "La Interiorización de los estereotipos de género," 39.
[143] Wollstonecraft, *Vindication*, 193.

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complete their identity within a narrow concept of sexual roles."[144] Nonetheless, Kitty and Lydia know nothing about love or sex. They just recklessly fool around, flirting with any man.[145] They do not appear to understand the relevance of respect or self-respect in a romantic relationship. In regard with their unrestrained obsession with men, both teenage girls want to marry a good-looking and rich gentleman, even though Lydia ironically marries Wickham, a broke soldier. They also chase soldiers and are constantly around them. The infatuation with the militia may have been related to a kind of preference or even a fetish, but I would doubt Austen wanted to be sordid. The explanation may be simpler. On the one hand, soldiers embodied the virtues traditionally considered virile and attractive, which were widely depicted in Georgian romance novels. On the other hand, Kitty and Lydia need a husband who will economically support them in the future. Even though soldiers were not particularly well-paid, they always received their wages and were therefore wealthy enough to maintain a wife. Consequently, marrying a soldier would be a good option for them both. Hence, *Pride and Prejudice* exposes both gender roles and "the economic base of social behaviour."[146]

As for their education, both Kitty and Lydia see themselves as accomplished girls, without realising the actual meaning of accomplishment. Although they bully Mary, they are not better than her. This lack of proper education presents them as "uncommonly foolish."[147] Their father, Mr Bennet, considers his children "two of the silliest girls in the country," but never takes responsibility for their stupidity.[148] According to Wollstonecraft, the tyranny of men, the established control of men over education, resulted in the inexistent formal education for women, as well as in their consequent silliness and folly.[149] Regardless of their idiocy, neither Kitty nor Lydia seems interested in being intelligent. In my opinion, their reason for their disinterest lies in that they have learnt that Georgian men liked marrying women who followed

[144] Brown, "Jane Austen and the Feminist Tradition," 330.
[145] Austen, *Pride and Prejudice*, 207.
[146] Herbert, "Place and Society," 207.
[147] Austen, *Pride and Prejudice*, 30.
[148] Austen, *Pride and Prejudice*, 30.
[149] Wollstonecraft, *Vindication*, 260.

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the aforementioned female-like behaviours, instead of being involved with bright and educated women.

Although *Pride and Prejudice* mainly focuses on the Bennet sisters, Austen's story also portrays other women who help recreate the patriarchal structure of the Georgian era. Among these characters, one may find Mrs Bennet. She is the mother of the Bennet clan but a complete mystery, as there is not much information about her. In fact, she does not even have a first name; her identity, the surname Bennet, is given by her husband. Thus, Mrs Bennet has nothing of her own and even lacks the freedom and attitude to be who she really wants to be, which means that "she was formed to please and to be subject to [men]; and that it is her duty to render herself *agreeable* to her master-- his being the grand end of her existence."[150] Briefly, Mrs Bennet is nothing without a man, symbolising how patriarchy oppressed Georgian women, by reducing them to another property of their husbands.[151]

Mrs Bennet displays pettiness and vanity, only interested in the pursuit of men. The evident lack of a proper education present in some Bennet sisters seems to be aggravated in their mother. She is not good at doing anything, and is portrayed as someone who pretends to be better than she is in an attempt to network with higher-class people, such as Lady Catherine de Bourgh. Nevertheless, she is clearly unsuccessful in her endeavours. Moreover, Mrs Bennet is a simpleton that sticks to the role of dumb wife for which she was "born," lacking ambition aside from having her daughters married.[152] Along with her foolishness come Mrs Bennet's nerves. She alludes to them several times throughout the book, particularly when something disturbs her. For example, when Mr Bennet refuses to speak to Mr Bingley[153] or when Elizabeth rejects Mr Collins's marriage proposal.[154] In this respect, Mrs Bennet shows that she has not been taught to handle her own emotions and does not want to learn, preferring to indulge them. Her nerves may also try to hide a shortage of both academic and emotional education. Besides, linked to the supposed frailty of women,

[150] Wollstonecraft, *Vindication*, 104.
[151] Bourdieu, *Masculine Domination*, 28.
[152] Brown, "Jane Austen and the Feminist Tradition," 337.
[153] Austen, *Pride and Prejudice*, 5-7.
[154] Austen, *Pride and Prejudice*, 109-10.

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the nerves may be a sign of the stereotypical "mad woman in the attic."[155] Recurrent in literature, this female archetype is related to women being medically diagnosed with hysteria, seemingly unable to restrain their emotional displays and behaving erratically. Showalter determines that the diagnosis turns into a caricature of traditional femininity, as well as into a hyperbolic image "of the cognitive and personal styles" encouraged in women to become attractive to men.[156] These women were medically enclosed for being crazy while many of them were just trapped in their marriages – a famous literary character being Bertha Rochester in *Jane Eyre*. They were victims rather than heroines in their own stories. Showalter also adds that, nowadays, hysteria is studied from a more feminist perspective (herstory), being unveiled as the consequence of how societal gendered roles have historically constrained and limited women's expression.[157] In the end, Mrs Bennet seems to be stuck in a marriage that does not provide her with anything but her husband's mockery: "I have a high respect for your nerves … I have heard you mention them with consideration these last twenty years at least."[158] Thus, neither Mr Bennet not society takes her seriously due to her behaviour, maybe due to her personifying those women that used to stick to their gendered conventions.

Mrs Bennet's lack of education leads to her neglecting her daughters' own learning. According to Mrs Bennet, it is irrelevant whether or not her children go to school or have a governess,[159] but they only need to learn to become experts at seducing men.[160] She is absolutely obsessed with marrying off her daughters for their own good, showing her love "in the most brutal manner, and [sacrificing] every relative duty to promote their advancement in the world."[161] Ultimately, Mrs Bennet

[155] Sandra M. Gilbert and Susan Gubar, *The Madrid Woman in The Attic: The Woman Writer and The Nineteenth-century Literary Imagination* (Yale University Press, 2020), 76-9.
[156] Elaine Showalter, "Hysteria, Feminism, and Gender," in *Hysteria Beyond Freud*, ed. Sander L. Gilman (University of California Press, 1993), 287.
[157] Elaine Showalter, "Hysteria, Feminism, and Gender," 287.
[158] Austen, *Pride and Prejudice*, 7.
[159] Austen, *Pride and Prejudice,* 161-2.
[160] Austen, *Pride and Prejudice,* 6-7.
[161] Wollstonecraft, *Vindication*, 199.

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understands marriage as a way of making women "agreeable and useful" to men.[162] Shortly, marriage is not based on love and respect, but rather business. It is the interdependent union of property and propriety.[163] Then, she teaches her children to "have such perfect power over their hearts as not to permit themselves to fall in love till a man with a superior fortune offers."[164] Besides, she encourages competition among women for their male audience, feeding their envy and insulting the "enemy": "The Lucases are a very good sort of girls. It is a pity they are not handsome! Not that I think Charlotte so very plain—but then she is our particular friend but you must own she is very plain."[165]

Despite Mrs Bennet wanting her daughters to be happy in wealth, the reason for her obsessive insistence may lie in how their marriages may raise her social rank at all costs. For instance, she hates Mr Darcy but blindly accepts him in the family when he proposes to Elizabeth: "My sweetest Lizzy! How rich and how great you will be! [...] Such a charming man!"[166] Thus, Austen may create Mrs Bennet to embody – and agree with – Wollstonecraft's criticism on how society compelled girls to get married. Curiously, the author of *Pride and Prejudice* also opens the novel with this famous quote: "It is a truth universally acknowledged, that a single man in possession of a good fortune, must be in want of a wife."[167] Austen's subtle irony stands out within these words. Whilst she seems to reflect on how men need to find wives, Austen actually wants to highlight that it is women who suffer the pressure of getting married, as it happens with the Bennet sisters.[168]

On the other hand, Charlotte Lucas is an interesting secondary character in Austen's novel. Although seemingly a minor character, she is important to understand women who had no choice but to surrender to established Georgian conventions. Being a 27-year-old woman, Charlotte is the eldest child in her family. She lacks the

[162] Austen, *Pride and Prejudice*, 211.
[163] Herbert, "Place and Society," 207.
[164] Wollstonecraft, *Vindication*, 100.
[165] Austen, *Pride and Prejudice*, 44.
[166] Austen, *Pride and Prejudice,* 357.
[167] Austen, *Pride and Prejudice*, 5.
[168] Brownstein, "Irony and Authority," 64.

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beauty worshipped in women,[169] as Mrs Bennet kindly notes: "however, he did not admire her at all; indeed, nobody can, you know."[170] Society regards her as too old and unattractive to marry anyone, unworthy of having a husband. She is clearly undervalued due to her looks, which inevitably means that she has less – or no – prospects. Therefore, her unmarried destiny would have been to become both the nursing spinster daughter and the burden to her family.

Charlotte knows that she does not fit the image of the perfectly beautiful Georgian woman, but accepts her features, understanding her limitations.[171] That is, she is aware of the difference between beauties, like between Jane Bennet and herself, but never manifests irrational jealousy, refusing to increase hatred and confrontation between women. Thus, Charlotte's personality completely diverges from those of other characters', such as Lydia or Caroline Bingley. In spite of caring about being less physically fortunate, Charlotte celebrates others' luck and tries to help them, proving that she is nice and sensible.[172] For instance, she is glad Jane finds Mr Bingley but also recommends Elizabeth to urge her sister to show her feelings to the gentleman.[173] With her advice, she attempts to prevent anyone from separating the couple, but fails because Elizabeth does not listen to her. Even then, Charlotte demonstrates the importance of sorority that is also displayed in Wollstonecraft's criticism of female competition.

Regardless of not being considered "marriage material," Miss Lucas marries the aforementioned Mr Collins. Charlotte accepts his proposal without the slightest hesitation.[174] Austen makes clear that Charlotte does not love him, but her motivation lies in her fear of a financially insecure future, as well as in the social humiliation of spinsterhood. Miss Lucas acquiesces in her fate, sacrificing any chance of true love for

[169] Ahmed, *The Cultural Politics*, 2.
[170] Austen, *Pride and Prejudice*, 14.
[171] Salma Haque, "Charlotte Lucas's Practical Approach to Marriage and The Conditions of Women of Her Society in Jane Austen's Pride and Prejudice," *IOSR Journal of Humanities and Social Science* 7, no. 4 (2013): 39.
[172] Haque, "Charlotte Lucas's Practical Approach to Marriage," 39.
[173] Austen, *Pride and Prejudice*, 23.
[174] Austen, *Pride and Prejudice*, 122-3.

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the sake of her family and her own stability.[175] By marrying Collins, Charlotte characterises herself as more practical than romantic, and unveils love as secondary or non-existent in marriages during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. According to her, "Happiness in marriage [is not about love but] is entirely a matter of chance."[176]

Once married, Miss Lucas becomes the perfect submissive wife. As Haque explains, she adapts to her new life and never complains about anything, not even about Collins's pompous behaviour and his obsession with pleasing aristocrats.[177] In fact, she prefers to satisfy him, instead of caring about his multiple flaws: "It is better to know as little as possible of the defects of the person with whom you are to pass your life."[178] Charlotte's position was not uncommon in the Georgian Era. Nonetheless, Elizabeth condemns her friend's choice, lacking comprehension and sisterhood. The heroine of the novel may voice Wollstonecraft's thoughts while she believes that Miss Lucas loses her dignity due to her marriage. However, Charlotte angrily reprehends her for feeling morally superior. Not only is she aware that she is marrying an idiot, but also knows that this is her only opportunity of having a content future.[179] Whilst Austen apparently agrees with Wollstonecraft/Lizzie, she may use Charlotte to slightly criticise the excessive display of moral superiority. The author may want to lecture proto-feminists, reminding them that their aim is not to admonish women with no choice, but to fight patriarchy to reach equality for all women.

Finally, *Pride and Prejudice* presents the reader with two characters which are two sides of the same coin: Miss Caroline Bingley and Lady Catherine de Bourgh. They represent different ranks within the Georgian higher classes. As Fowler explains, Caroline is beautiful and snobbish.[180] Her fortune comes to twenty thousand pounds, making her one of the wealthiest ladies in the novel. She has been educated in the best private seminaries, where she learnt how to be an accomplished woman. These elitist institutions are heavily criticised in *Vindication*, where Wollstonecraft condemns

[175] Haque, "Charlotte Lucas's Practical Approach to Marriage," 40.
[176] Austen, *Pride and Prejudice*, 24.
[177] Haque, "Charlotte Lucas's Practical Approach to Marriage," 41.
[178] Austen, *Pride and Prejudice*, 24.
[179] Haque, "Charlotte Lucas's Practical Approach to Marriage," 42.
[180] Fowler, "The Feminist Bias," 50.

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how schools separate high from lower ranks, increasing social inequality. In her essay, the British author also denounces the growth of social misbalance between women belonging to different social classes and proposes the creation of schools that "ought to be absolutely free and open [and mixed] to all classes."[181] In short, although admired by women like Mrs Bennet, the elitist education Miss Bingley receives turns her into a shallow, selfish and childish human being.[182] Additionally, Caroline learns to be "entitled to think well of [herself], and meanly of others,"[183] especially of those who she considers inferior to her rank. That is why she ridicules the Bennet family. Unsurprisingly, she feels fulfilled whenever she mistreats someone. In other words, honour and virtue do not come along with high rank. She enjoys pretending to befriend Jane Bennet but actually cannot stand the idea of her marrying her brother.[184] Hence, Austen may include this character to suggest the need for universal education that Wollstonecraft demands, in order to avoid said elitism and to create a more egalitarian society. Furthermore, Miss Bingley's education also leads her to be in need of a husband, and she apparently chooses Mr Darcy as her perfect match. In the end, she does understand marriage as a transaction between families, and they are socially equal. Nevertheless, she may be the elegant courtesy-book lady, but shows "to be sadly deficient […] [and] empty-headed";[185] lacking the characteristics that Darcy wants in a woman.

Likewise, Caroline is an advocate of female competition. She needs to be better than any other lady and dislikes whenever other women outshine her. She may embody the characteristic envious behaviours among girls that is described in *Vindication*. Fowler notes that she is mostly jealous of Elizabeth because Mr Darcy falls in love with her.[186] That may be the reason why she endeavours to denigrate her in front of him. For example, when Miss Bennet walks to Netherfield to take care of her sick sister, she laughs at her for wearing a stained dress: "To walk three miles [...] or

[181] Wollstonecraft, *Vindication*, 225.
[182] Fowler, "The Feminist Bias," 55.
[183] Austen, *Pride and Prejudice*, 17.
[184] Austen, *Pride and Prejudice*, 36.
[185] Fowler, "The Feminist Bias," 56.
[186] Fowler, "The Feminist Bias," 56.

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whatever it is, above her ankles in dirt, and alone. [...] It seems to me to show an abominable sort of conceited independence, a most country-town indifference to decorum."[187]

Concerning Lady Catherine de Bourgh, she is even more snobbish than Caroline but cleverer. As a satirical portrait of aristocracy, she assesses people "from their income."[188] All in all, I believe that she represents the Georgian gendered establishment. She shares her table with lower class people but never mixes with them, letting her guests know that she is superior. This behaviour is presented with the power relation between her and Mr Collins. In this sense, she is an authoritative person. She actually thinks that everyone must submit to her, and manipulates those who are around her – a quality traditionally seen as unwomanly. She seemingly wants to control their lives as if they were puppets: "I am almost the nearest relation he has in the world, and am entitled to know all his dearest concerns."[189] Moreover, she gets upset when someone challenges her wishes, as Elizabeth does when she refuses to promise her not to marry Mr Darcy.[190]

Lady Catherine defends education for girls as long as it deals with creating accomplished and obedient women. Her view on education consists of teaching drawing and music.[191] Moreover, she is appalled by the Bennet sisters' lack of accomplishments,[192] and does not understand how her mother – never their father – did not properly care about such a tremendous issue. Neither does she share their mother's allowance to be all out in society when the eldest sisters are not married yet. Besides, she also uses a specific paternalistic tone when "educating."[193] However pretentious her airs and reputation are, her education is quite poor, and it is said that "she derives part of her abilities from her rank and fortune."[194]

[187] Austen, *Pride and Prejudice*, 36.
[188] Herbert, "Place and Society," 205-6.
[189] Austen, *Pride and Prejudice*, 338-9.
[190] Austen, *Pride and Prejudice*, 338-9.
[191] Austen, *Pride and Prejudice*, 169.
[192] Fowler, "The Feminist Bias," 56.
[193] Fowler, "The Feminist Bias," 58.
[194] Austen, *Pride and prejudice*, 82.

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As Caroline Bingley, Her Ladyship also considers marriage a transaction. Nevertheless, she favours endogamy to avoid unworthy suitors/suitresses entering the family. Consequently, she wants her sick daughter to marry her nephew, Mr Darcy. Lady Catherine affirms that she has two main reasons for this wedding to be celebrated. First, she believes that she knows what is better for her own family. Second, she does not want to break the agreement she had with her late sister: "From their infancy, they have been intended for each other. It was the favourite wish of his mother [...] and [...] to be prevented by a young woman of inferior birth, of no importance in the world, and wholly unallied to the family!"[195] These words are clearly reminiscent of arranged marriages and keep proving that weddings were mere transactions.

3. Conclusion

"As long as she thinks of a man, nobody objects to a woman thinking"[196]

In her 1928 novel *Orlando*, Virginia Woolf reflects upon the idea of gender and women's position in her society. More than one century later, Woolf was able to summarise both the plot of Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice* and Mary Wollstonecraft's standpoints in *Vindication of the Rights of Woman*. This research has been articulated around one enquiry. It aimed to demonstrate that Austen uses her female characters to subtly introduce proto-feminist criticism against conventional gender assumptions, maybe influenced by Wollstonecraft's essay. In other words, the objective of the study was to prove that not only are Austen's women a faithful portrait of Georgian ladies, but also that they denounce eighteenth-century and nineteenth-century patriarchal Britain. After having conducted a meticulous analysis of most female characters in *Pride and Prejudice,* the following main conclusions are obtained.

From the Bennet sisters to Lady Catherine de Bourgh, Austen's female characters are constrained to social conventions, specifically to the stereotypes

[195] Austen, *Pride and prejudice*, 335.
[196] Virginia Woolf, *Orlando* (Rosetta Books, 2002), 160.

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associated to a traditional sexually gendered binarism. Despite their aspirations, most of them stick to the conventional role of women, devoted to pleasing people. As Lydia or Miss Bingley, they are educated to focus almost exclusively on beauty and obedience as the first steps to chase a good match. That is, they have to be beautiful and compliant to become the elegant woman that will marry a wealthy gentleman. Throughout the book, Austen describes these ladies as completely vain, selfish and foolish; neither accomplished nor perfect. The writer clearly notes how the lack of a proper education has turned them into ridiculous, petty and irrational creatures. Thus, Austen stands up for changing the conception of female education. In this vein, *Pride and Prejudice* condemns education that was solely designed to teach girls how they were expected to behave.

Austen caricatures some of her characters. She describes several Georgian female stereotypes, women who are mostly satisfied with their established role; through them, the novelist introduces a subtle criticism which echoes Wollstonecraft's *Vindication*. The literate – pedantic – woman is constantly mocked and never taken seriously, showing how female intellectuals were considered worthless. The housewife/mother is obsessed with having her daughters married to whoever has enough money. The envious girls lack sorority. The classist aristocrat understands marriage as a transaction. Besides, the novel also includes a non-caricatured character that submits to conventions because the patriarchal society does not give her another choice.

Furthermore, Austen creates a character that raises her voice against inequality: Elizabeth Bennet, the heroine. As Wollstonecraft does in *Vindication*, Elizabeth condemns sexist behaviours. She likes expressing her opinions. She refuses to marry a man that she does not love only because she is ordered to. In fact, she rejects marriage as her only concern in life, but has aspirations and wants to pursue her dreams regardless of what people might say. Moreover, she encourages women to read beyond courtesy books, to pursue their dreams regardless of the rules. She is a modern woman who fights for being listened to.

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In conclusion, the analysis ratifies the opening hypothesis. Through the female characters of *Pride and Prejudice*, Jane Austen denounces the Georgian patriarchal system, addressing themes discussed by Wollstonecraft in *Vindication*. She raises awareness of the poor situation lived by women back then, showing her readership the need for changing, for achieving equality. Jane Austen proposes a timeless discourse that can be applied to any period, even nowadays, where people claim to have reached equality while many women are still mistreated all over the world for the mere reason of being born female and, consequently, inferior to men.

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The Gothic Portrayal of Morality and Evil: Split Identities in Dorian Gray and Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde[197]

Marina Sanz Ortega[198]

Abstract:

The concept of the dual nature of human beings has been highly present in literature, from the Original Sin to Doctor Faustus, always motivated by the longing for some unattained desire. The subject of Victorian ethics has been enriched by the contribution of Leslie Stephen among other writers, and the concept of evil will be analysed in this paper from the perspective of Philip Cole's theory. The following paper collects the main ideas from both areas and focuses on the parallel journeys of Oscar Wilde's *The Picture of Dorian Gray* (1890) and Robert Louis Stevenson's *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* (1886). The respective journeys may appear to be quite resemblant, nevertheless, it is primarily the distinctions between them what is to be considered in the present project. The concepts to be applied to the works of Wilde and Stevenson, namely, morality and evil, will be analysed from the Victorian Gothic perspective, which portrayed darkness as a completely different idea from the traditionally assumed. Evil lurked among the most respectable members of society rather than in faraway castles; and decadence, a widespread topic during the fin de siècle, characterized the development of the characters.

Keywords: Evil, Morality, Gothic Fiction, Doppelgänger, Duality, Corruption

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1. Introduction

The Victorian era began with the reign of Queen Victoria in 1837 and lasted until her death in 1901. During said period, literature was profoundly reconstructed, with the introduction of new perspectives that completely altered the preconceived idea of fiction. It became a vehicle for social critique in areas such as class, gender roles, or industrialization; the characters gained psychological depth in their conflicts and motivations; the focus was shifted to ordinary settings which readers felt well acquainted with; and fiction evolved to portray flawed characters who challenged morality.

Victorian literature was highly influenced by its culture, in which status, appearances, and societal norms played a critical role. This was the era introduced by the Industrial Revolution, a time of economic boom, technological development and a shift to modern urban life. The system of beliefs of the era radically changed due to all these processes, plus, it was in 1859 that Charles Darwin published the revolutionary *On The Origin of Species*, which deeply conditioned the previous conception of religious faith and provided a new lens from which to observe life. People began to question what had been formerly taken for granted—topics such as morality, religion, or education were now given new consideration. The strict social protocol imposed at the time, insisted on ethical behaviour. But the question arises from whether all that was motivated by society was truthfully moral, or if it could be precisely social pressure that led some individuals into immorality. To be considered "moral," all that is fair and responsible, pure and honourable; and for "immoral" those actions or thoughts that fall in the realm of the sinful, corrupt and shameful.

With regard to literature, the Dark Ages' air of terror had already inspired writers of the 18th century to develop Gothic literature, which Victorians adapted to their new urban environment giving way to the so-called Victorian Gothic. As can be seen in *The Picture of Dorian Gray* and *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*, the view on evil and darkness is no longer a perception of something external or unknown. In this new era evil is an element deeply ingrained within human beings, rather than an independent entity. In the city of London, the setting for Dorian and Dr. Jekyll's eventful journeys, where nobody really knows their neighbour, ethics and immorality go hand in hand, leading to one another in an ever-going struggle to take control of the human mind and soul. This paper explores human

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duality, with a basis on the concept of morality and its role in shaping ethical frameworks, which is developed in the following section. Every society possesses its own distinctive values and norms, certain expectations about how the members of that society should behave, handle relations, and, in general terms, lead their social life. In the case of the Victorian period, the societal protocol was extremely relevant and there existed a rigid system of repression, which served to reinforce the social values of the time, among others decorum, hierarchy, and self-restraint, and allowed individuals to maintain their respectable status.

As a feature of the Victorian society, literary works of the time reflect these elements. In *Wuthering Heights* (1847) by Emily Brontë she portrays a passionate love story which defies the social boundaries of class, however the ambition for status predominates and breaks the deep emotional bond. Oscar Wilde in his play *The Importance of Being Earnest* (1895) transmits through the use of satire the absurdity of social codes and Victorian values, with lines like "in matters of grave importance, style, not sincerity, is the vital thing."[199] On the other hand, Coventry Patmore in his poem *The Angel in the House* (1854) focuses on the domestic woman, and how Victorian society expected them to be. He affirmed the ideal woman to be that with no identity, who finds her fulfilment in pleasing men, devoted and obedient.

These rules, however, were not necessarily synonymous of morality. In certain situations, society may encourage falsehood and a concealment of one's identity, for the greater good and in order to maintain formal appearances. Morality lies in each individual, it cannot be imposed through rules or protocols since it is in the nature of one's actions and line of thought. Leslie Stephen claimed: "I infer a man's actions from his character and circumstances, or his character from his actions."[200] This supports the idea that even a dogma as strong as the Christian was during this period, could not impose tendencies and actions on individuals whose longings and willpower lied somewhere else. The opposite to religious faith, which was assumed to be heresy and Satan's influence did not stop people from choosing the path of evil. Moral behaviour is a personal matter; human beings are

[199] Oscar Wilde, *The Importance of Being Earnest*, (Open Road Media, 2018): 45.
[200] Leslie Stephen, *The Science of Ethics,* (Cambridge University Press, 2011): 9-10.

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driven by different desires, possess their own life expectations and are shaped by the life they have lived. In modern society there exist, moreover, plenty of challenges to morality, some of them highly praised. In certain situations, an immoral course of action may be the easiest—factors such as selfishness, instant satisfaction, or popularity may encourage individuals to gravitate towards unethical behaviours. As explained by Stephen, "[…] conduct is determined by purely mechanical conditions; so far as he is a sentient being, his feelings, and so far as he is a rational being, his reasoning powers, must be taken into account."[201] Hence, one cannot be genuinely moral without willingly and consciously being so. Elements such as impulses, vices, or desires are inherently human, and it is the conviction of men, their own intuition about right and wrong, and their willingness to act on their moral side that will keep them from deviating, regardless of any laws or rules imposed.

