

A Rich Field Full of Pleasant Surprises

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Essays on Contemporary Literature in Honour
of Professor Socorro Suárez Lafuente

Edited by

José Francisco Fernández
and Alejandra Moreno Álvarez

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FOREWORD

Socorro Suárez Lafuente is Professor of English Literature at the University of Oviedo, Spain. She is a scholar of international renown whose academic career spans almost forty years. During this time she has given lectures on English Literature all over the world and has published numerous papers on postcolonial literature, feminism and contemporary writing in English. She has also been president of the Spanish Association for English and North-American Studies (AEDEAN). As an enthusiastic teacher, she has infused her research students with love and respect for all forms of literature in English. This collection of papers, written by her former PhD candidates, now most of them lecturers in different universities in Spain, are presented here in homage to her exceptional qualities as a teacher and as a human being.

PREFACE

A GENEALOGY OF PASSIONATE READERS

ISABEL CARRERA SUÁREZ
UNIVERSITY OF OVIEDO

It was with great pleasure that I received the news of this volume and that I accept the challenge of unfolding the academic influence and career of my colleague and friend María Socorro Suárez Lafuente, with whom I have shared many years of professional and personal experiences. Since we first converged in the English Department at the University of Oviedo in 1981, I have been a privileged witness of her impact and her power to inspire younger generations in their academic pursuits within the field of English Studies.

Dr Suárez Lafuente –Socorro in Spain, María internationally, after a number of amusing alterations of her name abroad– began her academic career in Spain in the difficult but hopeful decade of the 1970s, obtaining her English Degree from Oviedo in 1975, the year of the dictator’s death and also –relevantly– the International Year of Women, as proclaimed by the UN. The subsequent transition into democracy and freedom made this period unique for all those who lived in Spain during that time. At higher education level, the decade brought a new official emphasis on research which conditioned academic careers; teaching was deemed a necessary but unrewarding task, and only committed educators such as Patricia Shaw, then Chair of English Studies in Oviedo and an extraordinary mentor herself, gave full value to excellent tutors and supervisors. Fortunately, Dr Suárez Lafuente soon proved to be outstanding on both accounts. She was part of a Spanish generation of university students who had finally accessed higher education without belonging to the social elite; like many in that cohort, she has always valued learning and the public policies that allow equal access, and has exercised her social responsibility as a university lecturer. In a world where competition is too often rewarded above collaboration and training, she has fully supported others

throughout her professional years. Nothing could be more appropriate as a tribute, therefore, than a collection of works by her former doctoral students, who can vouch for this generosity better than anyone.

Summarizing Dr Suárez Lafuente's academic achievements is a complex task, given the variety and abundance of her work. For over three decades, she has been a key actor in English Studies at the University of Oviedo, one of the oldest universities in Spain, where English Studies has been taught very successfully since the 1960s; she has also contributed highly to the national development of these studies through her research, teaching and coordination tasks, not least as a founding member of AEDEAN (the Spanish association for English Studies), which she more recently presided over for six years. Her early research focused on narrative in English, and her work has continued to explore literature in its many guises ever since. She was one of the first academics in the country to specialize in contemporary literature (with a PhD on Malcolm Bradbury's work, 1978), at a time when studying the present still required a defence in the face of canonical views. This would not be her only innovative line, as she soon entered the then new worlds of feminist theory and criticism (with publications on Doris Lessing, Grace Paley, Rosamond Lehman, among others), literatures in English (particularly Australian and Canadian authors, such as Elizabeth Jolley and Margaret Atwood) and the study of intertextuality, including a pioneering analysis of the Spanish nineteenth-century classic, *La Regenta*, in the international context of writing. Her many publications on narrative in English are too extensive to be done justice here, but mention must be made at least of their admirable scope: they engage with a wide range of authors, periods and geographical areas, deploying with equal ease classic literary poetics, feminist theory or cultural approaches, and offer illuminating close readings of an impressive number of texts. Dr Suárez Lafuente's work maps the history of reading in the last quarter of the twentieth century, and fortunately continues the exploration into the twenty-first.

As a lecturer, Dr Suárez Lafuente has been inspiring generations of students in the many courses taught throughout the years. Having started her teaching career in the areas of languages, history and English literature, she gradually moved to more specialized literary courses and, after the institutionalization in Spain of Women's Studies, taught in the Erasmus Mundus MA Programme and the highly recognized PhD programmes in Gender and Diversity in Oviedo. She has also taught extensively and successfully, by invitation, in a number of national and international universities, and occasionally supervised PhD students in institutions other than Oviedo, as is the case with one of the editors of this

volume. An indefatigable traveller, she has exchanged knowledge with colleagues in many centres, networks and associations in English Studies and Women's Studies around the world (ESSE and ATHENA, respectively, amongst the most relevant), adding to the cross-fertilization so necessary in research and knowledge.

To this biography of research, teaching and activism must be added a long list of contributions to events and to cultural sections of newspapers and journals, which have resulted in wide dissemination of literatures in English among the general public. A remarkable characteristic of Dr Suárez Lafuente's history is her effortless movement across discourses and over language barriers. She is fluent in English, Spanish and German, reads many other literatures in translation and never tires of discussing literature with other book lovers, wherever they may be situated. Her hunger for reading makes her well acquainted with an imposing array of international authors. This aspect of her personality is well known in local circles, and she has many a time saved a cultural review by supplying expert commentary on "obscure" writers, regardless of origin and language.

Such passion for reading, often at the vocational heart of literary specialists, but exacerbated in Socorro, is a key to the attraction she exerts in many PhD students, combined, of course, with her academic competence and unassuming manner, her reliability, patience and dedication to students. Thus she has created a long genealogy of highly trained, competent readers and professionals (over 20 PhDs supervised so far), who are able to dissect the poetics of texts, to practice hermeneutics, and to continue the transmission of knowledge and the complex reading skills required in our contemporary world.

A skilled oral narrator herself, Socorro tells a story which traces the family origins of such a genealogy: a maternal grandmother who, at a time when reading was considered a subversive activity in women, was an avid reader of novels, and would delay her return home from her daily tasks in order to read, hiding the books in the working basket carried over her shoulder. Such a grandmother would have been proud of how far Professor Suárez Lafuente has come, and equally so of the long genealogy of keen and highly competent readers that now follow in her wake.

CHAPTER ONE

STILL POSTCOLONIAL BUT TREADING THE GLOBAL PATH

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Abstract

Literary studies are no exception to the trend contemporary humanities are moving towards in a redefinition in the context of globalization. Literatures in English from geographical backgrounds as diverse as Britain, Ireland, America as well as a vast array of postcolonial countries are currently finding a common ground in emerging fields such as global studies. Given the preeminence of the English language on a world-wide scale, these literatures are expected to become more influential and thus reach higher levels of readership across the continents, beyond the United States or the assorted realms of Commonwealth societies. This means that their coverage of contemporary issues and themes, such as migration or hybridization, will continue expanding, in such a way that the notion of a contemporary literature in English will most likely bear a global label.

Keywords: Globalization, Literatures in English, Postcolonial Studies, Global Canon.

Global we are, although in no way do we find it easy to discern exactly what this means; Zygmunt Bauman has said that the more one uses this term (“a fad word,” “a shibboleth”) the more opaque it becomes (1998, 1). However, we can identify assorted interpreters and signposts of this new era. Ever since Marshall McLuhan talked about the “global village,” terms such as worldwide or international have been dropped progressively in favour of nouns and adjectives derived from “Globe,” a synonym of planet Earth that seems to encompass better the idea of totality that we now attach to most relationships across borders in contemporary society.

Over the last decades, all the main academic fields have tried to adapt to, cope with, and explain the landmarks of this new period in history. Communication and media studies are at the forefront of this process since the internet or the large TV networks have turned into some of the most important instruments and icons of globalization. McLuhan’s colleague and disciple, Derrick de Kerckhove in *Planetary Mind* (1997) has pointed out that in a few decades we have made a rapid journey through technological progress, marked by the rise of a mass televised culture; computers that have made access to information more ready and tailor-made to consumer’s tastes and needs, and the final stage of telecommunications that will eventually enable diverse cultures and people of condition and nationality to produce a single collective intelligence. In turn, history and political studies have covered the developments that revolve around the aftermath of the Cold War, Fukuyama’s pronouncements on the end of history or Huntington’s theory on the clash of civilizations. Anthropologists, philosophers and linguists like Baudrillard, Deleuze, Lyotard, Foucault, Derrida, Lacan, Bauman, Todorov or Eco have tried to map the global condition within the framework of postmodernism, poststructuralism or semiotics. Critical theory, postcolonial and cultural studies have focused on colonization and its sequels; while Frantz Fanon gave intellectual support for decolonization movements, Edward Said and Spivak denounced the prejudices of the West in the depiction of alien cultures; Robert Young, among others, has studied the nature of multicultural, hybrid societies.

Likewise, literary studies, and particularly each of the national literatures have attempted to reposition their aims within the context of this new global society. In the case of the literatures written in English the fact is that they have traditionally covered a large geographical area (as happens with those in Spanish or French), therefore their “inter-national” concerns and comparatist critical strategies are not new. However, the idea of the existence of a literary production that is not primarily associated to any specific nationality, having, instead, an international scope, is

especially important at present. There are some precedents in the past two centuries, though, that can be traced back to Goethe, one of the earliest comparatists; he wrote about *Weltliteratur* in these terms: “I am convinced that a world literature is in process of formation, that the nations are in favour of it and for this reason make friendly overtures” (Strich 1949, 349); Goethe also stated: “National literature is now a rather unmeaning term; the epoch of world literature is at hand, and everyone must strive to hasten its approach” (Eckermann 1839, 204). In turn, Karl Marx also wrote about a unified world market that would eventually result in the emergence of some kind of literature on an international scale: “National one-sidedness and narrow-mindedness become more and more impossible, and from the numerous national and local literatures, there arises a world literature” (1972, 552-3).