2. Gothic Fiction: A Shift on the View of Evil

The Victorian Gothic constitutes a subgenre of Gothic literature that arose around the 1830s in England, and which plots were commonly set in the city of London. It differs from the original gothic in the fact that it shifts the focus from countryside life to urban life, adapting into the novels the new inventions that came with the Industrial Revolution and remarking the relevance of social class differentiation with the role of the *bourgeoisie* in opposition to the *proletariat*.

The Gothic is focused on the darkest sides of human beings. Hence, writers aimed to portray the relevance of morality through characters who, losing contact with it, started to decay. This is a fairly modern concept, closer to the human experience, since the tradition was to depict characters unflawed in every aspect, who served as an ideal representation of how the perfect man should be. Evil instincts—those not sustained by an ethical basis, which result in unnecessary harm for others or oneself— constitute, in Gothic Victorian fiction, the main threat against moral behaviour —characterised by the idea of duty, virtue, and personal conscience—.

Jarlath Killeen refers to Freud's concept of the 'uncanny' to explain Victorian horror: "it is the familiar and what is known to one which becomes the unknown and the

[201] Stephen, *The Science of Ethics*, 40.

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mysterious."[202] Tradition had long settled the idea that evil hid in gloomy dark forests and abandoned old castles, it was not to be found anywhere near the streets of London.

This shift of perspective brought horror closer to the reader's surroundings, making it a more familiar experience. In the Victorian Gothic, the villain may be one's neighbour or their dearest friend, no one is entirely safe from evil since it makes its way into the human soul and psyche. In ancient times, cities used to rely on walls guarding them from the enemy, now, there is no longer need for physical defences. Cruel creatures are already inside, leading what appear to be normal lives from the outside, yet keeping a sinful and corrupted soul under a set of concealing appearances.

These instincts, however, may be rooted in the individual himself, as is the case of Jekyll, or they might be introduced to them by a third entity under which influence they become evil themselves, as happens with Dorian. In his case, close friend Lord Henry Wotton paves the way to temptation and sin, by eloquently charming him into evil tendencies. As explained by Stephen, "reasoned conduct differs from merely instinctive conduct in that it implies an adaptation of means to ends, and therefore a possibility of following courses of conduct not agreeable in themselves, but promising a greater total of happiness."[203] The moral codes implanted during the late Victorian period stand, therefore, against individual happiness in the case of Jekyll and Dorian's characters, and since it is a natural instinct for human beings to pursue their own happiness, as long as morality stands in the way to achieve that goal, it will be discarded along the way.

Stevenson and Wilde portray in their novels a morality tale about the decadent consequences of surrendering to one's vices. They both agree in the fact that human beings are as much capable of being moral as they are of being immoral, but they portray in their characters the temptation of the evil side as a much stronger force. This is a traditional Gothic element that shows the relevance of morality through characters that prescind of it but, as their stories develop, it is clear to the reader that they should have fought for the moral values they recognized to be right. The Gothic character needs to undergo a cathartic journey in which they lose sense of their moral side in order for them to rather atone in life,

[202] Jarlath Killeen, *History of the Gothic: Gothic Literature, 1825-1914*, (University of Wales Press, 2009): 130.
[203] Stephen, *The Science of Ethics,* 46.

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as is the case of Scrooge in Dickens' *A Christmas Carol* (1843), or, as for Dorian and Jekyll, to die for their sins. This places the focus of 'evil' on the main characters rather than on their enemies, as is characteristic of Victorian literature. The new idea that evil could even be the most familiar of individuals led to the conclusion that, although one can be evil, one can also have a good side; the human mind has the capability to be more than one thing at the same time, therefore it is split between two opposites.

3. The Split of the Self

3.1. The Figure of the Doppelgänger

This concept of a divided identity is common ground to both Wilde and Stevenson's novels: "both Dorian Gray's portrait and Mr. Hyde are grotesque manifestations of secret opposite identities,"[204] while their owners, respectively Dorian and Dr. Jekyll, maintain their original appearances and even more so, their respectability, when facing society.

The concept of the *doppelgänger* was firstly introduced by Johann Paul Friedrich Richter —also known as Jean Paul—in 1796, and it has been a recurrent resource in literature ever since. They are, in essence, an evil twin that only resembles the main character in their physical appearance. Dimitri Vardoulakis asserts, "doppelgänger characters tend to be associated with evil and the demonic; thus one can infer that the Doppelgänger presents a notion of the subject/subjectivity that is defective, disjunct, split, threatening, spectral."[205] In the instance of Dorian and Dr. Jekyll, they are not similar to their counterpart characters in looks, which differ from the concept of doppelgänger. The similarity, however, lies in the presence of a double identity that represents evil and cruelty. In Freud's perception, narcissism is essential for the doppelgänger as "narcissism is what facilitates the movement from infantile or primitive wish to repression and fear—from the canny to the uncanny."[206] This can be perceived in Dorian's innocent wish to remain the boy in the portrait, and the dark consequences it entails.

[204] David E. Robinson, "The Gothic Genre, Classical Allusion and Other Influences in Oscar Wilde's The Picture of Dorian Gray," *Literator 42*, no 1 (2021): 3.
[205] Dimitris Vardoulakis, "The Return of Negation: The Doppelgänger in Freud's 'The Uncanny,'" *SubStance 35*, no. 2 (2006): 100.
[206] Vardoulakis, "The Return of Negation," 108.

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In the case of Dorian Gray, the division of his identity is shown by the appearance of his portrait; however, his painted image only reflects the darkness of his soul, since it does not have the ability to express itself. The young and beautiful appearance that he preserves is nothing but a remnant of what he once was. A vessel that remains unaltered by the passage of time, which is not in harmony with the development of Dorian's character. There is no double personality, for the side that shows the signals of a life lived in sin, does not possess a life whatsoever; it merely remarks the beauty he used to possess, and that he lost by dwelling on his hedonistic tendencies. The youthful looks in the picture show, not a different identity, but a different version of Dorian he could have been, had he chosen a different path. The division here is based on the fact that human beings have the ability to choose good or evil, even if they are predisposed to one side. Dorian was naturally a good person, yet his choices were what led him astray, for "Dorian is of both light and dark worlds; he is the living embodiment and symbol of the dualism of the light and shadow elements of existence."[207]

In Stevenson's work, Jekyll and Hyde's division is centred on the psychological area: the physical differentiation between them is a requirement to pass unrecognised, but the fact that they actually constitute two different individuals is due to Jekyll's hypocrisy of not wanting to be responsible for Hyde's evil and for Jekyll's respectability, for they threaten each other. As Jekyll reflects in his diary "it was on the moral side, and in my own person, that I learned to recognise the thorough and primitive duality of man; I saw that, of the two natures that contended in the field of my consciousness, even if I could rightly be said to be either, it was only because I was radically both."[208]

Although there are human feelings in Jekyll which on the contrary are not present in Hyde, it could be assumed that Jekyll is essentially capable of committing every crime Hyde does, since what represses him is not his own morals or principles, but what society will think of him. Hyde, at the same time, shows certain behaviours that would not be proper of a madman, but rather of a civilised man. The fact that they share features such as

[207] Robinson, "The Gothic Genre", 3.
[208] Robert Louis Stevenson, *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* (Penguin Classics, 2023): 56.

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handwriting sign that the essence of Jekyll's identity cannot be suppressed or divided, for their nature is that of one single being.

A key idea that opposes both Dorian and Jekyll's desires lies in the fact that they both desire what for the other is but a consequence of their process. Jekyll does not aim to look like Hyde does; he aims for his actions to go unpunished actions and his riddance of social obligations, so the physique simply works as a means to grant him the possibility to do so while remaining unnoticed. In the case of Dorian's, his appearance is not something secondary but the initial fuel to the whole division of the self that works as the main concept of the novel. What Dorian and Jekyll expect from society are opposing behaviours: Dorian searches for popularity and approval, while Jekyll longs to be set apart from social life and all the pretence that it entails. The versions of themselves that fit into society's norms are, therefore, opposing: Dorian's depraved self is admired and encouraged, while Hyde's is hated and feared. This is due to the fact that one of them is concealing his true face, that which reflects his soul, while the other's evilness shows itself—Jekyll is loved in spite of sharing Hyde's instincts—. As long as looks do not accompany what the mind possesses, people will trust (and hope) that they can believe in what they see.

3.2. The Hedonist versus the Scientist

Wilde's reference to Narcissus is crucial to understand Dorian's obsession with his own beauty. Lord Henry Wotton describes Dorian at the start as a Narcissus,[209] and Dorian, at the same time describes his lover Sibyl Vane as a white narcissus.[210] She is not, however, absorbed by her own image—she would represent Narcissus lover, Echo—but by Dorian's, and it is their obsession for his beauty that eventually kills both of them. Wilde's portrayal of dandyism is set, primarily, on the character of Lord Henry, and on Dorian by influence. These characters personalise the values of the Aesthetes, who place the relevance of beauty over that of intellect. For although Basil Hallward is a painter who maintains the Aesthetic tradition alive,[211] he does not share the idea that beauty should be so highly praised: "For Wilde, the new dandy is a refined, elegant Aesthete, who contemplates beauty whilst

[209] Oscar Wilde, *The Picture of Dorian Gray* (Modern Library, 2004): 3.
[210] Wilde, *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, 86.
[211] Olga Vainshtein, "Oscar Wilde," in *Fashioning the Dandy: Style and Manners* (Anthem Press, 2023): 153.

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perfecting his own lifestyle: in this, Wilde saw the manifesto of creative hedonism. [For Baudelaire] the dandy was far closer to the artist […] for Wilde, the contemplative, reflective critic is closer to the truth than the artist himself."[212] Therefore, in these terms, Lord Henry and Dorian represent the ideal of a hedonist dandy, who can appreciate art and beauty from the perspective of an observer.

His responsibility is not to create art but to enjoy it. In the same manner, he perceives his duty to be dwelling on the many pleasures of life, which he can afford, according to Lord Henry because "beautiful sins, like beautiful things, are the privilege of the rich."[213] In spite of *The Picture of Dorian Gray* being an Aesthetic novel with a hedonist hero, it is not portrayed as an idealised life to pursue. The hedonistic tendencies are shown as a warning that, when aesthetics are adopted as the main guiding principle in life, separated from intellect and morals, they lose meaning and result in the decadence and corruption of the beauty they worship. On the other hand, there is the case of Jekyll, in whose story there is no trace of hedonism. It is, precisely, his transformation that provides him with the opposite image of that of a beautiful or appealing one. However, the goal for him is that it serves his purpose as a concealer of his identity, as it eventually does.

Jekyll's motive is the eagerness of a scientist to investigate and develop an experiment that could constitute a milestone in his career. For Jekyll, his desire to get rid of his ties to society is greater than the potential consequences he may suffer under Hyde's identity, including the loss of his own person. Without his scientific knowledge, he would not have been able to develop the transformation into Hyde. Hence the contradiction that it takes a respectable and acclaimed doctor—a profession associated with care and a predisposition for honourable deeds—to create a heartless monster. Being Hyde a scientific experiment, it makes Jekyll conscious and observant of the consequences of his progress; he is never oblivious to his losing control over Hyde. On the contrary, Jekyll always shows a deep consciousness of the processes that take place within himself. Thus, even though he struggled to keep both identities divided, he knew from the start what he was facing: "I

[212] Vainshtein, *Fashioning the Dandy*, 153.
[213] Wilde, *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, 88.

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hesitated long before I put this theory to the test of practice. I knew well that I risked death,"[214] yet he willingly assumed this for the sake of discovering how far he could reach.

Without Hyde, Jekyll would not have been able to discover the core of his identity, for although he realised the evil instincts that hid within his soul, he would have never taken action on them from the perspective of Jekyll. From his perspective, therefore, it was preferable to die pursuing the division of his dual nature, than to remain one and keep his other side concealed forever. The fact that he chose to give life to Mr. Hyde is a sign that cruelty was a remarkably influential side of his nature, he was not, as Dorian, oblivious of his actions.

3.3. Cruel Instincts versus Naivety

In his work *The Myth of Evil* (2006), Phillip Cole explores the concept as divided into 'pure evil' and 'impure evil'. The first one can be understood as reserved for the supernatural elements, for it constitutes evil for the sole sake of evil. On the other hand, human beings are, as he suggests, capable of an impure sort of evil, that which is motivated by human longings such as fame, wealth or power.[215] Dr. Jekyll's evil behaviours do not provide him with any of these benefits except for his own satisfaction and fulfilment, but these desires are essentially to do wrong with no consequence whatsoever. This hence locates his actions closer to Cole's conception of 'pure evil', since they are not motivated by a logical human longing.

Mr. Utterson, on meeting Hyde, thought "O my poor old Harry Jekyll, if ever I read Satan's signature upon a face, it is on that of your new friend,"[216] and according to Cole, the idea of pure evil revolves around the key figure of Satan.[217] At the time, as previously mentioned, morality was closely related to religious faith, hence evil and unethical behaviours were associated to its counterpart: heresy, temptation, and the devil. The unspeakable nature of Hyde's appearance and the character's inability to describe him

[214] Stevenson, *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*, 57.
[215] Phillip Cole, *The Myth of Evil: Demonizing the Enemy* (Edinburgh University Press, 2006): 3.
[216] Stevenson, *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*, 16.
[217] Cole, *The Myth of Evil*, 4.

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support the idea that, even though Hyde's essence is not a supernatural one, he does not constitute something which human beings are able to recognise.

As ventured by Mr. Utterson, it is perhaps "the mere radiance of a foul soul that thus transpires through, and transfigures, its clay continent."[218] However, this statement implies that there would be a certain substance—namely, the soul—which does not fall into the realm of science, but is present nevertheless. This would constitute the closest element to the supernatural to be found in this novel, and it is not even made explicit: it is hence its inexplicability which makes it otherworldly and therefore unknown to the human eye. Again relevant to mention Sigmund Freud and his essay of 1919 'Das Unheimliche'—'The uncanny'—in which he develops the idea of the familiar becoming strange, as happens with Dr. Jekyll, friendly neighbour to everyone until he creates Mr. Hyde, who sows terror among what used to be his dearest friends.

The easiness and naturality with which Jekyll carries Hyde at the beginning, before the former takes over both of them, proves that he is comfortable under the skin of Hyde and he has enough self-confidence to bring Dr. Jekyll into the picture, rather than avoid any relation with his alter-ego. Hyde's actions come naturally to the doctor, for they are his truest instincts. In *Dorian Gray*, the root of evil does not stand by itself, it grows from an ache to live intensely, be popular among society's most respectable members and dwell in life's earthly pleasures. These are all comprehensive desires, yet, under the wrong influence (as is the case with Dorian and Lord Henry) and taken to the extreme, they lead to a corruption of the soul and the lines that limit one's morals, start to blur until there are no lines whatsoever. This does not mean that Dorian becomes evil, but that evil becomes a means for him to fulfil his goals, therefore his sins fall into Cole's 'impure evil', for they are motivated by human ambitions that people can easily relate to, to one extent or another.

The fact that his actions are not motivated by evil itself does not mean that he is not deliberately embracing that way of life as his own. Although at the beginning he was only a naïve and malleable young boy, he does not remain so forever. The case with him is that, by the time he gains awareness about his behaviours and tendencies, these are too deeply ingrained in his personality and at a certain point, he willingly makes the decision to remain

[218] Stevenson, 16.

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in that path of life. However, it is not in his nature and he needs to separate himself from his sins, for which he relies on opium-dens, "where one could buy oblivion, dens of horror where the memory of old sins could be destroyed by the madness of sins that were new."[219]

In this sense, the embodiment of sin is given in different ways from one character to another: on the one hand there is the persona of Hyde, which acts with premeditation on evil instincts that have been present within himself all his life. On the other hand, Dorian constitutes a representation of the weakness of the human mind and body, the lengths to which an individual may go only by letting himself get over-influenced by temptation and vices that were introduced into his knowledge by someone else or even society. Dorian, under Sibyl Vane's guidance could have been able to find the good in him that he denigrated, as he even claimed that her trust made him faithful, her belief made him good, and when he was with her he regretted all that Lord Henry had taught him.[220] Dorian, however, is shown to be unable to make decisions by himself, whether he chooses to be good or not, it is under someone else's influence, even though he does recognise what is morally acceptable from what is not. One of the very few situations in which he acted on his own terms, was the moment he traded his soul for the portrait's image, and even then, he invoked this unknowingly.

4. The Faustian Bargain and the Overreacher

This section follows the influence of two specific archetypes: the Faustian Bargain and the Overreacher. Firstly, the Faustian Bargain would be addressed. This concept has its root in Christopher Marlowe's play *Doctor Faustus* written in the late 16th century and first performed around 1594. The doctor makes a pact with the devil Mephistopheles in order to gain unimaginable wisdom and magical powers, in exchange for his soul. The idea of giving in to temptation and paying with one's own life has been a resource in literary works for further back as the Original Sin goes, being present even in Greek mythology. The same concept was then explored by Milton in *Paradise Lost* (1667), where he portrays the first act of disobedience and The Fall of Man. Even in J. R. R. Tolkien's *Lord of the Rings* (1954) the

[219] Wilde, *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, 209.
[220] Wilde, *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, 87.

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One Ring works as an embodiment of corruption and temptation to power, and reveals the moral integrity of its bearers in the way they respond to its influence. The case of Sméagol is the closest reference to the processes of Dorian and Dr. Jekyll. He commits murder in order to possess the Ring and is rewarded with an unnaturally long life. He deals with the split of his identity between the Hobbit he used to be—Sméagol—and the persona developed under the influence of the Ring—Gollum—. In the same way that all other mentioned characters succumbed to the object of their desires and died for them, he gave his soul to the Ring and with its destruction came his downfall.

This concept is essential in understanding Dorian's intertwinement with his portrait. In Marlowe's play, Faust considers that "the medical writings of Galen are worthless if one cannot raise the dead or grant the gift of eternal life,"[221] which claim comes close to the mentality of Dorian and Jekyll. Lord Henry educates Dorian into believing that intellect will not contribute to his beauty and, therefore, there is nothing in it for him. Jekyll, at the same time, uses his medical knowledge to alter his being, so this ambitious project becomes his reason for living. Jekyll's bargain is not as officially stated as Dorian's, who, in spite of not signing a physical contract like Faust, expresses his trade to Basil and Lord Henry: "If it were only the other way! If it were I who was to be always young, and the picture that was to grow old! For that—for that—I would give everything! Yes, there is nothing in the whole world I would not give! I would give my soul for that!"[222] In the case of Jekyll, his own experiment is a pact with the evil side in him to set him free. He assumes the fact that his sins will lead to his decay in exchange for being able to live in Hyde's skin for a while.

Although there is no physical hell in the novels of Stevenson and Wilde, in Marlowe's play, as Kaličanin explains, "Mephistopheles denies the existence of any local Hell, and defines it instead as a state of mind."[223] This applies to Dorian and Jekyll, who both create their own personal Hell: one that grows from their ambitions and vices. But this Hell is not somewhere they end up in, it is ingrained in their mind and their being, unknown and unreachable to anyone but them. This concept of the Faustian Bargain also carries the

[221] Milena Kaličanin, "Dr. Faustus," in *The Faustian Motif in the Tragedies by Christopher Marlowe* (Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2013), 20.
[222] Wilde, *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, 29.
[223] Kaličanin, *The Faustian Motif*, 25.

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implication of impossibility for the atonement of one's sins. Both Dorian and Jekyll, just like Faust, navigate through the scarce moments where they are overcome by the shame and remorse that their actions produce upon their moral side. This guilt, however, is not as strong a force as the desires that push them to corruption, so they find themselves unable to regret their ill-doings.

The concept of the 'overreacher' is explained in depth by Harry Levin's *The Overreacher: A Study of Christopher Marlowe* (1952). Here, he claims that the overreacher hero leads the fate of his life until his own ambition plays against himself, and his tragedy constitutes "rather an assertion of man's will than an acceptance of God's."[224] The Myth of Icarus,[225] from Greek mythology, is one of the early references there are about the figure of an overreacher. As the myth narrates, Icarus had to flee from Crete with his father Daedalus, who built a pair of wings for each of them. As they flew, Daedalus warned his son not to fly too high, for the sun's heat would melt his waxen wings and he would fall to his death. Icarus, however, blinded and mesmerised by his desire to ascend as much as he could, flew too close to the sun and died.

In this resource, one can recognise a hero tempted by an ambitious desire, a voice of conscience, and a lethal consequence for ignoring the message of that voice. This idea can be easily transferred to the novels of reference within this project: Dorian longs to preserve his youthful beauty; he ignores his friend Basil Hallward's warnings and advice, and dies for his own choices. The same is the case with Jekyll, whose desire is to split his identity. In this case, it is his friend Mr. Utterson who pushes him towards morality, even the essence of Jekyll in himself warns him against damnation. But his choices, once again, lead him into a doomed death.

The key idea is the fact that those characters considered themselves to be special, to be superior to the rest of their fellow human beings, and in thinking that, they ignored warnings that they believed would not apply to them, for they constituted an exception. The previously introduced 'Faustian bargain' implies the figure of an overreacher, portrayed by Faust in Marlowe, who aims to achieve a life that surpasses the limits of human ability. He

[224] Harry Levin, *The Overreacher: A Study of Christopher Marlowe* (Harvard University Press, 1952), 24.
[225] Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, book 8: 183-259.

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aims to acquire knowledge and powers that do not belong in the human mind. As is the case of Jekyll, who attempts to go against nature to separate one being into two, or Dorian who tries to alter the effects of the passage of time assuming it to be something that he could avoid. These are all goals that go out of human control, yet these characters, aiming to fight the natural order of the world, think they possess knowledge enough or power enough to find a manner in order to see their desires fulfilled.

The "hubris," from ancient Greek ὕβρις, etymologically excessive pride or defiance of the gods leading to nemesis, is a personality trait that makes reference to a dangerous level of overconfidence and arrogance. In the Greek tradition, these characters thought themselves to be closer to the deities than to their fellow human beings, and the consequence was usually a punishment from the gods. In adaptation to the modern perspective, the concept of a punishment from the gods has been replaced by the concept of 'karma', or simply by the fact that actions lead to consequences.

In essence, this is not but the consequence of a narcissistic personality and extremely nurtured egos that make the characters believe they are above the natural laws, or any entity such as a god or the devil. However, in the fact that all of these characters die for their sins and delusions of grandeur, it can be understood that they were, in fact, not the almighty beings they thought themselves to be. It was in their playing to be a God-like figure that they succumbed to the most humanly possible perdition: death.

The Gothic novel, as it dwells on the darkest side of human beings, does not commonly incline towards the atonement of its heroes since it does not portray an image of true repentance in them. The characters of Wilde and Stevenson do not regret their evil doings, rather the fact that these could not be maintained in time and did not have the outcome they had foreseen.

The reader is kept, throughout *The Picture of Dorian Gray* and *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*, in a constant state of expectation, waiting for the heroes to amend their vile tendencies and atone for their life in sin. This moment, however, never comes, for the periods of regret and shame are so scarce and fleeting that they never become actions. The fact that these characters are finally doomed to decay and a tragic death does not depend on external factors, or comes sentenced by fate. The individuals they were at the beginning

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of the novels were not yet doomed, they gradually sentenced themselves through their own actions and choices, until the consequences became inevitable.

It is during the *fin de siècle* that the popularisation of the concept of decadence spread among authors, and it provided a renewed tendency for the downfall of their heroes, which had been formerly present in numerous literary works from the Bible, to Shakespeare. The topic was adapted to different traditions and time periods, but the essence of the concept remains unaltered. Slight considerations of repentance are portrayed in Stevenson and Wilde's heroes as something distant and weak, practically non-existent. It constitutes no threat whatsoever for the centrifugal force of a sinful life, and hence this absence leaves no adversary for evil in the struggle to conquer the characters' minds, hearts and souls. At this point, once the evil side has taken control, all sense of will-power is lost and the characters drift towards the fatal outcome of the life they built.

Although both of them succumb to their vices and their dark side, in a sense, it can be perceived in Jekyll a last remnant of humanity, which he struggles to preserve, for his moral side is as dearest to him as his evil one. In the case of Dorian, the only purity and benevolence left in him is in the physical appearance that sources from the portrait, for in his personality there is, by the end, no trace of a moral side or even a conscience.

5. Conclusion

The eternal division of human nature into good and evil is something inherent and inexorable, that was firstly introduced into literature during the Victorian Era. Originally in literature, the hero was consistently guided by moral integrity—representing an ideal of behavioural perfection hardly achievable for everyday men and women. It was during this period of literary development that it became characteristic to create individuals as human as possible, which implied flawed in many ways: easily impressed, naïve, driven by desires and impulses, and who lose sight of their moral compass along the way. Many factors, as much external as internal, may provoke the course of a life to gravitate either way. The analysis of characters such as Dr. Jekyll or Dorian show that knowledge and conscious recognition of what is ethical and what is not does not constitute reason enough to act morally if one's desires lie on the other side. Moreover, society does not necessarily

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constitute an ethical party. In the case of Dr. Jekyll it is his social surroundings that keep him from sin. However, for Dorian, it is the vices and desires that come with a snobbish social environment that lead him to degradation. In this distinction it is perceived that evil can be inherent in an individual or introduced to them through influence if one is naïve enough.