From a philological perspective, Robert Curtius devoted much of his work to studying the identity of a single European culture. He argued that a substantial part of the continent had shared common features from Classical to Medieval times, actually considering Latin as the first vehicle of an international culture. Subsequently, when this language lost its hegemonic position, the new national vernacular cultures started the fight to inherit such status. It was French that first took preeminence, with Paris attracting writers and publishers from all over Europe, later extending this influence throughout the world. This city effectively became what authors such as Kjetil Jakobsen call a world capital of culture (2007) or Pascale Casanova “a new Babel,” a “Cosmopolis,” “a crossroads of the artistic world” (2004, 30) so important that it was capable of turning local artists into international figures through a process of denationalization (2004, 84).

However, by the end of the 20th century it was clear that the French hegemony had been replaced by English-speaking centres such as New York and, arguably, London; at some point, the importance of formerly colonial territories also rose to attain the standards of the metropolises. In this respect, Ali Mazrui has analyzed the impact of English in different regions of the world, recording its territorial advances to conclude that: “The English language is the most successful language in human history. It has brought more people together than any other tongue” (2000, 26). Although this may seem hyperbolic, the argument is supported by data from myriads of sources that confirm the advance of English in fields where it had not formerly been the language of choice, as is the case with diplomacy (traditionally conducted in French) or in European Union administration. Along this line, Stuart Hall thinks that globalization is centred in the West and speaks English, widening the scope of this

language to make it reach beyond the boundaries of Britain and the United States: “[This global mass culture] speaks Anglo-Japanese, Anglo-French, Anglo-German or Anglo-English indeed. It is a new form of international language” (1991, 28). On the contrary, one realizes that minor or “decentred” languages have little capacity to reach an international audience and writers who use them fare similarly badly if they are not translated into one of the major tongues; as Pascale Casanova has pointed out: “having no existence, visibility, or recognition outside their national literary space, they do not exist literarily” (2004, 279). Therefore, writing in English can be considered a major asset since it enables writers to reach readers from all corners of the world in the original version; this language has become the best linguistic choice for the new category labelled by scholars such as Michael Valdez (1995) or Hickey and Ruprecht (2005) as “global literature.”

This is particularly true of postcolonial literatures, traditionally studied from a comparative stance; Simon Gikandi refers to them as, “cosmopolitan in character and ambition, and transcendental of the nation and the national narrative” (2006, 69). Revathi Krishnaswamy argues that little research has been done so far on the relationship/influence between postcolonial and global studies; this scholar has tried to find reasons for this lack of convergence and, among them, she mentions the fact that in academia postcolonialism has evolved in the field of the humanities and has been mainly related to topics such as Eurocentric dominance, as well as critical practices in the area of hermeneutics and deconstruction; on the contrary, globalization has been studied mainly by the social sciences and is methodologically positivistic and concerned with a post/neo-colonial present (2008, 2). However, this is no hindrance for Krishnaswamy to admit that postcolonial and global studies share their main historical and geopolitical points of reference and she eventually mentions several critical studies focused on the parallel ways of postcolonial and global studies. Notably among them, Ahmad (1992), Jameson (1998) and During (1998, 2000), have given rise to “a proliferation of theoretical concepts and terminology” that have found common ground between both fields (Krishnaswamy 2008, 2).

Considering the thematic intersections between the postcolonial and the global agenda some issues feature prominently; most of them are overtly socio-political: the role of capitalism, multinationals, neocolonialism and the international division of labour; Third World development and poverty; the role of Eurocentrism in debates over cultural power, as well as theories of Western supremacy such as Orientalism; civil rights, especially those related to social, racial or ethnic

minorities (also associated to the concept of the subaltern or “the other”); centre vs. margins or periphery; power, political oppression and dictatorship; gender and women’s condition and vindication; spatial theory. In fact, we can say that postcolonial studies tend to be more contextual than textual¹; Helen Tiffin (1991) or Stephen Slemmon (1991) have set out in various ways the privileged attention that postcolonialism has paid to historic, political and social issues of the modern and contemporary age; hence, the connection with areas such as Cultural Studies and Global Studies is obvious. Similarly, Graham Huggan argues that

postcolonial studies, had already liberally drawn on a number of different disciplines –notably history, geography, sociology and political science– in their efforts to unravel the complex asymmetries, and no less subtle complicities, of imperial rule. What is new is a sense, sharpened no doubt by the institutional success of cultural studies, that the postcolonial field is rapidly transforming itself into a prime location for the experimental deployment of cutting-edge interdisciplinary methods in the humanities and social sciences as a whole. (2008, 4)