Wilde and Stevenson complement each other in demonstrating that there is not only one pathway to a sinful life. The journeys of Dorian and Jekyll develop in completely opposing contexts, their longings and desires are different, their transformations happen through different means—magic and science—, and even their approaches to life are that of a doctor and a dandy, with nothing in common with each other except for their need to satisfy certain desires that fall in the realm of the immoral. It can be perceived through this comparison, that the characters do not become their evil counterparts only by determination of their circumstances and environment. The path to decadence and sin is not fixed to certain recognisable behaviours but it is a cumulus of choices, some innocent and some wicked, that leads human beings to the final outcome of their lives.

All of these factors shape characters that follow previous archetypes, with recognisable processes of transformation and action that resemble those of Faust and Icarus, which eventually lead to foreseen downfalls. The difference that quite describes their pure natures and tendencies, could be reduced to their final courses of action once they are fully conscious of the situations they are facing: when the time comes that they are left to one final determination. In the case of Dr. Jekyll, he assumes the dooming consequences of his own deeds with repentance that he could not control his own experiment, yet not for his vile actions. Dorian, instead of killing the monster, attempts to destroy proof that he is one in a final act of vanity. The identities may be split, since in both cases there are two different entities, but this does not entail that the individual becomes two different beings, they remain one, hence they die as one.

The idea that both good and evil reside in them does not mean they are two different people at once, it is proof they are humans. As such, they are inherently both, and are capable of choosing the side they want to empower. The fact that makes them most inhuman is achieving that division, not their desire to do so, for it is a human's feature to avoid assuming the sins and wrongs of oneself. It is, therefore, necessary that they perish—

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and that they do so by their own hands—, for this closes the cycle of the downfall, characteristic of Victorian literature. The souls of Dorian and Dr. Jekyll never really had a chance for atonement, for they never desired one. Had they desperately searched for redemption, they would have reached it. However, once evil imposes itself over morality, it corrupts its way until there is nothing left of the personality that used to be there.

Taken together, this paper conveys deep analysis of human tendencies, providing a study on horror fiction not based on fantastic elements—yet including them. The focus is placed on common flaws and behaviours that lead to that known feeling of uneasiness characteristic of Gothic works and which is very much present in today's cinema and literature. As history evolves, so do societies and their cultures, yet, the topics dealt with in this paper have been a resource since ancient times, and most interestingly, still are nowadays. Wilde and Stevenson portray in their novels extremely flawed characters, which serve as raw examples of the impact choices have on human lives. They were not the first ones to do so and certainly not the last ones, however, their contribution has adapted an old topic to modern literature. Both of their works, as much *Dorian* as *Dr. Jekyll*, as complete as they are on their own, gain a deeper sense in their comparison, as this paper has shown.

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Narcissistic Personality Disorder in Lord Alfred Douglas: A Psychological Insight into Oscar Wilde's Letter *De Profundis*[226]

Nazaret Serrano Simancas[227]

Honouring Wilde's memory in the 125th anniversary of his death

Abstract:

This essay, presented as a literary essay to honour Oscar Wilde's memory in the 125th anniversary of his death, aims to cast some light on the psychology of lord Alfred Douglas by dealing with testimonies about his personality and behaviour, shown by Wilde in the letter he addressed to his lover during his imprisonment in Reading Gaol, from 1895 to 1897, called *De Profundis*. Taking the DSM-5-TR manual as a theoretical reference mixed with an innovative approach to the topic, the hypothesis that Alfred Douglas could be diagnosed with Narcissistic Personality Disorder has been formulated. This viewpoint, which has not been much studied to this day and could, therefore, give rise to ambiguity and discrepancies amongst scholars and thinkers, can ultimately serve as a conjectural exercise to, conceivably, understand the emotional abuse and toxicity that may have existed between the lovers. It also presents a plausible reason for the suffering and last erratic moves that led Wilde to his downfall, trying to find some closure to his experience through a new psychological insight. *De Profundis* is a text which requires further study and it can still be read nowadays as a powerful source of information about the author's life and, arguably, as a testimony of what emotional abuse can do to a victim of a possible NPD manipulator.

Keywords: Narcissistic Personality Disorder, DSM-5-TR, Oscar Wilde, Alfred Douglas, *De Profundis*.

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1. Introduction

De Profundis is a long letter written by Oscar Wilde during his imprisonment in Reading Gaol from 1895 to 1897, as a result of the trials between the Marquis of Queensberry and the playwright. Particularly, this conflict was promoted, to a great extent, by the Marquis' son, Alfred Douglas, and the trials led to a verdict which was resolved against Wilde, accused of gross indecency (homosexual relationships) apparently fostered by Wilde through the perversion of his young friend Alfred Douglas.

In my previous work on Oscar Wilde's letter *De Profundis*, I focused my attention on the language of emotions employed by Wilde so as to express his pain while suffering his reclusion in the Reading Gaol. Being a student of Linguistics and English Literature at that time, I decided to dive into a stylistics analysis of the text so as to decode the emotions that Wilde felt based on the type of words that he frequently used and how the repetition of some concepts and ideas were a clear sign of his torment and the things that worried him the most. "Love" and "Hate" were key concepts for him, as well as "Friendship." The overall scenario presented Wilde as "haunted" by the pain and emotional drain that he was enduring in jail, especially fostered by his lover's cruel abandonment and his lack of empathy towards him and his circumstances.

As said, the study was basically focused on linguistics and the study of the language of emotions. However, the need to write a bit further into the analysis of the emotional patterns existing between Oscar Wilde and Alfred Douglas was still in mind, so as to understand the dynamics that were at place in their relationship and that eventually led to the writing of *De Profundis* itself. Actually, it could be said that *De Profundis* would have never been written if the excruciating pain and confusion in Wilde's relationship had not been of a specific type.

This article aims to be a follow-up of said thesis, in which a specific analysis of the psychological nature of Alfred Douglas will be decoded through the explanations that Wilde presents in the letter. The guess suggested is that Alfred Douglas could have been a potential clinical case of Narcissistic Personality Disorder (NPD) and the toxic dynamics established in his friendship with Oscar Wilde and other acquaintances could prove his

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unstable and abusive nature, leading to the destruction of all his interpersonal connections. The symptoms of rejection, abandonment, and pain that Wilde suffered in prison were real and the natural result of, possibly, having been emotionally and psychologically abused by Alfred Douglas all throughout their relationship.

This is a psychological case unmasked and discovered through literature: all of Wilde's emotional reactions as well as Douglas's behaviours can be proved through psychology and the literature written about NPD, demonstrating that this relationship may fall into patterns of a toxic narcissistic dynamic. Some light can be casted onto this idea with examples taken throughout the letter to analyse the psychological profile of Alfred Douglas and the consequences of his behaviour in Oscar Wilde's psyche.

It is fair to say that there are hardly any papers which delve into this topic up to this day, so this article could honour Wilde's memory with a new contribution to the study of his life, particularly this year 2025, when Ireland commemorates the 125th anniversary of his death. All in all, the main purpose is to pay tribute to Wilde's memory by showing understanding and compassion towards what he went through, understanding why his relationship with this type of Cluster B personality was doomed from beginning to end without any possible resolution and raising awareness among society that NPD exists and it needs to be tackled so as to protect victims of emotional abuse, particularly at this point of the twenty-first century, when brand new importance is being given to mental health issues and how we approach them.

Literature is a mirror of reality and *De Profundis* can serve as a powerful testimony of what narcissistic abuse is, how we must protect and respect victims, and how psychologists can use this text to help patients and exemplify this silent malady that breeds in our society, often unchecked but suffered by their victims, either friends or lovers. However, although it is true that Alfred Douglas could be said to have shown traits of a maniac or a psychopath, what will be suggested is that the vast majority of traits and behaviours could actually tick the boxes of narcissism, mainly. NPD is a serious psychological condition. Most of the time, narcissists are unaware of their toxic behaviours, unwilling to recognise their flaws or how their behaviours impact others. The true victims are the people surrounded by the narcissist, who endure the consequences of living with their dysfunction. Narcissists rarely

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go to therapy, as they may consider themselves perfect or flawless. They seem to continue living unchecked and spreading their toxicity to those who dare to intimate enough with them, all while broadcasting a perfect, efficient image to the general public.

2. Definition of NPD (Narcissistic Personality Disorder)

The term "narcissism" was first described by the Roman poet Ovid in his work *Metamorphoses: Book III*.[228] This myth centres on Narcissus, a character cursed to fall in love with his reflection, disregarding anything outside of him and eventually condemned to drown in his own greedy self-centeredness. However, it was not until the late 1800s that "narcissism" was used to define a psychological mind state. According to Paroma Mitra, Tyler J. Torrico and Dimy Fluyau:

> The psychologist Havelock Ellis first used the term "narcissism" in 1898 to link the description of Narcissus to behaviours that he had observed in his patient. Shortly after, Sigmund Freud labelled "narcissistic libido" in his book *Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality*. Psychoanalyst Ernest Jones described narcissism as a character flaw. In 1925, Robert Waelder published the first case report of pathological narcissism and described it as "narcissistic personality." Despite these developments, NPD was not included in the first edition of the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM-I)*. It was not until 1968, during the era of the second edition of the DSM (DSM-II), that Heinz Kohut termed "narcissism."[229]

Considering the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, Fifth Edition, Text Revised (DSM-5-TR),[230] Narcissistic Personality Disorder (NPD) is defined as a complex psychological condition that presents a pervasive pattern of grandiosity (either in fantasy or behaviour), a constant need for admiration, a heightened sense of self-importance and a lack of empathy for others. Narcissists seem to be generally unable to manage criticism from peers and they can frequently become enraged. They also struggle with having honest,

[228] Ovid. *Metamorphoses: Book III*. Translated by A. D. Melville. London: Penguin Classics, 2008, 93-96.
[229] Mitra, Paroma, Tyler J. Torrico, and Dimy Fluyau. "Narcissistic Personality Disorder." *National Library of Medicine*. Published 2024.
[230] American Psychiatric Association. *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, Fifth Edition, Text Revised (DSM-5-TR)*. Washington DC. American Psychiatric Association, 2022, 733.

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mature communication, as they fear vulnerability and are unwilling to take responsibility for their actions.

NPD presents a pattern of behaviours that can persist for life and through a variety of situations or social contexts, and, thus, it can result in significant impairment in social and occupational functioning. This pattern of behaviours appears to begin in early adulthood and the clinical history usually reveals tumultuous relationships.[231] Often, these individuals become increasingly isolated as they grow older due to others having difficulty maintaining their friendships with those who suffer from severe NPD. Although many individuals with NPD deny feelings of depression or any signs of perceived weakness, they often do suffer these symptoms due to their often-underlying fragile ego, which can be threatened by the social and emotional impairment resulting from their maladaptive behaviours.[232]

NPD is considered an ego-syntonic disorder; therefore, a patient's understanding of their issue can be generally poor. Accepting self-deficit is usually not congruent with NPD. Besides, general cognition and orientation are not expected to be impaired. Individuals with this condition have the capability for linear and logical thought, often used to achieve their initial accomplishments (higher education, careers, relationships of status…). However, they often fail when it comes to emotional intelligence.[233] Besides, Narcissistic Personality Disorder (NPD) is classified within the spectrum of personality disorders, and it is usually included within Cluster B, characterized by dramatic, emotional, and erratic behaviour. This Cluster, which will be referenced hereunder, also includes disorders such as antisocial personality disorder, borderline personality disorder, and histrionic personality disorder.[234]

2.1. Clusters and Characteristics of NPD

In the current DSM-5-TR, personality disorders have been categorized into clusters, based on shared characteristics. This categorization includes Cluster A, Cluster B and Cluster C personality disorders: [235]

[231] American Psychiatric Association. *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders,* 735.
[232] Barlow, David H., Mark V. Durand, and Stefan G. Hofmann. *Abnormal Psychology: An Integrative Approach*. 8.ª ed. Boston: Cengage Learning, 2018, 475.
[233] American Psychiatric Association. *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders,* 762-763.
[234] Barlow, David H., Mark V. Durand, and Stefan G. Hofmann. *Abnormal Psychology*, 451.
[235] Mitra, Paroma, Tyler J. Torrico, and Dimy Fluyau. "Narcissistic Personality Disorder," 2024.

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- Cluster A: personality disorders with odd or eccentric characteristics, including paranoid personality disorder, schizoid personality disorder and schizotypal personality disorder.
- Cluster B: personality disorders with dramatic, emotional, or erratic features, including antisocial personality disorder, borderline personality disorder, histrionic personality disorder and narcissistic personality disorder.
- Cluster C: personality disorders with anxious and fearful characteristics, including avoidant personality disorder, dependent personality disorder and obsessive-compulsive personality disorder.

As for the characteristics of NPD, psychoanalyst Wilhelm Reich described "character armour" in 1933 as defence mechanisms that develop with personality types to relieve cognitive conflict from internal impulses and interpersonal anxiety (for example, those with narcissistic tendencies may have fantasies, projection defence, and splitting mechanisms).[236] Negative developmental experiences, such as being rejected as a child and ego fragility during early childhood, may contribute to the development of NPD in adulthood.[237] In contrast, it could be argued that excessive praise in childhood, including the belief that a child may have extraordinary abilities, may also develop into a lifetime need for constant praise and admiration. Temperament traits include harm avoidance (they may act in general disregard for the consequences of their actions or view the potential gain from risky behaviour as far outweighing the gamble of any potential harm that may result), novelty seeking (inherent desire to initiate novel activities likely to produce a reward), reward dependence (individuals with NPD try to be social but for the sake of receiving praise or being seen in association with others of high status, which provides them with internal validation) and persistence (these individuals strive for higher accomplishments and social status worthy of praise).[238]

The American Psychiatric Association (2022) outlines the specific NPD criteria for the diagnosis of this disorder in the DSM-5-TR.[239] Directly drawn from this reference, below are

[236] Mitra, Paroma, Tyler J. Torrico, and Dimy Fluyau. "Narcissistic Personality Disorder," 2024.
[237] Mitra, Paroma, Tyler J. Torrico, and Dimy Fluyau. "Narcissistic Personality Disorder," 2024.
[238] Mitra, Paroma, Tyler J. Torrico, and Dimy Fluyau. "Narcissistic Personality Disorder," 2024.
[239] American Psychiatric Association. *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders,* 761

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the following criteria that need to be met to diagnose narcissistic personality disorder, indicated by five or more of the following:

- A pervasive pattern of grandiosity (in fantasy or behaviour), need for admiration and lack of empathy, beginning by early adulthood and present in a variety of contexts.
- A grandiose sense of self-importance, such as exaggerating achievements and talents, expecting to be recognized as superior even without commensurate achievements.
- Preoccupation with fantasies of unlimited success, power, brilliance, beauty, or ideal love.
- They believe that they are "special" and unique and can only be understood by, or should associate with, other special or high-status people (or institutions).
- They require excessive admiration.
- They have a sense of entitlement, having unreasonable expectations of especially favourable treatment or automatic compliance with their expectations.
- They are interpersonally exploitative, taking advantage of others to achieve their ends.
- They lack empathy or are unwilling to recognize or identify with the feelings and needs of others.
- They are often envious of others or believe that others are envious of them.
- They show arrogant, haughty behaviours or attitudes.

NPD significantly affects familial and romantic relationships. As for the latter type of dynamic, they tend to present a common behavioural pattern designed to attract their targets: Narcissists tend to love-bomb their victims at the beginning, then devalue them when they begin to see "imperfections" in them or a lack of usefulness in their dynamic,[240] leading to the eventual discard and "ghosting," usually after a sudden break up. This cycle of abuse repeats endlessly, as narcissists are unable to form deep, meaningful bonds or

[240] Day, Nicholas J. S., Michelle L. Townsend, and Brett F. S. Grenyer. "Pathological Narcissism: An Analysis of Interpersonal Dysfunction within Intimate Relationships." *Personality and Mental Health* 16, no. 3 (2022), 212.

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connections with others and they see relationships as transactional, based on what they can take from their victims.[241]

2.2. Causes of NPD

While the exact causes of NPD remain a topic of on-going research, professional agreement exists around a combination of factors contributing to its development. These factors include biological, psychological, and environmental influences, each playing a unique role in the manifestation of NPD,[242] as expressed below:

- Biological factors: there is a possible genetic predisposition to NPD, indicating that individuals may inherit certain personality traits or sensitivities that increase their risk of developing the disorder.
- Psychological factors: a core feature of NPD, such as an inflated sense of self-importance or lack of empathy, could stem from early childhood experiences.
- Environmental factors: the environment in which a person grows up can significantly influence the development of NPD. For example, cultural and social expectations emphasizing success, beauty and personal achievement above communal values can contribute to narcissistic traits.
- Family dynamics: dysfunctional family structures, such as those involving emotional abuse, neglect, or inconsistent parenting styles, can be fertile ground for the development of NPD.
- Psycho-social theories: some theories blend psychological and social factors, suggesting that NPD develops as a result of the individual's temperament interacting with their environment. For example, a child with a naturally sensitive temperament might respond to their environment in ways that gradually shape narcissistic personality traits, especially if those environmental factors include validation for superficial achievements, beauty, or charm rather than empathy and collaboration.

[241] Day, Nicholas J. S., Michelle L. Townsend, and Brett F. S. Grenyer. "Pathological Narcissism," 204–216.
[242] Barlow, David H., Mark V. Durand, and Stefan G. Hofmann. *Abnormal Psychology*, 483.

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2.3. Challenges in Diagnosing and Treatment

There are significant challenges in diagnosing NPD, as these individuals may not often present for psychiatric evaluation.[243] There is a generally limited understanding of the disorder, because high-quality and multi-population studies are lacking. Most of the current knowledge is based on small sample-size investigations. A study of this type conducted in Germany showed grey matter decreased volumes in the prefrontal and insular regions. Notably, these brain regions are associated with empathy, compassion, cognition, and emotional regulation processing.[244]

Psychotherapy is the only available method to treat this disorder, despite there also being limited evidence for its efficacy.[245] In a safe, controlled environment, the individual might engage in discussions that provide valuable insights into their behaviour and how it affects those around them, although these individuals may also be highly sensitive to any suggestions or advice. NPD, as with other personality disorders, does not seem to have specific medications for treatment. Besides, as said before, individuals with NPD may not recognize their illness, as it is generally ego-syntonic, so they usually will not be willing to go to therapy. The suggestion will commonly be a request of a first-degree relative or friend. This may occur after maladaptive behaviours have created stress on another person, rather than internal distress from the individual with it. Ultimately, it could be argued that NPD seems to be unlikely to resolve on its own or with treatment.

3. Analysis of the Character of Alfred Douglas

Bearing the theoretical framework in mind, and in order to conduct the analysis, the different testimonies that Wilde presents in *De Profundis* will be classified into two different categories (nature and behaviour), gathering in them a series of traits that prove the narcissistic personality of Alfred Douglas. Throughout the letter, Wilde attempts to present his lover with a summary of his conduct during their three years of friendship, analysing both his temperament and behaviour, and the terrible impact that his unbalanced

[243] Barlow, David H., Mark V. Durand, and Stefan G. Hofmann. *Abnormal Psychology*, 451-475.
[244] Mitra, Paroma, Tyler J. Torrico, and Dimy Fluyau. "Narcissistic Personality Disorder," 2024.
[245] Barlow, David H., Mark V. Durand, and Stefan G. Hofmann. *Abnormal Psychology*, 483.

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personality may have had on him. The number of examples that can be found in *De Profundis* about this topic are profuse, and a complete reading of the letter would make all this sample a complete puzzle. However, a minimal but thorough selection will be used to illustrate the main ideas stressed in this paper.

In general terms, Wilde deplores the result of his friendship and its toxicity: "Of the appalling results of my friendship with you I don't speak at present. I am thinking merely of its quality while it lasted. It was intellectually degrading to me […] When you were away I was all right."[246] He also struggles to identify how he ended up in such a toxic dynamic: "But most of all I blame myself for the entire ethical degradation I allowed you to bring on me. The basis of character is willpower, and my willpower became absolutely subjected to yours."[247] Besides, he also acknowledges his resolution to break free from their toxic bon, as in "an irrevocable parting, a complete separation was the one wise philosophic thing to do"[248], since he needed time to reflect and analyse what he was going through: "I required rest and freedom from the terrible strain of your companionship."[249] But Douglas always managed his way back to him.

3.1. Examples of Douglas' Nature

To begin with, examples of Douglas' nature will be gathered, starting with his perceived lack of empathy towards Wilde. It is important to highlight that Wilde never uses the term "empathy" in his letter, but rather, the concept of "lack of imagination" to describe Douglas's inability to see him or others. He describes a time when first Douglas, then Wilde, came down with a nasty flu. They were away from home at the time, so they had to depend on each other. Wilde took care of Alfred very well, but when he got better and then Wilde got it, Alfred disappeared to have fun, leaving Wilde without anyone to care for him. In one of the many scornful letters addressed to Wilde, Douglas despised him during his illness: "You concluded your letter by saying: 'When you are not on your pedestal you are not

[246] Wilde, Oscar. *De Profundis. The Ballad of Reading Gaol and Other Writings*. Hertfordshire: Wordsworth Editions, 2002, 6.
[247] Wilde, 9.
[248] Wilde, 13.
[249] Wilde, 14.

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interesting. The next time you are ill I will go away at once.' Ah! What coarseness of fibre does that reveal! What an entire lack of imagination! […] I confess that when I had finished your letter I felt almost polluted."[250]

Wilde also stresses the importance, and marks the difference, between a healthy individual able to express compassion through love: "Love is fed by the imagination, by which we become wiser than we know, better than we feel, nobler than we are: by which we can see Life as a whole: by which […] we can understand others in their real as in their ideal relations"[251] and one dominated by what seemed to be hate and egotism like Douglas: "Hate so blinded you that you could see no further than the narrow, walled-in, and already lust-withered garden of your common desires. Your terrible lack of imagination, the one really fatal defect of your character, was entirely the result of the Hate that lived in you."[252]

There are numerous examples of Wilde pointing out the lack of empathy in Alfred's nature: "The faculty 'by which, and by which alone, we can understand others in their real as in their ideal relations' was dead in you."[253] Besides, Alfred was also unwilling to accept his share of responsibility for Wilde's imprisonment and Wilde suffered deeply his careless indifference towards his situation: "But that it was through you, for you and by you that I was there, never for one instant dawned upon you. Even the spectacle of me behind the bars of a wooden cage could not quicken that dead unimaginative nature […]. That you were the true author of the hideous tragedy did not occur to you."[254]

Wilde then seems to apply radical acceptance to the pathological phenomenon he had identified in Alfred's personality: "I saw that you realised nothing of what you had done. I did not desire to be the one to tell you what your own heart should have told you […] Everything must come to one out of one's own nature. There is no use in telling a person a thing that they don't feel and can't understand."[255] This may show that, even though he probably did not have the clinical knowledge about it, Wilde might have known very well that Alfred Douglas could be suffering from some sort of mental health issue or personality

[250] Wilde, 22.
[251] Wilde, 30.
[252] Wilde, 31.
[253] Wilde, 34.
[254] Wilde, 35.
[255] Wilde, 35.

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dysfunction whose terminology had not been explored yet: "There was always to my eyes, as I watched you, something not a little contemptible in your complete and wilful blindness […] "Do you realise now what Hate blinding a person is? […] Do you recognise now that when I described it as an Atrophy destructive of everything but itself, I was scientifically describing a real psychological fact?"[256]

Douglas's strong vanity or egotism will also be decoded, particularly by his choice of living a flamboyant life, most of the time at the expense of Wilde's money. Following this line of thought, Wilde insists on Alfred's parasitic nature: "Your incapacity of being alone, your nature so exigent in its persistent claim on the attention and time of others […] all these things, combined with the fact that your desires and interests were in Life not in Art, were as destructive to your own progress in culture as they were to my work as an artist."[257] All in all, Alfred seems to have exhibited a sort of blind and exaggerated vanity in his grandiose lifestyle: "Your interests were merely in your meals and moods. Your desires were simply for amusements, for ordinary or less ordinary pleasures. They were what your temperament needed, or thought it needed for the moment."[258]

Not only did Wilde notice Alfred's personality, but his mother was also fully aware of Douglas' emotional issues: "At that time I knew very little of your real nature […] Your mother began to speak to me about your character. She told me of your two chief faults, your vanity and your being, as she termed it, 'all wrong about money'."[259] Considering the knowledge provided by Douglas's mother, she also told Wilde in one of her many letters about her son's "blind and exaggerated vanity […] his temper […] the conduct in money matters […] and that he was, of her children, the one who had inherited the fatal Douglas temperament,"[260] which could conceivably show a genetic predisposition in the family.

Overall, Wilde realises the power and control that Alfred exerted upon him: "Your persistent grasp on my life grew stronger and stronger […] You demanded without grace and received without thanks […] You grew to think that you had a sort of right to live at my

[256] Wilde, 36.
[257] Wilde, 6.
[258] Wilde 7.
[259] Wilde, 7.
[260] Wilde, 15.

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expense and in a profuse luxury to which you had never been accustomed"[261] and he also complains about the impossibility of having mature and meaningful communication with Alfred about his behaviour: "In your case, one had either to give up to you or to give you up. There was no other alternative. Through deep if misplaced affection for you, through great pity for your defects of temper and temperament […] I gave up to you always."[262] His consumption of Wilde's time and energy is considered several times by Wilde himself, who thought he was entangled in a vicious cycle: "The froth and folly of our life grew often wearisome to me […] I was often bored to death by it, and accepted it as I accepted your passion for going to music-halls, or your mania for absurd extravagances in eating and drinking […] a part of the high price one paid for knowing you."[263]

In summary, Wilde admits that he rarely perceived Alfred's genuine love for the time they spent together, but rather, he knew there was a utilitarian purpose behind Alfred motives, and this was fuelling his vanity and pride by achieving his goals in life: "Of course you had your illusions, lived in them indeed, and through their shifting mists and coloured veils saw all things changed […] with me was luxury, high living, unlimited pleasure, money without stint."[264] There is also evidence of his rage, unleashed in public scenes, a clear sign of his plausible histrionic behaviour and the fact that his mother was scared of talking to him, therefore using Wilde to try to control her son's conduct, with Alfred's incapacity for emotional self-regulation mentioned several times: "That dreadful mania you inherit from your father, the mania for writing revolting and loathsome letters: your entire lack of any control over your emotions as displayed in your long resentful moods of sullen silence, no less than in the sudden fits of almost epileptic rage,"[265] and he also narrates several episodes that they both had lived, mainly scenes of public and private scandals in which Alfred had shown his changing moods and aggressiveness: "I was always terribly sorry for the hideous temper to which you were really a prey."[266]

[261] Wilde, 8.
[262] Wilde, 10.
[263] Wilde, 13.
[264] Wilde, 28.
[265] Wilde, 9.
[266] Wilde, 13.