The idea of the connection between the global and postcolonial literatures in English was not totally new and, at a time when no mention of globalization had yet been made, Norman Jeffares already wrote that “It is perhaps because of the existence of an outside and overseas audience that the different kinds of English written today in India, in Africa, in the Antipodes, in Asia, or in the West Indies, are not likely to become too local in interest” (1965, xiii). Jeffares further said that the best of Commonwealth writers (many of them starting their careers by then) were read “for the supranational qualities in their work because they bring new ideas, new interpretations of life to us ... The standards of judgement are not national standards. Standards of the critic must be cosmopolitan” (1965, xiv). From a contemporary stance, Annia Loomba believes that the discipline of postcolonial studies is marked by its connections with present times as well as by its involvement in the cultural and socioeconomic practices which define our present-day “globality” (1998, 256-7); similarly, Terry Eagleton stresses the presence of writers from former colonial territories as part of a modern international world canon:

¹ Even when poststructuralist terminology is used it tends to be qualified in favour of extratextual or social issues: “what might be called a deconstructive practice in some Caribbean literature and criticism is not the kind of hermeneutic impasse which characterizes, for example, the Yale School of deconstructionists” (Benson 1994, 293-4).

The fourth stage is when the empire writes back ... The greatest revolutionaries of literature, as Casanova comments, are to be found among the ranks of those struggling to get out from under an imposed colonial language, and who are compelled to invent any number of ingenious devices to do so. (2005)

The impact of postcolonial writers is measured not only in terms of the novelty of the topics they deal with or the technical approaches they use but also in their transnational condition based on the perspective of being at home and away at the same time or, in Appadurai's terms, because writers have become representatives of the global ethnosphere, consisting of "tourists, immigrants, refugees, exiles, guest workers and other moving peoples" (1990, 297)². Although they had not always been welcome in the former metropolitan centres³, with the passing of time postcolonial authors have turned into one of the hallmarks of contemporary English-speaking societies such as Britain, Canada and Australia, contributing to their multicultural condition, to some the archetypal model of 21st century society; as reflected in Bhabha's statement:

Increasingly, 'national' cultures are being produced from the perspective of disenfranchised minorities. The most significant effect of this process is not the proliferation of 'alternative histories of the excluded' producing, as some would have it, a pluralist anarchy. What my examples show is the changed basis for making international connections. (1994, 6)⁴

Among those representing postcolonial and global hybridization or migration, journalist and essayist Pico Iyer could be considered a paradigm; born in England, to Indian parents, he was educated at Eton, Oxford and Harvard and he still proudly claims his international

² Along this line, critics such as Paul Gilroy (1987) or Dick Hebdige (1996) refer to the migrant experience as one of the major icons of the global age. In turn, Michael Valdez considers Conrad as one of the forebears of this new cultural category, probably because "he remained something of an alien in his adopted country. Speaking English with a heavy Polish accent, criticized for his occasionally unidiomatic prose, visibly indefinable as a foreigner" (1995, 68-9).

³ Jamaican-born Stuart Hall refers rather ironically to the process which has also turned Britain into a multicultural country when he says: "in the very moment when finally Britain convinced itself it had to decolonize, it had to get rid of them, we all came home. As they hauled down the flag, we got on the banana boat and sailed right into London" (1991, 24).

⁴ Pascale Casanova even suggests some kind of superiority in what she calls "writers from the periphery" that she attributes to their "openness to international experience" (2004, 94).

allegiance: “I know a little about the Global Soul ... I’ve never been in a position to vote, and, in fact, I’ve never held a job in the country where I more or less live ... I’ve grown up, too, with a keen sense of the blessings of being unaffiliated; it has meant that almost everywhere is new and strange to me” (2000, 22-4). Salman Rushdie features prominently in the category of global fiction writer. Born in a Muslim Bombay environment and educated in secular British schools, he will evince a wide international scope in the selection of his settings: India, Pakistan, Nicaragua, Argentina or Spain. Many critics present Rushdie as an archetypal citizen of the world; for example, Minoli Salgado states that “his ‘rootlessness’ is part and parcel of his self-perception as an internationalist belonging to too many places at once” (2000, 39); Paul White calls him a “post-colonial cosmopolitan.” Some even point out the negative consequences of his position; this is the case with Betty Jean Craig, who remarks that Rushdie’s international exposure has eventually proved harmful:

The storm created by Salman Rushdie’s novel *The Satanic Verses* starkly reveals certain perils attending the transition from a world of cultures separated by linguistic, religious, racial, and geographic barriers to a world of cultural interpenetration. (1991, 395)

An opinion that has been confirmed by subsequent crises such as those sparked by the cartoons about Mohamed published in Denmark, or the burning of Qur’ans by a radical pastor in Gainesville, Florida. V.S. Naipaul shares similar circumstances to Rushdie’s. Assorted world scenarios and cultures can similarly be found in his work: Argentina, the United States, the Middle East or African countries. He has somehow rejected his condition as a West Indian, claiming for himself the label of world citizen or permanent expatriate: “one doesn’t have a community, one is entirely an individual” (Rowe-Evans 1971, 59). In spite of Naipaul’s attitude of distancing himself or criticizing postcolonial staple ideas, such as resistance, some still appreciate his world-wide interests and scope. Bruce King points out that Naipaul became “the first of the new international novelists from the former colonies who find their material in the postcolonial world” (2003, 22); King concludes that “Naipaul is the only writer to have taken on a broad perspective of the contemporary world and its discontents” (2003, 22). On the occasion of the Nobel Prize being awarded to Naipaul, Mario Vargas Llosa stated that this was his favourite writer in English, praising him for being one of the few contemporary authors who has a universal vision (“V.S. Naipaul” 2001). However, some of these so-called cosmopolitan celebrities have attracted criticism from various scholars who expose a certain stance of being