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3.2. Examples of Douglas' Behaviour

Douglas's behaviour will be further tackled in this section. Firstly, his complete recklessness in the use of money seemed to have led to Wilde's financial ruin, both in relation to their pleasures and the costs of the trial. Besides, there was Douglas's obsession with revenge against his father, who apparently shared many maniac traits with his son. Wilde constantly repeats the concept of Hate as predominant between them: "In you Hate was always stronger than Love."[267] In general terms, the psychological similarities between father and son point directly at the fact that more family members of the Douglas clan could conceivably have had a Cluster B personality disorder, and Wilde also acknowledges this sort of madness that he had witnessed within the family, for example, with the harassment of the Marquis he himself had suffered.

On top of that, Douglas seemed to have found some joy in making his family conflicts a public issue, showing that, perhaps, he would be looking for some sort of social approval or admiration coming from society if he had been able to send his father into jail. In this way, he weaponized Wilde to fulfil his purpose, as seen in "I told you I would not be the catspaw between you both in your ancient hatred of each other […] You could not be made to see this. Hate blinded you"[268] or in "Indeed the idea of you being the object of a terrible quarrel between your father and a man of my position seemed to delight you. It, I suppose very naturally, pleased your vanity, and flattered your self-importance."[269]

Wilde also refers to his distressing feelings towards the conflict between Douglas and his father, in which he ended up involved: "Between you both I lost my head […] I had made a gigantic psychological error."[270] Once Wilde pursued the demand to the Marquis of Queensberry, that he termed as a "hideous trap," Douglas refused to help him or discuss the situation any further: "You refused to discuss even for five minutes the position to which you and your father had brought me. My business was merely to pay your hotel expenses and your losses."[271]

[267] Wilde, 30.
[268] Wilde, 31.
[269] Wilde, 32.
[270] Wilde, 11.
[271] Wilde, 11

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Furthermore, and of utmost importance, is the narcissist's tendency to manipulation in order to get their needs met or to deflect responsibility. Some common manipulation tactics are "gaslighting"[272] (denying someone's perspective on something) and "projection" (projecting onto or accusing someone of your own flaws)[273] which were frequently used by Douglas, as seen in the episode when Wilde fell ill after taking care of Douglas' own illness, and the latter refused to help the former in his need: "You leave me entirely alone, without care, without attendance, without anything"[274], and also later on, when Wilde calls out his reckless behaviour and Douglas reacts negatively: "You fell on me with every hideous word an intemperate mood, an undisciplined and untutored nature could suggest. By the terrible alchemy of egotism you converted your remorse into rage. You accused me of selfishness in expecting you to be with me when I was ill; […] of trying to deprive you of your pleasures."[275]

Wilde was also subjected to several attempts of "hovering,"[276] a common manipulation tactic used by Cluster B's individuals who attempt to get back the person who has escaped or is trying to escape from them, usually involving new love-bombing, false promises of change and repentance, and in extreme cases, resorting to violence or threats of suicide. As said before, Wilde acknowledges the parasitic nature of Douglas and how he found emotional and physical difficulties to break free from the relationship. Douglas manifested an absolute dependence on Wilde, particularly in terms of money, and when Wilde was most convinced of getting rid of their bond, Douglas even threatened with committing suicide: "You stated […] that no matter what you had done to me you could not believe that I would absolutely decline to see you […] You made what I must admit was a most pathetic appeal and ended with what seemed to me a threat of suicide, and one not thinly veiled."[277] Eventually, Wilde always kept taking him back and forgiving him: "I ended my relationship with you every three months regularly […] and each time that I did so you

[272] Drescher, Anna. "Narcissistic Marriage Problems & How to Deal With Them." *Simply Psychology*. Published 2025.
[273] Zaslav, Mark. "The Manipulative Narcissist." *Psychology Today*. Published August 25, 2023.
[274] Wilde, 19
[275] Wilde, 20
[276] Drescher, Anna. "Narcissistic Hoovering: Signs & How to Respond." *Simply Psychology.* Published 2025.
[277] Wilde, 17.

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managed […] to induce me to allow you back."[278] This way, abusers often just escalate their guilt and intimidation tactics to keep their target invested in the relationship.[279]

Wilde also suffered in prison the consequences of rumination, and the trauma bond created between him and Douglas is reflected in his obsessive thinking about the whole story: "The memory of our friendship is the shadow that walks with me here: that seems never to leave me: that wakes me up at night to tell me the same story over and over till its wearisome iteration makes all sleep abandon me till dawn […] I am forced to recall […] every strained note of your voice, every twitch and gesture of your nervous hands, every bitter word, every poisonous phrase comes back to me."[280]

Finally, Douglas' "ghosting" behaviour towards Wilde during his imprisonment definitely needs to be pointed out. He never received a letter from him during that period, showing his inability for self-reflection and his incapability to take his share of responsibility for what had happened, or least to say, show a minimal sign of love and affection for his friend and lover during those harsh days in jail, as Wilde expresses with remorse at the very beginning of the letter. The feelings of abandonment that Wilde suffered were probably terrible, and it is important to bear in mind that using the silent treatment towards somebody could be a form of emotional abuse, as the receiver of it perceives it as a strong invalidation of his feelings, as a form of neglect and punishment.

All in all, this lack of understanding and this lack of closure in their relationship is what eventually triggers Wilde's desire to reconnect with his lover, as typical of this kind of romantic dynamics: "If I write to you now as I do it is because your own silence and conduct during my long imprisonment have made it necessary."[281] He needed answers to all this erratic and toxic behaviour, and this is the reason why he wrote *De Profundis*. Wilde also seems to have needed to come to terms with the whole experience so as to try to find peace for his soul. He finishes his letter with a tone of hope after all the bitterness, wishing that both of them could plan a future meeting to discuss things and desperately waiting for a possible answer to his letter.

[278] Wilde, 12.
[279] Day, Nicholas J. S., Michelle L. Townsend, and Brett F. S. Grenyer. "Pathological Narcissism," 211.
[280] Wilde, 30.
[281] Wilde, 35.

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Time proved, nonetheless, that their reunion did not bring resolution to their conflict and both parted ways after some time in Naples.[282] What Wilde could have never known is that the closure he was looking for was nearly and very likely impossible with a personality type as that of Alfred Douglas. He died alone in Paris in 1900, and it may be hinted that, in those days, he probably already knew all of this, although he could never give a name or a diagnosis to it.

4. Conclusion

This essay has tried to outline the main characteristics of Narcissistic Personality Disorder (NPD), offering a psychological analysis of the character of Alfred Douglas through the testimonies provided by Oscar Wilde in his letter *De Profundis*, addressed to his lover during his imprisonment between 1895 and 1897. The causes and characteristics of this disorder have been decoded through medical literature, and examples of similar behaviour and personality traits have been found in the letter, as Wilde was particularly precise in his attempt of reflecting and showing his lover what their relationship had been, in order to make sense of what he had experienced.

On the one hand, it is key to emphasize the need to keep on researching about the text *De Profundis*. Without a doubt, it provides an especially useful and very human insight into the psychology of the characters via the experiences narrated. On the other hand, NPD is a condition that our Western society seems to be fostering, so it is important to understand its relevance, and the text can serve both as a cathartic therapy for victims and as a tool to raise awareness about this disorder among the general public. Anyone can become a victim of narcissistic abuse at some point in life, and both literature and journaling, as Wilde did, can be effective forms of healing.

All in all, it could be argued that it is only a matter of justice to bring light into the psychological personality of Alfred Douglas so as to understand Wilde's text and his life, and it is essential to continue making hypotheses, like the one presented, about the impact of emotional and psychological abuse on Oscar Wilde's decisions, since it could have, potentially, led to his downfall. But, despite all his suffering and pain, Oscar Wilde left a

[282] Sturgis, Matthew. *Oscar. A Life*. Head of Zeus, 2018, 649-664.

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valuable piece of literature with his long letter *De Profundis*, and the misery he endured in his last years of life did not overshadow his reputation and position as one of the greatest Irish authors of all times.

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"It's So Cold in the D:" How Detroit Rappers of the 1980-1990s Respond to Social Inequity[283]

Brennen Siemens[284]

Abstract:

This paper examines the rap music scene of Detroit during the 1980s and 1990s, analyzing its intricate relationship with the socio-economic landscape of post-industrial Detroit. As the city grappled with the collapse of its once-thriving automotive industry, rising unemployment, and systemic disenfranchisement, rap music emerged as both a creative response and a critical intervention in these crises. Focusing on how Detroit's rappers addressed issues such as police violence, economic marginalization, and the emergence of "hustle culture"—a survival strategy shaped by career crime—this study explores rap as a form of artistic expression that reflects the attitudes of the people who created it. Through a combination of lyrical analysis and historical inquiry informed by critical discourse analysis, this paper investigates how Detroit rappers engaged with these challenges, not only through their music, but also through activism and community engagement. Additionally, the study considers the role of gendered labor in the city's underground rap scene, particularly how female artists navigated both the male-dominated music industry and the broader socio-economic struggles of the era. By examining rap's function as a platform for voicing dissent, promoting solidarity, and advocating for change, this paper situates hip-hop as a vital medium for contesting socio-economic inequities and fostering community empowerment.

Keywords: Hip-hop; Resistance; Critical discourse analysis; Urban decline; Labour; Gender

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[284] **CONTACT**: Brennen Siemens, <siemensb@uwindsor.ca>

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1. Introduction

"Being in the D is bad for your health," raps Detroit native LaTonya Myles, better known by her stage name T-Baby. The year is 2008, and Myles' friend Mason Graham had been shot and killed while trying to break up a fight. Myles wrote "It's so Cold in the D" as a response to his death and to express her frustration with violence in Detroit.[285] Despite Myles' good intentions, the song and music video received intense mockery, with World Star Hip Hop calling it the "Wackest Video of the Year."[286] Even though the song is undoubtedly a hard listen (Myles struggles to stay on the beat), it has become somewhat of an anthem for the people of the Detroit area. Artists such as New Kids on the Block and Usher have performed it at their concerts in Detroit, and everyone knows the lyrics.[287] In spite of the song's rougher aspects, people identify with its lyrics. It is cold in the D, indeed.

This song is representative of only one person's response to Detroit's social and political atmosphere made through rap. Detroit has had a thriving musical scene since the Great Migration, with jazz, gospel, R&B, house, and many other genres flourishing in Detroit, thanks to none other than Detroit's Black community.[288] It is not a rare occurrence that music made by Black Detroiters has addressed the fact that they have been mistreated and oppressed by the city they call home. Policies like redlining and housing discrimination, as well as issues like unemployment and gun violence have plagued Detroit for decades. The Detroit race riots of 1967 were a large-scale response to the way that Black Detroiters had been treated by the city. The riots also symbolized countercultural expression for African Americans in Detroit, from which hip hop music was born.[289] After the decline of the auto industry began in the 1950s, many Black Detroiters struggled to stay afloat, while a lack of jobs and an increasing crime rate instigated white flight to the suburbs.

In relation to and following changing population demographics, white flight additionally pushed further decentralization of the automotive industry. The majority of

[285] Adam Graham, "It's Still Cold in the D for Detroit Rapper T-Baby," *The Detroit News*, June 6, 2015.
[286] "Wackest Video of the Year: It's So Cold in the D," World Star Hip Hop, August 25, 2008, https://worldstarhiphop.com/videos/wshh0JoB6nP74Li7CJ9Z/wackest-video-of-the-year-its-so-cold-in-the-d.
[287] Graham, "It's Still Cold in the D for Detroit Rapper T-Baby."
[288] David Maraniss, *Once in a Great City: A Detroit Story* (New York City, New York: Simon & Schuster, 2015), 55.
[289] Bakari Kitwana, *The Rap on Gangsta Rap: Who Run It?: Gangsta Rap and Visions of Black Violence* (Chicago, Illinois: Third World Press, 1995), 8-10.

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auto industry jobs were decentralized out of Detroit proper when several large factories such as Ford's River Rouge plant shut down and new factories outside of the city center were built in places such as Plymouth and Wixom. Detroit had been functionally abandoned and left to become a symbol of urban decay by the end of the twentieth century. Detroit holds a unique position in America of a city that relied chiefly on one industry, and when that industry collapsed, the people who lived in the once bustling metropolis were left to fend for themselves.[290]

Fending for themselves looked different for many people. Some turned to crime (property crime as well as violent crime) to provide for their families or themselves, and some turned to other means of self-sufficiency, like music. Often, these means of self-preservation intersected, which resulted in the "hustle culture" that pervades the genre of rap. This research will focus specifically on how the rap music produced by Black Detroiters in the 1980s and 1990s reacted to hustle culture. This research, while exploring the economic situation of Detroit as reflected in this music, will also examine the rap music produced in these decades through a gendered lens. The way men and women reacted to Detroit's situation was often different, and the history of women's employment and reaction to, as well as representation in, Detroit's rap scene will be examined. This essay will explore the history of women's employment through the decades in Detroit and take this into account when examining the differences in gendered representation in rap music.

This research aims to use the economic situation of Detroit as a tool to examine Black Detroiters response as indicative of the larger Black experience in America during this period and will explore how economic stagnation affected the Black community specifically in Detroit. By using Detroit as a case study, this research will determine if Detroit has unique qualities or is in a unique situation as an abandoned city that produces a different outcome, as well as how these rappers attempted to improve the conditions in Detroit that materially affect them.

Furthermore, this article will employ Critical Discourse Analysis in order to examine how the voices of Detroiters exemplify resistance against systems of power in society. The

[290] Thomas J. Sugrue, *The Origins of the Urban Crisis: Race and Inequality in Postwar Detroit* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2014), 6-136.

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rap artists of Detroit participated in a discourse that not only represented the underlying political and societal powers that kept them systematically oppressed, it also was used as a tool of social action. These artists, through their music as well as political and social activism, shaped the social discourse. Ruth Wodak's work in Critical Discourse Analysis is heavily influential on this study. I borrow Wodak's idea of "socio-diagnostic critique" to uncover and situate the discourse of Detroit's rap artists within the broader political, social, and economic context of the United States in the 1980s and 1990s.[291]

This article is structured into several sections based on thematic scope. I begin by offering a literature review of not only pieces of Critical Discourse Analysis, but also the historiography of Detroit's rise and fall. I also establish a musicological and sociological background that informs the study of rap as a tool of social discourse and change. I explore the methodologies that inform this research, and finally, I will critically examine the lyrics of specific songs and the lives of the artists who wrote them to understand the discourse of Detroit's economic situation.

2. Rap in Resistance

There has been much research done on Detroit's fall into urban decay, notably by authors David Maraniss and Thomas Sugrue. There has also been some work on musicians that have come out of Detroit, but none have focused on the specific musicology of rappers of the 1980s and 1990s in Detroit. Several of the scholars cited in this research disagree on the best ways to categorize rap music. Sociologist Jennifer Lena claims that there are thirteen subgenres of rap.[292] Maulana Karenga says there are five archetypes, player/lover, gangster, teacher, fun lover, and religious; while Bakari Kitwana says there are three categories: recreational, conscious, and sex-violence.[293] This research follows what Kitwana categorizes as conscious, Karenga categorizes as gangster, and Lena categorizes as race rap. This genre

[291] Ruth Wodak, "The Discourse-Historical Approach," essay, in *Methods of Critical Discourse Analysis*, ed. Ruth Wodak and Micheal Meyer (London: SAGE Publications, 2001), 63.
[292] Jennifer C. Lena, "Social context and musical content of rap music, 1979-1995," *Social Forces* 85, no. 1 (2006): 2.
[293] Kitwana, *The Rap on Gangsta Rap,* 34.

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of music is marked by lyrics that use the artists personal experience to call attention to (often political) issues that affect their everyday life.

Theresa Martinez studies rap as resistance to dominant groups in her article "Popular Culture as Oppositional Culture: Rap as Resistance". In her work, she studies East and West Coast gangsta/political rap artists NWA and Public Enemy, and how their lyrics reflect the issues Black populations were facing, such as police brutality and a betrayal by healthcare systems.[294] Sociologist Jennifer Lena also studies rap lyrics and how they relate to the manner in which the songs are produced, whether the artist was under a contract with a record label or producing independently.[295] The label system of producing records has caused rap music to become more commercial and sanitized in recent years, as Lena argues, but the music under question in this research is, for the most part, separate from the major label system. I draw on the methodologies adopted by Martinez and Lena, and combine them to produce a work that centers Critical Discourse Analysis.

A key article on the topic of sampling in Detroit's music scene is "Race, Class, and Place in the Origins of Techno and Rap Music" by William Tsitsos. This article "compares historical accounts of the origins of techno and rap music to show how race interacted with place, as well as with social class, to produce two different musical styles."[296] Sampling holds a significant place in both genres. My work borrows from this article to explore the idea of sampling as a method of music-making for the economically disadvantaged. This has intersections with the "hustle culture" theme of my research.

Another piece that focuses heavily on the music of Detroit is the book *Heaven was Detroit: from Jazz to Hip-Hop and Beyond,* an essay compilation edited by M.L. Liebler. It looks at Detroit's musical history from the Jazz Age in the 1920s to the popularization of hip hop in the late twentieth century. However, it does not focus on what is different about Detroit, and it is not interested in the unique culture that Detroit has cultivated over the decades. Rather than make a cohesive argument about Detroit itself, these essays chronicle

[294] Theresa A. Martinez, "Popular Culture as Oppositional Culture: Rap as Resistance," *Sociological Perspectives* 40, no. 2 (1997): 265.
[295] Martinez, "Popular Culture as Oppositional Culture", 1.
[296] William Tsitsos, "Race, Class, and Place in the Origins of Techno and Rap Music," *Popular Music and Society* 41, no. 3 (May 27, 2018): 270.

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moments in time of famous Detroit musicians.[297] This book states that during the early decades of the twentieth century, the Black population of Detroit created a unique local community surrounding music, and that culture survives to this day. This paper builds on this idea of a specific and unique local culture that was cultivated in Detroit and transforms it into an analysis of the discourse formed by these musicians.

This research is also informed by the many reports and articles written about the presence of police in Detroit, and more specifically about police violence in the city. The history of contentious relations between police and Detroit's Black population goes back to the nineteenth century, as detailed in the article "Public Order and the Geography of the City: Crime, Violence, and the Police in Detroit, 1845–1875" by John Schneider.[298] There are many reasons that the police's interactions with the Black population of Detroit have been so contentious for the entire history of Black Americans' presence in the city, and those reasons, along with the resulting response in rap music, will be explored in this research.

The topic of policing meets a Marxist lens in the articles "Fiscal Politics and the Police: Detroit, 1928-1976" by Colin Loftin and David McDowell, as well as "Policing the Poor in Detroit" by Mark Jay. These articles explore issues like the effects of the Detroit race riot of 1967 on the numbers of police in the city, how Detroit's labour history intersects with policing, and how the economic stagnation of the city disproportionately affects its Black citizens. These issues compound to create the environment in which many Detroiters felt compelled to express themselves through music. As is often the case, many factors combined create the environment that allowed rap music to flourish in the city over the decades.

The historiography of labour in Detroit is vast, often focusing on the automotive manufacturing industry and its fall. The origin and collapse of the auto industry are well documented in the wider historiography. Detroit's position as a major city with such a notable climb and fall makes it a rich topic to mine. Many articles and books focus on the

[297] Michael L. Liebler and Dave Marsh, *Heaven Was Detroit: From Jazz to Hip-Hop and Beyond* (Detroit, Michigan: Wayne State University Press, 2016), 24.
[298] John C. Schneider, "Public Order and the Geography of the City: Crime, Violence, and the Police in Detroit, 1845–1875," *Journal of Urban History* 4, no. 2 (February 1, 1978): 183–208. doi:10.1177/009614427800400203. 193

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industrial aspects of the city, with works such as "'Detroit the Dynamic': The Industrial History of Detroit from Cigars to Cars" by Charles K. Hyde, "'Let's Make Detroit a Union Town': The History of Labor and the Working Class in the Motor City" by Mike Smith, and including some with a gendered lens, such as '"The Paralysis of the Labor Movement': Men, Masculinity, and Unions in 1920s Detroit" by Gregory Wood. There is somewhat of a cross-section between the studies of racial and gender-based labour history in Kevin Boyle's article "The Kiss: Racial and Gender Conflict in a 1950s Automobile Factory". It focuses on how "racial and gender constructs helped to shape working class identities and how those identities physically divided workers, privileging white labour over black, male labour over female."[299] The article also explores how racial and gender identities are intertwined with workers' struggles for empowerment. This article will be exceptionally useful in this research, as it will be able to inform the history of how the aspects of gender and race conflict in Detroit's labourers. It will also help form the background of Detroit's workers' search for empowerment through work and money. These articles focus on a gendered perspective of Detroit's labour history, but there has not been a substantial exploration of how Detroit's labour history has informed the subsequent gendered nature of the "hustle culture" endemic to the city. There has been some substantial historical research done on women's labour in Detroit. Holly Karibo has done much work studying the illicit avenues of work that women participated in in the Detroit-Windsor borderland area. The study of sex work, while present in the wide literature, will not be explored in this article. While gendered perspectives of labour are not new, this research will combine the study of lyrics as discourse and the gendered perspective on labour in Detroit. On the topic of women's history, there are also several works of Critical Discourse Analysis that study women's roles in rap music videos, which, while interesting and worthy of study, are also not the main focus of this work.

In order to effectively analyze the lyrics of the rap songs that were produced in Detroit during this era, this article will follow approaches and borrow methodology from sociologist Theresa Martinez and musicologist Jennifer Lena to analyze how lyrical content

[299] Kevin Boyle, "The Kiss: Racial and Gender Conflict in a 1950s Automobile Factory," *The Journal of American History* 84, no. 2 (1997): 496–523. https://doi.org/10.2307/2952568. 498.

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in rap was used as a reaction to social inequity. This essay will also examine the industrial history of the city to better understand its specific circumstances. It will not focus on nonblack rappers like Eminem, despite his mainstream popularity.[300] Otherwise, this study will look at the many factors that went into the development of Detroit's rap scene and why it is demographically significant. After the mass job loss following the collapse of Detroit's automotive sector, male and female workers were affected differently. This separation will be explored in this research. Specifically, this essay will examine key historical circumstances of Detroit, such as the downfall of the automotive industry in the city, systematic methods of discrimination that affect the Black population of Detroit, and the culture that stemmed from these factors.

The downfall of the auto industry, as it has been mentioned, created an environment that allowed crime to become increasingly prominent in the city. As a result, police have a large role to play in poor Detroiters' lives, and ergo, their music. The temporal focus of this research, the 1980s and 1990s, is important here, as gang-related violent crime peaked in Detroit in 1991.[301] Concurrently, the mid-1990s were also an extremely challenging time for many Detroiters economically, since, as an outcome of "tough on crime" policy, many Detroiters had been arrested on drug charges. These Detroiters no longer qualified for government aid, even though it is disproportionately difficult for convicted criminals to hold employment.[302] Gang affiliation was rampant in Detroit during this time. Sociological works such as "Recruitment to a Youth Gang" by John W.C. Johnstone detail how gang recruitment is targeted at vulnerable youth between the ages of 12 and 14, and gangs use strategies like promising safety and a source of income to convince potential gang members to join.[303] Gang culture is closely related to hustle culture, as gang members often facilitate the sale of drugs as a source of income. However, this is not a particularly safe method of making

[300] See Bakari Kitwana's article *Why White Kids Love Hip-Hop: Wankstas, Wiggers, Wannabes, and the New Reality of Race in America*, (New York: Basic Civitas Books, 2005) for a succinct criticism of including nonblack rappers in the study of hip-hop as a genre.
[301] Ronald Chepesiuk, *The War on Drugs: An International Encyclopedia* (Santa Barbara, California: ABC-CLIO, 1999), 269.
[302] Heather Ann Thompson, *Whose Detroit?: Politics, Labor, and Race in a Modern American City* (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 2017), 8.
[303] John W.C. Johnstone, "Recruitment to a Youth Gang," *Youth & Society* 14, no. 3 (March 1983): 284, https://doi.org/10.1177/0044118x83014003002

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money, and disputes between gangs can result in a war.[304] The strategy of gangs recruiting young men in economic insecurity targets the same demographic that is highly impressionable and could try to repeat what was done by older men in their lives.[305] In Detroit, educating oneself out of poverty is incredibly difficult, as from 1979 to 2013, Michigan increased spending on schools by 18%, but increased spending on prisons and corrections by 219%. This causes a vicious cycle in which young Detroiters, without an education, were forced "to try to survive in a dangerous illegal drug economy and, in turn, were heavily policed and incarcerated in historically unparalleled numbers."[306] By examining these circumstances, this research will function to promote a better understanding of how Detroit's specific situation manifests in the work of musicians.

Finally, this article is influenced by theories in the field of Critical Discourse Analysis. There has been some work done on rap music as critical race discourse, such as Daniella Hodge's dissertation *African American Identities and Communicative Practices in Rap Music and Hip Hop Culture: A Critical Race Discourse Analysis*, and Leslie Colima and Diego Cabezas' article, "Analysis of Social Rap as a Political Discourse of Resistance," which examines the phenomenon of social rap as political protest in a Chilean context. I have also observed that there is a degree of gendered perspectives on this topic, but they tend to be focused on gendered representation and expression in music videos or on objectification in lyrics and imagery, not based on gendered expressions of "hustling" or labour. Rap is not always an expression of social and political dissatisfaction, and when it is not, it often falls into the same expressions of "hustling," of self-aggrandizement and posturing. Though these ideas are connected, gender has a fascinating presence in both modes. Women are often used as props for men to express their masculinity or sexual success, at the expense of women's autonomy, as discussed by Sakhiseni Joseph Yende in the article "A Critical Discourse Analysis of the Influence of Contemporary Hip-Hop Music Video on Gender-Based Violence."

This research is an examination of modern culture and social issues because of the ways that rap music has come to represent social issues have not changed since the 1980s,

[304] Chepesiuk, *The War on Drugs*, 105.
[305] Johnstone, "Recruitment to a Youth Gang," 285.
[306] Thompson, *Whose Detroit,* 9.

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that fills a gap in the literature since I believe that Detroit has not been given adequate attention, especially in the gendered aspect of Detroit's labour history. The issues that were pervasive in the end of the twentieth century are still present today. It is important to examine how contemporary social issues manifest in the music people listen to, as well as other forms of pop culture.

This research will employ several methods and theories to approach the topic. By looking at responses to Detroit's social issues on a case-by-case basis, this essay will take a bottom-up approach to how the problems of Detroit affected its Black population.

It will also take a musicological approach by examining the lyrics of songs written by Detroiters that address the issues of unemployment, poverty, and gang violence. In the period under question, a popular trend in rap production was the heavy use of sampling. Through the musicological approach, this essay will also examine if aspects of music production, such as sampling other pieces of music, represents Detroit's music scene any differently.

The songs chosen were selected for their lyrical content, which reflects the economic and social struggles faced by marginalized communities, particularly in Detroit. These tracks highlight themes of systemic oppression, survival through underground economies, and resistance against institutional failures. The song "Mass Confusion" by Kaos & Mystro addresses the chaos and violence that individuals experience in their communities, emphasizing how gang involvement is often driven by necessity rather than choice. It serves as a reflection of how systemic neglect and social instability push individuals toward gang life as a means of survival. The lyrics of "Keep It On The Low" by Proof underscore the reality of living in poverty, where secrecy and discretion are necessary for survival. The song illustrates the struggles of individuals navigating life in marginalized communities while also critiquing the systems that leave them with limited opportunities. "Crack Attack" by Reverend Lowdown critiques the devastating impact of the crack epidemic on Black communities. It highlights how government policies and law enforcement disproportionately criminalized these communities while failing to address the root causes of substance abuse and economic deprivation. "What is Legal" by Awesome Dré & The Hardcore Committee explicitly calls out racial injustice within the legal system. The line

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"You're guilty if you walk in the court with a Black face" points to the systemic biases in criminal justice. Additionally, the song connects historical injustices, such as land theft from Indigenous peoples to contemporary struggles, making it a powerful critique of structural racism. "Broker than Broke" by Pooc E. Capone captures the economic hardships faced by many residents of Detroit, illustrating how financial insecurity forces individuals into informal or illegal economies. The lyrics resonate with broader discussions about wealth disparity and economic disenfranchisement. "Progress of Elimination" by Boss highlights themes of struggle and resilience, addressing the pressures faced by those attempting to escape cycles of poverty and violence. The track is relevant to this study because it provides insight into the limited options available to marginalized individuals and how these constraints shape their life choices. Finally, "Hustlin' Hoochie" by Smiley makes a direct reference to Detroit's employment crisis, shedding light on how economic instability forces people to adopt alternative means of survival. Smiley's lyrics provide a firsthand account of the economic desperation that fuels underground economies, reinforcing the broader theme of systemic failure.

The analysis of these songs focuses on lyrical content, historical context, and socio-political themes. By examining how artists convey their lived experiences and critique systemic oppression, this study aims to highlight the role of hip-hop as a form of resistance and storytelling. These songs serve as primary sources that document the struggles, resilience, and political consciousness of communities often overlooked in mainstream discourse. In order to understand these Detroiters' responses to their social and political circumstances, it is firstly imperative to outline the background of Detroit's history as an industry city.

3. The Great Migration, the Auto Industry, and White Flight

Detroit's large Black population stems from the Great Migration, a period of mass movement of African Americans from the south to urban centers of the north owing to systemic racial inequality pervasive in southern states. Unfortunately, they were unable to escape racial discrimination entirely, as Detroit and other northern cities had their own racist practices and policies that would make life difficult for those hoping to improve their

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quality of life or situation. Detroit's Black population increased from 1.2% to 4.1% in the years between 1910 and 1920 and even rose to 44.5% by 1970. The majority of African Americans in Detroit found blue collar jobs to support themselves, and for men, they were primarily in the automotive manufacturing industry.[307]

Beginning in the 1950s, automobile manufacturers began decentralizing industrial work from the urban center of Detroit to the suburban areas surrounding it. These suburban areas were populated mostly by whites. As automotive jobs and opportunities for housing sponsored by the New Deal appeared in the areas outside of Detroit, these jobs and opportunities disappeared from the urban center. African Americans also were prevented from gaining access to New Deal benefits, and this only widened the gap between them and Detroit's white population. Automation was also a large contributing factor in the loss of jobs during this period, with over 4000 jobs automated away in Detroit-area Ford plants between 1951 and 1953. The strength of labour unions and the high wages associated with them was an additional reason for manufacturers to divest from Detroit. Detroit lost nearly 130,000 auto manufacturing jobs between 1948 and 1967. This mass job loss mainly affected the Black population of the city, with nearly 20 percent of Black autoworkers losing their jobs, compared to 5 percent of whites. This crisis of employment only worsened in later decades, with 56 percent of the Black population unemployed in 1980 compared to 28 percent in 1950.[308]

The demographics of job loss within the Black community become more specific. Auto workers during this period were majority male, with increasing numbers of women joining factory work during World War II. Before the mass addition of women to the industry, they could supplement the household income with "daywork" in the domestic sphere, a contribution which often went unacknowledged.[309] Even when women did work in the factories, seniority rules were designed to keep Black workers and women in the jobs they always held and prevented their promotion. Women's work vs men's work was even

[307] Sugrue, *The Origins of the Urban Crisis,* 23.
[308] Sugrue, *The Origins of the Urban Crisis,* 128-151.
[309] Kyle E. Ciani, "Hidden Laborers: Female Day Workers in Detroit, 1870-1920," The Journal of the Gilded Age and Progressive Era 4, no. 1 (2005), 28.

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upheld within the same factory, and women's work mimicked domestic work.[310] Despite this boom of women joining the auto industry, where "at the peak of wartime employment in 1944, 43% of the 13,500 workers were women," by January 1946, only 4% of all Ford employees working in company plants were women.[311]Therefore, job loss in the fall of Detroit's auto industry hit women earlier, and they mostly transitioned to domestic work, either in the home or paid work outside of the home. The bulk of the job loss in the closing of the Detroit factories were men. This resulted in the greater percentage of men finding means of sustenance through crime and music.

Regarding Detroit's labour, while the racial split of auto workers was not exactly equal, white workers still largely outnumbered Black workers, it was much more proportional compared to the police force. In the early 1960s, Black people represented 25% of Detroit's population, and between one and fifty percent of auto workers, depending on the plant. This discrepancy largely relied on hiring practices of individual factories.[312] While some plants could have as much as half of its population being Black, Detroit's police force was not nearly so diverse. Policing was largely a white career, with Black officers taking up only 3% of the force.[313] Following affirmative action put in place in 1978 by Detroit's first Black mayor, Coleman Young (1974-1997), the DPD slowly began increasing its number of Black officers. Affirmative action had the goal of increasing the effectiveness of policing in the city, and by 1993, "the DPD finally reached a 50-50 split between white and black officers, including those in leadership positions."[314] As automotive jobs for Black workers decreased, the DPD was hiring more Black officers, not only due to affirmative action after the mid-1970s, but also due to a larger desire for policing in an increasingly crime-riddled city.

Women also joined the DPD in increased numbers during these years. Arta Barron-Hopes was one of the first female officers hired in 1952. Despite the appearance of gender equality, women were relegated to "Women's Divisions," which dealt with sex crimes and

[310] Boyle, "The Kiss", 507, 505.
[311] Nancy Gabin, "'They Have Placed a Penalty on Womanhood': The Protest Actions of Women Auto Workers in Detroit-Area UAW Locals, 1945-1947," *Feminist Studies* 8, no. 2 (1982), 376.
[312] Sugrue, *The Origins of the Urban Crisis,* 98.
[313] "Affirmative Action," Crackdown: Policing Detroit through the War on Crime, Drugs, and Youth, 2019.
[314] "Affirmative Action," Crackdown: Policing Detroit through the War on Crime, Drugs, and Youth, 2019.

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child abuse cases, until the 1970s when they were allowed to work with the general police population.[315] While policing became a viable career for larger portions of the population, these jobs did not make up for the larger job loss in Detroit that came as a consequence of the collapse of the automotive manufacturing industry. In fact, "in the late 1960s, the average pay for a patrolman nationally was 33% less than what was needed to sustain a family of four in moderate circumstances in a large city."[316] In the years after the 1967 riots, there was an increase from about 20 officers per 100,000 people, to almost 90 officers per 100,000.[317] Though this does not necessarily mean DPD was hiring hundreds more police officers, rather, this number reflects the shrinking population of Detroit *combined* with added precautions against Detroit's rising crime rate. These affirmative action policies were intended to increase trust in the DPD, as there was a problem with mistrust in the police system resulting in a lack of reporting of crimes. There was a desire to build relationships between the community and the police; however, instead "it dramatically increased police presence in neighbourhoods, especially low-income African American neighbourhoods."[318] This reflects the state of Detroit during these decades. As Detroiters were struggling with economic stagnation and unemployment, many turned to other means of sustenance. As unemployment rose, so did Detroit's crime rate. As these means of sustenance arose, like career crime and rap (both "hustles"), the culture of gangster rap can be found.[319] A hallmark of gangster rap, as seen in the repertoire of NWA and Public Enemy is a distrust of police, which is curiously not as prominent in the rap that can be found in Detroit during this time. Despite the police having a comparable police presence in low-income neighbourhoods to cities like Los Angeles and New York, anti-police sentiment is notably less present in Detroit's rap of the 1980s and 1990s. There is a notable anecdote from the Detroit stop on NWA's tour in 1989: "just singing a few lines of [Fuck the Police] at Detroit's

[315] "DPD's First Female Officers Honored," CBS News, November 9, 2010.
[316] Dennis A. Deslippe, "'Do Whites Have Rights?': White Detroit Policemen and 'Reverse Discrimination' Protests in the 1970s," The Journal of American History 91, no. 3 (2004): 939.
[317] McDowall, David, and Colin Loftin, "Fiscal Politics and the Police: Detroit, 1928-76," *Social Forces* 65, no. 1 (1986), 168. https://doi.org/10.2307/2578940.
[318] "Police/Community Relations," Crackdown: Policing Detroit through the War on Crime, Drugs, and Youth, 2019, https://policing.umhistorylabs.lsa.umich.edu/s/crackdowndetroit/page/ramifications-of-young-s-policies1#:~:text=The%20significance%20of%20building%20relationships,mini%2Dstations%20is%20partially%20misdirected.
[319] Kitwana, *The Rap on Gangsta Rap*, 19.

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Joe Louis arena caused the Motor City police to rush the stage … 'We just wanted to show the kids,' an officer told the Hollywood Reporter, 'that you can't say 'fuck the police' in Detroit.'"[320] In 1993, police brutality was such a problem in the city that, in light of many lawsuits against the police, a study was conducted with the goal of reducing police violence.[321] A heavy police presence due to the high crime rate in Detroit may discourage open dissent, which could make the performer a target. Governor John Engler followed a "tough on crime" stance when he assumed his role in 1991, and the policy and following reputation earned him a shoutout in Smiley's song "Hustlin' Hoochie."[322]

4. Detroit Rap Artists' Responses to Unemployment and Hustle Culture in Lyrics

Much of the political/gangster rap that came out of these decades in Detroit directly or indirectly addresses the issues of unemployment, economic insecurity, and the culture of hustling. "Keep It On The Low" by Proof, "Broker than Broke" by Pooc E. Capone, and "Progress of Elimination" by Boss reference the need to hustle to survive. A very explicit reference to the employment crisis in Detroit appears in Smiley's song "Hustlin' Hoochie," where she raps: "Ain't no jobs in Detroit, and that's a fact/Governor Engels made damn sure of that." Smiley continues, lamenting the "Detroit mentality" and expressing dissatisfaction with the idea of hustling until she dies.[323]

Smiley and Boss represent the smaller number of women who attempted to make a living through rap in Detroit during these decades. The low ratio of women to men in the industry can be attributed to the type of work women historically had in Detroit, being homemakers and domestic workers rather than working in the auto industry and thus did not have the same desire to "hustle" as much as men did after the fall of the automotive industry. The ones that did enter the music industry, though, faced more roadblocks than

[320] Tricia Rose, *Black Noise: Rap Music and Black Culture in Contemporary America*
[321] "Use of Force Study", Crackdown: Policing Detroit through the War on Crime, Drugs, and Youth, 2019, https://policing.umhistorylabs.lsa.umich.edu/s/crackdowndetroit/page/ramifications-of-young-s-policies1#:~:text=The%20significance%20of%20building%20relationships,mini%2Dstations%20is%20partially%20misdirected.
[322] "Hustlin' Hoochie," track 1 on Smiley, *Hustlin' Hoochie*, Bryant Records, 1992.
[323] "Hustlin' Hoochie," track 1 on Smiley, *Hustlin' Hoochie*, Bryant Records, 1992.

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their male counterparts. Contemporary Detroit rapper DeJ Loaf (née Deja Trimble) commented on the lack of support women get from men, saying: "That's my thing, 'cause a lot of guys don't listen to girls' music. They're not gonna ride around in the car listening to certain females."[324] Listening to music made by women was seen as emasculating, and women were not supposed to interfere in a masculine sphere. Nevertheless, these women also had to feed themselves and had as much of a desire for self-sufficiency as men. Several of the rappers mentioned faced economic hardship early in life, as well as ones not mentioned, like Esham, AWOL, and K-Town.[325] Interestingly, Boss (née Lichelle Laws) received criticism for posturing as someone from a low-income background, when she really grew up middle class and attended college.[326] Often, the rappers that are successful enough to be remembered were so because they had advantages that others did not. Proof grew up with a single mother because his father left to pursue a career as a music producer before he was born, yet his father was extremely successful and worked with Marvin Gaye.[327] Many of the Detroiters who attempted to escape poverty through music will be forgotten.

In order to escape from this poverty, many Detroiters turned to gang activity to supplement their income. Gang affiliation is extremely common for Black male youth in urban areas with a high rate of poverty, such as Detroit. Gang recruitment is extremely effective in Detroit, where single-income households or households generally in poverty are higher than most of the nation.[328] Many Black youth become involved with gangs as a means of self-sufficiency, and music can both supplement and reflect this involvement. Many rappers from Detroit were involved in gangs and this is shown in their representations of gang life in their music. The songs "Mass Confusion" by Kaos & Mystro, "Keep It On The

[324] Steven J. Horowitz, "'Try Me' Rapper Dej Loaf: 'What I'm Doing Hasn't Been Done,'" Billboard, November 10, 2014, https://www.billboard.com/music/rb-hip-hop/rapper-dej-loaf-interview-6312219/
[325] Mickey Hess, ed., *Hip Hop in America: A Regional Guide*, vol. 2 (Santa Barbara, California: Greenwood Publishing Group, 2010), 405-421.
[326] Brian Smith, "Same as the Old Boss," Detroit Metro Times, June 16, 2004. https://www.metrotimes.com/music/same-as-the-old-boss-2178805?url=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.metrotimes.com%2Fstory.asp%2Fid%3D6344.
[327] Gil Kaufman, "Proof: 'Eminem's Best Friend' And A Vital Member of Detroit's Hip-Hop Scene," *MTV* (Viacom, April 11, 2006), https://www.mtv.com/news/bxu21v/proof-eminems-best-friend-and-a-vital-member-of-detroits-hip-hop-scene.
[328] Karen Bouffard, "Census Bureau: Detroit is the Poorest Big City in the U.S.," The Detroit News (Detroit News, September 17, 2015), https://www.detroitnews.com/story/news/local/michigan/2015/09/16/census-us-uninsured-drops-income-stagnates/32499231/.

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Low" by Proof, and "Crack Attack" by Reverend Lowdown all refer to committing gang violence to survive. Some of the rappers that were involved with gangs made political points in their music about how they were compelled to join a gang because of failures by the system to protect them, and how that system then punished them for that. In "What is Legal" by Awesome Dré & The Hardcore Committee, Dré raps: "You're guilty if you walk in the court with a black face… We used to sell it, that makes us the victim … they land the victim in jail or hell."[329] He goes on to state how issues affecting Black populations are also reflected in the treatment of Indigenous American populations. Dré uses his music as a means to express his anger with the system that disproportionately punishes, and has failed, the Black population of Detroit. In a voice clip introduction before the song begins, Dré included a sample of an interviewer saying that around a third of rappers are involved in gang or drug trade. This is an example of the common practice of sampling.

Sampling has been a large part of rap music since the 1970s when it originated in New York City. For these early innovators, sampling made the process of creating rap beats much easier. For up-and-coming producers in recent years, the practice continues even though producing is comparably much less labour intensive with new technologies. Yet, in the early days of rap, when vinyl records were the common method of sharing music, sampling was the fastest and cheapest way to make new beats. For Detroiters specifically, this low-cost way of producing music was crucial, as many did not have the resources for more expensive methods of producing in the post-industrial period of the city. In Detroit, the genre of house, for example, was characterized by machine-like techno music with minimal human presence, reflecting the city's auto-manufacturing industry changing from human-operated to mechanized and automatized.[330] While house music developed separately from rap, the same circumstances of the city are reflected in both genres. Sampling was crucial to the poorer musicians of Detroit, who had to make their living off whatever they could, like music, and often gang activity. Specifically in Detroit during the 1980s, the Chamber Brothers gang was extremely prolific in the supply and sale of crack

[329] "What is Legal," track 4 on Awesome Dré and the Hard Core Committee, *A.D's Revenge*, Strictly Roots Recordings, 1993.
[330] Tsitsos, "Race, Class, and Place in the Origins of Techno and Rap Music," 273.

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cocaine in the city, and at its peak, making 1 million a week.[331] Dré's acknowledgement of this is a powerful statement of what life is like for the Black working poor in Detroit. As many of the rappers mentioned have stated, it was difficult to get by without getting involved in crime. This results in many of the aspiring rappers out of the city using their criminal activity as point of self-aggrandizement, both for money and status among their peers.

5. Conclusion

Beyond participating in hustle culture, some of these artists have become involved in various ways with trying to improve life in Detroit by preventing more youths from falling into a life of crime. Teferi "Kaos" Brent of Mystro & Kaos parents' were auto industry workers and spent a lot of time with gangs as a teen, which influenced his musical career, as mentioned previously.[332] He is also extremely involved with activism, becoming a minister after his rap career and now works frequently with Detroit's youth.[333] We Found Hip Hop is a Detroit-based foundation that focuses on helping women develop a career as hip hop artists by providing resources and mentorship.[334] In the decades following the 1990s, there has been a boom in the numbers of female rappers coming out of the city. Another project, The Foundation, started in 2009, focused on female performers with the goal of promoting the female artists in the city.[335]

The lyrics in these songs often reflect a need to survive by any means necessary, whether it be by making music, becoming involved in a gang, or "hustling" in another way. Detroit has a unique story of how a once prosperous city abandoned its people. Due to white flight and decentralization of industry, Detroit's poverty is notable when compared to other cities because of its sharp population decrease in the twentieth century. However, the

[331] Chepesiuk, *The War on Drugs*, 35.
[332] Hess, *Hip Hop in America,* 407.
[333] Dave Spencer, "New Detroit Shot-Stopper Program Pays $700K to Community Leaders Who Reduce Violence," FOX 2 Detroit (FOX, March 9, 2023), https://www.fox2detroit.com/news/new-detroit-shot-stopper-program-pays-700k-to-community-leaders-who-reduce-violence.
[334] "We Found Hip Hop: About Us," We Found Hip Hop, accessed March 30, 2023, https://wefoundhiphop.com/about/.
[335] Rob Boffard, "Detroit's Women Rappers: 'It's Time for Us to Take Control,'" The Guardian, June 9, 2011, https://www.theguardian.com/music/2011/jun/09/women-rappers-detroit-hiphop-invincible.

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songs discussed above and their lyrical content are not especially unique to Detroit, unless they specifically reference it, like in Smiley's "Hustlin' Hoochie." Many rappers of the period between 1980 and 2000 expressed dissatisfaction with the status quo, no matter their city of origin. Los Angeles and New York had no shortage of gangster rappers writing lyrics about how they came from nothing.[336] Besides Detroit, Appalachia also has its own distinct identity expressed in hip hop music that also focuses on the issues endemic to the (also historically poor) region.[337] Further research of this topic could entail exploring immigration from the South bringing their style of music to the North, as well as working class solidarity between musical artists from Appalachia and Detroit.[338] Detroit is the ideal city for this kind of study, though, not because it is especially different or unique from other cities across America, but because its conditions are emblematic of many of the issues facing Black Americans. The economic stagnation of these decades hit Detroit particularly hard because of its already vulnerable state after a mass job loss. While Detroit's story is undoubtedly profound and interesting, the rappers that came from there are no less so simply because they follow conventions that are common across the genre.

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[336] Martinez, "Popular Culture as Oppositional Culture", 265.
[337] Todd Snyder, "Rappalachia: The Performance of Appalachian Identity in Hip Hop Music," in *The Oxford Handbook of Hip Hop Music*, ed. Jason Lee Oakes and Justin D Burton, Online (Oxford University Press, 2018).
[338] Songs such as "Detroit" by Tyler Childers, "One Piece at a Time" by Johnny Cash, and "Detroit City" by Dean Martin are examples of this.

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BOOK REVIEWS

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Watch Your Words: A Manifesto for the Arts of Speech (2025), by Geralt Garutti[339]

Pablo Molinero Gómez[340]

Garutti, Geralt. *Watch Your Words: A Manifesto for the Arts of Speech*. John Wiley & Sons, 2025. 256 pages. ISBN 978-1-509567-29-4

In *Watch Your Words* (2025), Gérald Garutti presents a powerful ethical manifesto on the use of communication in our highly mediatized society[341]. Garutti warns readers that the degradation of public discourse must under no circumstances reach the arts: they must be protected from the increasing distortions and violence exhibited in contemporary speech acts. Garutti's register is not overtly academic, and thus renders his terminology and reflections accessible to a broader readership, whether or not familiar with linguistics or the performing arts.

One of the most relevant assertions Garutti makes is the following: "People don't listen to each other anymore. No one cares – and why care anyway? They also don't speak to, but at, each other. This is the exact opposite of speech in the true sense."[342] This concern aligns with ideas that have been developed by philosophers, linguists, and sociologists. For instance, in *Excitable Speech: A Politics of the Performative* (1997), Judith Butler explores how speech acts—once charged with the potential to build community—are increasingly becoming instruments of insult, harm, and exclusion. Spaces that could foster genuine dialogue sometimes turn into mere exchange of opinion, with limited room for listening. Similarly, Zygmunt Bauman argues in *Liquid Life* (2005) that the spoken word has lost its permanence and force in today's society. In this sense, *Watch Your Words* joins a broader

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[341] A "highly mediatized society" refers to a society in which life is deeply overwhelmed by the presence of social media that displaces or weakens face-to-face interactions.

[342] Geralt Garutti, *Watch Your Words: A Manifesto for the Arts of Speech* (John Wiley & Sons, 2025), chap. 2, VitalSource Bookshelf.

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critical tradition, offering an updated and artistically grounded view on the ongoing degradation of speech.

In order to provide a better understanding of Garutti's arguments and how these are unfolded throughout the book, I will briefly outline its structure. *Watch Your Words* is divided into three parts: Part I, titled "The Diminishment of Our Humanity" where Garutti diagnoses the decline of meaningful communications and how it used to work in the past, thus, stating that speech has become increasingly careless, disconnected and inhumane. This section is further divided into three chapters: in Chapter 1, "Watch how you speak," Garutti states that speech has resolved into something mechanical, aggressive and shallow by eroding our ability to truly engage with others; Chapter 2, "The Other does not exist," draws on the disappearance of the Other in contemporary discourse reflects a growing inability to recognize others as subjects worthy of engaging in dialogue and deserving attention; and Chapter 3, "Subject not at home," remarks that individuals feel estranged from themselves and from their community, weakening the authenticity and responsibility of their speech. Part II, titled "For a Humanism of Speech" deals with the author's advocacy for a renewed ethical approach to speaking in which language becomes a tool for connection, instead of domination. This section is also divided into two chapters: in Chapter 4, "We need to stand up in the full sense for what they say," Garutti claims that we must fully assume the moral and social responsibility of our words, standing behind them with coherence and conviction; and in Chapter 5, "Elevating speech" the author reclaims elevated speech means nurturing discourse that aspires to clarity, honesty, depth and care for the other. Finally, in Part III, namely, "Humanity Lost, Humanity Regained," Garutti offers a practical vision for restoring the dignity of speech through the arts, discipline, and institutional cultivation of eloquence and listening. This last part is structured in two more chapters: Chapter 6, "The seven arts of speech. Cultivating our humanity" where this author outlines seven essential practices that can help us recover meaningful, humane and transformative modes of speaking; and Chapter 7, "The Centre for the Arts of Speech," which ultimately contributes Garutti's new proposal for an educational space dedicated to training individuals in the art of speaking well and ethically, fostering civil and personal growth.