neither here nor there, what Timothy Brennan describes as the “convenient no-place” (1997, 306) and Ahmed Aijaz as “the pleasures of non-belonging” (1992, 157-8); this could be the case with Naipaul who has repeatedly considered England as a temporary home although he has enjoyed all the privileges of the established citizen, and has even accepted a knighthood bestowed upon him by the Queen.

It is necessary to note that not all sections of academia, and particularly from the postcolonial quarter, will be happy to find themselves involved somehow in the global agenda. Hyperglobalists recurrently warn about the evils of a homogenizing Western globalizing rave, particularly for its relationship or involvement in various manifestations of Eurocentrism, racism or neo-imperialism. In this sense, we can mention in-depth critical studies such as *Globalization & Postcolonialism. Hegemony and Resistance in the Twenty-first Century*, by Sankaran Krishna (2009), alongside scholars such as Gareth Griffiths who perceives “the danger that post-colonial theory may act as a globalizing international force to wipe out local differences and concerns” (1996, 168). Along the same lines, Tom Hickey and Anita Rupprecht (2005) have shortlisted certain postcolonial authors and works that could be considered as representative of the anti-globalization movement. They start by admitting the existence of an emerging “global fiction,” represented by writers such as Rushdie, Gordimer, Walcott, Naipaul, Zadie Smith, Hanan al Shayhk and Arundhati Roy, singling out those who are particularly engaged in denouncing the damage caused by globalization and, more particularly, trans-corporate environmental pollution, American imperialism, alienation caused by media networks or the exploitation of migrant workers. Among those provided as models, mention is made of Achebe’s *Anthills of the Savannah* (1987), Jamaica Kincaid’s *A Small Place* (1988) and *Lucy* (1990), Timothy Mo’s *Renegade or Halo2* (2000), Mudrooroo’s *Master of the Ghost Dreaming* (1991), and Ondaatje’s *In the Skin of a Lion* (1987) and *Anil’s Ghost* (2000).

By and large, we can say that postcolonial criticism tends to appreciate writers who have at least been able to strike a balance between the local and global. Actually, as part of the debate over the political dominance of the West and the corresponding strategies of resistance from various minorities, ethnicities or nationalities, some scholars have clearly denounced too much compliance with Eurocentric values (as could be the case with Naipaul) or even the exploitation of postcolonial writers on the part of European or American publishers or market forces; as suggested by Timothy Brennan: “Whenever they write, the banners ‘India’, ‘Latin America’, or ‘Africa’ are never out of sight. Being from ‘there’ in this

sense is primarily a kind of literary passport that identifies the artist as being from a region of underdevelopment and pain” (1997, 38). Abdulrazak Gurnah makes similar claims by stating that

In negotiating their condition, and turning it to their advantage, postcolonial writers are adept at manipulating the commercial codes of the international open market. They recognize that the value of their writing as an international commodity depends, to a large extent, on the exotic appeal it holds to an unfamiliar metropolitan audience. (2005, 275)

More radical in his Marxist-oriented analysis, Aijaz Ahmad denounces the upsurge of non-Western fictions that have given rise to the belief in the existence of a global community as one more side effect of the commercial dimension of culture and the gradual disappearance of the concept of the national: “This is the imperial geography not of the colonial period but of late capitalism: commodity acquires universality, and a universal market arises across national frontiers and local customs, while white trade joins black trade” (1992, 217).

Whether gladly accepted or raising resentment, Ahmad is right when he identifies the success of the postcolonial writers on a worldwide scale with the extra-textual elements involved in the cultural reproduction of their works that ultimately determine whether a given literary product will gain access to the core of the system or, on the contrary, will remain in the periphery. Therefore, the fact is that the circumstances leading to the canonization and international reputation of postcolonial writers in English have much to do with what Bourdieu has called the “cultural capital” (1986), involving the policies of publishing houses, censorship and institutional promotion. There is no doubt that getting published in major cosmopolitan cities, such as London or New York, has played a key role in the recurrent award of literary prizes to postcolonial writers. These have been particularly successful as winners of the Whitbread, Costa or the Orange awards. Likewise, the Booker Prize, so influential and international in scope, has also had a long list of postcolonial winners such as Naipaul, Gordimer, Keneally, Atwood, Coetzee and Carey (the last two, awarded twice). As symbolic of this presence, we can highlight the case of Salman Rushdie who was chosen, on the occasion of the 25th anniversary of the awards, as the best of previous winners. Indeed, postcolonial writers have been very successful in recent times as far as the Nobel Prize is concerned; among the winners we can mention Patrick White, Wole Soyinka, Nadine Gordimer, Derek Walcott, V.S. Naipaul and J.M. Coetzee; the awards to Toni Morrison and Doris Lessing are also somehow related

to the postcolonial field⁵. These prizes play an important role in the definition of the new canon, given that fact that they raise very clearly the attention of academics and the subsequent critical production on them (Varela-Zapata 2008).

Another source of world-wide popularity for postcolonial writers (and, to this effect, for all of those from English speaking countries) lies in the fact that the film industry is mainly located in the United States and secondarily in Britain; this has made fiction in English one of the most important sources for screen scripts. Over the last decades, among the works that have achieved acclaim for their screen adaptations we can mention Ondaatje's *The English Patient* (1992, adapted 1996), Peter Carey's *Oscar and Lucinda* (1988, adapted 1997), Thomas Keneally's *Schindler's Ark* (1982; adapted as *Schindler's List* in 1993) or, more recently, Yann Martel's *Life of Pi* (2001, adapted 2012). Given the influence of films in contemporary society, no doubt greater than fiction itself, they have contributed much to the presence of the literatures in English in the global cultural panorama⁶.

As a conclusion, we can say that the notion of postcolonialism has been questioned since its inception, and the alternate spellings (with or without a hyphen) even suggest disagreement over the term used. With the emergence and consolidation of internationally oriented societies during the 21st century, it might be possible to envisage the gradual demise of the postcolonial label in favour of terms such as global or multicultural literature in English. In fact, postcoloniality cuts across regional, national and political boundaries; this academic field claims a wide cultural scope, involving the revision of classical canonical texts as well as the literatures of diverse locations and countries (considered either as autonomous national literatures or, more important for our discussion, from a comparative stance). The new academic programme in World Literatures in English set up by Oxford University is actually based on the kind of connections between the postcolonial and global academic divisions

⁵ Luke Strongman has suggested that the relevance of postcolonial literatures, and their corresponding impact on the Booker, has much to do with their identification with the global agenda (2002, 222).

⁶ This is completed with many other British and American contemporary titles, such as Annie Proulx and her "Brokeback Mountain" (published as part of the collection *Close Range: Wyoming Stories*, in 1999; adapted into film in 2005), Cormac McCarthy's *No Country for Old Men* (2005, adapted 2007), or Philip Roth's *The Dying Animal* (2001, adapted as *Elegy* by Spanish director Isabel Coixet in 2008).

mentioned above. In fact, other literatures in English, namely American literature, have experienced the same drive towards the global perspective:

Recently U.S. studies –especially the growing scholarship on race, ethnicity, immigration and empire– has once again sought an international focus. U.S. literature past and present is increasingly being studied within the context of the global literatures in English. (Singh and Schmidt 2000, viii)

Similarly, postcolonial studies encompass a vast cultural and geographical diversity, inspired equally in East and West, North and South, in Christian, Muslim, Jewish or Hindu traditions; on the other hand, concepts such as multiculturalism, hybridization and migration are given privileged attention. The interdisciplinary orientation of postcolonialism further contributes to place it at the foundations of the emerging field of globalization.

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CHAPTER TWO

CARLO AND CAESAR: TWO SYMBOLIC DOGS IN EMILY DICKINSON'S POEMS AND MARY E. WILKINS FREEMAN'S "A NEW ENGLAND NUN"

M^a CARMEN GÓMEZ GONZÁLEZ

Abstract

This article examines the parallelisms between the two dog figures that appear in Emily Dickinson's poems and in Mary E. Wilkins Freeman's short story "A New England Nun." These animals are literary alter-egos through whom their owners try to find their own freedom and autonomy. They are also silent faithful companions who will help us understand the feelings and sexual reactions of their owners in the social context of 19th-century New England.

Keywords: Emily Dickinson, Mary E. Wilkins, Mary E. Wilkins Freeman, American literature, 19th Century New England.

In 1849, Edward Dickinson gave his daughter, Emily, a present: Carlo, a Newfoundland dog with a literary name that became Emily Dickinson's companion in her life, poetry and letters. This happened shortly after Emily Dickinson came back from Mount Holyoke Seminary, which she attended for only one academic year (1847-1848). In 1870, another student, Mary Eleanor Wilkins, would enroll in the same female seminary in South Hadley, Massachusetts, for one school year. This new student was to become Mary E. Wilkins Freeman, an important author of short stories and novels about New England life. In one of her best-known short stories, "A New England Nun," Caesar, "a large yellow-and-white dog" (Freeman 1891, 2) lived in the protagonist's garden constantly held by a chain.

Dickinson and Freeman were born in Massachusetts and received a similar kind of education in Puritan New England and in their works they faced their conservative puritan society with ambivalent feelings, going from compliance to rebellion. Their dogs, Carlo and Caesar, were both external companions and literary symbols.