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Garutti further critiques the idea that loudness equates to communication, so that digital "connection" may be understood as a form of human bonding: "To shout loudly is not to speak to someone, and to be 'connected' is not to have a real bond with them. Speaking to each other in the full sense of the term is a way of establishing a bond. Only when someone is listening does speech get its resonance, and only through speech is a bond established."[343]

The book reflects extensively on electronic communication—texts, social media, and other digital channels—and on its entailing erosion of presence and responsiveness. Garutti stresses the importance of feeling the receiver and/or interpreter's reaction and intention of the message: its irony, humour, sincerity, or ambiguity might be difficult to perceive without physical or vocal cues. For him, communication without embodied experience falls short of true interaction.

Watch Your Words's critical perspective on the social and political impoverishment of language is complemented by a strong aesthetic proposal. Garutti calls for a renewed appreciation of the poetic power of speech. As he puts it:

> In the aesthetic dimension, we must treat speech as an act of creation, as the art which can evoke things, as a poetic power, a form of expressive vitality. This is the dimension of symbolic elaboration, of placing reality in a wider perspective provided by the imagination. It is also the place for an art of interpretation, the unfolding of possible meanings which opens us up to an infinity of plural worlds.[344]

Here, Garutti positions language as *poiesis*—not just as a medium for conveying meaning, but as a space of imaginative creation. This approach is particularly significant given the author's background in dramaturgy. Speech becomes not just a communicative tool but an aesthetic event, which is rich in polysemy and interpretive potential. Against the flattening of language into slogans and derogatory remarks, Garutti defends the expressive density of performed speech, which is capable of opening new worlds instead of closing them. Then,

[343] Garutti, chap. 3.
[344] Garutti, chap. 4.

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he outlines what he calls the "seven arts of speech":[345] theatre, narrative, poetry, eloquence, oral presentation, dialogue, and debate. Each of these arts represents a distinct modality of spoken interaction; yet, all converge in their capacity to shape, transmit, and contest meaning through language. Garutti defines them as follows: (1) *theatre*, as the art of presence and embodied performance; (2) *narrative*, as the imaginative construction of fictional or factual worlds; (3) *poetry*, as the decentering of speech through rhythm and metamorphosis; (4) *eloquence*, as persuasive oratory; (5) *oral presentation*, as the didactic articulation of ideas; (6) *dialogue*, as reciprocal listening and exchange; and (7) *debate*, as agonistic confrontation aimed at persuasion.

While Garutti's taxonomy is both rich and evocative, it sometimes leans more towards poetic intuition than theoretical precision. For instance, the boundaries between eloquence, debate, and oral presentation are porous and could benefit from clearer conceptual distinctions. Additionally, some contemporary forms of speech performance—such as sound poetry, auto fiction, or digital storytelling—might challenge and stretch these categories. Nevertheless, the proposal is compelling in its effort to reclaim speech not just as a tool for communication, but as a field of ethical-aesthetic practice. By identifying these seven modalities of speech, Garutti invites us to reimagine language as action, relation, and creation—anchored in presence, yet open to transformation.

He is equally careful to emphasize the ethical stakes of these arts. While speech can be used to connect and to imagine plural realities, it may also be weaponized:

> These seven arts give us the power to use speech as a way to reconnect with each other, provided only that we are willing to devote ourselves fully to them and to employ them in the way I propose. This qualification is necessary because, as should be immediately obvious, each of these arts can pass over to the dark side, and find itself in the service of destructive forces. Think of the perverse eloquence of Nazi propaganda, bellowing horrors through loudspeakers. Are these disciplines, then, to become weapons of mass destruction or arts which we can all use in a constructive

[345] Garutti, chap. 6-7.

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> way? It's up to us to choose. This is why the arts of speech absolutely need to be grounded in speech in the full sense of the term.[346]

By invoking this historical example, Garutti shows how language, far from being inherently virtuous, has often been co-opted for domination and violence. The arts of speech, then, must be cultivated with responsibility and ethical awareness; they must serve connection, not subjugation.

One particularly striking aspect of Garutti's manifesto—especially given his background as a theatre director—is the near-exclusive emphasis he places on the act of speech itself. His focus on the deterioration of spoken language into empty slogans and performative aggression is persuasive; however, it is surprising that he does not extend this reflection to encompass the value of *silence*. Contrary to the conventional view of silence as mere absence, Dauenhauer offers a compelling reconceptualization of silence as an active performance act. In *Silence: The Phenomenon and Its Ontological Significance*, the philosopher distinguishes various forms of silence and argues that they all share key characteristics that distance silence from passivity. Silence can be understood as a culturally situated performance—as opposed to a reflex or biological behavior—never radically autonomous and always unfolding in relation to an Other. In this case, silence becomes a form of yielding, motivated by the awareness of one's own finitude and by an attitude of awe towards that which lies beyond the self. This yielding is not an act of submission but rather an expression of ethical responsibility: in remaining silent, the subject creates space for the Other to emerge. Finally, Dauenhauer highlights the structural function of silence by noting how it binds what has been said to what remains to be said, thus operating both discursively and existentially. Understood in this way, silence is not a void but a meaningful and deliberate practice, deeply rooted in listening, openness, and a recognition of shared significance.[347] In a society increasingly overwhelmed by noise, silence offers a space for ethical resistance, a pause that restores weight and depth to language. If Garutti invites a

[346] Garutti, chap. 6.
[347] Bernard P. Dauenhauer, *Silence: The Phenomenon and Its Ontological Significance* (Indiana University Press, 1980), chap. 1, 3–25, https://muse.jhu.edu/book/84734.

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revitalization of conscious, embodied, and responsible speech, Dauenhauer reminds us that eloquent silence can be just as ethically and artistically powerful.

Watch Your Words will be of particular interest to scholars working at the intersection of language, performance, and ethics. The book offers valuable insights for artists and educators seeking to reframe their communicative practices in more conscious and responsible ways. Garutti writes with clarity and conviction, making the text accessible not only to academics but also to theatre professionals, educators, and general readers interested in the ethics of speech. At times, however, Garutti's vision borders on idealism. His call for a revival of "speech in the strong sense"[348] presupposes a degree of individual and collective agency that may underestimate the structural forces shaping contemporary discourse—such as media algorithms, economic precarity, or systemic forms of silencing.

In short, *Watch Your Words* offers a thoughtful and engaged contribution to contemporary discussions on language, ethics, and performance. While some of its claims may be open to debate, the book presents a fertile ground for reflection and dialogue. It invites artists, thinkers, and readers alike to reconsider *how* we speak, as well as *why* we do so—and after all, what new worlds emerge.

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[348] Garutti, chap. 7.

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FILM REVIEWS

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No Other Land (2024), by Hamdan Ballal, Yuval Abraham, Basel Adra, Rachel Szor[349]

Chiara Catania[350]

Days and nights resemble water dripping onto your forehead: slow, relentless systematic drops of destruction until nothing remains to mourn. Your trees, precious livestock, home, and dignity are all gone. You stand still, watching your motherland bid farewell to her children, whose lives were once nurtured in the bucolic womb of Masafer Yatta. This is not a tear-jerking fictional story but a real and tangible ode to resistance, where intertwined Palestinian and Israeli experiences collaborate to give voice to the horrific theater of human rights violations in the West Bank – parallel to those documented in Gaza and Lebanon (Human Rights Watch 2024).

No Other Land stands out as a powerful documentary chronicling the systematic demolition of Palestinian villages in Masafer Yatta. Directed by Palestinian activist Basel Adra and Israeli journalist Yuval Abraham, along with co-directors Hamdan Ballal and Rachel Szor, the activist documentary employs first-hand testimonies to challenge decades of state-sanctioned oppression. The documentary has gained significant international recognition, winning the Best Documentary Award and the Panorama Audience Award at the Berlin International Film Festival and earning a 2025 Oscar nomination, among other prestigious accolades. Despite the film's acclaim, co-director Hamdan Ballal was attacked by Israeli settlers in the Palestinian village of Susya on March 24. Following the assault, Ballal was blindfolded and detained by the Israel Defense Forces, making his ordeal emblematic of the ongoing systemic abuses against Palestinians documented in *No Other Land*, adding yet another chapter to this harrowing narrative (Al Jazeera 2025).

[349] **Recommended citation:** Catania, Chiara. "*No Other Land* (2024), by Hamdan Ballal, Yuval Abraham, Basel Adra and Rachel Szor." [Film Review] *JACLR: Journal of Artistic Creation and Literary Research* vol. 13, no. 1, 2025, pp. 141-144:
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Terrified kids, fearless women, cursing soldiers, fierce bulldozers running over houses, officials stealing another family's generator, police destroying Palestinians' right to water, gunshots: this is the footage posted on social media by Adra as the occupation achieves its goal. The Palestinian journalist started recording at the age of 15, but his memory extends further as he incorporates that of his family, especially his father, an activist arrested on several occasions for protesting against the occupation – evidencing a longer history of oppression. The film opens with Adra's declaration of somber recognition: "I started filming when we started to end," he says in Arabic voiceover as the documentary witnesses a 22-year legal battle against the Israeli high court mandate of forced Palestinian expulsion in favor of a "closed area" for military training – although governmental documents reveal the real purpose of displacing Palestinian villagers for illegal Israeli settlements.

No Other Land represents the urgent need to denounce a story that never became past tense but has remained an eternal present since 1948. The displacement of Palestinians, together with brutal violence, is not new in history. The Zionist project of ethnic cleansing in favor of an exclusively Jewish presence in Palestine can be traced back to the 1948 Nakba. Initially, Zionist policy focused on retaliating against Palestinian attacks in February 1947. By March 1948, this approach shifted towards a broader strategy aimed at the systematic removal of the Palestinian population from the region, leading to the displacement of nearly 800,000 natives (Pappé 2006). The current situation in the West Bank represents a continuation of the 1948 Nakba, eclipsed only by major disastrous events in the Gaza Strip.

The lives of the two filmmakers illustrate the antithetical experiences of Palestinians and Israelis: Adra is confined to delimited Palestinian areas, whereas Abraham can come and go between his home and Adra's without being stopped by the police thanks to a designated colored license plate which allows him to circulate freely. In occupied Palestine, license plates are used to differentiate between Israeli and Palestinian drivers – Israeli drivers have yellow license plates, while Palestinian drivers have green license plates. This system of apartheid is evidenced by further severe movement restrictions imposed through checkpoints, roadblocks, and the separation barrier, limiting Palestinians' access to essential services, employment, and family life (Amnesty International 2022).

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As the two journalists intimately discuss uncertainty about the future, their emotional turmoil is disclosed to the audience, mirroring collective reflections on hope, freedom, and justice. Their considerations and fears correspond to two contrasting attitudes: Abraham's optimism and urge to take action animate the scenes, while Adra's fatigue clings to the last piece of hope in his body, humbling the Israeli. In one scene, the Palestinian journalist smiles at his friend while driving, advising him on the power of صَبْر (ṣabr, "patience") as only natives know how long it will take to end the conflict. The Israelis' enthusiasm seems to clash with the Palestinian understanding of the harsh and long course of events: Abraham's heart is pure in intention, but he remains an outsider with a savior complex, naïve enough to think that significant changes come quickly with real commitment. In this sense, Abraham can be interpreted as the spokesperson for the common Western sentiment towards this war: wanting a final resolution as soon as possible but lacking the patience to see it through, as ironically lamented to him by Adra. The truth is that it requires a long time to end the struggle, and Palestinian resilience proves this point by fighting for self-determination for more than 77 years.

Overall, the film deeply captures the Palestinian struggle for freedom, leaving us to wonder whether its critical acclaim stems from its powerful content alone or if it partially reflects a Western desire to witness Israeli-Palestinian collaboration – a relationship that, unlike the rare friendship between Adra and Abraham, remains elusive in the broader context.

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Notes on contributor

Chiara Catania is an English and American Studies student at the University of Turin. Their research focuses on post-colonial studies, with particular interest in gender studies and resistance narratives. Their bachelor's thesis, titled *"The Gender of Race in the US: Black and White Masculinities and Visual Representations in Green Book,"* explored double standards in representations of Black masculinity in the United States through a case study of the film *Green Book*. They are currently developing their master's thesis, which compares colonial narratives in Israel and the United States, focusing on the myth of the promised land and the weaponization of memory to justify colonization.

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Wicked (2024), by Jon M. Chu[351]

César F. Más Sánchez[352]

Directed by Jon M. Chu and distributed by Universal Pictures, *Wicked* (2024) invites the spectator to revisit the Land of Oz, immortalised by the Technicolor classic, MGM's *The Wizard of Oz* (1939). The film stars Cynthia Erivo as Elphaba Thropp and Ariana Grande as Glinda Upland, and follows their relationship in this fairyland—though less saturated in colour and more politically charged than the iconic film. *Wicked* adapts Act One of Schwartz and Holzman's musical *Wicked: The Untold Story of the Witches of Oz* (2003), with a sequel, *Wicked: For Good*, scheduled for release in November 2025. Continuing this chain of adaptations, both the musical and the film reinterpret Gregory Maguire's *Wicked: The Life and Times of the Wicked Witch of the West* (1995). Maguire himself reimagines the original fairy tale, L. Frank Baum's *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz* (1900) and the 1939 film by telling the story through the eyes of the green-skinned, marginalised witch, Elphaba. But before the broom takes flight along the yellow brick road, a proper introduction to the plot of Chu's *Wicked* is required.

A shot of a wet, pointed black hat resting at the centre of a castle chamber opens the film. This cryptic scene is soon interrupted by a swarm of flying monkeys, which propels the camera away from the castle known as Kiamo Ko and into Munchkinland, the Eastern Quadrant of Oz. There, a communal celebration is already underway, prompted by the long-awaited demise of the Wicked Witch of the West—spoiler: the owner of the abovementioned hat. After the musical number "No One Mourns the Wicked," led by the soprano vocals of Glinda the Good, the actual plot begins to unfold when a Munchkin girl asks the Good Witch "Why does wickedness happen?"[353] This initiates a flashback that transports the spectator to several years into the past, to Shiz University. At this institution, a young and more superficial G(a)linda meets Elphaba Thropp, a magically gifted individual

[351] **Recommended citation:** Más-Sánchez, César F. "*Wicked* (2024), by Jon M. Chu." [Film Review] *JACLR: Journal of Artistic Creation and Literary Research* vol. 13, no. 1, 2025, pp. 145-148

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[353] *Wicked*, 00:05:49.

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yet socially despised for her unique green skin. Forced to coexist, *Wicked* follows the evolution of their relationship alongside their individual paths towards self-discovery and personal growth. As the plot progresses, their bond is challenged by a series of events that, like a sepia-toned cyclone, sweep away their lives *for good*. This includes the arrival of a handsome prince, the escalating tensions of Oz's sociopolitical climate, and a life-changing invitation to see the Great and Powerful—or Terrible—himself, the Wizard of Oz.

Wicked has received generally favourable reviews from critics while also achieving box office success, surpassing *Mamma Mia!* (2008) to become the highest-grossing film adaptation of a stage musical to date. This accomplishment is no mere trick of magic, despite the wonder that dazzles audiences for the entirety of its 160-minute spectacle. Chu's first full-fledged attempt at the fantasy genre results in a musical extravaganza featuring exceptional musical numbers, richly detailed sets, and standout performances by Erivo and Grande. The final product is a vividly inspiring film that has earned, among other accolades, ten Academy Award nominations—capturing Best Costume Design and Best Production Design. However, beneath this enchanting allure, *Wicked* also engages with significant societal issues that may pass unnoticed by spectators predisposed to dismiss musicals as superficial entertainment.

Among these, the film places at its—tin—heart the issue of ostracisation motivated by physical difference, closely aligning with Maguire's novel and its musical adaptation. From the moment of her birth, Elphaba's anomalous skin colour marks her as Other, according to prevailing societal notions of bodily normalcy. Furthermore, she is rendered ugly by those around her, including her own family, as ugliness is "contingent and relational, taking shape through the comparison and evaluation of bodies."[354] This dynamic persists throughout her time at Shiz University, where Elphaba is continually measured against the idealised beauty of Glinda. Her appearance is not merely viewed as ugly or even unusual but rather rendered "uncanny" and "obscene."[355] This exaggerated portrayal is driven by the character's singular "flaw"—her green skin—which contrasts with Maguire's Elphaba, whose deformed body deviates from conventional beauty standards. Instead, following the 2003

[354] Ela Przybylo and Sara Rodrigues, eds. "Introduction: On the Politics of Ugliness," 14.
[355] *Wicked*, 00:07:49.

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musical, Elphaba's greenness is characterised by "its universality" and encompasses "all difference."[356]

In the not-so-merry old Land of Oz, society's reaction to Elphaba's green skin is the complete marginalisation of the individual. *Wicked* intensifies the politics of ugliness by positioning the Witch's physical deviance as the primary catalyst for her subsequent demonisation by the ruling authorities. This dynamic is powerfully encapsulated during the musical sequence "Defying Gravity," in which Madame Morrible—Elphaba's former mentor at Shiz—delivers a propagandistic address: "Citizens of Oz! There is an enemy who must be found and captured! Believe nothing she says! . . . She is evil. . . . This… distortion, this… repulsion, this… Wicked Witch!"[357]. In this moment, the film exhibits its fairy-tale roots, illustrating the genre's "propensity to externalize all inner states."[358] In doing so, Elphaba's bodily otherness is portrayed as the external *manifestorium*—meaning "outward sign or indication of something innate"[359]—of her presumed wickedness. To the citizens of Oz, she becomes both physically abhorrent and morally corrupt—a transformation that is fully realised through her construction as the conventional *wicked* witch.

To conclude, *Wicked* is more than just a superb spectacle of song, dance, and visual wonder. It is a story layered with complexity, inviting viewers to look beyond its glossy surface and into its deeper themes. Drawing from the grand tradition of the megamusical, the film enchants through its vivid performances and richly imagined world. However, when Glinda's pink bubble bursts, what remains is a critical reflection on identity, bodily difference, and gendered expectations. As audiences await Act Two in *Wicked: For Good*, it is clear that the story has yet more layers to unveil. The magic of Chu's Oz is worth revisiting—not only for its grandeur but for the conversations it provokes. *Wicked*, in all its superficial spectacle, is an invitation to pay attention to that man behind the curtain and discover that beneath monolithic narratives lie a green witch waiting to be heard.

[356] Stacy Wolf, "'Defying Gravity': Queer Conventions in the Musical 'Wicked'," 11.
[357] *Wicked*, 02:28:53.
[358] Eric S. Rabkin, "Fairy Tales and Science Fiction," 80.
[359] Cote David, *Wicked: The Grimmerie, a Behind-the-Scenes Look at the Hit Broadway Musical*, 191.

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Here (2024), by Robert Zemeckis[360]

Elena Velilla Gonzalvo[361]

Robert Zemeckis's *Here* (2024) presents an ambitious cinematic experiment that transforms a single patch of land into the protagonist of a sweeping temporal journey. Based on Richard McGuire's 2014 graphic novel, the film abandons traditional narrative structure in favor of a bold spatial approach: it follows one specific location from prehistoric times to the present day, revealing the many lives that briefly intersect with this unchanging geographical point. This unorthodox narrative framework challenges conventional cinematic storytelling, shifting focus away from individual characters and instead treating space itself as the true protagonist.

Zemeckis implements this concept through split-screen techniques that allow viewers to witness different historical periods simultaneously. We see dinosaurs roaming around the same area where a 1950s family will later host a barbecue, or Indigenous Lenni-Lenape inhabitants moving through the space that will eventually be a colonial estate. This visual approach effectively creates what spatial theorist Doreen Massey might call a "simultaneity of stories-so-far" (2005), depicting places not as static entities but as processes constantly being made and remade through social relations and historical forces. The result is a layered, almost palimpsestic representation of space, where different eras coexist on-screen, mirroring the way places are shaped by historical accumulation. The film's central focus becomes a house constructed at the turn of the 20th century, serving as an anchor point for much of the narrative. Through this structure, we witness multiple inhabitants: from aviation enthusiast John Harter and his wife during the Spanish flu era to bohemian inventor Lee Beekman and his pin-up model wife during World War II, and finally to the multi-generational Young family in the post-war decades. Each family's experiences demonstrate how spaces accumulate meaning through human activity, transforming mere locations into repositories of memory and emotion. The film subtly contrasts the

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architectural permanence of the house with the ephemerality of its inhabitants, underscoring the transient nature of human existence.

Tom Hanks and Robin Wright demonstrate remarkable emotional depth as they portray characters across multiple times through digital de-aging technology. Their familiar, trustworthy screen presence provides an accessible emotional entry point into the film's experimental structure. Rather than serving merely as a technical showcase, this digital manipulation reinforces the film's thematic interest in temporal continuity within spatial constancy. Hanks and Wright bring such authenticity to their roles that they create moments of genuine human connection, making the abstract concept of place as protagonist deeply personal and accessible. By allowing them to embody characters at different life stages, the film also draws attention to the passage of time within individual lives, highlighting the way people themselves are in constant flux while the spaces they inhabit retain traces of their presence.

One of the film's most affecting sequences involves Richard Young (Hanks) bringing his dementia-afflicted ex-wife Margaret (Wright) back to that same house, but this time, in 2024. As they stand in the empty living room, a blue ribbon triggers a cascade of memories, illustrating how spaces function as repositories of human experience, capable of reactivating dormant memories even when cognitive function has deteriorated. This scene powerfully reminds viewers of life's brevity and the importance of cherishing moments before they become mere memories. In this sense, *Here* offers a poignant meditation on aging, loss, and the lingering presence of the past in everyday spaces. Throughout the film, Zemeckis employs recurring visual motifs—most notably a hummingbird that appears across different time periods—to suggest certain elements persist despite human transience. This motif functions both as cinematic punctuation and thematic reinforcement, suggesting that while individual human lives are fleeting, the continuum of existence endures. The effect creates a profound awareness of life's impermanence while paradoxically emphasizing the importance of present moments within these larger temporal patterns.

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Here succeeds as a thought-provoking meditation on time, space, and memory. The film's technical achievements deserve particular attention. The simultaneous presentation of multiple time frames disrupts cinema's traditional temporal flow, requiring viewers to process spatial continuity across historical discontinuity. This technique places unusual cognitive demands on audiences accustomed to conventional narrative progression, perhaps explaining its limited commercial appeal. Yet for those willing to engage with its experimental nature, the film offers an intellectually and emotionally rewarding experience. What makes the film particularly moving is its ability to translate abstract concepts about time and space into emotionally resonant moments. The film suggests that our brief occupancy of any space is both insignificant in the grand scheme of history and profoundly meaningful in terms of human connection. Watching families love, celebrate, grieve, and simply exist within the same walls across different decades creates a powerful sense of connection across time that inspires reflection on our own temporal existence. This interplay between permanence and impermanence is where *Here* finds its deepest emotional impact: it encourages viewers to think about the places they have inhabited and the imprints they leave behind, however fleeting they may be. Hanks and Wright bring essential humanity to this experimental narrative structure. Their performances ground the film's intellectual concepts in authentic emotion, particularly in the scenes of the elderly Richard and Margaret revisiting their home. The familiar warmth these actors bring to their roles contributes to the conceptual gap between the film's ambitious spatial experiment and its emotional connection to memory, connection, and the time frame.

Here ultimately stands as a bold experiment in cinematic language, one that uses the unique properties of film to explore how space and time intersect in ways that shape human experience. Zemeckis has created a work that challenges viewers to reconsider their relationship with the spaces they temporarily inhabit and the fleeting nature of existence itself. The film raises crucial questions about what it means to inhabit a place, to leave behind traces of our presence, and to recognize that even as time progresses, spaces are echoes of those who came before us.

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The film's closing image – as the camera finally breaks its fixed perspective and a hummingbird flits across the frame – serves as a perfect visual summation of its thesis: while places persist, our time within them is transitory yet meaningful. Through Hanks and Wright's emotionally grounded performances, *Here* transforms from an intellectual exercise into a deeply moving meditation on memory, connection, and the relentless forward motion of time. For those willing to engage in its unconventional structure, the film offers not only a new way of viewing cinema but a new way of understanding our brief moment in the places we call home.

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Notes on contributor

Elena Velilla Gonzalvo

Elena Velilla Gonzalvo is a researcher and educator specializing in cinematic spatiality and identity. She is currently pursuing a PhD examining the representation of urban spaces in film, with a focus on how Toronto is depicted across different cinematic narratives. Her research explores the intersections of film, mobility, and cultural geography, analysing how spatial representation in cinema shapes and reflects identity. In addition to her academic work, she teaches English in a private school and engages in pedagogical research on film-based language learning, exploring innovative approaches to audio visual literacy and intercultural competence in education.

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The Substance (2024), by Coralie Fargeat[362]

Martina Villani[363]

In *The Substance* (2024), director Coralie Fargeat doesn't just dip a toe into body horror. She dives headfirst, dragging the viewer into a bubbling vat of viscera, shame, and impossible beauty standards. With surgical precision and neon-drenched brutality, the film dissects not only flesh but the cultural conditioning that renders female bodies monstrous the moment they sag, bleed, or assert autonomy. This isn't just horror; it's critique, satire, revenge fantasy, and a high-gloss scream of rage.

From the film's opening frames, we find ourselves in a world where women must be dazzling or disappear. The protagonist, portrayed by a striking yet visibly aging Demi Moore, is discarded from her TV fitness role not due to a lack of skill or charisma, but for the crime of no longer being 25. Her fall from grace is swift, humiliating, and surrounded by men whose own bodies are, to put it politely, *fungal*. These male figures aren't just unsympathetic; they're repulsive and cartoonishly grotesque. The camera lingers on their sweat, snot, pudgy hands, and open pores, while the women are illuminated and styled to near-mythic perfection. It's a grotesque inversion of Hollywood's usual treatment of gendered bodies, one that aligns with Julia Kristeva's notion of the abject: that which is cast off, rejected, yet hauntingly present. The aging woman is rendered abject not because she is inherently horrifying, but because culture has marked her as a *leak* in the symbolic order: a disruption to the fantasy of eternal, compliant beauty.