Caesar was Louisa's dog. Louisa Ellis, the main character in Freeman's short story "A New England Nun," was a single woman who lived quietly in her orderly feminine world. All around her was tidiness and perfection. She was precise, exact and controlled and she showed this same control every time she received her fiancé of fifteen years, Joe Dagget. Louisa and Joe's engagement could be best explained by feelings of loyalty and duty on both parts. They were loyal to each other and their attitudes did not differ from those of a faithful dog that would always stand by his or her owner. Joe Dagget was loyal to Louisa because she had waited for him for fourteen years while he was in Australia making his fortune although, by the time he came back, she was fixed in her "pretty but senseless old maiden ways" (1891, 9). Louisa Ellis was faithful to him because she considered marriage "a reasonable feature and probable desirability of life" (1891, 7) for the "true woman" she had been brought up to be: a gentle, emotional, dependent woman that would become a socially accepted wife, a woman that in one of Emily Dickinson's poems would exclaim: "I'm 'wife'—I've finished that—/ That other state—/ I'm Czar—I'm 'Woman' now—/ It's safer so— (J199, Fr225)¹.

¹ Poems and letters by Emily Dickinson are cited following Suzanne Juhasz's instructions: "Poems quoted from the Johnson variorum edition should be cited with the letter J before the poem number ('J680', for example); those quoted from the Franklin edition should use the abbreviation Fr before the poem number, and the letter of the version (A, B, C, etc.) after the poem number ('Fr724B'). If only one version exists, the letter A may be omitted ... Where it is necessary to

Duty was also the principle that guided Joe's and Louisa's lives. Even if Louisa felt consternation when she was told of Joe's return from Australia, "it was not for her, whatever it came to pass, to prove untrue and break his heart" (Freeman 1891, 12). Their forthcoming marriage was not to be disowned because "she had always looked forward to his return and their marriage as the inevitable conclusion of things" (1891, 7). Their marriage was also inevitable for Joe Dagget although he always left Louisa's house after his courtship visits feeling "much as an innocent and perfectly well-intentioned bear might after his exit from a china shop" (1891, 5). After his return from Australia, Joe had fallen in love with Lily Dyer, a young woman who was taking care of his mother. Lily was another example of this puritan sense of social duty. She agreed with the fact that Joe Dagget should marry Louisa because "honor's honor, an' right's right" (1891, 14).

In this world of Puritan honour, where nobody wanted to break established bonds and promises, Louisa's dog should have been an example of this same faithfulness and tameness but the fact is that Louisa kept Caesar constantly chained and, although she patted him when she fed him, she gave him "ascetic" corn-cakes instead of a "sanguinary diet of flesh and bones" (1891, 12) because Caesar had bitten a neighbour fourteen years before, the same year that Joe Dagget had travelled to Australia, and all the children and some adults in the village still regarded Caesar "as a very monster of ferocity" (1891, 11). Caesar had been kept under control by a strong chain while she clung to the promise of Joe's return and future marriage. She had remained in her proper sphere, that of the home, waiting for her fiancé's return because if you "stay within your proper confines ... you will be worshipped ... step outside and you will cease to exist" (Douglas 1977, 45).

There is a big contrast between the feelings of doggish faithfulness and loyalty that the men and women in this short story show and the human qualities that are attributed to the dog. Caesar is given human qualities that allow him to commit sins, feel remorse and encounter "rightful retribution" (Freeman 1891, 10) because he had misbehaved when he was a puppy and deserved to be punished for life. However, his punishment responds to the strict code of behaviour that Louisa and her society applied to single women, for whom marriage could become a coercive element "to subdue even the most restless spirits" (Welter 1976, 37). It was as if the gentle, quiet pet had dared to abandon his proper sphere to become a beast that wished to embrace freedom and life outside his hut. When Joe Dagget

distinguish a Johnson poem number from a Johnson letter number, the abbreviations JP and JL should be used" (Juhasz 1998, 26).

recognizes the dog's good nature and talks of setting him loose, Louisa is alarmed by the idea, just as she rejects the idea of abandoning her own house after her marriage because both Louisa and "her neat maidenly possessions" would run the risk of ceasing to be themselves "robbed of their old environments" (Freeman 1891, 8). Terror overcomes Louisa as she pictures marriage as a time when interests and possessions would be "more completely fused in one" (1891, 11) losing her autonomy and letting out her sexuality and all the feelings she had kept hidden and under control for so many years. For her, marriage is "disorder and confusion in lieu of sweet peace and harmony" (1891, 12) and that is why she pictures her married life as a time when Caesar would "rampage through the quiet and unguarded village" (1891, 12) biting children. "Louisa fears the pain of his bite: for her, the bite of pain, of sexuality, of longing" (Barnstone 1984, 131). When Louisa breaks her engagement after overhearing Joe's love conversation with Lily, she does not mind the fact that there is another woman in her fiancé's life. What really worries her is losing her autonomy: "In keeping Caesar chained Louisa exerts her own control over masculine forces which threaten her autonomy" (Pryse 1991, 142).