The horror, however, does not lie only in what society does to her; it lies also in what she does to herself. Offered the chance to "improve" through a mysterious injectable substance, Elisabeth undergoes a transformation that literalizes the toxic fantasy of becoming someone *new*. But this transformation is not seamless. It is slimy, bloody, and traumatic. She splits, literally, into two selves: the perfect, young, commercial-ready double,

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and the increasingly rotting original. The *old* body becomes an exoskeleton to be shed, a prison to be escaped. Here, Fargeat stages a violent rejection of femaleness itself—not in terms of identity, but in the physical, hormonal, biological sense. Menstruation, pregnancy, menopause; these are not milestones but horror motifs.

The metaphor becomes clear: to survive, to succeed, to be seen, the female body must be fragmented, commodified, and ultimately destroyed. *The Substance* weaponizes its genre to express this idea. It doesn't flirt with body horror: it *marinates* in it. There is no subtlety here, and that's precisely the point. The film isn't interested in metaphorical hauntings—it wants blood on the floor and guts on the ceiling. This is the horror of transformation, of becoming the ideal and losing the self.

The result is a vicious commentary on how society treats aging women, not just as invisible, but as monstrous. There's no room for ambiguity here, and Fargeat knows it. In fact, she exploits it. Mirrors, screens, and reflections recur throughout the film, each one echoing the same impossible message: be young, be beautiful, or be gone. It's *Black Swan* on steroids, *Videodrome* with a lipstick mirror.

As a matter of fact, as the film plunges us into horror, it never loses its biting intertextual edge. *The Substance* is littered with visual and narrative references, some explicit, others sly. The use of black-and-white command slogans and billboards calls back unmistakably to John Carpenter's *They Live* (1988), a film also concerned with false consciousness and capitalist horror. The finale echoes *Cinderella*, with its shimmering light blue dress and desperate flight from the ball before the transformation expires; but here, the magic curdles, the beauty collapses, and the clock doesn't strike twelve: it detonates. There's also a bold musical nod to Kubrick's 2001: *A Space Odyssey* in the final sequence, with the famous *Also sprach Zarathustra* theme playing over an orgy of grotesque rebirth. But instead of ascending into higher consciousness, this evolution is reversed. If *2001* was about transcending the human, *The Substance* is about being trapped in it, and loathing every wrinkle.

That said, *The Substance* is not without its contradictions. It relishes the spectacle of the beautiful young body almost as much as it critiques it. There's a danger here of reinscribing the very gaze it aims to dismantle. The film invites us to recoil from the aging

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female body but also forces us to watch its destruction with almost operatic flair. Is this subversion, or repetition with a wink? Fargeat doesn't give us an answer, and maybe that ambiguity is intentional. Maybe the true horror isn't the transformation, but the fact that it works. For a while, anyway.

In under two hours, *The Substance* manages to lacerate the toxic demands placed on women, expose the flesh trade of fame, and splatter the screen with metaphorical (and literal) bile. It is not a subtle film. It is a scream disguised as a fable, a satire soaked in acid. It asks not what it means to be beautiful, but what it costs, and whether survival is worth that price.

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Martina Villani holds a Master's degree in American Studies from the University of Turin, where they graduated in November 2024. Their thesis, *At the Intersection of Verse and Vision: Claudia Rankine, Eileen Myles, and the Evolution of Video poetry*, explores the fluid boundaries of video poetry as a hybrid form that merges literary text and moving image. Their research interests include contemporary American literature, feminist and queer theory, experimental film, and media studies. Martina has a background in audio-visual editing and has participated in video poetry competitions, blending creative practice with academic inquiry. They are particularly drawn to interdisciplinary approaches that connect literature, film, and digital media.

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Tómame y de la mano[364]

José Fabián Elizondo[365]

Tómame y de la mano

Que no importa quién seas

Mientras seas vos

La piel y el pellejo

No me interesan

Es lo que está detrás

Sed de garganta

Ron con tequila

Un borde de sal

El desinterés por convenciones sociales

La audiencia me es ajena

Que mi rodilla siempre te funja de banco en la entrepierna

Que no te cuente más de los otros

Que no se puede competir con las décadas

Un reproche por existir

Me tomas por el cuello en un callejón para asaltos

Que no me enfoque en el cigarro que me llama sin nombre

Que siempre seas la luna llena

En crema

Entre nubes y un noviembre.

También se caza de día

La sostuve en mi mano por primera vez

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Oscura, robusta

Traté de ocultar que por dentro el mondongo me temblaba

Tuve que fingir que las rodillas no cederían

Miraste con cautela entre barba enmarañada

Un abrigo impenetrable

Equipado en cacería

La inexperiencia me abofeteó la garganta

Pesada

Entre lo que imaginaba

Lo que en la lengua inauguré.

Hay una parte de la nieve que no se descongela si está bajo la sombra

Sostengo la respiración sin consentimiento

Me privo del aire

De llenar la panza de polen

Que las ideas se me escapan

Si salen de los pulmones

Los reprendo

Temo a quedarme sin ninguna

Las aferro

Es nieve necia en diciembre soleado

Que si la luz no la toca

Se queda vigilante

En tiniebla y promesa

A no quedarme vacío

Un respiro contamina el frío

Evapora el sentimiento

Lo deshace en barro en zapatazos.

Sin despedida

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A tres grados

No solo las mariposas migran

En otoño

Los osos regresan

Entre hojas secas

Y bigotes recién pulidos

No pueden hospedar

En su camarote infante

De memorias cosidas

Invaden el pueblo

De perfiles silentes

La mayoría vive en Chicago

Otros en Nueva York

Los de montaña en Seattle y Denver

Todos con el mismo vacío

Las ganas de encontrar lo que no existió

O lo que se perdió

En un puñado estancado

De trigo con castaña

Las noches en porches de mamá

O en una baranda incapaz de soportar

Tarde escribe el mismo de siempre

Que me entumece la lengua con nicotina

Me lleva tres cabezas

Doce cervezas

Un memento de la estación.

Perfil del autor

Jose Fabián Elizondo es autor de las novelas *Hacia ningún lugar* (2021), *Cuando los cuerpos recuerdan* (2024) y *Flesh (Un)Bound* (2024), así como de múltiples poemas y cuentos cortos

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The Old Woman and the Zipper[366]

Carolina Fernández Rodríguez[367]

One evening in September 2020, I went out with a friend of mine, Paquita, who works as a professor at BMCC, and also with her sister Paz. If it weren't for the pandemic, Paquita would have had to be in New York by then, but since she didn't have to be physically there, because she was having online classes that semester, she was in Asturias for a little longer than usual and she was teaching her classes via Zoom.

At the end of the evening, the three of us decided it was time to go home. Paquita had to take a train, as she was staying with her parents in the countryside, so Paz and I accompanied her to the train station and then Paz and I went walking to our respective apartments in Oviedo. We live nearby, so we walked together for a while. At one point our paths parted, and we started to say good-bye. We were standing at a corner between two streets that are typically busy, but by then it was late at night and there was hardly anyone out. The place was shabby, in a working-class neighborhood, with run-down apartment blocks around us where only old people live, and some immigrants too. Rent is cheap in that area, you know? So that explains everything.

When we were about to part, an old woman, who seemed to be in her eighties and was dressed in what looked like her Sunday best, approached us, looked me in the eye, and asked me to take down her dress zipper. She told me she lived alone and if I didn't help her, she would have to sleep in her dress, unable to put on a nightdress. I was shocked. First, because I could hardly understand what she was saying. You see, because of Covid-19, we were all wearing face masks those days and we were keeping social distance, so her voice sounded distorted. Also, I was slow to understand her because the situation was absolutely bizarre. This woman wants what?, I thought. So I asked her to tell me again what it was she wanted. The second time, I got it, but couldn't believe this was happening to me. I doubted

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if I should follow her order—yes, it was more like she was giving me an order, not like she was asking me a favor, and the tone of her voice was very authoritarian. In the end, however, I thought that maybe she really was alone, had no one to ask for help and, in spite of the pandemic, I could not refuse to help her. How could I? So I decided to help her.

She turned her back against me, so that I could put my hand under her jacket and reach for the zipper. Her back was warm and sweaty. As I was reaching for the zipper, I had a feeling that maybe I shouldn't do what I was doing. Come on, Carolina, I thought. We're in a pandemic, told to keep social distance, and you're unzipping this woman's dress and touching her sweaty back? Are you crazy or what? When I finally found the zipper, I lowered it a few centimetres, but it was difficult to do so, because it was broken. You know the part of a zipper that you grip? That part was missing. Anyway, when I stopped lowering the zipper half-way through the back, the woman turned to me and said: "Lower!" So I lowered the zipper a few more centimetres. Then she looked back at me once again and yelled: "Lower! I won't manage to undress unless you lower it some more!" This went on for a while. She would give me orders, I would then follow her orders, uncertain as to whether I was losing my mind or simply being a nice person, until I reached the woman's waist. Then she shouted "LOWER!!!" one more time, but at that point I said: "No. This is enough. You should manage with this. And besides, it looks like I'm undressing you in the middle of the street. This is it." So she said, "OK. Thank you." And then she walked a few steps away from me and I thought, it's over. Thank goodness! But half a second later she turned around and asked me: "Would you like some hand sanitizer?" Oh my! I was really taken aback by this and didn't know whether to laugh or to ask her to leave me alone right away. The hand sanitizer simply did me in!

After the old woman left, I looked at Paz, she looked at me, and we both cracked up, totally unable to believe what we'd just witnessed. Then we went home, each one of us our separate ways and I never got to ask her how she'd felt about this old woman. I did keep laughing all the way back home. And kept laughing some more when I arrived home and told my husband, my kids, and my whole family about the zipper anecdote.

But the next day I woke up and I simply wanted to cry for the old woman who had found herself so lonely she had asked a stranger to unzip her dress in the middle of the

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night. A woman who was walking to the solitude of her home. A woman who had made me feel unease, maybe afraid of contagion, and maybe repelled, too—her warm, sweaty back was still vivid in my memory, as was her old, worn-out dress with a broken zipper.

Two days later, I woke up even sadder. In that poor woman I could see myself, maybe in thirty years' time: old, in need of help even for basic things like dressing and undressing, and so alone.

Notes on contributor

Carolina Fernández Rodríguez is an Associate Professor at the University of Oviedo, where she teaches American Literatures and Cultures. Her research focuses on contemporary women's writing. Early on in her career she focused on feminist revisions of fairy tales, a topic on which she has published extensively. More recently, she has been interested in the representation of latinidades in American literature and mass media, and in issues related to multiculturalism in children's and young adults' literature. In 2016 she started working on the genre of popular romance, publishing articles on Nora Roberts and on romances by Chamorro writers, as well as a book on historical romances: *American Quaker Romances: Building the Myth of the White Christian Nation* (University of Valencia, 2021). She has also written a few short stories, like "El juego del escondite," which received an award in 2010 in Miranda de Ebro (Burgos), and "Credo," published in *Raudem* (vol. 7, 2019: 217-220).

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ResearchGate: https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Carolina-Fernandez-Rodriguez

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INTERVIEWS

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When Shall We Restore Our Humanity? A Dialogue of Poetics with Carl Terver[368]

Tolulope Oke[369]

In this extensive dialogue, Tolulope Oke engages Carl Terver, his personal and intellectual sensibilities, and the socio-political undercurrents that inform his poetics. As a poet, critic, and editor, Carl embodies a literary restlessness that reflects the turbulence of contemporary Nigeria. His poetics, characterized by sharp wit, biting irony, and an unflinching engagement with existential, historical and present-day struggles, position him as a vibrant voice in contemporary Nigerian/African poetry. Carl's poetry thrives on juxtaposition, humour and despair, the sacred and the profane, nostalgia and disillusionment etc. These contrasts are not incidental but reflective of the fragmented nature of the postmodern human condition. His poetry resists closure, favouring ambiguity and an open-ended pursuit of meaning that never fully resolves, allowing readers multiple interpretive entries. Beyond his versatility, his poems reinforce that which is poetry's crux: to provoke and challenge us to restore our humanity. This conversation delves into his creative process, influences, and the tensions that animate his writing, particularly in his two collections: *For Girl at Rubicon* (2020) and *Everyone I know is ripe in plumage* (2023). This dialogue was conducted as an online exchange over a period of several weeks starting in December 2024.

Carl Terver was longlisted in 2024 for the Commonwealth Short Story Prize. In 2023, he contributed to the Olongo Africa Multilingual Anthology as a translator. He was a writer-in-residence, in February 2022, at the Ebedi International Writers Residency, Iseyin, Oyo, Nigeria. And in 2020, he co-edited *The Weight of Years*, the second volume of the AfroAnthology Series. He is a Nigerian writer of Tiv ancestry with a BA English from Benue

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State University, Makurdi. He has written on film, literature, photography, music, and new Nigerian poetry, and has been published in *Afapinen,* where he is founding editor, *Goethe-Institut Nigeria, The Stockholm Review, The Lagos Review, The Republic*, *Olongo Africa, Gainsayer, The Shallow Tales Review, Iskanchi, The Question Marker, Millennial Poets,* and *Konya Shamsrumi.* He is the author of the poetry chapbook, *For Girl at Rubicon* (2020), and the photobook *Glory to the Sky* (forthcoming).

Photo credit: Adoka Adaji

Tolulope Oke: I can't quite pinpoint my first encounter with your work, but I know it has been a while, and my earliest awareness of you was as an essayist, editor, and short story

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writer. I took notice, even more, when two winners of the Toyin Falola Prize, the same prize for which your short story "The Son of Blue Jack" was selected for the inaugural anthology, credited you as their editor or acknowledged working with you, all of which is hardly coincidental. Since then, I have also come to learn about the many other remarkable things you are involved in, such as *Afapinen*. What does this constellation of roles and contributions mean to you? How do you navigate the intersections of these creative and intellectual pursuits?

Carl Terver: Thanks for bringing up "The Son of Blue Jack." When I wrote that story, its ambition was greater than my capacities as a writer at the time. It's a story I wish to go back to very soon, especially after having read some Ted Chiang and seen what one can achieve with a short story if you give yourself limitless vision. I do not really know how to answer your question without coming off as self-advertisement, but I'm sort of a writing virtuoso, maybe even to my disadvantage, because which do I focus on and really master? I have tried to leave editing but editing keeps coming back to me, in the way of returning clients or writers I have worked with. When I am not getting paid for writing, editing pays, so I'm in that one foot in and out relationship with it. Nevertheless, I love editing, especially after it's done the job it's supposed to do; and I feel very fulfilled when I have satisfied a writer or shared ideas with them that made their work better. And working as a founding editor too makes me feel like a kind of pilot—I pore over details so much, over the sound of sentences, what works and what doesn't, et cetera. And right now, I am invested into the industry of words, at least at home; it is how I get identified in some spaces, and I am just plugged into it. I let it be until there's a change in trajectory.

Tolulope: Isn't that one of the graceful burdens of being a creative: to live at the crossroads of several influences and to be aware of it? Your poems often explore the socio-political realities of Nigeria, with recurring symbols like the rose representing both beauty and loss. In "Tonite I Am Complete With All the Deaths My Country Has Gifted Me," you juxtapose the fear of becoming and unbecoming: of becoming a rose to be gifted to others and of unbecoming, one, the severance from the umbilical cord and "two, dying, to live where snowflakes/ are cold metaphors." Could you elaborate on how this duality, or other contrasting multiplicities, shapes your creative process and poetic voice?

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Carl: I don't think we can function very well without the capacity for contrasting our ways of thinking or seeing or looking at the world—or to put it this way, without contradiction. Thus, duality. The only way I can fully accept or grasp you is by letting some part of me partake with some part of you: to ask who are you from my vantage already initiates the idea or the possibility that not only myself exists, but you, and maybe others too. It is in the fabric of nature: create, destroy, create, destroy, love and hate, good and evil, and so on. If this found its way into my poetry, it is because at an earlier time, I came to define poetry for myself as trying to grasp meaning from the seeming meaninglessness life presents sometimes—you see the contrast? And, that poetry may try to redeem me from hypocrisy. I have constantly failed at these, especially the latter. If duality found its way to my poetry too, it is because I'm always thinking of the ego and the superego, how they exist within an individual's consciousness, always at war but never destroying their host; how this reveals our truest natures, which I feel I just replicate in my art. It is also in knowing that our conscience's assessment of right and wrong is very contingent and limited to what it "knows."

Essentially, one position switches with the other; a way of seeing or long-held beliefs change within a minute of new knowledge or even disaster. Duality saves us from the sin, I think, of absolutism, keeping the door for negotiation open, making us see beyond the limits of our selfishness and to acknowledge that nothing is certain. For me, sometimes, this should be the work of art, to not provide easy answers but to make us partake in a quest of finding again, or questioning again, what we think we already know—the certainties; *what is beauty, what is not beauty?*—or of who we think we are.

Tolulope: Hmm, I do agree with the provocative depth of art. But beyond that, it speaks of some things that are intrinsic to human nature: our restless pursuit of meaning, our compulsion to question, and the unsettling drive that keeps us seeking, creating, and reimagining. In "This Blood," you reflect on both internal and external politics of war, poverty and hunger in Nigeria/Africa, teasing out the dynamics of propaganda and global aid. How do you perceive the connection between the international perceptions of Africa and the internal realities shaping narratives about the continent?

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Carl: This one is very tricky and almost too diplomatic for me to find my way around it. There is a recent poem by Njoku Nonso, which partly answers this. It has quite a long title: "Surveillance from a High-Functioning Homo Proteus At Eagle Square, Circa Redacted." Its last lines, which demonstrates the state of Africa for me, read

> What other ruin resides in the occupation of time?
> Whose patient dog lies dead and rotten among the wreckage?
> Tell me, when Lord Lugard opened his eyes to the rainbow lights of this country,
> did he, too, like me, hiss and walk away
> knowing yes, oh my god yes, we are beyond screwed

Africa is such a failed place. I know we don't like to say it, maybe that is why we console ourselves with words like *black is beautiful* and so on, why we always insist on our beauty or whatever romantic ideas and perceptions we have for ourselves. The war which seems already lost is for the restoration of our humanity, which was taken by our colonizers. Each year, or every day, someone comes up and says we can't keep blaming our past (meaning slavery and colonialism) as causes for our underdevelopment, someone comes up (this time) a foreigner with a book or apologia about how the West's contact with Africa was more beneficial to us, etc. I don't really care about these. But the reality, and we see it every day, is that there's a lack of basic humanity here, and it affects everything, like a neurotic condition, which reflects in the degeneration we see around, from how we value life, the values we exhort, our worldview, and we know that it is from such a system that we all born into and grow up in, even our politicians.

So, there is a reason why the brand of corruption we have here is different. And it is the lack of humanity. This has caused so many problems for us and even answers your question about the "internal realities shaping narratives about the continent." But in my revision, I'd say, the internal crisis bedeviling the continent. It is why a country like Nigeria, which in the last decade we have seen its total disregard for human value, thus why it has an alternative stock exchange where "bodies," rather than economic growth, is the focus. You must be unthinking to think that the precolonial African or precolonial Africa and the reality today is the same thing. It is not; no revisionism can undo this fact. We live in very

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deplorable societies where humanity is not considered; the mentally ill are abandoned to starve and die on the streets; there are no shelters or homes by the state for the very lowly and poor. No housing projects. No basic healthcare for them. This is not who we were. We have been damaged. When shall we restore our humanity? That is the most important task at hand.

Tolulope: Indeed, and as it appears that the vortex will continue spinning, there is an increasing desperation to depart, by any means necessary. The *japa* movement. And this departure appears as a central preoccupation in your poetry, capturing the tension, indecisiveness, and ethical dilemma it often entails. In "Tonite I Am Complete With All the Deaths My Country Has Gifted Me," you write about leaving as a "final suicide in a distant place, my second/ slave-coming. I take no grace in the arith-/metic of leaving, to un-be." What are your views on migration, and why do your poems frequently appear to express a resistance to it, particularly in relation to the loss of dignity?

Carl: Man must up and go, especially when situations no longer favour him at a particular place or point in time. This is how humans spread all over the world; it is the march of our civilization, if you wish. But a decision must be made. By an individual or a group, and so on. This is a very personal subject for me, so I guess I will answer it on a personal note too. I have been coaxed to leave Nigeria, so much it feels like an atrocity to not have left by now. Why leaving is imminent, or maybe not, since we just talked about dualities, I don't think we really pause to think about certain realities. I mean, the promise of a better life is good. A saner environment, perhaps?

When I read Chukwuemeka Famous's essay "Reflections on the Burden of Parting," it felt like an answer to a part of this dilemma. This act of leaving, of severance from place and people. That it is real, and painful, and that we all have different thresholds of processing these decisions. Don't get me wrong. For some persons it is urgent that they flee from their homes, as seen in very unstable climates ravaged by wars or disasters. I wouldn't want to talk about the loss of dignity here because it can be impractical. I have an unpublished poem where I've written about letting go of what cannot be as "the dislocated north of my country tires me." I do not necessarily root against migration, as you imply; I simply use my poetry to reflect on it.

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Tolulope: I look forward to reading the poem. Your poetry defies linearity, in rhythm, tone, and preoccupation. For instance, "Tonite I Am Complete With All the Deaths My Country Has Gifted Me" combines elegiac concerns with satire and foretelling: "toast to our achieve/ ment, toast to hideousness, toast to our bravery./ Toast, one last time, to the end." How do you approach this stylistic flexibility, and how intentional is this layering in your works?

Carl: I am very intentional about writing poetry, maybe because I am also a critic and editor. Working with other poets by way of editing their works, or with language generally, has taught me the importance of closely listening to what I am writing. What helps me in writing with such precision most times is, I believe, because I tend to write poetry only from response. And what I mean is I do not set out to write a poem. It must come to me; I believe in that ritual, that when it does, it comes with its own logic, magic or witchcraft, something in the air I breathe during that visitation of the muse, because it is then that the true poem comes to you. One you haven't written by your intelligence alone, but which was revealed. Defying linearity or stylistic flexibility, as you put it, is an internalized thing for me at this point. It just comes. And I think this is because, as stated already, I have learnt the importance of closely listening to what I write.

Tolulope: Your love poems, such as "Phenyl ethylamine," "Musleema," and "Aubade for Vanessa for Leaving Makurdi Without Goodbye," are striking for their unusual and nonconventional sensual gestures. "Confessions to Two Lovers & Things Felt In-Between" for example is addressed to two lovers. How do you approach love poetry differently from your more political or existential works?

Carl: I am, primarily, a love poet. Writing poetry began with love poems as a natural response to what was more real to me, as in my own experience, compared to the polemical poems I wrote then. The latter was simply a poor mimicry from the political poems I read at the time, nevertheless that I was trying to mirror what was around me too, the perennial burden, of course, of growing up and witnessing the chaos of Nigeria. But later in this journey I saw that my language was refined in romance than in political poems. Although this has greatly changed since I found that thing called "voice." The language is even now.

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To answer your question, I do not approach either love or the existential any differently than the response with which they're borne from. Rather, it is the experience that matters. And a poem is an act of reflecting on an experience or a post-mortem of it. Sorry to say again that "it just comes," and I say so in the very Wordsworthian manner, of that spontaneous overflow. So that in "Confessions," for example, it is just what it is, that "they told me I will enjoy / the lights of the city / but now I am having urban frostbite / from cata-tone / & neon blizzards." This is my post-mortem of that sour love, that experience, and the words that arrived to convey perform it.

Tolulope: You've emphatically mentioned your poetry comes to you, a kind of embodiment. But I'm curious, have there been moments when you've had to actively seek out the poem instead? Are there specific triggers, conditions, or constellations that invite these moments of poetic arrival? After all, to be embodied is also to be willing, how does that willingness shape the intentionality of your creative process?

Carl: I can still insist on poetry coming to me because there are some poems that begin from my mental space that sooner get evaporated, and I don't write them. And this happens because I waited for it to give me more but then it didn't. Maybe in the past I sought after a poem. The redemption, or freedom rather, is that I do not force any kind of writing at all in my life right now. If it doesn't come, it doesn't come. I'd rather let response do that job.

Tolulope: Your poems are satiric, although subtle and layered in ways that might escape casual notice. For example, "Down Payment on a Roasted Corn" closes with: "He who brings corn brings life!" Similarly, in "Tonite I Am Complete With All the Deaths My Country Has Gifted Me," the toast to bravery and hideousness has an ironic undertone. What role do you intend sarcasm to play in your poetry? How do you reconcile the grim realities of your subjects with these moments of biting humour, and how do you balance chastisement with restraint?

Carl: Something happens when you understand language in certain ways. For example, its limitations or sometimes, maybe, its uselessness or redundancy when writing the polemical. We have enough troubles already; tragedy is familiar and the stuff of tabloids. It is rammed into our consciousness daily. How do you as a poet, then, tell it differently, or in a way that is genuine and not just some masturbation of your faculty with language? Or not just as a

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manifestation of the desire to create art? Because this is what happens sometimes: poets writing to mourn when no one asked them to; writing to write, without actual heart. To show heart then becomes the goal for me. This is where humour and subtlety work for me. I want my reader to see themselves in the poem; this is one way to make them believe what I am saying and connect to it. And I feel humour does this because it makes us good judges of ourselves, rather than chastisement. Who am I to chastise even? How does doing so help with my hypocrisy? If it helps too, the Tiv language, my native language, is a language of humour generally, such that even insults come with humour or creativity. Say, your teeth are so scattered like broomsticks made to stand on a pile of shit. This is just one example. So maybe being Tiv also affects the way I infuse humour in my poetry.