Freeman expresses the conflict "between rebellion and submission, self-fulfillment and acceptability" (Glasser 1984, 323) by the use of "psychological doubles" in her short stories. In "A New England Nun," her psychological doubles are represented by the submissive Louisa Ellis and her dog, the rebellious Caesar, but Louisa's dog is not as unruly as it seems and Louisa gains independence and autonomy by assuming public submission and politeness while openly rejecting her future marriage. This self-division and apparent subservience can generate a world of madness and contradictions that Emily Dickinson's poetry has been able to convey: "Much Madness is divinest Sense— / ... / Assent —and you are sane— / Demour— you're straightway dangerous— / And handled with a Chain—" (J435, Fr620). Like in the case of these psychological doubles, Dickinson had to hide the creative, autonomous poet behind the depending, subservient public image that she offered to the world if she wanted to avoid being handled with a chain.

Louisa Ellis and the female voice present in Emily Dickinson's marriage poems did not want to become conventional wives. They even challenged "the very expectation that all women should desire marriage as a means of attaining fulfillment" (Pennell 1991, 213). They feared renouncing their personal autonomy after marriage although social pressure to marry was strong. One example was Louisa, who had suffered this pressure coming from her own mother. This was also the common vision of many contemporary domestic women-writers who finished their

stories with a wedding because marriage was supposed to be the happy ending of a woman's life.

Freeman's Louisa and author Emily Dickinson avoided becoming brides because brides were Queens for just one day. After their wedding day, they would become the "wife forgotten" of Dickinson's poems. That is why, at the end of "A New England Nun," Louisa does not feel she is losing anything by withdrawing her affections and remaining single. She has chosen her peaceful "serenity and placid narrowness ... like an uncloistered nun" (Freeman 1891, 17) feeling like an autonomous "queen" in her own harmonious home, "firmly insured in her possession" (1891, 16) away from a "coarse masculine" (1891, 10) world represented by Joe Dagget.

That same feeling of happiness that accompanies renunciation is also present in Emily Dickinson's marriage poems because the bride's happiness stops instants before the actual wedding: "Dominion lasts until obtained—/ Possession just as long—" (J1257, Fr1299). When Judge Otis Phillips Lord asked Emily Dickinson to marry him, she did not accept his offer although her letters to him show sincere admiration and maybe also love. Avoiding the moment of "possession" could be behind Dickinson's refusal to marry him: "dont you know you are happiest while I withhold and not confer —dont you know that 'No' is the wildest word we consign to Language?" (JL562)².

To achieve their happy renunciation and single autonomy, Louisa and the protagonist of some of Dickinson's poems had to control the sexual, untamed part of themselves represented by their dogs. In the short story "A New England Nun," Caesar is seen by the public as a rebellious monster although his attitude throughout the story is good-natured and humble. The dogs that appear in Dickinson's poems are also double-sided. When the protagonist of the poem calls herself a little spaniel or a little hound, her attitude is humble because she wishes to conquer her lover's affection but, when the female protagonist of a poem has her dog walking by her side, she is an empowered woman who can make her own decisions and who can stop or avoid the destructive advances of her lover.

In Dickinson's poem "If he dissolve —there is nothing more," written in 1861, the protagonist of the poem calls herself "His little Spaniel," a faithful pet that only wants to attract her Master's attention. Although the "chariots" of death are waiting for her, what worries the dying woman is not her physical death but her unwilling separation from her lover and the suffering it involves.

² JL plus the number of the letter corresponds to Johnson's edition of Dickinson's letters. Emily Dickinson's punctuation and orthography have been respected.

If He dissolve – then – there is nothing –
 more –
 Eclipse – at Midnight –
 It was dark – before –
 ...
 Would but some God – inform Him –
 Or it be too late!
 Say – that the pulse just lisps –
 The Chariots wait –

 Say – that a little life – for His –
 Is leaking – red –
 His little Spaniel – tell Him!
 Will He heed? (J236, Fr251)

The image of the poet as a faithful dog or as a humble daisy appears in two more pieces of work written by Emily Dickinson in 1861: The second Master Letter and the poem “What shall I do –it whimpers so.” In the Master Letter “Oh –did I offend it”³, “Daisy” is about to be punished for an offence that is unknown to her. “Tell her her [offence –] fault – Master – if it is [not so] small eno’ to cancel with her life, [Daisy] she is satisfied – but punish – do [not]nt banish her – Shut her in prison–” (JL248).

Like the “little Spaniel” in the poem “If he dissolve – then there is nothing more,” “Daisy” prefers death to abandonment in a prison of forgetfulness, similar to the one that appears in “What shall I do – it whimpers so.”

What shall I do – it whimpers so
 This little Hound within the Heart
 All day and night with bark and start –
 And yet, it will not go –
 Would you untie it, were you me –
 Would it stop whining – if to Thee –
 I sent it – even now?

It should not tease you –
 By your chair – or, on the mat –
 Or if it dare – to climb your dizzy knee –
 Or – sometimes at your side to run –
 When you were willing –
 Shall it come?
 Tell Carlo –
 He’ll tell me! (J186, Fr237A)

³ Franklin’s chronology of the Master letters has been used.