Tolulope: Right, it's fascinating how language allows for such profound expression, yet it's heartbreaking to be conscious of the disservice that translation does to indigenous languages, the dissipation of their aesthetics and depth. Tiv is primarily spoken in Benue (a place I had the chance to visit in 2015), and Benue itself seems to hold a special place in your work. We encounter Makurdi and Gboko in several shades: the rustic Makurdi, the endearing Makurdi, but also the bereaved Gboko, as in "Coming for your head":

In Gboko, humans become Goods Only
perched on Toyota Tacomas
& Peugeot pickups – the fleeing.

However, we do not encounter these places as just another geographical location, but also as animated entities with their own agency. In the "Looping Machine," it says "Makurdi eating up my dreams/ Lonely, lovelorn, anxious. 30. Shall I marry?" How has living in or being connected to these places shape(d) your writing?

Carl: I spent a good number of years outside the school system after graduating from secondary school, and went to university very late, which happened to be in Makurdi, at the Benue State University. Before this time, I had read enough and was mostly bored by the school environment and the lectures. Being a student with lesser obligations, I had a lot of free time which I believed I put into pursuing the literary life, so-called. This happened in Makurdi. I read most of my great reads in the city, wrote my best poems here, fell deeply in and out of love with several women here, discovered Hitomaro, Sebald, language, founded

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a magazine, edited hundreds of thousands of words, and so on. I built my library here and the city also gifted me an idea for a great novel set in it. I'd say I found my writing self here. It is not just about how or if Makurdi shaped my writing; but that Makurdi is the place where I became a writer.

Tolulope: Invariably, places are important social networks to creatives, and so are ideologies. "Down Payment on a Roasted Corn" reflects political ideology and economic disparity through the symbolism of the Anunnaki. What do political leadership and economic inequality mean to you, and why/how do you articulate this tension in your poetry?

Carl: I borrowed the symbol of the Anunnaki from the Sumerian myth about extra-terrestrials or supernatural beings who'd colonized earth, and by editing their genes created man as a subspecies to work as labourers for them. This is how I see the current political situation in Nigeria; our politicians are these powerful gods, and by saying "the last Anunnaki," I'm referring to the politician the poem addresses, whose slogan "emi lo kan" represents this all-mightiness, the ultimate power, where all else is inconsequential. In this contract, the people can do nothing about his power because what can—to quote a favourite line from a poem I read a long time ago—"What can a rat's swollen greed do to a bag of rice?" I try to stay away from political poetry, and I stated why I do so in my essay "Homage To Memory." I believe other poets, especially of the older generation, have done just enough in that department. But when I do write it, however, I articulate tension—which I believe should be the prevailing character of a political poem—by situating myself in such a poem, showing how I am affected by the political climate. But I must say I do not always succeed in doing so, because I have found, as in this particular poem, that I could be just an observer.

Tolulope: Still on orientations. The breath of your poetry is extensive. In "May We Not Create a Vocabulary of Borders," you critique (post)colonial demarcations and their lingering effects on African unity. If there are any, how does the Pan-Africanist impulse influence your poetry, and what motivates your exploration of border tensions?

Carl: I don't like Pan-Africanism, in the sense that it is distracting because it resulted from a bourgeois consciousness than from the proletariat. It is distracting, first, because it tends to

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sell the idea of black homogeneity which just robs us of individual ingenuities, and I am talking about this on an ethnic unit scale here. It's a bigger debate for another time, not one to go into here. On a general note, you can therefore say it doesn't influence my poetry. Consciously, that is. I cannot account for any unconscious influence because I know it is there. On border tensions, it is simply this idea that we are all victims of history or several indoctrinations that tend to pit us against one another. I do not write about this because I am presenting a way for us to locate our shared humanity, but simply as caution for us to reflect on the ways we have allowed ourselves become vessels of hate. As Teju Coles says, "History assures us that many people get swept up in the flood of its seduction."

Tolulope: The line "Tell MLK Jr to shove his dream up his arse" seems to critique idealism in the face of harsh realities. Is this an indictment of impractical aspirations, or is it a call for rethinking approaches to true liberation in Africa and its diaspora?

Carl: I think it is smart how you quickly insert Africa's struggle of liberation after your initial concern on discarding idealism in the face of harsh reality, because thinking about your question and the poem that line is culled from, there isn't so much as a relationship with the sentiments you raise. That line was the result of a spontaneous thought but maybe it does reveal something of what you ask too.

"Tonite I Am Complete With All the Deaths My Country Has Gifted Me" was written from a place of deep frustration and could be read also as a work of glorifying a nihilist creed, which seems to be the way to cope with Nigeria. When I wrote the line I wanted to take it back, you know; it sounded obscene to me. But what could be truer than the unfiltered language of the unconscious which tends to know more about how we feel than our superego? So, I left the line there. For Africa's liberation, we must enforce decoloniality first, with the same violence of colonialism, as Fanon stated. Surely, this has nothing to do with combat or brute force, but in overhauling systems, so many things (cancellation of the celebration of Independence Days, for example, which is a bloody colonial reinforcement tool, because we were never ever dependent but conditioned to be so through colonialism), and so on.

Tolulope: And that is one of the intriguing dynamics of poetry, it reveals different facets to us, and as the unconscious seeps into the creative process, it also shapes interpretation. I've

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noticed that while you are critical of Pan-Africanism, you strongly embrace the idea of decolonization. Ideologically and in practice, how do you differentiate between the two? In what ways do you find Pan-Africanism limiting or insufficient, and why does decolonization resonate more deeply with you as a framework for liberation?

Carl: I wish this kind of discussion should be had at a table over bottle; that's when the dialectic animal charges and spews grand debates… I mean, this is Pan-Africanism we are talking about! Ja Rastafari! I-man! I-and-I… So, the thing is Pan-Africanism, like Independence, was a bourgeois struggle or fight, not the people's in general, and focused on aspects of imperial mimicry, in the ideas for Africans to have nation states after the models of the colonizers (in the case of Independence) and for Africans to have a certain homogeneity that reinforces a miseducation that we weren't a unified people in the first place. And this is also confusing in the sense that to the local Tiv man or Yoruba at the time what did Africa even mean? These were people who hadn't even survived the consciousness of the rural/ethnic public they belonged to, let alone ideals of a confederacy.

All you have to do is look at the history and source of Pan-Africanism: it did not even begin on African soil but in the diaspora, in pockets of England, and in North America, between the late 19th century and the first half of the 20th, resulting mainly from the intellectual heft accomplished by the diasporic Black community coming to terms with its human capital. They wanted to build an anti-imperial conglomerate of nations. But where were the strong institutions to build on—the extraordinary league of weak African countries at the time, whose case have even worsened? Decoloniality would have been every country's individual project of recovery; as I have already stated, the restoration of our humanity that was lost. You cannot fix the body if the spirit is broken. Decoloniality is more practical and truer, this latter truth is the main reason why the bourgeois and political class who benefit from it not happening will never canvass for it the way they proclaim ideas as democracy and nationalism. And one of the pits of Pan-Africanism today is the Rastafarian struggle which so far remained on an ideological plane of ghettoized fantasies of liberation. Decoloniality is a very practical thing, and we are not ready for it yet. The world and the powers don't even want it. It is dangerous.

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Tolulope: Your poem "Like Frankenstein Supine on the Rail" evokes the imagery of a laboring train questioning whether to revolt or remain in servitude, which gains even more essence when read against the Sumerian myth of the Anunnaki evoked in "Down Payment on a Roasted Corn." Do you see yourself or your poetry as revolutionary, and how do you perceive humanity's relentless pursuit of technological advancement, as explored in "Looping Machine"?

Carl: Great, great connection of these poems and the ideas you bring to them; but they are wrong as they are right too, maybe it's just the angles of poet and reader from which the poems are seen, and that's fine too. I don't know. My poems are not revolutionary, maybe at a microcosmic level, at least, to shift the reader's way of how they see the world, maybe that. To answer your question, it is not new for humans to imagine technological advancement as an invasion of our ways of life or threat even to our humanity. I mean, it was the very thing that made the First and Second World Wars devastating and different from the medieval wars that trailed Europe and the old world. The scale of destruction and humanity's realisation of what violence can be wreaked on itself with the technology we have, the fear and the horror of our capacity for mayhem. I just found a way to bring in this sentiment with the train—this is the Kaduna train—and I was thinking of its bestial character, as a gargantuan automobile and the noise it makes, its movement, and the cases of bandit attacks that were launched on it in 2023 which led to the death of Dr. Chinelo. So, the arrival of the train for me wasn't just the train itself but its history. And this was some kind of representation of violence for me. "The Looping Machine" is just a poem about the crisis of becoming 30 years old and feeling unfulfilled; I know it has postmodernist angst but there's barely much connection to machines.

Tolulope: Your shorter poems, like "Remember Garissa" and "After Rain in Rwanda," powerfully condense tragedy into acute, minimalistic forms imitating the suddenness of horror. Likewise, the fragmented structure of "May We Not Create a Vocabulary of Borders" mirrors its preoccupation of dislocation and identity. How intentional are you with the forms your poetry takes?

Carl: I wished you stopped your question at the first observation because I have a Sebald quote that answers that, which is the fact that it is almost impossible to address with art

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that which is already horrific. The Rwanda poem was up to 30 lines but with every edit, I realized I couldn't satisfyingly speak about that tragedy with poetic heart and fidelity. And it is a good thing as I think about this in retrospect, for I hadn't encountered Sebald then or was conscious of this way of thinking about art. So, it is just as you have said; for me I therefore go to minimalism if I ultimately have to write about the horrific, which I have now learnt to let be.

Or to use indirection, the way Achebe accomplishes so much in the poem "Air Raid," whose first line I borrowed for my Garissa poem. I also deploy structure sometimes to create effect or to reinforce message. I actually had this phase and hardly do this today, simply because I have cut back on writing poems with a lot of tension in them. But when the spirit leads, or when it happens by itself, as in a poem like "Sometimes I Need a Catapult to Aim," I allow the disorganization to remain on the page to show, to the attentive passer-by, that there is turmoil here, or chaos.

Tolulope: Poems like "Sudanese" and "Bombs Keep Going Off in the Middle East" confront global oversimplifications and misrepresentations of Africa and the Middle East, like the naivety of the child poetic persona in "Sudanese":

> […] I ate Cornflakes
> every morning & knew
> you were a distant continent that will not happen to me
> even when I hear you die in a Salif Keita song
> Screaming to heaven, Eloi eloi eloi eloi lama sabachthani.

How do you navigate the complexities of alienation and privilege in representing these narratives so that they do not become another perception of distant spectres? By distant spectres, I mean essentialized dystopias or unsettling horrors that are reduced to the vanity appeal of aesthetics.

Carl: This has a similar ring to the last question, no? I think what happens is the poet's empathy or understanding of life that comes from everyday learning. Some of us are just fortunate, I guess. I learnt from an earlier time to always try to put the heart into the art. To avoid being the ventriloquist. If you are not writing about your own pain or tragedy, you need a way to engage it so that your reader can see that—and let me just paraphrase

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Sebald—you have been thinking about the topic and considered it for a long time. Because as most times, we write about these events from places of comfort. Recently, a poet revealed in a Zoom conversation how far removed she is from the trauma in her works and must imagine herself as a victim. Yet her collection is one long ride of trauma poetry. Why then can't she write about her beautiful life instead?

So, it can be the failure of empathic knowledge, which I think is when the artist falls into the pit of what you have described as "essentialized dystopias or unsettling horrors that are reduced to the vanity appeal of aesthetics." (Lovely context, by the way. I'm going to be using this expression a lot henceforth. Haha.) If the story or pain is not yours, there must be respect in how you write about it. And one other way I do this, as you may have noticed, especially from the poems you have cited here, is that I include my privilege of distance from the things I write about in the poem, using Realism in such cases, rather than abstract imageries: "watching Netflix with a second hand Hewlett Packard laptop […] eating Cornflakes," etc. It's interesting as I only make this observation now. These things just become internalized, I guess. I'm lucky.

Tolulope: Mortality is a recurring motif in your poems, serving as a solemn reminder of death, the brevity of time, and the essence of life. How does this preoccupation with mortality influence the emotional undercurrent of your poetry?

Carl: Ahmed Maiwada wrote in *We're Fish* that "death is no vacation / to follow your stars." Yet the Nigerian star is death. It doesn't matter if you want to follow it or not. Nigeria has made me very conscious of death but sadly not even in a productive way as to inspire the philosophical but to constantly be tortured by its banality. Death has no meaning in Nigeria, and it is sadly that it is this context that mortality appears in my poetry. I'd have loved for it to bear a more profound sense, as in Japanese death poetry where you come across the simple but deeply reflective lines. Mortality does not appear in my poems as an intricate, internalized, or accepted motif, but a hazard of the environment I find myself in. If I am writing from response therefore, what surrounds me will find a way to reflect itself in the poetry.

Tolulope: There have been criticisms of contemporary Nigerian poets for what some call "empty evocations." Your works, however, are remarkably grounded and devoid of these

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tendencies. What is your observation or sentiment about the current generation of Nigerian poets?

Carl: I am currently working on an essay (two, in fact) on this question. (As you may know, I have already written "O, Griefa," where I decried the overused grief trope in the New School poets.) My current essay, however, deals with poetics, how the New School groomed its poetics, wherefore I am looking at exploring Lacan's *The Symbolic Order* in situating our poet's development and understanding of language, and so on. So, you shall find an extensive answer to your question in this essay. Also, generally speaking, if you have followed my sometimes unofficial criticism of Nigerian poetry today you will know of course that I have been decrying what I call "the imagination of the singular trope," where poets have suddenly and sadly chosen, unwittingly sometimes, which is rather unfortunate, but at the same time exposing ignorance and the absence of growth, the usage of similar imageries and metaphorization in craft.

To quote Shlovsky, "Images are given to poets; the ability to remember them is far more important than the ability to create them." But what this causes is the entry or habituation into what he calls "automation." So, there's that automatic redial to an already pervasive aesthetic the community runs on, that most poets, sadly devoid of fresh language, relapse into. I am not the first to say it, but there's been concern voiced about how our poems now all sound the same. But then, of course, it is interesting and revealing to study all of this. Because there are still very good voices among the gathering dust. But I mention no names for now.

Tolulope: Yes, there are. A handful, actually. I suppose a part of the problem is with visibility and new media sensationalism which flatten the voices seen. Not just African political leadership or interfering international agencies, your chastisement does not spare the creatives or intellectuals who are often seen as the conscience of the society. For instance, in "Coming for Your Head," you contrast research papers with political negligence, all against grim and turbulent social realities that do not discriminate: "Moloch's worshippers make merry while we/ submit research papers to Princeton:/ The Beautification of the Countryside with Red Flowers" while "Getting Out the Port of Spain" critiques the migration of African writers to the Global North, which is "the real estate of the new African writer/

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where all his gains are, lest he amounts to/ nothing, as a friend tells me." What would you say are the roles and responsibilities of creatives in contemporary African society?

Carl: That line about the Princeton thing was a way for me to self-indict because I am also a creative and an intellectual, so-to-speak. The same way I wanted to show how fucked we are. African writers and intellectuals have fought all the good fight, and today the harsh economic realities of the post-colony haven't given intellectuals much time to do very much about the political reality. Our best shot is to witness and document, I guess. We are gradually experiencing the brain rot age, and in the near future, there'd be certainly no need for intellectuals. It's all a mess. I fear even that questions like you've just asked will soon be very irrelevant, if not useless. And I guess this answers your question, too. We don't have much of a role. It used to be said that we tell compelling stories, of representation, to enrich the African man, stories capable of empowering the oppressed. But with late capitalism and the over-commercialization of society today, where is the place for such stories? That kind of art is to be found in very small spaces now. That kind of art has left the cathedral, as Walter Benjamin would have it. Thus, the intellectual's abilities are now also put up for joining the train of capitalism. Thus, migrations, for example. Even for me, I already see myself teaching at one of these American universities; it's like a habitus, you know. How much more can one do?

Tolulope: Hehe, like you said: man must up and go. "Telex from The Past" stands out as an Africanfuturist poem, contemplating the tension between past, present, and futures, from an African locus of enunciation, through the lens of technology and myth. How do you see Africanfuturism intersecting with poetry, and what role does it play in reclaiming African narratives/past and re-imagining the futures?

Carl: Good question. And the thing is I have already started a conversation about this in my first "Coming in from the Cold" *dispatches* (an essay series I initiated to randomly talk about art). I'd rather say that African futurism is an incursion rather than an intersection in our poetry. I also spoke in that essay about its elitist-elitist status for readers. But what I shall say about it here, pardon me to quote myself, is that it's a "discourse of the postmodernist reality of Africa juxtaposed with black identity, technology, dystopia and utopia, late capitalism, AI, The Singularity question, the invocation of African myths and gods, borne-ing

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back sometimes into the past to understand the present, and more—in defining the individual and collective existence of Africa in personhood, place, and time."

I also see it as trying to fill a gap in what I call the waiting end of the postcolonial continuum, you know, where there's nothing more. After disillusion, what next? Without answer, the creative processes of our contemporary writers, and now poets, leap into the future, into 'futurescapes.' It is the great unconscious at work again, the neurosis here being the restiveness of the artistic mind to find answers or to imagine what will become of his world in such state as the silent dystopia we find ourselves in.

Tolulope: It has been truly enriching to engage deeply with your poems and to have this thoughtful dialogue with you. To bring it to a close, for now, could you share what (creative) projects you're currently working on and future pursuits?

Carl: I have been interested in the idea of man leaving the cathedral, the way Walter Benjamin speaks of art leaving the cathedral when it loses its aura, a thought he pursued in his popular essay on the reproducibility of art in the age of mechanical reproduction. With the age of surveillance and data capitalism, what is the deep end of man's several reinventions of self in such an age, and how does this affect his ability to be a more original person? I'm calling this "exitus cathedralis," and I'm working on an essay to foreground this. Other creative pursuits include a novel-in-progress titled *Astralite.* There are critical essays in the works too. A second poetry collection, *We are Carbon.* And maybe, I shall go into creating short visual content on writing, philosophy, photography, and criticism soon. Also: I am learning German. So, *danke*, you too, for an engaging conversation.

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Notes on contributor

Tolulope Oke is a creative and a researcher with interests at the intersection of narratives, decoloniality, and technological innovation. Tolulope is also the publisher of *Lunaris Review* and the co-facilitator of the Toyin Falola Prize. This dialogue is one in a series of dialogues with contemporary Nigerian and African poets.

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JOURNAL INFORMATION

JACLR is a peer-reviewed open access journal that aims to stimulate scholarly debate in English Studies, comparative literature and related disciplines. Publishing cutting edge research from emerging scholars since 2013, the journal is published biannually and now features original research articles and creative writing pieces alongside book and film reviews and cultural interviews. Its mission is to encourage diverse perspectives and foster innovative research within our field. The journal is indexed in EBSCO and is featured on academic sites such as Google Scholar and Academia. It is published by the SIIM (Studies on Intermediality and Intercultural Mediation) research group and is supported by the Vice Rectorate of Quality at the Complutense University of Madrid.

The upcoming winter issue of the *Journal of Artistic Creation and Literary Research* (*JACLR*) will be officially open for submissions in the upcoming months (*JACLR* 13.2) although we invite original manuscripts all year round. All pieces received **before November 1, 2025** will be considered for publication in the following volume.

Submissions may address, but are not limited to, the following areas:

- Utopian/Dystopian Studies
- Gothic Fiction
- Comparative Literature
- Critical Theory

- Cultural Studies
- Masculinities and Gender Studies, Feminism, and Queer Studies
- Film Studies
- Postcolonial and Decolonial Studies
- American Studies
- Irish Studies
- Medical Humanities
- Digital Humanities
- Corpus, Contrastive, and Cognitive Linguistics
- Applied Linguistics
- Translation Studies

The journal particularly welcomes submissions exploring emerging or interdisciplinary approaches in these fields.

From issue 13.2, JACLR will become part of REUNIDO, the publishing house portal of the University of Oviedo for academic journals. Moreover, it will still published by the SIIM research group at the Department of English Studies of the Complutense University of Madrid, with the support of the Vice-Rectorate for Quality UCM. It is an honour to share these exciting plans of growth!

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GENERAL SUBMISSION INFORMATION

Research articles should be between 6,000 and 9,000 words, including abstract, keywords, notes and bibliography. Book and film reviews should adhere to 1000-1,500 words. JACLR publishes works both in Spanish and English. Research manuscripts should be well written, have a clear focus and follow the 17th edition of the Chicago Notes and Bibliography. A short (150 words) author bio-note is also required in all submissions. In addition, uncorrected manuscripts with grammatical errors or spelling mistakes will not be considered for judging. If your first language is not English, make sure your work is checked by a copywriter before submission.

For more information and review recommendation with partner Editorial Houses, please check the journal's website, https://www.ucm.es/siim/jaclr-style-guide, the AEDEAN communication channels and the journal's social media, where the CfP will be announced in due time.

ONGOING CALLS FOR PAPERS

JACLR Special Issue: "Visibilizing Intersectional Girlhood(s) in Contemporary Anglophone Cultural Manifestations"

Grant PID2022-136904NB-I00 funded by MCIN/AEI/ 10.13039/501100011033
and by "ERDF A way of making Europe"

This special issue is led by guest editors Sara Tabuyo-Santaclara (Universidade de Vigo) and Iria Seijas-Pérez (Universidade de Vigo) as part of the research project "Communitas/Immunitas: Relational Ontologies in Atlantic Anglophone Cultures of the 21st Century" (PID2022-136904NB- I00) funded by MCIN/AEI/10.13039/501100011033 and by

"ERDF A way of making Europe". P.I. Belén Martín-Lucas. **Deadline for submissions: September 1, 2025.**

In recent years, girls have been progressively gaining increased visibility in popular culture. 2023 has been considered by different media outlets as "the year of the girl" (Firth 2023), which became especially noticeable on social media. Trends like girl math or girl dinner filled sites such as TikTok or Instagram where girls may find a space to express themselves and connect with other like-minded people. The release of Barbie (2023), Taylor Swift's Eras Tour (2023-2024) or more recently Charli XCX's album brat (2024) have all interpellated girls and worked as grounds for connection through enacting girlhood. Nevertheless, it seems that these girlhood trends are inevitably performed through their adaptation to idealized images of girls shaped by postfeminist market requirements.

Girlhood Studies addresses precisely the experiences and representations of girls in a range of formats and manifestations (Mitchel, Reid-Walsh and Kirk 2008, vii). The field of Girlhood Studies did not begin to take shape until the 1990s when girls began to be considered as agentic subjects to analyze, instead of incomplete individuals expected to become passive women (Currie, Kelly, and Pomerantz 2009, 4; Kearney 2009, 11).

This field constitutes an interdisciplinary approach to girlhood in a variety of settings and cultural productions, a transnational perspective that considers the particularities of both their collective and individual experiences in terms of their political, cultural, and/or historical contexts.

Although girls have been historically marginalized due to their lack of visibility and presence across society (Kearney 2009), they are currently experiencing a moment of hypervisibility that we are seeking to address. Anita Harris has developed the concept of the future girl, a particular kind of young woman that is hailed as the ideal subject of late modernity and praised for her ability to adapt to the constant fluctuation of her social, political and cultural context (2004, 1). Several girlhood scholars have addressed the conflicting stereotypes that are imposed on girls, often dividing them as either innocent, fragile and obedient or as hyper-sexualized postfeminist subjects, thus perpetuating patriarchal ideals and norms (Gonick 2006; Harris 2006; McRobie 2007). In order to fit in, girls may internalize these reductive and damaging roles as acceptable at the same time as

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they feel pressure to abandon other possibilities for self-awareness outside what has been established as "normal".

Following Mitchell, Reid-Walsh and Kirk (2008), the aim of this issue is not to declare a universalized or monolithic definition of girlhood, on the contrary, we seek to attend to the particularities of girlhoods, and how cultural, social and political differences influence individual and collective experiences. To do so, we seek to rely on notions of intersectionality (Crenshaw 1991), which have served to pluralize girlhood (Currie 2015), and feminist theories, as these allow for the examination of the many ways intersecting oppressions (Crenshaw 1991) become intertwined to "fix" girls within the matrix of domination (Hill Collins 2000) that supports the maintenance of heteropatriarchal hierarchies. This special issue aims to provide an intersectional approach to girlhood(s) by analyzing their depiction in cultural productions such as films, series, and literature, among others. Moving from stereotypical notions of girls as delicate or as sexualized subjects, this publication will attempt to recognize the different forms of girlhood(s) that exist across society, thus giving prominence to those girls who are often rendered invisible. Contributions to this special issue on visibilizing intersectional girlhood(s) in contemporary Anglophone cultural manifestations may address topics such as (but not limited to):

- Queering girlhood: Sapphic and trans girlhoods
- Indigenous girlhoods
- Girls and post-feminism
- Girls and activism
- Dissenting girlhoods
- Utopian/dystopian representations of girlhoods
- Refugee girlhoods
- Intersections of gender, class, race, ability, sexuality and/or religion across girlhoods
- Postcolonial or decolonial girlhoods

Creative pieces such as short stories and poetry (though we are open to other formats of artistic creations such as video essays) on the above-mentioned topics are also welcome for submission. Interviews to writers and scholars and reviews of books, films, and TV shows

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that focus on girlhoods can also be submitted. Should you be interested in these forms of contributions, please contact the guest editors with your proposals beforehand.

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A peer-reviewed, open access, biannual journal, with access to full texts, JACLR is an initiative of the SIIM research group and the Department of English Studies of the Complutense University of Madrid, with the support of the Vice-Rectorate for Quality UCM.

The journal publishes **interdisciplinary research** related to comparative literary studies, critical theory, applied linguistics and semiotics, as well as associated educational aspects. It has also expanded its focus by welcoming **book and film reviews** alongside scholarly **interviews**. It also publishes original contributions of **artistic creation** in order to publicize and disseminate these works. *JACLR* also publishes a selection of works submitted to the Literary Creation Award.

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